

Cabinet

Report Title	Proposed relocation of Causeway Green Primary School to new build	
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 14 January 2026	
Report Author	Sue Moore, Assistant Director, Education Support Services, Children and Education Directorate	
Lead Officer	Executive Director - Children and Education	
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education	
Why is this a key decision?	1. Expenditure over £1 Million+ 2. Significant impact on 2 or more wards	yes yes
Wards Affected	(All Wards);	
Identify exempt information and exemption category	None	
Is the report urgent?	No	
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)		
Appendices (if any)	1. CGPS Options Appraisal RIBA 4 2. Capital Appraisal report dated 1 st December 2025 3. Outline Planning Permission Site Plan 4. Site Plan Brandhall adjoining Council Ownership 5. Cost plan for Causeway Green Option 4B November 2025	

1. Executive Summary

1.1 To enable completion of the replacement build for Causeway Green Primary School at Brandhall Village, Oldbury, this report seeks approval to allocate resources from the council's School Condition and High Needs Provision

Capital Allocation grant funding balances to support funding of the capital project and instruct the contractor to complete delivery of the new build of the school.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Approve the allocation of £15.76m from School Condition grant funding and £1.64m from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation to support funding of the replacement school for Causeway Green Primary School, at Brandhall Village, Oldbury as part of the Schools Capital Programme 2025-28.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1 above, delegate authority to the Executive Director - Place and the Executive Director – Finance and Transformation to allocate an additional £0.5m of Community Infrastructure Levy Funding from the 80% Main CIL fund towards the capital cost of the replacement of Causeway Green Primary School.
- 2.3 Delegate authority to the Executive Director - Children and Education to award a contract to deliver the construction works in accordance with the council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules – July 2022, following a compliant procurement exercise, in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer, and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education.
- 2.4 Subject to 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above, authorise the Service Director Governance, Monitoring Officer to enter into any legal agreements on terms agreed by the Executive Director – Children and Education to complete the replacement school.
- 2.5 In connection with 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above, ensure compliance with any recommendations from the full capital appraisal undertaken for the project.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

3.1 At its meeting on 13 November 2024, Cabinet resolved (Minute No.118/24) to implement its decision of 20 July 2022 (Minute No.148/22) which included amongst other things:

- (1) that approval is given to the delivery of the Brandhall Village scheme which incorporates the following:
 - a circa 27-hectare Eco-Park,
 - **a replacement school for Causeway Green Primary School which achieves a carbon zero / carbon neutral accreditation (e.g. PassivHaus) accreditation.**
 - the provision of 190 new homes delivered to a minimum of Energy Performance Certificate – Grade A, of which a minimum of 25% will be for affordable provision.

The Climate Change Strategy 2020-2041 has the overall objective of the Council being a Net Zero Council by 2031, and a Net Zero Borough by 2041. Specifically, the associated Action Plan identifies the need for all schools to be Net Zero by 2030.

At the inception of the scheme, market research determined that a design such as PassivHaus, as opposed to a more traditional build, would deliver against the Council's sustainability targets. Current designs for the replacement school are being developed on PassivHaus principles, as the concept is seen as a sustainable build solution without excessive use and dependency on high-specification elements to achieve carbon neutrality. Given the nature of the design, they require very little heating / cooling, and result in significantly reduced energy requirements, and thus reduce the costs of operation of the building.

The provision of a net zero / carbon neutral ready design like a PassivHaus standard will ensure the new school contributes towards the Climate Change Strategy and will be complementary to the Eco-Park objectives in the wider scheme. However, the principle of delivering a net zero /carbon neutral (e.g. PassivHaus) accredited school is recommended as a key objective.

