Proposed New School at the Former Darfield Colliery

Planning Statement

December 2007

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Quality Standards Control

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This document must only be treated as a draft unless it is has been signed by the Originators and approved by a Business or Associate Director.

DATE	ORIGINATORS	APPROVED
December 2007	David Brown Planner	Tony Lamb Planning Director

Limitations

This document has been prepared for the stated objective and should not be used for any other purpose without the prior written authority of GL Hearn; we accept no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than for which it was commissioned.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GL Hearn were instructed by Barnsley Metropolitan Council (BMBC) in accordance with planning advice relating to the identification of sites for new Advanced Learning Centres (ALC) in several areas of Barnsley in June 2004. The scheme is part of a wider national programme of secondary school improvements – Building Schools for the Future. The aim of Building Schools for the Future is to ensure that secondary education in every part of England has facilities of 21st Century standard within 10 to 15 years from 2005-06.

1.2 This Planning Statement accompanies the third of three planning applications for new Advanced Learning Centres which have been submitted by GL Hearn on behalf of Barnsley MBC. The previous two (at Royston Lane, Carlton and Engine Lane, Shafton Two Gates) now have the benefit of outline planning permission.

2 THE PLANNING APPLICATION

2.1 The planning application is in outline form, with all matters reserved with the exception of access, the details of which are provided in the accompanying Transport Assessment. However, the application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) to ensure policy compliance. A reserved matters application with details of design will be submitted by the appointed contractor in due course. It is necessary to secure outline planning permission prior to funding from the government being made available for the project.

2.2 This supporting Planning Statement explains the process and background to the choice of the application site, and goes on to explain how the choice of site is justified in planning policy terms. Section 3 explains the educational circumstances of the choice of site and the need for a site of this size, Section 4 justifies the site selection process, Section 5 explains the conclusions drawn from the Sequential Site Search exercise. Section 6 examines the planning policy merits of the proposal, Section 7 then addresses Green Belt policies and the justification for the development, and Section 8 provides a conclusion.

2.3 Details of the documents forming and supporting this planning application are given in the covering letter. The form of the application drawing is an illustrative site plan; however in order to carry out the necessary assessments, we are required to specify the general parameters of the design. The site plan shows the area of the site where the building will be located, and the approximate location of the car parking and playing fields.

2.4 At this stage we are able to confirm that the maximum height of the buildings will be 18 metres, although many parts are not expected to reach this height.

2.5 The grant of outline planning permission is a pre-requisite for the funding for further instructions for the detailed design of the building. At this later stage reserved matters including full detail of the scheme will be submitted.

3 EDUCATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND SITE SIZE

3.1 The performance of pupils in Barnsley's secondary schools compares unfavourably with the average level throughout the UK. There is therefore an urgent need to provide existing and future pupils with facilities and conditions that will give them the greatest opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Metropolitan Borough Council have embraced Government policy under the Building Schools for the Future initiative, and are proposing the replacement of traditional secondary schools by new Advanced Learning Centres (ALC) in various locations throughout the Borough.

3.2 The proposed number and distribution of new ALCs is a response to meeting educational and community needs within financial limits. Each new ALC will provide facilities and teaching to:

- Help pupils gain a wide range of qualifications and skills;
- Provide advice and support for children; and
- Offer specialist education

3.3 The framework of secondary schools in Barnsley is currently unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. At present, there are too many surplus places. The pupils on roll at secondary schools maintained by the council by 2012 will be 11,499 with 2,164 surplus places. This is almost 16% of the total secondary school capacity. Barnsley Council is required to manage the supply of school places so that the total level of surplus capacity does not exceed 10%. The effect of current trends for some schools is for school rolls to fall a level well below the school capacity. There are also many poor school buildings which need replacing. The primary goal however is ultimately to improve school educational achievements in Barnsley.

3.4 With these objectives and policies in mind, the Council have identified that there is an urgent need for replacement of the Foulstone School, and the Wombwell High School with modern learning centre facilities. The principle is to establish a community facility that will serve the wider community which will include educational facilities for both school age and life long learning, and which in some cases will include related facilities such as libraries, health centres etc. This is in line with current Government thinking, not least to integrate efficiently the Government's income flows for the various functions of the Council.

