



Northumberland  
County Council

# The Outline Business Case for the Replacement school buildings for Astley Community High and Whytrig Middle Schools with community facilities





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4H	Utilities Survey i. Existing site ii. New site
4I	FF&E including technology audit report
4J	Pool Condition Survey
4K	Flood Risk Assessment
4L	Net Zero Carbon report (two copies)
6A	Project Risk Register



## Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
AHS	Astley High School
BB103	The document which sets out simple, non-statutory area guidelines for school buildings and sites
BCIS	Building Cost Information Service
BS8300	A code of practice that details the required design of buildings for meeting the needs of disabled people
CBR	California Bearing Ratio
CDM	Construction Design and Management
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DfE	Department for Education
EA	Environment Agency
EcIA	Ecological Impact Assessment
ERIC NE	Environmental Records Information Centre Northeast
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
FACS	Family And Children's Services
FBC	Final Business Case
FFE	Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
ITPD	Invitation to Participate in Dialogue
LA	Local Authority
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NCC	Northumberland County Council
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OBC	Outline Business Case
OJEU	Official Journal of the European Union



OS	Ordnance Survey
PCR	Public Contracts Regulations
PCSA	Pre-Construction Services Agreement
PQQ	Pre-Qualification Questionnaire
PROW	Public Right of Way
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RIBA stage	Denotes the design work stages that address the required phase of a construction project
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SoA	Schedule of Accommodation
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
SVF	Seaton Valley Federation
WMS	Whytrig Middle School

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines the options appraisal, cost estimates, affordability assessment and procurement strategy carried out in relation to the proposal to provide new buildings for Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools with community facilities.

The new buildings would be co-located on the existing site or on a new site for the project. Sufficient detail is included to allow capital funding to be confirmed and for approval to be sought from Cabinet for the implementation and delivery of the preferred scheme.

### *1 Overview and commitment*

**Section 1** and **Appendix 1** of this Outline Business Case describe the scheme and confirm the commitment of all parties to the project.

The preferred scheme supports the objectives set out in Northumberland County Council's vision for Northumberland's residents. While strong leadership and good governance are key components of successful schools, the provision of a suitable learning environment can have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. This scheme delivers a service that has positive outcomes for the community.

The need to improve the buildings of Astley High and Whytrig Middle School had already been identified through the ongoing maintenance programme. Additional funding to improve the buildings of both schools would be extremely beneficial to improve outcomes for the Northumberland children and young people who attend them. Subsequently, Northumberland County Council approved funding for officers to carry out works to enable the development of this Outline Business Case which sets out the work undertaken to establish the feasibility and affordability of this proposal. The high-level costs for this option are outlined in Section 5.

After carrying out a site option appraisal process two sites proved feasible. However, the existing site would require off-site playing fields due the site being undersized to meet the requirements of the schools under DfE and Sport England statutory guidance. The Avenue site will result in an enhanced provision to re-provide the buildings as the preferred option. The local authority, with support from Seaton Valley Federation, are now working together to ensure the project is delivered within agreed timescales.

As well as improving the teaching and learning environment for current and future pupils in the schools, improvements to the on-site sporting and community facilities will benefit the wider Seaton Valley community.

Pupil place planning data for Seaton Valley Partnership shows that reprovision of the current capacity for pupils at Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools will be adequate for current and future needs.

The co-location of the two schools in Seaton Valley Federation will help to secure its educational and financial future by: enabling access to specialist facilities; reducing ongoing maintenance and other fixed costs; retaining the consolidation of back-office functions; and retaining the reduction in the revenue cost liability of running two school sites. Savings will be redirected towards supporting the delivery of the curriculum and the broader educational experience.

The timeline for the delivery of the school aims for a handover date of Easter 2025.

## *2 Procurement strategy*

**Section 2** and **Appendix 2** of this Outline Business Case describe the Procurement Strategy for the whole scheme.

Following a review of procurement options available for construction projects, the development will be procured through a Design and Build strategy utilising a single stage tendering procedure tendered at the end of RIBA stage 4.

The project will proceed via a PCR compliant, non-Framework 'open' tender process.

The key objective for the delivery of the project is;

- New Middle School and High School to operate from 28 April 2025

New Middle and High School (existing or new site) key dates:

- OBC approval 26 April 2022
- RIBA stage 3 designs instructed 02 May 2022
- Planning submitted 22 July 2022 and determined on 08 November 2022
- RIBA stage 4 designs completed 09 December 2022
- Tenders issued 09 January 2023
- Tenders returned 17 March 2023 and contract awarded 14 April 2023
- Construction commences on site 12 June 2023
- New school opens 28 April 2025



### 3 Land

**Section 3** of this Outline Business Case describes the site options appraisal undertaken that contributes to the design and construction works of a preferred option.

There have been many challenges in finding a suitably sized site for the two schools within their existing catchment areas. This section outlines the options available for the redevelopment. As the existing school site is undersized by circa 12,000m<sup>2</sup> all of the compliant options require the use of land outside of the ownership of the Local Authority. The Options Appraisal outlines the advantages and disadvantages of each option together with planning commentary. The outcome of the appraisal has resulted in Option 6 being the preferred option. This option would see the development of land off The Avenue to provide two schools together with some offsite parking that could also be utilised by the community out of school hours.

### 4 Design and Construction

**Section 4** and **Appendix 4** of this Outline Business Case describe the design options and investigative survey works undertaken to demonstrate feasibility.

The feasibility study considered the Education Brief, Planning, Highways and Sport England requirements and DfE area guidance for both the design of the school buildings as well as the overall site to ensure the schools would meet the minimum standards set nationally. In addition, the feasibility study considered the surveys referenced in this Outline Business Case and all design guidance and standards that are relevant to this initial stage of design.

The feasibility study demonstrates the viability of the new build middle and high school on both the existing site and the proposed site. The Avenue site is preferred and provides all of the school facilities together on one site, that also maximises the community benefit of the development through improved sports facilities. The site also provides the opportunity and capacity for future proofing the education provision on site, that wouldn't be possible on the existing school site.

### 5 Commercial appraisal

**Section 5** of this Outline Business Case describes the commercial appraisal for the options available for the scheme.

The scheme is to be fully funded by NCC. The Council will proceed with Net Zero in Operation, which will incur an additional £5,649,025 to the cost of the build, resulting in a total cost of £37,032,498 for the preferred option.

## 6 Readiness to Deliver

**Section 6** and **Appendix 6** of the Outline Business Case sets out NCC's project management structure and identifies the roles and responsibilities of each part of the structure.

Northumberland County Council has put in place resources for the duration of the project, including post contract, to monitor and maintain ongoing relations between Northumberland County Council and the Seaton Valley Federation to ensure the effective delivery of the project, throughout its lifetime.

A Bidders' Day is scheduled for September 2022.

A risk workshop has been held and a risk strategy developed. Risk will continue to be monitored and evaluated with any changes being reported to the project board on a monthly basis.

## 7 Moving Forward

**Section 7** sets out the proposed recommended approach for the procurement should approval for the scheme be given by Northumberland County Council's Cabinet.

A critical path of scheduled delivery activities has been provided based on the proposed route to market, Design and Build Single Stage Procurement, and in line with the Public Contracts Regulations [PCR] 2015.

The RIBA Stage 3 design will need to proceed immediately on approval of the OBC for the key milestones to be achieved. The design process will progress on through to RIBA Stage 4 / tender issue level by early January 2023.

## 1 OVERVIEW AND COMMITMENT

**Section 1** and **Appendix 1** of this Outline Business Case describe the scheme and confirms the commitment of all parties to the project.

### *1.1 The Corporate Vision*

Northumberland County Council (NCC) has set out its vision for the County in its Corporate Plan 2021-24. The principles of the vision are focused on ensuring we are: “A council that works for everyone”

#### **Our Values**

##### **Residents first**

- Respond to the needs of all of our residents
- Provide the right information at the right time
- Deliver services that have positive outcomes for the community

##### **Excellence and Quality**

- Respect the diverse communities that we serve
- Act on feedback to ensure the best customer journey
- Look for opportunities to improve customer experience

##### **Respect**

- Build strong and long-lasting relationships based on trust and mutual respect
- Involve communities and staff in decisions which affect them
- Support communities to embrace change and innovation

##### **Keeping our communities safe and well**

- Quality and Safety will be at the heart of everything we do
- Empower our residents to do as much for themselves as possible
- Set clear standards and report against them



## **1.2 Strategic Overview**

### **1.2.1 Countywide Strategy**

Stemming from the Education Vision, Northumberland's countywide strategy for education is articulated within the Service Director's Annual report 2020.

Improving the quality of education in Northumberland is a key priority for the local authority's (LA's) elected members. Both the Corporate Plan and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) 2018 - 2028 place education at the heart of the work of the Council and its partners.

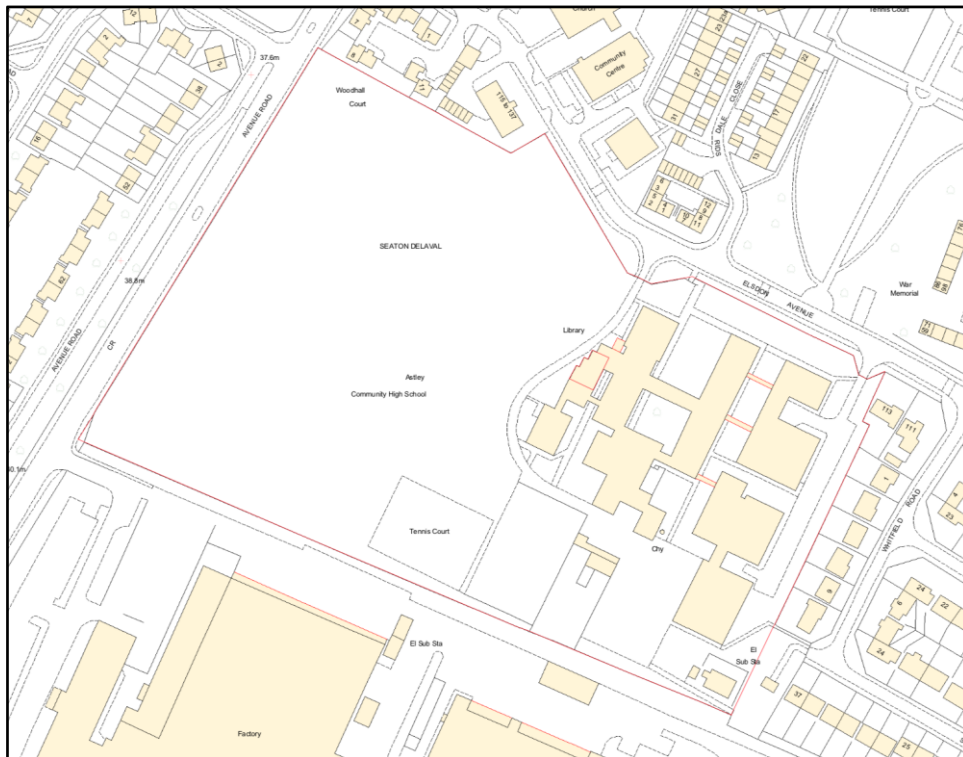
Elected members recognise how vital it is for the future prosperity of Northumberland that our children and young people achieve to the best of their abilities in schools, academies and colleges and that all our educational establishments are judged to be good or better by Ofsted.

It is accepted that while strong leadership and governance in schools together with good teaching are key to improving outcomes for pupils, studies have shown that poor quality surroundings can impact negatively on effective teaching and learning, both for staff and pupils. To address this issue, NCC is proposing to continue to invest significant capital resources in education.

### **1.2.2. Project Overview**

Astley Community High School is a mixed 13-18 high school maintained by Northumberland County Council. It forms part of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools, which was formed in 2009, together with Whytrig and Seaton Sluice Middle Schools. Whytrig Middle School accommodates pupils from ages 9 to 13.

Astley Community High and Whytrig Middle Schools are co-located approximately three miles away from Seaton Sluice on a shared site at Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval, of 55,417m<sup>2</sup>, as illustrated within the red line below:



### 1.2.3 Strategy and Objectives

The rationale for the initiation of this project has been founded on Seaton Valley Federation's desire to provide a financially and educationally secure future for its schools. They were also faced with the need for significant capital investment in the school estate.

The project would improve the teaching and learning environment for current and future pupils in the schools, including on-site sporting and community facilities that would also benefit the Seaton Valley community as a whole.

The objectives of this project are to:

- Ensure value for money for the Council by driving down all project costs whilst delivering the agreed scope of works to a high quality and to programme.
- Provide good quality, modern teaching and learning environments for the pupils attending WMS and AHS, thereby removing existing physical barriers that distract from the teaching and learning experience.
- Provide buildings that deliver a high level of environmental performance that is in step with the Council's Climate Emergency goals.
- Support the delivery a coherent transport and travel plan for the local community.
- Provide modern sporting facilities on-site to enhance the curriculum offer and to provide improved sporting and community facilities for the wider community in and around Seaton Valley that will increase participation and associated benefits.



- Support Seaton Valley Federation in providing a financially and educationally secure future for its schools by continuing their co-location.

### ***1.2.4 Stakeholder Consultations moving forward***

#### **Consultation Process**

During the development of the Outline Business Case to re-provide buildings for Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools the Governing Body of the Seaton Valley Federation approached the local authority to see if the benefits of co-location, already experienced by Astley and Whytrig Schools, could be extended to Seaton Sluice Middle School by the amalgamation of the two middle schools in the planned new buildings.

A six-week informal consultation was undertaken from 13<sup>th</sup> October until 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021. A consultation document, which set out the rationale, background and implications of the proposal, was circulated directly to stakeholders including parents, staff and governors. The Council, on behalf of the federation, invited stakeholders to respond to the consultation.

Following analysis of the feedback and responses it was concluded that Seaton Sluice Middle School, in its current form, was highly valued by parents and the wider community.

It was therefore recommended to Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 not to move forward to a statutory consultation to amalgamate Seaton Sluice Middle and Whytrig Middle Schools in a shared building with Astley High School. Cabinet approved this recommendation and the proposal to amalgamate the middle schools has proceeded no further. With the scope of the project confirmed to provide new school building for Astley and Whytrig this OBC sets out the options to progress the project through to delivery.

Consultation events on the options set out in the OBC took place with Local Elected members, The Governing Body of the schools, Staff, Seaton Valley Community Council, parents and members of the public. They were asked to make comments on each option identifying what they liked about each option and also what improvement they felt could be made. The feedback from these events will be used at the next stage of detailed design in order to address the concerns raised with the preferred option.

Further engagement will be planned in order that the pupils of the school can get involved through pupil workshops to influence the final designs and finishes as will the staff of the school who will be involved in detailed design workshops. The workshops will ask pupils to look at the plans and highlight both positive and less favourable aspects of the build. Through staff and pupil involvement there could be further development of the designs.

There will also be an opportunity for the wider community to be involved in consultation events as the design for the new schools and site develop, with a pre planning consultation event taking place before the end of the summer 2022.



### 1.2.5 Pupil Place Planning

While pupil numbers overall in the Seaton Valley Partnership have remained more or less stable over a number of years, this masks a change in demographics in relation to individual schools, with the Seaton Delaval area experiencing a growth in the birth rate in recent years, and schools in the Seaton Sluice and Seghill area experiencing a fall in the birth rate. There are currently 9% surplus places across the partnership, and there is not a significant number of pupils attending these schools from out of catchment or out of county, except for Astley High where 26% of students (not sixth form) live outside of the partnership, including out of county (although the majority live in other Northumberland partnerships) and Seaton Sluice Middle where 25% of children live outside of the partnership. However, this masks variation at the school level.

Numbers of pupils being born in the Seaton Delaval First and Whytrig Middle School catchment have been increasing in recent years. In September 2017, the PAN of Seaton Delaval was increased from 30 to 45 in Reception to support the additional pupils being born in the catchment, while in September 2018 the PAN of Whytrig Middle was increased from 54 to 90 in Year 5. Additional capacity has been added to Whytrig Middle in a phased way to manage the increase in pupil numbers and further accommodation has been put in place over Summer 2021 ready for September.

However, due to surplus capacity in other first schools in the partnership, parental choice has meant that Seaton Delaval has not in fact consistently reached close to its PAN in every year group, perhaps because other schools are simply closer to the home address than the catchment school. This has led to difficulties for the school in staff planning and class organisation. Therefore, it is proposed that subject to approvals, consultation on the reduction of the school's PAN should be undertaken as part of the annual consultation on admissions arrangements in order to better reflect the flow of children across this small partnership.

It is not envisaged that any other schools in the partnership will need additional capacity at this stage. While there is minimal housebuilding planned over the next 5 years, the impact of any proposed housing development on an individual school will be assessed in line with the Council's Education Infrastructure Policy. As the year groups in Seaton Delaval First School are growing at the bottom end, the need to provide additional places at the school will be reviewed on an annual basis. The Council publishes pupil forecast data by school partnership annually in its School Organisation Plan, with the forecast for the Seaton Valley Partnership as follows:

Final Forecasts																NOR
Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTALS	
Actual Jan 2021	126	150	134	140	156	129	133	156	148	133	138	141	80	71	1835	
2022	127	125	148	135	139	157	132	144	156	145	135	135	86	70	1836	
2023	132	127	125	150	135	141	162	144	145	153	149	133	82	75	1854	
2024	136	131	125	125	149	136	144	175	143	141	155	144	80	72	1855	
2025	111	136	129	125	124	149	138	155	174	140	143	151	88	70	1833	
2026	127	111	135	131	125	125	154	151	155	171	143	140	92	76	1836	
2027	126	126	108	135	129	125	127	165	149	151	172	138	85	80	1815	
2028	126	125	123	108	132	128	127	137	163	145	153	167	84	74	1790	
2029	125	125	123	124	107	133	131	137	136	160	147	148	102	73	1771	
PAN TOTALS	165	165	165	161	161	175	175	175	139	150	150	150	100	70	2101	

Key: PAN - Planned Admission Number

### 1.3 Preferred Scheme

There is considerable support from the schools for substantial investment in Seaton Valley Federation buildings (a letter of support from the Seaton Valley Federation Governing Body is contained in Appendix 1C). NCC and SVF have been working together to develop the scope and options for the project delivery. As a result of these many months of work, the Executive Headteacher and staff support the vision of retaining the co-location of both schools on one site as they believe the challenges they face in ensuring its schools are both educationally and financially secure would be best addressed through this option, along with maintaining each school's own age range and distinctiveness.

The objectives of the proposed project aims to support SVF in achieving a secure educational and financial future for its schools, through the co-location of the middle school and the high school into new buildings. The co-location would enable the Seaton Valley Federation to continue to benefit from the reduced ongoing maintenance and revenue cost liability of running two school sites, as well as making savings by bringing together the back office/administrative functions of both schools. This would then allow any saving to be used on supporting the delivery of the curriculum and the broader educational experience.

The preferred scheme detailed in the OBC therefore is to co-locate the two schools on the Avenue site with off-site hybrid park and stride. This conclusion has been made by drawing upon Seaton Valley Federation's Education Brief (which is contained at Appendix 4A) and the site option appraisal contained in section 3.3 of this report.



### 1.3.1 Timeline

Table 1A: Timeline

Event	Date
Final Business Case complete	05 April 2022
Submit Outline Business Case and report	08 April 2022
FACS	21 April 2022
Cabinet	26 April 2022
Bidders' Day	September 2022
PIN NOTICE PERIOD	26 April – 22 September 2022
RIBA Stage 3 Designs	02 May – 22 July 2022
Planning Submission	22 July 2022
Planning Approval	08 November 2022
Prepare ITT Documents	26 September – 23 December 2022
Tender Period	09 January – 17 March 2023
Appraisal / NCC Approvals / FBC	20 March – 14 Apr 2023
Award of contract	14 April 2023
Construction	12 June 2023 – 20 December 2024
Handover	25 April 2025

### 1.3.2 Accommodation

The accommodation schedule (appendix 1D) for the feasibility study has been compiled on the basis of the standard DfE Schedule of Area templates and the desire to meet the specific curriculum needs of the two schools. However, the standard DfE templates do not recognise the requirements of middle schools (being limited to primary and secondary schools only). Therefore, a primary school template has been used for years 5 and 6 in the middle school and a secondary school template for years 7 and 8. The secondary school template has been used for years 9, 10, 11 and post 16. The intention is to recognise the independence of the middle school and to provide sufficient area and accommodation to allow it to function independently. However, there are operational efficiencies to be realised in terms of central admin, kitchen and plant with the subsequent area gains invested elsewhere.

The three accommodation schedules inevitably have a degree of overlap, particularly in learning resources and large spaces, as well as non-net, which will need to be rationalised to create a cohesive scheme design. The feasibility study makes many of



these rationalisations to produce a cohesive initial design proposal. The three accommodation schedules are based on DfE BB103 minimum areas.

The Schedule of Accommodation can be found in Appendix 1D.

### **1.3.3. Local Authority Commitment**

The Seaton Valley Federation are supportive of NCC's intention to invest in the school buildings.

## **1.4 Summary**

The preferred scheme supports the objectives set out in Northumberland County Council's vision for Northumberland's residents. While strong leadership and good governance are key components of successful schools, the provision of a suitable learning environment can have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.

