Barnsley LEA

BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

New School for Darfield Colliery

Design and Access Statement



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Design and Access Statement complements the Planning Statement and Environmental Statement (ES). The Planning Statement summarises the planning policy position with regard to the proposals and the ES sets out the environmental effects arising from the proposals. The ES incorporates a Visual Impact Assessment that explains the visual changes resulting from the proposals in the context of the site and the wider landscape. The chapter in the ES is supported by a block plan indicating the important viewpoints into the site (See appendix 1).

1.2 The Design and Access Statement is intended to meet the following objectives:

(i) provide a review of the site's immediate and wider context in terms of its physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policy and guidance;
(ii) provide a rationale for the scheme's design based on objective (i);
(iii) explain and illustrate the design principles in terms of the development's layout, density, scale, landscape and visual appearance;
iv) explain how the development will meet the local authority's planning and urban design objectives; and,
v) explain how future users of the site will be able to access the development from the existing transport network and why the main access points to the site and the layout of access routes have been chosen.

2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Site Analysis

2.2 The site is the former Darfield Main Colliery, located centrally between Darfield and Wombwell, approximately five miles from Barnsley town centre. (See figure 1)

2.3 Formerly owned by British Coal Corporation it is now in BMBC's ownership and is used for recreational purposes as stated within the UDP and is largely covered with mature trees and vegetation. Little evidence remains of its former colliery use and the site is populated by dense woodland and vegetation planted in various land reclamation schemes over the last ten years.

2.4 The site's northern boundary lies adjacent to Pitt Street, a link between the two communities of Darfield and Wombwell. The eastern boundary borders a new housing development consisting of traditionally constructed two storey houses and apartments. The southern boundary runs along the River Dove and is bounded by recent planting and mature trees, and the eastern boundary dissects the current recreational ground through an open space and along one of the footpaths. There is an industrial estate over the River Dove to the south east of the site.

2.5 The site lies within the Green Belt and is designated as a Greenfield site - identified as such



Figure 1: Plan indicating proximity of surrounding settlements to the colliery site.

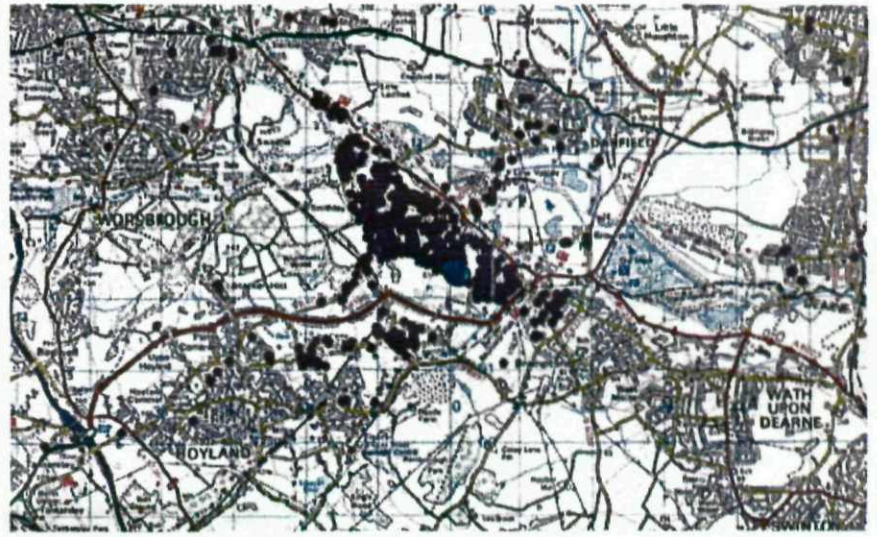


Figure 2: Barnsley and its surrounding area with the Graphical Location of Students Attending the Wombwell High School.

in the Barnsley Adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2000. The site is considered to be in a rural area outside of the Community Area Boundary. This is looked at in further detail later on within the document. Approximately a third of the site, central to the eastern half, is leased to a local resident who grazes animals there. This area is fenced off and can be accessed by vehicle from Pitt Street.

2.6 There are various footpaths from Pitt Street onto and around the site which are subject to proposed changes under the Highway Act. Consultation with LPA planners suggests there would be a preference for a new vehicular and pedestrian access point from Wombwell bypass, a road to the south of adjacent land on the southern boundary. Furthermore, it is suggested that a parent drop-off area is to be located to the south west corner of the site alongside the main access to the school. This access is to use an existing opening currently utilised by a redundant railway bridge. This bridge is of no architectural merit and is proposed to be demolished.

2.7 Generally the site slopes to the south although the area to the centre is predominantly a plateau, with embankments to the east and south.

2.8 The proposed school site itself lies upon an embankment which slopes down to the east. It is only when the embankment is viewed from the adjacent footpath outside of the site to the east that the extent of the level change is witnessed. Figure 10 identifying the section changes through points A-A of the site on page 6 of the statement helps visualise this.