3.5 The proposed pattern of ALCs will result in an Advanced Learning Centre in each Area Forum, thereby creating an opportunity to integrate other existing learning provisions into a single establishment. Each new ALC would provide each Area Forum with:

- 'A wide range of pathways to further education, training and employment and the flexibility to combine work-based training with learning in a centre or college.
- Integrate Youth Service provision, allowing young people early access to personal advice and support, as well as exciting and enjoyable activities.
- A full service provision, ensuring swift and easy access to a range of support services for the student and their family.
- A school offering a specialism and a subsidiary and collaborate closely with Barnsley and Dearne Valley Colleges and training providers. Together they will provide a coherent offer to parents and learners in the community.
- A range of extended provision to young people who access some or all of their daytime learning elsewhere.'

3.6 Barnsley Council are proposing to create 9 ALCs to replace the 13 secondary schools currently in the Borough. Additionally, Elmhirst School is being replaced by a separate funding programme. This is the final of the three sites which are the result of a combination of two existing schools (The Foulstone School and the Wombwell High School). The remaining 6 ALCs will be constructed on existing school sites.

3.7 Figure 1 below identifies the site in relation to the surrounding villages of Darfield and Wombwell.

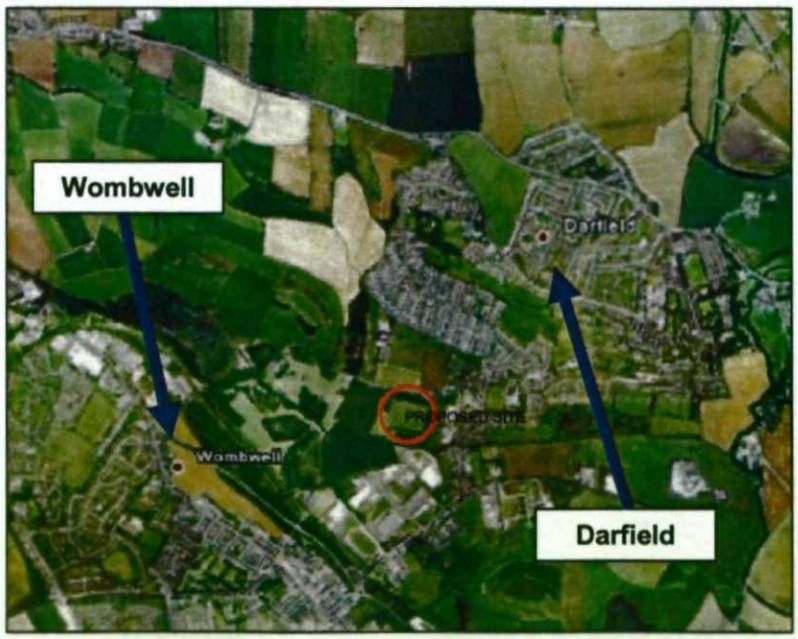


Figure 1 – Proposed school site in relation to the surrounding catchment areas

3.8 The Foulstone School draws its pupils predominantly from Darfield (See Figure 2 below), with a few travelling from surrounding areas such as Great Houghton, Thurnscoe and the south east of Barnsley.

