

Agenda Item	6
Report No	HC/20/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Highland Council

Date: 26 June 2025

Report Title: Highland Investment Plan and Thurso Masterplan – Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Highland Council has made a specific commitment in its Highland Investment Plan (HIP) to redevelop Thurso High School as part of a wider Community Point of Delivery (POD) along with consideration of options for future primary school provision. The estimated value of this crucial investment in the town is circa £100m.
- 1.2 This is the first new school build planned for Thurso since the 1960's and is therefore a generational opportunity to invest in critical infrastructure and improve the quality of our facilities and our offering to children and families in the town.
- 1.3 Thurso High has various building condition and suitability issues, including the presence of High Alumina Cement Concrete (HACC) in some structural elements, the recent mothballing of A Block requiring modular accommodation to be installed, and accessibility and security challenges due to the site layout and multiple blocks on the campus, all of which significantly impairs the functionality of the accommodation and the learning offer to young people.
- 1.4 The Community POD concept allows the future provision of education to sit alongside a broader range of services in an integrated offering which can enhance partnership activity in Thurso and positively impact the lives of children and their families. Through partnership activity there are other avenues being explored which may further broaden the offering to other community stakeholders.
- 1.5 This report updates Members on the significant master-planning activity that has been undertaken thus far, the outcomes of the early stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken and the next steps planned for development.
- 1.6 Members are asked to approve the work conducted to date to establish the existing Thurso High School campus as the preferred location of a future Community POD in Thurso, subject to further consultation with the community and stakeholders on the proposal.
- 1.7 Members are reminded that the establishment of Community PODs, and other types of PODs, is linked to plans to modernise service delivery and will be a key driver for the future operating model of the Highland Community Planning Partnership. Such a future

operating model needs to be seen as part of a strategy to provide more integrated local services across the ten Council areas, effectively devolving and decentralising Council operations over time and ensuring that all places benefit from this new approach. This is essential to help sustain communities and population through a revised partnership service delivery model.

- 1.8 The report also summarises the key updates on other HIP workstreams that will be reported to the Council meeting in October 2025.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to:-

- i. **Approve** the work to date on progressing the Highland Investment Plan workstreams and in developing a masterplan for Thurso;
- ii. **Agree** to nominate the current Thurso High School site as the preferred location for the new Thurso Community POD and that a public drop-in event will be held after the summer holiday period to allow the Thurso community to consider this proposal and provide feedback; and
- iii. **Agree** the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation and Contract Standing Orders identified in Section 6.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no new or additional resource implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Past reports to Members have set out the consolidated HIP, totalling £756m of agreed priorities across the period 2025/26 to 2029/30, and those reports also re-stated the funding strategy for the HIP, including funding decisions already made, and any future implications arising. The recommendations within this report operate within the £756m HIP as agreed.

As also previously agreed, HubNorth have been appointed as delivery partners for the HIP. As also agreed, a Commissioning Approval Board, through which all pipeline projects will be taken through has been established, to enable the most effective procurement route to be followed.

- 3.2 **Legal** - Delivery of the HIP will significantly assist the discharge of various statutory powers and duties of the Council, including those related to Roads, Education and Health and Safety. As set out in Section 6 an amendment to the wording of both Contract Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation is the subject of a recommendation of this report, to formally reflect the establishment of the Commissioning Approval Board and previous Council decisions on the HIP.
- 3.3 **Risk** - The allocations of funding agreed within the £756m HIP included £100m for Thurso. The recommendations within this report, and the actions to be taken forward, will support the preparation of updated plans and costings as work moves forward, and support the management of project risk.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - The adopted approach to health and safety was included in the December 2023 report to Council. This set out a hierarchical approach to where we would prioritise capital resources, specifically: “where the health and safety of staff and other service users, stakeholders, or visitors are at actual or potential risk (section 9.5).”
- 3.5 **Gaelic**: The HIP will have a positive impact in relation to maximising the objectives of the Gaelic Language Plan. Several schools that currently deliver Gaelic Medium

Education will be in scope for investment, with others potentially having the capacity to expand their provision. There are also opportunities to engage with the Scottish Government to secure capital finding for the specific purpose of investing in Gaelic education. The implementation of this approach will be modelled as part of the ongoing process.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 Members are being asked to agree to nominate the Thurso High School site as the preferred location for the new Thurso Community POD, subject to further consultation. A full impact assessment may be required once engagement with the Thurso community has taken place, and the scale of facilities and services that will be included has been determined.

5 Thurso Masterplan

- 5.1 **Appendix 1** comprises an executive summary report prepared by Hub North Scotland of the work undertaken in conjunction with Council officers to assess the requirements for Thurso, the engagement with potential partners, and to capture the available assets in a "Map of Opportunities" to inform the place-based masterplan approach.
- 5.2 The report provides detailed information on the engagement process and some of the key challenges and potentially innovative solutions that will need to be considered. This section of the report provides more detail of the overall process and the activities undertaken to date.
- 5.3 Two workshops were held recently in Thurso with private and public sector stakeholders to discuss a partnership approach to reviewing and refining potential concepts for the POD delivery model to serve the Thurso community and the wider Caithness area. The main aim of the workshops were to discuss the following:-
 - a) The development of a Thurso "Place Narrative."
 - b) The various POD options (Community, Depot, and Office) and associated opportunities.
 - c) Current and future priorities for partners, including potential phasing.
 - d) Capturing feedback to develop and refine options.
 - e) Clear communication and understanding of next steps in the context of the HIP.
- 5.4 The report also provides a summary of the analysis of the perceived strengths and challenges discussed with partners to identify areas of opportunity in Thurso. Partners were also encouraged to consider where their current or future plans could be aligned with Council investment to increase the overall benefits to the community and ensure ongoing efficiencies and benefits within their specific areas of service delivery. The following are examples of the opportunities that were captured:-
 - a) Recognised the need for collaboration of services and local assets.

- b) Specific “Synergy” ideas for local service provision.
- c) Partners are keen to pursue the Highland Property Partnership approach.
- d) Innovative ideas away from the “norm” (such as a Shared Training Centre).
- e) Identified potential resource capacity and shared requirements.
- f) Identified potential shared objectives and outcomes.
- g) Understand collective funding contributions, alignment, and timing.
- h) Key worker accommodation, linked to the Council’s Housing Challenge.

5.5 The outputs of this workshop will inform the next stage of the review, the business case for potential PODs and wider community engagement. There will be further collaboration with a wide range of potential partners as indicated below:-



5.6 This collaborative process will inform the development of opportunities and potential solutions that maximise the use of assets and improve service delivery in Thurso and the wider area, thus ensuring effective and coordinated investment to meet local needs. By understanding prioritised needs and opportunities and engaging with partners, the place-based review will identify options to explore across Thurso and potential opportunities, which may include community and residential spaces. Although the current exercise is focussed on Thurso, there are several areas where a Caithness-wide view is required, including depots, offices and community, leisure, and sports facilities.