2.9 **Use**

2.10 The proposed development would comprise a new secondary School (Advanced Learning Centre) to serve the Foulstone and Wombwell area of Barnsley as part of the "Building Schools for the Future" programme being promoted by the government. The new school site has already been the subject to extensive consultation with the local community as part of the Council's Education programme and has been included as a Preferred Option allocation in the Local Development Framework (LDF) DPD.

2.11 The Council acting as the Education Authority has concluded that this is the best location for the school if it is to serve the population of the area effectively. It will include sports facilities and other supporting amenities that will be available outside normal school hours to serve the wider community in order to fully fulfill the role of an Advanced Learning Centre.

2.12 A core objective of the ALC scheme is to ensure the school relates to the catchment area that it serves. Currently the Foulstone School serves students from Darfield (see Figure 3) and the Wombwell High School draws pupils almost entirely from Wombwell itself (see Figure 2). In this instance and given the nature of the proposal this is not merely children of secondary school age but adults who will use the school through its extended working day. This means that the school needs to be located in close proximity to these large sections of the community of which it serves.

2.13 An Advanced Learning Centre requires a site upwards of eight hectares. This cannot

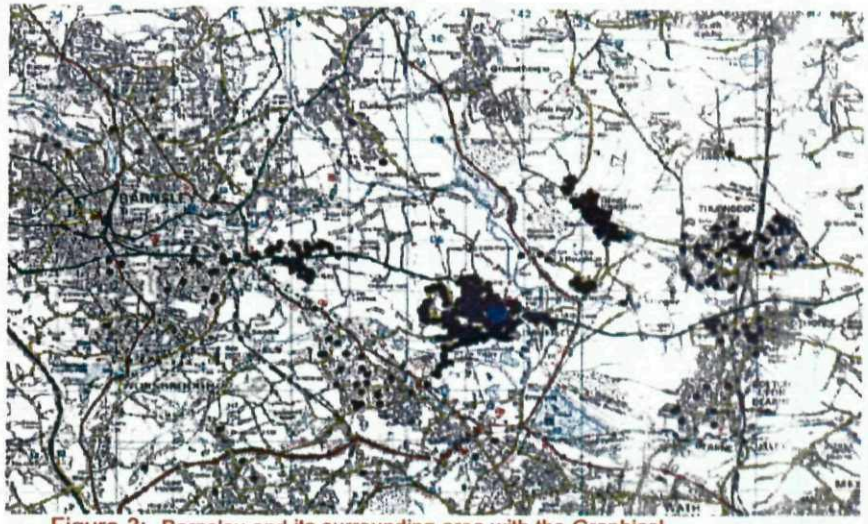


Figure 3: Barnsley and its surrounding area with the Graphical Location of Students Attending the Foulstone School.

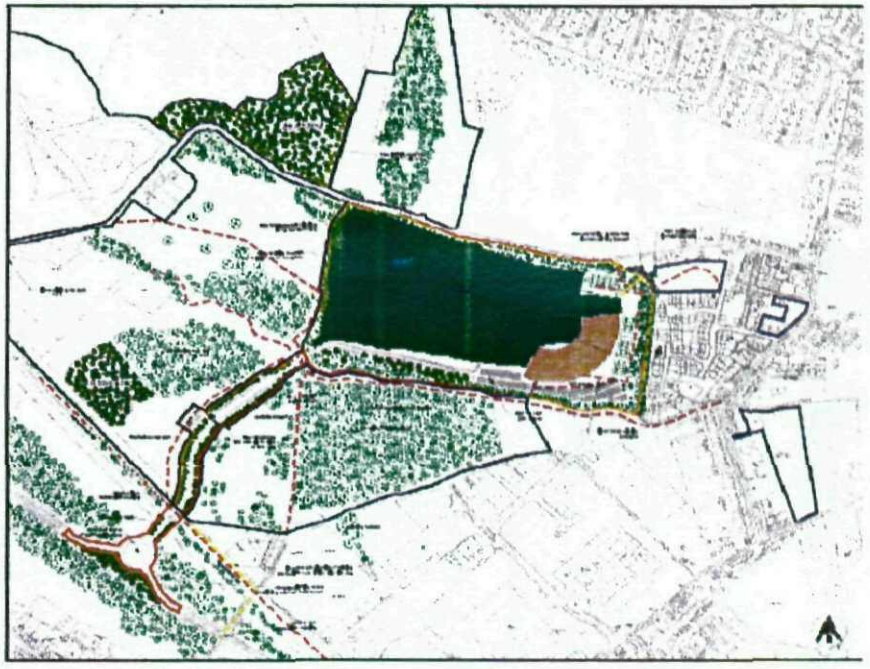


Figure 4: Site Location Plan with site outlined in red.

realistically be found within the area serving these catchments on a site lying outside the Green Belt. This was established through the preparation of the DPD.

2.14 **Amount**

2.15 The planning application that is the subject of this Design and Access Statement is in outline form but defines the upper limit of development required to accommodate all the necessary facilities to be provided in the new school. In total this will comprise an approximate built development covering about 3.6 hectares with a further 9.6 hectares for playing fields, playgrounds etc.