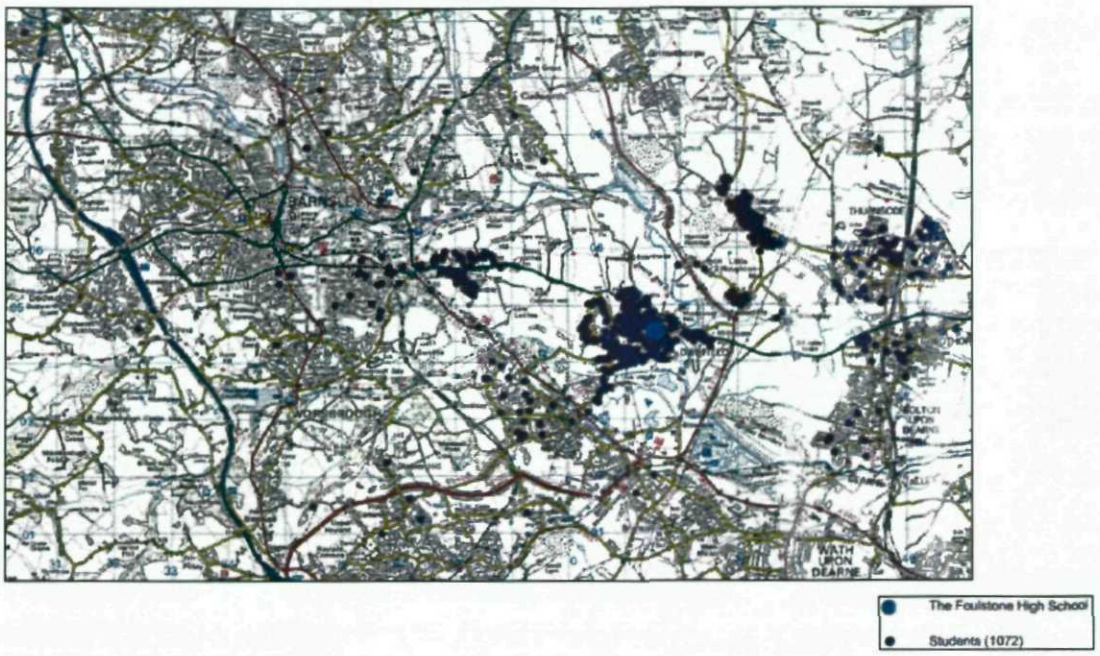


Figure 2 - Catchment Area for the Foulstone High School

3.9 The Wombwell High School draws its pupils almost entirely from Wombwell itself with some travelling in from Jump and Hemingfield. This is illustrated in Figure 3 below

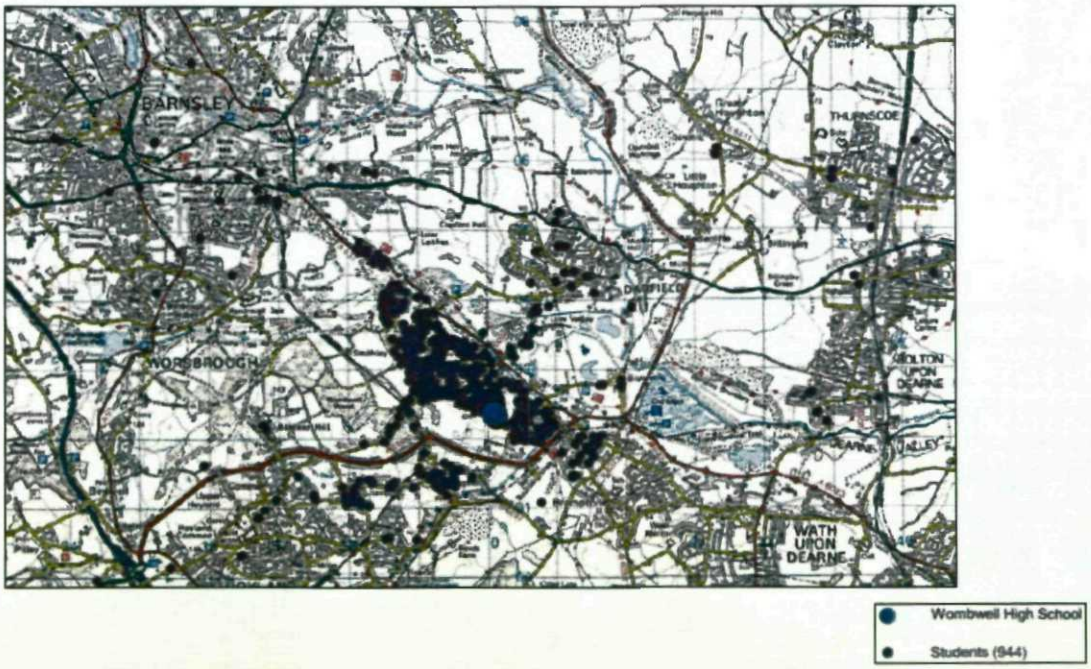


Figure 3 – Catchment Area for the Wombwell High School

3.10 The transferring primary schools for these secondary schools total four, of which three are in Wombwell itself and one is in Hemingfield. These factors have helped influence the choice of location for the new ALC, and are critical, not only in terms of ensuring the most sustainable location for transport access, but also to ensure the social and community links and groups are not lost through location of an ALC predominantly in one or other communities, or outside areas which the population perceive as part of their local area.

3.11 The school role for the combined learning centre would be approximately 1800 pupils.

3.12 A critical element of the proposed ALC is its size. Given the circumstances of replacing two schools and in order to make the replacement worthwhile a relatively large site is required. Government guidance explains that smaller sites, which may be preferable in planning terms, are not suitable. It is obviously not appropriate to provide such a facility on fragmented sites.

3.13 The Department for Education and Skills have issued Building Bulletin 98: Briefing Framework for Secondary School Projects as a guide. Interrogation of both the information contained in this document and the predicted school capacities for 11-16 year olds provided by Barnsley Education Department, has allowed for an accurate prediction of overall site size based upon Figure D3 of Building Bulletin 98.

