



# Essential Steps for University Estates Strategies

The ultimate guide to the importance of an estate strategy with a checklist of over 80 key items

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# **Essential Steps for University Estates Strategies**

Paul Wilson, Director

Provelio

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# Introduction

University estate strategies have changed irreversibly, because of several challenges and events around the world, which have changed the public's attitude and ways of working.

These are:

1. Climate change.
2. The coronavirus pandemic.
3. A greater demand for well-being and flexibility of work.

All these issues will have a profound effect on university estates strategies.

## Climate change

There can be little doubt that climate is changing and that it is necessary to reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. Whilst some people have doubts about the causes of this change, there can be little doubt that “net-zero-carbon” is a desirable first step.

In the UK, transport is one of the most significant contributors to carbon along with buildings.

Both factors should be considered when preparing a university estates strategy.

# The Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant effect in the UK, where it has led to considerable hospitalisation and deaths.

Universities have found themselves in “lockdown” because of the need to stop the disease spreading. The short-term future will involve short-term measures such as social distancing, face-coverings and better hand-hygiene.

Coronavirus is likely to mutate and be a threat for some years to come. New vaccines will be developed to make the disease manageable.

## **Well-being and flexibility of work**

One aspect of people’s adaptation to the health crisis and lockdown has been flexibility of working.

People from many types of businesses have become much more able – out of necessity - to work from home thanks to software such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Zoom.

Whilst it has been impossible for some businesses to operate in this way, it has reduced the amount of traffic on roads, buses and trains. When the pandemic is over, there are indications that people will want to keep some of this flexibility and despite an appetite for travel again, they may wish to attend their workplace for say, three days per week.

This will have a profound effect on universities.

# Part 1 - Why have an Estates Strategy?

There are several reasons why a university needs an estates strategy:

1. After the cost of salaries, the estate is the second largest expense for most universities. It involves decisions which have a long-term impact and cannot be changed easily.
2. An estates strategy involves setting out the long-term thinking, typically for a 10–15-year period. This timescale is necessary to avoid the estate being developed in a haphazard manner which will lead to unsuitable buildings and the expense of making alterations.
3. The strategy must ensure that the estate is responsive to the university's corporate plan. It must ensure that the university always remains fit-for-purpose.
4. The estates strategy must include the costs for implementation. It should be cost-effective and affordable. You should therefore consider how you are going to present your case forcefully to get the funding you require.

## Part 2 - The Importance of Integrating Strategic Documents

The traditional way of producing an estates strategy has been to await an overall corporate plan from the university and to assess what impact this would have on the buildings.

However, as the buildings have become more central to achieving the objectives of a university, we recommend that the estates strategy should be integrated with other strategic documents. This means that the Directors of Estates should be involved as part of the university team in drawing up these documents.

The principal strategic documents that should be put together for a university, include:

1. Learning and teaching strategy
2. Research and enterprise strategy
3. Residential strategy
4. Information technology strategy

The titles of the documents may vary according to the university, but they reflect the main influences on the accommodation.

## **Learning and teaching strategy**

This is the most important part and sets out the main strategic objectives of the university and is essential to answering the five key questions:

1. **Who** are we going to teach and what are the numbers?
2. **What** are we going to teach them and what courses will we run?
3. **Why** are we going to teach those courses and what is the need we are fulfilling?
4. **How** are we going to teach them - what are the methods of teaching?
5. **Where** are we going to teach them - find the spaces and location.

## **Research and enterprise strategy**

Research and the support of enterprise is an important part of a university's offering and this strategy sets out whether it will be local, regional, national or international.

It also sets out whether the research is conducted for commercial purposes and/or for the public sector.

## **Residential strategy**

The strategy for student residences depends to a large degree on the location of the university. Sometimes a residential strategy is automatically a part of the estates strategy.

The strategy should include the number of residences required, their type and how they may be provided, including private sector supply. Most importantly it will establish whether there needs to be any sale of land or buildings to fund it.



## **Information Technology Strategy**

This is constantly developing and whilst Information Technology must be integrated into the design of the estate, it is of sufficient scale to be considered as a separate entity.

This needs to be set out from first principles as most software has changed dramatically over the last 10 years; often making it more flexible and cheaper. It must deal with the problem of using (or making redundant) legacy systems.

