

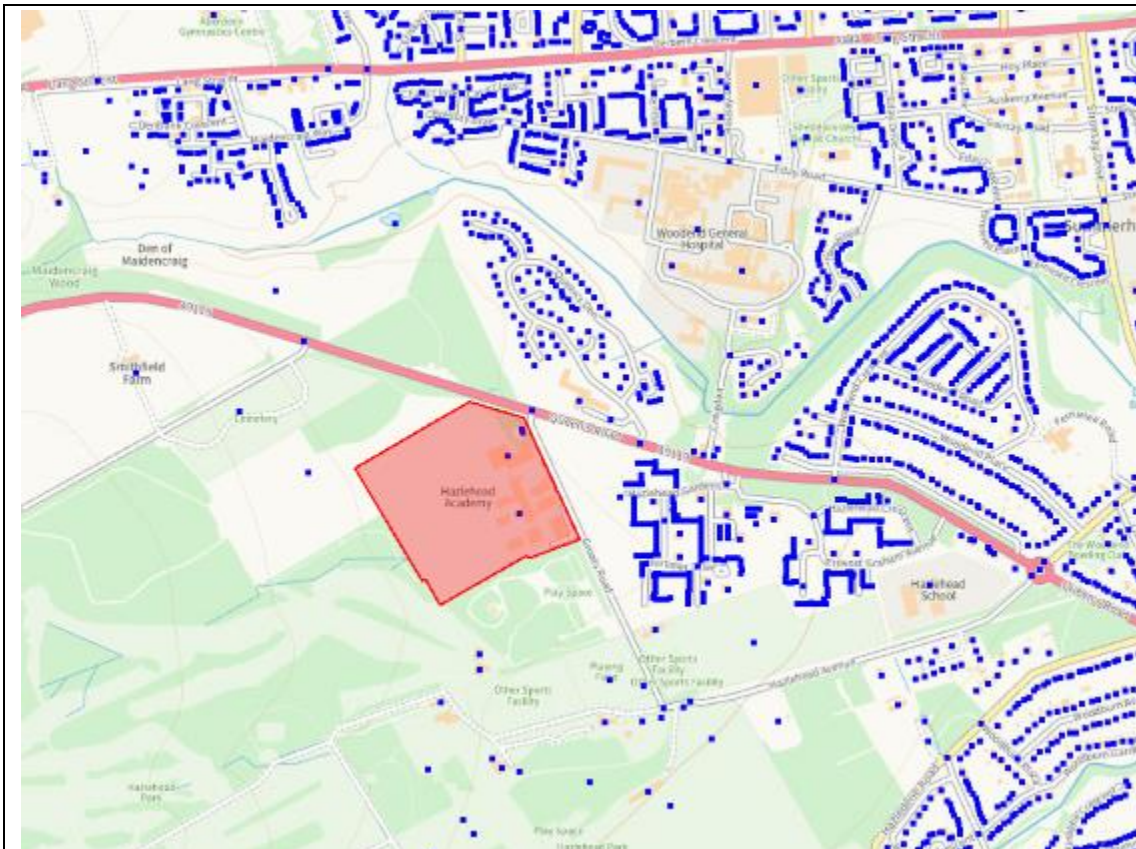


## Planning Development Management Committee

Report by Development Management Manager

**Committee Date:** 6 November 2025

<b>Site Address:</b>	Hazlehead Academy, Groats Road, Aberdeen AB15 8BE
<b>Application Description:</b>	Erection of secondary school community campus with associated external amenities, including landscaping, parking and sports pitches, including demolition of the existing school and associated buildings
<b>Application Ref:</b>	250479/DPP
<b>Application Type</b>	Detailed Planning Permission
<b>Application Date:</b>	15 May 2025
<b>Applicant:</b>	Aberdeen City Council
<b>Ward:</b>	Hazlehead/Queen's Cross/Countesswells
<b>Community Council:</b>	Craigiebuckler and Seafield



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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve Conditionally

## **APPLICATION BACKGROUND**

### **Site Description**

The application site extends to c.8.7ha and contains the existing Hazlehead Academy, energy centre and disused swimming pool building, and associated playing fields and playgrounds. The site is bounded by Groats Road to the east, and two residential dwellings at 1 and 2 Groats Road, Skene Road to the north east; and public open space consisting of tree belts, woodlands and the Hazlehead golf course to the north west, west and south. The southern boundary includes an established tree belt, beyond which is the former caravan park.

The existing Hazlehead Academy consists of a collection of two, three and four storey educational buildings served by two car parks and a bus turning area, all with access from Groats Road. This collection of buildings and associated hardstanding covers approximately one third of the application site, with the remainder generally in use as grassed playing fields supplemented by a multi-use games area and hard surfaced tennis court to the north. There is an extensive grassed field area to the west of the buildings. The main school buildings date from 1970, with later additions of single storey detached classroom units sited in the southern area. Access and egress are taken from Groats Road to the east.

The site is well screened by mature trees along most boundaries, including in longer views from Skene Road.

### **Relevant Planning History**

- 241379/PAN – A proposal of application notice for a major development of new campus with associated external amenities, including landscaping, parking and sports pitches was submitted on 9 December 2024.
- 250742/DPP – An application for detailed planning permission for a change of use and construction of low carbon energy centre, air source heat pumps (ASHP), thermal stores and excavation of trench and laying of district heating pipes is currently under consideration. This would be located on the site of two vacant residential dwellings at 1 and 2 Groats Road.
- 251103/PND – Prior notification for demolition of two residential dwellings at 1 and 2 Groats Road has been submitted. This application is under consideration.

## **APPLICATION DESCRIPTION**

### **Description of Proposal**

Detailed planning permission is sought for the erection of a secondary school community campus with associated external amenities, including landscaping, parking and sports pitches. The proposal further includes the demolition of the existing school and associated buildings.