- 3.2 The appointed Design Team has now completed RIBA Stage 3 (see definitions), and initial designs will be reviewed by Building Control, Planning Policy and technical services.
- 3.3 Authority is now required to advance to RIBA 4 with the contractor following the procurement completed during previous RIBA stages subject to value for money and compliant design.
- 3.4 A financial appraisal has been undertaken by the Financial Planning Team which recorded a score of 68%, with recommended actions to mitigate potential risks to the Council and is attached at Appendix 2.

Background

- 3.5 The proposal is to relocate Causeway Green Primary School, a 2 form entry (420 place) school, to the north west corner of the Brandhall Village, fronting Grafton Road and Ferndale Road, Oldbury, as indicated on Plan No. 0339-“Outline_planning_permission_school_site_plan” site plan attached at Appendix 3 and “Brandhall_adjoining_council_ownership” at Appendix 4.
- 3.6 Due to the poor state of disrepair of the existing school buildings located at Penncrickett Lane, Oldbury B68 8LX, Causeway Green Primary School has remained as the council's top priority school for replacement. Following exclusion of the school from the government's previous Priority Schools Building Programme, School Condition grant allocation has been held back each year to fund replacement of the school. The buildings identified for replacement are now beyond their economic life expectancy, in poor condition and significant recurring flooding issues have been experienced with the site.

The original school buildings were built in 1953 with a mixture of Hills system-build and traditional construction. The original Hills façade was originally clad in concrete planks, single glazed metal windows and flat roofs. The majority of schools in the borough that were constructed using Hills type system-build design have now been replaced through either the Department for Education (DfE) rebuild of school building programmes, or through the council's own schools capital programme due to the structural failures and general state of condition at those schools.

- 3.7 Option appraisals undertaken with regard to possible reconstruction of the school on its existing, or a new site, have been considered using both traditional and Passivhaus construction methods. The option for further significant investment to improve the existing buildings has also been considered and proved that for the cost involved the condition of the building could not be sustained to an appropriate standard, thereby requiring a full replacement build in the medium term. The proposed scheme to build a replacement Passivhaus design school, on a new site, has proved to be the most cost-effective solution for the council.
- 3.8 Cabinet have set aspirational sustainability targets for any new development at Brandhall Village to be net zero or carbon neutral ready. For the school several design solutions were considered following Cabinet's decision in November 2022. The Design Team was tasked with developing the new school based upon Passivhaus principles. The general design philosophy for Passivhaus is to provide a well-insulated building from the foundations, through to the wall and roof construction, that requires much less or no reliance upon the use of fossil fuels to heat and power the building compared to traditional building construction.
- 3.9 Subject to Cabinet approval to proceed with the report recommendations, and full planning consent being secured, the current outline programme for the project would see a start on site autumn 2026, with completion anticipated early 2028.
- 3.10 RIBA Stage 3 has now been completed by the Design Team. Indicative costs for the scheme are:

	£m
Construction	18.05
Fees	0.51
Furniture & equipment	0.2
Contingency	1.6
Total	20.4

3.11 Minute No.148/22(5) resolved to allocate a minimum of £2.5m of Community Infrastructure Levy Funding from the 80% Main CIL fund towards the capital cost of the replacement school as a blend of funding was required to deliver the scheme. Following the DfE's School Condition grant allocation for 2024/25 a sufficient balance is now held within reserves to support the project cost. The new facility offers an opportunity to establish a new Resource Provision at the school to support the proposed Locality Plan for SEND. The provision can be funded through a contribution from the council's High Needs Provision Capital Allocation reserve. The allocation has been made by the DfE to support Local Authorities in establishing new SEND places.

3.12 The funding profile for the scheme:

	£m
Community Infrastructure Levy	3.0
School Condition	15.76
HNPCA	1.64
Total	20.4

3.13 Following detailed site investigations and completion of the design solution for the school at the end of RIBA Stage 3, the project has identified that significant infrastructure works are required to relocate the new school. Cabinet is requested to delegate authority to the Executive Director Place and Executive Director – Finance & Transformation to allocate an additional £0.5m CIL funding to support the proposed works. The works will include the provision of mains services, including a full drainage package to mitigate against flood risk identified with the development site.

