

What is this document about?

As the local education authority for Hertfordshire, the County Council has to keep under review the number and sizes of schools in its area.

When there are more pupils than there are places in schools, the County Council has to bring forward proposals to enlarge existing schools or open new ones in order to provide more places for pupils. When there are fewer pupils than there are places in schools the County Council has to bring forward proposals to reduce the size of existing schools or to close schools in order to remove unused places.

Because of the number of unused places in north east Watford the County Council is reviewing primary schools in this area.

As the first phase of this review, the County Council is putting forward proposals for the possible closure of Leavesden Green School and the possible amalgamation of Alban Wood Infant and Nursery School and Albans Wood Junior School.

The County Council is very well aware of the anxiety which proposals of this kind can produce and only pursues such a course of action when it is convinced that there is an overwhelming case to do so. It is important to point out that **no decision about the future of these schools has been taken**. This document is being issued in order to start a consultation process with parents, staff and the local community. All views are welcome and will be taken into account when the County Council considers the outcome of this consultation in October 2003 and decides whether or not to continue with the proposals.

This booklet is a consultation document and sets out the proposals to close Leavesden Green School in July 2004 and to amalgamate Albans Wood Infant and Alban Wood Junior Schools from September 2004. The booklet:

- explains what changes are being proposed and why
- provides details of how you can let us know about what you think of this proposal (see opposite page)
- gives information about the timetable if the proposals are carried out
- explains what the implications would be for pupils and staff
- gives an outline of the likely timetable of events following the issue of this consultation document
- includes a response form for your comments.

Please remember no decision has been taken and your views are important so please do come to the public meetings and return the response form.

You can let us know your views by:

1 **Coming to meet us** to discuss the proposal, on

**24 June 2003 at 7.00 p.m. at
Leavesden Green School, High Road, Leavesden, Watford, WD25 7QZ**

or

**1 July 2003 at 7.00 p.m. at
Alban Wood Junior School, Newhouse Crescent, Watford WD25 7HU**

We will explain the background to the proposals and answer your questions. A County Councillor will chair the meetings and other County Councillors will be there to listen to your views. We will take notes and make a sound record of the meetings as well.

1 **Sending in one or both of the response forms** in this document.

1 **Writing to us (freepost)**, if you do not want to use the forms, to:

Tom Stacey
CSF Planning
Business Reply Service HJ71
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
SG13 8YD

1 **e-mailing** us at tom.stacey@hertscc.gov.uk

1 **completing the on-line form** on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/watford

If you have other suggestions or options, please make sure that you say so in your response.

Your letters and forms need to be with us by 1 August 2003.

This document is being widely distributed within the area. If you would like more copies please telephone Tom Stacey on 01992 555875.

Why the changes are being proposed

To meet the County Council's vision for primary schools

Some fundamental principles underpin the proposed changes. The County Council is committed to securing the number and distribution of schools that will promote children's achievement and help to raise their attainment. To achieve this, the County Council intends that any changes will result in a pattern of schools that:

- reflects parental preferences for schools;
- produces schools normally not less than two forms of entry (i.e. 60 pupils admitted per year) in size;
- provides sufficient places for current demand and future growth to reflect any population changes and possible future housing developments;
- responds to any future population decline by reducing capacity;
- produces primary school buildings which conform to the County Council specification that is based on government guidelines for school premises;
- provides schools with playing field areas in accordance with government regulations, on a separate site if necessary;
- achieves a fair geographical distribution of provision, taking account of existing communities and transport barriers like railways and major roads;
- locates schools in a way which reduces traffic congestion around school sites and encourages safer routes to schools.

Why the changes are being proposed

The need to reduce the number of places in the area and to match supply and demand

There are four primary schools and three 'pairs' of infant and junior schools in the north east Watford area, (Alban Wood Infant and Junior, Coates Way, Gartson Infant and Lea Farm Junior, Kingsway Infant and Junior, Leavesden Green, Meriden, and St Catherine of Siena). The map on the front cover shows the location of these and neighbouring schools.

If schools are not full they are liable to have problems of viability, both financially and educationally. North east Watford has these problems because there are a large number of empty places. The schools in this area are shown in the table below that shows the capacity of each of them to take pupils, as calculated by a formula from the Department for Education and Skills.