2.16 The total site area measures 13.2 hectares (including 10% to allow for additional facilities in all ALCs). This figure includes all of the floorspace required to accommodate the teaching and community resources that central government considers should be provided in new schools that are built as part of the "Schools for the Future" programme. Not all of these resources will be included in the first phase of the development and some of the sports accommodation will need to await the later elements of the building programme.

2.17 The floorspace required to provide such facilities is nevertheless included within the planning application so that its full effects can be considered and its impacts measured as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The level of floorspace required to accommodate the activities to be carried out at the new school is the result of the space standards recommended by the Department for Education and Science. In part these are generated by the proposed number of pupils at the school (in this instance 1800 pupils) but also by the school curriculum and community based activities to be provided.

2.18 **Layout**

2.19 The outline application shows an indicative layout and takes the form of a 'parameters plan' (Figure 4) in that it shows the area within which the buildings will be sited. This built form is proposed to be located to the east of the site, west of George Street and Stonyford Road (See Figure 5). The site lies to the south of Pitt Lane and to the north of Station Road. This configuration ensures that the buildings are well related to the existing settlement and will make a strong and positive visual statement when viewed from the settlements that it will serve. At the same time it will primarily be seen as part of the settlement.

2.20 The main building complex will therefore have a legible 'presence' between Foulstone and Wombwell that will declare its function and provide an inviting entrance for all its users and visitors. The courtyard nature of the space planning will minimise the need to provide corridors and give prominence to the collective communal space at its heart. It will also allow outward views from the main teaching block to the surrounding countryside and allow efficient and attractive internal connections to be made to the playing fields and surrounding land.

2.21 **Scale of the Proposed Buildings and the Aims of Good Urban Design.**

2.22 The size of the proposed buildings have already been described above. From an examination



Figure 5: Application Proposal - Parameters Plan.



Figure 6: Aerial Photograph of site (highlighted in red).

of the site and surrounding area there are no obvious urban design references that should influence the design of the new school. This is because there are no buildings of a similar size, footprint, bulk and scale to the proposed school in the surrounding area. Such buildings that exist beyond the catchment area are generally in employment use and not of any great architectural merit. Accordingly it is considered that the design of the new school should be most influenced by two factors. One is the topography and landscape setting of the proposed school site and the other is the important community role that it will play in the life of local residents. The topography of the site can be seen at Figure 7.

2.23 **Location of Proposal**

2.24 The application site is well located both geographically and in terms of its public transport accessibility in relation to the pupil catchment area. A key requirement of the project brief was to ensure that pupils could walk to school or conveniently access the site by public transport. The application site was chosen as it is adjacent to the settlement of Darfield and is easily accessible being near to five main bus routes. The importance of the school

