Planning Statement

On behalf of:
Aldi Stores Limited

In respect of:
Land at Goldthorpe Industrial Estate
Commercial Road
Goldthorpe
Barnsley

Date:
September 2007

Reference:
AC/AC/847307/RPT001ac

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Executive Summary

The application proposes the construction of a regional office and distribution centre (Class B1 and B8) of 79,518 sq m on this site. The development will also include the provision of ancillary facilities including a service station and refuse area, the formation of a new access and car park, lorry parking, associated ground works and extensive landscaping.

The proposal fully accords with the Government's key theme, as set out in PPS1, of contributing to sustainable economic development and supporting existing communities by providing good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community. This is particularly pertinent in Goldthorpe which sits within a EU Objective 1 funding area, the Dearne Valley Development Zone and the South Yorkshire Housing Market Renewal Area; all initiatives are a result of the fatal decline in the coal mining industry which was experienced by the area in the 1980's. As a result Goldthorpe falls within the top 8% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England, with unemployment rates significantly higher than the national average. Long term unemployment, low skill levels and lack of mobility are other key features of the local population.

The investment by Aldi into this area represents a total of £25 million in terms of build costs and over £5 million per year in subsequent payroll and local spend, this will increase further as the region grows. In direct terms it will create 250 jobs when both phases of the development are complete, the majority of which will come from the local area. These jobs will for the most part be suitable for those with little or no qualifications and training will be provided. Other key barriers to work such as travel and childcare can also be addressed by this proposal. Indirectly, the centre will serve a network of stores throughout Yorkshire, some existing and some proposed, each of which will employ approximately 8 staff.

The ability to service stores from a Yorkshire regional office and distribution centre, rather than Darlington, as is currently the case, has clear net gains in terms of vehicle mileage rates and resultant emissions. Aldi undertook a number of extensive site searches during a 4-5 year period which identified Goldthorpe as the only suitable and available within the sub-region.

The eastern part of the site, (52%) is allocated as an Employment Policy Area in the adopted Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (2000) and the proposal fully accords with policy in this respect. The western part of the site, occupying 11.86 ha (48%) falls within the Green Belt. In built development terms, 42% will sit within green belt. In this case it is clear that any harm arising as a result of this development, which in PPG2 terms, is classed as 'inappropriate' is clearly outweighed by other considerations, namely the socio-economic effects arising from the development, as outlined above. In addition the development would have potential positive effects including the creation of a distinct edge to the green belt, the enhancement of the ecological value of the green belt in this location and an improvement to the quality and overall setting of a public footpath. Harm arising from the development in terms of visual and landscape impact is mitigated by an extensive landscaping scheme.

For the reasons outlined in this statement, it is considered that the proposal complies fully

with all relevant local, strategic and national planning policy and all other material planning considerations. As such, it is considered that planning permission should be granted for the proposed development of a regional office and distribution centre on this site.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in conjunction with Aldi Stores Limited's proposals to construct a 79,518 sq m regional office and distribution centre (Class B1 and B8) on a 24.6 hectare site adjacent to the Goldthorpe Industrial Estate, off Commercial Road in Goldthorpe, Barnsley. The development will also include the provision of ancillary facilities including a service station and refuse area, the formation of a new access and car park, lorry parking, associated ground works and extensive landscaping.

1.2 This statement provides a detailed review of the development proposed, the planning history of the site, a review of relevant national, regional and local planning policy guidance and also an assessment of the relevant planning issues.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY

Site Description

2.1 Goldthorpe is a small town located in the western fringe of the Dearne Valley, an area of rural and urban settlements encompassing the towns of Thurnscoe, Goldthorpe, Bolton-on-Dearne and the surrounding countryside. The Dearne Valley is located between Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham in South Yorkshire.

2.2 The Dearne Valley is located within the South Yorkshire European Union (EU) Objective 1 Funding Area where significant EU, Government and private sector investment is being targeted in order to promote the regeneration of South Yorkshire's economy. The Dearne Valley is also located within the catchment area of Transform South Yorkshire, a 'Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Area' and forms part of the Dearne Valley Development Zone which is identified as a regionally significant location where regeneration should be focussed and investment in economic, housing, social and transport infrastructure should be targeted.