3.14 Once the new school is completed, the ongoing operational costs for the school will be met from the annual delegated budget the school receives from the Local Authority. Post handover there will be no further financial commitment required from the council.

3.15 A direct saving will be realised as a result of the new school development. Currently resources from a combination of the School Repair Account, the council's School Condition grant allocation and the school's own revenue budget are required to maintain a school asset that has been identified as in the worst condition within the maintained school estate. Although the new school will still require an appropriate level of repair and maintenance, the current level of investment will reduce the current financial impacts with the removal of the existing school buildings at Penncrickett Lane, Oldbury from the school estate.

3.16 Children and Education and Property and Assets will work together to explore and appraise options for future use of the existing school site on Penncrickett Lane.

3.17 Cabinet will be aware that Leadership Team have received regular updates on the project's progress with regards to how the cost of replacing the school will be met, and design development based initially upon the principles of Passivhaus, but now for full accreditation. In turn, a Project Board meets to co-ordinate the Brandhall Village development proposals, supported by a Project Group led by Regeneration and Growth and representatives from Children and Education, Assets and Land, Housing, Parks and Countryside. The Children and Education Directorate has established a Design Team with colleagues from Urban Design & Building Services, with appointment of an external Lead Architect and technical designers informing the early concept designs and project development. To complete RIBA Stage 3, the contractor was appointed as a main construction partner to inform the design solutions and estimated project cost now presented for approval.

3.18 Performance management and contract monitoring will be undertaken through the Children and Education Client Team, with specific contract monitoring of the contract delivery by Urban Design & Building Services. Following a compliant procurement exercise and appointment of a main contractor to construct the school, the contractor will have direct responsibility for management and accountability of its own employees and all sub-contractors.

3.19 Procurement of a suitable main contractor was completed during RIBA 3, the contractor has been appointed in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules. Following cabinet approval, value for money checks and a compliant design the contractor will be instructed to proceed to completion.

3.20 The contractor will be required to enter into a JCT Design and Build Contract to complete the construction.

4 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 A copy of the options appraisal undertaken for the project is attached at Appendix 1. The appraisal considered the alternative solutions that may be available to address the significant condition issues present at the existing school. A summary for each option is provided below.

4.2 Table 1 provides an overview of the options considered.

Table 1

Option		Estimated total cost £m
One	Rectify defects on existing school	4.43

Two A	Reconstruct new school on existing school site – traditional construction	24.64
Two B	Reconstruct new school on existing school site – Passivhaus construction	25.5
Three A	Construct new school on existing school playing fields – traditional construction	21.42
Three B	Construct new school on existing school playing fields – Passivhaus construction	22.3
Four A	Construct new school on Brandhall site – Traditional construction	19.22
Five	Close existing school and accommodate pupils in alternative schools	-

The cost analysis to support the options appraisal is attached as Appendix 6.

4.3 **Option One – Rectify defects on existing building.** This is not a realistic or viable option and does not address the fundamental issue which is failure of the sectional panels / structural integrity of the building. The school was built by Hills Construction, a system renowned to not have longevity, the building life has expired due to corrosion of the steelwork. Remedial mitigation works to address major flooding risks that can be undertaken to the existing site have been undertaken, however the school buildings continue to experience issues with flooding. Significant works in an attempt to rectify drainage and flooding problems over the long term cannot be completed with the school buildings in situ.

This option is dismissed based upon the continued risk of flooding and the age and construction of the building. Refurbishment of the building would not resolve the structural integrity failings that already exist, and that have been experienced with other school buildings in Sandwell which have been replaced.

