



# Accounting Officer Memorandum

## Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme - Channings Wood Expansion Full Business Case

It is normal practice for accounting officers to scrutinise significant policy proposals or plans to start or vary major projects and then assess whether they measure up to the standards set out in Managing Public Money. From April 2017, the government has committed to make a summary of the key points from these assessments available to Parliament when an accounting officer has agreed an assessment of projects within the Government's Major Projects Portfolio.

### Background and context

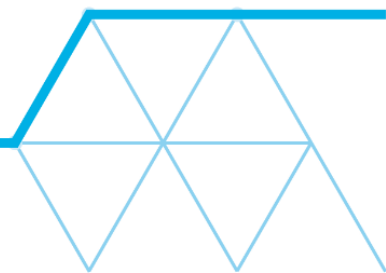
HMPPS is delivering 20k additional prison places. The Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme was initiated to ensure HMPPS provides additional, modern prison places. HMPPS are planning to deliver an increase of 2,500 prison places through the Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery programme, at a mixture of Category B and C sites. This Full Business Case (FBC) is seeking approval to deliver 494 new Category C prison places at HMP Channings Wood.

This memo provides an update on the HMPPS accounting officer responsibilities published on 22 September 2022 in relation to the Programme Business Case 2 (PBC2), including HMP Norwich approved in 2022, the Programme Business Case 3 approved in 2023 and HMP Channings Wood approved in 2024.

### Assessment against the accounting officer standards

#### Regularity

The Channings Wood FBC is assessed as regular. The Prison Act 1952 includes that the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury alter, enlarge, or rebuild any prison and build new prisons. I therefore consider that the department has the required spending powers to progress the project to its next decision point. The FBC is fully compliant with other relevant legislation and the project has obtained legal input throughout its development.



## Propriety

The Channings Wood FBC is assessed as proper. The FBC has passed our internal project and departmental governance. I am satisfied that all relevant governance and assurance procedures have been completed ahead of submission to HM Treasury and Cabinet Office for final assent. The FBC is fully compliant with the relevant legislation. The project is affordable within SR21 budgets, and has been selected based on its cost, feasibility, strategic fit and overall value for money.

## Value for Money

The investment in Channings Wood has been assessed as delivering value for money. This is based on meeting the demand for prison places, delivering 494 Category C places and delivering a design and specification that meets the operational requirements. Value for money has also been assessed through the total cost per place, assured by cost consultants (industry specialists) and assessed against key set of criteria that takes into consideration, strategic viability, deliverability and the time required to deliver the places.

## Feasibility

The HMP Channings Wood FBC is assessed as feasible. The project management arrangements, internal governance and assurance processes are already in place and embedded to control, oversee and manage the build.

## Conclusion

I have considered this assessment of the Channings Wood FBC against the four accounting officer standards of regularity, propriety, value for money, and feasibility. I am satisfied that these responsibilities are met.

I have prepared this summary to set out the key points which informed my decision. If any of these factors change materially during the lifetime of this programme, I undertake to prepare a revised summary, setting out my assessment of them.

As the accounting officer for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, I approved this memorandum on 6 March 2025.

This summary will be published on the government's website (GOV.UK). Copies will be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons, and sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General and Treasury Officer of Accounts.

A copy has also been provided to the principal accounting officer for the Ministry of Justice, who has seen my assessment and endorsed my decision on the basis of my assurance that my accounting officer responsibilities are met.



Amy Rees, HMPPS Chief Executive and Accounting Officer