Education estates: From drain to gain

Rising to the challenge of estate optimisation

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Executive summary

Creating positive and safe learning environments is about more than bricks and mortar; it's about creating spaces that enable students to focus and thrive, whether they are in a primary school classroom or on a university campus. Yet, according to the National Audit Office, an estimated 700,000 pupils are learning in unsafe or ageing schools in England with headteachers struggling with issues such as leaking roofs, sewage leaks and asbestos.

To create and maintain safe and warm learning spaces, leaders must overcome increasingly complex issues, not least, rapidly rising energy costs. The challenge – whether a primary school, Multi Academy Trust (MAT) or university – is to ensure that the land and properties that leaders are responsible for help to inspire students, provide value for money, generate revenue where possible and fulfil both their current and projected needs. However, future-proofing and optimising estates, at a time where there are no signs that pressure on the public purse will ease any time soon, is especially difficult.

MATs with ambitions to grow or universities with a strategy to attract more students, must be able to plan for the financial investment that is needed. This report explores the potential for turning a property cost centre into a value generator and identifies practical steps leaders can take to optimise the buildings they are responsible for.

We understand that no two learning environments are the same, and there will always be factors, nationally and locally, that impact effective optimisation strategies. However, as this report shows there are common issues that can be addressed - from primary to university level - that can lead to greater energy efficiency and lower costs, reducing the pressure on leaders and staff.

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Introduction

In January 2023, there were 21,600 state schools in England, educating 8.4 million pupils in 64,000 buildings that vary in age and design. The National Audit Office found that: "Following years of underinvestment, the estate's overall condition is declining and around 700,000 pupils are learning in a school that the responsible body or DfE believes needs major rebuilding or refurbishment."

This level of deterioration also has an impact on staff. It is no secret that there is increasing dissatisfaction within the teaching community; the national school strikes are evidence of that. Although, the dispute focuses on pay it also comes during a recruitment and retention crisis. Attracting people to the teaching profession and keeping them there is becoming increasingly difficult.

All too often, what once was considered as an asset is now very much a liability.

Although pay is a primary issue, the environment that staff work in also has a contributing role to play. People have the right to expect to work in a safe, warm and compliant building. In 2016, a RIBA study found that the most comfortable and well-designed schools contributed to a 15% increase in staff productivity.

Although the Department for Education has donated £15bn since 2015 to keep schools safe and operational, it is proving not to be enough and any money that schools do receive is often used for urgent repairs rather than planned maintenance. On top of dealing with this challenge, there is the pressing need for schools, colleges and universities to decarbonise their facilities to support the UK's goal of achieving net zero by 2050. Greater energy efficiencies can lead to cost savings, but this still requires an initial investment in both time and money, which can push decarbonisation initiatives down the list of priorities.

Property optimisation can help education leaders to drive energy efficiencies, use their buildings in a smarter way, and reduce costs, without sacrificing the learning experience for students. In this report we focus on five key challenges:

1. Improving energy efficiency.
2. Progressing towards net zero.
3. Ensuring safer and healthier environments.
4. Optimising space and design.
5. Transforming legacy buildings.
6. Securing funding.

There is no magic solution to the challenges in education, but there are practical steps that leaders can take to make better use of their buildings and turn those that have become a drain on resources into revenue generators. However, the focus of the report is very much on practicality and understanding. With the right data, the right insight and the right skillset, it is possible to move forward with confidence in the knowledge that risks and liabilities are minimised, sustainability objectives are being met and all areas of the estate are performing as any asset should.

Any asset is just that.
It delivers genuine value.
It provides tangible benefit.
And it creates a world of opportunity.

When an ‘asset’ does
none of those things,
it becomes a liability.

Any underperforming or redundant
asset is, at best, untapped potential.
At worst, it’s a major operational risk
and a very costly handicap.

Challenges for the education estate

There is no doubting the opportunity that exists for schools, universities, Multi Academy Trusts and other public sector partners to lead the way and provide much-needed anchor points for ongoing behavioural change without creating undue exposure to risk.

