

## SERVICE UPDATE

<b><u>Name of Function:</u></b>	Corporate Landlord
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	21 August 2023
<b><u>Title of Update:</u></b>	New Secondary School Provision for Hazlehead/Countesswells
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### **UPDATE:**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

The update provides an overview of the proposed new secondary school provision for Hazlehead/Countesswells.

#### **2. Background:**

- 2.1 At its budget meeting of 1 March 2023, Council instructed the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to progress the new Hazlehead/Countesswells Secondary School to an Outline Business Case and to report back to the Finance and Resources Committee by the end of the financial year 2023/24; [Decisions 01st-Mar-2023 10.30 Council.pdf](#) A budget of £91.5m was allocated in the Capital Programme for this project. This update provides an overview of work to date, next steps and an indicative delivery programme with targeted milestones.
- 2.2 The Council's School Estate Plan was approved by the Education Operational Delivery Committee on 8 September 2022 when officers were instructed to assess the feasibility of creating new secondary school provision to serve the communities of Hazlehead and Countesswells and to put this forward to the Scottish Government as a priority project for funding in Phase 3 of the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP).
- 2.3 A proposed new secondary school project to serve the communities of Hazlehead and Countesswells was submitted to Scottish Government in October 2022 as a priority for phase 3 LEIP funding. The LEIP bid proposed the replacement of the Hazlehead building and construction of a new school for Hazlehead and Countesswells (and Kingswells) on the Hazlehead site. A successful bid would provide up to 50% funding from Scottish Government received through annual revenue payments during the first 25 years following successful completion, subject to ongoing compliance with LEIP funding criteria for the first 25 years of the completed building operations. To date there has been no announcement of Phase 3 LEIP funding awards.

- 2.4 This project fulfils the instruction to create new school provision for Hazlehead and Countesswells and will support the following vision as outlined in the school estate plan:

Our buildings and grounds are used to deliver highly effective learning experiences and to support pupil, staff and community wellbeing within and out with school hours. Across Aberdeen City, we will make the best use of our facilities to ensure sustainable, transparent and equitable allocation of resources to support the learning needs of all. As a result, our facilities will support our ambition to ensure each and every learner has the opportunity to attain and achieve a wide range of qualifications and develop the skills for life, learning and work

### **3 Emerging Opportunities – Countesswells Masterplan**

- 3.1 Hazlehead Academy was built in 1970 and is currently listed as a C category for condition and C for suitability although there are many elements within these categories that fall below these grades. There are a number of issues with the practical learning and teaching spaces which are unsuitable for some functions. The school is lacking in internal social spaces and the whilst the building achieved a condition B a few years ago it is recognised that major investment would be required to achieve this rating and maintain it for the future.
- 3.2 Pupils living within the new Countesswells development are currently zoned to Hazlehead Academy for secondary school provision. This was intended to be a temporary measure in advance of a new secondary school being constructed within the Countesswells development. A decision was also taken to include the established settlement of Kingswells within the catchment area for the new school at Countesswells. Hazlehead Academy has a capacity of 1127 and in 2022/23 had a roll of 1019 pupils. Future pupil roll forecasts are predicting to exceed this capacity from 2027 with incremental annual increases thereafter. The pupils generated at Countesswells will be aligned to developer's build rates. A Section 75 Agreement is in place which places a duty on ACC to provide secondary education provision on a pre-selected site within the development upon completion of the 1000th housing unit. It is difficult to predict a timeline for when this will happen due to current market conditions and the impact of the development going into administration last year.
- 3.3 The first 1000 housing units will generate approximately just over 100 pupils that will require secondary school provision at this time. This number of pupils is not viable to sustain a new secondary school both from a curriculum offering and the capital and revenue investment required to deliver it. Within the updated School Estate Plan, a recommendation was approved by members that all new secondary schools are to be designed with a minimum pupil capacity of 1000 in order to support high quality learning and teaching
- 3.4 There is an opportunity to rethink how high-quality secondary education provision for these communities could be provided more efficiently that will be flexible in meeting their future needs. The initial desktop study work has

considered a range of options to provide the required capacity incorporating ACC strategic drivers for a higher quality, efficient and effective learning estate. Taking a place-based approach and applying the principles of the community campus model identified a recommended approach in order to take forward a LEIP funding application at the end of October 2022.

- 3.5 Our Community Campus model which was approved in November 2021 will be key in future design options as we move to a place-based approach and integrated service delivery model. Emerging evidence is highlighting that co-location contributes to more positive outcomes for our learners. The model reviews local needs with a focus on improving local outcomes, targeting actions that will contribute and create sustainable, self-sufficient communities. The broad principles and key drivers of the model align with the National Learning Strategy.