In total there are currently 2,454 places in all the primary schools in the north east Watford planning area, in the reception year through to year six. As the table below shows, currently about 530 of these places are empty, and we are forecasting that in seven years more than 700 will be. Such a large number of empty places cannot be sustained.

SCHOOL	Annual admission number	SCHOOL CAPACITY 2002	2002/03 actual nos.	% surplus places 2002/03	2003/04 forecast	2004/05 forecast	2005/06 forecast	2006/07 forecast	2007/08 forecast	2008/09 forecast	2009/10 forecast
Alban Wood Infant	75	225	135	40.0							
Alban Wood Junior		300	232	22.7							
Coates Way JMI and Nursery	30	198	209	0.0							
Garston Infant's	60	180	111	38.3							
Kingsway Infant	60	180	152	15.6							
Kingsway Junior		240	231	3.8							
Lea Farm Junior		240	188	21.7							
Leavesden Green JMI	60	261*	184	29.5							
Meriden Primary	60	420	272	35.2							
St Catherine of Siena RC	30	210	207	1.4							
WATFORD NORTH EAST Total	375	2,454	1,921	21.7	1,856	1,790	1,761	1,737	1,742	1,739	1,728

* the school actually has the space to take 360 pupils

Why the changes are being proposed

The area, therefore, needs to be reviewed and we are doing this in phases starting with the sub-area north and immediately south of the A405. In this sub-area there are currently 1416 places in the primary schools, in the reception year through to year six. As the table shows, currently 275 of these places are empty and we are forecasting that by 2009/10 almost 400 will be:

SCHOOL	Annual Admission Number	SCHOOL CAPACITY 2002	2002/03 actual nos.	% surplus places 2002/03	2003/04 forecast	2004/05 forecast	2005/06 forecast	2006/07 forecast	2007/08 forecast	2008/09 forecast	2009/10 forecast
Alban Wood Infant	75	225	135	40.0							
Alban Wood Junior		300	232	22.7							
Kingsway Infant	60	180	152	15.6							
Kingsway Junior		240	231	3.8							
Leavesden Green JMI	60	261	184	29.5							
St Catherine of Siena RC	30	210	207	1.4							
Total	225	1416	1141	19.4	1106	1062	1042	1026	1030	1028	1021
Empty places			275		310	354	374	390	386	388	395

To match supply and demand in this sub-area we propose to provide 1050 places that is five forms of entry per year (ie 150 pupils per year). To do this we propose to remove 366 places in this sub-area which represents the difference between the current capacity of 1416 places and the planned total of 1050 places. In considering the need to do this we have taken the principles on page 3 and the following factors into account:

- future demand for places
- the level of empty places
- the availability of accommodation
- parental preferences
- where children live
- the distribution of schools and the accessibility of alternative schools
- financial considerations
- the quality of education.

In the light of the above factors, we propose no change to **St Catherine of Siena Primary School** because:

- it is full
- it has good accommodation
- it meets the demand for denominational education.

Why the changes are being proposed

We propose no changes to **Kingsway Infant and Junior Schools** because:

- they only have a relatively small number of empty places
- these places could be used by children from Leavesden Green Primary School if it were to close
- they are not operating on a 'split site'.

We propose to close **Leavesden Green Primary School** because:

- it is supposed to be a two form entry school, admitting 60 pupils per year
- for the last five years the school has admitted less than one form of entry (fewer than 30 pupils) with numbers falling and forecast to fall further
- not all the current buildings are used by the school and therefore some parts of the school buildings are let to other users
- as the number of pupils goes down it becomes more and more difficult to maintain standards. A bigger proportion of the budget has to be spent on heating, cleaning and maintaining buildings which are much larger than the school needs, rather than on books and teachers
- the cost of buildings-related items is higher per pupil; to illustrate this, the current cost per pupil at Leavesden Green is £2,534 compared with the average in the County of £2,249
- governors and the head teacher have to spend more time planning how to work within their budget, and change the organisation each year to run the school as efficiently as they can
- teachers have to take on a wider range of responsibilities for subject and specialist areas like special educational needs
- the building need considerable expenditure on repairs and maintenance, some £300,000 in the near future
- the school has a smaller number of pupils than the Alban Wood schools
- there are other schools available to the pupils at Leavesden Green: the Alban Wood schools and the Kingsway schools through the underpass
- educational quality is good but so it is also in neighbouring schools.