# Part 3 - Checklist of Items Contributing to an Estates Strategy

## General information on the existing estate

The starting point of all estates strategies is to take an audit of the information for all existing buildings, services and public realm works.

This is particularly important in times of profound change in the service.

- List all buildings and ensure that they are allocated a Unique Building Identifier
- Identify which buildings are listed
- Obtain plans of every building and each department or space
- Obtain a valuation of each building
- Obtain photographs of every building
- Obtain condition surveys of all buildings
- List backlog maintenance©
- Cost backlog maintenance
- Obtain long-term maintenance plans for all building
- Cost long-term maintenance
- Identify the gaps in the information
- Prepare a gap-filling exercise to complete the information on the existing estate

## Learning and teaching strategy

This stage of the strategy enables you to assess all requirements for the university (as proposed).

- List the strategic objectives of the university from the point of view of teaching areas
- List the demographic of the people to be taught
- List the numbers of people to be taught
- List the courses to be delivered
- Describe the methods of teaching (on campus, online, and recorded)
- Describe where the courses will be based - what part of the campus
- List the required type and size of teaching spaces and how they should be co-located
- List the administrative and support services
- List the required type and size of non-teaching accommodation and how they should be co-located
- Produce a consolidated schedule of all information related to the spaces for all teaching and non-teaching spaces

## Research and enterprise strategy

The purpose of this section is to provide the strategic aims that relate to research and enterprise strategy.

They may be related to local, regional, national, or international enterprises. The organisations for which the research or support is provided may be public or private sector.

Importantly, the funding source must be identified for each area.

- List the local research strategic aims
- List of local enterprises to be included in an academic and research programme
- List the regional research strategic aims
- List of regional enterprises to be included in an academic and research programme
- List the national research strategic aims
- List of national enterprises to be included in an academic commitment search programme
- List the international research strategic aims
- List the international enterprises to be included in an international academic research programme
- Determine which items have an estates impact and describe an appropriate project to which they should relate
- List which items on the strategy relates to a specific grant or grant awarding authorities
- State how each type of organisation will be supported

## Information Technology Strategy

It makes sense to think of the technology from the Users point of view. First identify the software and “apps” to be used.

Then identify the number of devices that are needed and which of them are fixed (wired into a network) and which of them are mobile. Finally, the arrangements for a network can be designed to “tie” all the software and devices together.

- List the software and apps to be provided to staff, to provide all the needs now and for the foreseeable future (including numbers of licences)
- List the hardware to be used to provide a flexible resource to all users including numbers of licences
- List the hardware which will be owned by staff, students or visitors
- Define the network (or networks) required and the infrastructure to make the hardware and software available
- List all facilities for students including Wi-Fi
- List any specific spaces to accommodate the hardware

## **Residential strategy**

The residential strategy for each university varies considerably.

There should be a distinction between provision by the public sector and the private sector.

- Take stock of all existing student housing and define its condition
- Establish the work required to restore the properties to an acceptable condition
- Cost the works
- Define the new requirements (if any) to produce accommodation that meets the academic and learning strategy
- Cost the provision of new housing
- Determine the funding available for new housing

## Objectives of the Estate

This brings together all the strategic objectives from the learning and teaching strategy; research and enterprise strategy; information technology strategy and the residential strategy.

- List the accommodation that is required to provide an up to date and efficient physical infrastructure and working environment that meets the university's requirements
- Define the infrastructure requirements such as the power and utilities impact
- Prepare and maintain a campus and estate development masterplan
- Cost the works
- Prepare a phased programme for the works
- Prepare a list of inefficiencies in space usage
- Prepare a programme for dealing with inefficiencies
- Describe a programme for tackling inefficiencies in space usage
- Define a clear routine for statutory long-term maintenance plans

## **Risk management**

In all programmes, there are risks. These should be identified, costed in full and taken account of in the funding requirements for the strategy.

- Set up a risk register
- Identify all risks in the plans for redevelopment of the university
- Identify the person responsible for managing each risk
- Identify all possible and potential measures to overcome these risks
- Cost the risks

## **Environmental impact**

The impact on the environment is vital to combating climate change and that this is essential to consider for an estates strategy.