2.3 The Regional Development Agency, has identified the Dearne Valley as an area for Renaissance Market Towns Initiatives. Goldthorpe is located within this identified area and has been selected as a key area for the development of a masterplan and feasibility study for economic and social regeneration. The consultants undertaking the masterplan work are aware of Aldi's proposals and are supportive of the significant economic benefits that would be realised.

2.4 The proposed development site is a 24.6 hectare plot of land located adjacent to the western boundary of the existing built settlement of Goldthorpe. The site is directly bordered by the existing Goldthorpe industrial estate to the east which comprises numerous commercial buildings of varying size, design and materials. The site is also bordered by a school and open fields to the south, by residential properties to the south east and by open green belt land to the west and northwest. The site is currently undeveloped and is relatively flat. There are no hedges or field boundaries within the site and only two trees of any significance. There is very little vegetation along the western boundary of the industrial estate to screen this site from the wider area. An open land drain runs from east to west across the northern part of the site.

2.5 Goldthorpe is located off the A635 which runs between the M1 and A1(M) and links Barnsley in the west with Doncaster to the east. Junction 36 of the M1 is located approximately 9 miles to the west via the A635 Barnsley Road and the A6195 Dearne Valley Parkway which provides a bypass for the village of Goldthorpe. Junction 37 of the A1(M) is located approximately 4 miles east along the A635.

2.6 Access to the Goldthorpe industrial estate is currently via Commercial Road which links Goldthorpe village to the east with the A635, Barnsley Road to the west via Dudley Drive which is located to the north of the site.

2.7 The area is well served by public transport and there are 4 bus stops within the vicinity of the site. Bus stops to the north east of the industrial estate provide hourly connections to Mexborough and Doncaster and bus stops to the south of the site provide half hourly services to Barnsley, Mexborough, Manvers and Rotherham. Further bus services depart from the centre of Goldthorpe providing frequent services to both the local and surrounding areas.

2.8 Goldthorpe train station is located approximately 1.7km from the site and provides hourly connections to Sheffield, Rotherham, Leeds and other intermediate stations.

2.9 An adopted public right of way (Dearne 15) currently runs through the centre of the site, linking Carr Field Lane in the south east with Barnsley Road (A635) to the north west.

2.10 The area of land to the north and west of the site forms part of a larger agricultural holding. A reserved access strip to the freeholder of this land passes through the north of the application site. Whilst this access does not exist at present, the reserved access strip will be maintained as part of the proposed development.

2.11 The eastern part of the application site, occupying 12.65ha (52%) is allocated as an Employment Policy Area in the adopted Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (2000), whilst the western part of the application site occupying 11.86 ha (48%) falls within the green belt. 58% of the proposed built development will be located within the Employment Policy Area and 42% within the green belt.

Planning History

2.12 The history of this site both in terms of planning applications and the evolution of the existing Barnsley UDP is of significance to the current proposal. Historically, planning permission has been granted for employment uses within this area and a large area of land has also been removed from the green belt and reallocated for employment purposes. Very special circumstances were demonstrated and accepted as to why these proposals should be allowed and these are outlined in further detail below.

<u>Planning Applications</u>

2.13 In 1996, conditional outline planning consent was granted for an extension to the Goldthorpe Industrial Estate, located off Commercial Road, in Goldthorpe (95/1122/DE). This involved two areas of land to the west and northwest of the existing industrial estate and incorporated an area of greenbelt land. In determining this application, the Council accepted that very special circumstances existed as to why the proposed development should be allowed within this green belt location. Unfortunately, Barnsley MBC are unable to locate this planning file and therefore it is not possible to ascertain the exact nature of these very special circumstances, however the extension to the industrial estate was considered to be acceptable in this green belt location and as such a precedent for such development has previously

been set.

