

Strategic Outline Case

Project Name	Northfield Area Asset Review		
Sponsoring Cluster	Corporate Landlord		
Senior Responsible Officer	Stephen Booth		
Gateway Review by Sponsoring Cluster The Sponsoring Cluster must confirm their support for the project and, crucially, have the resources necessary to deliver the project to conclusion.	Strategic Outline Case agreed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Project scope modified – further options?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Pilot exercise to test assumptions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Postpone or abandon	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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1. Project Overview

A detailed review of Council owned non-domestic assets within the Northfield area was undertaken between March and June 2025, to identify opportunities for consolidation of assets, to help reduce costs, and improve Council services to the area. This Strategic Outline Case presents the findings of that review and sets out options for bringing about improvements.

The asset review builds on a separate feasibility study undertaken in 2023, which focused on the primary schools within Northfield and the potential for reducing excess pupil capacity within these. The feasibility study did not lead to any conclusive recommendations, and officers were instructed by the Education and Children's Services ECS Committee in February 2024 to carry out further work to identify potential future options for primary school provision in Northfield, alongside a review of the long term future for Northfield Academy.

The 2025 asset review focused on all Council operational assets within the Middlefield, Mastrick, Cummings Park, Northfield, and Heathryfold localities (collectively referred to herein as 'the Northfield area') including education, sports, leisure, and community facilities, with the objective of identifying potential asset consolidation and enhancing Council services across the area. The review covered:

- Current asset utilisation and future service requirements
- Building running costs and annual maintenance costs
- Building condition and suitability (including backlog maintenance and ability to meet net zero ambitions)
- Opportunities for asset rationalisation, to better meet future service requirements and reduce overall costs
- Opportunities to deliver services in a more integrated way, for example by delivering a range of services from the same building
- Viability of progressing options in relation to required capital spend against revenue savings.

A map of the area to be reviewed along with a list of the assets reviewed is shown at **Appendix 1**.

This document sets out a number of high level options for improving and consolidating assets in the Northfield area, which have been informed by the findings of the asset review, and recommends that officers are instructed to develop these options further in an outline business case, which would identify a preferred option to be taken forwards.

2. Business Aims, Needs, Objectives and Constraints

The Sponsoring Organisation for this project is Corporate Landlord.

By identifying the options for improving buildings and services and potentially consolidating assets within the Northfield area, the project will support the delivery of Stretch Outcomes detailed in the LOIP:

- No 3 in the LOIP – addressing that 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones. By supporting young peoples physical, mental and emotional health & wellbeing through improving access to services.
- No 5 in the LOIP – Our care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers. By improving the quality of the buildings and combining multiple services this will increase access to the services available in the community.
- No13 in the LOIP – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. Reducing the

number of operational buildings within the area and particularly removing older buildings which are less efficient to run, will help to reduce the overall carbon emissions from the estate.

The project supports the overall delivery of the School Estate Plan, approved by Committee in September 2022. In turn the School Estate Plan acts as a strategic implementation plan for the Council's Property and Estates Strategy.

Implementing the actions from the School Estate Plan as instructed by Committee will help to ensure that the school estate is effectively managed and can continue to support and contribute to the delivery of high quality services for children and young people, and for wider school communities.



To address the Strategic Priorities above, the review has explored various options, from a minimal approach with limited benefits, to a full community campus solution with potentially substantial advantages for the community and partners. More detailed information can be found in Section 5.

School Capacity in Northfield

Certain primary schools within the Northfield Associated Schools Group (ASG) are located in close proximity to each other, including Bramble Brae and Manor Park Schools, which are less than one mile apart. Pupil numbers at Bramble Brae School are expected to fall to 42% of its capacity by 2032 and the roll at Muirfield School is predicted to fall to as low as 32% of its available capacity within that timescale. Pupil numbers at Northfield Academy are expected to remain at or around 80% of the school's capacity for the foreseeable future.