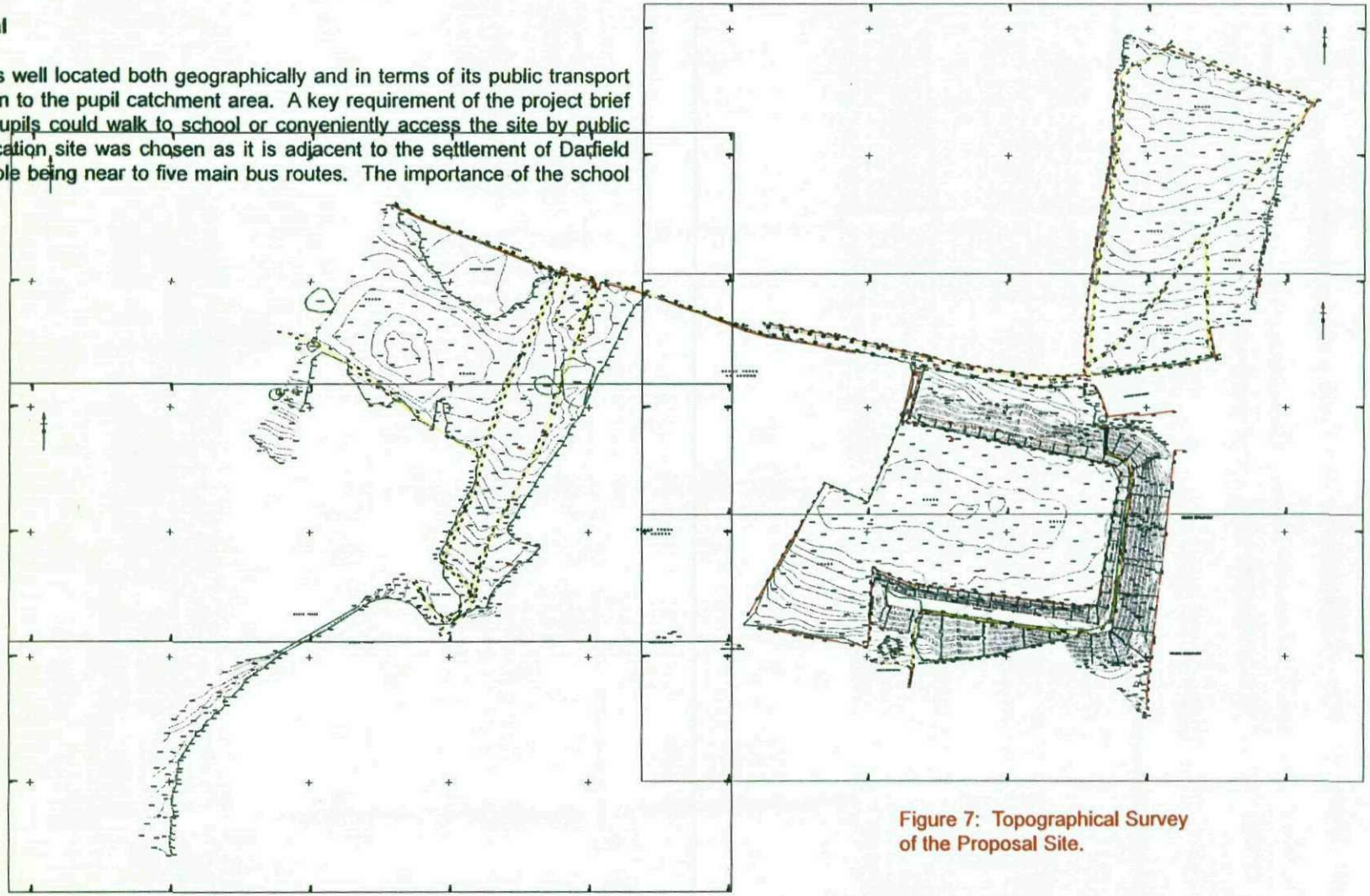


Figure 7: Topographical Survey of the Proposal Site.

building will be enhanced by its location, whilst at the same time, the development's design will respect the openness of the land.

2.25 The existing settlement of Darfield is prominent when looking from the east in particular although most buildings are two storeys in height with pitched roofs. The location of the school building has been chosen so it will be seen in views as part of the established settlement, albeit one of the most dominant structures. At the same time however the specific siting of the building will also ensure that the built form will not appear significantly harmful to the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

2.26 The community significance of the school cannot be underestimated and this provides compelling reason for seeking to integrate within the fabric of the settlement itself rather than locate it in a more peripheral location. A peripheral location would suggest a 'distance' or aloofness from the community it serves, instead of it providing a focus and a symbol of regeneration.

2.27 On the other hand there is a need for the school not to overwhelm or dominate the adjoining built development. Partly this will be achieved by siting the school buildings at the edge of the settlement. It is also intended to limit the tallest elements of the new buildings to four storeys (see Figure 4) (although these will be higher than those found in domestic buildings) with a maximum overall height of eighteen metres. This will be the maximum height of any building (including plant and machinery) above ground level, although parts of the structure may be 'dug in' to the slopes to allow circulation to take place at continuous or consistent levels.

2.28 When viewing the site from the north of Darfield (i.e. upon the hill) the built form and building bulk will not breach the tree lined skyline to the west as the colliery site lies within a valley. This positioning will help to mitigate the visual change arising from the proposals.

2.29 The drawings that form part of the application show the relationship between the proposed *school buildings and those (primarily residential in use and character) that exist around* the site. While this is a relatively prominent site it can for the reasons discussed above successfully accommodate the proposed school buildings even though they are larger than those in the surrounding area. Even if other sites could be found within the built-up area it is unlikely that they would be as flexible as that proposed because they would be more likely to be constrained visually by the scale and appearance of their surroundings.

2.30 The site is currently characterised by a uniform planting of species not all of which are native to the area although does appear sympathetic. The existing vegetation results from an engineering-led reclamation scheme carried out ion the 1980s. Much of the boundary vegetation is to remain in situ in order to preserve the established rural character while also aiming to protect the countryside and Green Belt views.

3.0 GENERAL PLANNING POLICY

3.1 The green belt allocation shown at Figure 8 (striped land) and covered in detail in policies

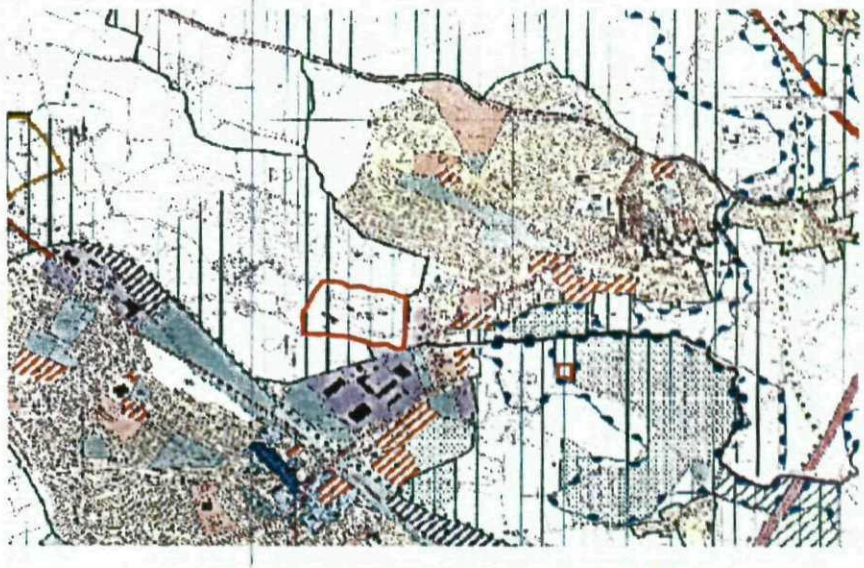


Figure 8: Barnsley Unitary Development Plan - Proposals Map Extract, 2000.