But, before exploring the options, it's important to understand and address the many challenges that continue to muddy the water.

Challenge one

Improving energy efficiency

Rising energy costs are having a major impact on education budgets, along with staff salaries.

The huge increases and ongoing uncertainty over how long they are likely to last is putting immense pressure on leaders.

There are two ways cut energy costs; address how your energy is bought and how much you use. While energy prices continue be turbulent, the current guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) on purchasing gas and electricity, says:

- Don't allow your energy contracts to expire.
- Avoid signing long-term supply contracts.
- Consider joining a DfE approved framework contract.
- Reduce energy usage across your estates.

If you are purchasing your energy as a single school or Trust, you will have insufficient volume to benefit from cheaper deals and you must be sure that you understand the energy product you are using. In addition, being tied to a long-term contract may prevent you from benefiting if the market diverges downwards. This is why an energy framework contract can be more beneficial, as it gives you the advantage of being able to consolidate your energy volume with other members to attract better rates and buy energy in advance through a purchasing organisation.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which provided schools with discounts on wholesale gas and electricity prices, has been replaced by the Energy Bill Discount Scheme, which runs until April 2024. Under the new scheme, only those who are paying above £107 per megawatt hour for gas or £302/MWh for electricity will receive help that is automatically applied to their bills, while the previous scheme had significantly lower thresholds. This means that fewer schools are now eligible for support and must find more money from their budgets to pay their bills.

The other way to limit the amount you spend on energy consumption is to implement energy efficiency savings. Display Energy Certificates promote the improved energy performance of public buildings like schools, by rating them from A (being the most efficient) to G. The typical operational rating for a public building is D, so there is room for improvement. An average secondary school could save up to 20% on energy bills by switching to energy-efficient heating, lighting and cooling equipment. Utilising building management systems can help you to magnify your savings by replacing old plant systems and controls, and ensuring they work harmoniously together.

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Monitoring data effectively to become more aware of how energy is used and wasted within buildings can help leaders to make better informed decisions about how to heat them. While focusing on teaching and learning it can be easy for the school environment to be overlooked, but using sensors and data can point the way towards better use of renewable technology or inform the best way to procure energy to give better flexibility based on the exact amount of data that is being used.

Case study

Staffordshire County Council energy frameworks

An energy framework gives you the advantage of being able to consolidate your energy volume with other members to attract better rates. They work by enabling you to buy energy in advance through a purchasing organisation. For example, in Staffordshire, the electricity framework has been extended to March 2027. Members purchase a full year of energy through the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) which is supplied by Npower.

The procurement cycle starts in October for delivery the following April. For gas, the Staffordshire framework runs until 2025. YPO purchase the gas a year in advance in April which is supplied by Corona energy.

Both products are evergreen, which means the schools remain in contract unless they choose to terminate it.

Challenge two

Progressing towards net zero

Many educational leaders are not fully aware of the energy performance of their education estates or the funding routes and financing opportunities for zero carbon development.

The Clean Growth Strategy, the Ten Point Plan and the Energy White Paper are among the many initiatives driving the UK's commitment to achieve net zero by 2050. According to Let's Go Zero schools have the power to prevent 625,000 tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere.

Across a single school or academy chain, interventions such as lowering electricity use or boosting the energy-efficiency of buildings has a huge impact. Yet, many education leaders are unaware of the existing energy performance of their estates and do not have detailed knowledge of the access routes and opportunities for funding of decarbonisation and zero carbon developments.

The task of developing comprehensive, systematic and strategic bids that embrace scale, resources, skills and capability, as well as physical property specifications can be quite daunting. Effective prioritisation and governance of such programmes also requires the total commitment of senior management. This all amounts to quite an undertaking, where fulfilment is only likely to be achieved with new insight, alternative thinking and blended funding options. Obviously, that's not a step any leader will take lightly.