In light of the forecast decline in primary pupil numbers, there is a requirement to consider the options for reducing the excess primary school capacity in the Northfield ASG, to help ensure that pupil rolls at the schools in this area can be maintained at sustainable levels in the medium to long term.

Northfield Academy

At Northfield Academy, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) has been found to be present within the roof structure in various locations around the school site. Although there were no immediate safety concerns reported by the specialist engineers who inspected and tested the roof panels in the school, this will require to be reviewed on a regular basis and could require more intrusive work in the future leading to unplanned closure.

Asset Review

In light of the above, officers were instructed by the ECS Committee in February 2024 to carry out further work to identify potential future options for improving and consolidating primary school provision in Northfield, alongside a review of the long term future of Northfield Academy to provide solutions for removing any risks associated with the RAAC in the building.

In September 2024, the ECS Committee further instructed officers to widen the scope of the review to include all Council owned assets in the area, alongside the schools. This was to allow for a wider range of options to be considered, in terms of consolidating buildings and offering services in different ways, which will help to maximise the potential savings and improvements which could be achieved. The Committee instruction emphasised the need for the review to encompass the principles of the Council's Community Campus and Family Support models.

The options described in Section 5 below therefore focus on the potential for consolidating existing primary school provision, to reduce excess capacity, and for providing solutions for removing RAAC at Northfield Academy. The options also give consideration to the possibility of improving the delivery of other Council services in Northfield, which could lead to the consolidation of other, non-education assets in the area.

Community Campus Model

A key focus of the Council's Community Campus model is to encourage the shared use of facilities by communities, to improve collaboration and integrated service delivery, and encourage more effective and efficient use of resources to meet a broader range of community needs at a single location. This approach supports delivery of multi-agency spaces, drives efficiency through the co-location of services, supporting the needs of a particular community, and has the potential to maximise opportunities for early intervention, in keeping with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

By proposing solutions for Northfield which follow the principles of the Community Campus model, this project provides an opportunity to deliver significant and valuable improvements for the Northfield community, not only in terms of providing quality education facilities, but also in improving access to a wide range of local services to support the community as a whole.

Family Support Model

The Family Support Model, which has been developed over the past year by the Fairer Futures Partnership and with the Northfield community as an initial test site, aims to shift the focus from reactive and risk-based services to upstream and preventative approaches. The model was based in part on the findings of the Scottish Government's Independent Care Review (2020) which highlighted the importance of partnership working, shared culture and leadership, holistic and person-centred practice, and locality-based service delivery.

The intention is for the Family Support Model to help tackle poverty and deprivation by improving wellbeing, increasing income and employability and reducing the cost of living for individuals and families, especially in priority areas such as Northfield. It focuses on building stronger communities and emphasises early intervention and prevention rather than just a crisis response. This new approach recognises the importance of establishing a community space that is accessible without 'referral' and which provides an environment that is welcoming and trauma informed.

The options for improving assets within Northfield which are set out below provide an opportunity to support the further development and rollout of the Family Support model, by providing spaces within buildings which are designed to be used flexibly to deliver a variety of key services in different ways to support the above principles, which also link well with the principles of the Community Campus model.

For example there is scope to include a community library function within any new build development, and expand access to community sports facilities. In addition and depending on service requirements there could be the opportunity to provide office accommodation or customer contact space for Health and Social Care. The project provides an opportunity to work collaboratively with the Fairer Futures Partnership to provide facilities which can effectively deliver the Family Support Model in Northfield.

The asset review was limited to non-residential, operational properties only within the review area – as defined within the map and assets list at **Appendix 1** of this document.