The need to improve the buildings of Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools had already been identified. Subsequently, Northumberland County Council approved funding for officers to carry out works to enable the development of this Outline Business Case of which sets out the work undertaken to establish the feasibility and affordability of this proposal. The high-level costs for this option are outlined in Section 5.

A site option appraisal of the two potential sites for the development of the new school determined the existing site to be significantly undersized for the new build requirements, therefore the Avenue site is the preferred option. The local authority, with support from the Seaton Valley Federation are now working together to ensure the project is delivered within agreed timescales.

As well as improving the teaching and learning environment for current and future pupils in the schools, improvements to the on-site sporting and community facilities will benefit the wider Seaton Valley Federation community. Pupil place planning data for Seaton Valley Partnership determines that reprovision of the current capacity for pupils at Seaton Valley Federation will be adequate for current and future needs.

The continued co-location of the two schools in Seaton Valley Federation will help to secure its financial and educational future by: reducing ongoing maintenance and other fixed costs; consolidating back-office functions; and reducing the revenue cost liability of running two school sites. Savings will be redirected towards supporting the delivery of the curriculum and the broader educational experience.

The design and development of the new schools supports the Council's agreed Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23 and its aspiration to move Northumberland to a Net Zero carbon position by 2030.

The timeline for the delivery of the school aims for a handover date of April 2025.

The following documents are attached at <b>Appendix 1:</b>	
1A	Pupil/catchment data - Astley High School
1B	Pupil/catchment data - Whytrig Middle School
1C	Letter of support from Seaton Valley Federation Governing Body
1D	Schedule of accommodation



## 2 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

**Section 2 and Appendix 2** of this OBC describe the Procurement Strategy for the whole scheme.

This section of the Outline Business Case outlines how the overall scheme will be procured given the information and time constraints available.

### *2.1 Procurement Options*

A Procurement Report has been developed at Appendix 2B which considers the following four procurement options:

1. Traditional
2. Design and Build
3. Management Contracting
4. Construction Management

Northumberland County Council's key objectives for the delivery of the project are noted as follows:

1. New Middle School and High School to operate from Easter 2025
2. Lump Sum Contract
3. Risk reduced to manageable level

Management Contracting and Construction Management procurement routes involve the Client retaining a large portion of the scheme risk and in addition they do not provide a lump sum contract, therefore both options were discounted as they do not comply with the above parameters.

Traditional procurement, following Public Contracts Regulation 2015 (PCR) tendering procedures, would push back the contract award by a couple of months and put the operational date in serious risk. In addition, most risk is born by the Client through this route and on a scheme of this cost the level of risk retained would be excessive.

Design and Build procurement shares risk between the Contractor and Client on a more even basis, design can overlap with construction activities commencing and a lump sum contract is obtained prior to contract award.

## 2.2 Recommended Option

It is recommended that a Design and Build Procurement strategy is utilised to deliver the project; either via a single stage, two stage or competitive dialogue tendering process.

Soft market testing would be undertaken on issue of the PIN (Prior Information Notice) to establish the market's views to the tendering process and to consider the appetite for each of the processes listed above.

A single stage approach creates greater competition in pricing across all tendered works and allows the Authority greater control of the design by retaining the design team through the development and technical design stages.

A two-stage approach comes with a more significant proportion of risk associated with the negotiation of the second stage contract packages as has been demonstrated on several recent projects where negotiations were extremely difficult and protracted. Through observation of the market in the North East, on a scheme of this size, the market's preference would be for a two-stage tender approach.

A variation to the two-stage approach, which introduces a greater element of competition during the second stage, is to shortlist the suppliers down to two following a design process where the designs have been taken to RIBA Stage 3. This allows both bidders to input into the RIBA Stage 4 designs as they progress and the successful bidder is appointed following their final cost submission. The added benefit of this approach is that the design utilises the experience of both Contractors during the Technical Design phase to advise on buildability.

A competitive dialogue approach is best utilised where the key driver is introducing design competition through the contractor's design teams to obtain an innovative and unique building design. This route however is labour intensive and extremely expensive for contractors to bid. There is a value threshold where the market will not consider this to be an appropriate method due to the costs incurred in bidding via this method. It is anticipated this scheme is below that value and doesn't have the design demands to warrant such a route to market.

Development of designs can be managed through these options to a varying degree of control. There is also the ability to take designs through to developed designs (RIBA stage 3) or to technical designs (RIBA stage 4). The design team will be novated across to the preferred bidder at the contract award stage to ensure their continued involvement.

The principal difference is around the level of control that the client wishes to maintain with the design development. Developing designs to RIBA stage 3 requires the contractor to complete the design increasing the likelihood of design aspirations not being fully understood and implemented and design changes being proposed to make the project more profitable and to ease buildability for the contractor on site.

Taking designs through to RIBA stage 4, the client would have full control of the design process which would enable the design intent to fully reflect their objectives. This will be key if the scheme is to be designed to Net Zero Carbon in Operation as the design detailing is critical to hitting the necessary standards.

To reduce risk to a manageable level, to retain full control of the design objectives for the scheme and to ensure the requirements of Net Zero Carbon in Operation are achieved it is recommended to follow a single stage Design and Build procurement strategy tendered at the end of RIBA stage 4.

### **2.3 Route to Market**

Advice has been obtained from the Procurement department within NCC to understand its obligations regarding the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Whilst there are benefits to proceeding with an open tender or Framework procedure which will be discussed below, it is recommended that this project proceeds utilising a PCR compliant, non-Framework 'open' tender process.

The procurement programme highlights that there is time to tender through an FTS notice as this can be run in parallel with the development of stage 3 designs and the determination period of the planning application.

There are several benefits of procuring from a Public Sector compliant framework; contractors have prequalified saving the cost of this exercise, have tendered their level of overheads and profit and have provided a benchmark on their preliminary costs. The downside however is that there is a potential levy charge for utilising frameworks which adds a further capital cost to the scheme. The benefit however is the saving in time gained by the prequalification, so framework options are essentially used when programme deadlines are at risk of being met.

There are several Public Sector compliant frameworks that Northumberland as either a member organisation or as a Public Sector Contracting Body in the UK can purchase from, both local and national. Framework options such as NEPO, YORBuild, CCS, SBS, Pagabo, Procure Partnerships. Another option for the Authority is to utilise one of the DfE's contracting frameworks. NCC procurement will look at all available frameworks to see which is best value for the Authority.

The selection of which framework to use will be essential in obtaining the best tender list for the project to ensure the right level of competition is realised and that local suppliers are provided with an opportunity to bid. The quality of contractor is always important and part of the frameworks vetting process but will be given additional scrutiny if Net Zero Carbon in Operation is to be set as a requirement.

Going through a framework tender process will reduce tendering costs and alleviate the pressure on internal resources. However, this needs to be balanced against the additional cost of the levy and whether the frameworks list of prequalified contractors is not too restrictive in respect to ensuring value for money and that local suppliers aren't precluded.

Using the PCR compliant, non-Framework 'restricted' option will both add additional time and elongate the programme by three months and thus is not a deliverable option. This is due to the requirement of having to publish the ITT at the SQ stage which can only be done on completion of RIBA Stage 3 at the earliest.

With due consideration to the questions in the selection questionnaire it will be possible to ensure that the shortlisted tenderers are selected on both education, swimming pool and

particularly their Net Zero Carbon in Operation expertise and experience, their team, capacity and their use of the local supply chain.

In summary, both options will offer value and a competitive price for NCC. Procuring from a framework will be potentially cheaper, subject to the levy charge, however a PCR compliant, non Framework 'open' tender process may provide a more robust list of tenderers.

Further to consultation with the NCC procurement team, it is recommended that we proceed with the PCR compliant, non Framework 'open' tender process.

## 2.4 Procurement Programme

Two programmes have been appended to this Outline Business Case at Appendix 2A to demonstrate the procurement of the project through a Design and Build approach using the single stage tendering strategy tendered at the end of RIBA stage 4.

The programme for procurement includes for a pre-qualification shortlisting process followed by a tendering procedure with a minimum of 5 contractors invited, run over a total duration of twenty-three weeks. The programme allocates four weeks to scrutinise the shortlisted bidders' proposals.

It should be noted that, to comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the full ITT documents are to be issued as part of the pre-qualification suite of documents.

Key Dates are as follows for the two options:

### 2.4.1 New Build Middle & High Schools on Existing Site

Outline Business Case (to end of RIBA Stage 2)	22 Sep - 10 Feb 2022
Outline Business Case Approval	26 Apr 2022
PIN Notice Period	26 Apr – 22 Sep 2022
RIBA Stage 3 Designs	02 May – 22 Jul 2022
Planning Submission	22 Jul 2022
RIBA 4 Detailed Designs	25 Jul – 09 Dec 2022
Planning Approval	08 Nov 2022
Prepare ITT Documents	26 Sep – 23 Dec 2022
Tender Period	09 Jan – 17 Mar 2023
Appraisal / NCC Approvals / FBC	20 Mar – 14 Apr 2023
Award contract	14 Apr 2023

\* risk of judicial review on new site option due to developing on the greenbelt.



## 2.5 Construction Programme

It will be the responsibility of the successful contractor to provide a construction programme to support the delivery of the construction project.

Upon appointment of the Contractor, a set of contract documents will be issued for execution by both the Contractor and Client. This will include a set of updated designs for Contract which will further develop into Construction Issue Drawings which is what the Contractor will use to undertake the works on site.

### 2.5.1 New Build Middle & High Schools on Existing Site

A period of 80 weeks for construction is anticipated inclusive of commissioning but exclusive of the 6 weeks mobilisation period. A period of 3 weeks is programmed for decanting the end user of the building which commences at handover. A 15 week contingency period has also been factored in to account for any unforeseen delays and tie in with handover at the end of the spring term.

Contract finalisation (Standstill period)	17 Apr – 28 Apr 2023
Contractor lead-in	01 May – 09 Jun 2023
Construction commences on site	12 Jun 2023
Construction complete on site (Phase 1)	20 Dec 2024
Decanting complete	25 Apr 2025
School opens	28 Apr 2025
Demolition and External Pitch Works (Phase 2)	28 Apr – 05 Jan 2026

### 2.5.2 New Build Middle & High Schools on Proposed New Site

A period of 80 weeks for construction is anticipated inclusive of commissioning but exclusive of the 6 weeks mobilisation period. A period of 3 weeks is programmed for decanting the end user of the building which commences at handover. A 15 week contingency period has also been factored in to account for any unforeseen delays and tie in with handover at the end of the spring term

Contract finalisation (Standstill period)	17 Apr – 28 Apr 2023
Contractor lead-in	01 May – 09 Jun 2023
Construction commences on site	12 Jun 2023
Construction complete on site (Phase 1)	20 Dec 2024
Decanting complete	25 Apr 2025
School opens	28 Apr 2025
Demolition (Phase 2)	28 Apr – 24 Oct 2025



## 2.6 Summary

Following a review of procurement options available for construction projects, it is recommended that the development is procured through a Design and Build strategy utilising a single stage tendering procedure tendered at the end of RIBA stage 4.

It is recommended that the project proceeds via a PCR compliant, non Framework 'open' tender process.

The key objective for the delivery of the project is;

- New Middle School and High School to operate from 28 April 2025

New Middle and High School (existing or new site) key dates:

- OBC approval 26 April 2022
- RIBA stage 3 designs instructed 02 May 2022
- Planning submitted 22 July 2022 and determined on 08 November 2022
- RIBA stage 4 designs completed 09 December 2022
- Tenders issued 09 January 2023
- Tenders returned 17 March 2023 and contract awarded 14 April 2023
- Construction commences on site 12 June 2023
- New school opens 28 April 2025

The following documents are attached at **Appendix 2:**

2A	Programme
2B	Procurement Report

### 3 LAND

**Section 3** of this Outline Business Case describes the site options appraisal undertaken which contributes to the design and construction works of a preferred option.

#### 3.1 Introduction

The scheme outlined involves the potential development of a new educational facility in Seaton Delaval, combining the existing AHS and WMS, which are currently located on a single site off Elsdon Avenue.

The site also includes a swimming pool that is used by both the general public and the schools. The current school buildings and pool are in poor physical condition and the proposed redevelopment will rectify those problems. This section outlines the potential development options considered, including the Options Appraisal undertaken for the purpose of demonstrating that the scheme is deliverable. It should be noted that the current Elsdon Avenue site is undersized (it is circa 56,278m<sup>2</sup>) to accommodate the redevelopment of a new high school and middle school. Redevelopment of the existing site will require the acquisition of additional land to provide further sports pitches to meet DfE standard BB103. This requires a minimum site area of 69,000m<sup>2</sup>, giving a shortfall of circa 12,722m<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to two 11 v 11 football pitches.

In planning terms Sport England would be a statutory consultee on the planning application and any sustained objection from them (anticipated if we can't meet their requirements for pitch sizes) would lead to the application being either refused by the LPA or, if the LPA were minded to approve, an application with a Sport England objection outstanding, it means referral to the Secretary of State to consider a call in and a potential public inquiry.

One of the options developed however includes off-site playing fields in order to address the shortfall in on-site provision. However, this option brings many disadvantages to the operation of school in terms of safeguarding and the impact on curriculum time as the children and young people would have to travel on foot to the off-site pitches.

As such, relocating the schools to a larger site has also been considered and a potential site has been identified on the outskirts of the town within the green belt. The land search has proved challenging in seeking to identify a suitably sized site within the catchment area that would be suitable for development i.e. not affected by pylons, access issues etc., hence why a green belt site has had to be considered. The Avenue site, which has been identified for use for either the entire school or for standalone playing pitches, is classified as green belt and it should be noted that development in the green belt will only be allowed in very special circumstances. This requires a demonstration of substantial public benefit to be obtained from release of the green belt. The option of constructing a new build school on each site to replace the existing has been considered.

#### 3.2 Land Ownership

Table 3A below shows a summary of the ownership status of the sites covered by the review:

**Table 3A: Site ownership status**

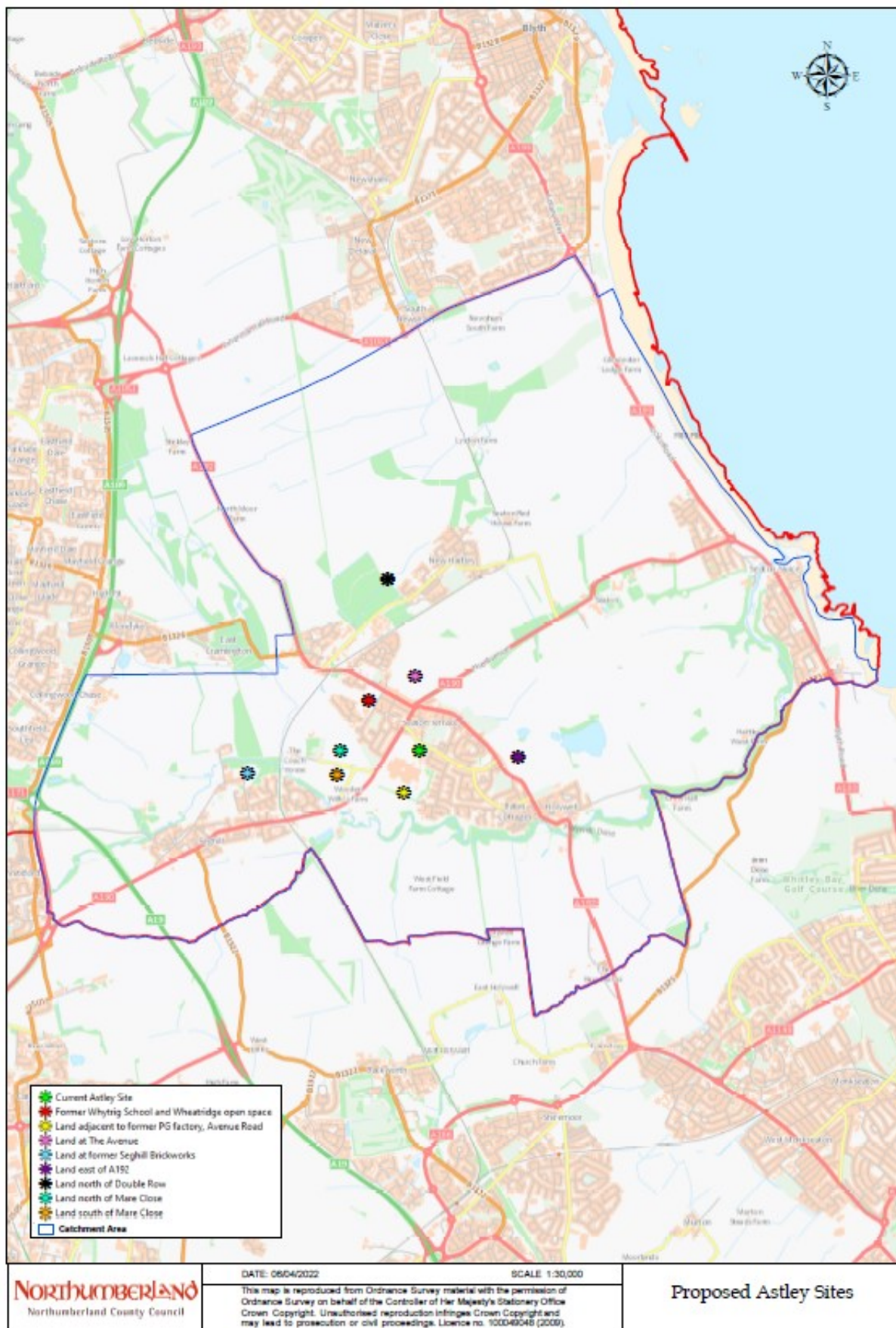
<b>Astley High and Whytrig Middle School (current site)</b>	NCC freehold
<b>Land at former Whytrig Middle School</b>	Part NCC freehold, part private ownership - Hastings Estates. Currently leased by NCC for educational purposes, site of Seaton Delaval Primary School.
<b>Land off The Avenue</b>	Land in private ownership - Hastings Estates.

### **3.3 Site Options**

A site options appraisal was undertaken to identify available sites. The following sites were discounted.

#### **Search Parameters**

- Within the Seaton Valley Federation catchment area
- Good adjacency to current Whytrig and Astley Schools
- Accessible from major transport routes
- Good accessibility for travel on foot/bike
- Close to settlement boundary
- Not affected by physical features i.e. pylons, ponds, watercourses
- Min 120,000m<sup>2</sup> site area



### **Land north of Double Row**

- Affected by historic colliery use
- Expensive to remediate & develop

### **Land at Former Whytrig Middle School & Wheatridge open space**

- Using public open space
- Under-sized for required development
- Considered for playing facilities or parking only

### **Land adjacent to former P&G factory, Avenue Road**

- Under-sized for required development
- Considered playing facilities
- No longer available for purchase

### **Land at former Seghill Brickworks**

- Under-sized for required development
- Affected by historic land use issues, expensive to remediate
- Away from current school sites

### **Land north and south of Mare Close**

- Affected by pylons- avoiding pylons would result in difficult shaped site to meet required area
- Not as easily accessed on foot

### **Land east of A192**

- Proximity to Holywell Ponds not ideal
- Location not as central as Avenue site

Table 3B states the following options have been considered:

**Table 3B: Site Options**

<b>Option 1</b> - Do nothing
<b>Option 2</b> - Backlog maintenance at the existing Astley High School building
<b>Option 3</b> - New build on the existing Elsdon Avenue site with off-site playing fields on the land off The Avenue
<b>Option 4</b> - New build on the Avenue site only, with access from The Avenue
<b>Option 5</b> - New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with park and stride provision on Astley Road.
<b>Option 6</b> - New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with hybrid park and stride provision on Astley Road.



### **3.3.1 Methodology**

All sites with the potential to accommodate the schools were identified through an initial search using plans, followed by a physical search of the area. The sites were then appraised in a systematic manner by application of seven criteria to produce a score for each in order to grade any suitable options.

### **3.3.2 Appraisal Criteria**

#### **i) Ownership**

Established where possible from existing County Council records and reference to title documentation.

#### **ii) Site capacity**

All the options described are capable of being located on the sites as mentioned.

#### **iii) Planning**

In consultation with County Council planning staff, a number of matters were considered in assessing the appropriate score. These included the following:

- Green belt issues
- Settlement boundary / open land issues
- Accessibility / transport
- Highways and parking
- Landscape impact
- Impact on nature conservation
- Impact on archaeology / historic heritage
- Adjacent land uses and potential impact on residential amenity
- Contaminated land issues

#### **iv) Access & Transport**

In consultation with County Council Highway Officers, road access, proximity of junctions and public transport services were considered.

#### **v) Timescale**

Scores applied to reflect the estimated period required to acquire the site, without obtaining planning permission.

#### **vi) Acquisition Cost**

Involved consideration of existing use and planning consents, ownership and use allocation within the Local Plan.

#### **vii) Title Investigation**

Carried out wherever possible using a title report from Womble Bond Dickinson. Any title defects are reflected in the scores applied.

#### **viii) Location**

Accessibility for pupils.

#### **ix) Support from Schools**

Level of buy in from the schools involved.