The proposed replacement building would be located in the north west corner of the application site on part of the existing playing fields, multi-use games area and hard surfaced court. It would consist of a single building varying in height between two and three storeys. The main entrance would be to the east, accessed from Groats Road. This front part of the building would be two storeys in height and, on the ground floor, would contain the main entrance, reception and office space, and indoor sports facilities including the games hall, dance studio, fitness studio and changing rooms. The first floor of this part of the building would include the library and office and support spaces and some

classrooms.

This front part of the building would lead into the main school building, which would be three storeys in height and have a general U-shape with two projecting wings extending south. This part of the building would incorporate communal spaces for pupils, including the main student entrance, dining room, social space and café. It would further accommodate the main kitchen, assembly hall and drama studios on the ground floor, along with classrooms, toilets and further office spaces. The two upper floors would be predominantly used as classrooms, with some office space, storage, and toilets.

Externally, vehicular access from Groats Road would be maintained, and would lead to a car park and service yard to the north east and north of the building. Further to the south along this eastern site boundary, the existing bus turning area would also be retained. The main pedestrian entrance into the site would be between the two vehicular access points centrally within the east site boundary, and would lead directly to the main entrance in the east elevation of the building, and to various access points into the main playground to the south of the building providing a direct route to the main student entrance. Further pedestrian access points into the site are located in the south east corner and centrally along the western site boundary. Pupil and staff cycle shelters are proposed at pedestrian entrances and adjacent to the staff car park.

The main playing fields, including two full-size 3G pitches, an all-weather sports track and a grassed area for informal football, athletics and other sports would occupy the southern half of the site, whereas the area surrounding the building on all sides would be predominantly hard surfaced and act as spill out social space for students. Some outdoor teaching and performance spaces would be located to the north of the building.

## **Amendments**

In agreement with the applicant, the following amendments were made to the application:

Additional information including a Safe Routes to School document submitted;  
Refinement of elevational treatments.  
Refinement of car park layout.

## **Supporting Documents**

All drawings and supporting documents listed below can be viewed on the Council's website at:

<https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=SW4ZIBBZIRN00>

- Biodiversity Net Gains Report
- Design and Access Statement
- Drainage Strategy Report
- Energy Statement
- Geotechnical Design and Environmental Risk Assessment Report
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Pre Application Consultation Report
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Safer Routes to School Assessment
- Transport Statement
- Tree Survey Report

## **Reason for Referral to Committee**

The application has been referred to the Planning Development Management Committee because the proposal is in the major category of development in the Hierarchy of Development Regulations. Determination of the application therefore falls outwith the scheme of delegation.

## **Pre-Application Consultation**

The proposed development was the subject of pre-application consultation between December 2024 and March 2025 between the applicant and the community, as required for applications for major developments.

Prior to statutory pre-application consultation, early engagement events with parent councils of both feeder schools, (including pupils from Countesswells and Kingswells as are proposed to be zoned to the new Academy) and Hazlehead Academy, and design charettes with pupils, staff and the parent council. The design charettes took the form of two workshops focusing on key spaces within the school.

The applicant also undertook statutory pre-application consultation which included two public drop in and exhibition events, both at Hazlehead Academy. All attendees were offered a feedback form to be completed either at the event or emailed to the Council at a later date. The first event was attended by more than sixty visitors, and fifteen feedback forms were received. The second event attracted more than thirty visitors, and a total of 21 feedback forms were received.

Concerns raised by respondents during the first event included safe routes to school; capacity of the new school given current housing developments in the larger catchment area; environmental considerations in relation to maintaining outdoor spaces and encouraging biodiversity; and potential inclusion of a swimming pool. Other matters raised were non-material to the planning process, such as the integration of pupils from various catchment areas and the project's timeline. In response, the applicant confirmed that a safe routes to school assessment would be part of any application; that the project would need to meet green energy targets as set out by ACC Corporate Landlord; and that the inclusion of a swimming pool was not economically viable in this location.

Concerns raised by respondents during the second event included practical concerns in relation to the internal layout including the mezzanine floors and proposed use of white walls; further clarification required in relation to sports facilities; and impact on local community in relation to increased traffic, potential damage and vandalism and litter. In response, the applicant set out that the internal spaces would be further refined, provided further clarification on the extent of proposed sports facilities and that there is the hope that a new school would encourage community engagement.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Aberdeen City Council (ACC) Internal Consultees**

- **Archaeology Service (Aberdeenshire Council)** – No objection. Recommends inclusion of a condition requesting a photographic survey of the existing buildings and structures on the site.
- **ACC - Environmental Health** – No objection. Satisfied that the proposed multi-use games

areas (MUGAs) shall not cause a noise nuisance provided that:

- o The MUGA's are located shown in the Proposed Site Plan (Drawing No. 8461-RYD-00-EX\_00-D-L-001902);
- o The fencing surrounding the MUGAs is a proprietary weld mesh sports fence securely clamped with resilient fixings to avoid vibrations; and
- o That the MUGAs are not used after 22:00 hours.
- o It is recommended that a management plan is put in place to monitor and prevent inappropriate use.

Satisfied that noise impacts due to new building services plant can be suitably controlled and would recommend (in-line with report recommendations) a further review of plant noise breakout once the location and specification of the plant is known.

- **ACC - Roads Development Management Team – No objection.**

The site is located in the outer city, outwith any controlled parking zone. The proposed academy will have capacity for 1,600 pupils and 160FTE staff.

As this is a replacement school, the accessibility of the site will remain largely unchanged.

The catchment area of the school has changed as it now includes both Countesswells and Kingswells. Both of these sites are a considerable distance away (c.3.5km to each). Both sites have potential safe routes to the school, however, they are circuitous and, at worst, would take in excess of an hour to walk. For these reasons, it is envisioned that a bus service will be provided. The provision of such a service is outwith the remit of Roads Development Management. In summary, safe routes to school do exist, but they are either indirect or would take too long and a bus should instead be provided.