5.7 The potential regeneration of Thurso town centre to mitigate the impact of any displaced facilities and services or vacated sites will be explored. This could include addressing housing supply and demand issues, such as accommodation for key workers, graduates, and students, along with future options for adult care provision. Lessons from the major capital investment in Wick will be identified, particularly in relation to the future use of buildings and sites that may become surplus to operational requirements, and Council officers met with Community Council representatives in Wick last month to visit some of these buildings and facilities.

5.8 The image below identifies a potential “Corridor of Opportunities” based around the proposed Thurso Community POD site (25B and 25C) and the adjacent UHI campus (25A) to provide opportunities for longer-term co-investment in lifelong training and skills development to support local businesses and industries.



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- 5.9 Caithness Members are being kept updated on the various aspects of the place-based review and stakeholder engagement that is underway. It is planned to hold a public drop-in event in Thurso after the summer holiday period to outline the progress so far and encourage feedback from the community. There will also be further focussed engagement with key stakeholders, such as Head Teachers, Parent Councils, High Life Highland, and their facility users.
- 5.10 A further update on the development of the masterplan will be provided at the Council meeting in October 2025. However, one key recommendation at this stage is to propose that the existing Thurso High School site is nominated as the preferred location for the Thurso Community POD. Other potential sites in Thurso were considered but none were found to be suitable.
- 5.11 **Appendix 2** is an indicative site layout that has been prepared to assess the capacity of the Thurso High site. It shows the general shape and layout of buildings, playing fields, car parking etc that could fit within the site boundary. The full scope has yet to be determined, and any changes to primary school provision would be subject to a statutory consultation. However, the core educational accommodation, community and leisure facilities, and POD accommodation for Council services and partners could be accommodated on the site, with the construction work carried out in a phased manner to minimise disruption to the High School.
- 5.12 It is proposed that information to support the proposal will be presented at the planned public drop-in event in Thurso, and that a final decision is deferred until after this event has taken place and feedback has been obtained from the community. However, Members are asked to agree at this stage that the Thurso High site is nominated as the preferred location for the Thurso Community POD.

6 Governance

- 6.1 At its meeting in March in their consideration of the Highland Investment Plan Council agreed that a Commissioning Approval Board, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, be introduced as soon as possible to determine capital contract awards including but not limited to HIP.

6.2 Following upon Council's decision it is appropriate that both Contract Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation be amended to reflect the creation of and authority of the Commissioning Approval Board.

6.2 It is proposed therefore to amend the current wording of the section entitled **'Delegated Powers for all Executive Chief Officers, Depute Chief Executive and Chief Executive: Contracts'** on page 56 of the Scheme of Delegation to include reference to the Commissioning approval group and to reflect the changes in senior management . The proposal is to change the wording from:

1. Contracts:

- 1.1 Subject to the requirements of the Council's Contract Standing Orders and procurement legislation, the undernoted powers will enable all Executive Chief Officers, Depute Chief Executive and Chief Executive to manage ongoing contracts tendered by the Section 95 Officer or their delegated Procurement Officer within their area of operation. In the case of Works Contracts as defined by the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, the reference to Directors will refer to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy, the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property, and the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.
- 1.2 All procurement must be conducted in accordance with Contract Standing Orders and subject to approval of the Procurement Approval Group prior to the procurement commencing or, in its absence, the Section 95 Officer. Capital Procurement would be approved by the Capital Board.
- 1.3 The award of contracts must be in accordance with the Contract Standing Orders and approval of an award report by the Executive Chief Officer of the procuring service.
- 1.4 Approval of terms and conditions recommended by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure and Environment, the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property, and the Executive Chief Officer –Communities and Place for their Services' projects contained within the approved Capital Programme, subject to a maximum value as prescribed from time to time.
- 1.5 Power to submit tenders for the provision of contract work pursuantto the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970, or under other relevant powers.
- 1.6 Power to tender for contract work in consultation with the ExecutiveChief Officer (Corporate Resources)/Section 95 Officer, pursuant to the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 or under other relevant powers.

To

Delegated Powers for all Chief Officers, Assistant Chief Executives and Chief Executive:

1. Contracts

- 1.1 Subject to the requirements of the Council's Contract Standing Orders and procurement legislation, the undernoted powers will enable all Chief Officers, Assistant Chief Executives and Chief Executive to manage ongoing contracts tendered by the Section 95 Officer or their delegated Procurement Officer within their area of operation. In the case of Works Contracts as defined by the

Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, the reference to 'Directors' will refer to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, the Chief Officer – Property and Assets and the Chief Officer – Housing and Communities.

- 1.2 All procurement must be conducted in accordance with Contract Standing Orders and subject to approval of the Procurement Approval Group prior to the procurement commencing or, in its absence, the Section 95 Officer. Subject to the thresholds identified in Contract Standing Orders all proposed capital procurement must be reviewed and approved by the Commissioning Approval Group.
- 1.3 The award of contracts must be in accordance with the Contract Standing Orders and approval of an award report by the Chief Officer of the procuring service.
- 1.4 Approval of terms and conditions recommended by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, the Chief Officer – Property and Assets and the Chief Officer – Housing and Communities for their Services' projects contained within the approved Capital Programme, subject to a maximum value as prescribed from time to time.
- 1.5 Power to submit tenders for the provision of contract work pursuant to the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970, or under other relevant powers.
- 1.6 Power to tender for contract work in consultation with the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance /Section 95 Officer, pursuant to the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 or under other relevant powers.

Further, on page 82 of the Scheme it is proposed in Row 5 which delegates authority:-

To authorise works contained within approved capital improvement and revenue maintenance programmes for the Council's land and property assets, funded through the approved capital programme and revenue budgets.

That the Assistant Chief Executive-Place is the officer identified as having this authority replacing the Head of Property and Facilities Management.

Contract Standing Orders

It is proposed to amend the following paragraph of Contract Standing Orders to reflect the establishment of the Commissioning Approval Group.

5.2.3 The Chief Officer - Corporate Finance is responsible for establishment of a Governance Board to review and approve expenditure where any contract has an estimated value of above £2,000,000 for works. Terms of Reference and membership of the board shall be reviewed annually; the board membership must include Procurement and Finance representation.

To

5.2.3 The Chief Officer - Corporate Finance is responsible for establishment of a Governance Board, to be known as the Commissioning Approval Group which will be chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place, to review and approve expenditure where any contract has an estimated value of above £2,000,000 for works. Terms of Reference and membership of the board shall be reviewed

annually the board membership must include Procurement and Finance representation.

