

How can you let us have your views?

You can let us know your views by:

- ❖ **Completing and returning the response form** at the back of this document.
- ❖ **Completing the on-line form** on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/stevenage
- ❖ **Writing to us (freepost)**, if you do not want to use the form, to:

CSF Planning
Freepost HJ71
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8YD

- ❖ **E-mailing us at** kate.maguire@hertscc.gov.uk

However you choose to respond please let us know if you have other suggestions or options.

Your response needs to be with us by the 31 August 2004 please.

During this period of consultation there will be meetings to discuss the proposals at:

Longmeadow Junior School	28 June	7.30- 9.30 pm
Pin Green Primary School	5 July	7.30- 9.30 pm
Burydale Junior School	6 July	7.30- 9.30 pm
Bedwell Primary School	7 July	7.30- 9.30 pm

Facilities will be made available for those hard of hearing at the meetings.

At the meeting we will explain the background to the proposal and answer your questions. A County Councillor will chair the meeting and other County Councillors will be there to listen to your views. We will take notes and record the meeting as well.

This document is being widely distributed within the Stevenage area. If you would like more copies, please ring us on 01992 555897.

We know that this consultation may cause anxiety and uncertainty, but it is important that the County Council knows your views.

Section 1: Raising achievement in Stevenage primary schools

As Local Education Authority (LEA) for Hertfordshire, the County Council is committed to promoting good quality education which aims to:

- provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve
- prepare all pupils for the responsibilities and experiences of life.

It does so in the context of the government's Primary Strategy to promote excellence in teaching and enjoyment in learning.

Stevenage primary schools face a number of challenges, including at some schools low levels of achievement which, on average, falls below the County and national averages. There is also a significant number of surplus primary school places which affects schools' ability to organise efficiently and effectively. This, in turn, potentially affects the quality of the education provided to pupils.

One part of the County Council's strategy for raising achievement is to secure the appropriate number and distribution of primary school places. In Stevenage there is a significant surplus of places. This consultation document explains the County Council's proposals to reduce surplus places in Stevenage primary schools.

These are only proposals and no decisions have yet been taken. The feedback from this consultation will be carefully considered before any decisions are made.

The rest of this document is set out as follows:

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Section 2: The need for primary school places in Stevenage and the level of surplus places

The current need for primary school places in Stevenage is less than the capacity available. This surplus is forecast to grow by 2010/11.

Capacity for pupils	Number of pupils	Surplus places	Number of pupils forecast	Forecast surplus places
	2003/4		2010/11	
8690	7483	1207	7100	1590
		(13.9%)		(18.3%)

This is one of the highest levels of surplus places in Hertfordshire.

Within those town-wide levels, the surpluses are higher in some parts of the town.

In the centre of the town they are 21.2% (30.9% by 2010/11)

In the south of the town they are 19.1% (30.6% by 2010/11).

More detail is given in the appendix to this document.

The County Council considers that the level of surplus places in the centre and the south needs to be reduced to support schools' improvement efforts, and to enable them to operate more efficiently and effectively.

It is proposed to remove a total of 735 places, which can also be described as 3.5 forms of entry. A form of entry is 210 pupils, that is 30 pupils in each of the seven primary year groups (30 x 7=210).

This would reduce surplus places to around 11% which is considered to be a reasonable level of surplus as there is some uncertainty about future housing plans for the town.

Section 3: Proposals for the centre of Stevenage

The County Council's aim is to remove 315 places (1.5 f.e) from this area.

The schools within the centre of the town are Bedwell, Pin Green, Moss Bury and Broom Barns.

Bedwell, Pin Green and Moss Bury are of similar size. They each have capacity for 315 pupils (1.5 f.e) and have a total of 301 surplus places between them. Other surrounding schools also have some spare capacity.

Closing one of these school would be the best way to reduce surplus places within this part of the town and strengthen the remaining two schools within the area.

The County Council is proposing two options to achieve this:

Option 1 (the County Council's favoured option)

to close Pin Green Primary School on 31 August 2005; or

Option 2

to close Bedwell Primary School on 31 August 2005.

The County Council is aware that by proposing these options it could be said to be placing one community against the other, but it cannot ignore that these are both options which would remove the necessary number of surplus places.

Taking all factors into account the County Council favours option 1, the closure of Pin Green School. Closing Bedwell School would mean that there would not be enough school places within the Bedwell estate. The County Council has identified this area as needing significant support. It is providing this by co-ordinating local services to meet local needs better through a pilot Children's Trust for the area.