The applicant is proposing to provide the 'missing' section of footway on the east side of Groats Road, along with a new zebra crossing to allow pupils to cross Groats Road safely. This location is to be agreed with Aberdeen City Council.

The applicant has highlighted that adhering to the APG Cycle parking requirements will result in a huge overprovision of cycle parking. Instead, the applicant is proposing 192 long stay pupil spaces which will accommodate a 40% increase in cycle mode share compared to the existing school. It is noted that the layout of the site would allow for increasing this provision if required. The secure staff cycle store has a capacity of twenty spaces. Both are accepted.

Bus services are put on for pupils where required. The nearest public bus stops to the campus are on Skene Road/ Queens Road and are within 200m of the site.

The existing school has two car parks with a total capacity of 61 spaces. There is also a dedicated bus/taxi drop-off layby at the southern end of the campus. The applicant is proposing 133 parking spaces for 160 staff. Seven of these spaces are accessible, and fifteen of these spaces will have EV provision. A further five motorcycle spaces are provided. A pick up/ drop off layby for six buses is being provided in an inset road parallel to Groats Road. This is acceptable.

It is noted that the applicant states that 'the increased staff parking in the campus should reduce overspill onto Groats Road and surrounding roads and improve traffic flow on Groats Road. Much of the current congestion on Groats Road at the start and end of the school day arises from the conflict between overspill staff parking and vehicles wishing to pick up and drop off. Increasing staff parking inside the campus should reduce this overspill and improve traffic circulation on Groats Road. This is an existing issue which will be made better by the

proposals. To completely eradicate this issue, a large drop off area would be required within the site, however, this would go unused for the majority of the day and reduce amenity to the site. The proposal is thus accepted.

Submitted swept path analysis for refuse vehicles are accepted.

A successful Travel Plan should have an overarching aim, realistic modal share targets and a series of measures to obtain these targets set out in an Action Plan. Although the proposal is the same use on the same plot, this would be an appropriate time to refresh the travel plan and provide this to staff, and possibly to parents, to alert them to the different ways of accessing the school, and the benefits of not relying solely on private vehicle trips.

Roads Construction Consent will be required for elements of the proposed development, including the construction of the pavement and pedestrian crossing along the east side of Groats Road.

- **ACC - Structures, Flooding and Coastal Engineering** – No comments following submission of drainage information.
- **ACC - Waste and Recycling** – No objection. General comments provided in relation to waste collection and access to service yard.
- **ACC – Passenger Transport Unit** – Commented regarding the need for a safe walking route developed between Countesswells and Kingswells to the Hazlehead site to reduce the level of contracted school transport required. Already considerable pressure on school transport budget.

## External Consultees

- **Craigiebuckler And Seafield Community Council** – No comments received.
- **Aberdeen International Airport** – No objection subject to a condition requesting details of a landscaping scheme to ensure species proposed would not increase bird hazard risk.
- **Police Scotland** – Encourages that the applicant attains the 'Secured by Design' award as this demonstrates that safety and security have been proactively considered and that this development will meet high standards in these respects.
- **Scottish Water** – No objection. General comments provided in relation to capacity at Invercarnie Water Treatment Works and Nigg Waste Water Treatment Works. Sets out that Scottish Water will not accept any surface water connections into the combined sewer system. Advises that live Scottish Water infrastructure is located in the proximity of the development area.
- **Sport Scotland** – No objection. Refers in their comments to Policy 21 (Play, Recreation and Sport) of NPF4. Provides guidance in relation to sports facilities to be provided for a school roll of 1600 pupils. In terms of outdoor provision, the construction of two full-size synthetic pitches alongside the retained natural grass pitch and track area would increase overall playing capacity at the site – as synthetic surfaces can be used in all weathers and withstand more wear than natural grass. Consideration of curricular and community needs should inform the selected surface type to ensure the appropriate mix of sports at the site.

It is presumed that the proposed synthetic pitches will be floodlit, although this is not shown on the drawings. Based on this understanding, a condition should be attached requiring submission of details of proposed floodlighting scheme and submission of pitch specification for natural grass pitch and 300m running track.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

One neutral letter of representation has been received. The matters raised can be summarised as follows –

### **Non-Material Considerations**

1. Comments on internal layout of building and use of balconies.

## **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Legislative Requirements**

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan; and, that any determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Development Plan**

#### **National Planning Framework 4**

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the long-term spatial strategy for Scotland and contains a comprehensive set of national planning policies that form part of the statutory development plan.

- Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises)
- Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Policy 3 (Biodiversity)
- Policy 4 (Natural Places)
- Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees)
- Policy 12 (Zero Waste)
- Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place)
- Policy 15 (Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods)
- Policy 19 (Heat and Cooling)
- Policy 20 (Blue and Green Infrastructure)
- Policy 21 (Play, Recreation and Sport)
- Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management)
- Policy 23 (Health and Safety)

#### **Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023**

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- Policy D2 (Amenity)
- Policy H1 (Residential Areas)

- Policy NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure)
- Policy NE3 (Our Natural Heritage)
- Policy NE4 (Our Water Environment)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)
- Policy R5 (Waste Management Requirements for New Developments)
- Policy R8 (Heat Networks)
- Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy T3 (Parking)
- Policy WB3 (Noise)

## **Aberdeen Planning Guidance**

Transport and Accessibility

## **EVALUATION**

### **Key Determining Factors**

The key determining factors to be considered as part of this application are:

- The principle of development;
- Scale, massing, design and proposed site layout;
- Impact on residential amenity;
- Impact on local highway conditions, including access and parking;
- Impact on the natural environment, including impact on trees and protected species.