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The London School of Economics and Political Science proved that sustainability can be achieved with the right investment after it became the UK's first carbon-neutral university in 2021. It successfully reduced direct carbon emissions by 44% since 2005, despite an increase in campus size and student numbers.

From 2015 the university invested £4.8 million in a range of energy efficiency measures for campus and residences buildings, including upgrading Building Management Systems, installing LED lights and advanced lighting controls, fitting solar panels, insulating pipes, or replacing boilers and chillers. At the time, Professor Nicholas Stern, Chair of LSE's Grantham Institute on Climate Change and the Environment said: "We hope LSE becoming Carbon Neutral is an inspiration for others to reduce their carbon footprint. Higher education institutions have a duty to show leadership and advocate for decisive action in tackling climate change, the challenge of our times."

To encourage schools to consider ways to decarbonise their estates, such as replacing traditional oil, gas, and coal boilers with heat pumps, the Government Actuary's Department launched The Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA). This is an alternative to insurance for schools and academies where losses that arise are covered by government funds.

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures. In the latest round of funding the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy awarded over £613m in grants to 170 public sector organisations for energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects. This included many schools and MATs. There is funding available, but having the data to support a bid or the time that is needed to develop it can be in short supply.

Case study

Supporting Lancaster University's solar plans

In November 2020, Lancaster University declared a climate change emergency and pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2035. One of its initiatives to achieve this goal was building a solar farm on land it owned. The site will be capable of generating 16.5MWp of renewable energy – equivalent to powering 3,125 four-bed homes – saving approximately 2,654 tonnes of CO2 emission annually, equivalent to taking 600 average cars off the road. The electricity produced will feed into the university campus through a dedicated private connection.

When going through the planning approval process, the university and Lancaster City Council entered into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which set out the relevant timescale, actions and resources. We provided a dedicated case officer to ensure the application was determined according to the PPA. We also conducted a pre-application site visit with council officers to appraise the development site and provided written planning advice to the developer and engaged with them through the council's Member Engagement Forum, and presented the scheme to the planning committee, which was approved.

Challenge three

Ensuring healthier and safer environments

Safe and compliant learning spaces are a strategic priority for leaders. However, not all are fully aware of where the gaps are in their estate and where servicing is lacking.

A building should be safe for students and staff to walk into on a daily basis.

Poorly maintained buildings increase the risk of accidents and potential liabilities. Good estate management enables you to keep on top of your statutory responsibilities and maintain a safe and compliant estate.

The Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) guidance helps education leaders to take a strategic approach to their estate management. This can help to reduce running costs, prioritise and procure maintenance services more cost effectively and make informed decisions about investment. The GEMS self-assessment tool is designed to help headteachers, executive leaders and governing bodies to assess your organisation's approach to estate management and identify where you are following good practice and areas which require further development. The checklist spans 12 areas of estate management including health and safety, performance management and sustainability, emergency planning and procurement of estate services.

A building should be safe for students and staff to walk into on a daily basis. Using a central, cloud-based solution can help you to keep track of your compliance needs, service logs and dates of when equipment and buildings were last checked, so you have a complete picture of your compliance needs.

Ensuring that your buildings remain safe and compliant can be particularly resource intensive. Rather than directly employ specialist staff, external qualified maintenance teams can manage your refurbishment, replacement and expansion projects on your behalf. They can ensure you meet your statutory obligations to test and inspect the mechanical and electrical services within your buildings and maintain the efficiency and reliability of your systems.

Case study

Removing Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete from schools

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is a lightweight form of concrete that is deemed to be much weaker that traditional concrete. It was used in schools, colleges and other building construction from the 1950s until the mid-1990s. Deficiencies in the material could lead to a sudden failure of RAAC panels in roofs, eaves, floors, walls and cladding systems that would have serious consequences could be serious.

Schools that have RAAC present are now required to gather information and arrange assessments with a specialist engineer to inform an appropriate management and remediation strategy. A central asset management system can help to compile and store this information quickly and safely.