### 3.3.3 Scoring criteria

- Scoring is on a scale of 1- 10.
- In relation to ownership, planning, access, timescale, acquisition cost and title investigation, a higher score is indicative of a positive contribution to scheme deliverability, with 10 representing no barriers to deliverability arising and 1 representing a significant level of added difficulty or risk to deliverability arising from that aspect.
- In relation to capacity and location, a higher score is indicative of greater levels of suitability in meeting the requirements of the scheme, with 10 representing the scheme needs being fully met and 1 representing the scheme needs being unmet.
- In relation to the support from schools' criteria, a higher score is indicative of a greater level of buy-in from the school, with 10 representing full support and 1 representing no support from the school. A negative number suggests not just a lack of support but active resistance.

Option 1 – Do nothing		
Criteria	Comments	Score
Ownership	Current site in NCC ownership	10
Site Capacity	Current site is undersized by the equivalent of 2 11 v 11 football pitches. No scope for future expansion	1
Planning	No planning implications	10
Access	No access implications	10
Timescale	Failing to address current repair issues is essentially deferring and delaying inevitable work, during which time the condition will deteriorate further and costs to remediate will increase as a result	2
Acquisition Cost	No acquisition costs	10
Title Investigation	No title implications	10
Location	Current site is accessible and works well for the pupils and staff. No potential to expand due to site being bounded on all sides.	5
Support from schools	The Federation is concerned at the current standard and quality of facilities for both staff and pupils and the impact on the education of the children. Disappointment if the opportunity to improve was not seized upon	-4
<b>Appraisal Score</b>		<b>54</b>



Advantages	Disadvantages
No legal or planning implications for NCC	Condition of the school will continue to deteriorate further, cost of remedial works will increase as a result
Use of the current site continues undisturbed	Quality of the teaching environment will remain poor for staff and students
Makes use of the current site	Site will remain inadequate in terms of sports provision and will be unable to accommodate further growth
	No improvement to community facilities
	No buy-in from the Federation

#### Option 2 - Backlog maintenance

Criteria	Comments	Score
Ownership	No implications- site in NCC ownership	10
Site Capacity	Current site is undersized by the equivalent of 2 11 v 11 football pitches. No scope for future expansion	1
Planning	No implications	10
Access	Work will have to be carried out within an operational school, requiring decanting of students and disruption to teaching.	2
Timescale	Working within an operational school will slow the process of completing the required work.	2
Acquisition Cost	No implications	10
Title Investigation	No implications	10
Location	Current site is accessible and works well for the pupils and staff. No potential to expand due to site being bounded on all sides by existing development.	5
Support from schools	Support for improvement in the standard of the facilities but disappointment at the missed opportunity to use the funds to achieve benefits over and above basic repairs.	1
<b>Appraisal Score</b>		<b>51</b>

Advantages	Disadvantages
Improves the standard of accommodation for staff and pupils	Missed opportunity to use the money to be spent (c. £16m) towards making greater improvements
No associated acquisition costs or other site-related implications	Site will remain undersized to allow for future expansion and short on playing pitches for the current schools
Use of current site within NCC ownership-works can commence at any time	Disruption to school operation due to accommodating for works and need to decant students
	Ineffective use of time working around a school in use
	Lost opportunity to improve community benefits
	Limited support from the Federation

**Option 3 – New build on the existing Elsdon Avenue site with off-site playing fields on the land off The Avenue**

Criteria	Comments	Score
Ownership	Part NCC owned, part in private ownership. Terms for use of the Avenue land subject to negotiation, initial response from the private landowner was positive	6
Site Capacity	As the existing site is under capacity and to achieve the playing pitch requirements of the schools off-site playing fields are required to meet DfE and Sport England standards of sports provision.	7
Planning	Planning has indicated providing sports facilities on greenbelt land should be acceptable, but potential exists for residents' opposition to the plan. Playing fields will have less visual impact on a heritage landscape than school buildings. Use of the existing site for school buildings will reduce risk of planning complications and delay due to call-in. Potential for residents' objection to proximity of new school buildings	7
Access	Access via Prospect Avenue for pedestrians and vehicles if required. Unregistered land laying between the end of the public highway and the site boundary will require insurance to protect NCC's position in the event of potential claims.	7
Timescale	Potential for delays if there are complications with ending the agricultural tenancy in place on the Avenue site or in agreeing the lease for use of the land. Completion of the build will take longer with greater potential for delays due to the complications of working on an operational school site. Current building will need to be retained until the new build is completed with demolition work and build of playing pitches to follow	3
Acquisition Cost	The Avenue land is offered on a leasehold basis, as such there is no capital outlay for acquisition, however there will be a long-term rental commitment under the lease	7
Title Investigation	Title report completed into The Avenue land - agricultural tenancy to be terminated by the landowner, legal advice has been taken and this is possible. Landowner is keen to work with NCC to achieve vacant possession of the site. Drainage rights affect part of the site but should be unaffected by sports pitches. No issues affecting current school site.	6
Location	Current school site works well for staff and pupils. Playing fields within walking distance but preferable to	5

	have them on site. Inconvenience of pupils travelling between sites during lesson time	
Support from schools	The Federation is keen to benefit from modernised facilities and increased sports provision but given its particular interest in sporting activities, off-site facilities are impractical	5
<b>Appraisal Score</b>		<b>53</b>

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Considerable improvement to facilities and teaching environment	Potential for delays if complications arise with the legal work relating to the tenancy and the lease to NCC
Likely to be successful in planning terms	More complicated build and potential disruption to the school operation
Rebuild will result in a more energy efficient school building	Off-site playing fields are impractical and introduce a risk around safeguarding pupils as they travel on foot to the off site facilities. The travelling between the sites also takes value curriculum time out of the school day.
Gives scope for the off site school fields to expand if needed in the future	Risk of rejection of development in the green belt and call-in
	Not supported by the school staff or governing body because of the compromises around safeguarding and impact on the curriculum.
	Limited improvement in facilities used by the community

#### **Option 4 – New build on the Avenue site only, with access from The Avenue**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score</b>
Ownership	Land in private ownership. Initial discussions with the owner are positive, Heads of Terms for a new lease are under negotiation with no contentious issues. National Trust own the land abutting The Avenue- Hastings Estate has reserved rights to cross it that can be utilised, however additional land owned by the Trust will be required to create the necessary width of access road and cycle/footways. Terms are yet to be agreed	6
Site Capacity	Site will have scope for future expansion while accommodating all facilities on one site.	10
Planning	Site will require development in the greenbelt- initial discussions indicate the scheme could meet the special considerations requirements but there is potential for call in by Secretary for State which could delay or put an end to the plans	5

Access	Agreed with Hastings Estate exclusivity of use for the existing track to avoid potential conflict with farm vehicles Use of the National Trust's land may not be agreeable. The Trust has indicated that the consent process may be time-consuming and the procedure difficult to navigate.	3
Timescale	Potential delays due to agreeing terms with National Trust regarding access. Discussions ongoing to seek to agree terms early in the timetable to provide certainty Potential delays in agreeing terms with landowner for the lease, although terms have been agreed in principle. Further potential for delay in terms of the landlord agreeing with its tenant provisions for the termination of agricultural tenancy. Call-in could delay timetable	3
Acquisition Cost	The Avenue land is offered on a leasehold basis, as such there are no capital outlay for acquisition however there will be a long-term rental commitment under the lease	7
Title Investigation	Title report has been completed- land subject to agricultural tenancy that can be terminated. Site subject to drainage rights that can be accommodated for in build design.	6
Location	The new site is within walking distance of the existing site so will retain the same accessibility as the current site. Sports and educational buildings on one site, which will be preferable from an operational perspective over Option 3.	10
Support from schools	The Federation is keen to see the redevelopment of the site to create improved facilities and the benefits that the redevelopment will bring, however there is awareness that the access required poses a significant obstacle to delivering the scheme.	8
<b>Appraisal Score</b>		<b>58</b>

Advantages	Disadvantages
All facilities located on one site- sports and educational buildings	Multiple potential sources of delay to timetable but potential to minimise risk through early agreement on lease and access
Site offers potential for further expansion if needed in the future	Termination of agricultural tenancy is the responsibility of the landowner to agree with its tenant and so outside the control of NCC
Site offers space to accommodate the optimal amount of sports pitches	Potential for call-in presents significant risk to project delivery
New building will provide facilities with a longer economic life than the current site	Complications of seeking agreement of the National Trust for land use presents significant potential for delay or a threat to the project proceeding at all
Redevelopment will provide modern, enhanced teaching facilities and an improved environment	
Redevelopment will provide improved facilities for the benefit of the community	
Releases current Astley site for reuse or disposal and a potential capital receipt	
Rebuild will create a more energy efficient building	

**Option 5 – New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with park and stride provision on Astley Road.**

Criteria	Comments	Score
Ownership	Land in private ownership. Initial discussions undertaken with the owner are positive, Heads of Terms for a new lease are under negotiation with no contentious issues.	7
Site Capacity	Site will have scope for future expansion while accommodating the key facilities one site.	10
Planning	Site will require development in the greenbelt- initial discussions indicate the scheme could meet the special considerations requirements but potential for call in by Secretary for State which could delay or put an end to the plans	4
Access	Off-site parking means reduced traffic volume that negates the need for use of National Trust land as discussed in Option 4. Prospect Avenue to be used for the main access into the school site. Land between the adopted highway and site boundary is unregistered- discussions are ongoing with Hastings estate as the likely owner to seek to secure registered title to allow a right of access to be granted. Alternatively, insurance can be obtained to protect NCC's position.	8



	Reserved right of access from The Avenue can be used as a secondary access without the need for additional land from the National Trust.	
Timescale	Potential delays due to agreeing terms with landowner for the lease, and in the landlord agreeing terms with its tenant for the termination of agricultural tenancy. Call-in could delay timetable	4
Acquisition Cost	The Avenue land is offered on a leasehold basis, as such there are no capital outlay for acquisition however there will be a long-term rental commitment under the lease	7
Title Investigation	Title report has been completed- land subject to agricultural tenancy that can be terminated. Drainage rights that can be accommodated for in build design.	6
Location	The new site is within walking distance of the existing site so will retain the same accessibility as the current site. Sports and educational buildings on one site, which will be preferable from an operational perspective over Option 3. May be some negativity from staff regarding the inconvenience of off-site car parking.	8
Support from schools	The Federation is keen to see the redevelopment of the site to create improved facilities and the benefits that the redevelopment will bring. The park and stride may not be well-received by staff but the increased deliverability of this option leads to greater support from the Federation	8
<b>Appraisal Score</b>		<b>62</b>



Advantages	Disadvantages
All facilities located on one site- sports and education buildings	Multiple potential sources of delay to timetable but potential to minimise risk through early agreement on lease and access
Off-site car parking will mean the existing accesses can be used. Removing the need to gain National Trust consent to use land in their ownership will reduce the risk to the deliverability of the project	Termination of agricultural tenancy termination is a responsibility of the landowner to agree with its tenant and so outside the control of NCC
Site offers potential for further expansion if needed in the future	Potential for call-in presents significant risk to project delivery
Site offers space to accommodate the optimal amount of sports pitches	Split site with off-site car parking is not ideal from a staff amenity point of view
New building will provide facilities with a longer economic life than the current site	
Redevelopment will provide modern, enhanced teaching facilities and an improved environment	
Redevelopment will provide improved facilities for the benefit of the community	
Releases current Astley site for reuse or disposal and a potential capital receipt. Part of the site may be used	
Rebuild creates a more energy efficient school building	

**Option 6 – New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with hybrid park and stride provision on Astley Road.**

Criteria	Comments	Score
Ownership	Land in private ownership. Initial discussions undertaken with the owner are positive, Heads of Terms for a new lease are under negotiation with no contentious issues.	7
Site Capacity	Site will have scope for future expansion while accommodating the key facilities one site.	10
Planning	Site will require development in the greenbelt- initial discussions indicate the scheme could meet the special considerations requirements but potential for call in by Secretary for State which could delay or put an end to the plans	4
Access	Off-site parking means reduced traffic volume that negates the need for use of National Trust land as discussed in Option 4. Prospect Avenue to be used for the main access into the school site. Land between the adopted highway and site boundary is unregistered- discussions are ongoing with Hastings estate as the likely owner to seek to secure	8



	registered title to allow a right of access to be granted. Alternatively, insurance can be obtained to protect NCC's position. Reserved right of access from The Avenue can be used as a secondary access without the need for additional land from the National Trust.	
Timescale	Potential delays due to agreeing terms with landowner for the lease, and in the landlord agreeing terms with its tenant for the termination of agricultural tenancy. Call-in could delay timetable	4
Acquisition Cost	The Avenue land is offered on a leasehold basis, as such there is no capital outlay for acquisition however there will be a long-term rental commitment under the lease	7
Title Investigation	Title report has been completed- land subject to agricultural tenancy that can be terminated. Drainage rights that can be accommodated for in build design.	6
Location	The new site is within walking distance of the existing site so will retain the same accessibility as the current site. Sports and educational buildings on one site, which will be preferable from an operational perspective over Option 3.	8
Support from schools	The Federation is keen to see the redevelopment of the site to create improved facilities and the benefits that the redevelopment will bring. The on-site sports facilities and staff parking leads to increased support from SVF over Option 5	9
<b>Appraisal Score</b>		<b>63</b>

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
All facilities located on one site- sports and education buildings. On-site staff car parking is appealing to SVF.	Multiple potential sources of delay to timetable but potential to minimise risk through early agreement on lease and access
Off-site car parking will mean the existing accesses can be used. Removing the need to gain National Trust consent to use land in their ownership will reduce the risk to the deliverability of the project	Termination of agricultural tenancy termination is a responsibility of the landowner to agree with its tenant and so outside the control of NCC
Site offers potential for further expansion if needed in the future	Potential for call-in presents risk to project delivery. Risk has been mitigated by working with Planning Authority who have issued a letter of comfort that the development is likely to be supported
Site offers space to accommodate the optimal amount of sports pitches	



New building will provide facilities with a longer economic life than the current site	
Redevelopment will provide modern, enhanced teaching facilities and an improved environment	
Redevelopment will provide improved facilities for the benefit of the community as all sporting and changing facilities will be together on one site.	
Releases current Astley site for reuse or disposal and a potential capital receipt. Part of the site may be used	
Rebuild creates a more energy efficient school building	

**Table 3C: Option Appraisal Results**

Rank	Option	
<b>1</b>	<b>Option 6</b> - New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with hybrid park and stride provision on Astley Road.	63
<b>2</b>	<b>Option 5</b> - New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with park and stride provision on Astley Road	62
<b>3</b>	<b>Option 4</b> - New build on the Avenue site only, with access from The Avenue	58
<b>4</b>	<b>Option 1</b> – Do nothing	54
<b>5</b>	<b>Option 3</b> - New build on the existing Elsdon Avenue site with off-site playing fields on the land off The Avenue	53
<b>6</b>	<b>Option 2</b> – Backlog maintenance	51

### **3.3.4 Preferred Option**

Option 6, closely followed by Option 5 is the preferred option due to the increased deliverability prospects over Option 4.

This option represents the best opportunity to realise several improvements that will benefit both the Federation and NCC. These include as mentioned above:

- The cost saving offered by a new-build, energy efficient school
- Simplicity in terms of the build and demolition process. The school can operate from its current location and move to the new site on completion, leaving the vacant sites to be cleared. No phasing or temporary arrangements would be required, preventing disruption to school operation.
- Increased and improved playing facilities, meeting standard BB103

- Scope to accommodate a growth in numbers or any future changes i.e. through reorganisation
- Creating an environmentally friendly school building that responds to the current climate emergency and the removal of an inefficient and wasteful building
- Capital receipt generated through the sale of the released school site or the site may be redeveloped where NCC has a need for the land for other purposes.

It is accepted that development in the greenbelt and acquiring land from a third party brings additional risks to the project in terms of potential impact on the timetable and deliverability. It is possible to mitigate the risks associated with the acquisition through early negotiation of the lease and entering into an agreement for lease, subject to relevant matters such as obtaining satisfactory planning permission and satisfactory results of site investigation surveys. This can be achieved in parallel with ongoing design work, with the risk of abortive legal and project fees if the matter is not concluded in an acceptable timeframe, or if planning permission is not forthcoming. Unfortunately, the risk remains regarding planning and a potential 'call in'. However, given the experience of the team and work already carried out with planners on developing the options and confirmation in the planning letter of comfort that their initial view was that very special circumstance demonstrated would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The opportunity to secure a site that offers the benefits highlighted above and that will serve the schools and wider community more appropriately both now and into the future, warrants a degree of speculation.

As part of the process of obtaining Department for Education consent to dispose of surplus former school sites elsewhere in the County, NCC has committed to applying the receipts generated towards the SVF scheme. This encompasses receipts obtained from the following disposals:

- West Woodburn First School - £175,000 - £200,000
- Netherton Northside First School - £150,000
- Wooler First School - £300,000

### ***3.5 Potential Land Acquisition Costs and Capital Receipts***

#### ***3.5.1 Market Values of Potentially Surplus Sites***

**Table 3E: Site Valuations**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Total Area (Hectares)</b>	<b>Valuation</b>
Astley High School- built-on area only due to limitations of DfE consent to dispose of school playing fields	2.5	£1,100,000

If a new school is built on the Avenue Site, the entirety of the sports provision will be new playing fields and would offset the loss of the fields at the Elsdon Avenue site. It is likely therefore that Planning Permission could be obtained for development of the whole of the existing Elsdon Avenue site and this receipt could be up to £2,500,000

### 3.5.2 Valuation Assumptions

- The value included above is a high-level figure for estimation purposes only and final value will ultimately depend on a range of factors
- Planning permission is granted in respect of redevelopment without any onerous conditions
- There are no adverse site investigation results
- Assumes Planning and other consents will only be achieved on the brown field part of the site. This may be conservative as new pitches are being provided which would fully mitigate any loss on the Astley site.

### 3.6 Planning Commentary

#### 3.6.1 Existing Astley High and Whytrig Middle School Site





### Constraints

- Proximity to residential properties will need to be considered
- Size of site will dictate layout options
- Limit on the playing facilities that can be created. Building type will determine the extent of the loss against the BB103 standard.
- Highways considerations in relation to site access

### Key Issues

- The site is currently in the settlement boundary so the principle of the development is acceptable here
- Currently used as a school so preferable in planning terms

### Ecology Comments

- School buildings often have cladding and other features which can be used by roosting bats and nesting birds. There are several bat roost records locally including at the nearby factory.
- It is recommended that bat and bird surveys are undertaken at the site in Summer 2020 and updated regularly thereafter. This will begin with an ecological appraisal (daylight) survey followed by activity (dusk/dawn surveys).
- A pond is present within the grounds of the neighbouring factory, and this will need to be assessed for its ability to support great crested newts and other protected amphibians.
- If bat roosts are discovered a Natural England Protected Species Mitigation License will be required prior to demolition or works affecting the roosts.
- It should be noted that it can be problematic to secure a Natural England license to demolish buildings when no alternative use of a site is proposed.
- If the site is to be sold for housing the developer will be required to contribute to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service, to mitigate for increased recreational disturbance to coastal sites.



### 3.6.2 The Avenue Land



NB For illustrative purposes only, land to be acquired subject to negotiation

#### Constraints

- The site is outside the settlement boundary and is in green belt
- It is also next to the Avenue which falls in the Seaton Delaval Conservation Area. Consultation with Conservation also required.
- The principle of the development would not be acceptable here unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated

#### Key Issues

- Risk of developing in the green belt and potential review of the decision by the Secretary for State
- Potential adverse public reaction to green belt development
- Need to ensure appropriate access rights to the site across land abutting the adopted highway

#### Ecology Comments

- This is an arable field with limited value to protected species. However, there are field margins and an area of standing water to the northeast corner. The site is 320m at its nearest point from New Hartley Ponds Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is designated for a large population of great crested newts. The ponds are being surveyed to inform the development of the Northumberland Line and as such there should be no need to commission separate survey of these off-site ponds.
- Government Standing Advice on great crested newts and development projects states that the risk to the species of disturbance of terrestrial habitat over 250m from breeding ponds is low. In terms of construction site management, the constraints may include a Protected Species Licence but with avoidance of the period when newts are in their terrestrial phase, working method statement and avoidance of the existing field buffer (i.e. retaining that as a site buffer) the risk can be managed easier and may qualify for a Low Impact licence for great crested newts.

- Trees to the Avenue and existing hedgerows on the site should be retained as far as is possible in the design to avoid harm to features which could be used by protected species such as newts and bats.
- The cost of extensive surveys can be reduced if good design principles are used to avoid harm, so maintaining the tree lined boundary to the Avenue and minimising light spill onto that boundary automatically removes the risk to bats foraging routes and reduces the need for extensive survey.
- Work on both sites will require Ecological Clerks of Works to be in place during site clearance to supervise works and avoid harm to protected species.

### **Planning**

- Any ecological survey should be completed with reports and any mitigation proposed submitted with a planning application.
- Without adequate survey there may be delays to determination.