7 Other Workstreams

7.1 Updates on the following workstreams that are currently being progressed will be reported to the Council meeting in October 2025.

- a) The Phase 1 projects that were approved in March 2025 and the procurement approach to the overall programme.
- b) The capital projects that are included in the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Plan (Tain, Broadford, and Nairn).
- c) The Phase 1 prioritised locations (Alness, Brora, Dornoch, Golspie and Invergordon); updates will be provided to the relevant Ward Members before the end of June.
- d) The development of the Dingwall masterplan and Depot and Office POD options.
- e) The engagement with public sector bodies that is taking place through the Highland Property Partnership to explore potential co-location opportunities for all projects and locations.
- f) The proposed plan to meet the intention to bring all our school buildings up to at least a "B" rating for condition and suitability that has been stated in previous reports.
- g) Proposals for investment in Community, Leisure, and Sports Facilities, including facilities in Dingwall, Inverness Leisure Centre and Queens Park Athletics Stadium, and the potential for a Highland Tennis Centre at the UHI Inverness Campus co-located with other sports facilities to serve East Inverness.
- h) The strategic review of Lochaber Adult Care Provision that is underway.
- i) The development of a Strategic Asset Management Plan.
- j) The Depot Transformation Project.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 16 June 2025

Authors: Finlay MacDonald, Chief Officer Property and Assets
Brian Porter, Chief Officer Corporate Finance
Robert Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning and Estate Strategy

Background Papers:

- a) Establishing the Highland Investment Plan and Mechanisms to Fund and Deliver It (May 2024) [Report](#)
- b) Highland Investment Plan – Next Steps (June 2024) [Report](#)
- c) Highland Investment Plan – Progress Update (October 2024) [Report](#)
- d) Highland Investment Plan – Progress Update (December 2024) [Report](#)
- e) Highland Investment Plan – Progress [Update](#) (March 2025)
- f) Highland Investment Plan [Update](#) (May 2025)

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Thurso POD Report – Management Summary Extract

Appendix 2: Indicative Layout for the Proposed Thurso Community POD Site

The Highland Investment Plan

A Place Based Approach to Delivery

Thurso - Points of Delivery (PODs)

APPENDIX 1

Management Summary Extract

In preparation for June 2025 Committee
Issued to Highland Council 11th June 2025

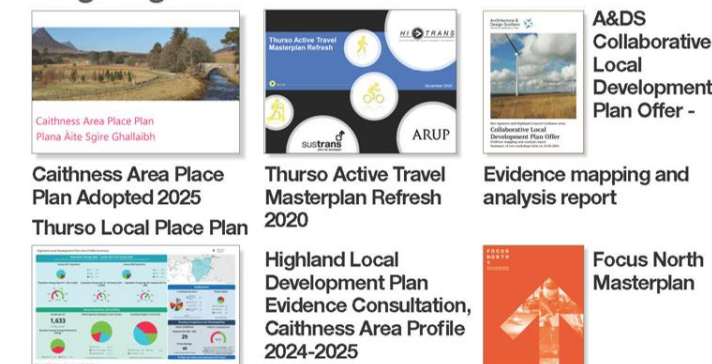
Thurso Report Format – differentiators from previous work

The focus of the hub North Scotland (hNSL) activities for Thurso is based on a similar template to that prepared and submitted to THC for Dingwall in December 2024. The process and outcomes have been enhanced due to lessons learnt and a greater level of integration of the THC engagement exercises currently underway e.g. **Caithness Area Place Plan (Adopted 2025)**, **Thurso Local Place Plan**, **Thurso Active Travel Masterplan Refresh (2020)**, **Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Consultation – Caithness Area Profile 2024-2025** and the **Focus North Masterplan**. Because of this and other refinements, the Thurso Report benefits from:

- THC engagement feedback impacting and influencing Thurso POD work.
- The context of the current Thurso Place Based Review set amongst wider THC activity.
- Joint THC / hNSL presentation of information for Partner Consultation at Workshop 2.
- THC SAMP approach now included as part of the Place Review toolkit.
- Exploring the Thurso specific opportunities to include in the long-list of options (for the business case).
- Early consideration being given to the potential re-use of existing buildings (town centre opportunities) and potential redundant sites – e.g. any primary school sites in Thurso that may be vacated.
- Early input and engagement with Partners. Their voices were heard at Workshop 2.
- Direct input from elected members during Workshop 2.



Ongoing Initiatives: Context



Introduction & Overview

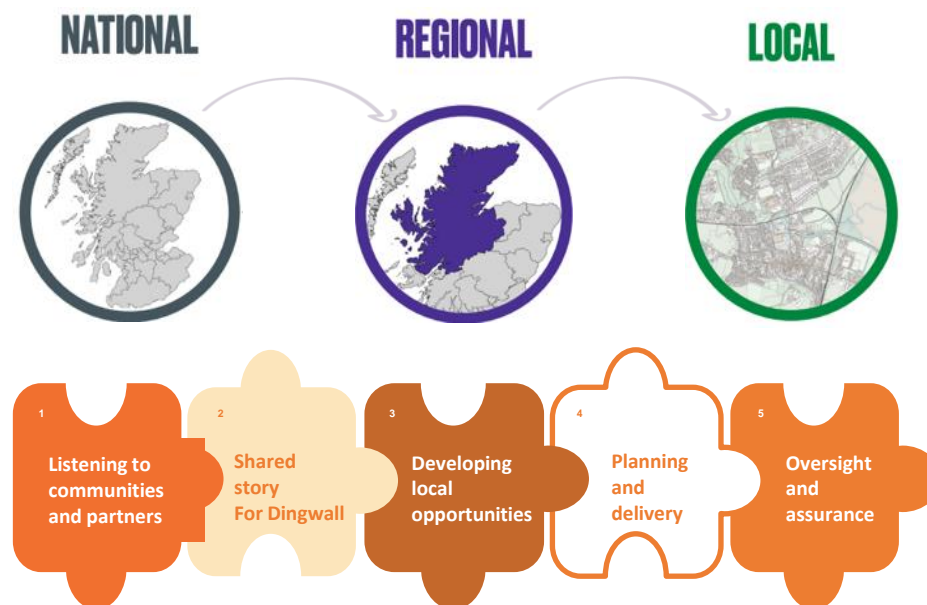
The focus of the hub North Scotland (hNSL) activities were to support **The Highland Council (THC)** with the scoping & definition of the initial phases of the **Highland Investment Plan**.

This Place based review has focused on requirements for **Thurso**, outlining considerations and short-listed options for establishing a new generation of **Points of Delivery (PODs): community, office and depots**. A similar approach has commenced for Dingwall leading to the identification of a long-list of opportunities.

A **Place Based Approach** puts individuals at the heart of the solution to allow them to “live well locally” and follows a “golden thread” to ensure alignment from **National** (set by Scottish Government & Others) to **Regional** (set by THC) to **Local** objectives and requirements.

