

# Estate Strategy Good Practice Guidance 2013

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# AUDE

## Estate Strategy Good Practice Guidance

### 1.0 Executive Summary

This document aims to provide simplified good practice guidance on estate strategy preparation for AUDE members.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England published 'Estate Strategies: A Guide to Good Practice' in 2004 and the Scottish and Welsh Funding Councils published guidance in 2007 and 2011 respectively. In 2012, following consultation with the membership, the AUDE Executive committee decided it would be timely to provide an update.

A working group was established to:

- review existing guidance both within, and external to, the higher education sector
- consider whether relevant documents are up to date and meet the current needs of Directors of Estates and Facilities and their teams
- recognise the changing role of the funding councils in monitoring and supporting institutions and providing guidance
- consider whether a simplified guidance note would assist Directors of Estates and Facilities, particularly those new to the sector.

The working group recognised that institutions vary across the UK and AUDE guidance will not meet all needs. It was noted by the group that there already exists a great deal of guidance and reference material, with separate advice in both Wales and Scotland. This AUDE document is therefore intended primarily as an aide-memoire for Directors of Estates and Facilities in preparing and updating their estate strategies.

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## Estate Strategy Good Practice Guidance

### 2.0 Introduction

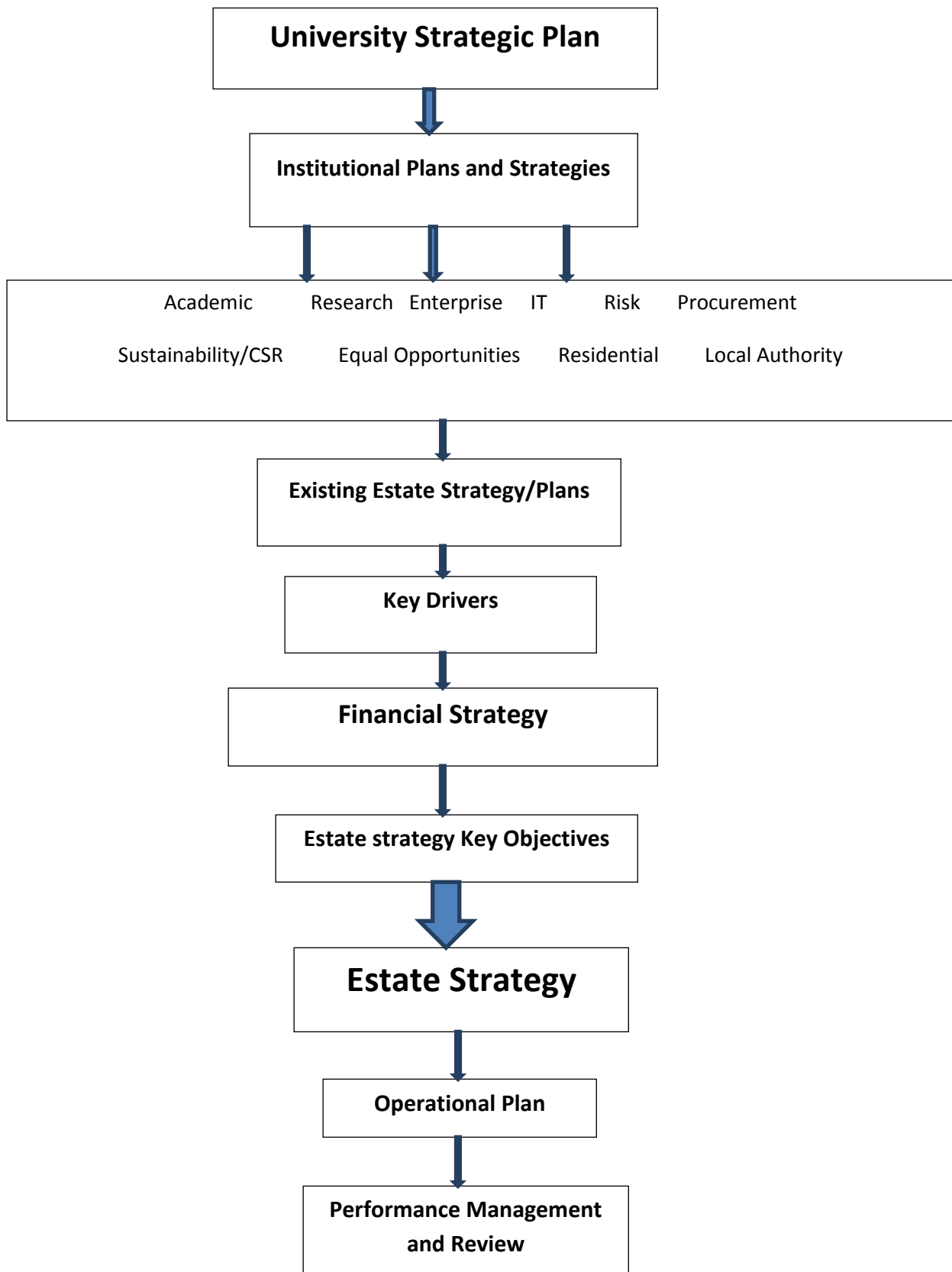
It has been well documented that a university's expenditure on its estate is second only to institutional expenditure on staffing. It is imperative therefore that Directors of Estates and Facilities have an appropriate development strategy in place for the efficient and well planned running of their estates.