BUDP 2000 G57 and G58 expect very special circumstances to exist in order to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It has been concluded, in more detail in the Planning Statement, that "very special circumstances" do exist, sufficient to outweigh the policy objection to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

3.2 Nevertheless, every effort will be made to ensure that the impact of the school on the Green Belt is minimised. Much of the site will remain as open land for playing fields while the built form will lie towards the village boundary and will respect the hierarchy of built form from the east to the west.

3.3 This is assisted by locating the school buildings as close to each other as possible within environmental constraints to the existing roads, not projecting too far into the open land.

3.4 To the south of the site is an Employment Policy Area and to the east is an urban greenspace area.

3.5 In terms of the design and accessibility of the proposals, the most relevant policy within the Barnsley UDP (BUDP) 2000 is Policy BE6 which deals with design standards. The ALC will be of a high quality design which will have a minimal impact on the landscape. These are detailed matters that will be dealt with at reserved matters stage.

3.6 The architecture of the proposed school, the internal and external environment will be specifically designed to promote and encourage enjoyment of learning and improvement to the quality of the life during the pupils school years.

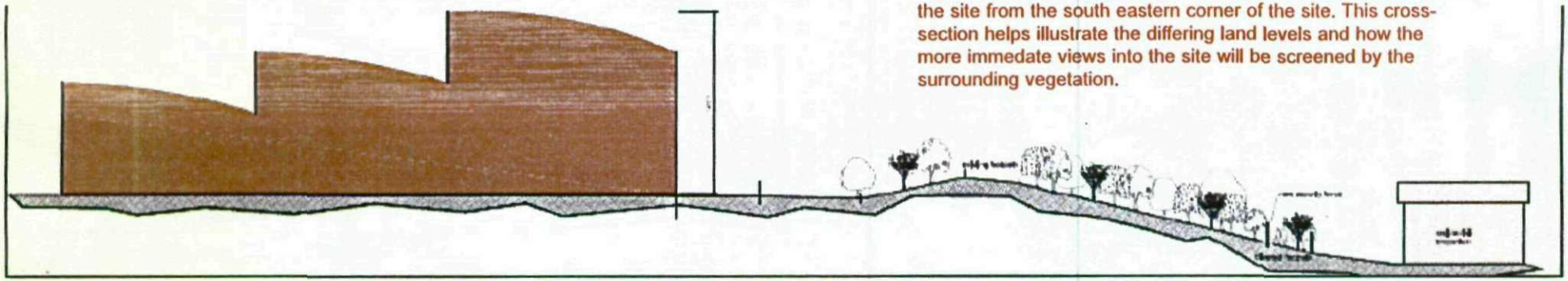
3.7 The setting of the school with a backdrop of green countryside will be a beneficial setting to encourage learning. The architecture will respect the green setting, reflecting it by choice of materials, colours, textures and form.

3.8 The design will ensure that the building sits comfortably within the landscape, reducing any harm to the openness of the land and enhancing the views of the area, without causing visual harm.



Figure 9: View from Pitt Street looking towards the site. This view indicates that the tallest parts of the proposed building would be visible, however the associatesd infrastructure (car parking etc.) would not.

Figure 10: Cross-sectional plan looking towards the north of the site from the south eastern corner of the site. This cross-section helps illustrate the differing land levels and how the more immedate views into the site will be screened by the surrounding vegetation.



SECTION A - A

3.9 **Barnsley Local Development Framework - Preferred Options October 2005**

3.10 The site is allocated as Green Belt (Policy GB1) 'Land to be mainly kept free from development.' This is part of a much wider expanse of Green Belt land spanning to the north and west.

3.11 In addition the site is allocated as 'Green space' (Policy OS1) 'Parks and open spaces, sports pitches, local natural areas and cemeteries.'. The allocation abuts the site to the south and west.

4.0 DETAILED DESIGN ISSUES

4.1 Building Design Principles

4.2 Amongst the principles adopted in terms of design, the Building Schools for the Future programme is informed by: Best Practice, Best Value, User Group Consultation and Participation in formulating the design process, Public Consultation, DDA, Consultation with Statutory Authorities, BRE Guidance, DFES Design Guidance, The UK's Sustainable Design Strategy and other local and national development strategies.