2.14 An associated application for the formation of a new access road to the Goldthorpe Industrial estate at Bolton House Farm, Barnsley Road, Goldthorpe (95/1264/DE) was also approved in 1996. Whilst the application site was located within the green belt at the time of the application, it was proposed that this site be allocated for employment purposes in the Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan (1994) which had reached an advanced stage. The Council considered that the social and economic regeneration that could be facilitated by the formation of the new access road, along with the need and available funding for the road constituted very special circumstances and was sufficient to outweigh any potential harm that may be caused to the green belt. They also considered that the reallocation of the site through the UDP review carried significant weight and consent for the development was granted.

Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2000)

2.15 As part of the production of their Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2000), Barnsley MBC proposed to reallocate a 17.8ha area of land adjacent to the western boundary of the existing Goldthorpe industrial estate as employment land along with a further 4.1ha of land to the south. This commercial development also required a new access road from the Dearne Valley Link Road roundabout to link into the existing industrial estate road and allow industrial traffic to avoid residential areas of Highgate. Approximately 8ha of the land to the west of the industrial estate was allocated as green belt.

2.16 The Council's justification for the reallocation of this green belt land was the 'regeneration strategy for the area, the proposed improvements in accessibility, the desirability of providing an access direct from the Dearne Towns link road and the potential need for development land near the search area for a proposed aerodrome'.

2.17 No objections were received to these reallocations.

2.18 The Council also proposed that an additional 6.3ha of land at Bolton House Farm, to the north of the existing industrial estate should also be reallocated from 'Land to Remain Undeveloped' to land suitable for employment purposes. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) objected to reference being made to the development potential of this site and considered that its existing allocation should remain.

2.19 In his 'Report on the Objections to the Plan', the Planning Inspector raised no objections to the proposed extensions to the Goldthorpe Industrial Estate and concluded that the plan should be modified in accordance with the changes proposed by the Council and as such, these areas of land were reallocated for employment purposes in the Barnsley UDP, which was adopted in 2000.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Background

3.1 With over 7000 stores across the world, including 339 in the UK, Aldi is an international leader in grocery retailing. 8 regional office and distribution centres located throughout the UK, currently supply Aldi's 339 national stores on a daily basis. These regional office and distribution centres receive goods from a range of suppliers with approximately 65% of these goods coming from the UK and the rest from Europe.

3.2 As part of their long term plan to establish 1,500 stores throughout the UK, Aldi has identified the Yorkshire region as a defined geographical area in which to locate one of its planned network of regional office and distribution centres. At present, 33 existing Aldi stores located within the Yorkshire region are managed and serviced by a regional centre based in Darlington which also covers numerous stores in the North East and the Lake District areas. Ultimately it is anticipated that there will be 80-100 stores in the Yorkshire region. Clearly the distribution network which exists at present is insufficient to service even the existing stores in an economic and sustainable way. As such, Aldi have identified a need to locate a regional facility within the Yorkshire area in order to efficiently service this region and propose to divide the area served by the Darlington based centre into two, creating a new regional office and distribution centre based in Goldthorpe. The background to the identification of Goldthorpe as a location is examined in more detail below.

Site Identification

Area of Search

3.3 In the first instance, CACI, a marketing and research company were commissioned by Aldi to undertake detailed site research in order to identify the optimum locations in which to site proposed regional office and distribution centres throughout the UK. As part of this research, CACI considered the location of Aldi's existing stores and predicted store openings throughout the UK, along with the potential catchment area that the regional office and distribution centres could serve (approximately 80 stores and 30,000 residents per centre). The UK was then divided into 17 sub regions, each of which would be ideally served by an individual regional office and distribution centre. In terms of Yorkshire the sub regional area was identified as encompassing parts of South, West and East Yorkshire along with parts of Lincolnshire. This sub region is identified on the locations and catchments plan included at Appendix 6.

3.4 CACI then considered the optimum location within this sub region in which to site the proposed regional office and distribution centre. Again, the location of Aldi's 33 existing stores and up to 67 predicted store openings were considered along with the potential catchment area that the regional office and distribution centre could serve. The centre of the region, encompassing the Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster

areas and the Dearne Valley was identified as the preferred area of search for a suitable site to accommodate the regional office and distribution centre for a number of reasons.