### **Biodiversity Net Gain**

- The Environment Bill 2021 includes a mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain for planning applications. There is a two-year implementation period but it does make sense to forward plan for the mandatory requirement, carry out a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (via the DEFRA metric) and plan for how biodiversity loss can be avoided, and gain can be maximised through design.
- If the development as proposed is impacting areas of arable field, buildings, amenity grassland and hard standing this would be reflected as a very low unit value calculated using the DEFRA metric. The addition of loss of natural habitats such as hedgerows and tree lines would increase the net loss value which would need to be compensated for.
- This not only includes avoiding loss and impacts on habitats (which as discussed above saves costs and reduces the need for licensing and site supervision and delays whilst waiting for licences) but reduces the need to find biodiversity net gains on the site or to offset on other land within the Council's control.
- It is essential that ecologists are involved in the early stages of the design process to reduce risks to the project and save costs and delays further along the project timetable.

### 3.7 Summary

The Avenue site presents a number of potential complications to scheme delivery, however a number of those can be resolved at an early stage to reduce the risk to the project timeframe.

Relocating to The Avenue Site remains the best option to deliver a scheme that meets the needs of the Federation both now and in the future and allows for the creation of a modern, environmentally conscious building with enhanced facilities that benefit both the school and the local residents.

The surrounding heritage landscape and adjacency to housing will require sensitivity in the design but does not present a significant obstacle.

The potential difficulties caused due to the status of the site as green belt is the only aspect of the scheme that cannot be mitigated against.

Option 6 allows the current site on Elsdon Avenue to be released for redevelopment by NCC or marketed for sale, generating a capital receipt. While Option 6 is marginally the highest scoring option due to the increased support from SVF, Option 5 offers the same benefits and scope to deliver and warrants equal consideration, although as there is almost parity of project cost for Options 5 and 6, Option 4 is an additional option to consider.

## 4 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

**Section 4** and **Appendix 4** of this Outline Business Case describe the design options and investigative survey works undertaken to demonstrate feasibility.

### 4.1 Introduction

*Since the appointment of the team in September 2019 we have worked closely with the Head of Seaton Valley Federation the Northumberland County Council (NCC) team and their appointed education advisor to develop a space budget and explore design options to optimise the development of the current site and a new site for a new purpose-built facility.*

The brief has been developed by NCC and the appointed education advisor and has been based upon the integration of Astley High and Whytrig Middle School and the *option for the integration of Seaton Sluice Middle School at some time in the future if desired.*

#### 4.1.1 Education Brief

The education brief has been developed in great detail and has been used as a template to explore the design options, test typologies and site strategies. See appendix 4A

In summary the new buildings are required to provide accommodation to support the following pupil and staff numbers

Student: 1020  
Whytrig Middle School 360  
Astley High School 650  
ARP 10

Staff: 188  
Whytrig Middle School 34  
Astley High School 99  
Across both Whytrig and Astley Schools 55

The overall building area required within the design brief to deliver the two schools plus the swimming pool is 10,500sqm based upon a standard design response.

#### Vision, Ethos and Values

‘Small enough to care, big enough to deliver a positive impact.’

#### Vision

The vision for the three schools in the Seaton Valley Federation is simple:

- To be exceptional in everything that we do
- To ensure that everyone attends a school where they are safe, happy, successful and have lots of opportunities
- To provide a positive learning environment which allows everyone to achieve their potential

## Ethos

All three schools in the Seaton Valley Federation share the same ethos, which has three main themes:

- To know every child academically and pastorally as a complete young person
- To treat everyone and everything with respect
- To strive for everyone to be as good as they can be and to be proud of doing well

The Federation puts teaching and learning at the heart of every lesson. Staff receive regular training to ensure they are always improving, and this has an impact on the lessons they teach.

The schools are medium sized schools and because of that they are far more able to respond to an individual's needs compared to larger schools. They pride themselves on the level of support that both the young people and their parents or carers receive. Academically, all students are closely monitored to identify if they are making the progress they should be. If they are not, interventions are put in place to rectify the situation.

## Values

Schools in the Seaton Valley Federation share a set of core values. It is expected that all members of the school community will demonstrate these core values including students, staff, volunteers, governors, and parents. It is expected that all members of the school community will:

- develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence.
- respect the laws of England and will know right from wrong and ensure their actions reflect this
- accept responsibility for their behaviour.
- show initiative and contribute in a positive way to the school community, the local community and society in general.
- show respect for each other and all other people.
- show tolerance and respect for different cultures and traditions and will never act in such a way that these cultures or traditions are abused or attacked.
- show respect for the rule of democracy and respect for the democratic principles of England.

Each school considers how best to communicate and embed these values for their pupils

## Community Use

Continued community access to sport and recreation facilities is important to the school.

## The Middle School

Whytrig Middle School, although part of the Federation, is keen to keep its own identity. The design therefore needs to respond to access and separation issues and support different teaching and curriculum delivery. Year 4 and 6 are classroom based for all aspects of the curriculum other than sport. Years 7 and 8 spend the majority of their time in their class bases but need to have access to shared facilities as the world of work (WOW) and specialist curriculum areas.

There is an ambition for the schools to work together and give the learners a sense of progression through the spatial arrangements of the schools working as a collective as well as individually. The opportunity to maximise the potential or access to shared areas is important.

#### The High School

The High School is set up on more traditional lines and the faculties are as follows

English

Maths

Science

World of Work (WOW)

Arts and Technology

PE and Health

Culture and Diversity

There are some interrelationships that have been reflected in our adjacencies diagram that was used to support the development of the school vision and visualise spatially.

#### Flexibility

Flexibility and future proofing are important considerations. The school will need to be able to respond to ever changing curriculum demands, teaching styles and demographic changes. As such the new building(s) need to be easily reconfigured and if required extended in the future without disrupting the education provision.

#### Relationship with the external environment.

The relationship with the external environment is important. The school building(s) need to be arranged to encourage students to move around the campus and be confident to engage with different landscape settings whether for formal play, recreation or for quiet contemplation.



## 4.2 Design Journey

During the design journey we explored the opportunities to redevelop the existing site assessing the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. In parallel the property team within NCC carried out a site search which identified the option to develop agricultural land on the edge of Seaton Delaval.

The scenarios explored for both sites are based upon a preferred building typology. The typologies explored were evaluated against the objectives of the Education Brief which informed the approach to the site options so that irrespective of which site is developed there is a preferred typology that can be delivered.

## 4.3 Options

- Option 1 Do Nothing
- Option 2 Retained estate and back log maintenance
- Option 3 New Building on Existing Site
- Option 4 New Build on The Avenue all works on site
- Option 5 New Build on The Avenue Park and Stride
- Option 6 New Build on The Avenue Hybrid Park and Stride

## 4.4 Option 3 New building on existing site

### 4.4.1 Site Arrangement

The proposal develops a site masterplan that best serves the requirements for curriculum delivery and provides a well organised, effective design response

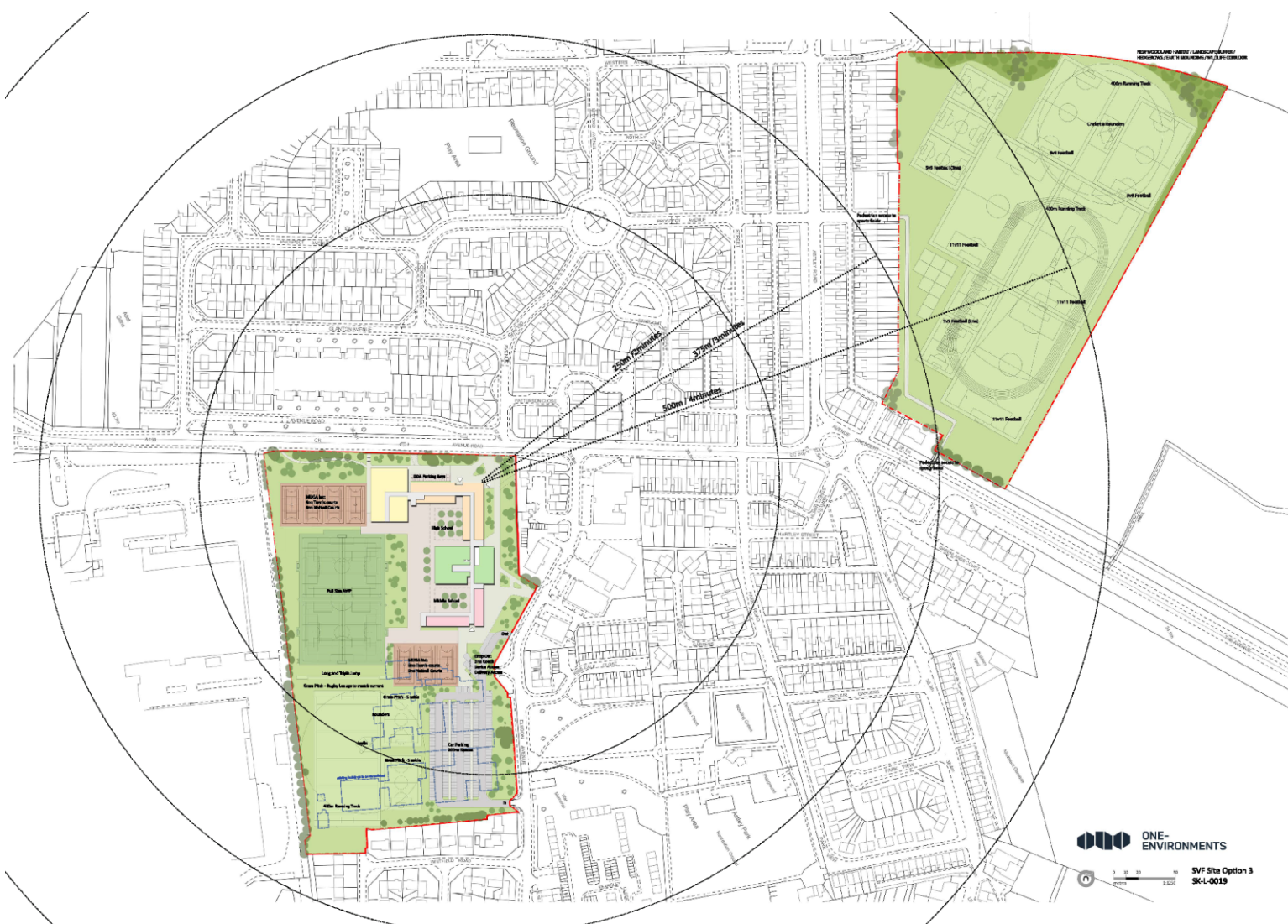
The site that the school occupies is flat and the boundary is defined by Avenue Road to the North. There is a mixture of residential development to the east and south boundary. Much of the east boundary is defined by Elsdon Avenue. The Western boundary is dominated by an industrial complex and car parking.

The location for the building is in the northeast corner of the site which provides presence on Avenue Road as well as a presence off Elsdon Avenue. The teaching provision wraps around hard play and landscaped areas and the indoor sports facilities and associated changing is located adjacent to the all-weather sports provision, which will support curriculum delivery and will enable the site to be secured out of hours, supporting community access without compromise.

On-site sports provision sits to the west of the site. The eastern boundary is defined by the car parking.

The hierarchy of space from site entrance to the school building, private recreational areas, access to all weather surfaces and the grass fields beyond is logical and manageable





#### 4.4.2 Access

Pupil access will be facilitated by pedestrian access points off Avenue Road and Elsdon Avenue. These access points avoid pupil/vehicular traffic crossover beyond the site edge. The carparking for staff and coaches is off Elsdon Avenue and uses the existing established junctions. Visitor and disabled parking will be facilitated off Avenue Road.

The building is deliberately set back from the eastern boundary to avoid overlooking and privacy issues with the residential neighbours and enables the creation of a green plaza promoting good access in and around the school building for pupils and staff alike and a pleasant outlook for the neighbours rather than being confronted by a sea of car parking. The opportunity for planting regimes will enhance the boundary edge.

The building is well orientated and the social areas for pupils are sheltered south and west facing.

#### 4.4.3 External Areas

We have explored the opportunities that arise out of this building form and considered the impact of the middle school being integrated. There are several routeways to the main



building entrances via generous footpaths that will meander through a green landscape setting which can be accessed by pedestrian gates off Avenue Road and Elsdon Avenue, promoting walking to school for pupils approaching from all directions. There is a recognition that some pupils will arrive by car and coach, which is catered for off Elsdon Avenue which is already an established transport route.

The Middle school and High school, external play and social spaces combine social/quiet play space and active/noisy play space. These spaces sit within the building footprint which has formed two sizeable courtyards which will be broken down by soft landscaping and planting regimes to create an oasis adjacent to the building. Middle school and High school external play and social spaces provide access to their respective pupil entrances, ensuring separation and promotes the individual identities for both schools.

The overall site area is undersized at 56,406sqm, compared to a Building Bulletin 103 recommended site area range of between 69,000 – 86,260sqm.

The existing Playing Field Area as defined by Sport England is 30,000sqm. This option proposes to replace the 30,000 playing field requirement on site and the BB103 shortfall off-site which should mitigate against Sport England concerns.

New on-site sports provision will be enhanced by the inclusion of a full-size AWP, four court MUGA, and a three court MUGA which are in close proximity to the hard and soft play areas so will complement these spaces and increase recreation play opportunities, during breaks.

Habitat areas will be integrated into the proposals by enhancing existing boundary planting and identified areas in the green arrival plaza.

- The area to southern corner of the site is dedicated to natural sports pitch provision which will accommodate: -
  - 1no full-size rugby league pitch
  - 2no 5 a side pitch

And green space to support Athletics

- 100m grass running track
- Long and triple jump
- Rounders (juniors)

The overall sports provision is below BB103 requirements and will require off site provision to make up the short fall. This is provided at The Avenue Site

#### **4.5 Option 4 New Build on The Avenue all works on site**

The new site is referred to as The Avenue site. The option developed follows the same model as deployed for the existing site. The site is capable of meeting the BB103 requirements.

This option enables the building and external sports provision to be delivered all in one go, leaving the school fully operational on its existing site during the construction works.

##### **4.5.1 Site Arrangement**

The proposal develops a site masterplan that best serves the requirements for curriculum delivery and provides a well organised, effective design response.

The proposed new site is agricultural land on the eastern edge of the Seaton Delaval conurbation, which is well served by road, cycle path, footpath, and public transport networks. The site is flat and bound to the south by the main road, The Avenue which links Seaton Delaval to Seaton Sluice to the east. The northern edge of the site is bound by medium density low rise housing with a rail line beyond. To the east, the boundary is defined by open agricultural fields and hedgerows. The western edge is defined by two rows of terraced housing served off Astley Road. The houses at the site boundary enjoy long gardens and currently an open aspect across agricultural land.

The location for the proposed building is in the southeast corner of the site which provides some visual presence from The Avenue, well away from immediate neighbours who have enjoyed uninterrupted views since their houses were built.

The building orientation locates the teaching provision facing the Avenue, oriented North South. The building form wraps around hard play and landscaped areas. The indoor sports facilities and associated changing is in close proximity to the onsite parking and MUGA's to promote ease of use for the community out of school hours. The outdoor provision is close by, supporting curriculum delivery and will enable the site to be secured out of hours supporting community access without compromising school security.

All the natural grass sports provision sits to the north and west of the school building. The car parking will be designed to minimise the impact on the views enjoyed by the neighbours and sits to the south of the school building between it and The Avenue screened by the existing belt of trees.

The site is large enough to support future expansion.





The hierarchy of space from site entrance to the school building, private recreational areas, access to all weather surfaces and the grass fields beyond is logical and manageable.

### 4.5.2 Access

Pupil access will be facilitated by pedestrian access points off The Avenue where there is already an established footpath and cycle route. Access will be encouraged off Astley Road, via Prospect Avenue in the middle of the western boundary and northwest corner, off Western Avenue. These accesses are designed to minimise vehicular traffic crossovers at the site edge.

The building is deliberately set back from the southern boundary to accommodate all the onsite parking required between the building and The Avenue. The opportunity for planting regimes will enhance the boundary edge and frame the views beyond.

### 4.5.3 External Areas

We have explored the opportunities that arise out of this building form. We have created the routeways to the main building entrances via generous footpaths that lead all pupils to the same arrival points off The Avenue, Prospect Avenue and Western Avenue promoting walking to school for pupils approaching from all directions. There is a recognition that some pupils will arrive by car and coach, which is catered for off The Avenue.

The middle school and high school external play and social spaces combine social/quiet play space and active/noisy play space. These spaces sit within the building footprint which has formed two sizeable courtyards which will be broken down by soft landscaping and planting regimes to create an oasis adjacent to the building. Middle school and High school external play and social spaces provide access to their respective pupil entrances, ensuring separation and promoting the separate identities for both schools.

The overall external play and social spaces achieves BB103 recommended areas for hard play, soft play and hard sports based upon the larger school provision and thus future proofs the site.

The Grass sports provision

- 1no full-size rugby league pitch
- 2no 11v11 football pitches
- 5no 5v5 football pitches
- 3no 9v9 football pitches
- 1no cricket pitch and outfield
- 1no rounders (juniors)
- 400m grass running track
- Long and triple jump
- Training and informal playing field areas

The grass sports provision will be enhanced by the inclusion of a full-size AWP suitable for Rugby (potentially Rugby league team games) and Football, plus a four and three court MUGA which are in close proximity to the hard and soft play areas so will compliment these spaces and increase recreation play opportunities during breaks.

Habitat and woodland areas will be integrated into the proposals by enhancing existing boundary planting, integrating with the wider green infrastructure and identified areas in the green arrival plaza.

### 4.6. Option 5 New Build on The Avenue Park and Stride

The new site is referred to as the Avenue site.

This option looks to provide the majority of staff and parental drop off on the vacated Whytrig Middle School site approximately 3 minutes' walk from the site promoting a park and stride to the school for all pupils and staff other than those with access requirements under the Equalities act. The option developed follows the same model as deployed for the existing site. The site is capable of meeting the BB103 requirements.

This option enables the building and external sports provision to be delivered all in one go, leaving the school fully operational on its existing site during the construction works.

#### 4.6.1 Site Arrangement

The proposal develops a site masterplan that best serves the requirements for curriculum delivery and provides a well organised, orderly site with an effective design response within the community it sits.

The proposed new site is agricultural land on the eastern edge of the Seaton Delaval conurbation, which is well served by road, cycle path, footpath, and public transport networks. The site is flat and bound to the south by the main road, The Avenue which links Seaton Delaval to Seaton Sluice to the east. The northern edge of the site is bound by medium density low rise housing with a rail line beyond. To the east, the boundary is defined by open agricultural fields and hedgerows. The western edge is defined by two rows of terraced housing served off Astley Road. The houses at the site boundary enjoy long gardens and currently an open aspect across agricultural land.

The location for the proposed building is in the middle of the southern boundary which provides some visual presence from The Avenue, well away from immediate neighbours who have enjoyed uninterrupted views since their houses were built.

The building orientation locates the teaching provision facing the Avenue, oriented north south. The building form wraps around hard play and landscaped areas. The indoor sports facilities and associated changing is in close proximity to the onsite parking and MUGA's to promote ease of use for the community out of school hours. The outdoor provision is close by, supporting curriculum delivery and will enable the site to be secured out of hours supporting community access without compromising school security.

All the natural grass sports provision sits to the north and west of the school building. As the majority of carparking is off site, there is a minimal car parking allocation on site and associated coach parking for visiting schools. It is not large and designed to reduce the impact on the views enjoyed by the neighbours. The site is large enough to support future expansion.





The hierarchy of space from site entrance to the school building, private recreational areas, access to all weather surfaces and the grass fields beyond is logical and manageable

#### 4.6.2 Site Access

Pupil access will be facilitated by pedestrian access points off The Avenue where there is already an established footpath and cycle route. Access will be encouraged off Astley Road, via Prospect Avenue in the middle of the western boundary and northwest corner, off Western Avenue. These accesses are designed to minimise vehicular traffic crossovers at the site edge.

The building does not need to be set so far back from the southern boundary. The opportunity for planting regimes will enhance the boundary edge and frame the views beyond. The required, on-site parking is located to the west of the school with proposed access off Prospect Avenue.

#### 4.6.3 External Areas

We have explored the opportunities that arise out of this building form. There are several routeways to the main building entrances via generous footpaths that lead all the pupils to the same arrival points which can be accessed by pedestrian gates off The Avenue, Prospect Avenue and Western Avenue promoting walking to school for pupils

approaching from all directions. There is a recognition that some on site car and coach parking is required which is catered for off Prospect Avenue. There is no vehicular access off The Avenue.

The middle school and high school external play and social spaces combine social/quiet play space and active/noisy play space. These spaces sit within the building footprint which has formed two sizeable courtyards which will be broken down by soft landscaping and planting regimes to create an oasis adjacent to the building. Middle school and High school external play and social spaces provide access to their respective pupil entrances, ensuring separation and promoting the separate identities for both schools.

The overall external play and social spaces achieves BB103 recommended areas for hard play, soft play and hard sports based upon the larger school provision and thus future proofing the site.

The Grass sports provision

- 1no 11v11 football pitches
- 3no 5v5 football pitches
- 2no 7v7 football pitches
- 3no 9v9 football pitches
- 1no cricket pitch and outfield
- 1no rounders (juniors)
- 400m grass running track
- Long and triple jump
- Training and informal playing field areas

The grass sports provision will be enhanced by the inclusion of a full-size AWP suitable for Rugby (potentially Rugby league team games) and Football, plus a four and three court MUGA which are in close proximity to the hard and soft play areas so will compliment these spaces and increase recreation play opportunities during breaks.