Key hNSL activities undertaken include:

- Developing a **Vision** (Place Narrative) for Thurso to understand key areas of needs
- Ensuring that **THC wider engagement** work in Caithness is reflected in this report
- **Engaging with Partners** to identify aligned opportunities and testing these at Workshop 2
- Developing a **Map of Opportunity**: ensuring needs and outputs are focused on Thurso.
- Preparing ‘**what if**’ scenarios to test ideas.
- Capturing a list of available **Assets**
- Development of an **Interim Outline Business Case** for Thurso Community POD. This allows:
 - Assessing future focus for Investment (and subsequent approval)
 - Prioritisation
 - Measurement of impact
 - Tangible outputs and benefits for the Thurso Community



Confirming the Opportunities – Thurso Analysis & Partner Feedback Summary

In addition to the Consultation carried out by the Highland Council, to ascertain the possible areas for opportunities within Thurso we analysed and discussed perceived strengths & challenges with public sector partners.

This allowed us to develop areas of opportunities which we discussed with Partners, to ensure that ongoing focus was aligned to original objectives and that delivery focused enablers had could have specific and measurable outputs & outcomes.

Strengths

-  Strong sense of community & support
-  Collaboration and cohesion
-  Strong tourism potential
-  Attractive place to live
-  Resilient and resourceful community
-  Current Examples of Cross Partner Engagement

Challenges

-  The sense of Pride and attraction has gone
-  Retaining skilled talent is a challenge
-  Wider investment benefits aren't maximised
-  Connectivity is a key community issue
-  Aging population
-  The public estate is unsustainable and underutilised
-  Logistics & Transportation Links

Opportunities for Focus:

-  Positive Making Learning Work for All
-  Making Services Accessible
-  Making the Place More Attractive
-  Making a Place for Nurture
-  Making it easier for communities to lead
-  Opportunity to redevelop existing assets
-  Making it Sustainable

Understanding Possible Alignment & Synergies with Partners

Specific / Potential Opportunities for synergy and joint working were captured and mapped against the Highland Local Development Plan & Highland Investment Plan Elements.

This diagram illustrates some of the initial interest / capture / interpretation from Partners in supporting the development of PODs

	Points of Delivery											
	Community			Office			Depot			Other		
HIE			●		●	●						
UHI NWH	●	●	●		●	●						●
Dounreay & Partners		●	●		●	●						●
Focus North/ Partners		●	●		●	●						●
NHS Highlands		●	●		●	●			●			
Police Scotland			●			●			●			
NatureScot/ Scottish Forestry												
Scottish Government			●			●						
SEPA						●			●			
SFRS			●			●			●			
The Highland Council	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
HLH	●	●	●		●	●						●

KEY



Current Requirement



Future Requirement



Potential Requirement

Place Narrative – Thurso – Four Guiding Principles – Themes & Alignment

As part of developing the shared story and **Place Narrative** for Thurso, **four guiding principles** emerged, which can be used to ensure that **future investment** in Dingwall is **clear, cohesive and effective** for the people who live, work, learn and play there.



Four Guiding Principles

Map Of Opportunities – Existing Thurso Assets

Thurso SE

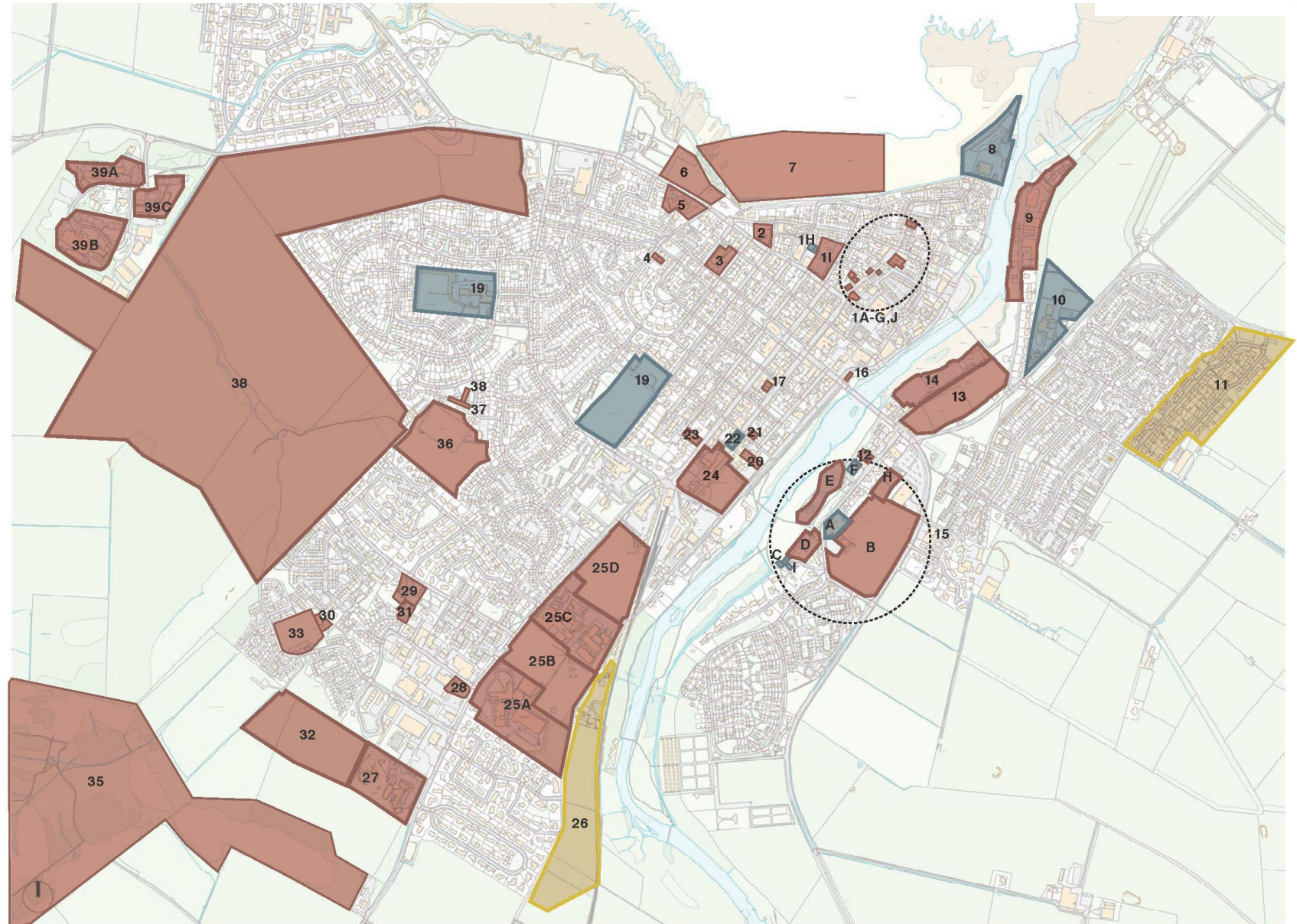


Key:

- Mixed use opportunity
- Residential opportunity
- Community opportunity
- Office opportunity
- Depot opportunity

This diagram is comprised of an indicative set of assets and linkages to raise awareness of opportunities and does not represent the complete asset portfolio of Partners.