3.14 The figures for this learning centre are as follows:

Total pupils	= 1800 pupils
Total site area	= 12 hectares + 10% = 13.2 hectares
Approx. area of playing fields, playgrounds etc.	= 9.6 hectares
Approx. built development	= 3.6 hectares

3.15 The inclusion of the additional 10% on top of the standard secondary school size prediction is to allow for the additional facilities expected in all ALC. This is a relatively new concept and Building Bulletin 98 does not include an allowance for the extended facilities which have become such an important part of these community schools.

3.16 Therefore the size of the site is critical to the functioning of the facility for its purpose, and the educational circumstances have been one of the critical factors in choosing the location, since if these are not right, the project could fail. Given the substantial Government and local funding proposed (and indeed already invested) for this project, we hope that the importance of these circumstances can be afforded sufficient weight as a material planning consideration.

4 THE SITE SELECTION PROCESS

4.1 On behalf of the Council, GL Hearn carried out a site search exercise for a suitable site in planning terms to replace the Foulstone and Wombwell High schools. The search process involved identifying sites which were of a suitable size, with reasonable availability and which were most appropriate from a planning perspective. In particular the sustainability of the sites was examined.

4.2 The site search exercise brought forward 8 sites which were then sequentially assessed using a series of specific criteria. The criteria were predominantly planning based, however it was also necessary to include matters of availability, ownership and other practical consideration which would undoubtedly affect the likelihood of the site being appropriate for the development of an ALC.

4.3 The three most appropriate sites from an educational and planning perspective were then subjected to public consultation as a Preferred Options Paper as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) – See Table 1 below. From this consultation exercise and careful examination of planning, educational and other criteria requirements, the application site has been chosen to be taken forward.

Sequence No.	Document	Date
	Issues and Options	
1	Sites for New Schools: Consultant's Search Report	January 2005
2	Education Sites: Issues and Options	October 2005
	Preferred Options	
3	Educations Sites DPD: Preferred Options	October 2006
4	Education Sites DPD: Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal.	September 2006
5	Education Sites DPD: Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal: Non Technical Summary	October 2006
6	Education Sites Background Paper: Preferred Options (Background Paper 1)	October 2006
7	Education Site Selection DPD: GL Hearn Underpinning Document (Background Paper 2)	October 2006
8	Education Sites DPD: Preferred Options First Draft	Circulated February 2007 (dated June 2007)
9	Education Sites DPD: Preferred Options Revised Draft	Circulated May 2007
10	Education Sites DPD: Submission Sustainability Appraisal	May 2007
11	Education Sites DPD: Submission Sustainability Appraisal Non Technical Summary	May 2007

Table 1 - Education Sites Development Plan Document preparation (Accurate at time of submission)

5 SEQUENTIAL SITE SEARCH EXERCISE AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5.1 Essentially the primary criteria in selecting suitable sites for ALCs were to: provide enough land to accommodate the ALC; allow students and staff to get to the ALCs by walking, cycling or bus rather than by car; and perform against a number of key sustainable development and deliverability criteria. The four step process used to sequentially assess the sites was as

follows: Step 1 – Site Prioritisation; Step 2 – Site Appraisal; Step 3 – Site Constraints; Step 4 – Development Practicalities. Further details of this process can be seen in the separate GL Hearn Site Search Reports (February 2005).

5.2 Table 2 below shows the results of this exercise which was set out in the above mentioned report from February 2005.

Step 3 - SITE CONSTRAINTS	Selected Sites							
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
a) Site access/local traffic impacts	3	5	1	3	3	5	3	5
b) Visual and landscape impacts (including impact on Green Belt openness where relevant)	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	5
c) Topography	5	5	5	5	3	5	1	5
d) Impacts on ecology and biodiversity	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5
e) Ground conditions, drainage and flooding	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	5
f) Contamination and mitigation costs	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	1
g) Afjoining land uses	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	5
h) Agricultural land classification where relevant	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
TOTAL (HIGHEST INDICATES LEAST CONSTRAINTS)	36	38	32	36	34	30	32	36

Table 2 – Table taken from '*The Foulstone & Wombwell High Schools Site Search*' report (February 2005) indicating the potential constraints of each site

5.3 The main outcome of the site search exercise revealed that:

- There are no sites within the community area specifically designated for new community facilities
- There are no sites within the built-up area of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed academy development
- The only sites capable of accommodating the proposed ALC development would be undeveloped land the majority of which lies in the Green Belt and areas of Urban Greenspace

5.4 The steps set out above resulted in 3 recommended sites (shown on the map extract at Figure 4 below) which were regarded as being sequentially preferable in relation to the criteria used for the 2005 Site Search study. The BMBC Education Officers then examined these sites with regard to their educational and operational suitability and practical availability. Having considered the content and conclusions of the GL Hearn report, the Council opted on the basis of operational needs for a location at Darfield Main Colliery which, whilst located within the Green Belt, provided good levels of public transport connections to the pupil catchment areas via five local bus routes, and also satisfied the educational requirements.