- The facility would need to be located in the centre of the sub region rather than on the periphery, in order not to impact on the operation of other Aldi distribution centres and compromise the purpose of the identified sub regional boundaries.
- A distribution centre located close to the boundary would also be remote from large parts of the region.
- The centre of the region is considered to be the logistically optimum position for the distribution centre to be located as this is where the majority of the primary population centres are located, it is also closer to most of the existing and proposed stores and the established motorway network.
- It is more environmentally sensible to locate the distribution centre within the centre of the region, close to the existing motorway network as this is a more sustainable location and will reduce travel distances for HGV's and other commercial vehicles. This is also the most cost effective solution.
- Given the high and sustained unemployment rates which prevail within the Dearne Valley area (as outlined in section 5 of this statement), there is a suitable and available supply of labour within this area.

3.5 In taking these factors into account, the east of the region was discounted from the detailed area of search as it would not be sustainable or economically viable. Sites within the south of the region were also considered, where only 1 suitable and available site was identified (Dinnington), however Aldi's bespoke regional office and distribution centre prototype could not be accommodated on this L shaped site. The peripheral areas of the region were also discounted from the detailed area of search as they would be remote from the majority of the region and would affect operations within bordering sub regions.

3.6 Having regard to the above factors, the optimum location for a distribution centre to be located within this sub region in terms of sustainability and travel distances was identified to be the Rotherham/Doncaster area, encompassing the Dearne Valley and the surrounding M1, A1(M) and M18 motorway network.

Distribution Centre Requirements

3.7 Having identified an area of search, the primary factor in the search for an appropriate site in Yorkshire was the specific requirements of Aldi's distribution system. The logistics of an Aldi distribution centre are very specific, with efficiency and speed being the primary factors. Due to their specific and unique requirements, Aldi have therefore developed a prototype design for their regional office and distribution centres in order to ensure that they operate with maximum efficiency. The distribution centre will primarily deal with food and convenience goods and a fast turnaround is essential in order that fresh produce can be sorted and delivered to

Aldi's customers in the stores. The majority of goods pass through the distribution centre within 2-3 days and some goods pass through within a matter of hours. In summary the drivers unload produce from HGV's into allocated lanes within the allocated 'goods in' area. These goods are then sorted and categorised into ambient, chilled and frozen produce by warehouse staff and are moved into dispatch lanes allocated to individual Aldi stores within the 'goods out' area of the centre. Goods are then transported from the distribution centre to the Aldi stores in three shifts throughout the day. This need to ensure a free flowing movement of goods through the centre, coupled with the number of stores to be served and the number of lines to be sold in each store, is what has essentially dictated the size and layout of the building required to serve existing and proposed stores within the region.

3.8 In particular, all goods within the distribution centre are stored at ground level as stacking goods would be both labour and time intensive, particularly given the rapid turn around of produce. Although this arrangement is 'space hungry' it has the advantage, in this location, of resulting in a low level building which is much less intrusive in terms of massing than many other distribution centres in the surrounding area. This is an important factor in this partly green belt location. Nevertheless, this requirement for a large footprint building means that only sites above a certain size could be considered as part of any site identification exercise

3.9 Another factor is that Aldi will only purchase freehold sites where possible, in order to provide secure employment for staff and to ensure that employees have long term and well paid employment. In addition a freehold site provides long term security and control for the Company which is essential in terms of the amount of investment each regional office and distribution centre represents.

3.10 Within the context of these requirements, Aldi's property consultants Harris Keane were commissioned in 2004 to consider all available large sites located within the identified search area which met with Aldi's requirements on freehold and had the physical capability to accommodate their bespoke distribution centre layout. Harris Keane completed 4 separate and detailed searches over the period 2004 to 2007 and as part of this research, circulars were issued and Agents, Landowners, developers, local authorities and regional inward investment groups were contacted in order to ensure that all suitable opportunities were identified. The area of more detailed search is identified on the plan included at Appendix 7. Harris Keane were helped particularly in their search by Renaissance South Yorkshire.