We propose to amalgamate **Alban Wood Infant and Nursery School and Alban Wood Junior School** in order to create a primary school on the Infant School site because:

- the Infant and Junior schools are supposed to be 2.5 forms of entry, admitting 75 pupils per year
- the schools are currently attracting less than two forms of entry and we are, therefore, proposing to create a viable two form entry primary school
- there is some surplus accommodation
- the schools can be amalgamated on to one site and the number of empty places reduced (the Infant site would be used because more needs to be spent on the Junior School than the Infants)
- the cost of creating a primary school on one site can be met from the sale of land.

Why the changes are being proposed

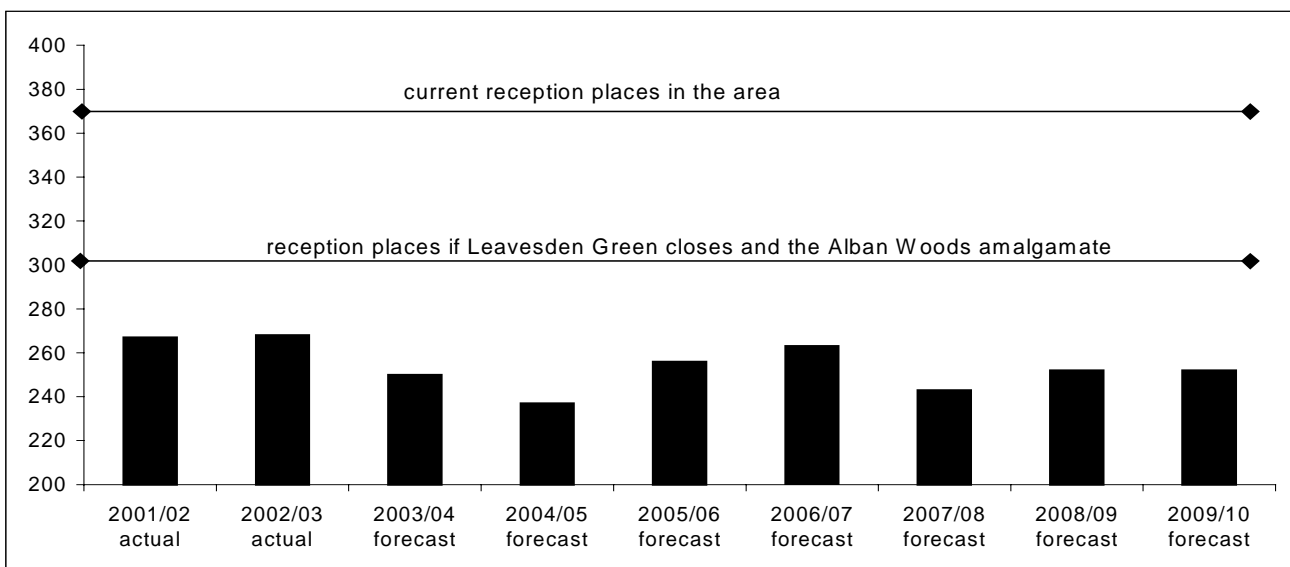
The County Council is aware of the impact which this will have on the pupils, parents and staff at all affected schools but is putting forward these proposals for the good of all the schools in the area and to create a community of thriving schools.

The above measures would provide five forms of entry (1,050 places) in good quality accommodation with good quality teaching.

The effect of these proposed changes on the **total number of places** in the north east Watford area as a whole is illustrated in the following chart (and see the table on page 4):



The effect of these proposed changes on the **number of reception places** in north east Watford area as a whole is illustrated in the following chart:



Why the changes are being proposed

As can be seen from the two charts above, even if Leavesden Green School was to be closed and the Alban Wood Schools amalgamated, there would be still be sufficient places to accommodate parental choice and any further proposals for school reorganisation in the north east Watford area. The forecast used to produce these numbers includes an assessment of current demand, births (and the birth rate) in the area, and the impact of all future housing developments for which planning permission has been sought. The estimated number of children that these would produce have been included in the charts.