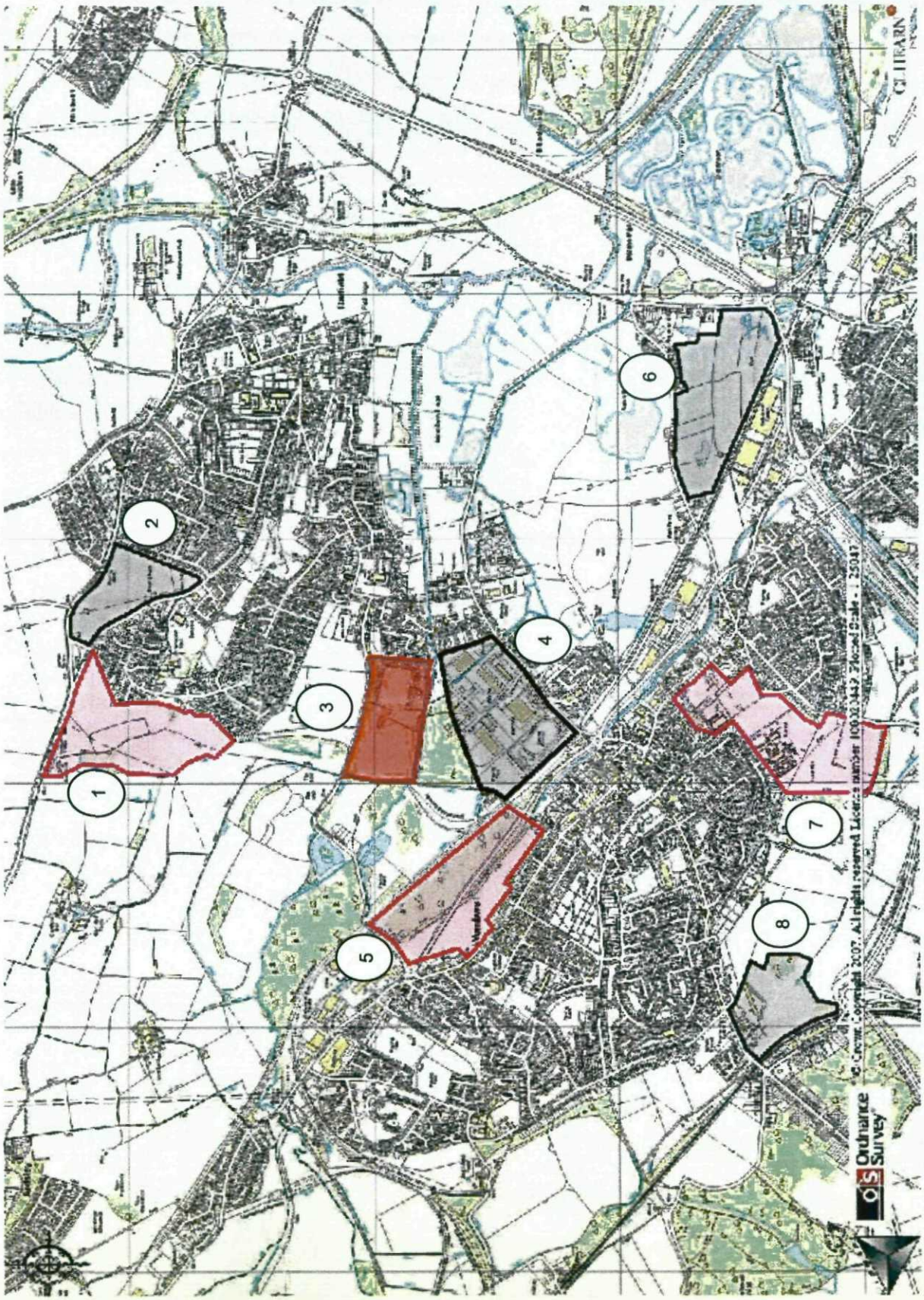


Figure 4 – Indicating the 3 recommended sites (in purple) of the proposed 8 sites and the final choice at Darfield (in red)

