



Title of report: Retaining of the swimming pool at Peterchurch Primary School

Decision maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services and Assets

Decision date: 18 December 2026

Report by: Head of Educational Development

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

Golden Valley South;

Purpose

To approve the retention of the existing swimming pool at Peterchurch Primary School as part of the new school site, following receipt of a viable school business case as required by Cabinet on 27 October 2022.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The swimming pool at Peterchurch Primary School is retained in principle as part of the new school site; and
- b) Responsibility for the renovation, upgrade, and long-term operation of the swimming pool rests with the school, where the upgrade shall be funded by secured Section 106 contributions and, where appropriate, any uncommitted budget within the approved Peterchurch Primary School rebuild project; and
- c) The Service Director for Education, Skills and Learning, oversees the integration of the retained pool within the site plan, ensuring that no additional capital pressure is created for the council.

Alternative options

1. Do nothing - Not viable. Cabinet (27 October 2022) required Peterchurch Primary School and the Parish Council to bring forward a viable business case for retaining the pool within 12 months, otherwise the pool would be demolished within the approved project budget.
2. Demolish the pool - Demolition of the pool would cost £20,000 and would remove a long-standing local facility highly valued by the community. The school would incur significant ongoing costs (approx. £10,560 per year – from the school business case) for transport, pool hire and instructors to access alternative provision 11 miles away. This option has negative curriculum, financial and wellbeing implications for a rural community where practical alternatives are limited.
3. Construct a new pool – This option was previously explored and rejected. Cabinet concluded that a new-build pool would provide year-round capacity but would be unaffordable and generate higher operating costs, making it poor value for money in the context of the school rebuild budget.

Key considerations

4. Cabinet agreed in October 2022 that Peterchurch Primary School and the Parish Council would be given 12 months to produce a viable business case for retention of the pool (recommendation C), with demolition approved in the absence of a viable case.
5. The school's business case demonstrates:
 - An achievable renovation cost of £80,500 for essential upgrades including roofing, whiterock lining, rewiring, lighting, alarm systems, floor repairs and changing area refurbishment;
 - A small annual operating surplus based on existing income and modest running costs;
 - Very limited availability of alternative swimming provision in the county, with travel time, transport cost and impact on curriculum time identified as significant barriers;
 - Educational, health and wellbeing benefits for pupils and the wider community.
6. The existing pool has been used for decades and retains strong community value. The Parish Council consultation during the rebuild process confirmed a strong preference to retain the pool if viable.
7. Retention supports the statutory requirement for schools to deliver Key Stage 2 swimming and water safety. For a rural primary school, local provision is essential to meeting this obligation.
8. Renovation costs will not fall to the council. Delivery will be dependent on:
 - Section 106 contributions, secured in the agreement dated 28 June 2024, from the adjacent housing development, which will support enhancements to the local educational infrastructure; Potential use of any uncommitted budget within the approved rebuild project envelope; and
 - School governance decisions.
9. The recommendation does not commit the council to undertake or fund renovation works; rather, it approves the strategic retention of the pool as part of the site and allows the school and project team to plan the renovation in line with the available resources.

Community impact

Retaining the swimming pool will:

10. Support rural equity, giving local children access to swimming, water safety, and physical activity in an area where transport links and leisure facilities are limited. This aligns with the 'People' priority in the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024–2028, which commits to helping residents “live healthy lives within their communities” and ensuring that “all children have the best start in life”.
11. Enhance the wellbeing and resilience of children and families in the Golden Valley, reducing the stress, cost and curriculum disruption linked to long-distance travel for swimming lessons.
12. Strengthen community cohesion by preserving a long-standing community asset used by generations of local families, supporting the Plan's aim to “build connected and resilient communities.”
13. Improve access to physical activity and learning, supporting both educational and health outcomes in line with the Plan's focus on reducing inactivity and improving mental wellbeing.
14. Benefit vulnerable children, including those with SEND or SEMH needs, who may find long journeys challenging and are more likely to be disadvantaged by the loss of a local provision.