4.3 In accordance with current good practice, the authority will develop the design of the new school site so as to:

- Promote walking and cycling to schools by careful consideration of the position of new buildings, enhancement of existing footpaths and cycle paths, provide new footpaths and cycle paths where possible.
- Provide cycle sheds on all secondary school sites and adequate changing facilities. These will be informed by consultation with Highways, school transport providers, public footpaths/rights of way, the LA and other interested parties.
- Promote 'car-sharing' for staff and pupils.
- For those having to use vehicles to travel to school we will encourage the use of public transport and provide turning points and drop-off points within the school boundaries.
- Locate development within 400m of a bus stop.
- Use energy efficiency as a major driver for the design of the new building. Sustainable heating, ventilation and cooling systems will be employed.
- Adopt the Energy Hierarchy as set out in the Regional Planning Guidance (2002 revised 2004).
- Maximise the use of natural light without the negative effects of solar gain.
- Ensure an airtight construction and adequately controlled ventilation.
- Provide more than adequate insulation.



Figure 11: View from the western boundary within the site looking from north to south. This photo helps illustrate how he former colliery use is no longer evident.



Figure 12: View from Pitt Street to the north looking into the site. The mature boundary screening will help reduce the visual impact of the development however the school building will be noticeable from this vantage point

- Include unheated buffer spaces to the main building to store solar heat and reduce exposure to cold.
- Utilise advanced glazing systems.
- Adhere to BMBC's policy of using 'Biomass' boiler systems.
- Use the careful orientation of the new buildings to harness and make best use the existing landscape and renewable natural resources.
- Create maximum opportunity and accessibility for current and future generations whilst minimising the loss of natural resources.
- The new development will contribute to establishing healthy environments and diverse communities.
- Use the most up-to-date information and guidance from the BRE. Sustainability will be the deciding factor in the choice of materials and construction methods as will the embodied energy associated with the materials and the maintenance of the new building.
- Endeavour to re-use materials and topsoil already on site and give priority to low energy materials.
- Source materials locally, reducing delivery journeys and supporting the local economy. Ensure contractors do likewise by examining their supply chains.
- Use reclaimed materials where possible.
- Incorporate durable materials and products that have low impact in terms of environmental damage.
- Ensure stability of existing ground and suitability to withstand new foundations and development.
- Ensure any building management company understands the commitment to sustainability and puts measures in place to monitor environmental performance and guarantee action is taken if targets are not met.
- Design in features that protect the building and its inhabitants from extreme weather conditions and use average weather conditions to the advantage of the running of the building/s.
- Ensure service installations are easily accessible and flexible.
- Any negative impact on the existing environment by the new buildings and any re-configuration of the existing will be kept to an absolute minimum. Land previously developed will be maximised for the new development to restrict the loss of Greenfield area.
- Sustainable drainage techniques (SUDS) will be used where possible.
- Install water meters.
- Encourage the installation of: low-flush WC's, waterless urinals, low water use fittings and water efficient appliances.
- Encourage re-cycling (grey water) systems.
- Considered soft landscaping i.e. avoid plants/shrubs/trees requiring large amounts of water, water planting with recycled water, avoidance of mains supplies and sprinklers.
- Keep hard surfaced areas to a minimum in favour of porous surfaces thus slowing the rate of run-off to existing watercourses.
- Encourage natural alternatives to traditional sewage treatment.



Figure 13: View from Upperwood Road to the north of the site. This view will be one of the more prominant vantage points. Notwithstanding this however the photo accentuates the valley and how the development wouod not break the skyline.



Figure 14: View from the opening to the field beyond 104 Netherwood Road to the north west of the site. This viewpoint would indicate that the entire development would not be visible in this instance.

- The design will aim to meet and improve on standards set by Building Regulations.

The design will also consider and respond positively to existing conditions in terms of **green** space, topography, ground conditions and environment.

4.4 **Landscape Proposals**

4.5 Decisions regarding the proposed landscape design have been considered concurrently with the layout and development parameters of the proposed school and the siting of the buildings in particular. This is particularly important given the relatively open nature of the application site. Siting of the main building complex and the location of the major elements of structure planting have also been developed as part of an iterative process to establish the most appropriate design principles in their widest sense.

4.6 There will be three major activity zones within the site. These may be regarded as interrelated but complementary areas;

- the school entrance including car parking;
- the main building complex including central space and related activities; and
- the playing fields to the south.

4.7 The first two are more urban in character and relate directly to the settlement. There therefore needs to be a clear demarcation between these two 'urban zones' and the playing fields in landscape terms. This is best achieved by a strong belt of vegetation planted in the manner of established field and tree boundaries to soften the transition between the 'rural' and the 'urban'.

4.8 How the design of outside spaces will make them attractive, useful and environmentally responsible will be the task of the detailed application stage. Similarly the landscape design of the car park, internal courtyard, and play spaces will be dealt with at this later stage.

4.9 The needs of disabled or older people will be met by careful use of levels, non slip materials and the provision of resting places. The form of landscape within the 'urban' areas of the site will be of a finer and more intimate scale than the major structural elements designed to integrate the building complex within the wider landscape. All of the planting will be chosen to make it as self-maintaining as possible but the authority remains committed to ensuring that the highest standard of landscape maintenance is undertaken commensurate with the needs of the new plant material.