Given the linkages with the separate and ongoing work around the Family Support Model described above, at this stage of the project it has not been possible to define in detail the types of community services which would be provided within a new Community Campus, and therefore which of the existing non-education assets in Northfield could potentially be consolidated. It will be necessary to wait for the Fairer Futures Partnership to conclude its work, and consideration could then be given to how a Community Campus in Northfield could support any recommendations from the Partnership on the future use of assets for service delivery in Northfield. At this stage the high level options presented in Section 5 below include an allocation of space to be used for the delivery of community services. More detail on this, including the identification of any existing assets which could be consolidated as a result, will be provided in the proposed Outline Business Case.

The Local Development Plan highlights new housing at Greenferns and potential brownfield development at Granitehill. This was taken into account as part of the asset review, and the proposed options outlined below have been developed to ensure sufficient school capacity will be available to meet demand from future new housing in the area.

There is currently no budget allocation within the Council's capital programme to support the construction of any new assets in Northfield. The identified options which involve new construction projects are therefore subject to the identification of appropriate funding sources to deliver them.

In terms of location for a suitable development, a number of sites in ACC ownership have been explored for a potential community campus solution, to include the existing Northfield Academy site and surrounding Cummings Park area, together with the development land at Greenferns Farm. Each of the sites is likely to have planning restrictions and will require a strategy to mitigate the loss of green space and / or future housing allocation.

3. Stakeholder Issues

There are several stakeholder groups who will have an interest in the outcomes of the wider assets review, including people who live in Northfield, parents of all pupils attending the schools, local elected members, MPs and MSPs, community councils, Health & Social Care and also the staff and pupils within the ACC owned and operated assets.

A questionnaire for building managers was developed to ascertain the core data required to determine the suitability, accessibility, conditionality, energy performance and utilisation rating of the assets in scope. In addition, one to one interviews were conducted with the Health & Social Care team, the Fairer Futures Team with input from the Communities Team and partners such as Police Scotland and NHS Grampian. The output of this information is included in **Appendix 2**, and rated to highlight the buildings which are likely to require intervention in the near future. This exercise has highlighted that 16 properties may require capital intervention in the near future to maintain the property and deliver the service.

The consultation was conducted with responses from 28 service lines and followed up with one to one interviews, where further information was required:

1. Children & Families Team
2. Communities Team
3. Libraries Team
4. NHS Grampian (Partnership Team)
5. Fairer Futures Team
6. Sport Aberdeen

Initial consultation has been progressed with the Health & Social Care Partnership and also Police Scotland to determine if there is a requirement for accommodation, and this will be dependent on their own reviews of services in this location.

In addition to the above the Community Planning Team are updating the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and have completed consultation through the Your Place; Your Plans; Your Futures initiative, which will provide additional input into the community aspirations for the North area of the city.

Sport Aberdeen are currently undertaking a review of all of their operational assets in the city, which may have future implications for the sports facilities in Northfield; any relevant findings or recommendations from that review will be accounted for within the proposed Outline Business Case.

With regard to the education estate, The School Estate Plan sets out a commitment to engage with all stakeholder groups from an early stage, so that views and feedback about the available options can be gathered and considered prior to any decisions being taken.

Any recommendations to close schools or change the arrangements for primary school provision will also require formal statutory public consultation, before any final decisions on making changes can be taken.

4. Management and Implementation

The project will be led by Corporate Landlord with support from Hub North Scotland.

Strategic and technical support for developing the feasibility studies will be provided by the Design Team within the Capital cluster. Consultancy Support is likely to be required, particularly to provide specialist engineering and ground investigation to inform the development of the outline business case.

5. Consideration of Options

In order to meet the Strategic Priorities listed above, a series of options have been explored below with the benefits and disbenefits detailed.

Option 1: Do Nothing

Description:

Continue with current maintenance / inspections of roof structure at Northfield Academy. No consolidation of assets in Northfield.

Benefits:

1. Limited capital required
2. Limited disruption (until any unplanned closure)

Disbenefits:

1. Ongoing revenue implications
2. Potential unplanned closure of school
3. No benefit for community or new campus facility
4. Does not mitigate backlog maintenance
5. Does not positively impact energy usage
6. Does not address RAAC removal from estate

7. Does not allow for any consolidation of the primary estate or non-education assets, and cost savings that are associated with this.