Case study

Improving air quality to provide a healthier learning environment

In August 2021, the Scottish Government set out to improve air quality in schools to create healthier environments. We helped East Renfrewshire Council to meet this challenge by implementing sensors that monitor environmental factors like CO2, temperature and humidity. We identified the schools that would benefit from immediate intervention, delivered the pilot and then scaled fast to implement sensors in every teaching space in the area and gather the data in a digital dashboard.

This data can now be tracked by individual schools and Council-wide, so necessary remediations can be spotted and acted on quickly, putting their limited resources to better use.

Challenge four

Making better use of space

When student numbers are increasing and space is getting tight, it's not always possible to push for capital funding for new buildings projects. This is why good space design is so important, as it helps you assess whether you are using the space you do have in the most effective way.

> Good design is not just about aesthetics; it's also about how places make us feel and support our mental health.

Your spatial needs would probably have been met by the masterplan when your buildings were first designed and built, but over time, it's highly likely that your minimum space requirements for classrooms, laboratories, offices or corridors, have changed.

Spaces in modern schools are generally allowed to be larger than previous guidance permitted, which means older schools are often at a disadvantage, perhaps even no longer fit for purpose. If yours is an older school, you may need to retrofit your spaces to suit a new masterplan.

The master planning approach helps you to choose the right investment project for your school by:

- Clustering department spaces logically so that people working together can collaborate better.
- Making sure that learning environments are appropriate to pupils' needs, times of life and stages of learning.
- Ensuring efficient and stress-free circulation and movement.
- Making non-educational facilities such as toilets and changing rooms more easily accessible.
- Creating a modern and appropriate environment for staff.
- Providing a professional and engaging experience for visitors.
- Ensuring appropriate outdoor facilities for play, sport and physical education.
- Building spaces that require minimal cost and time to maintain.

Learning spaces should be adaptable so they can be used in different ways, and this can require a total rethink about what is possible. Good design is not just about aesthetics; it's also about how places make us feel and support our mental health. Young people are affected by their environments, so classrooms and other learning spaces should make them feel welcome, secure, engaged and ready to learn. For example, natural light can reduce anxiety, a tidy space can encourage better behaviour, and crowded areas can create discomfort. Providing smaller, quieter areas where pupils can relax and get away from the hustle and bustle of school life can also have a positive impact.

Many schools set their sights on new-builds and extensions, but it's much more cost effective to reimagine and refurbish your existing space to meet your new needs. With subtle alterations, you can eliminate challenges such as cramped spaces, a lack of natural light and airflow, and poor acoustics.

Challenge five

Managing legacy buildings

Teaching in old or listed buildings can present many challenges when it comes to maintenance and repairs. If you are a Multi-Academy Trust with many different buildings or a university with a 100-year-old academic hall, it can be difficult to budget effectively and work within planning constraints.

> Accurate and constantly updated insight is essential to establish a clear and coherent estate management strategy.

According to Historic England there are over 5,000 listed school buildings in England, and while these can be successfully refurbished to accommodate new uses, doing so presents many challenges. In very old buildings there may be asbestos, leaking roofs or unsafe structures, and while during construction of a new building you can control everything, in an existing building you can be left reacting to what needs doing.

Preserving the cultural history of a building while also ensuring it meets current needs can be particularly dauting. The diversity of 'bricks and mortar' assets can present quite a complex puzzle, as every asset will have unique performance, cost and occupancy figures. The future potential of each property asset will also vary enormously. Accurate and constantly updated insight is essential to establish a clear and coherent estate management strategy and to make informed decisions for each asset.

It is important, therefore, to establish specific performance measures that can be monitored on an ongoing basis. It's not just a case of looking at occupancy levels, energy costs and accessibility. The contribution to service delivery priorities and decarbonisation goals and the adaptability of each building to meet current and projected demands.