### **Principle of Development**

The application site is located in an area zoned as residential and Policy H1 (Residential Areas) of 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP) applies. This policy sets out that non-residential development in residential areas can only be supported if:

1. It is considered complementary to the residential use; or
2. It can be demonstrated that the proposed use would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

In this case, the proposal is for a new secondary school community campus on a site that is currently in use as such. It would therefore be a continuation of an existing use, that is generally considered complementary, acceptable and appropriate in a residential area.

The principle of the development is therefore accepted.

### **Scale, Massing, Design and Layout**

Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place) of NPF4 sets out that all development proposals will be designed to improve the quality of an area and should be consistent with the six qualities of successful places: healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable, and adaptable. Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking) of ALDP sets out that all development must follow a thorough process of site context appraisal to arrive at an appropriate proposal, have a strong and distinctive sense of place and should meet the six essential qualities: distinctive; welcoming; safe and pleasant; easy to move around; adaptable; and resource efficient.

Policy 21 (Play, Recreation and Sport) of NPF4 provides guidance and criteria in relation to the



provision of sports facilities and play spaces. It sets out in part (a) on provision of outdoor sports facilities that:

*'Development proposals which result in the loss of outdoor sports facilities will only be supported where the proposal:*

- *Is ancillary to the principal use of the site as an outdoor sports facility;*
- *Involves only a minor part of the facility and would not affect its use; or*
- *Meets a requirement to replace the facility which would be lost, either by a new facility or by upgrading an existing facility to provide a better quality facility. The location will be convenient for users and the overall playing capacity of the area will be maintained; or*
- *Can demonstrate that there is a clear excess of provision to meet current and anticipated demand in the area, and that the site would be developed without detriment to the overall quality of provision.*

Part (f) on play provision sets out that any new or replacement play provision should provide a stimulating environment; be inclusive; suitable for different ages of young people; and be well overlooked.

The proposed site layout would see the construction of a single academy building located in the northern half of the larger site, with playing fields to the south, and vehicular and main pedestrian access points, including bus turning circle, retained from Groats Road. A car park would be situated in the north east corner, partly screened by new landscape planting and, in all likelihood, the proposed energy centre subject to planning application 250742/DPP.

The proposed building would be part two/part three storeys in height, with double valley pitched roofs to reduce its overall height and have a general U-shaped footprint with additional front entrance section. The front section would be two storeys in height, and would include the main entrance, main reception and associated office space, and sports facilities and changing rooms on the ground floor and facilities such as the library and staff room on the first floor. The taller three storey section to the rear would include social and dining spaces on the ground floor and the majority of classroom spaces on the ground, first and second floor. The building would generally be finished in facing brickwork to the ground and first floor with standing seam metal cladding to the second floor and roof. A brick colonnade would be formed leading up to the main entrance in the east elevation, providing a sense of arrival. A similar approach is used for the main pupil entrance to the south elevation, although the doors serving this entrance are less set back. Large full height glazed sections mark out the social spaces and main pupil entrances in the south elevation and parts of the east elevation leading up to the main entrance. Patterned brickwork would be used to break up large sections of brickwork and create additional interest, particularly in the gable ends on the south, east and west elevations.

Whilst large, due to the placement of the building within the extensive wider site, the building would be set at a considerable distance from Groats Road to the east and Skene Road to the north. It would further be somewhat screened by existing and proposed trees along both roads. Due to its location within the site and of the wider site itself, the building would generally be seen in isolation. There is a large public open space separating it from existing properties on Hazlehead Terrace to the east, whilst Skene Road forms a clear visual barrier to Denseat Court to the north. The building would therefore be set within its own context, which is an appropriate approach, given the educational campus use of the site, both existing and proposed. Its design and setting is well considered, and distinctive and, if implemented, would represent a significant improvement on the existing site layout and built form.

The building has been designed with the end users in mind, through features such as the projecting

wings to the south elevation which assist in creating a welcoming courtyard for pupils to use as a social space. Throughout the hard surfaced playground area, included in this southern courtyard would be a series of outdoor shelters and seating areas for use at break times. This is further supplemented by the proposed landscaping scheme for the wider site, which would create a series of outdoor education spaces, including a pupil support garden to the west, external demonstration spaces and outdoor performance space to the north in addition to the social courtyard space to the south. All these spaces would be close to, and directly accessible from, the building, and would make best use of the space immediately surrounding it.

Further to the south would be the outdoor sports facilities including an informal grassed area for various sports including football and athletics, a dedicated all weather sprint track and two full size 3G pitches. It would further provide an informal games court including 3x3 basketball fields and an outdoor gym. These latter facilities would provide a wider range of informal opportunities for physical exercise than the existing grassed area outside of dedicated PE lessons.

Due to its location in the northern half of the site, the building would be constructed on part of the existing playing fields. This would ensure that the existing school can continue to run efficiently on the site, whilst the new school building is under construction. This would therefore result in a temporary loss of some of the outdoor sports facilities currently serving the school. However, it is considered that the proposed detailed landscaping scheme which incorporates the facilities as set out above would be a betterment in terms of facilities available on the site following completion of the development.

The proposed combination of extended seating areas and opportunities for informal physical exercise through the 3x3 basketball fields, grassed area and outdoor gym would provide a good range of opportunities for young people to socialise before and after school and during breaktimes. These facilities are well considered and, taking into account that the proposal is for a secondary school, would cover the full range of ages generally using the building. All social spaces would be clearly visible within the wider site and would be easily overlooked by pupils and staff, creating a safe and healthy environment for pupils.

The entrances into the building and the wider site would be welcoming and there are clear routes from the various access points into the site towards the building and its various entrances, making it easy to move around. Bike store facilities would be provided at various entrance points into the site, which would again allow easy access for pupils and would provide opportunities for pupils to access the site in a sustainable manner.