4.4 **Option Two A – Reconstruct new school on existing school site – traditional construction.** The capital costs estimated to undertake partial demolition, provide temporary decant accommodation, and rebuild over several phases to wholly replace this 2-form entry primary school, proved cost prohibitive, and did not provide value for money for the council. The site is very constrained, has poor access which would result in additional delivery costs and delays. Significant costs were also anticipated with ground conditions, including flood risk. Timescales would be extended significantly due to the site constraints, additional ground works, phasing of demolition.

This option is dismissed as it does not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option, Four B.

4.5 **Option Two B – Reconstruct new school on existing school site – Passivhaus construction.** The option proved to be the most cost prohibitive, and the project viability was of major concern to the Design Team. Similar to Option Two A with regard to site constraints, timescales and the associated additional costs that would be incurred the option did not prove value for money for the Council.

This option is dismissed as it does not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option, Four B.

4.6 **Option Three A - Construct new school on existing school playing fields – traditional construction.** In addition to the site constraints identified with the previous options, the school playing fields are set at a higher plain than the existing school buildings and playgrounds. The fields are set in the back of the school site with no direct access for construction requiring the purchase or compulsory purchase of adjacent properties to afford access / egress, together with partial demolition of classrooms required to enable construction to continue.

This option is dismissed as it does not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option, Four B.

4.7 **Option Three B - Construct new school on existing school playing fields – Passivhaus construction.** Building upon the outcomes from Option Three A, the variety of design solutions that could be used would be severely constrained due to the constraint of the site. The option proved less value for money.

This option is dismissed as it does not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option, Four B.

4.8 **Option – Four A - Construct new school on Brandhall site – Traditional construction.** In comparison to those earlier options to re-use the existing school site, construction of a new school at Brandhall Village using a traditional method proved to be a more economic solution for the Council. However, the option failed to meet the Council's net zero commitments, long term there would be significantly higher running costs, and delay in the delivery programme due to the redesign period needing to be extended.

This option is dismissed as it does not offer the Council value for money or meet net zero targets when compared with the preferred option, Four B.

4.9 **Option Five - Close existing school and accommodate pupils in alternative schools.** Cabinet is recommended to approve that the Council proceeds with the construction of a new school on the Brandhall Village site using Passivhaus design as this proved to be the most cost-effective solution whilst meeting net zero commitments. Option Five was considered on a non-financial basis to consider whether the school could close with pupils accommodated at alternative schools. The option was not viable due to continuing projected demand for school places in Oldbury and across the Borough.

This option is dismissed on the basis of the need to ensure sufficient school places are provided in the future.

5. Consultation

5.1 In 2021, to inform the development of the masterplan, the council and its consultants AECOM carried out two forms of consultation: early stakeholder engagement and wider community consultation. The report to Cabinet on 20 July 2022 provided the programme for consultation and full details on the responses received from a wide group of stakeholders.

5.2 To support the school design development to date, ensuring that the school complements the remainder of Brandhall Village with connection between the new proposed housing and park, a series of focussed consultation meetings have been held with representation from local ward members, local interest groups, schools and the wider community.

5.3 Further consultation will be completed during the planning application.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 As per 3.9 and 3.10 above, indicative costs and funding streams are detailed below:

Cost

	£m
Construction	18.05
Fees	0.51
Furniture & equipment	0.2
Contingency	1.6
Total	20.4