- Assess the environmental impact of the university's existing operations
- Compare your results with other universities and determine which additional measures you can consider
- Assess the impact of any changes to the university's proposed operations on the environment
- Proposed ways to mitigate harmful effects on the environment
- Cost the proposed changes



## Local Authority Plans

Local authorities provide plans that may have an impact on a university's long-term development plans.

- Review local authority plans and assess the impact on (if any) the university's long-term development strategy
- Consult on the plans if there is likely to be a major impact on the strategy
- Work with the local authority where development plans are considered to have shared objectives
- Determine how these shared opportunities could be accommodated
- Cost any consequential works

## Travel plans

This is something which needs to be considered carefully, given that it is university students which have such strong views on transport.

They are more likely to want to cycle or use other forms of transport, such as e-scooters. In addition, they are more likely to use public transport such as rail, buses and trams. Indeed, many of them are likely to consider it a public duty to do so.

- Consider ways to use cycling for both staff and students
- Consider other forms of transport such as e-scooters
- Provide lockable areas for cycles etc.
- Consider ways to use public transport by staff and students
- Consider ways to provide a car share service where other forms of transport are more difficult
- Prepare an institutional travel plan that helps reduce the negative impact on the environment
- Cost the measures

## Whole life costs

It is important for whole life costs to be considered alongside capital costs.

To put these in perspective the cost of running a complex building over a 60-year period (the average lifetime of a building in the public sector) are 3% for the construction and fees and 97% for the running and staffing of them.

Many of these running costs might be considered as whole-life costs; for example, more expensive insulation now would save a large amount on heating.

- Identify all costs associated with the existing buildings
- List the enhancements that are possible and cost the resultant savings in running costs
- Identify all running costs associated with the proposed new buildings

## **Shared services**

Sharing services is seen increasingly as a way of saving money without compromising the quality of service. It may be typically (but not exclusively) in administrative and financial matters.

- Review sharing Financial services with other institutions
- Review sharing HR services with other institutions
- Review sharing Property maintenance with other institutions
- Review sharing Information Technology maintenance with other institutions
- Review sharing any other items with other institutions
- Determine the impact on accommodation for the university
- Cost the works for the changes

# Part 4 - Next Steps

This document sets out the essential steps for preparing a university estates strategy.

**They are based on teamwork, cooperation and above all, experience.**

They require data gathering about the existing assets, imaginative planning and a series of iterations about the design solutions that can meet your challenges for the future.

In other words, an estates strategy is **a programme for change**. It takes the best that you can achieve today and uses that knowledge to plan what you can achieve tomorrow.

At Provelio, our mission is to **Change Organisations for the Better**.

If you would like some advice on producing an estate strategy for a university, please contact us:

1. Call Paul Wilson on 0117 302 0001
2. Email [marketing@provelio.com](mailto:marketing@provelio.com)
3. Leave a message at the [Contacts Page](#) on [www.provelio.com](http://www.provelio.com)

We will be delighted to talk to you.

# About Provelio

In our experience, most organisations have the same broad objectives, when building. They just want to get the maximum operational benefit from the buildings that they create or manage.

That is why it matters how they manage their projects, because it can make a real difference!

We provide Professional Construction Management Services, ensuring that our Clients get the building that they want, on time and on cost.

Equally important is the ability to manage the existing day-to-day business whilst the project proceeds – often described as “the status quo.” When we provide the full professional service, the Client can concentrate on their core business.

Management is not just about processes and procedures. It is about best practise. This means paying attention to the things that really matter like fostering good, motivational relationships between people. We therefore deliver management solutions with integrity, clarity and a constructive style.

You will find more details in a substantial number of downloadable guidance notes from our website:

**[www.provelio.com](http://www.provelio.com)**





# Essential Steps for University Estates Strategies

If you are going to do something complex like a building project, it helps if you have a simplistic guide. It helps you to focus! You do not get confused by activities, because you just focus on the things you want to achieve.

All projects have a plan of work. It varies a little, depending on the nature of your project and your personal preferences, but they are broadly the same.

In this booklet, Paul Wilson, the Managing Director of Provelio, describes the 8 stages of a project. He goes on to explain the key deliverables and objectives of each of those stages in a clear way, which you will find helpful.

Paul's advice is drawn from his substantial experience in managing major capital projects for Clients in the public and private sectors.