Option 2: Do Minimum / Health & Safety Works at Northfield Academy

Description:

Carry out minimum works necessary at Northfield Academy to make existing building structurally sound (i.e. address RAAC). No consolidation of assets in Northfield.

Benefits:

1. Limited capital required
2. Limited disruption
3. Removes RAAC from estate

Disbenefits:

1. Limited lifespan of the Northfield Academy building - will require replacement in future.
2. No benefit for community facility
3. Does not mitigate backlog maintenance
4. Does not positively impact energy usage
8. Does not allow for any consolidation of the primary estate or non-education assets, and cost savings that are associated with this.

Option 3: Consolidation of primary school capacity and enhancement of Northfield Campus

Description:

Upgrade Northfield Academy (with extension) to provide 1,000 secondary places, new build two or three-stream primary school and community space on Northfield site, to consolidate existing assets. Community provision to align with the Family Support model – further detail to be added at OBC stage.

Benefits:

1. Develops a part education campus on a shared site with access to shared leisure facilities
2. Allows consolidation of primary estate and non-education buildings, and reuse or disposal of surplus sites.
3. Removes RAAC from estate
4. Improves Condition / Suitability of existing Northfield Academy
5. Potentially reduces energy use of existing Northfield Academy and improves thermal performance

Disbenefits:

1. Limits benefits of joint / combined spaces and the efficiencies that go with developing a joint campus and shared communal spaces.
2. Limited lifespan of the existing Northfield Academy building - will require replacement at some point in the future.
3. No cost saving by developing in one phase. By developing in stages any benefit (shared prelims / groundworks / mobilisation) will be lost.
4. Will require full or phased decant of pupils and disruption during construction
5. Will require temporary decant facilities therefore further cost implications.

Option 4: Consolidation of existing assets and new Community Campus on a single site

Description:

Replacement Northfield Academy, consolidated primary school provision and consolidated and improved delivery of and access to community services, in a single campus location. Community provision to align with the Family Support model – further detail to be added at OBC stage.

Benefits:

1. Develops a shared community campus on a single site
2. Allows consolidation of primary estate and non-education buildings. and reuse or disposal of surplus sites. Reduces revenue costs for multiple dated buildings.
3. Removes RAAC from estate
4. Potential reduction in overall floorspace / shared communal facilities. Potentially reduces overall development costs.
5. Improves thermal efficiency of existing assets
6. Depending on preferred site, could limit disruption / decant for pupils.
7. Provide the opportunity for other ACC service lines to co-locate and potentially reuse part of the existing Northfield Estate. Potential for NHSG / H&SC to reuse space.
8. Ensures condition / suitability of education assets is A rated
9. Removes backlog maintenance liability

Disbenefits:

1. Significant capital cost
2. Could be a number of years before the benefits are realised
3. Loss of greenspace

Option 5: Consolidation of existing assets with new secondary and primary school provision on separate sites

Description:

New two or three stream primary school and replacement Northfield Academy on separate sites. Improved delivery of and access to community services to align with the Family Support model – further detail to be added at OBC stage.

Benefits:

1. Improves education / community facilities in multiple locations within Northfield area
2. Allows consolidation of existing assets and reuse of buildings or disposal of surplus sites. Reduces revenue costs for multiple dated buildings.
3. Provides opportunities to form a community campus with existing primary schools adjacent to the secondary school site
4. Removes RAAC from estate
5. Improves thermal efficiency of existing assets
6. Would limit disruption / decant for pupils.
7. Provide the opportunity for other ACC service lines to co-locate and potentially reuse part of the existing Northfield Estate. Potential for NHSG / H&SC to reuse space.
8. Ensures condition / suitability of the education estate is A rated
9. Removes backlog maintenance liability

Disbenefits:

1. Likely to be highest requirement for capital as limited benefit for shared site works
2. Could be a number of years before the benefits are realised
3. Potentially additional travel time for access to leisure facilities

Recommendation

It is recommended that officers are instructed to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) to explore the above options further, and for the completed Outline Business Case to be included within the budget setting process for 2026/27.