Habitat and woodland areas will be integrated into the proposals by enhancing existing boundary planting, integrating with the wider green infrastructure and identified areas in the green arrival plaza.

#### ***4.7 Option 6 New Build on The Avenue Hybrid Park and Stride***

The new site is referred to as the Avenue site.

This option looks to provide the majority of staff parking on the Avenue Site with parental drop off, and 6<sup>th</sup> Form parking located on the vacated Whytrig Middle School site approximately 3 minutes' walk from the site promoting a park and stride to the school for all pupils. The option developed follows the same model as deployed for the existing site. The site is capable of meeting the BB103 requirements.

This option enables the building and external sports provision to be delivered all in one go, leaving the school fully operational on its existing site during the construction works.

#### 4.7.1 Site Arrangement

The proposal develops a site masterplan that best serves the requirements for curriculum delivery and provides a well organised, orderly site with an effective design response within the community it sits.

The proposed new site is agricultural land on the eastern edge of the Seaton Delaval conurbation, which is well served by road, cycle path, footpath, and public transport networks. The site is flat and bound to the south by the main road, The Avenue which links Seaton Delaval to Seaton Sluice to the east. The northern edge of the site is bound by medium density low rise housing with a rail line beyond. To the east, the boundary is defined by open agricultural fields and hedgerows. The western edge is defined by two rows of terraced housing served off Astley Road. The houses at the site boundary enjoy long gardens and currently an open aspect across agricultural land.

The location for the proposed building is in the middle of the southern boundary which provides some visual presence from The Avenue, well away from immediate neighbours who have enjoyed uninterrupted views since their houses were built.

The building orientation locates the teaching provision facing the Avenue, oriented north south. The building form wraps around hard play and landscaped areas. The indoor sports facilities and associated changing is in close proximity to the onsite parking and MUGA's to promote ease of use for the community out of school hours. The outdoor provision is close by, supporting curriculum delivery and will enable the site to be secured out of hours supporting community access without compromising school security.

All the natural grass sports provision sits to the north and west of the school building. The majority of carparking is on site, all accessed off Prospect Avenue, which includes accessible parking as required by the equalities action associated coach parking for visiting schools. It is large and designed to reduce the impact on the views enjoyed by the neighbours. The site is large enough to support future expansion.





The hierarchy of space from site entrance to the school building, private recreational areas, access to all weather surfaces and the grass fields beyond is logical and manageable

### 4.7.2 Access

Pupil access will be facilitated by pedestrian access points off The Avenue where there is already an established footpath and cycle route. Access will be encouraged off Astley Road, via Prospect Avenue in the middle of the western boundary and northwest corner, off Western Avenue. These accesses are designed to minimise vehicular traffic crossovers at the site edge.

The building does not need to be set so far back from the southern boundary. The opportunity for planting regimes will enhance the boundary edge and frame the views beyond. The required, onsite parking is located to the west of the school with proposed access off Prospect Avenue.

### 4.7.3 External areas

We have explored the opportunities that arise out of this building form. There are several routeways to the main building entrances via generous footpaths that lead all the pupils to the same arrival points which can be accessed by pedestrian gates off The Avenue, Prospect Avenue and Western Avenue promoting walking to school for pupils

approaching from all directions. There is a recognition that some on site car and coach parking is required which is catered for off Prospect Avenue. There is no vehicular access off The Avenue.

The middle school and high school external play and social spaces combine social/quiet play space and active/noisy play space. These spaces sit within the building footprint which has formed two sizeable courtyards which will be broken down by soft landscaping and planting regimes to create an oasis adjacent to the building. Middle school and High school external play and social spaces provide access to their respective pupil entrances, ensuring separation and promoting the separate identities for both schools.

The overall external play and social spaces achieves BB103 recommended areas for hard play, soft play and hard sports based upon the larger school provision and thus future proofing the site.

The Grass sports provision

- 1no 11v11 football pitches
- 3no 5v5 football pitches
- 2no 7v7 football pitches
- 3no 9v9 football pitches
- 1no cricket pitch and outfield
- 1no rounders (juniors)
- 400m grass running track
- Long and triple jump
- Training and informal playing field areas

The grass sports provision will be enhanced by the inclusion of a full-size AWP suitable for Rugby (potentially Rugby league team games) and Football, plus a four and three court MUGA which are in close proximity to the hard and soft play areas so will compliment these spaces and increase recreation play opportunities during breaks.

Habitat and woodland areas will be integrated into the proposals by enhancing existing boundary planting, integrating with the wider green infrastructure and identified areas in the green arrival plaza.

## **4.8 Planning Statement**

### **Planning Application**

It is proposed that a full planning application will be submitted for the construction of the new school buildings and sports facilities with associated access, parking and landscaping.

The planning application would be categorised as a major planning application. Major planning applications typically have a 13-week determination period however changes to the determination period for 'public service infrastructure' projects, which includes schools were introduced in 2021 in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure and Section 62A Applications) (England) (Amendment) Order 2021. The changes reduced the current 21 statutory consultation period from 21 days to 18 days and the determination period has been reduced from 13 weeks to 10 weeks.

Given the nature of project, the application would be required to be determined at the Council's Strategic Planning Committee.

The planning application will need to be supported by a suite of plans and documents to demonstrate that the application is policy compliant. This is discussed in more detail in the below sections.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

At a national level the NPPF sets out the Government's proposed planning policies for England. The NPPF also carries forward the requirement for Local Planning Authorities to approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay, or where the policies most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless the adverse impacts of allowing development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

At paragraph 95, the NPPF states that

*'It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*

*a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*

*b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.'*

### Local Development Plan

At a local level, the Development Plan comprises the Blyth Valley Local Development Framework which includes the Core Strategy, adopted in 2007, Development Control policies, adopted in 2007 and Saved Local Plan Policies, adopted in 1999.

The Avenue Site is allocated as Green Belt land under Policy DC3 with land running alongside The Avenue allocated as Regions of Mature Semi-Natural Woodland under Policy DC16 and DC17. The existing Elsdon Avenue and the Prospect Avenue sites are not allocated. New educational facilities are supported by Core Strategy Policy C1, Saved Policy C10.

The Council are currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, the Northumberland Local Plan, which will replace the existing Local Plans. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29th May 2019 and is currently undergoing examination. The Inspector is currently finalising the report into the soundness of the Plan, the timescales for publication of this report are not yet known.



Paragraph 48 of the NPPF states that weight can be given to policies contained in emerging plans dependent upon three criteria: the stage of preparation of the plan; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to policies within the plan; and the degree of consistency with the NPPF. It is considered that the plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and should therefore be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

The emerging Northumberland Local Plan supports educational facilities under Emerging Policies STP5 and INF2. The Local Plan also retains the Green Belt allocation which covers The Avenue site.

### **Planning Matters**

Detailed discussions have taken place with the LPA and statutory consultees in relation to the proposed development and key planning matters.

Based on the proposed development options and relevant planning policy, we have an understanding of the policy position and the key planning matters. Those we believe relevant to the determination of the application are set out below which will be addressed as part of the planning application.

#### **Need for the development**

The need for new schools is vital and is evident in planning policy at all levels seeking to provide replacement or new educational facilities to meet the needs of an expanding population.

The need to provide enhanced educational facilities, whether this is done via replacement or new educational facilities to meet the needs of the local community, is recognised and promoted in paragraph 95 of the NPPF. This is reiterated within the policy statement regarding Planning for Schools Development (2001), stating that the planning system should operate in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the creation of state-funded schools.

At a local level, educational facilities are supported by Core Strategy Policy C1, Saved Policy C10 and Emerging Policy STP5 and INF2.

Based on the above, it is considered that the principle of a new school development is supported in policy terms at both a national and local level. It is however, acknowledged that The Avenue site is located within the Green Belt and within the setting of Seaton Delaval Hall and its associated parks and gardens. As such, the planning application will give due consideration to and address these matters.

#### **Green Belt**

The NPPF states at Paragraph 137 that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It is therefore considered that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF, states that the construction of new buildings constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, unless it meets one of a list of exception

criteria. The proposed sporting facilities would fall under Green Belt exception criteria b) provided the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposed school buildings would however be considered, by definition, to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The NPPF is clear at paragraph 147, that 'inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'. It goes on in paragraph 148 to state that 'Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In order to assess the extent of the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, it is first necessary to assess how the site contributes to the five purposes and openness of the Green Belt in its existing form and then to consider how the Proposed Development would affect this. As such, as part of the planning application we will prepare a detailed Green Belt Assessment which will assess in detail the extent of the harm. We will then consider the very special circumstances that exist to outweigh this harm. It is considered that very special circumstances do exist in relation to the proposed development; these will be demonstrated in detail within the planning application and will include:

- Justification for the need for the proposed development and the benefit to the local community in terms of educational provision.
- Demonstration of the public benefit associated with the proposed development in terms of community sports provision.
- Consideration of alternative sites for the proposed development to demonstrate that the most suitable site has been chosen for development.

Subject to being able to demonstrate the points outlined above, it is considered that a very special circumstances case for the proposed development could exist to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt and we will set this out fully in our planning submission. This will be subject to assessment by the LPA.

### Heritage and Landscape Visual Impact

The Avenue site is located adjacent to the Grade II\* listed Park and Garden listing and within the setting of various listings associated with Seaton Delaval Hall. As such, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 194, it will be important to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities are also required to identify and assess the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposals, and to take this into account when considering the impact of the proposed development on those assets.

When considering the impact of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) (para 199). Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm, local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss (para 201). Where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm

should be weighted against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (para 202).

The project team are in the process of undertaking discussions with Historic England and National Trust with regards to the proposals and a detailed Heritage Impact Assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application to assess the level of harm. As noted earlier, it is considered that there are considerable benefits associated with the proposed development; relating to significantly enhanced educational facilities and new sporting facilities for use by the local community which can be used to demonstrate that the benefits of proposals will outweigh harm to the heritage assets resulting from the proposed development. This benefits case will be presented as part of the planning application.

Based on the above and subject to submission of a heritage assessment and benefits case, it is considered that the proposed development could be deemed acceptable in heritage terms subject to an assessment by the LPA and statutory consultees

#### Other Matters

As part of the planning application, we will also submit technical reports to address matters relating to:

- Archaeology
- Ecology
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Land Contamination
- Lighting
- Noise
- Transport

The reports mentioned above will need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development, or that any impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated in order to justify that the proposed development is acceptable and policy compliant.

#### Validation Requirements

It is considered that the following information would be required for validation of a planning application however, this list should be agreed with the LPA.

- Application forms and ownership certificates
- Application fee
- Plans pack to include: Location plan, Site plan, Proposed Elevations, Proposed Floorplans, Proposed Roof Plans, Proposed Site Sections and Levels
- Design and Access Statement
- Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment
- Ecological Surveys and Assessments
- Flood Risk, Surface Water and Drainage Assessment
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Land Contamination Assessment and Minerals Safeguarding Assessment
- Landscaping Details
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

- Lighting Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Open Space Assessment
- Planning Statement
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Transport Assessment, Travel Plan and Road Safety Audit
- Tree Survey/Arboricultural Impact Assessment

A letter of comfort from NCC planners has been received confirming they would look to support the application. Reference has been made to identify the key planning considerations, which are all matters we would seek to address as part of the planning application. A copy can be found in Appendix 4B.

#### ***4.9 Surveys and Investigations***

Resources have been commissioned to undertake various site options appraisals, to determine buildability, affordability and to collate the OBC. These appointments we made through the NEPO Framework, following an OJEU compliant competitive tender process, selected on best value.

This section of the OBC details the results of these surveys which have been undertaken as part of the feasibility exercise and summarises the outcomes of these. Copies of these reports can be found in Appendix 4D-K.

The project team, together with the LA identified a list of surveys and investigations which would be required for this stage of the exercise. These were carried out for both the existing and new sites and are listed as follows:

- Desktop Study
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Survey
- Arboricultural survey
- Topographical survey
- Utilities survey
- FF&E including technology audit (undertaken in 2019)
- IT Audit (undertaken in 2020)
- Pool condition survey
- Flood risk assessment
- Transport Assessment

The summary of findings and recommendations of each of the above is identified below.

##### **4.9.1 Desktop Study (Existing Site)**

The desk study area is located on a parcel of land south of Eldson Avenue. The site is irregularly shaped and has a mostly flat and even topography. The site is currently an active high school and its associated buildings and playing fields. The site comprises multiple school buildings and a sports hall with areas of hardstanding currently used as

car parking areas in the eastern portion of the site and playing fields across the western part. No obvious signs of contamination were noted during the walkover. An electrical substation was noted towards the south eastern site boundary. The site perimeter is secure with gated access to the north via Eldson Street.

The earliest maps (1858) show that the site was undeveloped agricultural land. From the earliest mapping the area around the site was predominantly agricultural fields. An unnamed road was present to the immediate west of the site. Residential properties along Wheatridge Row were present approximately 250m north west of the site. Seaton Delaval Colliery was present approximately 900m north west of the site.

There are no Landfills or any facilities handling or managing waste within 500m of the site.

There are nineteen contemporary trade directory entries within 500m of the site. There are two fuel station entries within 500m of the site.

The solid geology beneath the site is likely to mostly comprise Pennine Middle Coal Measures formation of interbedded sandstone, siltstone and mudstone with coal seams of varying thickness. The drift deposits on site are likely to comprise of silty, sandy and gravelly Glacial Till.

Using the Environment Agency's Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater the solid geology beneath the site is classified as a Secondary Aquifer – A. The overlying drift is classified as a Secondary Aquifer – Undifferentiated.

The site does not lie within a source protection zone.

There are no Ground Water Abstractions located within 1km of the site.

The nearest surface water feature is an unnamed river located 80m south east of the site.

The Envirocheck Report states the site is not at risk of Flooding from Rivers and the Seas without defences, and there are no flood defences, flood water storage areas or areas benefiting from flood defences and flood storage present within 250m of the site.

The site is not in a Radon Affected Area, as less than 1% of properties are above the Action Level. No radon protection measures are necessary for new buildings or extensions on the site.

Given the expected ground conditions noted in the sections above, the use of strip or pad foundations for the new development is anticipated at present.

For the proposed new access roads and carparking the foundations will consist of suitably compacted and graded fill to be used to form a sub-base, base and binding course beneath the road surface course. The road design and choice of materials should be undertaken in line with the guidance "Specification for Highway Works".



The mining report highlights that the site is situated in an area where four seams have been worked within the likely zone of physical influence on the surface. The shallowest seam is the Main seam last worked pre 1935 at a depth of 115m with a section thickness of 2.03m.

Given the absence of shallow coal seams within influencing distance to the surface, and the sites location outside of a Development High Risk Area, no further investigation into historical coal mining is considered necessary.

The desk study has shown that the site may have been exposed to some contamination, with construction/demolition waste and possibly oils or fuel from vehicle spills the most likely source local to the structures. Asbestos may also be present on the site from previous/existing building materials used on-site.

Made ground is expected on site, therefore ground gas assessment is recommended due to the nature of the development.

Phase 2 recommendations are as follows:

- A series of small percussive boreholes with insitu testing and samples.
- Gas monitoring comprising four visits over one month.
- A series of machine dug trial pits for sampling, insitu soakaways and CBRs.
- Provisional: A series of Cable Percussive boreholes with insitu testing and samples.
- Geotechnical testing.
- Chemical testing.

A copy of the desktop study can be found in Appendix 4Di

#### **4.9.2 Desktop Study (New Sites)**

The site is located on a large parcel of land on north of The Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Whitley Bay comprising an open area of agricultural land. A second, smaller area of the site is located off Weston Avenue approximately 100m south-west of the main area. The eastern side of the site is currently disused with brick rubble and macadam covering the area. The western side is covered by grass and is used as a playing field. The site is bounded along the northern, western and south western boundary by residential properties with the eastern boundary open to adjacent agricultural land. The southern boundary comprised a tree line with a road (The Avenue) immediately beyond. A trainline is noted in the vicinity of the northern boundary. The second site area is bounded by residential properties to the east and north, with Seaton Delaval County First School adjacent to the southern boundary and both grass playing fields and residential properties to the west.

The earliest maps (1865) show that the main site comprises undeveloped agricultural land. This remains unchanged throughout the documented history. The second site area shows terraced housing along the northern boundary from 1897 to 1985. A school



building is shown by 1950. From the earliest mapping the area around the site was predominantly agricultural with some housing noted to the west of the site and a railway line to the north. A small number of shafts were noted, and Seaton Delaval Colliery was noted 500m north of the site. The surrounding area has undergone significant housing development throughout the documented history

The proposed development of the main site area is outlined to comprise construction of a middle and high school with soft landscaped playing fields and hardstanding in the form of car parking and access roads. The second, smaller site area is to comprise a large school car park with associated access roads and soft landscaping.

There are no Landfills or any facilities handling or managing waste within 500m of the site. There are 21 no contemporary trade directory entries within 250m of the site. There are two fuel station entries within 250m of the site. The solid geology beneath the site is likely to comprise of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. The drift deposits on site are likely to comprise clay, sand and gravel. Using the Environment Agency's Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater the solid geology beneath the site is classified as a Secondary Aquifer – A. The overlying drift is not classified Secondary Aquifer - Undifferentiated. The site does not lie within a Source Protection Zone. There are no Ground Water Abstractions located within 1km of the site. The nearest surface water feature is located 209m north of the site. The Envirocheck Report states the site is not at risk of Flooding from Rivers and the Seas without defences. The site is in a Lower Probability Radon Affected Area, as less than 1% of properties are above the Action Level. No radon protection measures are necessary for new buildings or extensions on the site.

Given the expected ground conditions, the use of strip or pad foundations for the new development is anticipated at present. Where loose made ground or soft/loose natural deposits are encountered, foundations will need to be taken through the made ground/disturbed ground into underlying natural strata of adequate bearing capacity.

Given the presence of possible ancient shallow coal mine workings it is recommended that a minimum of five open rotary boreholes are drilled to ca. 30.00mbgl as part of any site investigation for the new development. The boreholes are necessary to investigate potential voids, collapsed workings and possible weak/broken areas of rock due to mine workings underlying the proposed new development.

The desk study has shown that the site is unlikely to have been exposed to anything other than minimal contamination, with construction/demolition waste the most likely source local to the structures immediately off site. Asbestos may also be present on the site from previous building cladding and roofing surrounding the site.

Made ground is expected on site, therefore ground gas assessment is recommended due to the nature of the development.

## Phase 2 recommendations

- A series of small percussive boreholes with insitu testing and samples.
- Gas monitoring comprising six visits over three months.
- A series of machine dug trial pits for sampling, insitu soakaways and CBRs (for both the main site area and the smaller site area).
- 5no rotary boreholes to ca. 30.00mbgl.
- Geotechnical testing.
- Chemical testing.

A copy of the desktop study can be found in Appendix 4Dii

### **4.9.3 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Survey (Existing Site)**

The site supports limited habitats being dominated by amenity grassland used for sports, hardstanding and buildings. There is vegetation around the site peripheries comprising hedgerow and amenity tree planting however these are of limited ecological value due to their species composition. Some introduced planting is present around the school buildings. A single dry pond was recorded on site which is of greater value.

No evidence of bats was recorded during the daytime risk assessment. The buildings do provide some limited opportunities for bats between gaps under fascia boarding and between window frames in places. Overall, the buildings on site were considered to be of low suitability for supporting roosting bats.

A total of four bat roosts used by small numbers of common pipistrelle bats were recorded during dusk activity surveys. Given the time of year of the surveys, no maternity roost is considered to be present, with the roosts on site considered to be day roosts.

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded on site however, the site is likely to support breeding by locally common species such as house sparrow, wood pigeon and starling.

Based on the survey work, and likely impacts of the proposals, the following impacts are predicted:

- The loss of confirmed roosting features within a number of the structures including the bungalow, the sports hall and section 4c of the main building. These buildings are considered to support small numbers of day roosting common pipistrelle bats.
- Potential disturbance and harm to roosting bats, should they be present at the time of the demolition.
- Potential harm and/or disturbance to nesting birds, should works be undertaken in the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive).
- The loss of habitats of up to local ecological value, including semi-mature trees and hedgerow and a small pond.

- The low risk that the works may result in harm or disturbance to hedgehog which have been recorded within the site.
- The low risk that works may result in harm to common toad.
- The low risk of the spread of New Zealand pygmy weed and wall cotoneaster, both species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The following avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are proposed; however these will need to be updated once the final scheme layout has been produced:

- External lighting that may affect the site's suitability for bats will be avoided. If required this will be limited to low level, avoiding use of high intensity security lighting. The final lighting strategy will be determined by the results of the bat activity survey work detailed above.
- Building demolition and vegetation clearance will not commence during the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) unless the site is checked by an appropriately experienced ecologist and nests are confirmed to be absent.
- Removal of New Zealand pygmy weed and wall cotoneaster will be undertaken to a method statement to prevent the spread of these species.
- Demolition of the buildings where bat roosts have been recorded will not be undertaken unless under an appropriate Natural England licence.
- Works on the building to be undertaken to a detailed method statement, including:
  - a. Removal of key features around potential bat roosting features by hand;
  - b. Supervision of the removal of key features by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- Works will be completed under a method statement in order to minimise the risk of harm to hedgehogs.
- Bat roosting opportunities will be included within the new school building. These will be required as part of the mitigation and compensation scheme under the Natural England licence.
- At least 4 bat boxes will be erected within trees on site and will be suitable for use by small numbers of crevice roosting species.
- The inclusion of bird nesting opportunities within the site.