Environmental Impact

15. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public, and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
16. Retaining the swimming pool has minimal environmental impact and is consistent with the environmental ambitions set out in the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024–2028. Keeping the facility on site removes the need for repeated vehicle journeys to alternative swimming pools, reducing carbon emissions and supporting the council's commitment to more sustainable travel and cleaner air.
17. Renovation works, which will be led and funded by the school, provide opportunities to incorporate energy-efficient lighting, improved insulation and modern materials that reduce ongoing energy consumption. Where possible, the school and project team will seek to minimise waste, use sustainable materials, and follow good environmental practice during refurbishment.
18. Overall, retaining and upgrading the existing facility is environmentally preferable to demolition and external travel, and supports the County Plan's 'Place' priority to make Herefordshire a more sustainable and resilient place to live.

Equality duty

19. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

20. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision, and it has been found to have low impact for equality.
21. Due to the potential impact of this decision being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, the following equality considerations should be taken into account when making a decision about this activity/project:
 - a) Retaining the swimming pool provides a positive equality impact, particularly for children with SEND or SEMH needs, who may find long-distance travel to alternative facilities challenging. Local swimming provision improves equitable access to statutory swimming and water-safety education and supports inclusive participation for pupils who may otherwise be disadvantaged by rural isolation.
 - b) The decision does not alter workforce arrangements, commissioning activity, or wider service structures. Access to the facility remains unchanged and continues to serve a broad demographic across age, disability, and socioeconomic groups. The pool's rural location is particularly important for families who face geographic or transport-related barriers to accessing leisure and physical activity opportunities elsewhere.
 - c) Future renovation works, led by the school, will continue to ensure physical accessibility, safety standards, and inclusive use, consistent with the council's duty to provide environments that are accessible to all residents.
 - d) Overall, the proposal promotes equality of opportunity, supports children and families with protected characteristics, and has no negative equality impacts.

Resource implications

22. No additional council capital funding is required.
 - Renovation will be funded and managed by the school and may be supported by, up to a maximum of £168,000. £148,000 Section 106 contributions.
 - The avoided demolition costs of £20,000.
23. Operating costs continue to sit within the school budget and are already included in the school's 5-year financial plan.
24. Future travel/hire costs (£10,560 per year) are avoided.
25. No new revenue implications arise for the council as these costs are all funded by the school's revenue budget.
26. The school, as the commissioning body for any renovation works, will be supported to follow the council's Contract Procedure Rules, ensuring appropriate procurement, value for money and compliance with all statutory and financial governance requirements.

Legal implications

27. The upgrade of existing infrastructure facilities from monies contributed by development under a section 106 agreement can be justified provided (i) the express terms of the original s106 permit the use of monies for the intended purpose and (ii) the proposal mitigates the impact or a consequential infrastructure requirement of the development.

28. Accordingly, s106 funds can only be used for existing infrastructure where the expansion or upgrade works are required as a result of the additional demand due the additional development. S106 funds cannot be used for the day to day operational or running costs (including repair and maintenance) of existing infrastructure. Where an asset is beyond its economic life (and would be demolished) then provided that the terms of the s106 allows, there can be utilisation of funds necessary to mitigate the impacts of the development.

The proposed works will be funded in accordance with the terms of the relevant section 106 agreement.

Risk management

Risk / Opportunity	Mitigation
Renovation costs exceed estimates	Detailed scoping and procurement led by the school; ability to phase or scale works; S106 support.
Insufficient funding secured	School responsible for securing funds before committing to works; retention in principle does not mandate immediate renovation.
Community expectation for rapid delivery	Clear communication that retention is approved but renovation depends on school-led funding and planning.
Coordination with rebuild programme	Managed through the project team and Service Director of Education, Skills and Learning.
Loss of curriculum swimming if pool were removed	Avoided through approval to retain; supports statutory curriculum and reduces rural inequality.

29. Risks will be managed by the school and supported at service level.

Consultees

30. Consultation has taken place with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, the local Parish Council, and the Ward Councillor, all of whom were engaged throughout the Peterchurch Primary School rebuild process and are supportive of the proposal to retain the swimming pool.
31. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People has also been consulted and is supportive.
32. Two public consultation events were held at the school hall (on the wider rebuild project), and a number of comments were made in support of retaining the swimming pool.

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published.

Governance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 25/11/2025
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 08/12/2025
Communications	Michala Lee	Date 27/11/2025Click or tap to enter a date.
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 26/11/2025
Procurement	Rachel Best	Date 25/11/2025
Risk	Amanda Sherrard	Date 26/11/2025
Approved by	Tina Russell	Date 10/12/2025

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.