As part of the strategy for its use, there is a clear separation between areas that could be used by the wider community, including both the indoor and outdoor sports facilities and changing rooms, dance studios, performance areas and some meeting rooms, and core teaching spaces which would be for school use only. This would ensure that, out of hours, the building could act as a community hub and could provide facilities for local sports clubs and other community groups whilst ensuring safety and restricting access to these core teaching areas. As such, the building would be adaptable to the needs of these various groups.

The building would meet the latest building regulation standards, and its design would incorporate an area for photovoltaic panels on the roof. The building would be linked to the district heating network covering this part of the city, which would provide a resource efficient means of heating the building.

Taking together, the proposed development would meet the six qualities of successful placemaking. The proposal would therefore meet the requirements of Policy 14 and Policy 21 of NPF4 and Policy D1 of the ALDP.

## **Impact on Residential Amenity**

Amenity has a significant impact on the quality of life of individuals and communities. Consideration should therefore be given to ensure that development does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses. Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 sets out that development proposals that are likely to raise unacceptable noise issues will not be supported, and that a Noise Impact Assessment may be required where the nature of the proposal suggests that significant effects are likely. Policy WB3 (Noise) of ALDP generally reiterates this policy.

The site is located to the west of Groats Road and to the south of Skene Road. There are two residential properties in the north east corner of the wider application site. These properties are currently vacant, and a separate application for prior notification for their demolition has been received by the Planning Service, and this, alongside a separate planning application for the proposed energy centre, is currently under consideration. Given that these buildings are owned by the Council, and that an application for their demolition has been received as part of the wider redevelopment of the site, their residential amenity does not need to be considered.

Therefore, the nearest residential properties would be located on Hazlehead Terrace to the east and Densat Court to the north east, both set at a distance of more than 100m from the application site. The site is currently in use as a secondary school and the proposal would thus not introduce a new use. It is further noted that the building would be set in the northern half of the application site, further away from residential properties than the existing school buildings. Finally, the application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment focusing on building services plant and the use of the Multi-Use Games Areas serving the school. The Noise Impact Assessment concludes that the proposal would not cause unacceptable noise nuisance. Taking the foregoing into account it is considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of any nearby residential properties.

It is understood that floodlighting will be proposed to serve the new external sports pitches, however no information regarding this has been provided through the current planning application, therefore any floodlighting proposals would require to be the subject of a future separate planning application.

## **Access and Sustainability**

### Sustainability and Safe Routes to School

Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport) of NPF4 and Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport) both support development proposals that are accessible by a range of sustainable transport options, including walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport, and aim to reduce reliance on the use of the private car. Policy 15 (Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods) seeks to ensure that people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably through the use of sustainable transport methods.

The development is for a new secondary school campus on the same site as the existing Hazlehead Academy within an established residential area. It would thus continue to provide an essential facility for residents of this area in line with Policy 15 of NPF4.

Students living in the existing Hazlehead Academy catchment area would continue to use the same school site and it is expected that existing sustainable transport methods of walking, wheeling and public bus would be retained for this part of the catchment area. The catchment area serving the new school would however be increased to include Kingswells and Countesswells primary schools as additional feeder primaries. A Safe Routes to School Assessment (SRSA) has been submitted as part of the application, which sets out that parts of both settlements of Countesswells and

Kingswells would be within three miles of the site. In general, pupils living within three miles of a secondary school within their catchment area are not eligible for school transport. The SRSA sets out that a safe route would be available from both settlements along routes that are well lit, using dedicated pavements and cycle routes, principally using the Skene Road from the north. It is acknowledged that, whilst they meet the criteria for a 'safe route to school', these routes are long and circuitous and might not be particularly desirable for students, especially during the winter months. It is further noted that existing direct public transport routes run from both Countesswells and the edge of Kingswells along Skene Road/ Queens Road, with the nearest bus stop to the school located c.100m to the north east from the school site, with a safe route, including a controlled pedestrian crossing at the Queens Road/Groats Road junction.

Further pedestrian and cycle routes have been considered through the SRSA which pass through woodland and are adjacent to the golf course. It is considered not to be appropriate to promote these routes as it would not be possible to upgrade them to the necessary standard, when considering environmental and ecological impacts and student safety.

Taking consideration of these matters, whilst acknowledging that parts of the safe routes to school might not be appealing, they are available and given that there are alternative public transport options available, the combination of these will ensure that the site would be in a sustainable location and accessible through a range of transport options. It would therefore comply with Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport) of NPF4 and Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport) of ALDP.

### Access and Parking

The proposed site layout would see three existing vehicular access and egress points reconfigured and reused. The northern access would lead into a staff and visitor car park with a total of 133 car and five motorcycle parking spaces. Policy T3 (Parking) sets out that sufficient parking should be provided as part of development. Maximum parking standards are set out in Aberdeen Planning Guidance: 'Transport and Accessibility' and require 0.5 space per member of staff plus 1 per 15 students. In practice it is considered that the 0.5 space per member of staff is on the low side, whereas in a secondary school, taking account of Policy 13 of NPF4 and Policy T2 of ALDP, it would be undesirable to provide student parking. The submitted Transport Assessment sets out that 160 staff would be working at the new school, resulting in a parking provision of 0.83 per member of staff. Out of the 133 spaces, seven would be marked up for accessible parking and a further fifteen would have EV provision. Given that no student parking would be provided, this overprovision for staff would be acceptable.

The proposed site layout would further see the two existing vehicular access points in the southern half of the site reconfigured to form a pick up/ drop off layby for six buses. This would be acceptable.

