Infrastructure/Estate Strategies Interim Guidance

Infrastructure or Estate Strategies are intended to provide a clear, evidence-based framework for understanding future estate requirements and planning how these will be delivered over time. They are a key process in enabling colleges to move from an understanding of where they are today to a clear long-term vision of the estate needed to support future learners, staff and communities.

While colleges differ in size, geography, operating models and strategic priorities, the principles of effective estate planning remain consistent across the sector. For this reason, the guidance is structured around core themes, rather than a prescribed template, that collectively provide a framework for the development of a robust Estate Strategy.

The core themes are aligned with the **Scottish Government's Investment Hierarchy**, and are as follows:

- Strategic Alignment
- Estate Understanding
- Option Development and Appraisal
- Preferred Direction
- Governance and Management.

Sustainability and digital considerations should be embedded throughout, rather than treated separately. Sustainability should inform decision making at every stage, supporting decarbonisation and adaptation, climate resilience and wider environmental outcomes. Similarly, digital infrastructure, technologies and data should be considered throughout the strategy, recognising their role in enabling new delivery models, enhancing estate performance and supporting organisational transformation. Colleges will have separate digital and sustainability strategies for which they are supported with specialist guidance from organisations such as **Jisc** and **EAUC**.

Each of the core themes are closely interconnected and should be considered as part of a single strategic planning process. Together, the themes create a joined up approach to estate planning that aligns physical, digital and sustainability objectives, supports long term organisational success and helps ensure infrastructure remains fit for purpose, right sized, resilient and responsive to future needs.

This interim guidance is intended as a summary framework to support the college sector. More detailed Estate Strategy guidance is currently being developed and will be made available to colleges in due course.

Colleges that require further support or assistance with their Estate Strategy should contact Scottish Futures Trust.

assetstrategy@scottishfuturestrust.org.uk

Definitions /Terminology
Infrastructure Strategies refer to the umbrella of strategies covering estates (physical assets), digital and sustainability.

This guidance focuses on *Estate Strategies* but refers to the need to show alignment with digital and sustainability objectives where they affect estate needs.

Key Links and Additional Reading:
Scottish Government Consultation on the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-2037
EAUC Scotland
Jisc Scotland

Core Themes of an Estate Strategy

Digital and sustainability are cross cutting themes that should be embedded throughout the Estate Strategy, influencing decision making across all stages and aligning with relevant sector guidance and good practice, including Jisc and EAUC

Strategic Alignment

Define the long term vision and need for estate informed by a college's strategic priorities, curriculum and future delivery model.

Key Expectations

- Understand the current organisational context, student profile and future demand drivers
- Consider national, regional and local policies, funding and sector priorities
- Align estate planning with future organisational objective and curriculum plans
- Embed digital, decarbonisation and climate adaptation objectives
- Demonstrate a place based and collaborative approach with partners
- A clear 10 year estate vision, a series of strategic objectives that inform and guide future estate needs and decision making

Estate Understanding

A comprehensive understanding and evidence base of current estate and its performance.

Key Expectations

- Define estate scope, assets, tenure, condition and costs
- Assessment of estate condition, utilisation, suitability, compliance, carbon performance
- Evaluate how the estate supports strategic and curriculum objectives
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities
- Establish the gap between current performance and future estate needs
- Align estate, curriculum, digital and decarbonisation priorities
- Identify surplus, underutilised or non compliant assets
- Provide the evidence base for options development

Option Development and Appraisal

Develop and appraise alternative options for meeting future estate needs.

Key Expectations

- Develop a range of strategic options for meeting future estate need, including:
  - Consider invest, maintain, divest and collaboration options
  - Prioritise reuse, repurposing and optimisation of existing assets
  - Explore opportunities for collaboration and colocation
  - Consideration of decarbonisation and climate resilience within options
- Use a structured appraisal methodology with clear evaluation criteria aligned to strategic objectives
- Assess whole life costs, benefits and risks of each option
- A clear preferred option/direction

Preferred Direction

The approach to delivering the preferred option/direction.

Key Expectations

- A clear description of the scope of the preferred option/direction and the key outcomes
- Establish the proposed approach for delivery, including potential phasing and pipeline of projects and programmes
- Outline the key stages, milestones, indicative costs and risk considerations
- Confirm potential role and support from partners
- Consideration of key funding sources and affordability
- Highlight the proposed benefits of to the college and wider community
- Set out ‘business as usual’ arrangements during delivery
- Include a strategy for any surplus assets

Governance and Management

Establishes the leadership, decision making, assurance and management arrangements required for successful delivery.

Key Expectations

- Define governance structures and approval routes for decisions
- Align estates, finance, HR, ICT, sustainability and curriculum functions
- Set out clear roles and responsibilities for delivery
- Demonstrate the capacity and capability required for delivery
- Identify requirements for external support and specialist resources
- Integrate appropriate assurance, such as gateway reviews and lessons learned
- Approach to risk management and benefits realisation