SITE	
1	Land west of Snape Hill - South of A635
2*	Land between Barnsley Road and Bly Road, Darfield
3	Former Darfield Main Colliery, Pitt Street, Darfield
4	Land west of Station Road including Sport Stadium, Low Valley
5	Land adjacent to Trans Pennine Trail and A633, Wombwell
6	Land south west of Broomhill, North of A6195
7	Wombwell High School
8	Wombwell Foundary, Hough Lane, Wombwell

* denotes eventual site chosen

Table 3 – Alternative Sites Assessed (See also figure 4)

5.5 Following further examination of the availability and practicality of the short listed sites, it was concluded that none satisfied the need to serve the two catchment areas comprehensively.

5.6 As a result of this process, a decision was taken to test the results upon the practicality of the sites to which it was concluded that the Darfield Colliery site was preferable as it would sufficiently serve both catchment areas suitably. This is because the site lies equidistant to both Darfield and Wombwell geographically where transport links to both settlements are sufficient to serve the day to day running and function of the school. Additionally, the built form if designed appropriately could be integrated into the built up area with little visual disruption. This was concluded and presented within the Barnsley LDF Education Sites Development Plan Document (September 2007).

6 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Under **Section 70(2)** of the Town and Country Planning Act, the development plan is the primary consideration in the determination of planning applications. In dealing with (applications for planning permission) the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. In this case the Development Plan is the Barnsley Unitary Development Plan which was adopted in December 2000 (BUDP2000), and the current draft Local Development Framework (LDF) and Preferred Options papers including Education Sites Preferred Options Paper which included consultation on this site. The LDF documents are afforded limited weight at this stage, but are nevertheless a material consideration. The Yorkshire and The Humber Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) - adopted December 2004, also applies in this instance and will also be considered in referring to the proposal.

6.2 Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk (PPS25) was published in July 2001. The aim of PPS25 is to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk. The flooding issues have been addressed within the ES however for the purposes of the Planning Statement it should be noted that the applicants (the LPA) will support any adaptation and mitigation measures that maybe required to secure planning approval.

6.3 Part (a) of policy SOC2 (Education) of the RSS states that 'Development Plans should *recognise the importance of the educational infrastructure in the recognition of promoting both* social inclusion and economic growth and regeneration.' Part (b) of the policy also states that 'Development Plans should encourage the retention and development of education and learning facilities in locations that are accessible by good public transport and in accordance with the locational criteria in policies P1 and T2.'

6.4 Part (c) of SOC2, although not directly relevant to the proposal (as it refers to more remote areas), should also be considered in this instance as it promotes the '...opportunities for the delivery of learning through ICT and should consider how the multi-use of buildings and facilities can help in this provision.' Although the site has been assessed to be easily accessible, it is argued that the need to provide ALCs throughout the region (regardless of accessibility) is still very important, particularly in areas of poor academic performance.

Site Designations

6.5 The site is designated Green Belt in the BUDP2000 and in the draft LDF. Section 5.0 sets out in detail why the very special circumstances that exist in this case.

Strategic Policy Considerations

6.6 This site has formed part of a public consultation process within the LDF process. The Education Sites Development Plan Document is part of the LDF and is a key to delivering the LDF Core Strategy Sustainable Communities Aim: "*To help create places where people want to live with convenient access to good quality local services including shops, education, health, open space, leisure, culture and countryside*".

6.7 As the Education Sites Development Plan Document progresses it gives strengthened planning policy support to the Remaking Learning initiative; in particular the reorganisation of secondary school provision through the Building Schools for the Future programme.

6.8 The proposal also complies with the strategic aims (goals) of the BUDP2000, primarily *"To revitalise communities and lessen disadvantage".*

Green Space and Recreation

6.9 Policies GS36, GS37, GS39 and GS40 highlight the Council's support for indoor and outdoor sport and outdoor recreation facilities, and also new opportunities for outdoor recreation space; this supports this proposal which will include new sport and recreation facilities. Furthermore, policy GS26 (Recreational Routeways & Networks) also applies in this instance which seeks to extend the network of public rights of way wherever possible, connecting new footpaths and bridleways to the existing system. This includes maximising the use of disused railways and routed between settlements into rural areas.