Programme

An indicative programme has been drafted, which details the governance process and committee schedules below:

- SOC to be presented to ECS Committee September 2025 and F&R Committee November 2025, setting out high level options for improving assets in Northfield, based on findings of the asset review
- Seek approval from Committee and instruction to develop an Outline Business Case (commencing September 2025) to add more detail to the options, carry out site investigations and to identify a preferred option
- OBC to be presented by March 2026 (budget setting)
- OBC to identify preferred option, to seek approval of funding in capital programme, and an instruction to proceed with design development

6. Costs, Benefits and Risks

Due to the scope of this project at this strategic stage, the projects will require more detailed information to provide project budgets. Due to the nature of the buildings and their condition, a detailed building survey will be required for each of the primary and secondary schools included in the project scope.

Financial savings will be expected from any consolidation of primary schools into a single location / campus and the saving on ongoing / planned and future maintenance requirements, which will be defined through the building condition surveys.

In terms of budget for new build facilities and utilising information available through similar projects a budget estimate has been provided for the following:

New build development options utilising campus approach or a split site - £120m to £180m

The above makes limited allowances for site conditions / abnormals, inflation and programme, which will be provided through the business case process.

The OBC may identify opportunities for consolidating buildings, which will ultimately help to reduce any inefficiencies associated with the current condition and utilisation of assets and reduce the overall cost of running the estate. It also has the potential to bring about improvements to service delivery, through achieving efficiencies in the deployment of staff and resources across a smaller number of buildings.

Depending on the options there will likely be opportunities to explore indirect benefits with partners such as NHS / Health & Social Care to either repurpose existing structures or utilise space within a new build development.

Removing older, inefficient buildings will also help to contribute to the Council's net-zero carbon ambitions.

The project is unfunded and any options are likely to have capital cost implications. Appropriate funding will need to be identified to allow any preferred option to be taken forwards.

Desktop studies undertaken during the asset review have confirmed that the existing Northfield Academy site and adjacent playing fields were formed on a former quarry site. There is therefore a risk of poor ground conditions, which could add significantly to the cost of any development, and also to delivery timescales. As part of the development process to be explored through the OBC, it is anticipated to carry out detailed site investigation work to minimise risks associated with the sites.

7. Operational Carbon Impact

The Northfield asset review considers the rationalisation of a number of primary and secondary school assets in the area together with community facilities. Northfield Academy is central to the asset review with proposal being assessed for a decommission and rebuild or a refurbishment and expansion of the existing footprint.

As part of this Strategic Outline Case the current operational carbon impact has been considered to present an overview of the current and expected future emissions of Northfield Academy under its current operation.

Energy use intensity factors have been calculated to rationalise the current building's operational efficiency against other similar assets. These benchmarks have been calculated using CIBSE industry recognised benchmarks and incorporate annual building energy consumption. The next step of analysis will seek to use available data to assess how different energy efficiency measures might impact the building's operation and carbon footprint. Further analysis is needed of the proposed scenarios to support an operational carbon comparison.

It should be noted that benchmarking has been carried out on the other public assets in the Northfield area however, focus has been given to Northfield Academy due to its prevalence in the asset review and that it is the single largest gas consumer in the area and has the largest carbon footprint of any of the Council's assets in the area. Other school assets have been shown to follow a similar trend so considerations for energy and refurbishment options are considered to be common to both.

Further detail on the likely carbon impact of this project will be provided in the Outline Business Case.

8. Funding and Affordability

Development of OBC will need input from the consultancy team and would likely be in the region of £150,000

In addition there will be costs associated with Site Investigation, which are likely to be in the region of £150,000

These costs will be met from existing budgets for the delivery of the School Estate Plan.