#### **4 Transforming and Adapting**

- 4.1 In order to align with and plan for the delivery of the shared ambitions of the LOIP and the on-going fiscal challenges felt across the public sector, Aberdeen City Council has embarked on a transformation programme. These principles/targets are embedded in the Community Campus Model for future education and service delivery which was approved by the former Education, Operation and Delivery on 25 November 2021. It will utilise the strength of the Community Planning Partnership to:

- Address Excellence and Equity;
- Understand and support the particular needs of a locality;
- Understand and manage demand;
- Offer effective primary prevention and early intervention to limit escalating needs;
- Design sustainable services which can adapt to a changing demographic;
- Co-locate where there are clear benefits to our citizens; and
- Remove professional silos where appropriate and beneficial to do so;
- Use technology to creatively deliver

#### **5 Stakeholder Engagement**

- 5.1 All stakeholders within the communities of Hazlehead, Countesswells and Kingswells including the learners themselves, will be given the opportunity to share their views and contribute to the decision-making process on future plans for any new school proposals. By engaging with stakeholders from a very early stage, officers will better understand the requirements and aspirations of the community, which in turn will assist with developing proposals for formal consultation. Methods of engagement with the communities and stakeholders will be proportionate and appropriate to the timescales in which priorities need to be addressed.
- 5.2 It is proposed to use our online consultation hub to update and seek feedback from the Hazlehead, Countesswells and Kingswells school communities alongside face to face meetings with relevant Head Teachers and management teams. This informal stakeholder engagement will commence in September

and a summary of the feedback received will be reported as part of the OBC to November's committee meeting of Finance and Resources and Education and Children Services.

- 5.3 To support the LEIP funding application within the required timescales a preferred direction of travel was identified only for the purposes of framing a funding application.
- 5.4 Any decision to proceed with this project will be subject to a comprehensive statutory public consultation exercise that will be undertaken following completion and reporting of the outline business case, subject to committee approval.

## **6. Governance/Section 75 Agreement**

- 6.1 The section 75 agreement for the Countesswells development sets out clear triggers for the delivery of the secondary education provision. Any proposed changes arising from the feasibility study will require to be discussed and negotiated accordingly. There is a risk that the level of developer contributions previously agreed for the provision of a school within the Countesswells development site (£18m) may be reduced, or lost entirely, if a decision is taken to establish secondary school provision for Countesswells at an alternative location. However, due to the significant changes in forecast pupil numbers for the Countesswells community, building a school to serve only that community is likely to lead to inefficiencies, in terms of both staffing and building running costs, which over the long term would be substantial.
- 6.2 Negotiations are likely to be complex, given that the development company is in administration, whilst a separate developer is still building on the site.
- 6.3 Countesswells Development Limited (CDL) who managed and coordinated delivery of the Countesswells Masterplan development went into administration last year. This has proved challenging for officers to conduct any engagement to date regarding potential options for future secondary school provision for Countesswells pupils. Officers will continue to liaise and seek updates from the administrators as information becomes available and will also review and report on any associated impact when appraising options. This information will form part of the options appraisal within the Outline Business Case due to be reported to committee in November 2023.

## **7 Procurement and Delivery**

- 7.1 As part of the provision of Ongoing Partnering Services to Participant organisations in the North Territory and the agreed Programme Approach strategy for the Phase 3 Learning Estates Investment Programme (LEIP), Hub North Scotland Ltd ('HNSL') has been initially engaged by Aberdeen City Council to appraise options which will be considered by ACC as part of a design development process and strategic briefing review for this project.
- 7.2 Within this process commercial proposals have been provided by each bidding consultant, outlining savings where further projects are commissioned based on a scaled approach.

- 7.3 The ongoing feasibility work is considering a range of options to provide the required capacity incorporating ACC strategic drivers for a high quality, efficient and effective learning estate. Taking a place-based approach and applying the principles of the community campus model, a recommended approach will be developed and reported on within the outline business case.

## **8 Indicative Programme**

- 8.1 There are many varying factors which could influence the delivery programme at this stage however, as we continue to work through the feasibility stage and engage with key stakeholders, we would estimate a start on site in May 2025 following a detailed design stage. Construction works of this nature and size would normally take up to two years however there would be various milestone events to celebrate and communicate with our wider community.

- Feasibility Study & Stakeholder Engagement - Summer 2023 to Autumn 2023 – Outline Business Case to be reported to ECS and F&R committee meetings (November 2023)
- Design Development to financial close – Winter 2023 to March 2025.
- Construction works commencing May 2025 for 2 years
- Indicative phase 1 soft ceremonial opening / topping out in Feb 2026

## **9 Project Reporting**

- 9.1 This project will form part of the Capital Programme Dashboard reporting and will be available for Members scrutiny. The project will also be included in the annual update of the School Estate Plan to be reported to the Education and Children's Services committee.