6.10 The BMBC Green Space Strategy '*Barnsley Green Spaces – Part 1: Our Strategy*' was adopted in August 2006 and is underpinned by an audit of Green Spaces across the borough. The audit identifies over 1600 Green Spaces which include 'natural and semi-natural areas' (paragraph 18) such as the former colliery site. Part 2 (*In Your Neighbourhood*) of this document is currently being prepared and will give a local assessment of green spaces for each town and village in the borough.

6.11 As part of the Green Space Strategy, each green space is given a value score based upon their benefits to; a towns identity; the character of an area; the ecology; education; cultural and heritage benefits; community and health, and; the economy. The findings of which will be presented in Part 2 of the document.

6.12 Notwithstanding this, and without the given value for the Darfield area it can be concluded that the existing quality of the green area of Darfield is relatively low and can (and will) be improved as a result of approving this development. The finer points of improving the quality and therefore the value will be addressed fully within the reserved matters application submitted at a later date.

Landscaping

6.13 Landscaping is a matter reserved for future consideration. However, the future development will include substantial planting and a full scheme of soft and hard landscaping will be provided for all parts of the site. This will be designed to complement the architectural treatment of the proposed buildings and will make a positive contribution to the local environment. The landscaping will also ensure that the building blends effectively with the environment and assist with ensuring the openness of the Green Belt is suitably protected.

6.14 The requirements set out in the BMBC Supplementary Planning Guidance for Landscaping and Tree and Hedgerows have been taken into account in the indicative layout and suggested mitigation, and further consideration will be given a detailed stage.

6.15 The site is bordered by a dense mature vegetation of varying levels of amenity value - for example the western boundary has been subject to a short term reclamation scheme in order to reduce the visual impact of the sites former industrial use. Notwithstanding this, every effort will be made to retain as many of these trees and hedgerows as possible in the proposed development. Further detail will be provided at reserved matters stage and the landscape mitigation is discussed within the ES.

Transport

6.16 Policy T2 is concerned with the additional demand generated by new development being able to be accommodated on the highway network. A full Transport Assessment is being submitted with this application, the conclusion of which is that the proposal will comply with this policy. Car parking is dealt with in policy T22 and provision on site will meet the standards.

6.17 One of the primary qualities and advantages of the chosen site is that it is extremely well served by public transport as a number of bus routes serving pupil areas pass close by the site, therefore complying with the aims of national policy PPG13, and Local Policy T14, which encourage sustainable development with good access to public transport to reduce reliance on private vehicles.

6.18 There are also, we understand, specific school bus services which will be adjusted to serve the new site, thus providing an additional sustainable, convenient and safe way for pupils to travel to school.

Community and Education Facilities

6.19 In the Community Facilities chapter of the BUDP2000, one of the objectives set out is to "Encourage the provision of community facilities in locations which will enable social needs to be met."

6.20 Policy CF1 states that community facilities will be encouraged where they meet community needs, are convenient and accessible, have adequate car parking and access arrangements, are compatible with adjoining uses and do not adversely affect residential amenity. We consider that this proposal will meet these requirements and is therefore in compliance with this policy.

6.21 *Volume 8 of the* BUDP2000 considers community facilities within the area of Darfield where the proposed ALC is to be located. Paragraph 7.3 states that new facilities will be encouraged in appropriate locations in accordance with Policy CF1.

Agricultural Land

6.22 Policy GS12 protects the best quality and most versatile agricultural land from development. This site does not fall within this category while the quality of the land itself is moderate given the former intensive use of the site. *As such the development will not conflict with this policy.*

Design and Access

6.23 Policy BE6 deals with design standards. Whilst we expect the ALC *to be of high quality* design which will have minimal impact on the landscape, the detailed design and landscaping are reserved matters which will be addressed in detail at a later stage.

6.24 A Design and Access Statement has been provided and is separately bound. The architecture of the school, its internal and external environment will be designed to promote enjoyment of learning and improvement to the quality of life during important school years. The site has strong links with the green countryside and is in a primarily green setting (with a more recent short-term landscaping programme lying to the west). The rurality of the setting will be reflected in the architecture of both the school and the external space, in choice of materials, colours, textures, and form.

6.25 The site does not lie within, nor adjoining a Conservation Area. However as much of the developable area can be viewed from outside of the site to the north – due to the low lying land, particular attention will be given to the design ensuring that the architecture will appear sympathetic to the rural character of the area while ensuring that the building bulk is minimalised to unsure for a subordinate form of development within the open context of the area.