We have also considered the neighbouring area of Abbots Langley because we know that a number of housing developments, such as that at Leavesden Airport, are planned or in progress there. We are clear that the demand for school places can be met without those places which we are proposing to remove from the north east Watford area.

Implications for Leavesden Green School

Site and buildings

If the proposals were to go ahead, the playing fields would be retained and reserved but the area of land occupied by the school buildings could be sold off for a small residential development. Consideration will need to be given to the location of other users of the buildings.

What would closure mean for children and parents

The County Council is proposing to close the school in August 2004. Until that time the school would remain fully operational and would receive financial support to enable it to maintain an effective education for the pupils. At the point of closure there would be children on roll for whom an alternative school place would be required. We have looked carefully at the geographical distribution of the 160 children who would be at Leavesden Green in September 2004, and the locations of alternative local schools.

There will be 122 spare places in September 2004 at Alban Wood Infant and Junior Schools and the Kingsway Infant and Junior Schools using their proposed permanent accommodation. As may be seen from the chart on page 7 of this booklet, there will also be empty places at other local schools. However, there would be 160 pupils from Leavesden Green to accommodate. In addition to this consultation process if proposals are agreed we would consult parents about which school they would like to move to, making use of the empty places that are available. We will provide additional accommodation for one or two years at either or both Alban Wood and Kingsway schools depending on parental preferences.

Nursery places would be available at both Alban Wood Infant School and Kingsway Nursery School.

Implications for Leavesden Green School

The estimated figures for the school year 2004/05 are:

School	Capacity	Admission Limit	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL (excluding nursery)
Sub-area capacity			120	120	120	120	120	120	120	840
Alban Wood Primary (proposed)	420	60	43	47	51	38	45	59	56	339
Kingsway Infant	180	60	49	60	58					167
Kingsway Junior	240	60				58	37	57	60	212
Schools total			92	107	109	96	82	116	116	718
Spare places			28	13	11	24	38	4	4	122
Leavesden Green	261	60	19	21	22	21	23	27	27	160
Shortfall (Surplus)			(9)	8	11	(3)	(15)	23	23	38

The County Council recognises the concerns which parents will have about the future of their children's education and will do all that it can to make the change to a new school, if that becomes necessary, as smooth and stress free as possible.

What would closure mean for staff?

Although all staff would be at risk of redundancy, the County Council has a redeployment scheme for all staff who are at risk. In partnership with local schools redeployment into similar positions should be achievable. As part of this consultation we shall meet staff, their professional associations and Trade Unions.

Implications for the Alban Wood Schools

The size of school we are proposing

We propose that the combined school should have 420 places, plus a nursery. That means there would be two forms of entry 60 children would be admitted per year.

This is a smaller number of places than the total of the two current schools, which is 525, but would be sufficient to accommodate children from Leavesden Green School if the proposal to close it goes ahead.

Implications for the Alban Wood Schools

When would the schools amalgamate?

We propose that the present schools should close at the end of the summer term 2004 and the new school would open in September 2004.

This time-scale would allow us to build the necessary extra accommodation so that the new school would be on a single site.

Using the infant school site for the new school would mean we would have to build some more classrooms and a new library. We would keep the junior school playing field, as it would provide additional necessary resources for the proposed new school. The upper part of the junior school site, where the buildings are, could be sold for a small residential development.

Potential benefits of amalgamation

A school which covers the full primary age-range, from nursery to year 6, has a number of possible advantages:

- Children do not have to learn different routines or behaviour policies when they move from year 2 to year 3, because these would be the same throughout the school
- Children would know all the staff and what was expected of them
- There are more opportunities for staff development. The skills and knowledge of staff can be extended. This benefits the children and can also help to retain good staff and to recruit replacements when necessary
- Teachers can follow and monitor children's development more closely. This can be particularly useful if a child has a special educational need at any stage
- It is easier to plan educational development throughout the whole primary stage. Whole school policies can be developed for reading, mathematics, science and other areas of the curriculum from reception through to the end of year 6. This offers more potential for improving the level of achievement of all pupils
- Recent curriculum developments have increased the number and range of specialist tasks to be done in schools. Having more staff to share these tasks and a wider range of experience available can enhance the education of children throughout the school
- The head and governors have more flexibility in managing the school with a single budget and combined staff. This may help to reduce the effects of fluctuations in pupil numbers in different age groups.
- There should be economies of scale from running one school instead of two.
- The school would operate from a single building, some of it new.