## **Natural Heritage**

### Trees

Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees) of NPF4 and Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) of ALDP are both restrictive policies that seek to protect and enhance tree cover throughout the city. The application is supported by a Tree Survey and tree removal plan. This shows that more than 150 trees would be removed from and in close proximity to the site. The vast majority of these trees are located in the north east corner and along the northern site boundary and mainly comprise coniferous trees. Many of these are in poor condition following storms in recent years. Other trees would be removed centrally within the site to allow for development. A prominent line of predominantly lime trees along the eastern site boundary adjacent to Groats Road would be generally maintained, dependent on the condition of the individual trees. A further prominent cluster in the south east corner would also be retained.

The detailed landscape drawing submitted as part of the application would see replacement tree planting in the north east corner, and in strategic locations along the main pedestrian routes into the site. Further trees would be located in the car park and along the building. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would see a large amount of tree loss, especially in the north east corner, it is accepted that many of these trees were in poor condition, including from storm damage. Proposed replacement tree planting would be in excess of this number, and would thus see an increase in tree cover across the site. The proposal would thus suitably meet the requirements of Policy 6 of NPF4 and Policy NE5 of ALDP.

### Natural Heritage

Policy 3 (Biodiversity) of NPF4 seeks to protect and improve biodiversity, and reverse biodiversity loss. Policy 4 (Natural Places) of NPF4 sets out that development that would have an adverse impact on the natural environment would not be supported. In part (d) it specifies that development affecting local nature conservation sites will only be acceptable where:

- a. *Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or*
- b. *Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance.*

Part (f) of Policy 4 sets out that development proposals that are likely to have an adverse effect on protected species will only be supported where the proposal meets the relevant statutory tests.

Policy NE3 (Our Natural Heritage) of the ALDP generally reiterates this policy in respect of the potential impact of development on Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) and seeks to protect protected species.

To the west and south of the application site is the Hazlehead LNCS, and to the north, across the Skene Road is the Den of Maidencraig LNCS. Given that the proposed building would be contained centrally within the northern half of the application site, it would have no direct impact on either LNCS. Two Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) would be located in the south east corner of the application site, near the site boundary, adjacent to the edge of the Hazlehead Woods. Again, their position is sufficiently far away from the Hazlehead Woods, the Hazlehead LNCS and the Den of Maidencraig LNCS to not adversely affect these areas. Whilst it is anticipated that the pitches would be floodlit, no details of these have been submitted as part of this application. Any potential floodlighting scheme would therefore be subject to a further planning application.

The application is supported by a preliminary ecological impact assessment. This concluded that the three buildings located along the southern site boundary have moderate suitability for bat roosts via gaps under wooden soffits, and gaps around windows and flashing. It recommended that this was followed up by a preliminary roost assessment and summer bat activity survey. These have not yet been undertaken. The Planning Service is generally not able to condition a bat survey. A bat survey is generally valid for a period not exceeding 18 months. The existing buildings in that part of the site would only be demolished once the new school building has been constructed and is ready for occupation, which would be in 2027 at the earliest. The results of any bat survey undertaken prior to determination at this point of time would therefore no longer be valid when the relevant buildings were to be demolished. To pre-empt any potential necessary mitigation methods resulting from the bat survey, the applicant has committed to the installation of eight bat boxes in suitable locations within and near the application site. These should be installed during 2026 to allow migration of bats that might use the affected buildings as roosting sites to the bat boxes. Therefore, in this instance and on that basis, it is accepted that a condition could be used to secure a further bat survey and installation of bat boxes prior to demolition of the existing school buildings.

As part of wider biodiversity improvements across the site, a range of native trees and plant species are proposed, including areas of wildflower planting to the north and east of the building.

Taking account of the above, the proposal would suitably meet the requirements of Policy 3 (Biodiversity) and Policy 4 (Natural Places) of NPF4 and Policy NE3 (Natural Heritage) of ALDP.

### Green Space Network

The majority of the application site, excluding the area currently covered in hardstanding and buildings, is part of the green space network. Policy 20 (Blue and Green Infrastructure) of NPF4 seeks to protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure and their network. Part (a) of this policy sets out that development resulting in a net loss of existing green infrastructure will only be supported where it can be evidenced that the proposals would not result in or exacerbate a deficit in green infrastructure and the overall integrity of the network is maintained. Policy NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure) of the ALDP seeks to protect, support and enhance the Green Space Network.

It is noted that the new building would be located on part of the area currently designated as green space network, which would subsequently be lost, and that the amount of hardstanding across the site, including the two proposed MUGA's, would be increased. However, given its location, where the site is surrounded by higher quality green space on all sides, this loss of part of the green space network in this location would not have an adverse impact on the integrity of the network in this general area.

### **Other Matters**

#### Drainage

Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management) of NPF4 sets out that development proposals should incorporate suitable sustainable urban drainage systems to manage rain and surface water. This is reiterated in Policy NE4 (Our Water Environment) of ALDP.

The application is supported by detailed drainage drawings and a Drainage Strategy Report. This information has been assessed and is considered suitable for the proposed development. The proposal thus suitably complies with the above policies.

#### Waste

Policy 12 (Zero Waste) of NPF4 sets out that all development should incorporate suitable storage facilities for waste management, including for recyclables. Policy R5 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development) of ALDP reiterates this policy.

The proposed site layout incorporates a dedicated, fenced service yard to the north of the building. This would be accessible from the northern vehicular access and through the staff car park. Swept path analyses have been submitted, demonstrating that a bin lorry could access this service yard through the car park without impeding on any of the marked out parking bays. Sufficient space is available in the service yard to accommodate all necessary bins, and this arrangement is therefore acceptable, and the above policies are met.

It is acknowledged that the demolition of the existing buildings on the site would result in the release of their embodied carbon. Policy 12 (Zero Waste) of NPF4 seeks to reduce waste and prioritises reuse of materials. To ensure compliance with this policy, a statement is required, as part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, setting out what proportion of materials from the existing buildings would be recycled and what methods for recycling are proposed.