It is incumbent upon Directors of Estates and Facilities to provide assurances to Vice Chancellors and Governance Boards that the university has an estates strategy which will ensure that their estate is fit for purpose; well planned; affordable; cost effective; responsive to the university Corporate and Strategic Plan; integrated with other university strategies and meets the needs of these plans over an agreed timeframe.

As timeframes are generally five to ten years in estate planning terms, the Estate Strategy should be regularly reviewed and updated to meet changing economic conditions, student, academic and research needs.

This document aims to lead Directors of Estates and Facilities through the estate strategy development process with reference to sample documentation and other sources of guidance.

### 3.0 Planning Process



## **4.0 Guiding Principles**

There will be a number of overarching guiding principles informing the development of an Estate Strategy, these will be led by the institutions strategic or corporate plan and academic objectives.

Institutions will have a variety of detailed strategic planning documents, which may have slightly different titles within institutions, but they will all set out, in relation to their specific academic or service function, how they will support and deliver the mission and vision of the institution.

Directors of Estates and Facilities will need to liaise with colleagues, or producers of other strategy documents, within their institution. Such liaison is a two way process - to ensure that colleagues understand and have taken account of key estate issues arising from institutional plans - and to make sure the estates strategy can address all key issues to meet institutional needs.

The following is a list of important institutional documents and other reference points that Estate and Facilities Directors should consider in preparing an Estate Strategy:

### **4.1 Academic Plan/Learning Strategy**

The Academic Plan or Learning and Teaching Strategy will outline the aims, principles and strategic priorities the institution will have, or may wish to put in place, to support the delivery of its teaching and learning. Key drivers for the Estate Strategy from this plan may include such things as type and size of teaching spaces required, co-location of departments and set space standards.

### **4.2 Research Strategy**

The Research Strategy will outline the institutions intentions in relation to research activity locally, nationally and internationally. There may be an impact on estate development, or on specific projects, from the requirements of individual research grants or grant awarding bodies. For example, it may be an institutional research priority to target a key research function requiring specific facilities to be available.

### **4.3 Existing or Previous Estate Strategy Document**

There may already be an existing Estate Strategy document in place which needs to be reviewed to assess progress to date, with the aim of updating and amending it to meet changing academic, financial or other institutional needs.

#### **4.4 Enterprise Strategy**

Many institutions will have an Enterprise Strategy in place to provide support to the academic and research programme. Such strategies are normally designed to encourage innovation and the development of staff and students - and aim to contribute to local and regional development. University estate developments can be an important component in institutional enterprise.

#### **4.5 IT Strategy**

The Information Technology (IT) Strategy will set out plans for providing facilities, services and technological requirements needed to support the institution's computer network system and information technology development. The potential current and future impact on the services infrastructure will need to be understood, planned and programmed into future estate and facilities works.