The Opportunity Sites work is included in the hNSL report. **Refer Appendix 3.**



Thurso – 'What If'? Exploring the Shortlisted Options

Town Centre

Strengthening the Town Centre offer with additional civic, community and mixed uses through renovation and repurposing



Former M&Co



UHI North, West and Hebrides - Environmental Research Institute



Tollemache House

Leisure Centre & Surrounding Facilities

Reinforcing the Leisure Centre, surrounding facilities, accessibility and connections



Photo: hub North Scotland

Thurso Leisure Centre & Surrounding Facilities



Photo: hub North Scotland

TS06 Former Mill Site at Millbank

Education (Ormlie Rd)

Connecting a lifelong learning cluster at Thurso High School and UHI North, West and Hebrides - Ormlie Road to the Town Centre, Leisure Centre and surrounding facilities



Thurso High School



Thurso High School Pitches



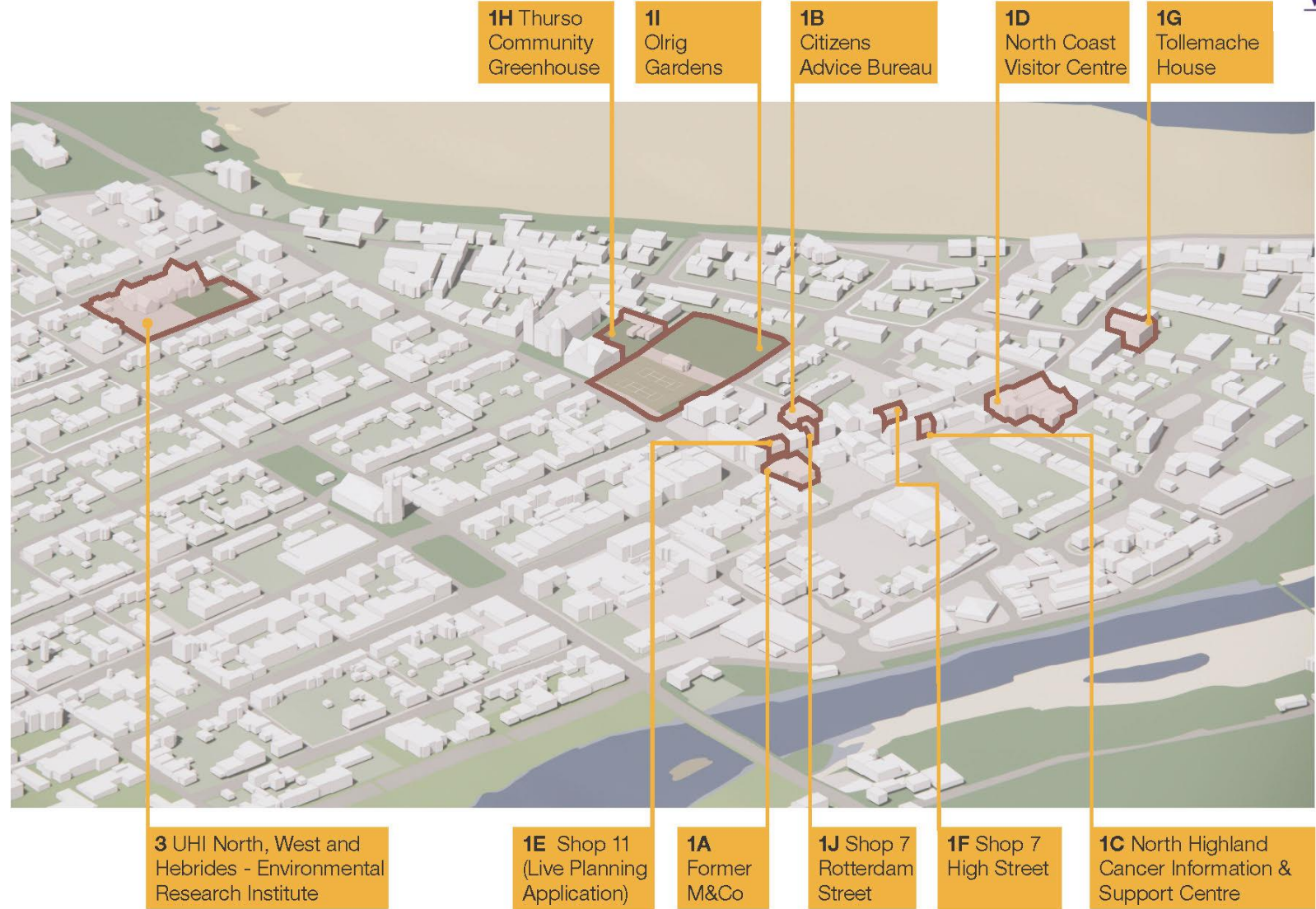
Photo: hub North Scotland

TS05 Former Mart Site



UHI North, West and Hebrides