This is where expert support is required to ensure there are up-to-date CAD drawings of the buildings so a full assessment of need can be made. Early assessment ensures that key design aspects are identified and retained. External experts can also help manage any planning process and facilitate collaboration with local authorities and community groups.

Armed with the right information and insight, it is possible to move forward with the knowledge that risks and uncertainties have been minimised and opportunities have not been missed.

Challenge six

Securing funding

Securing external funding for asset management, decarbonisation, repairs and new building projects can be very time-consuming and intensive.

Over recent years Capita and Entrust have worked together to secure over £60m in funding for schools.

While school leaders are focusing on teaching and learning outcomes, they often don't have the time that is needed to gather the appropriate evidence and submit engaging bids. This means that important funding opportunities can be missed, which leads to an ongoing cycle of deterioration.

In any given financial year, eligible schools can access government funding through either:

- School Condition Allocations with funds paid to eligible bodies responsible for maintaining school buildings.
- The Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), a bidding round with funds paid directly to single academy trusts, MATs and sixth-form colleges. Funding is given for projects such as heating, lighting and safeguarding.
- Devolved formula capital for individual schools to spend on capital projects that meet their own priorities.

The Wales Funding Programme allows public sector bodies, including schools, colleges and universities, to apply for interest-free loans for up to one hundred percent of the costs of energy-saving or renewable energy projects. The Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme is open for applications to support organisations across Wales in achieving their net-zero targets by 2030.

Using external partners and specialists who fully understand the evaluation criteria, challenges and risks can help to relieve this burden. Over recent years Capita and Entrust have worked together to secure over £60m in funding for schools.

Case study

Helping children in Stafford thrive with safe and sustainable learning spaces

For a number of years, Leasowes Primary School near Stafford struggled with ongoing waterproofing issues. Despite the best efforts of the facilities team to carry out various quick fix repairs, substantial leaks and relentless water ingress meant that many classrooms were forced to shut, causing continuous disruptions to pupils and staff.

With our strong track record of successful CIF bids, the school turned to us to help prepare their application and collate the essential supporting evidence required by the DfE.

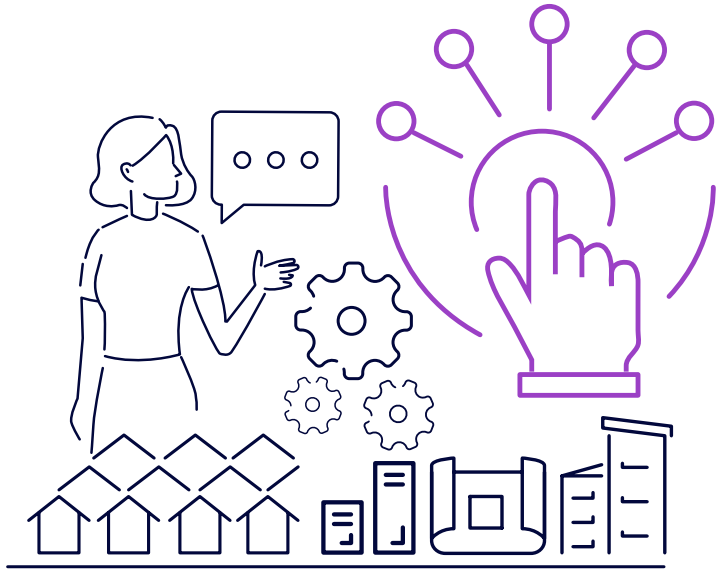
Collaborating with trusted roofing specialists, we carried out a series of investigative works on-site, starting with a comprehensive condition survey of each roof section that included core sample testing, u-value calculation and analysis, and a series of supporting photographic evidence. Following this, it was clear that the entire roof needed replacing. Our in-house bid writers put together a comprehensive report aligned to legislative requirements. Despite the CIF being a highly competitive fund, we were successful in our application, which released over £430,000 to carry out the much-needed repairs.