#### **4.6 Risk Management Strategy**

Institutions will, as part of their strategic planning process, have in place strategies for understanding and managing potential risks. The risk management process will flow through all stages of estate development and should be used as a basis for the formulation of alternative strategies where need is identified.

#### **4.7 Procurement Strategy**

Each institution will have a Procurement Strategy or policy which will set the parameters for tendering and purchasing. In some cases the institutional procurement policy will have separate guidance on estate management requirements, because of specific needs and potential difference in scale, value, approval processes and formal tendering requirements for major projects - as, for example, with OJEU requirements. Approval processes with differing timeframes may need to be built in to the estate planning process.

#### **4.8 Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Universities now generally assess the impact of their operations on local communities and the environment.

Business supporters, existing students and prospective students are increasingly aware, not only of an institution's academic and research reputation, but also the character of the institution, how it interacts with others and how it deals with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).



Estate and Facilities Directors may already have contributed to the initial CSR policy development and should ensure that institutional policies in this area are incorporated into estate strategies where appropriate.

#### **4.9 Equality and Diversity**

University Equality and Diversity strategies may go beyond the legal requirements normally understood and embedded in estate development processes. The institution may set higher goals and targets, with impacts that will need to be assessed and accommodated in the Estate Strategy document.

#### **4.10 Residential Strategy**

The Student Residential Accommodation strategy will set out the institutions requirements both current and planned. Such plans normally detail the type of accommodation required and how it should be provided as well as the potential need for the disposal of land or property for investment to meet these requirements. The residential function may be a part of the estate and facilities departmental responsibility and therefore already included in estate plans.

#### **4.11 Local Authority Plans**

Local Authorities will have planning guidance and their own strategic development plans that may impact on a university's longer term estate development strategy. A consideration of Local Authority plans should be undertaken and authorities should be consulted where appropriate. This may be of particular relevance to city or urban based universities integrated into the fabric of their communities. Universities may work in conjunction with Local Authorities on developments with particular relevance to the area or on shared university and community facilities.

#### **4.12 Other External Factors**

External factors which may impact on the estate strategy include such things as local and national economic conditions, current and potential funding sources, demographic changes and other institution or private sector plans such as private residential accommodation developments.

The above list is not exhaustive, but sets out a sample good practice list of important documentation and factors to consider in preparing a university Estate Strategy.

## **5.0 Structure of the Estate Strategy Document**

The HEFCE publication A Guide to Good Practice, January 00/04, stated that “there is no ideal template for an estate strategy; it should meet the needs and circumstances for each institution.”

It will be for Directors of Estates and Facilities to decide on the form, content and layout of their own strategy documents and the following is intended only to provide some guidance on possible layouts.

The strategy document itself should be concise, it should set out the background to the plan and university development, summarise the institutional strategic objectives to be delivered and set out how these will be met.

The separate operational or delivery plan will follow on from the strategy and will be supported by a wide range of data and analysis.

### **5.1 Executive Summary and Overview**

The document should begin with the Executive Summary and Overview. This should state clearly the purpose of the strategy document, the range of sources used in its compilation, why it has been prepared and what it is intended to convey.

There should be particular reference to the mission and vision of the institution and the institutional strategic plan. The institutional strategic plan itself is likely to provide this summary quite succinctly.

It is also useful in this section, to provide a snapshot profile of the institution and of the estate and facilities supporting it.

The overview does not need to be too detailed at this stage, as it should simply be a summary of how the estate and facilities will be developed to deliver the academic, research and other plans.

### **5.2 University Profile**

Some institutions will choose to provide more detailed information on their background, type, size, mission, ethos and objectives. This can form a separate section if necessary.

### **5.3 Introduction**

The introduction to the Estate Strategy should make reference to previous or current estate strategies, major developments and what has been achieved in the preceding strategy timeframe. This should be followed by the general aims and objectives of the new strategy.

### **5.4 Strategic Drivers**

It can be useful to summarise the primary drivers for the Estate Strategy.

The main strategic drivers will be derived from the various institutional plans and should set the themes for establishing objectives within the Estate Strategy.

Other strategic drivers may include elements of, for example, the university Capital Investment Framework (CIF). CIF may be particularly relevant if specific improvements have been identified and are required in a particular area - and if a Local Authority's redevelopment intentions overlap with that of the institution.