## **Recommendations**

### **Further Survey**

1. It is recommended that an eDNA survey for great crested newts of the pond to the south of the site is completed in the breeding season of 2020 in order

to confirm the presence or absence of the species. This should be undertaken between April and June.

2. Should no demolition of the buildings take place within 12 months of the last activity survey, additional updating survey work for bats is likely to be required.

## Avoidance Measures

3. The following measures should be incorporated into the design of the scheme to avoid impacts on wildlife:
  - External lighting that may affect the site's suitability for bats will be avoided. If required this will be limited to low level, avoiding use of high intensity security lighting. The final lighting strategy will be determined by the results of the bat activity survey work detailed above.
  - Building demolition and vegetation clearance will not commence during the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) unless the site is checked by an appropriately experienced ecologist and nests are confirmed to be absent.
  - Alternatives to timber treatments that are injurious to mammals will be sought and used on site (see [http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/batwork\\_manualpt4.pdf](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/batwork_manualpt4.pdf)).
  - Removal of New Zealand pygmy weed and wall cotoneaster will be undertaken to a method statement to prevent the spread of these species.

## Mitigation Strategy

4. The following elements of mitigation are proposed to address the impacts on bats which cannot be avoided:
  - Demolition of the buildings where bat roosts have been recorded will not be undertaken unless under an appropriate Natural England licence.
  - Works on the building to be undertaken to a detailed method statement, including:
    - i. Removal of key features around potential bat roosting features by hand;
    - li. Supervision of the removal of key features by a suitably qualified ecologist.
  - Works will be completed under a method statement in order to minimise the risk of harm to hedgehogs.

## Compensation Scheme

5. The following elements of compensation are proposed to address the impacts which cannot be avoided:
  - Bat roosting opportunities will be included within the new school building. These will be required as part of the mitigation and compensation scheme under the natural England licence.

- At least 4 bat boxes will be erected within trees on site and will be suitable for use by small numbers of crevice roosting species.
- The inclusion of bird nesting opportunities within the site.

Once planning approval has been obtained, a bat license can be applied for and is required prior to starting any work on site as result of the roost loss.

A copy of the Ecological survey can be found in Appendix 4Ei

#### ***4.9.4 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Survey (New Sites)***

##### **Habitat Assessment**

The site is made up of two parcels of land. A larger parcel where it is proposed to develop a new high school and a smaller parcel of land which is proposed for additional parking. The larger parcel of land is dominated by arable fields with a grassland margin to the site boundaries. A strip of broadleaf woodland is present along the southern boundary and an intact hedgerow crosses the northern section of the site. The smaller parcel of land is dominated by grassland with scrub and scattered trees. Habitats on site are considered to be of up to local value.

##### **Bats**

There are no suitable structures for roosting bats present within the parcels of land. Mature trees present within the broadleaf woodland have the potential to support roosting due to the presence of suitable features. Should the mature woodland be affected by the proposals further survey of the trees will be required to assess the presence / absence of roosts.

The arable fields, grassland margins, scrubs and woodland present within the larger parcel have the potential to support foraging and commuting bats. The site is well connected to additional blocks of woodland within the local area as well as Seaton Delaval Hall.

Grassland present within the smaller parcel of land has the potential to support foraging bats however connectivity to this area is limited. Due to the habitats present and the overall small size of this parcel of land habitats are considered to be of low value to bats. Further activity survey of the larger parcel of land are recommended in order to confirm the value of the site to bat species.

##### **Birds**

Suitable foraging and nesting opportunities within the smaller parcel of land are limited to scrub and scattered trees. The grassland areas have the potential to provide a suitable foraging resource however this parcel is limited in potential due to its small size. The



woodland, scrub and hedgerow habitats within the larger parcel of land have the potential to provide both foraging and nesting opportunities. The arable fields are large in size with good sightlines and located approximately 3km from the coast. There is potential for the large parcel to support breeding farmland bird species such as skylark. The small parcel of land is considered to be of low value to bird species. Further survey of the large parcel of land is required in order to confirm the value of this area to bird species.

### **Great Crested Newts**

Areas of ephemeral water were noted in the arable fields during the survey. There are no ponds present within the development site, however the larger parcel of land is located within 90m of The New Hartley Ponds SSSI which has primarily been designated due to the presence of great crested newts. Areas of coarse grassland provide high quality connectivity between the SSSI and the development site. Coarse grassland margins, scrub, hedgerows and woodland present within the larger parcel of land have the potential to provide suitable habitat for this species during its terrestrial phase as well as connectivity both within and around the proposed site boundaries. Additional survey work is required in order to confirm the value of the larger parcel of land to this site.

### **Badger**

No setts or other field signs of this species were recorded on site during the survey. The smaller parcel of land is considered unsuitable of supporting badger. However, the woodland and hedgerow habitats within the larger parcel of land have the potential to support sett creation. In addition, the coarse grassland and arable fields have the potential to provide a suitable foraging opportunity. Overall, the site is considered to be of low value to this species with additional suitable habitat present within the local area.

### **Red Squirrel**

Red squirrel are known to be present within the local area and the woodland within the larger parcel of land has the potential to provide suitable opportunities to this species. No evidence of this species was recorded during the survey and overall the site is considered to be of low value to this species with alternative suitable habitat present within the local area.

### **Other Protected or Notable Species**

There is potential for brown hare to be present within the larger parcel of land on occasion. Hedgehog and common toad have the potential to be present within both parcels of land however the site is considered to be of low value overall. Due to the nature of the site and the habitats present additional protected or notable species are considered likely to be absent.

### **Designated Sites**

The site is found within an identified SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the New Hartley Ponds SSSI and the nature and scale of the development fall into the identified risk categories.

Consultation with the LPA should be undertaken as Natural England may require an appropriate assessment in order to further assess the potential for impacts on the SSSI.

### **Impact Assessment**

- Loss of habitats of up to local value.
- Harm or disturbance to roosting bats during tree removal works, should roosts be present
- Loss of bird nesting / foraging opportunities through site clearance works
- Harm and / or disturbance to nesting birds, should works be undertaken during the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive).
- Disturbance to bat foraging and commuting routes through increased lighting on site after development works and or vegetation removal.
- Risk or harm to great crested newts during site clearance and development works.
- Loss of potential great crested newt terrestrial habitat during vegetation clearance.
- Risk of harm to badger, hedgehog, brown hare and other small mammals should they be present within the site during works.
- Risk of harm of disturbance to red squirrel should they be present within the site during site clearance works.
- Damage to the crown or roots of retained trees and scrub during works on site through severance or asphyxiation.
- Risk of spreading species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as invasive species, namely Montbretia during site clearance works
- Potential for impacts on the adjacent SSSI site.

### **Recommendations**

- Lighting that may affect the sites suitability for bats will be avoided. If required this will be limited to low level, avoiding the use of high intensity security lights.
- Site clearance works will not be undertaken during the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) unless the site is checked by an appropriately experienced ecologist and active nests are confirmed to be absent
- Any excavations left open overnight will have a means of escape for mammals that may become trapped in the form of a ramp at least 300mm in width and angled no greater than 45 degrees.
- Works will be undertaken to an approved Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- Should further survey work confirm presence of bat roosts within mature trees on site and impacts on these trees are predicted a Natural England licence will be required before works to these trees can be undertaken.
- Trees, scrubs and hedgerows will be retained wherever possible.
- Retained trees will be protected from damage in line with the recommendations in BS5837:2021.
- Landscape planting shall include berry and fruit bearing species to provide increased foraging opportunities in the local area.

- The provision of bat and bird boxes within the Site.

## Further Survey

- Bat activity survey of the mature trees in the broadleaf woodland, present within the larger parcel of land which may be affected directly or indirectly by the proposals. Two surveys, to be undertaken between May and August,
- Bat transect survey and remote monitoring of the larger parcel of land should be undertaken on a monthly basis between May and September. Due to the small scale of the small parcel of land transect surveys are not recommended however remote monitoring should be undertaken on a seasonal basis.
- Breeding and wintering bird surveys of the larger parcel of land should be completed. Level of survey work should be confirmed with the LPA.
- Levels of great crested newt survey should be discussed with the LPA.
- A botanical checking survey of the grassland areas and the woodland should be completed during the core periods for these habitats.
- A badger and red squirrel checking survey of the site should be completed prior to the commencement of works on site.
- The requirements for Net Gain should be discussed and agreed with the LPA.

A copy of the Ecological survey can be found in Appendix 4Eii

### 4.9.5 Arboricultural Survey (Existing Site)

All trees apart from those classified as Category U and those with stem diameters less than 150mm measured at 1.5m above ground level should be considered as potential material site constraints with the emphasis on their retention if appropriate. Layout plans should therefore take account of the trees' above and below-ground constraints, namely the crown spread and root protection areas (RPA's) when being considered for retention. Where trees have been subject to significant restrictions to root growth (i.e. roads and buildings etc), their RPA's have been altered accordingly. The extents of these constraints are detailed upon the Tree Constraints Plans (Appendix 3).

Where retained all protected areas around trees should be considered sacrosanct from disturbance throughout the entire development process. Where possible trees should be protected with continuous fencing protecting groups rather than individual specimens.

Proposed layout designs need to be assessed in context of appropriate tree retention and protection within an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Once all of the proposed site layout decisions are finalised and the technical details to enable the construction prepared, an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan should be produced. This document, which requires Local Planning Authority approval, will be used to guide demolition and construction phases with regards tree-related operations, special construction methodology and adequate tree protection measures.

A copy of the Arboricultural survey can be found in Appendix 4Fi

#### **4.9.6 Arboricultural Survey (New Sites)**

All trees apart from those classified as Category U and those with stem diameters less than 150mm measured at 1.5m above ground level should be considered as potential material site constraints with the emphasis on their retention if and where appropriate. Layout plans should take account of the trees' above and below-ground constraints, namely the crown spread and root protection areas (RPA's) considered for retention. The extents of these constraints are detailed upon the Tree Constraints Plan (Appendix 3).

Where retained all protected areas around trees should be considered sacrosanct from disturbance throughout the entire development process. Where possible trees should be protected with continuous fencing protecting groups rather than individual specimens – this is of particular merit around the periphery of a site to protect boundary trees both on and off-site.

Proposed layout designs need to be assessed in context of appropriate tree retention and protection within an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Once all of the proposed site layout decisions are finalised and the technical details to enable the construction prepared, an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan should be produced

A copy of the Arboricultural survey can be found in Appendix 4Fii

#### **4.9.7 Topographical Survey (Existing site)**

A topographic survey has been carried out and a copy of the drawings can be found within Appendix 4Gi

#### **4.9.8 Topographical Survey (New site)**

A topographic survey has been carried out and a copy of the drawings can be found within Appendix 4Gii

#### **4.9.9 Utilities Survey (Existing site)**

A utilities survey has been carried out and a copy of the drawings can be found within Appendix 4Hi

#### **4.9.10 Utilities Survey (New site)**

A utilities survey has been carried out and a copy of the drawings can be found within Appendix 4Hii

#### 4.9.11 FF&E including technology audit

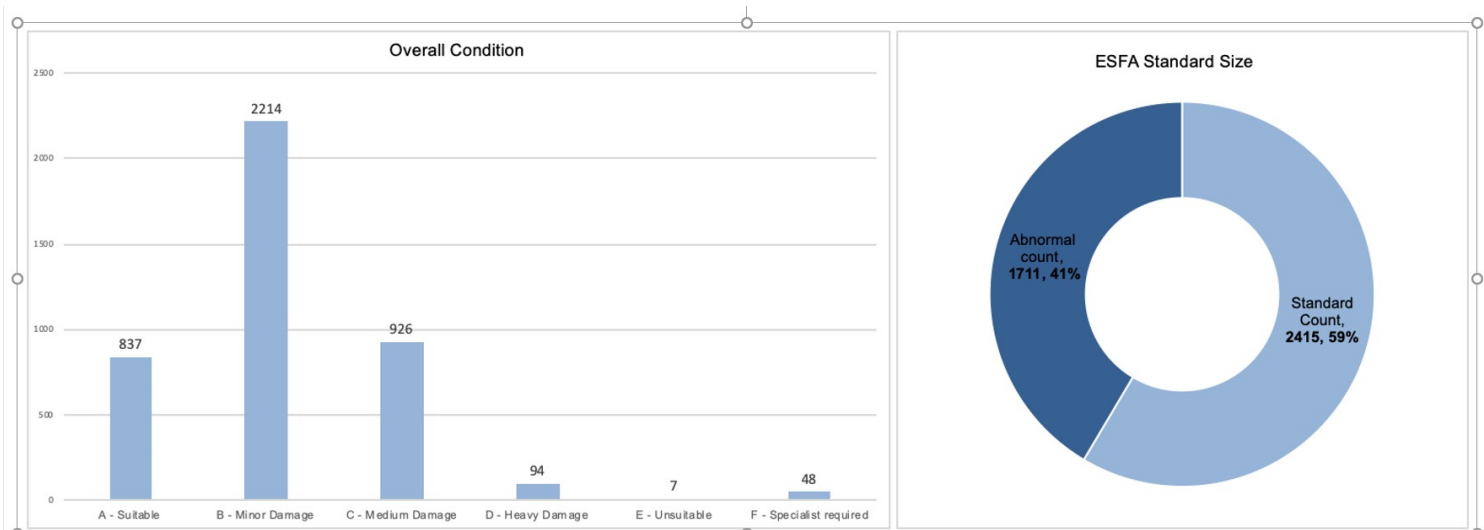
A survey of both Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School was undertaken to ascertain the condition of the existing furniture and technology equipment. The following was recorded:

### **Astley**

#### **Loose Legacy Survey**

Out of items 4126 individual loose furniture items that were surveyed, 101 items were considered to be unsuitable to be re-purposed into a new site and in need of replacement. 926 items were considered to be reasonable condition but likely to need replacing within the next three years or prior to transfer.

After studying the data collected from each survey, 98% of the existing loose furniture can be re-purposed within the next three years at present usage.



Please note that all fitted furniture will be provided as new as part of the new build scheme.

#### **Catering Legacy Survey**

Following an assessment of the specialist equipment at Astley Community High School on 28th October 2019 the school has a selection of old catering equipment that would require replacing prior to the move, we would recommend re-purposing 72% of the equipment surveyed.

Out of the 28 items that were surveyed, 8 items were considered unsuitable to be re-purposed into a new site and in need of replacement.

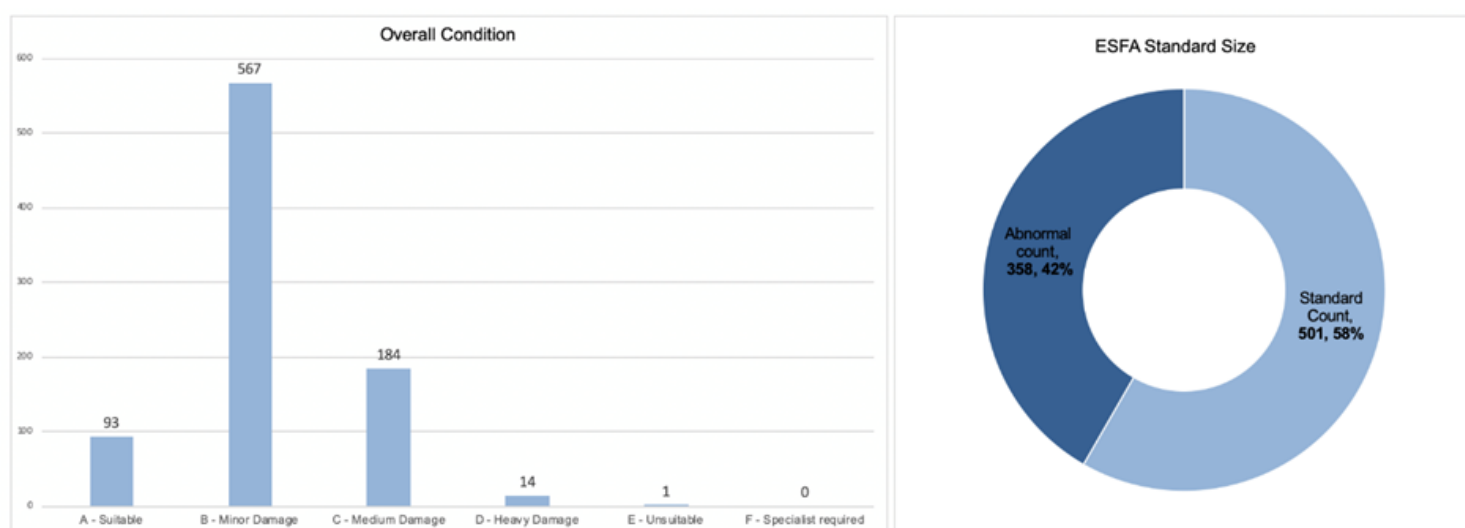


## **Whytrig**

### **Loose Legacy Survey**

Out of items 859 individual loose furniture items that were surveyed, 15 items were considered to unsuitable to be re-purposed into a new site and in need of replacement. 184 items were considered to be reasonable condition but likely to need replacing within the next three years or prior to transfer.

After studying the data collected from each survey, 94% of the existing furniture can be re-purposed within the next three years at present usage.



Please note that all fitted furniture will be provided as new as part of the new build scheme.

### **DT Legacy Survey**

Following an assessment of the specialist equipment at Whytrig Middle High School on 28th October 2019 the school has a great selection of top quality machines and we would recommend re-purposing 98% of the equipment surveyed.

Out of the 18 items that were surveyed, 3 items were considered unsuitable to be re-purposed into a new site and in need of replacement. 1 item was considered to be reasonable condition but require upgrades to bring them up to current standards. The replacement of the DT equipment will form part of the project budget.

A copy of the FF&E including technology audit report can be found in Appendix 4I

#### **4.9.12 IT Audit**

A copy of the IT audit report can be found in Appendix 4I

#### 4.9.13 Pool condition survey

The following is a summary of the major issues that need to be addressed:

- The pool water circulation rate is substantially undersized resulting in a turnover that is over 3 times longer than the maximum limit for this type of pool. Operating with this system will increase the risk to bathers including of infections and diseases such as cryptosporidium.
- With the current system the maximum number of bathers at any one time in the pool should be 12. This limit should not be exceeded.
- The provision for the storage and dosing of chemicals is not satisfactory. Chemicals are not properly segregated increasing the risk of incidents such as chlorine gas release if there is inadvertent mixing. In particular, the chlorine and acid dosing systems are located adjacent to each other.
- It is critical that given the inadequacy of the safe storage provision for chemicals that the management of the chemicals is as good as possible and the current practices fall well short of this. This includes removal or empty carboys and limiting the volumes of chemicals stored.
- The pool liner is showing creases and the securing bolts for the insulation underneath, this may cause the liner to fail.

The pool water treatment system should be upgraded to one that is suitably sized for the pool and bather load. Safe chemical storage and dosing should be provided, ideally with dedicated chemical stores. This upgraded system will cause significant disruption to the pool and require more space than provided in the existing plant room. The water treatment equipment could be accommodated within the existing plant room if the chemical dosing and storage were moved to new dedicated stores. The chemical stores would require a total internal area of approximately 10m<sup>2</sup>, there does appear to be open space adjacent to the plant room. This would need to be confirmed in more detail.

In summary, the works required to bring the pool up to modern day standards are extensive, disruptive and would impact the construction programme. There would be a loss of amenity while the works were executed and the pool would still be a pool once refurbished. In order to deliver the upgrade, the costs of doing this would be in the order of £1,000,000.00 and would reduce the amount of external play space for the school.

A copy of the pool condition survey can be found in Appendix 4J

#### Sports facilities:

There is a limited amount of community sports facilities in Seaton Delaval, with the main attractions being in the Newcastle area, approx 9 miles travel distance.

The facilities at Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools are well used by the community as demonstrated in the community use and lettings timetables in appendix 4C and summarised below:

**Sports hall:** Monday - Saturday

**Swimming pool:** Monday – Sunday

**Gym:** Tuesday and Wednesday

**Pitches:** Sunday

The 2020 – 21 agreements are slightly down on pre-pandemic bookings and revenue. Historically the schools have turned down requests for the sports hall due to full capacity and the gym is too small for group requirements.

The schools expect to be able to let the football pitches every evening throughout the winter with an offer of artificial grass and floodlights.