4.10 **Appearance**

4.11 Since the planning application is in outline only it is not possible to comment in any detail on the form and appearance of the proposed buildings. It is anticipated however that these will be carefully 'modelled' to break up their apparent mass and to give visual expression to clear, coherent scales at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Any long elevations or facades



Figure 15: View into the site taken from the footbridge to the south - accessed via Valley Road. This would be the only immeidate and un-obscured view into the site. Notwithstanding this the visual impact could be mitigated through the eventual design and from landscape screening.



Figure 16: View into the site from a footpath to the west. This footpath is to be redirected and as auch the immediate view will no longer exist as a result of its diversion to the other side of the screened raised bank.

will, where necessary, have their elements expressed in recognisable units to form a suitable 'rhythm' and avoid blandness or repetition.

4.12 The colour of the external materials to be used on the new buildings will not be determined until the detailed design stage of the project. As a generality however it is likely that the upper design elements will be lighter in colour and tone as an acknowledgement that they will be seen in most cases against the sky rather than against other buildings or the land itself. Where the lower elements will be seen in that kind of context the use of local colours, textures and materials will be more appropriate.

4.13 The appearance of the building must also be considered in terms of its setting within the wider landscape. The objective of the landscape proposals is to ensure that the new school is integrated with its landscape context while the more urban features previously mentioned are softened in order to preserve the perceived openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. This requires the mass and outline of the building to be broken up by the structure planting in mid to long views. At close quarters it should be seen as an important community facility without the need for such intensive planting.

5.0 ACCESS PRINCIPLES

5.1 Policy Approach

5.2 The policy approach in this Design and Access Statement will ultimately inform decisions that will have to be made later in the development process – for example decisions about the internal layout of the buildings that go beyond the level of information required with a planning application. The full policy background relating to these issues is set out in the Planning Statement that accompanies this application and it is not considered necessary to repeat them here, however the accessibility of the proposal is covered below.

5.3 How Access will be Achieved

5.4 Walking and cycling to schools will be encouraged by the layout and position of new buildings, enhancement of existing footpaths and cycle paths, and provision of new footpaths and cycle paths where possible. Cycle sheds will be provided on all secondary school sites together with adequate changing facilities. These will be informed by consultation with Highways, school transport providers, public footpaths/rights of way, the Local Authority and other interested parties.

5.5 Car-sharing for staff and pupils will be encouraged. For those having to use vehicles to travel to school, encouraging the use of public transport and the provision of turning points and drop-off points within the school boundaries will be made.

5.6 The main vehicular entrance will be given the greatest visibility as will access to the buildings through the strategic location of entrance areas and front doors. The main entrance will meet the requirements of the highway authority.



Figure 17: View from Venetian Crescent that lies to the north of the site. This view was suggested by the LPA and would suggest that the main school building would be noticeable above the existing boundary screening.



Figure 18: View from the recreation ground to the north of Upperwood Road. This is the highest distant vantage point whereby mucn of the development wuold be visible. Notwithstanding this however, and as per the photo appearing in Figure.13, the built form would not break the skyline due to the valley location.

5.7 The site is accessible by public transport and its use will be strongly encouraged. The site is surrounded by key vehicle routes (see Figure 15) to assist in travel to and from the site.

5.8 **Site Access**

5.9 The overall strategy which is being taken for this site is to create an accessible facility with good vehicular access whilst trying to create good pedestrian routes and provide secure, covered cycle storage facilities.

5.10 **Car Parking Provision**

5.11 The staff/parent car park offers designated disabled parking spaces/special needs spaces. The spaces will be clearly defined with yellow thermoplastic paint road markings and appropriate signage.

5.12 **Principles of the Entrance/Exit**

5.13 The entrance will be easily identifiable and will offer clear visibility to people approaching the school from both directions as recommended in BS8300:2001. The entrance will be level with the floor finish so that it will not impede the movement of wheelchairs or create a trip hazard. The main entrance will be clearly lit and well sign posted.

5.14 **Internal Circulation within the School Building**

5.15 Information will be available at the main entrance for disabled persons to obtain information about the building as defined in Approved Document M: 2004. The internal floor material will be non-slip and reasonably uniform to avoid confusion for the visually impaired.

5.16 **Toilets**

5.17 There will be a dedicated unisex toilet for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled cubicles in the separate sex toilet accommodation.

5.18 **Communication Aids**

5.19 Signage within the school building will offer clear information about the purpose and layout of the building and offer a clear sense of direction.

5.20 **Escape Strategies and Assistance**

5.21 The fire escape strategy will comply with the Approved Document B and be subject to Building Control approval. Fire alarms will emit an audible sign to warn those with



Figure 19: View taken from Venetian Crescent to the north of the site. This view was suggested by the LPAand would indicate that the tallest parts of the building would be visible, however much of the site would be obscured by the mature screening.

visual impairments. The school will have a management policy with trained staff offering assistance to disabled people during an evacuation.

5.22 **Vertical Circulation within the Building**

5.23 A lift will be in place. The position of the lift will be clearly sign posted and the lift doors will be clearly distinguishable from the adjoining wall. The size of the lift car will be a minimum of 2000mm x 1200mm as stated in BS 8300:2001. Control buttons will be located between 900mm and 1100mm from the finished floor level and have tactile buttons. In addition the lift will have an audible announcement of lift arrival and the level reached.