#### Heat Networks

Policy 19 (Heat and Cooling) of NPF4 supports development that includes decarbonised solutions to heat and cooling. Policy R8 (Heat Networks) of ALDP encourages and supports the use of heat networks throughout the city.

As part of the wider development of the current Hazlehead Academy site, an energy centre will be located in the north east corner. The future development of this energy centre is subject to planning application 250742/DPP which is currently under consideration and can be determined under delegated powers. This energy centre is intended to link into the district heating network, which will include the new Hazlehead Academy.

## **Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises and Climate Mitigation**

Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) of NPF4 requires significant weight to be given to the global climate and nature crises in the consideration of all development proposals. Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed and sited to minimise life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible, and to adapt to current and future risks from climate change.

The proposal would consist of the demolition of a secondary school campus, with the main building constructed in the 1970s with further later additions. The building is in a poor condition and not fit for purpose. Whilst its demolition would result in the release of its embodied carbon, its replacement with a more energy efficient building meeting the latest building regulations would result in a significant reduction in carbon emissions from the site in the medium to longer term. Due consideration is therefore given to Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) and Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation) of NPF4.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve Conditionally

## **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The application site is located in an established residential area and has long been in use as a secondary school campus. The proposed replacement Hazlehead Academy would therefore be a continuation of this existing use and the principle of the proposal would comply with Policy H1 (Residential Areas) of the 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

The proposed positioning, scale, design, massing, (whereby the two to three storey building would be located in the northern half of the application site) is acceptable and, together with the proposed landscaping scheme and outdoor facilities, including outdoor social areas and sports facilities, would provide a well-considered design across the wider application site, taking account of its specific site context. Subject to a condition requiring specification of material details, the use of bricks and cladding is acceptable in this landscaped setting. Due to its location, the distance between the application site and the nearest residential properties at Denseat Court and Hazlehead Terrace, would ensure the proposed development would have no adverse impact on their residential amenity. The proposal thus suitably complies with Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place), Policy 21 (Play, Recreation and Sport) and Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and Policies D1 (Quality Placemaking), D2 (Amenity) and WB3 (Noise) of 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

Whilst it is acknowledged that a large number of trees would be removed, partly due to good tree

management and partly to accommodate the proposed development, a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted, demonstrating that at least the same number of trees would be planted within the site. The landscaping plan and associated biodiversity net gains report sets out that the scheme would incorporate biodiversity enhancements in terms of planting and providing habitat and roosting and nesting opportunities for bats, birds and other species. Whilst the Preliminary Ecological Impact Assessment recommended a further bat survey, this was not undertaken as part of this application. Some potential for bat roosting features was found within some of the existing school buildings in the southern part of the site. Whilst it is not generally acceptable to condition a bat survey, in this instance, due to the timelines proposed where the new building would be constructed first and the existing buildings demolished at the end of the project, and the agreement of the applicant to install bat roosting boxes in close proximity to the potentially affected buildings in 2026, this is accepted in this instance. Given the location of the site, where it is surrounded on all sides by higher quality Green Space Network, the loss of some soft landscaping areas would not prejudice the functioning of the green space network in this location. The proposal thus complies with Policy 3 (Biodiversity), Policy 4 (Natural Places), Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees) and Policy 20 (Blue and Green Infrastructure) of NPF4 and Policies NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure), Policy 3 (Our Natural Heritage) and NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) of 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

Given that the proposal would replace the existing Hazlehead Academy on the same site, it would contribute to the provision of essential local services in this location, in compliance with Policy 15 (Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods) of NPF4. Students living in the existing school catchment area can continue to use sustainable transport methods to get to school in line with Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport) of NPF4 and Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport) of 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The Safe Routes to School Assessment provided as part of this application sets out that a safe route to school with a distance of less than three miles would be available to students living in parts of Countesswells and Kingswells. It is acknowledged that these routes, which would use existing lit pedestrian and cycle routes, could be perceived as long and circuitous, but would meet the criteria for a safe route to school. A condition requesting submission of a School Travel Plan prior to occupation of the replacement school building is also necessary.

Sufficient vehicular and cycle parking would be provided in line with guidance as set out in Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Transport and Accessibility and thus in compliance with Policy T3 (Parking) of 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan. Acceptable drainage proposals and waste storage facilities have been provided, and the site would be connected into the existing district heating network serving the existing Hazlehead Academy and surrounding buildings. The proposal thus complies with Policy 12 (Zero Waste), Policy 19 (Heat and Cooling) and Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management) of NPF4 and Policies NE4 (Our Water Environment), R5 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development), R8 (Heat Networks) and T3 (Parking) of the 2023 Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

Whilst the proposal would result in the demolition of the existing buildings, its replacement with a significantly more energy efficient building would ensure that the proposal would suitably consider the requirements as set out in Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) and Policy 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation) of NPF4.

## **CONDITIONS**

### **(01) DURATION OF PERMISSION**

The development to which this notice relates must be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years beginning with the date of this notice. If development has not begun at the expiration of the 3-year period, the planning permission lapses.



Reason - in accordance with section 58 (duration of planning permission) of the 1997 act.

#### (02) MATERIALS

That no development pursuant to the academy school building shall take place unless a scheme and/or samples detailing all external finishing materials to the roof, walls and windows of the development hereby approved has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the planning authority and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so agreed. This shall include clarification of colour of mortar and bonds used in the brickwork

Reason - In the interests of visual amenity.

#### (03) BAT SURVEY

That a preliminary bat roost assessment and summer bat survey shall be undertaken during the survey season in 2026, and that the recommendations as set out in that bat survey shall be implemented in full prior to demolition of the three school buildings located along the southern site boundary.

Reason – To ensure the demolition of the three buildings with moderate bat roosting potential will have no adverse impact on the bat population in the surrounding area.