Lettings confirmed income for academic year 2021 – 22

Lettings (external hire) - £38,142 (the schools expect another £2,000-£3,000 for the summer term)

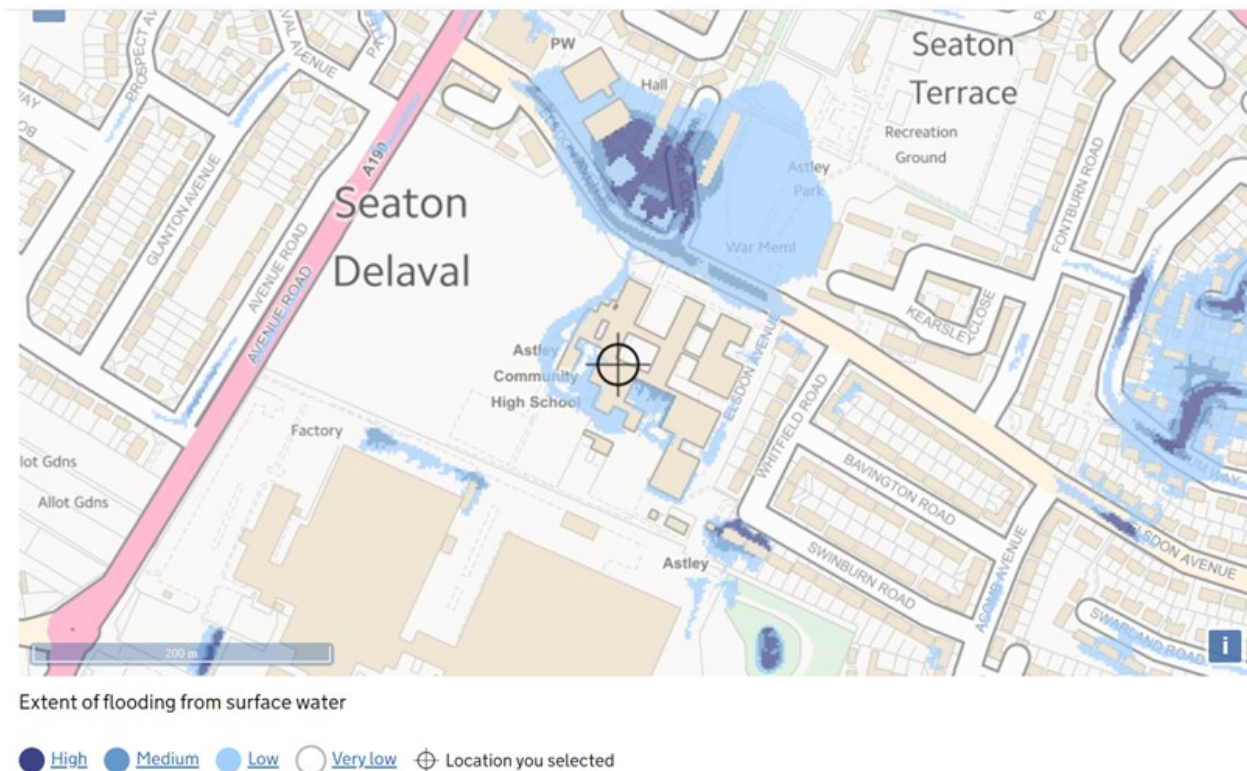
Community learning (delivered by the school - swimming and football development) - £51,030

Projected total of £89,172

The pool and other facilities are an important revenue stream for the federation - not to mention the savings they bring the schools by not having to go elsewhere to meet National Curriculum requirements, especially at Key Stage 2 (the cost of swimming lessons and cost of transport would both be needed to be factored in) and the various benefits they bring to young people and adults across the federation and wider community e.g. mental health and wellbeing. The pool also means the schools can offer their sixth form students employment opportunities as lifeguards, which is a great progression route for them.

#### 4.9.14 Flood Risk Assessment (Existing Site)

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 as can be noted from the Environment Agency Website and the map below provides a more detailed record of the issue of localised overland flow from the detailed Environment Agency maps for planning.



From this it can be noted that the risk of flooding from overland flow is advised as being low to very low risk.

#### Lead Local Flood Authority consultations

Early consultations with the Northumberland County Council Lead Local Flood Officer for this scheme, revealed that they had been requested to investigate and study an area of the existing sports pitches that has suffered from flooding.

They advised that the monitoring and modelling indicated that up to 200mm of water may stand on the surface in this area. The LLFA advised and indicated that they had carried out analysis and modelling of this issue and the design team will investigate these issues further and accommodate the requirements to mitigate these issues within the scheme design.

#### Existing Sports fields and topography

It is noted that the existing playing fields cover some 30,000m<sup>2</sup>. The high points are set at 38.720m in the North West corner of the site and the south west corner is at approximately 37.220m. The existing school and access road are set at 36.600 and

36.700 respectively. The low point on the sports field is at 36.680m in the North East corner between the pitch and the six concrete pad foundations. It is noted that the boundary fence line and the adjacent highway are higher than the pitch low point.

### **School Layout Design option proposals**

The scheme options include the development of this area of the site with either car parking, play areas or buildings and therefore positive drainage will be included in these areas. Further the sports pitches will be developed to provide the required specification of surface gradients and layouts.

#### ***4.9.15 Flood Risk Assessment (New Sites)***

### **Detailed Development Proposals**

The proposals are to construct a new school building with an accompanying courtyard, all-weather pitch and grass recreation field on the Greenfield site that currently houses the existing Astley Community High School. There are also proposals to construct car parking on the brownfield site that was used for the now demolished Whytrig Middle School. Appendix A shows the Site Location Plan.

The proposed site layout within Appendix B shows the extents of highways and building positions. The majority of the highway will be offered for formal adoption. For School Site, the new school and on-site parking will be accessed off Astley Road. For Car Parking Site, the car parking will be accessed off Western Avenue.

Minor highway works are proposed to the existing road off Astley Road to the southwest of the site to provide the access to site. These works will be carried out in accordance with Northumberland County Council Highways guidance.

The current use means that the surface water drainage discharge rate will need to be kept as close as practicable to Greenfield rates as per the Northumberland County Council SuDS Adoption Guidance for Major Developments. The surface water is to follow the discharge hierarchy in Building Regulations H3:

“Rainwater from a system provided ... shall discharge to one of the following, listed in order of priority:

- a. An adequate soakaway or some other adequate infiltration system; or, where this is not reasonably practicable,
- b. A watercourse; or, where that is not reasonably practicable,
- c. A surface water sewer.
- d. A combined sewer.”



The initial findings from BGS records indicate it may be difficult to discharge to soakaways due to the impermeable underlying clay that is anticipated throughout the site. It may also be difficult to discharge to a watercourse, due to the distance to the nearest watercourse and the surrounding infrastructure. The NWL records show that there are no NWL surface water sewers that can be connected into within a close proximity to the site.

Therefore, it is likely the surface water for School Site will discharge to a combined water sewer, most likely the 375mm – 525mm combined water sewer mentioned in 3.5.1. The surface water from Car Parking Site will also likely discharge into a combined water sewer, most likely the 300mm – 450mm combined water sewer mentioned in 3.5.4.

Foul water will most likely discharge to the 375mm – 525mm combined water sewer for School Site. There will be no foul flows from Car Parking Site.

A comprehensive Drainage Philosophy is required to review Building Regulations Part H hierarchy for discharge of surface water and to identify feasible outfall locations.

### **Flood Risk Management Measures**

As stated in previous sections, the site is at low risk of flooding from tidal, fluvial, sewer, overland, groundwater and artificial sources post development. All impermeable areas will be positively drained via a positive drainage system. Flood risk from surface water remains high within Car Parking Site.

### **Off Site Impacts**

The proposals for this site should not increase the flood risk elsewhere off site for the following reasons:

- The proposed surface water discharge rate will be restricted as close as reasonably practicable to Greenfield runoff rates and agreed with the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- The impermeable areas within the site will be positively drained via a proposed drainage network and designed to the 1 in 100 year storm + climate change, with attenuation provided accordingly.

### **Residual Risks**

Recommendations have been made within Section 7 to mitigate against any flood sources that pose any significant risk to the proposed site. All sources of flooding have been considered and the conclusion is that any residual risks are negligible. Flood risk from surface water within Car Parking Site is to remain status quo post development.

### **Conclusion**



From the analysis it can be seen that the risk of flooding to School Site is **LOW** from all forms of flooding as categorised in the Framework and Technical Guidance. The risk of flooding to Car Parking Site from all forms of flooding is **LOW**, apart from surface water which is **HIGH**. This will be classified as **HIGH** post development and remain status quo. The flood designation for the site is **LOW**.

The proposed uses of land are appropriate in this Flood Zone. (Tables 1, 2 & 3 of the Technical Guidance).

This report has been prepared with reference to the information available at the time of writing. The summary and recommendations may be revised upon receipt of additional or further information.

A copy of the flood risk assessment can be found in Appendix 4K

#### ***4.9.16 Transport Assessment (Existing and New Sites)***

SAJ Transport Consultants have been engaged early in the design process to inform the options appraisal and design development.

The preferred option will influence the scope and extent of the Transport Assessment which will be required to be prepared prior to a planning submission. It may be that a Transport Statement will suffice subject to agreement with the Highway Authority rather than a Transport Assessment. Depending on the preferred option, scope of traffic surveys and junction capacity assessment will need to be agreed with the Highway Authority.

As part of the development proposals, the school will be required to commit to the implementation of a Travel Plan. Whilst this can be prepared by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, it will be the responsibility of the School and its Governing Body to implement the Plan. Northumberland County Council prefer the use of a compliant Modeshift STARS Plan to assist with monitoring, the school can also access National Travel Awards through this scheme.

Developing a Travel Plan during design development will assist in determining appropriate access and transport infrastructure both on and off site. It is likely that further travel mode and attitude surveys will be required to be undertaken to inform an update to the School Travel Plan. Depending on access arrangements, speed survey, Junction Turning Counts and parking beat surveys may also be required to inform the design. A review of Personal Injury Collision data will establish whether there are any patterns which may be compounded by development and therefore require mitigation.

The layout of the site is to promote the principles of sustainable travel. This is to minimise travel distances from the surrounding highway network to the building entrances, increasing legibility and accessibility. Routes are to be direct and appropriate width to the

type and volume of movement. As the age range of pupils on site is from 9 to 18 years old, travel characteristics and impacts vary, and this will be taken into account in the development proposals.

Sufficient and appropriate cycle parking is to be provided in locations which minimise conflict with other modes of transport and encourage the use of this means of transport. Complementary facilities for walking and cycling will be considered in the design of the school such as lockers, changing, drying areas and shower facilities.

Car parking levels will have regard to NCC Standards. Flexibility in the design of parking areas will be considered to accommodate potential changes in School Transport Policy arrangements and SEN transport provisions. Large vehicle access is sought to be segregated from pupil movements where possible and reversing should be minimised. The site should be capable of operating 'out of hours', the layout is intended to be flexible to meet these needs as well as the day-to-day operation of the school.

As a Statutory Consultee in the planning process, a close working relationship is advocated with the Highway Authority to minimise risk and retrospective changes to design proposals. To date, consultation with the Highway Authority has been limited but moving forward with the scheme this will be undertaken together with input from Officers responsible for Sustainable Travel, Safer Routes to School and Health and Safety.

Preliminary information has been collected to inform the transport requirements of the development proposal. This includes;

- Modeshare data for staff and pupils;
- School Transport utilisation and routes; and
- Geographical spread of pupils at Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School.

Options 1 and 2 retain the existing, historic highway infrastructure, parking and access arrangements at the existing site with minimal benefit in transportation terms.

Option 3 with the new build school on the existing site, this provides the opportunity to reconfigure access and parking arrangements. The consolidation of the car parking allows for coach access and the opportunity for parents to utilise the car park circulation for drop off away from the existing highway, reducing conflicts with other / vulnerable road users. The layout ensures that accessible parking bays are located close to the building entrance within an acceptable travel distance. The pedestrian and cycle access into the site will be prioritised and enhanced to promote active travel. The off site sports provision will require pupils and staff to travel to The Avenue site. A safe route would include utilising the existing signal-controlled crossing facilities on Avenue Road (close to the junction with Elsdon) Avenue and then the crossing on Astley Road (western arm of the roundabout junction). Staff would accompany students and with the infrastructure provision, this is considered acceptable from a safe routes perspective.

In the case of Options 4, 5 and 6 where the school is provided on The Avenue site, the immediate vicinity will be subject to 'new' movements and parking demands. In all cases, staggering the start times of the Middle School and the High School reduces the volume of movement at peak times, reducing congestion and therefore conflicts and the risk of accident. In all cases, active travel should be prioritised with multiple access points and direct routes from all approaches to the site. By minimising travel distances, this makes active travel a more attractive and therefore viable option for travel to school. The provision of multiple routes is to ensure safety of vulnerable road users, segregating them from vehicular movement at the earliest opportunity.

In the case of Option 4 where vehicular access is from The Avenue, this is an A classified road and bus route. The vehicular access is to provide for all car parking and vehicular access, it will need to be carefully considered and designed to ensure compliance with standards. A traffic survey and Stage 1 Road Safety Audit is likely to be requested by the Highway Authority to accompany the Planning Application where there are changes to the highway. The informal Highways comments are that there is a preference to avoid signalisation and that a priority junction with 2 lane egress should suffice (subject to PICADY modelling). This will require a visibility splay of 215m subject to the speed survey. The relocation of the school will change movement patterns and pedestrian desire lines are likely to include the uncontrolled refuges on the roundabout junction of the A192 and A190, this could cause rise to road safety concerns.

Option 5 locates all but essential car parking off site on the former Whytrig Middle School site. This is located within a reasonable and acceptable walk distance and makes use of the existing signal controlled crossing facility on Astley Road. Where 'park and stride' is not feasible for a building user (approx 600m), it is anticipated that they could utilise the on site facility to drop off heavy bags etc before the pupils arrive or if eligible, they could park in the accessible parking bays. This has the benefit of removing significant conflict of vehicles and pedestrians. By providing a dedicated facility, this provides a facility off the highway for those driving or being dropped off. To reduce the risk of drop off occurring near the pedestrian entrance points, off site control measures (parking restrictions) may be used to protect junctions and visibility splays.

Option 6 includes on site parking for some staff and off site parking for 6<sup>th</sup> form students, staff and visitors. This would allow for some staff to access the site via Prospect Avenue to the car park however during times of pupils arriving and departing this access would not be available for vehicles to minimise conflicts. As with Option 5, to reduce the risk of drop off occurring near the pedestrian entrance points, off site control measures (parking restrictions) may be used to protect junctions and visibility splays.

Further data is picked up in respect of Options 4, 5 and 6 from:

- Topographical surveys of likely access locations to enable visibility splay assessment to be undertaken and
- Speed surveys / Automatic Traffic Count of The Avenue.

In all cases the car parking numbers will need to be verified against NCC Guidance when staff information is made available by the school.

#### **4.10 SEN Accessibility**

The new development will provide full accessibility and as such can be Equality Act compliant, compliant with BS8300 and the relevant building regulations. This scheme does not present any onerous design challenges as both sites are flat and can be remodelled, without much, if any, material being taken off site in consequence.

The feasibility study proposes two new lifts within the school building and a lift within the swimming pool and sports hall area to ensure compliance particularly out of hours. External level access should be achievable to all sports facilities and full accessibility to the visitors' entrance is achievable for both options via an accessible visitors parking area.

The teaching facilities are enhanced by the inclusion of a dedicated Additionally Resourced Provision Unit (ARP) that will support up to ten students at any one time. It will have its own external area for external learning and recreation and a dedicated entrance

#### **4.11 Net Zero Carbon in Operation**

NCC's approach to carbon reduction is set out in its draft Climate Commitment Action Plan 2021. The target date of net zero emissions for the county is 2030. The target date to halve operational emissions has been brought forward from 2030 to 2025 and an updated action plan with a road map to achieving net zero emissions by 2030 will be published by 2024. To support this ambition, we have reviewed the impact of these considerations for this project.

The options considered were Passivhaus, Net Zero Carbon in Operation and Net Zero Carbon in Construction and in Operation (Embodied Carbon). Passivhaus standard is a route towards Net Zero Carbon however further works would be required to achieve the Zero Carbon aspiration of the Council. The cost of implementing Embodied Carbon is yet to be fully understood or available within the construction sector at this time.

The adopted approach is to achieve Net Zero Carbon in Operation which will be achieved by a balance of improvement in the overall thermal performance of the building envelope, reducing energy demands and the provision of energy from renewable sources on site (or off site from responsible sources) and develop offset strategies such as planting coppices on the site all with the aim of creating a Net Zero Carbon proposal. Refer to the commercial appraisal in Section 5 for further details on the Net Zero Carbon in Operation costings. The initial investment is substantial however the long-term benefits for running costs are significant and it enables Northumberland County Council to lead the way.

The impact of these considerations is still at a high level and will be developed in more detail during the design development and will be reported against at every stage. This approach will, we believe, assist in the planning approval processes for either site.

Two copies of a net zero carbon report can be found in Appendix 4L

#### **4.12 Third Party Use**

Currently the local first and middle schools and the community enjoy access to the swimming pool during the school day as well as at the evening and weekends. The sports hall is well used by the community, as is the onsite public library and customer services centre.

Consultation with all third-party users commenced in February 2020 and will continue throughout the design and construction phases of the project should this OBC be approved.

#### **4.13 Health and Safety**

The design requires consideration to the potential implications of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, the Construction Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 2015 and all other construction related health and safety legislation. At this stage, the considerations have been at a very high level and will be developed once the designs are developed further.

The phasing of the works is critical to the safety of the existing school users and public visiting the site. This needs to consider how the design and temporary work impacts the existing school and the additional control measures required throughout the construction period to minimise conflict between the school and the construction activities.

The current strategy is to build the new building, vacate the existing estate, demolish the existing estate, and complete the external sports provision. To achieve this, it is recognised that the school sports curriculum will need to be temporarily delivered off site. Temporary car parking arrangements on the adjacent site might need to be provided, after decanting into the new building.

The existing estate varies in age and as such will need to be carefully managed during the demolition phase and the following will need to be considered and comprehensive mitigation strategies developed: -

- There is asbestos present in several of the structures
- There are likely to be some structural issues due to the age of the building
- Effective vehicle and pedestrian segregation will need to be fully planned and evaluated
- There will be some tree removal and tree protection required for the retained.
- Ecological issues
- Impacts from traffic (buses / drop offs) congestion at peak times



The proposed demolitions will expose the construction workforce, third parties and the public to other reasonably foreseeable hazards including: -

- Dust
- Noise
- Vibration
- Lead
- Utility Services
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 will apply (but will not apply during the construction phase, for which CDM 2015 contains provisions).

In relation to the proposed new building the impact of the design must consider: -

- Priority to permanent, collective edge protection
- Access/equipment/activities associated with cleaning and maintaining the Structures
- Information pertaining to any proprietary system to access roofs/voids
- Anti-social behaviour/crime prevention
- Lighting
- Climbing hazards
- Flooding / drainage
- Biological hazards - including Leptospirosis/Weil's Disease, Lyme disease etc.

The extent of works required to develop the preferred design will require the appointment of CDM duty holders with sufficient skills, knowledge, experience, and training to fulfil their respective roles.

The appointed Principal Designer must ensure the general principles of prevention are applied to the design and hazards are reduced to an acceptable level. Information relating to residual hazards must be passed to the Principal Contractor for inclusion into the Construction Phase Plan and Health and Safety file.

#### **4.14 Material Choices**

In response to the Grenfell Tower fire, HM Government have issued amendments to Approved Document B: Fire Safety Volume 2 – Buildings Other Than Dwelling Houses, 2006 edition incorporating 2007, 2010 and 2013 amendments. These amendments took effect on 21 December 2018 for use in England for all applications made after this date.

We are bound by these amendments to façade design which, along with the guidance laid out in Approved Document B, provide rules on fire egress for all new building types, building heights, firefighting requirements and when sprinklers are / not required.

During the course of the design process, we will bring to your attention the strategies and the material choices available to you to achieve compliance with Approved Document B.



Some material choices may comply with building regulations but may be uninsurable on the basis of fire safety. NCC need to consider these implications and may wish to improve on the legislative standards to comply with your own governance and insurance requirements.

Our recommendation at this stage is to elect for the inclusion of non-combustible materials for all wall build-ups. This will require all insulants to be mineral wool. This does impact on material costs. We will ensure all other options are explored and the financial implications explained, and the risks associated with decisions we collectively make.

We recommend the appointment of a fire engineer on most projects. The criteria for when an engineer is employed depends on project complexity and where a standard response to Approved Document B does not apply. Multi occupancy residential developments, schools, hospitals, and offices will warrant the involvement of a fire engineer to ensure there is a comprehensive fire risk assessment and that the façade design satisfies BR135.

#### **4.15 Summary**

The feasibility study has considered the educational brief, planning, highways, and Sport England requirements. In addition, the feasibility study has considered all of the surveys referenced in this Outline Business Case and all design guidance and standards that are relevant to this initial stage of design.

The recommendation of the report is to proceed with option 6 - New Build on the Avenue with Hybrid Park and Stride.

This option enables the building and external sports provision to be delivered all on one site, leaving the school fully operational on its existing site during the construction works and meets the requirements of BB103.

It also provides safeguarding for pupils and decreases the level of transport usage. This is via dedicating a number of staff parking on the Avenue Site however by segregating pupil access for parental drop off, 6<sup>th</sup> Form and part-time staff parking to the vacated Whytrig Middle School site, which is approximately 3 minutes' walk from the site, promoting a park and stride to the school for all pupils.