Implications for the Alban Wood Schools

Possible disadvantages of amalgamation

However, there are some possible disadvantages:

- Although the new school's budget would be partly protected during the first few years, the amount allocated to the new school would be smaller than the total for the two existing schools, reflective of the economies of scale mentioned above.
- A new set of policies and practices will be needed as part of planning how the new school will work. The governors and staff will need to ensure there is continuity for children throughout the transition.

What would this mean for staff?

The posts of Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher(s) of the new school must be advertised nationally. Therefore existing Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher of both schools would be at risk of redundancy. It is likely that all other teaching and support staff would be able to transfer to the new school. This will depend on the staffing structure and pupil numbers, though a larger school is likely to provide opportunities for most of the staff who wish to work there. As part of this consultation we shall meet with the staff and their professional associations and trade unions.

What would this mean for the Governing Body?

The new school would have a single Governing Body. The current Governing Bodies for the two schools would continue to look after them until they closed. A new temporary Governing Body would have to be set up to appoint the Headteacher of the new school and take other steps to organise it. The appointments and elections process to create a permanent Governing Body for the new school would begin in the late spring or early summer of 2004.

Financial Implications for the new primary school

Local Education Authority Budget Share

Under the LEA budget share arrangements for funding amalgamated schools, the new school would receive additional funding to ease the transition from two schools to one. The new school would be funded as the equivalent of two schools (but on the basis of occupying only one site) for the first two years from the date of the amalgamation. In the third year, it would receive amalgamation funding of 50% of the difference between the funding of one and two schools. In the fourth and subsequent years after the date of amalgamation there would be no additional funding and the school would be funded as one school.

Financial implications for the new primary school

The balances, both surpluses and deficits, of the existing schools would transfer to the new primary school on amalgamation.

The combined budget share of both schools is currently (2003/04) £967,436. This excludes adjustments made to the 2003/04 budget due to changes in pupil numbers in the previous year. The budget of any school is worked out on the basis of a School Funding Formula that takes into account the size of the school and the number of children on roll. This means that the budget fluctuates from year to year as the numbers of children go up or down.

The table below gives the LEA budget share available to the new school following amalgamation, based on current (2003/04) pupil numbers and other funding data for the schools (except for the premises areas used for area related funding which, from the 1st September 2004, have been amended to reflect the estimated area of the new primary school). The figures assume that there will be no change to the school funding formula.

Financial Year £	Base Budget £	Amalgamation Funding £	Total Budget Share* £
1 st year: year of amalgamation 2004/05	929,339	32,241	961,580
2 nd year: following amalgamation 2005/06	902,127	55,270	957,398
3 rd year: following amalgamation 2006/07	902,127	39,150	941,277
4 th year: following amalgamation 2007/08	902,127	11,515	913,642
5 th year: following amalgamation 2008/09	902,127	0	902,127

* Please note that the budget includes additional funding in relation to social deprivation which could vary in the event of changes in the number of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Other Grants

Currently there are a number of additional government grants, which come to the schools. These include the School Standards Grant and resources from the Standards Fund (which includes some capital funding devolved to schools). Elements of these grants are distributed on a “per school” basis. Where this is the case, following amalgamation, the new school would qualify for one per school allocation rather than two. Based on the current (2003/04) pattern of these grants the reduction in the school’s allocation resulting from amalgamation would be approximately £41,000 per year.

What happens next?

Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee		18 June 2003
Consultation Closes		1 August 2003
Children, Schools and Families Schools' Resources Panel	To consider outcome of consultation	30 September 2003
County Council's Cabinet		13 October 2003
If decision taken to proceed, the two-month Statutory Notice period		20 October – 19 December 2003
Consideration by Hertfordshire School Organisation Committee when the final decision will be taken		January 2004
Proposed date for the closure of Leavesden Green JMI School		July 2004
Proposed date for the New Alban Wood Primary School to open		September 2004