### **5.5 Estate Objectives**

The estate objectives are the key elements of the plan and they should summarise all of the main intentions of the strategy. Some of these may be general statements and others more specific.

The list can be as long or as short as necessary to outline the major intentions of the Estate Strategy.

Examples of the sort of issues normally found in Estate Strategies include.....

- To provide an up to date and efficient physical infrastructure and working environment to meet the university's mission and vision.
- To produce and maintain a campus and estate development masterplan.
- To tackle inefficiencies in space usage with emphasis on flexibility and appropriate timetabling analysis.
- To establish and maintain clear routine, statutory and long term maintenance plans.
- To consider opportunities for efficiencies through shared services with similar institutions.
- To create space that is fully accessible, meeting all ability needs.

## **6.0 Putting the Plan into Operation**

Once the Estate Strategy is in place, then comes the process of putting the detailed proposals together into a working document, which will enable the plan to be put into operation. The following sections outline some of the key stages in this process.

### **6.1 Information Gathering**

Information gathering and understanding your estate is probably the most critical stage in formulating the estate development plan.

Experienced and well prepared Directors will have this information readily available to underpin their vision.

This information gathering stage should not be underestimated, however, as the data rarely remains static for long, it should ideally be under constant review and subject to regular updating as part of good estate management practice. Nor should Directors feel overwhelmed by the volume and type of data required, as much of it will already be available in one form or another for various other purposes.

Most institutions will routinely compile an extensive amount of data on their estate from basic building plans and space utilisation analyses, to valuation reports with property descriptions. Both the regular Capital Investment Framework (CIF) process and the annual Estate Management Statistics data collection will generate a vast amount of key data. Pulling all this information together in a database will provide the reference points from which to produce the estate development plan.

The following list of reference documents and data needs aims to assist Directors through the information gathering process. It is recommended that this data should be readily available, kept under review and updated as necessary.

### **6.2 List of University Buildings**

Most university estates have developed and grown over a period of time. Many are complex and may be spread out over cities or large rural areas, whilst some universities now have additional overseas campuses and property. A starting point should always be a complete and up to date list of campuses and buildings as the master reference point. Assigning a unique building identifier can provide an unambiguous reference on drawings and for finance purposes.

### **6.3 Listed Status of University Buildings**

Information about listed buildings can be included on the base list of university property or developed as a separate document, depending on its importance. Some institutions will have major parts of their estate in conservation areas and may have an extensive range of listed buildings, which will significantly influence their estate development strategy plans. Others may have relatively little property in this category.

### **6.4 Building Space Data**

Space need is frequently a lively and contentious issue within higher education institutions. Different university departments will have varying space needs and rarely consider that they have enough space to meet current and future plans, whereas Directors of Estates and Facilities are required to achieve the most efficient institutional space use possible. Accurate space data, therefore, is essential.

It can be useful to involve other university departments in space allocation procedures and processes. Requiring departments to review and confirm any space analysis for their own areas will avoid future disputes. A set of coloured marked up floor plans, if practical, can also be very useful in delineating departmental boundaries.

Detailed material about space management is available from the space management group website at: [www.smg.ac.uk](http://www.smg.ac.uk).

### **6.5 Detailed Description of Individual Properties**

Financial regulations will require institutions to have a valuation of their estate carried out every five years. These valuation reports can be produced in a format that provides a simple descriptive summary of each building. In addition to the valuation details they can also be used to summarise the main issues affecting individual buildings, such as future life and need for redevelopment.

### **6.6 Building Plans and Photographs**

As well as the essential requirement to have an up to date set of measured building floor plans, it can be very useful for estates colleagues to procure aerial campus photographs and building photographs. These can assist in assessing campus boundaries and highlight opportunities or restrictions for future campus expansion into surrounding areas.

### **6.7 Condition Survey**

A property condition survey can be carried out by the in-house estates team, or by external consultants. The in-house team, if they have the time and correct data gathering systems, will have

much greater knowledge of their own estate and are more likely to be operating systems which are coordinated with other institutional electronic databases.

The decision about whether to use in-house staff or external consultants will be down to individual choice and circumstances.

