

Cambridge City Council

Record of Officer Decision

Capital Allocation: Demolition of Council Owned Buildings

Decision of: Jody Etherington, Chief Finance Officer

Reference: Capital Allocation - Demolition of Council buildings, North East Cambridge

Date of decision: 08/05/2026

Date Published on website: 12/05/2026

Decision Type: Non Key

Is Subject to Call in? No

Purpose

To confirm capital budget allocation to enable demolition of Council's buildings Orwell House and Orwell Furlong (Cowley Road, North East Cambridge), to be funded from the GF development fund set up for this purpose by the Council.

Record of Decision to be included within AGM pack for information for Council.

Officer decision:

Approval of capital budget of up to £285,000 + VAT for the demolition of the Council's current buildings at North East Cambridge.

Reasons for decision: As set out in recommendations.

Any alternative options considered and rejected:

A number of alternative options were considered and reviewed.

Scrutiny Consideration: The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Performance, Assets and Strategy Scrutiny Committee were consulted.

Background and Recommendation

Following the Government's decision to terminate the proposals to relocate the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant, the Council has been considering alternative options for the site. Given changing market conditions, and the expected Anglian Water proposals to upgrade the Cowley Road plant, which is likely to impact any redevelopment scheme, the Council is still considering future redevelopment options.

In the meantime, the options for the current buildings have been reviewed. The recommended decision included a review of the current and future costs for securing, maintaining and improving the buildings in line with legislation, legal advice in relation to compliance with the vacant possession strategy that was required to progress the then Hartree scheme, alongside consideration of ongoing liabilities in relation to the current buildings.

The recommended option is to demolish the current buildings and perform associated works to leave the site in appropriate condition for possible future redevelopment. An initial draft quote has been received (£260,000 plus VAT) and a formal Request for Quote is being registered to the contracts portal in line with Procurement Legislation.

The approval of £285,000 (plus VAT) capital funding requires confirmation before completing the planning application for the demolition works, and also provides additional contingency in advance of the final formal tender process. VAT is complex, and currently considered irrecoverable but remains within the Council's exemption level. Residual liabilities would, however, cost the Council in excess of the VAT.

The Council has secured the site since vacant possession on 31st March 2026 and it is monitored.

A prior approval demolition application is being developed in line with Shared Planning Team advice and is due for submission in June 2026. Subject to capital budget and planning approval, demolition would be completed by November 2026.

The demolition will be funded from the GF development fund. The remit of the fund, as approved by Council in February 2018, includes GF investment in commercial or residential property or for enabling works. These works constitute essential enabling works in advance of future redevelopment, and therefore fall within the remit of the fund.