The solutions – from cost centre to value generator

Now, more than ever, property and land that is being used for education are being seen as potential community assets that can have a key role to play in helping to drive local economic growth and helping the UK fulfil its net zero goal by 2050.

The government's new property strategy 2023-30 provides a context and direction of travel for decarbonisation, estate optimisation, cutting costs and revenue development. Schools are an important part of this, as the government is responsible for a total of 78.7 million m2 of floor area in state funded schools at an annual running cost of £3.3bn. It therefore makes sense if property and land can be used outside of the school day to generate an income.

Lancaster University's solar farm is an example of how land can be put to other uses that are good for budgets and the planet. However, opening sports and recreation to the wider community can also bring revenue in. Here, the challenge is to cost it appropriately so the benefit to the school isn't dwarfed by the cost of keeping the lights or heating on or dealing with extra damage or maintenance.



Understanding what is needed

The right data and the right data analytics will actually accelerate progress as it will provide clarity and persuasive evidence to support the decision-making and funding processes.

Without knowing all the facts, it is impossible to know where to start or how to get there. The first task, therefore, must always be one of information gathering.

It is vital to have a good understanding of the facilities, equipment and systems used in all of your buildings, as well as their condition, market and community value and the potential for adaptation and co-location. It is just as important to have respective and comparative performance statistics for each building - from energy efficiency, running costs and the effectiveness and efficiency of service provision, to occupancy levels during different times of the day, structural flexibility and the satisfaction levels of students and staff alike.

Successful asset management is informed and guided by key strategic documents. These ensure that investment plans are aligned to strategic plans.

- Your school education vision – Aligned to your educational philosophy and objectives.
- An estate vision – Sets out a simple and realistic ambition for your school estate in 5 to 10 years' time. It is developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, landowners and governors.
- School estate strategy – Explains how you will achieve your estate vision over the next 3 to 5 years and identifies projected funding requirements, outcomes and improvements.
- Asset management plan (AMP) – A working document that informs operational, day-to-day activities on your school estate in the short-to-medium term. We recommend the AMP/estate vision should set out your ambition for the next five to 10 years.

All these important documents must be signed-off and reviewed by your School Board and informed by data.

Of course, gathering and maintaining the information required can be resource intensive. However, without it, you will only be able to proceed on assumptions – with the inevitable risks and uncertainty that entails – or to play safe without making any significant inroads in fulfilling strategic objectives. It will only be possible to take decisive and well-informed actions once a clear baseline has been established.

Some larger schools and MATs have worked hard in recent years to approach this position, often with the support of external expertise. Many others are only at the start of this journey. It's important to recognise, however, this is not an overnight or one-off mapping process as the performance and potential of different properties will never be static. Nor will the restoration, repair, renovation and repurposing costs or the market values of each estate asset.

Continuous monitoring and access to accurate, current and relevant data are absolutely crucial for sound and strategic estate management. This means using a readily available and multi-access system that enables processing and reporting in different formats without delay or difficulty. There is popular misconception that the sheer volume of data could delay any estate optimisation drive. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If it is managed and stored correctly, the right data and the right data analytics will actually accelerate progress as it will provide clarity and persuasive evidence to support the decision-making and funding processes. It will also help the estate management team nail down the priorities for changes and improvements to the estate, while also identifying any shortfall in existing resources and expertise. Put simply, data is most definitely the key for success.

The value of data and data analytics

Sound evidence and insight will help estate management teams to move forward with confidence in all areas of estate optimisation:

- Establish key targets for the short, medium and longer-term.
- Informed decision-making at all times and in all circumstances.
- Pinpoint immediate gains and savings that move towards the target goals. For instance, where and how to focus on energy efficiency and cost-saving initiatives and evolving clinical considerations and the steps needed to improve the performance of each property.
- Prioritise all actions.
- Ongoing service transformation.
- The scope to capitalise fully on the resources already in place.
- Maximise management agility and responsiveness. Ensure responses to changing circumstances are always timely, well-informed and in keeping with the broader strategic vision, such as new funding opportunities and government announcements.
- Identify priorities for more accessible and flexible service provision - from the perspective of staff and communities.
- Demonstrate how the estate can be used to drive new community benefits.
- Act as a catalyst for new collaborative ventures.