### **6.8 Long Term Maintenance Plan**

Long term maintenance (LTM) planning requirements can be prepared alongside condition survey data. The LTM plan will normally cover major projects over a five or ten year timeframe, with projects listed in order of priority.

The LTM plan will also outline budget costs and may highlight details of business critical projects, or projects with health and safety concerns.

### **6.9 Carbon Management Plan**

The university sector has been identified as a key contributor in assisting the UK to deliver carbon reduction.

Higher education institutions are required to develop individual carbon reduction strategies, targets and associated carbon management plans.

See: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2010/201002/>

### **6.10 Travel Plans**

An institutional travel plan will be designed to help reduce negative impact on the environment by encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport by both staff and students. It will commonly be concerned with such issues as reducing the number of single occupant car journeys, utilisation of public transport, cycling and walking and with the university car parking management.

The travel plan will also assist in improving access in and around university campuses.

Advice and assistance on travel planning can be obtained from local planning officers and transport providers.

### **6.11 Estate Management Statistics**

Estate management statistical data is collected annually by the majority of UK higher education institutions and submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The information gathered enables institutions to monitor their progress against an agreed range of metrics with other institutions on a national basis, or with a group of institutions similar to themselves.

The data can assist Directors of Estates and Facilities in understanding the potential impact of a range of processes in the management and operation of their estates.

An analysis of the data also helps to identify trends and plans for future needs.

## **6.12 Shared Services**

The government has announced that shared services will receive an exemption from VAT, removing what the Diamond Review identified as a significant barrier to collaboration between universities. HEFCE has suggested that in order for the higher education sector to take advantage of this change and establish high-quality shared services, institutions will need to simplify, streamline and improve their internal processes.

Consideration needs to be given to how and where institutions can work together to achieve efficiencies.

## **6.13 Finance Schedule and Investment**

The university finance team will already have in place a detailed university Finance Strategy which should incorporate the capital development plans contained within the Estate Development Plan.

Estate and Facilities Directors will need to understand potential sources of funding over the planning period. These should include an assessment of potential property disposals or acquisition costs, grants and borrowing capabilities - as well as the institutions own resources.

## **6.14 Timescales**

The time involved in the preparation of an Estates Strategy will very much depend on individual circumstances, size of institution, availability and content or impact of other institutional strategic documents. It is likely that the various institutional documents will themselves be in different stages of development or review and Directors may need to seek out specific information which could impact on their Estate Strategy. The initial stages could therefore take several months.

When all relevant information is available, the estate strategy process from establishing the key drivers to the final document and operational plan can be completed in a couple of months. The strategy should then be reviewed annually with updates as necessary and a major review carried out mid-way through the duration of the plan.

## 7.0 Conclusion

The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education produced a document for higher education Governors entitled 'Getting to Grips with Estates and Infrastructure'<sup>1</sup> which states that:

“Developing, approving and measuring the achievement of strategy is a crucial board role, and critical in relation to both estates and infrastructure.”

Higher education institutions (HEIs) should,

“develop an estates strategy for the institution which underpins and facilitates the HEIs corporate plan and academic objectives in teaching and research”.

The document goes on to say,

“In one way this should be straightforward, and just part of the standard planning process: identifying needs; setting objectives in line with the overall corporate strategy; modelling available options; undertaking risk analysis; monitoring implementation; and reviewing subsequent performance management. In reality this may be more easily said than done.”

Governors will be looking to Directors of Estates and Facilities to meet these needs and this document has been produced by the Association of University Directors of Estates as a reference point and to assist Directors of Estates and Facilities in the preparation process of their own estate strategies.

Further reference material, guidance and contact information can be obtained from the AUDE website, [www.aude.ac.uk](http://www.aude.ac.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Getting to Grips with Estates and Infrastructure by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and Committee of University Chairs (2009):  
[http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/filemanager/root/site\\_assets/research\\_resources/g2g/G2G%20Estates%20&%20Infrastructure.pdf](http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/filemanager/root/site_assets/research_resources/g2g/G2G%20Estates%20&%20Infrastructure.pdf)



## 8.0 Acknowledgements

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