Some of the factors taken into account were:

Pin Green School

- has lower than average achievement levels at KS2
- recently came out of the Ofsted 'special measures' category and is improving, but continues to be monitored by the County Council
- has the fewest primary allocations in the town for September 2004
- has consistently recruited below its admission limit in the last seven years

Bedwell School

- has lower than average achievement levels at Key Stage 2
- recently has received a good Ofsted report.
- has low allocations for September
- has recruited below its admission level for the last few years.

Section 4: Other options considered and discounted in the centre

In deciding which options to propose the County Council looked at other alternatives and discounted them for the following reasons:

- closing Moss Bury School, but this school is more popular than either Pin Green or Bedwell, achieves higher levels of attainment, and has a good special needs unit for children with partial hearing
- 'amalgamating' Bedwell School with Broom Barns School, which is also located within the Bedwell estate. This option would still leave too many surplus places.

Section 5: Sites and buildings implications in the centre

The site and buildings of whichever school closed would no longer be required for educational purposes. It is likely that they would be sold to contribute to the investment needed for the other primary school proposals in this document. Temporary non-school users of the Pin Green site would be relocated to other spare accommodation within the town.

Section 6: Proposals for the south of Stevenage

The County Council's aim is to remove 420 places (2 f.e.) from this area.

The schools within the south of the town have capacity for 2868 pupils (13.7 f.e) and currently have a total of 547 (2.6 f.e.) surplus places between them. This is forecast to grow to 878 places (4.2 f.e.) by 2010/11. They serve distinct communities and sufficient places need to remain to serve them.

The schools which have been considered are Burydale Junior, Featherstone Wood, Roebuck, Longmeadow Infant, Longmeadow Junior, Shephall Green and Ashtree Schools.

In order to preserve provision for the communities within the area, the County Council has concluded that it should propose only one option to achieve the required reduction of surplus places within the area. That is to:

- **close Shephall Green Infant School, Burydale Junior School, and Longmeadow Infant and Longmeadow Junior Schools on 31 August 2005.**
- **create a new 3 f.e. primary school on the joint sites of the Longmeadow and Burydale Schools from 1 September 2005.**

This would result in a net reduction of 2 f.e. (reducing 5 f.e. by the proposed closures and creating 3 f.e. in the new school).

The proposal is being made because it:

- produces a 3 f.e. school which is of a size to attract good quality staff, offer wider opportunities for staff development and more opportunities to provide specialist staff
- would provide a strong new school to serve the majority of the affected schools' community which will foster community cohesion;
- does not make sense to have two pairs of infant and junior schools which mainly serve one community. Most of these schools are operating with significant surplus places;
- is not possible to create evenly sized schools within the area if all communities are to be served, or for other reasons which are explained in section 7.

Some of the factors taken into account in reaching this proposal were:

Shephall Green and Burydale Schools:

- are 2 f.e. schools but are only approximately half full
- do not share the same location/site: they are some distance from each other on either side of the A602, although there is a good underpass
- Shephall Green is located in a cul-de-sac within a conservation area close to a special school and two secondary schools. This results in congestion, which is a local sore-point
- Burydale School is located immediately next to the two Longmeadow Schools. It does not make sense to have three schools on one site
- Burydale has recently come out of the Ofsted 'special measures' category and continues to be monitored by the County Council, although it is improving.
- Burydale's current achievement levels are just below the Stevenage average at KS2.

Longmeadow Infant and Junior schools:

- are 3 f.e. schools but the Infant School intake has been approximately 2 f.e. in recent years and the Junior School intake is now at that level
- the Junior school's current achievement levels are just below the Stevenage average
- both schools rely on temporary accommodation (a total of 5 classrooms)
- they are located immediately next to Burydale Junior School, which does not make sense in terms of geographical distribution.
- the Infant School is without a permanent headteacher at this point in time.

This proposal, which would remove 420 surplus places and result in a strong new school to serve the majority of the affected schools' community, will also foster community cohesion.

Section 7: Other options considered and discounted in the south

In deciding to make this proposal the County Council looked at and discounted other alternatives as follows:

- Basing the new school within the Burydale School buildings, as well as the Longmeadow schools' buildings: the Burydale buildings are not large enough to contain all the pupils at one key stage. The Longmeadow buildings would therefore provide the basis for a more cohesive new school.
- Creating more evenly sized schools in the area south of the A602 by making Roebuck School and the new school both 2 f.e. schools: this would require the Roebuck building to be altered/extended, which is not advisable for structural reasons, or to be rebuilt, which would not be cost effective. The level of investment required is not advisable given the continued fall in the level of demand within the town.
- 'Amalgamating' Featherstone Wood with Ashtree School: the best geographical location for this would be the Ashtree School site but it is not big enough for a 3 f.e. school.
- Reducing provision even further by closing either Roebuck or Featherstone Wood: the schools serve different communities and the closure of either school would not, in the short to medium term, leave sufficient places for either community .
- Reducing the size of the Roebuck and Featherstone Wood School buildings and sites: while the County Council expects the demand for primary school places to continue to fall there is uncertainty over future housing plans. It would not be wise to close more schools or reduce site capacities at this point in time.