5.24 There will be staircases with a clear width of 1200mm and a clear level landing of 1200mm. The number of risers in a single flight of stairs will be no greater than 16 and there will be a disabled refuge at the proposed stairs.

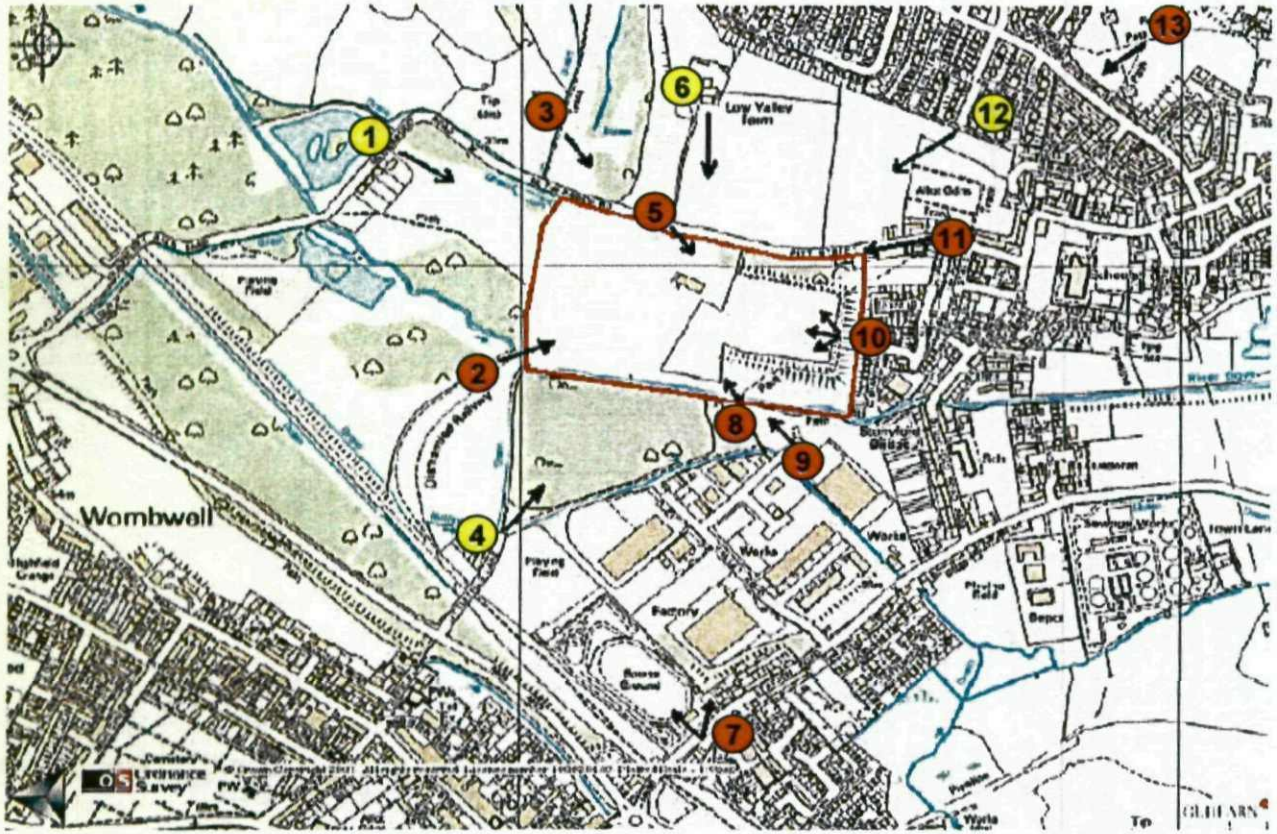
6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The proposed Advanced Learning Centre will provide accommodation which is designed and configured to modern best practice standards of accessibility and inclusivity. The new accommodation will represent a significant improvement on that provided in the two existing schools, as well as offering new cultural and educational opportunities to all sectors of the community.

6.2 The overall visual impact (supported by the Visual Impact Assessment within the EA) will be sympathetic to the open context of the site. Although the built form would generally be higher than the surrounding area, the siting will immediately adjoin the existing village boundary and the bulk will respect the hierarchy of the built form thus making a soft transition from urban to rural.

6.3 It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable upon design, access and amenity grounds.

7.0 **APPENDIX** - Viewpoint plan as taken from the Enviornmental Statement, Visual Impact Assessment chapter.



Viewpoints

1. View from rear of 104 Netherwood Road
2. View from unused railway bridge
3. View from disused tip
4. View from 67 Littlefield Lane
5. View from Low Valley Farm access
6. Views from Low Valley Farm
7. Views into and from the bridge along Station Road
8. View from bridge crossing the River Dove
9. View from Valley Road Industrial Estate
10. View from brow of raised bank into the site
11. View from Pitt Street towards the site
12. View from 49 Venetian Crescent
13. View from Recreation Ground looking into the site