Funding Streams

	£m
CIL	3.0
School Condition	15.76
HNPCA	1.64
Total	20.4

- 6.2 The cost of the proposed scheme does not put future School Condition projects at risk or under pressure for delivery. Whilst retaining a proportion of the School Condition Allocation grant funding allocated by the DfE each year to fund the project, the council has continued to fund a programme of lifecycle works across its community-maintained and voluntary controlled schools. As a result delivery of future schemes is not adversely affected as works are managed through a matrix basis to ensure that worst condition elements are replaced or improved as a priority. As the DfE grant allocation permits Local Authorities to fund both lifecycle and school rebuilding programmes, the proposed funding of Causeway Green Primary School will not affect future grant allocations.
- 6.3 The school will establish a new Resource Provision for SEND pupils. Use of the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation to part fund construction of the new provision aligns directly with the DfE grant conditions to improve or provide new SEND places across the school estate.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 This report supports the discharge of functions contained within s.22 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 which places a duty on the Council has a duty to maintain its schools, including expenses relating to premises. This requirement is supplemented by s.542 of the Education Act 1996 and the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 which places further obligations on the Council to ensure that maintained school buildings are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 7.2 Under s.1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has the power to enter into the arrangements set out in this report, which are within the remit and limits of the general power of competence in ss.2 and 4 of the Localism Act 2011. Any and all legal powers under the Council's Constitution and Procurement and Contract Governance Rules will be upheld when contracting with and or agreeing contracts with third parties.
- 7.3 Procurement activities required to enable the delivery of the new build school will be undertaken in accordance with applicable procurement legislation from time to time in force including but not limited to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Procurement Act 2023, alongside required compliance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.
- 7.4 The school is a local authority-maintained school. The freehold ownership of the land will remain with the local authority. The school's governance arrangement will remain the same.

8. Risks

- 8.1 The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with – to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision / project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.
- 8.2 Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that for the significant risks that have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these effectively.
- 8.3 If this report is not agreed, then the council will risk the potential of a prolonged school closure due to either significant flooding or failure in the building structure rendering teaching areas being inaccessible to school staff and pupils. Further, the council and the school will continue to incur additional expenditure to repair and maintain a poor condition asset until a final decision is made on the long-term future of the school and its buildings. A deteriorating school environment will detrimentally impact on children's future access to a high-quality education and the council's reputation will be detrimentally affected.
- 8.4 Early risk analysis identified that approval of the report could introduce an amber risk to the project due to the increased costs associated with delivering a net zero or carbon neutral ready school. Sufficient mitigation measures are being managed to finalise the scope of works: detailed early stage concept designs / appointment of a contractor to provide estimated project costs at end of RIBA Stage 3: and allowance for a project contingency.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed on the recommended decisions to Cabinet. There were no negative or adverse impacts identified in relation to the recommended decisions being taken.
- 9.2 The EqIA identified the positive impacts being that the project is a like for like replacement of the existing school provision – a 2-form entry primary school. In addition, the inclusion of a new, purpose-built Resource Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) pupils will further enhance the new school environment providing full opportunities for inclusion of all pupils, irrespective of their particular characteristics.

10. Other Relevant Implications

- 10.1 **Health and Wellbeing** - A new replacement school will be a positive impact for children and young people as it will ensure the current poor building environment is replaced.

10.2 **Social Value** - The new school will improve the school environment for children / young people and provide opportunity for use of the facility by the local community.

10.3 **Climate Change** - The replacement school based on the principles of carbon neutral / readiness for carbon neutrality presents an opportunity to influence many major capital projects in the future. Lessons learnt will have a positive impact on the whole Brandhall Village development and set a precedent for future educational, residential and commercial schemes.

10.4 **Corporate Parenting** - The new replacement school will enhance and improve the teaching environments for all, extending the council's primary provision for SEND children through the inclusion of a new Resource Base enabling children to attend their local school.

10.5 **Procurement Implications** – no procurement implications are envisaged with the proposed course of action recommended to Cabinet. Procurement of the project will be conducted in accordance with the council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules – July 2022 by experienced council officers within the Procurement, Client and Urban Design & Building Services teams.

There are available construction frameworks through which the council can invite companies to tender for the work, and traditional tendering is an alternative procurement vehicle for the council to secure a suitable constructor for the scheme.

11. Background Documents

Urban Design & Building Services Project Cost Plan 4b dated November 2025
– Appendix 5
the contractor NRM1 Cost Plan

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- Growing up in Sandwell

12.1 We will provide enough good school places that offer families choice and confidence that their children can experience high quality education and achieve good outcomes.