#### (04) BAT MITIGATION MEASURES

That a detailed scheme providing as a minimum eight bat boxes in the proximity of the three school buildings located in the southern part of the site or in the woodland immediately to the south of the application site shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall subsequently be installed during 2026.

Reason – To ensure that the demolition of the three buildings with moderate bat roosting potential will have no adverse impact on the bat population in the surrounding area.

#### (05) BIODIVERSITY IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

That prior to occupation of the development hereby approved, biodiversity improvement measures as specified in section 4.4 of the Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment by EnviroCentre, dated July 2025 shall be implemented in full and that photographic evidence of implementation of these measures have been provided to the Planning Authority.

Reason – To ensure an improvement to biodiversity across the site.

#### (06) LANDSCAPING SCHEME (IMPLEMENTATION)

That all planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping as shown in the hereby approved drawing 8461-RYD-00-EX\_00-D-L-001906/Rev02 shall be carried out in the first planting season following the completion of the development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a size and species similar to those originally required to be planted, or in accordance with such other scheme as may be submitted to and approved in writing for the purpose by the planning authority - in the interests of the amenity of the area.

(07) TREE PROTECTION (01)

That no development shall take place unless the scheme for tree protection as shown on drawing 'Tree Protection Plan' by Struan Dalgleish Arboriculture has been implemented. Subsequently, the tree protection shall remain in place during construction works on the site.

Reason – To ensure adequate protection for the trees on site during the construction of the development.

(08) TREE PROTECTION (02)

That no materials, supplies, plant, machinery, spoil, changes in ground levels or construction activities shall be permitted within the protected areas specified in the aforementioned scheme of tree protection without the written consent of the Planning Authority and no fire shall be lit in a position where the flames could extend to within 5 metres of foliage, branches or trunks

Reason - To ensure adequate protection for the trees on site during the construction of the development.

(09) OUTDOOR SEATING AND EQUIPMENT

That no development pursuant to the academy building shall take place unless details of outdoor seating, including canopies, and proposed external gym equipment as set out on the hereby approved drawing 8461-RYD-00-EX\_00-D-L-001902/Rev04 have been submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Subsequently, the building shall not be brought into use until the approved details have been implemented.

Reason – To ensure a good quality environment for students and in the interest of visual amenity.

(10) CYCLE PARKING

That the academy building hereby approved shall not be occupied unless details of cycle parking storage areas have been submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, and the approved details have been implemented in full.

Reason – To promote sustainable transport modes

(11) PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

No demolition or any other works in connection with the development hereby approved shall commence unless a photographic survey of the existing buildings and structures on the application site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Service. All external elevations of the buildings and structures together with the setting of the buildings, structures and play areas shall be photographed, together with key internal spaces (a typical classroom, hall, canteen area etc). The photographic viewpoints must be clearly annotated on a plan to accompany the survey. The photographs and plan must be in a digital format and must be clearly marked with the planning reference number.

Reason – To ensure that a historic record of the building is made for inclusion in the National Record of the Historic Environment for Scotland and in the local Historic Environment Record, owing to its community role it has served since 1970.

(12) CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

That no development shall take place until a Construction Environment Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. As a minimum, this should cover:

- a. A Demolition Method Statement including details of the recycling of waste materials;
- b. An 'Air Quality (Dust) Risk Assessment' carried out by a suitably qualified consultant, to predict the likely dust levels resulting from the proposed development and its impact on air quality including a determination of it significant; and
- c. A 'Dust Management Plan', which shall be based on the results of the 'Air Quality (Dust) Risk Assessment'
- d. A 'Construction Noise Impact Assessment', which should:
  - i. Be undertaken by a suitably qualified noise consultant
  - ii. Demonstrate adherence to the guidance contained within: BS8228 - 1:2009+A1:2014 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction sites and open sites - Part 1 Noise and Part 2: Vibration
  - iii. Identify the sources of construction noise likely to impact on the existing residences.
  - iv. predict the impacts of the noise sources on the proposed residential development
  - v. Detail the noise mitigation measures to reduce noise from the construction noise sources to an acceptable level to reasonably protect the amenity of the occupants of the proposed residences.
  - vi. The methodology for the noise assessment should be submitted and agreed in writing with the Environmental Protection Team in advance of the assessment.

Any such scheme as has been approved shall subsequently be implemented during the construction works.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

#### (13) RESTRICTION ON HOURS – MULTI-USE GAMES AREAS

That the multi-use games areas hereby approved shall not be in use between 22:00 and 08:00 on any given day.

Reason – in the interest of residential amenity

#### (14) SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

That the academy building hereby approved shall not be brought into use unless a Travel Plan, incorporating suitable aims and measures to encourage the use of sustainable and active travel by staff and students to and from the site, has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Service. Thereafter the development shall be operated in accordance with the agreed Travel Plan.

Reason – In the interest of promoting the use of sustainable and active travel by staff and students

#### (15) PAVEMENT – GROATS ROAD

That the academy building hereby approved shall not be occupied unless a scheme detailing the installation of a footpath along the east side of Groats Road for a minimum distance of 125m in a southwards direction from its junction with Queens Road, and a parallel crossing into the school grounds has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Service. Any such scheme as

has been approved shall subsequently be implemented prior to opening of the academy building.

Reason – In the interest of promoting the use of sustainable and active travel by staff and students.

### **ADVISORY NOTES FOR APPLICANT**

#### (1) ASBESTOS SURVEY

The development proposal includes the demolition of the existing school buildings. It is recommended that a specialist contractor is appointed to carry out an asbestos demolition survey prior to works starting on site with any asbestos containing materials (ACMs) removed by a licensed contractor in accordance with HSE guidelines.

#### (2) FLOODLIGHTING

The applicant is advised that a separate application for detailed planning permission will be required for the installation of any floodlighting. Further information can be found on the Aberdeen City Council website: [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning-and-building-standards](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning-and-building-standards)