Thurso –Town Centre Opportunities



Thurso – Leisure Centre & Surrounding Facilities

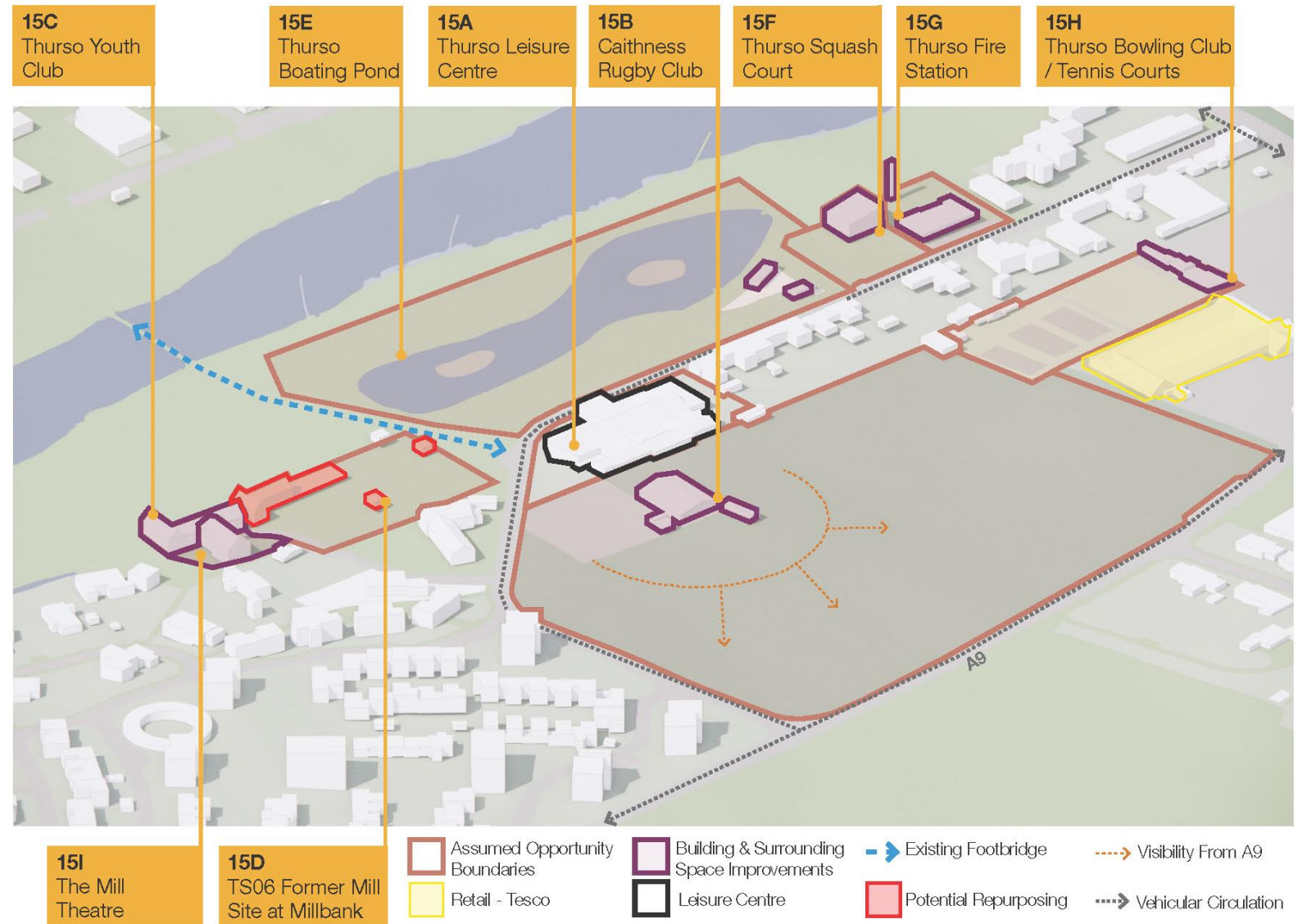
Opportunities for potential building & surrounding space improvements to:

- Reinforce existing facilities
- Improve accessibility
- Enhance connectivity
- Potential repurposing of TS06 Former Mill Site at Millbank

What Services Could be Accommodated?

- Community POD - potential to improve sport & leisure facilities and increase capacity

Who could the potential partners and stakeholders be?



Thurso – Education (Ormlie Road) Option 1

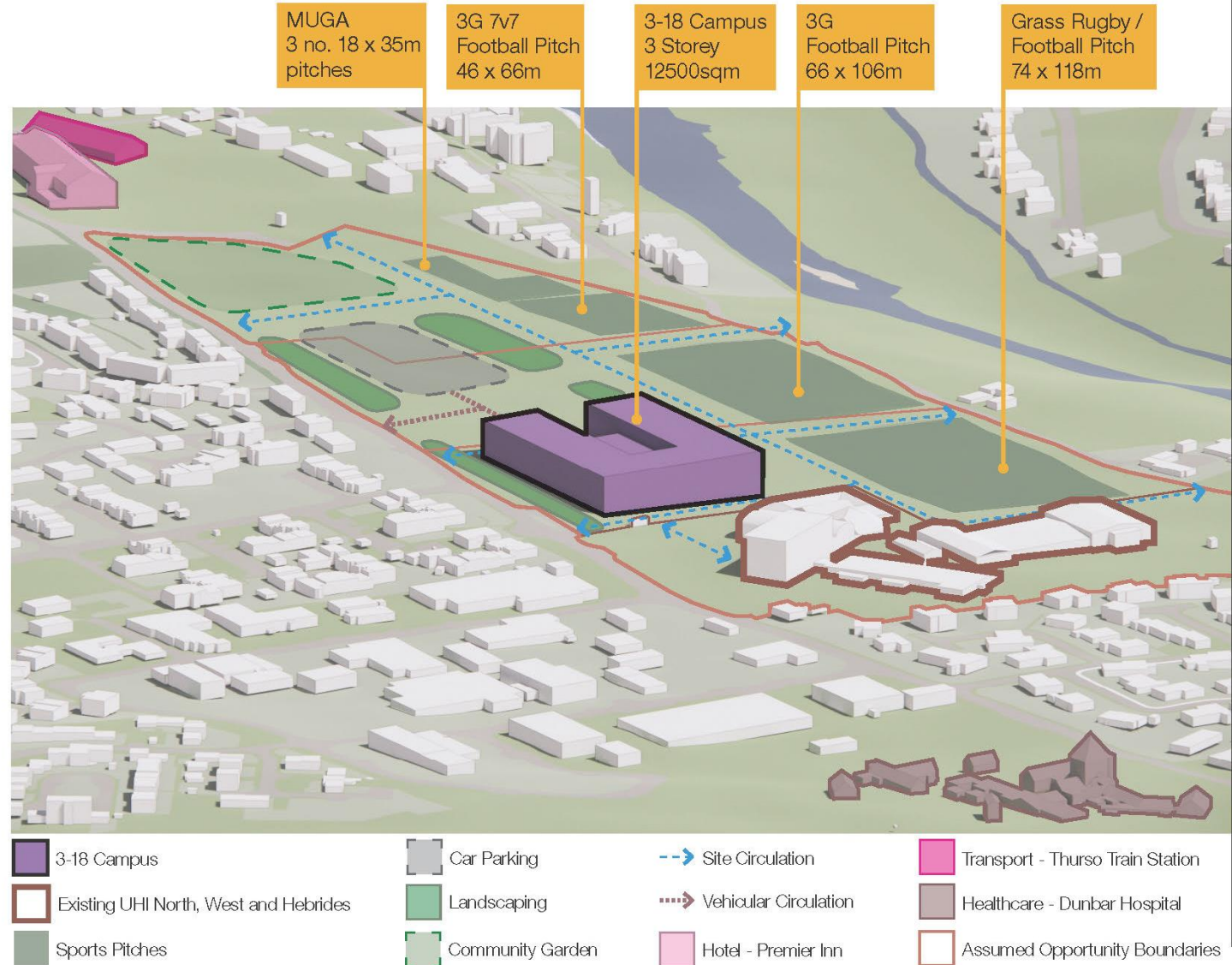
Opportunity to improve:

- Education provision
- Community sport & leisure provision
- Strengthen connection to UHI North, West & Hebrides

What Services Could be Accommodated

- Community POD:
 Education - replacement High School / 0-25+ learning campus
 Sport & leisure - enhance community facilities
 Healthy living - provide generational care

Who could the potential partners and stakeholders be?