Section 8: Sites and buildings implications in the south

The site of Shephall Green Infant School would no longer be required for educational purposes. It is likely that the area approximating the school buildings would be sold and the remainder of the site would be added to Barnwell Secondary School, which is immediately next to it.

The Burydale Junior buildings would be kept for a minimum of two years to help with the transition of pupils by providing additional accommodation. It may then be re-used for other educational/County Council use or sold.

There would be a major programme of investment in the current Longmeadow Infant and Longmeadow Junior School buildings (which are joined) to replace temporary accommodation, to extend and improve existing accommodation and produce good accommodation for a 3 f.e. school. It may be possible to allow space for community use, a nurture group and a special needs unit. The new school site would also incorporate most of the Burydale Junior School playing fields.

The cost of the building works at the new school would be covered by the sale of the sites to be released in the centre and south of the town.

Section 9: What would the proposals mean for pupils at the schools affected?

The County Council is committed to providing the best possible education for pupils at the closing schools.

In the centre of the town:

Should Pin Green School close, parents would have the opportunity of a place at either Moss Bury or Fairlands primary schools. In the year 2005/06 we would expect there to be 140 pupils at Pin Green and 193 spaces available for them between Moss Bury and Fairlands Schools.

Should Bedwell School close, parents would have the opportunity of a place at either Moss Bury or Pin Green schools. In the year 2005/06 we would expect there to be 191 pupils at Bedwell and 245 spaces available for them between Pin Green and Moss Bury Schools.

In the south of the town:

Should the four schools close, their pupils would automatically be placed in the new primary school on the Longmeadow/Burydale site. In the year 2005/06 we would expect there to be a total of 679 pupils in Longmeadow Infant and Junior, Burydale and Shephall Green. There would be 870 places

for these pupils available across the Longmeadow and Burydale School buildings.

In future years, there are sufficient spare places in the Peartree Spring Infant and Junior Schools, which are located close to the Shephall Green area, to meet local needs. The new school would also be an option for children in that area.

In both areas:

Parents would be able to take up places at any other school which had spare places in the relevant year group.

During the transition period there would be support from the County Council, which would work closely with school management teams to maintain standards and ensure continuity of the curriculum.

All staff would offer reassurance and support to pupils and parents throughout the transition period.

Parents of pupils transferring to new schools would be able to obtain financial assistance to purchase the particular items of school uniform that would be different. More information would be sent to parents if decisions were taken to close the schools.

Most pupils who attend the affected schools live within a reasonable distance and it should therefore be possible for most families who currently walk to school to continue to do so.

On the basis of information on current pupils at Pin Green School, more than 70% of them live within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of Moss Bury and Fairlands Schools.

On the basis of information on current pupils at Bedwell School more than half live within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of Pin Green and Moss Bury Schools.

In the south, three of the four schools affected would remain on the same site. The fourth school, Shephall Green, is only a 600 metres walk from the site of the new school.

Section 10: What would the proposals mean for staff at the schools affected?

There is no existing Headteacher at either Pin Green or Longmeadow Infant Schools. Currently there are many opportunities for headteachers, teaching and non-teaching staff within primary schools in Hertfordshire.

It is likely that the posts of Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers of any "new" school would be advertised nationally in accordance with the County

Council's usual practice. Therefore existing Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers of any closing or amalgamating schools would be at risk of redundancy.

It is hoped that all other teaching and support staff in the schools affected would be given prior consideration for any posts in the "new" school or in other local schools, although that would be dependent on staffing structures and numbers on roll at the time.

CSF will endeavour, to redeploy all staff who may be at risk through these proposals.

As part of this consultation we will meet with the staff and their professional association representatives and trade unions.

Section 11: What happens next ?

Timetable	
Activity	Dates
Publication of proposals	17 June
Public Meetings	28 June – 7 July
End of consultation period	31 August 2004
Cabinet Panel* to consider the outcome of the public consultation	September 2004
County Council Cabinet* to consider the outcome of the public consultation and to decide on whether to proceed to Statutory Notices	11 October 2004
Publication of Statutory Notices (for a six week period)	October 2004
School Organisation Committee* to consider any formal objections received during the statutory notice period and to take a decision on the proposal.	Early January 2005

* These are public meetings