9. Assumptions

Budget estimates provided in this document include high level assumptions on:

- School Roll Projections

- Design Development Risk
- Post Contract Risk
- Main Contractors Margin
- Design Team Fees
- Survey Costs
- Inflation in Construction Costs throughout project period to Q1 xxxxxx
- Allowance for preliminaries
- Ground condition risk

These will be further explored during development of the Outline Business Case.

10.Support Services Consulted

Service	Consultee	Comments	Date
City Regeneration and Environment	Chief Officer, Capital AlanMcKay@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
City Regeneration and Environment	Chief Officer, City Development and Regeneration jrichardswood@aberdeencity.gov.uk	Comments provided	04/08/25
Communications	David Ewen, Communication and Marketing Manager DaEwen@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Corporate Services	Chief Officer, Finance jbelford@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Corporate Services	Jade Leyden, Locality Planning & Community Development Manager jleyden@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Design – Public Buildings	Ian Flett, Senior Architect laFlett@aberdeencity.gov.uk	No comments at this stage	05/08/25
Emergency Planning Officer	Fiona Mann FioMann@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Families and Communities	Chief Officer, Corporate Landlord stbooth@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Families and Communities	Chief Officer, Education & Lifelong Learning shmilne@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Families and Communities	Guch Dillon, Fairer Futures Partnership Lead gdhillon@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Families and Communities (Asset Management)	Andrew Jones, Service Manager ajones@aberdeencity.gov.uk		

Service	Consultee	Comments	Date
Finance	Scott Paterson, Finance Partner spaterson@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Fleet (if your project has fleet implications)	John Weir, Fleet Manager jweir@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Governance	Chief Officer, Governance jelawson@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Grounds Maintenance	Steven Shaw, Environmental Manager stevens@aberdeencity.gov.uk	No comments.	05/08/25
ICT – Digital and Technology	Steve Robertson, Service Manager, Engineering and Operations sterobertson@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Legal (Commercial and Procurement)	Michele Pittendreigh, Team Leader MPittendreigh@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Legal (Property/ Planning and Environment)	Ross Campbell roscampbell@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Operations	Chief Officer, Operations mareilly@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Operations (Facilities)	Andy Campbell, Facilities Manager AnCampbell@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
People and Citizen Service	Linsey Blackhurst, Organisation, Change & Design Lead (Interim) lblackhurst@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Procurement	Gillian Ross giross@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Programme Management Office (PMO)	PMO Programme Manager RMacTaggart@aberdeencity.gov.uk	No comment at this stage	5/08/2025
Roads Management	Stuart Allan, Team Leader Technical StuAllan@aberdeencity.gov.uk Vycki Ritson, Team Leader Engineering vritson@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Roads Projects	Stuart Andrew, Senior Engineer standrew@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Strategic Place Planning	Chief Officer, Strategic Place Planning DDunne@aberdeencity.gov.uk		

Service	Consultee	Comments	Date
Climate and Environment Policy	EPConsultations@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Equalities Team	equality_and_diversity@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Estates	Property Estates Manager		

Service	Consultee	Comments	Date
	Estates@aberdeencity.gov.uk		
Planning	Local Development Plan Team LDP@aberdeencity.gov.uk Development Management PI@aberdeencity.gov.uk	Comments provided	06/08/25
Transportation Strategy and Programmes	transportstrategy@aberdeencity.gov.uk	No comments	08/08/25

11. Decision by Capital Board	Date
* Approved/Not Approved to prepare an Outline Business Case.	

*indicate whether approved, as well as any additional stipulations.

12. Document Revision History			
Version	Reason	By	Date
1.0	First Draft SOC for Consultation	MW/AJ	04/08/25
1.1	Updated draft submitted with Director Draft committee report	AJ	12/08/25
1.2	Final Draft submitted for Committee	AJ	03/09/25