Business Case Development – The Five Case Model

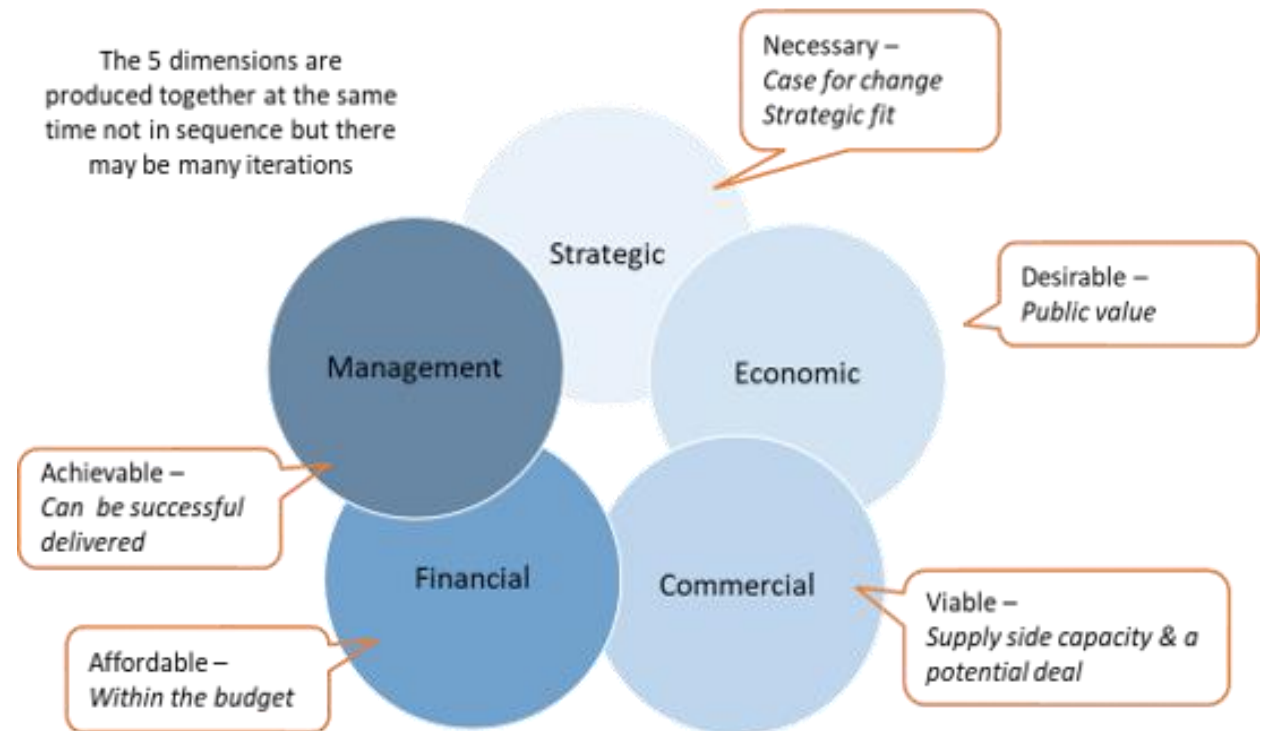
Following engagement with Highland Council, hNSL has started work to develop an **Interim Outline Business Case (IOBC)** for the proposed HIP investments in Thurso, based on **HM Treasury Green Book & Building Better Business Case** guidance.

This included the agreement of **project spending objectives** and **critical success factors**, identifying a **short-list of four potential scope options** of the Community POD, and identifying long lists of potential additional amenity options for the Community POD, scope options for the Office & Depot PODs, and location and partner options for all three PODs.

The next slide shows the current business case development status of each POD, while the following slide summarises the options identified to date.

The IOBC document is contained within Appendix 8 of the hNSL report.

The Five Case Model



Thurso – business case status update

Stage	Thurso		
	Community PoD	Depot PoD	Office PoD
Step 1: Determining the Strategic Context	✓	✓	✓
Step 2: Making the Case for Change	✓	✓	✓
Step 3: Exploring the Preferred Way Forward	✓	✗	✗
Step 4: Determining Potential Value for Money	✗	✗	✗
Report Stage 1: Interim Outline Business Case	✗	✗	✗
Step 5: Preparing for the Potential Deal	✗	✗	✗
Step 6: Ascertaining Affordability & Funding Requirement	✗	✗	✗
Step 7: Planning for Potential Delivery	✗	✗	✗
Report Stage 2: Outline Business Case	✗	✗	✗
Step 8: Procuring the VfM Solution	✗	✗	✗
Step 9: Contracting for the Deal	✗	✗	✗
Step 10: Ensuring Successful Delivery	✗	✗	✗
Report Stage 3: Full Business Case	✗	✗	✗

Business Case Development – Options Identified

POD	Potential Scope Options	Potential Location Options	Potential Partners
Community	Core Component 1. Business as Usual 2. Joint Campus (1 Primary School) 3. Joint Campus (2 or 3 Primary Schools) 4. Separate Campuses (1 Primary School) 5. Separate Campuses (2 Primary Schools) Additional Amenities Community information point SACC /pre-3 nursery/early years support centre Community library provision Sport & leisure provision Hireable community space NHS services Lifelong learning campus Youth café	Thurso High School Playing Field Site Old Mart Site Vacated primary schools (e.g. The Miller Academy)	THC (education and social care teams) Highlands & Islands Enterprise High Life Highland NHS Highland Police Scotland Scottish Government Scottish Fire & Rescue Service UHI-NWH Private nursery operators
Office	Business Hub Community Café Meeting & Event Space UHI-NWH town centre preference	Former M&Co site Tollemache House North Coast Visitor Centre UHI Environmental Research Institute	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority; NRS Dounreay; Supply Chain Focus North & CoC THC; HIE; High Life Highland; NHS Highland, Scottish Government Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service; Scottish Ambulance Service UHI; SEPA; self-employed and remotely employed community members
Depot	Storage, maintenance and washdown facilities Fleet overnight parking EV charging points Green energy (e.g. solar PV, wind turbine, private wire, microgrid) Office, welfare & meeting spaces for depot staff Petrol, diesel and alternative fuel (e.g. hydrogen /bioethanol) storage	Extend existing site in Thurso (e.g. the site at Sir Archibald Rd/Janetstown) New site in Thurso New site elsewhere in Caithness (e.g. Wick, Castletown, Halkirk, Lybster)	THC; Police Scotland; Scottish Ambulance Service; Scottish Fire & Rescue Service SEPA; SSEN; EMBR; Local taxi, bus & freight operators; NHS Highland HM Coastguard
Wider Investment Opps	Green Innovation Centre Sport & leisure infrastructure	Healthy living infrastructure Energy & connectivity infrastructure	Accommodation