The following documents are attached at <b>Appendix 4:</b>	
4A	Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools Education Brief
4B	NCC letter of comfort from planners
4C	Sports facilities Community use timetable
4D	S.I. Phase 1 - Desktop Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Existing site</li> <li>ii. New site</li> </ul>
4E	Ecological Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Existing site</li> <li>ii. New site</li> </ul>
4F	Arboricultural Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Existing site</li> <li>ii. New site</li> </ul>
4G	Extended Topographical Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Existing site</li> <li>ii. New site</li> </ul>
4H	Utilities Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Existing site</li> <li>ii. New site</li> </ul>
4I	FF&E including technology audit report
4J	Pool Condition Survey
4K	Flood Risk Assessment
4L	Net Zero Carbon report (two copies)



## 5 COMMERCIAL APPRAISAL

**Section 5** of this OBC describes the commercial appraisal for the options available for the scheme.

### **5.1 Introduction**

This section for the Outline Business Case examines and sets out the current position with regards to the commercial viability of the scheme.

Northumberland County Council (“NCC”) along with its Technical Advisor has undertaken a feasibility cost assessment of the scheme, based on the options outlined earlier in section 3.3 of this report.

### **5.2 Funding**

The scheme is to be fully funded by NCC.

There is potential for Sport England and/or Rugby League funding or funding via other national governing bodies of sport, but this has not been included in any figures reported herein.

Other grants or funding streams may be available, but at the time of writing these have not been pursued. The reason for this is that NCC wishes to remain in full control of the scheme design and requirements by reducing the input of external factors which would otherwise have an impact on the scheme and programme.

### **5.3 Project Assumptions**

Assumptions have been used in calculating the scheme costs and are identified as follows:

- New Middle and High School to operate from April 2025.
- Gross Internal Floor Area for the New Build is based on 10,500m<sup>2</sup>.
- Single stage design & build procurement route.
- Works to be carried out during normal working hours.
- Works to be completed in a single phase on the proposed new site.
- Works to be completed in two phases on the current site.
  - o Phase 1 new build school and part external works.
  - o Phase 2 demolition of existing school and final external works.
- Complete segregation between construction works and the live operational school site where developing on the existing site.

The following exclusions also apply:

- VAT
- Capital allowances
- Third party grant or funding, other than those mentioned above
- Land acquisition costs
- Maintenance costs
- Finance and legal costs

The Schedule of Accommodation areas and pupil numbers are the key driver for the funding for construction costs. These have in turn assisted with the generation of the design options on which the cost information has been prepared. The following figures have been used for projected pupil numbers:

**Table 5A: Projected Pupil Numbers**

School Site	Total Proposed Numbers
Whytrig Middle School	360
Astley High School (incl ARP)	660
Seaton Valley - Elsdon Avenue Total	<b>1020</b>

#### **5.4 Overall Project Outturn Costs**

NCC and its Technical Advisor have developed costs for each of the options to demonstrate the scheme's affordability. Build cost rates used have been taken from the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS), in-house cost data and by benchmarking against other recently completed schemes of a similar size and nature.

The table below provides a cost comparison of the overall Scheme Options to achieve Northumberland County Council's Facility Output Specification (FOS) together with a minimum EPC A rating:

**Table 5b: Overall Scheme Options**

Overall Scheme Options Cost		
Ref	Option	Total
1	Do Nothing	-
2	Backlog Maintenance	<b>£15,728,920</b>
3	New build on the existing Elsdon Avenue site with off-site playing fields on the land of The Avenue site.	<b>£30,218,363</b>
4	New build on The Avenue site only (access from The Avenue)	<b>£31,217,333</b>
5	New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with park and stride provision on Astley Road – off-site parking	<b>£31,383,473</b>
6	New build on The Avenue site with access off Prospect Avenue with hybrid park and stride provision on Astley Road	<b>£31,438,853</b>

#### **5.4.1 Construction Cost including inflation**

During 2020, BCIS was rather stagnant and reflected the market up until the 4th Quarter, showing a modest rise in inflation and in some cases, deflation. At which point, some Contractors began to see a major shift in the market, moving circa 5-10% since Feb 2021 to the end of September 2021. This has remained constant in the last month, but forecasts suggest it could get worse leading into, and throughout much of, 2022. This doesn't reflect the BCIS index which is always, at best, 6 months behind the market in reality.

Other Contractors have seen a lot of volatility in the market, certainly over the last 6 months, with inflation ranging between 3-10% making it very difficult to pitch where they tender. As a result, Contractors have been reviewing the tenders, prior to submitting to clients, on a package by package basis, with steel packages being particularly problematic. Tenders are typically held as fixed price for 90 days, but packages such as steel are staying fixed for only 24 hours in some cases.

Some examples of material price increases over the past 6-12 months, include 13% increases for plasterboard, raw materials up as much as 80% and bricks and blocks by up to 10%. These are just a few examples but there are many more which have been affected.

Taking the material price hikes into consideration, as well as the overall tender inflation from the past 2 years ranging between 3-10% following our market research and intelligence, we feel 6.5% gives a good reflection of the impact we have seen over this period, and in particular the past 12 months across the industry

Whilst inflationary allowances have been included, the construction industry is seeing unprecedented *fragmented global supply chains as a result of Brexit, COVID-19 and most recently, due to the crisis in Ukraine*. As a result of this, it can be identified that the current market conditions are listed as *Overheating*. Therefore it would be beneficial to undertake early Contractor engagement to discuss current market conditions and tender appetite as soon as practicably possible.

Please note that inflation has been included in the figures above within Table 5b.

#### 5.4.2 Abnormal Costs

During the development of the options, surveys and investigations have been undertaken and their results considered. The resultant abnormal costs identified have been estimated and are summarised in table 5d.

Category	Option 2 (‘000)	Option 3 (‘000)	Option 4 (‘000)	Option 5 (‘000)	Option 6 (‘000)
Ecology	n/a	50	75	75	75
Transport ~ new entrance junctions	n/a	150	200	200	200
Transport ~ alteration to existing junction	n/a	75	n/a	n/a	n/a
Section 278 works	n/a	250	500	500	500
3G Football / Rugby Pitch	n/a	650	650	650	650
Playing fields / hard play areas	n/a	Inc	200	200	200
Off-site car parking	n/a	n/a	n/a	150	200
Off-site playing fields	n/a	300	n/a	n/a	n/a
Increased foundations	n/a	263	263	263	263
Retaining Structures	n/a	25	50	50	50
Arboriculture	n/a	15	50	50	50
Suds/Drainage/Attenuation	n/a	500	500	500	500
Stats ~ supplies	n/a	300	300	300	300
Stats ~ diversions	n/a	50	350	350	350
Demolitions	n/a	512	512	512	512
Asbestos Removal	220	220	220	220	220
Temporary Buildings	2,500	50	n/a	n/a	n/a
Flood mitigation works	100	50	50	50	50
Sustainable	n/a	400	400	400	400
Refurb of existing pool	1,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Grouting to coal seams	n/a	n/a	300	300	300
Abortive survey / investigations costs	n/a	n/a	100	100	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,820</b>	<b>3,860</b>	<b>4,720</b>	<b>4,870</b>	<b>4,920</b>





The list of abnormal items has been collated, in part, from the preliminary results of the various surveys which have been carried out as part of the OBC process.

- An initial ecology & transport survey has been undertaken, however, there will be a requirement for further detailed surveys to be carried out during the next stage.
- An allowance has been included to account for off-site highways works that will be required to adapt the highway to cater for the new vehicular and pedestrian access routes and junctions.
- Costs have been included to enhance foundations due to unfavourable ground conditions because of made ground.
- The current design is based upon maximising the use of the existing topography of the site; however, there is likely to be a requirement for retaining structures to be provided so an allowance is included for these.
- Tree surveys have been carried out to identify the impact of removing trees and the measures required to protect existing trees as part of the build.
- All options will require drainage solutions such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), attenuation tanks, ponds, and soakaways etc. so an allowance has been included for this.
- New gas, electricity and water supplies will need to be provided to the sites, together with the removal of any existing redundant services.
- Option 2 will require temporary accommodation for existing students whilst the existing School is refurbished as part of the backlog maintenance.
- An allowance has also been included for refurbishment works to the existing pool in option 2 which would be retained if the desire was to proceed with the backlog maintenance option.
- Allowances have been included for the new site options to accommodate an increase in site area and potential grouting of coal seams based on the Phase 1 Desktop Study.

#### **5.4.3 ICT and FF&E**

Costs for end-user ICT equipment and loose FF&E have been included based on the proposed pupil numbers for the new Schools.

#### **5.4.4 Fees**

Design team fees have been included in the costs above. There will be fees paid for by the Council up to the point of novation, after which the remainder of the design team fees will be paid for by the Contractor.

## 5.5 Sustainability

### 5.5.1 Net Zero Carbon in Operation Approach

Net Zero Carbon in Operation is achieved when the amount of carbon emissions, associated with a building's operational energy on an annual basis, is zero or negative. This type of building is highly efficient and powered from on site and / or off-site renewable energy sources, with any remaining carbon balance offset.

Examples of how this could be achieved on this development include, but not limited to:

- Maximise building orientation particularly the noise source from The Avenue A190
- Prioritise passive measures, natural ventilation, daylight and beneficial solar glare in winter months
- Minimise the requirement for power usage in long term maintenance.

Based on the available cost data, which is limited due to the lack of completed similar buildings, designing and building to this standard will increase the costs, included in Table 5b, by a further 18% (please note that this does not include the pool, which would add a further cost and increased complexity to the scheme). Market research was undertaken with experienced industry professionals who confirmed the required uplift as being adequate for this type of work. This also mirrors cost data from recent schemes undertaken in the Northeast which are also aiming to achieve Net Zero Carbon in Operation.

As a result, this would likely **increase the capital budget by between £5.4m and £5.7m**, depending on which option is chosen, over and above the costs required to achieve an NCC FOS (EPC A) rated building.

### 5.5.2 Other Sustainability Options

Other sustainability options were explored such as Passivhaus and Net Zero Carbon in Construction and in Operation (Embodied Carbon). The reasons for not proceeding with these other options are as follows:

Passivhaus adopts a whole-building approach with clear, measured targets, focused on high-quality construction, certified through an exacting quality assurance process. The prescriptive nature of the build can cause limitations on school operations and flexibility meaning there could be some potential restrictions on room type and adjacency requirements. It is also restrictive in relation to future expansion plans.

Passivhaus standard is a route towards Net Zero Carbon however further works would be required to achieve the Zero Carbon aspiration of the Council. The Department for Education have also decided to move away from Passivhaus designs now in favour of Net Zero Carbon in Operation in their latest 'Spec 21' technical annex'.

Net Zero Carbon in Construction and in Operation includes any CO<sub>2</sub> created during the manufacturing of building materials (material extraction, transport to manufacturer, manufacturing), the transport of those materials to the job site, and the construction practices used. Put simply, embodied carbon is the carbon footprint of a building or infrastructure project before it becomes operational. Most of the embodied carbon for a construction product is CO<sub>2</sub> emitted from the use of fossil fuels in extraction and manufacturing of construction materials and because of process emissions from manufacturing. To address embodied carbon, several organisations including Architecture 2030, Structural Engineers 2050 Challenge (SE2050), the Carbon Leadership Forum, and the World Green Building Council have jointly taken on a mission to eliminate embodied carbon from buildings by the year 2050.

How we tackle embodied carbon is going to change the whole method of materials are produced in manufacture and at source. This step change is yet to be fully implemented across all different processes of manufacturing and construction. We therefore do not believe that this approach or the cost of implementing such is yet fully understood or available within the construction sector at this time which is supported by soft market testing undertaken with several principal contractors.

### 5.5.3 Overall Project Outturn Costs

If the Council opted to proceed with any of the options identified previously, including the requirement to achieve Net Zero Carbon in Operation, the summarised costings for each option would be as follows:

Option	FOS (EPC A)	Net Zero Carbon in Operation	Total
1	-	-	-

2	£15,728,920	n/a	£15,728,920
3	£30,218,363	£5,439,305	£35,657,669
4	£31,217,333	£5,619,120	£36,836,453
5	£31,383,473	£5,649,025	£37,032,498
6	£31,438,853	£5,658,994	£37,097,847

### 5.5.3 Summary

*The Overall Project Outturn Cost for the recommended option (Option 6 - New Build on the Avenue with Hybrid Park and Stride) is £37.1m.*

This is exclusive of VAT however includes abnormals, professional fees, ICT, FF&E and the additional funding of £5.7m to support the further recommendation to achieve Net Zero Carbon in Operation.

## 6 READINESS TO DELIVER

### 6.1 Project Governance

The NCC process for project structure and governance has been established to oversee and manage the relevant stages of this initiative. A Project Board, Project Steering Group and Project Team have been established, although membership of either group may be subject to variation according to the requirements of the project should it move forwards to implementation. Membership of the Project Board is shown in Table 6A: and is an existing group that oversees the delivery and development of major education projects.

**Table 6A: Project Board Membership**

<b>Major Capital Project Board Membership</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Role</b>
Cath McEvoy-Carr	Executive Director of Adults and Children Services.	Chair
Rob Murfin	Executive Director Planning and Economy	Member
Rick O'Farrell	Executive Director	Member
Sue Aviston	Head of School Organisation and Resources	Member
Alison Elsdon	Service Director Finance	Member
David Laux	Head of Technical Services	Member
Mike Turner	Head of Property Services	Member
Lawrence Inkster	Director, Faithful & Gould (Technical Advisors for the project)	Member
Mike Robbins	Strategic Estates Manager	Member
Alistair Bennett	Senior Accountant	Member
Pam Hindhaugh	Procurement	Member
Phil Soderquest	Health and Safety	Member

**Table 6B: Project Steering Group**

<b>Steering Group Membership</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Role</b>
Cllr Guy Renner Thompson	Cabinet Members for Children's Services	Chair
Les Bowman	Councillor for Holywell Ward, representing Labour	Member
David Ferguson	Councillor for Hartley ward, representing Conservative	Member
Eve Chicken	Councillor For Seghill ward representing Conservative	Member
Audrey Kingham	Senior Service Director of Education and Skills	Member
Sue Aviston	Head of School Organisation and Resources	Member
Mark Elliott	Education Capital Programme Manager	Member
John Barnes	Executive Headteacher for Seaton Valley Federation of Schools	Member
Lawrence Inkster	Director, Faithful & Gould (Technical Advisors for the	Member

	project)	
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The Project Steering Group, outlined in Table 6B, is a consultative group between the school and the LA. The group will represent the local area and will ensure the local views are taken into account through the development and delivery of the project.

### **6.1.1 Project Management**

A project team has been assembled to produce this OBC for review and decision by NCC's Cabinet. If the scheme is approved to move forward, the suitability of the current project team would be reviewed, and relevant adjustments made to personnel where required to ensure successful delivery.

From consultation to implementation, the project team (outlined in Table 6C) has a breadth of knowledge and experience of successfully delivering significant school capital projects, in Northumberland.

As it is proposed for the project to be procured through a design and build process it is recommended that the current team are retained to develop detailed designs in order to tender the project on the open market to ensure best value and control the quality of the design.



**Table 6C: Project Team**

Project Team		
Role on Project	Position	Name
Project Sponsor	Executive Director of Adults & Children's Social Care and Education	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Project Director	Head of School Organisation and Resources.	Sue Aviston
Project Manager	Capital Programme Manager	Mark Elliott
Project Assistance	Project Support Officer	Jacqui Pearson
Seaton Valley Federation Representative	Executive Headteacher	John Barnes
Communications	Media Communications Officer	Liz Walker
Land issues and investigations	Strategic Estates Manager	Mike Robbins
Legal Adviser	Legal Adviser	Womble Bond Dickinson
Technical Adviser	Cost management, design and technical services.	Faithful+Gould
Procurement	Procurement Business Partner	Chris Baty

Resources have been commissioned to undertake the site options appraisal, to determine affordability and feasibility and to collate the OBC. These appointments were made via NCC's framework contract with Faithful+Gould.

## **6.2 Consultation and Statutory Approvals**

### **6.2.1 Statutory Implications for Seaton Valley Federation**

The options for the new build schools for Astley High school and Whytrig Middle do not require any school organisation statutory processes to be undertaken as all site option are within 2 miles of the existing school site and are also within the schools existing catchment areas.

### **6.2.2 Other Consultations**

**Current and future planning consultations**

Relevant bodies have been informally consulted to develop the proposals to incorporate their views within the various site option appraisals. Implementation is subject to NCC approval at Cabinet on 26 April 2022.

Informal consultation has already been undertaken to establish the scope and number of schools to be included in this project and as a result of this process Seaton Sluice Middle School was removed from the scope and will remain on its existing site within its existing buildings.

Further informal consultation has also taken place to seek feedback on the options as set out in section 4 of this business case on 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Three design options were presented to provide new school buildings on The Avenue site with alternative access arrangements on to site and differing levels of on site parking, shown as option 4, 5 and 6. Attendees at the consultation were asked to make comments on each option identifying what they liked about each option and also what improvement they felt could be made. The feedback from these events will be used at the next stage of detailed design in order to mitigate the concerns raised with the preferred option.

The majority favoured two of the three options (option 4 & 6) shown on The Avenue site, whilst there was very little support for the development on the existing site with off site playing fields.

As the most likely preferred option for ACHS and WMS has been identified as the relocation of the middle school and high school to The Avenue site, these proposals would now form the basis of the planning submission. Planning policies would be fully adhered to, appropriate sporting provision is being made to meet Sport England requirements and ongoing discussions are progressing with Highways to ensure all appropriate needs and standards are met.

#### **6.4 Risk**

Several risk workshops, facilitated by NCC's Risk Manager, have been undertaken throughout the early phases of the project. These have included a representative from the Seaton Valley Federation and the Project Team. A Risk Register has been developed and mitigation measures put in place in order for this project to proceed. The Risk Register will be constantly monitored throughout the project with key risks and issues being reported at every Project Board meeting. The Risk Register is managed by the Project Director with specific input from the Project Team.

The Risk Register contained in Appendix 6A, details:

- the top ten risks identified during the process leading to preparation of this OBC;
- who is responsible for the mitigation; and
- the measures being taken to mitigate each risk.

#### **6.5 Summary**

Northumberland County Council has put in place resources for the duration of the project, including post contract, to monitor and maintain ongoing relations between the Northumberland County Council and Seaton Valley Federation to ensure the effective delivery of the project, throughout its lifetime.

A Bidders' Day is scheduled for September 2022.

A risk workshop has been held and a risk strategy developed. Risk will continue to be monitored and evaluated with any changes being reported to the Project Board on a monthly basis.

Public consultation -

The following documents are attached at **Appendix 6:**

6A	Project Risk Register
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## 7 MOVING FORWARD

### 7.1 Programme Delivery

To achieve the key programme objective, identified in section 2.1, principally handover of the building to allow occupation for April 2025 several critical path activities must be achieved, namely

- RIBA Stage 4 Designs to be completed by the beginning of December 2022.
- Submit to planning end of July 2022.
- Contract to be awarded mid April 2023.
- Construction to commence mid June 2023.

To award contract in April 2023, the tender documents must be issued no later than early January 2023 to allow the contractors sufficient time to price and submit their proposed tenders as well a time period for reviewing and assessing the tender submissions prior to a recommendation for acceptance.

To achieve these timescales, RIBA stage 4 designs will need to commence by the end of July 2022. This requires the design team to commence with RIBA Stage 3 immediately on approval of the OBC.

This stage would also include liaison with various stakeholders and finalisation of the site surveys and investigations to help reduce unknowns and minimise risk. To enable the programme to be achievable, the tender period will run alongside any potential judicial review from a secretary of state call in.

The client and end user will have a review period at the end of each RIBA Stage and it is essential that these timescales are followed so as not deviate from the critical path and to ensure the school can open in April 2025.

The project team can help assist with guidance and advice around Framework options and other potential platforms/routes that may be used for appointing a contractor. This will involve liaison with NCC procurement and framework providers and their local supply partners to gauge interest and a further review of market trends to ensure the best route is chosen.

Upon receiving the tender submissions, there is a 4 week evaluation and approvals period to review the documents and to prepare the final business case for submission to NCC's full cabinet (if required).

An 80 week build programme is anticipated however the Contractors will be afforded the opportunity to submit an alternative tender which may realise programme benefits. Completion, ready for School occupation in April 2025, will be written into the documents as an Employer's requirement.

## 7.2 Summary

A critical path of scheduled delivery activities has been provided based on the proposed route to market, Design and Build Single Stage Procurement, and in line with the Public Contracts Regulations [PCR] 2015.

The RIBA Stage 3 design will need to proceed on approval of the OBC for the key milestones to be achieved. The design process will progress on through to RIBA Stage 4 with tender issue scheduled for early January 2023.

A PCR compliant, non Framework 'open' tender procedure will be sourced in conjunction with NCC Procurement to maintain programme and to ensure the best route is chosen. Further market engagement will commence on approval of the Outline Business Case.

Construction to commence mid-June 2023 with handover scheduled in spring term for school opening Easter 2025.