Harnessing technology

It's not just a case of having the right systems to capture, collate and analyse data. It's just as important to take full advantage of new technologies and digital tools to maximise the speed and effectiveness of estate optimisation initiatives – not to mention in helping to prepare convincing business cases and bid propositions.

Conventional and manual systems are no answer to the complexities of the task, particularly given the scale and urgency of the need. A good example is the way technology can be used to signpost the route towards decarbonisation. Advances in high-tech sensor and energy saving systems can deliver substantial benefits and stimulate a wider behavioural change in carbon-saving.

The role of technology is not restricted to such physical and attitudinal improvements, however, as it can also help to extend capabilities, open up new possibilities and can be used to unlock seemingly impenetrable operational mazes.

Concepts such as digital twins and high-performance modelling and simulation intelligence software are proving to be significant game-changers in the fight against climate change and the delivery of sustainable service outcomes. The creation of virtual versions of real-world buildings allows the performance of new approaches and alternative systems to be evaluated and helps to identify where and how the most savings and service gains can be achieved.

Such digital twins are especially useful in assessing the impact of relatively high-cost systems such as smart lighting, grey water harvesting and heat networks. Carrying out tests on a virtual twin helps to de-risk the decision-making process and to ensure capital investment is well-informed and founded on definitive scientific evidence.

Accessing the right expertise at the right time

There will always be a limit to the resources and skills that you are able to draw upon internally. Where appropriate and specialist skills are not readily available or where there are capacity or capability shortfalls, steps can be taken to plug the gaps with the introduction of external expertise.

The importance of de-risking, future-proofing and adding value to any estate optimisation programme cannot be overstated, but it is dependent on you being able to draw upon the right expertise at the right time.

For example, MATs with plans to grow don't want to inherit risks of incurring unbudgeted costs. To make their plans a reality they are likely to require the input of a range of professional services – from surveying and legal advice through to financing.

If a school is under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract and wishes to convert to an academy, there may be additional support required to manage the PFI contract expiry effectively. All PFI assets cannot be viewed in isolation from other areas of the estate and must be included in any forward planning decisions, with the right expertise and experience assigned at an early stage.

Once again, to achieve optimisation goals, leaders certainly need access to the right data and insight, such as:

- What is the current condition/performance of the asset?
- What specialist expertise is required to establish compliance standards and the need for any remediation works?
- Does the asset fit with the broader estates' strategy?
- What are the legal and governance requirements that must be met?

A progressive way forward

Due to fiscal and operational pressures, estate optimisation is no longer just a priority for estate managers but also for every member of the senior management team.

It's a complex and often bewildering task that requires a new level of insight as well as a new mindset and a new skillset to ensure all decisions are fully informed so that risks are minimised, and target outcomes are maximised at all times.

There is no simple and clearly defined route to guaranteed success, as the priorities, considerations and resources of one learning environment are likely to be quite different to another. Lessons have been learned and new doors are opening, so educators are no longer confined by their own operational 'bubble'. By looking beyond conventional solutions and capitalising on insightful data as well as the right skills and experience, true estate optimisation is very much within reach for any place of education.

The ever-growing number of inspiring and practical examples of optimisation are showing just how much can be achieved. Such projects are not just helping to reassure and open eyes to new possibilities. They are also adding impetus to increasingly progressive solutions that help to instil confidence and direction for education leaders, regardless of how far they are along their estate optimisation journey.

From drain to **gain**

As this report has shown, the challenges in delivering estate optimisation are considerable. But so too are the opportunities to take decisive action that will fulfil both short and longer-term strategic objectives.

To find out how Capita's property asset optimisation experts can help you turn your land and estates from a cost centre to value generator, please **get in touch with us.**

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