6.26 Good design can make a major contribution to both the prevention of crime and reducing the fear of crime and must be the aim of all those involved in the development process. The new development will adopt design measures to reduce the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour, taking into account the Association of Chief Police Officers publication 'Secured by *Design – Schools', dated April 2004.* Good surveillance will be a prime consideration in the design and layout and appropriate security measures will be an integral part of the design.

6.27 A Design and Access Statement is being submitted as part of the planning application. The later, more detailed design will be accessible to the disabled in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

6.28 The matter of access for vehicles and pedestrians has been carefully considered and is detailed in the Transport Assessment. Of particular importance in this case has been the availability of sustainable transport choice for staff, pupils and visitors, and one of the key considerations behind the choice of this site has been its proximity to five local bus routes that pass to the eastern side of the site running between Darfield and Wombwell. The centre will also operate a dedicated bus service to transport pupils from key feeder areas. Accordingly attractive local access to encourage use of public transport will be a feature of the detailed design.

7 GREEN BELT AND VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

7.1 The application site is located within Green Belt. The proposal constitutes development within the Green Belt which is "inappropriate" in the context of national policies. It is consequently necessary to show that there are special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the basic policy presumptions to grant such inappropriate development.

7.2 More detailed local policy guidance on development in the Green Belt is given in the BUDP2000. Policies GS7 and GS8 in particular reiterate that very special circumstances must exist to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

7.3 PPG2 contains clear national guidance with a Green Belt and more specifically development within them. It is clear that this proposal would be a departure from the Development Plan, although the proposal for an ALC at this location has been pursued as far as is possible through the LDF process to date, which demonstrates the support for the improvements to education provision through planning policy, and in the LDF process, which will eventually supersede the BUDP2000.

7.4 It is also necessary to consider the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt in this location, and to conclude that it would not detract from that openness, or if it does detract from the openness, that such adverse effect is outweighed by the overriding need.

7.5 It is clear from this document that there is:-

i) An urgent need to provide improved educational facilities, within a community wide context.

ii) That the selected site is eminently suitable for the purpose.

iii) That there is no other site outside the Green Belt which has proved genuinely suitable in operational and physical terms for the proposed use.

7.6 Accordingly we have concluded that there are "very special circumstances" in this case sufficient to outweigh the basic policy objection to this otherwise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

7.7 Notwithstanding this view, there is still a clear need to minimise any impact the ALC will have upon the Green Belt, and in this regard it should be noted that much of the site will be open land for playing fields – particularly to the north and west of the site. The school buildings will be located as close as is possible within environmental constraints to the existing small settlement of building to Darfield.

7.8 The proposed arrangement of the site will ensure that the proposal has minimum visual impact between the transition of the built up area and immediate countryside and Green Belt. Thus the proposal achieves a successful balance of allowing the ALC in the optimum educational position for both achieving maximum capacity for the catchment area while minimising the visual intrusion of the development by abutting the school up to the village boundary.

7.9 If it is considered that the openness will be materially adversely affected by the proposal and the visual appropriateness of the proposal is unacceptable on policy grounds, then it is the applicant's view that the overriding need for this proposal on this particular site is such that it would outweigh the adverse effect on the openness and visual amenity and that planning permission should be granted.

7.10 For the above reasons, it is considered that there are "very special circumstances" in this case sufficient to outweigh the basic policy presumption against such development in this Green Belt location, and that accordingly planning permission should be granted for development of an Advanced Learning Centre as proposed.

7.11 The Darfield Colliery site will provide one of the final building blocks in Barnsley's educational facilities review and seeks to ensure that secondary education within the district will meet the national standards within the next 10 to 15 years.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The proposal for an Advanced Learning Centre in this location has been given thorough consideration for educational and planning aspects prior to the choice of this site at the former Darfield Colliery. Possible alternatives, particularly those in more appropriately designated

land have been carefully considered in making the site choice and have been carefully scrutinised and thrown out under the preferred options for the LDF.

8.2 The site is within the Green Belt as designated in the BUDP2000. However, we consider firstly that very special circumstances exist to warrant the setting aside of Green Belt policy to allow this development, which is part of a programme of educational regeneration of national importance, and secondly, that the proposal will not severely compromise the openness, purpose, effect and visual amenity of the Green Belt in this location.

8.3 We hope that the unique circumstances, accompanied by a comprehensive site search exercise, and the support of the BMBC Planning Department through the LDF process, will ensure that permission is granted for this development, which will improve education for the many pupils living in the local community.