Place Programme - Background

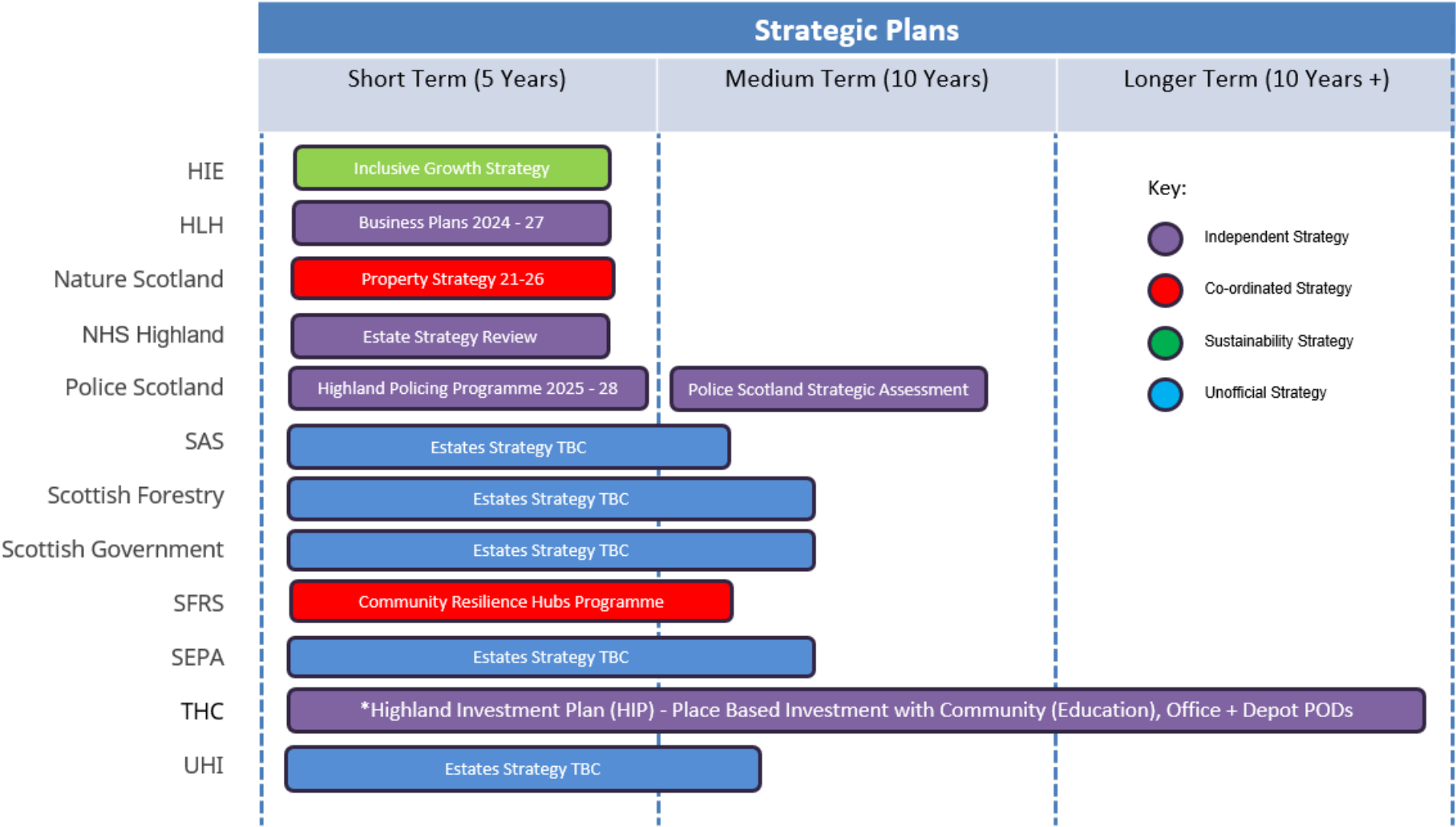
This programme should capture the relevant local, regional and potentially national investments underway or planned along with the relevant strategies and plans that inform the requirements for infrastructure investment and sustainable resources. This should reflect all THC projects and initiatives alongside those of Partners.

The portfolio approach through the Place Programme, supports prioritisation, sequencing, resource allocation and investment planning across all partners in the public, community, third sector and private sector. Examples of key activities discussed with Partners **(illustrated on the next slide)** are for alignment and consideration when Programme Design activities are underway.

Place Programme - Strategic Project Timelines

“The Highland Investment Plan (HIP) commits £2.1 billion of capital funding over a twenty-year period, based on the ring fencing of 2% council tax per annum, or an equivalent revenue stream. These funds will be capitalised to create an investment fund that will be used to tackle the major capital challenges that Highland Council faces: **transport and roads; schools and community facilities; depots and offices – as part of work towards a single public estate and integrated community operating model. One of the key objectives will be to initiate a programme of improvements to our school estate, with 92 of our 196 operational schools currently rated as “C – Poor” for condition and/or suitability.”*

Source: THC Highland Investment Plan – Progress Update, December 2024.



Next Steps – work to be undertaken by hub North Scotland

Based on discussions and agreement with THC and building on recent successful engagement with Partners, the following next steps to develop the Thurso Points of Delivery (PODs) are proposed. It is agreed that the following activity should progress immediately following this commission to ensure continuity and the achievement of committed timescales:

1. Continuation of Partner, Public and Stakeholder engagement:

- Leading on Partner engagement whilst developing the POD proposals
- Obtaining support from relevant Partner organisations for emerging solutions
- Supporting THC on future Public and Stakeholder engagement including agreeing the number of primary schools to be provided
- Developing an understanding of Partners related strategic and business cases e.g. Dounreay

2. Further Development of POD Opportunities:

- Consideration of the ‘additional opportunities’ identified during Workshop 2.
- Preparing a range of ‘test-for-fit’ exercises on identified short-listed options
- Providing initial proposals for the re-use of existing buildings
- Providing initial proposals for uses of land which may become vacant

3. Developing the next stages of the business case – refer diagram:

- Evaluation of all short-listed options – working with THC
- Exploring the Preferred Way Forward
- Determining Potential Value for Money

The above activities being addressed during July to September to report to Committee in October ‘25. Detailed scope proposals are to be prepared by hNSL for THC review. Once agreed, resource requirements and fees can be established.





Location Plan at 1:1500@A3