

PROPOSAL TO EXPAND ELM COURT SPECIAL SCHOOL

Notice is given in accordance with Section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013/3110 that Lambeth Council proposes to expand the permanent capacity of Elm Court Special School from 150 places to 210 places with effect from April 2026, utilising the site of the former Kings Avenue Primary School, at Kings Avenue, London SW4 8BQ.

Name, address and contact details of proposer:

Lambeth Council, Civic Centre, 6 Brixton Hill, London SW2 1EG

Name, address and category of school:

Elm Court Special School, Elm Park, London SW2 2EF
This is a community special school.

Description of alteration:

The Council proposes that Elm Court Special School's capacity should permanently increase from 150 to 210 pupils in a process beginning in April 2026.

The proposal means that over time the school would cater for a cohort that increases by 60 students.

To achieve this expansion, the Council would be utilising an additional site due to the site constraints at Elm Park. The additional site (the site of the former Kings Avenue Primary School, Kings Avenue, London SW4 8BQ) is an unused educational site owned by the Council that would be redeveloped to provide a suitable environment predominantly for the Key Stage 4 and 5 students within the school (pupils aged 14-19). This approach ensures that pupil movement would be kept to a minimum.

Construction work at the Kings Avenue site would be necessary to realise the permanent increased capacity. It is anticipated that this will be phased and completed by September 2026, with initial works to one block to accommodate 20 pupils in April 2026 and works to the second block to be completed over Summer ready for September 2026

Evidence of demand:

Elm Court is a successful and highly sought-after outstanding special school for pupils aged 11 to 19 who have learning difficulties, often with associated social and communication needs, including autism. The school is currently at full capacity. It continues to be the first-choice school for many SEND families in Lambeth.

As such there is the need to provide additional places for young people with learning difficulties with associated social and communication needs, including autism, to cater for the increase in the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and reduce the need to place out of Borough.

Specifically in relation to this proposal, analysis by the Lambeth SEND Service has identified the need for an additional 60 Secondary places for young people with learning difficulties with associated social and communication needs, including autism.

The need for a number of these places already exists, as can be shown by existing demand to place young people in Elm Court School which is currently full and in effect

oversubscribed (with over 60 requests for the circa 20 Year 7 places in 2025). As a result, the Council is having to commission places outside of the Borough, often in expensive, and distant, independent provision.

Additionally, a pre-consultation was conducted in Summer 2025 in which there was strong and widespread support from staff, parents/carers of children with SEND, local residents, and current pupils for an expansion of Elm Court School. The key themes from that pre-consultation were:

- The urgent need for more SEND places in Lambeth.
- General agreement on the suitability of the Kings Avenue site (with some caveats).
- Enthusiasm for expanded facilities
- The importance of a well-managed transition process.

Objectives:

The objective of the proposal is to create additional capacity to accommodate the increase in demand for learning difficulties with associated social and communication needs provision, including autism, within the borough and reduce the need to commission out of borough placements, as placing young people in provision that is further afield does not benefit the young person in terms of social inclusion or a sense of community. There is often an extensive amount of travel time (often in isolation) which is disadvantageous also. The ability to cater for our young people and their families close to home will allow the wider range of support systems to function in the best interests of those young people and their families.

The proposal would build on the (Ofsted) outstanding standards for teaching and learning already in place at the school and provide additional places. The proposal would also have a positive impact on travel distance/time for some students.

The proposal would increase parental choice by increasing places for SEND students.

The Council believes that, after short terms initial costs, the proposal would save the Council money by reducing the number of pupils who attend more attend independent special schools, and associated travel costs.

This proposal forms part of Lambeth Council's response to the statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation:

The additional places proposed would enable the school to grow to admit up to 210 pupils in total. The intake would start to increase in April 2026, and thereafter would grow organically over a number of years up to 210 pupils. It is not possible to be more specific as each year group is a different size, dictated by need.

Effect on other educational institutions in the area:

It is not anticipated that the proposed expansion of Elm Court School would have any impact on other educational facilities within the local area. The proposal has been made to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers that is being experienced within the Borough and to reduce the reliance on out of borough provision.

Project Costs:

The building works associated with the proposal will be funded by Lambeth's High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) which is funding received from the Department for Education (DfE), with operating costs being met from the Dedicated Schools Grant High

Needs Block (DSG HNB) funding that Lambeth also receives from the DfE. Long term value for money would be achieved through reducing the Council's reliance on funding pupils to attend more expensive independent schools.

Commenting on the proposal:

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (by 12 noon, Friday 19 December 2025), any person may comment on, support, or object to the proposal via the Lambeth Consultation Portal www.haveyoursay.lambeth.gov.uk/elmcourtproposal or via post to Sophie Garner, Director of Education and Learning, PO Box 80771, London SW2 9QQ

Signed: Sophie Garner, Director of Education and Learning, Children, Families and Education Services, Lambeth Council

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