3.11 Following the first search, Red House Interchange in Doncaster was identified as a suitable site on which Aldi could locate their regional office and distribution centre. However, they lost this site to B&Q who took out a lease on 93,000sqm followed by ASDA who subsequently occupied the remaining land.

3.12 A second search was carried out in 2004 and the Houghton Main site at Grimethorpe was identified as a suitable site on which to locate this facility. Aldi made an offer on this site, however they lost out to Prologis who have since built speculative units

which are not suitable to meet Aldi's specific requirements.

3.13 The sites which were considered as part of these extensive searches are detailed at Appendix 2. For a wide range of reasons, which are also set out in this appendix, all of these sites were discounted. As such, it was concluded that there are no other available sites within the area of search that Aldi can purchase freehold with no insurmountable planning issues and which are of the necessary size.

3.14 Following these detailed investigations, a third search was undertaken in March 2006 and the application site at Goldthorpe was identified as the only available and suitable location within the sub region that would be capable of accommodating the proposed distribution centre. This site lies within the centre of the preferred area of search, it is located on the edge of an existing urban centre and is close to existing public and private transport links to both the immediate and wider area. Other retailers are also taking up a lot of space within this sub area and therefore it is not unusual that this area has been identified as the optimum location for Aldi to locate a distribution centre of this size. Whilst part of this site is located within the green belt, there are no suitable, large sites within the identified catchment area and no suitable alternative sites to Goldthorpe outside of the green belt.

3.15 An updated search of the Doncaster, Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and North Midlands area was completed in September 2007 which confirmed that there are still no further available sites suitable to meet Aldi's requirements. The responses received in response to this search are included within Appendix 2.

3.16 This view is supported by the South Yorkshire Land and Property Study undertaken by GVA Grimley in February 2007 which identified 47 non-constrained sites within South Yorkshire. Of these sites, only 4 were over 20 hectares in size; these were West Moor Park in Doncaster, Manvers Brookfields Park in Rotherham, Waverley in Rotherham/Sheffield and Park Springs in Grimethorpe. These sites were discounted for a variety of reasons, as set out in Appendix 2. This view is further confirmed in the emerging Renaissance South Yorkshire commissioned report by Crossland Otter Hunt surveyors (Appendix 4) which establishes that there are currently no alternative or more suitable freehold sites available to accommodate the proposed development in the Barnsley area.

The Proposed Development

3.17 The application proposes the construction of a regional office and distribution centre (Class B1 and B8) on this site. The development will also include the provision of ancillary facilities including a service station and refuse area, the formation of a new access and car park, lorry parking, associated ground works and extensive landscaping.

3.18 Full details regarding the height, design and massing are contained within the supporting Design and Access Statement. The key points to note however are that

the main office and distribution centre will be a low level building, it will occupy the central part of the site and it will comprise a single storey building with a shallow pitched roof. The accompanying Landscape Statement concludes that, with the mitigation measures proposed, the overall visual impact of the proposed development will be minor adverse.

3.19 The proposed scheme will be developed in two phases. The initial phase will provide 55,128 sq m, approximately 67% of the total planned floorspace. The remainder of the floorspace will be constructed at a later date when the number of stores and sales volume in the region reaches the necessary level. At this point in time Aldi are unable to confirm an estimated date for Phase 2, as this is dependant upon their development programme and changes in distribution practices. However it is fair to say that Aldi are currently in the process of extending 3 distribution centres around the country due to continued growth and they anticipate that both phases will ultimately be necessary. Nevertheless it was felt that both phases should form part of this current submission in order to show how ultimately the massing and scale of the building will sit within the site and in order that its impact upon landscape, the adjacent green belt and adjacent properties could be properly assessed. Clearly Aldi do not want to invest a large amount of money in building phase 1 if phase 2 could not, for some reason be delivered; certainty is needed at the outset.

3.20 Both phases of the distribution centre will occupy 79,518sqm in total, 58,984sqm of which will form the ambient distribution area and 18,311sqm will form the chilled area. The northern elevation of the building will provide 31 unloading bays for 'Goods in' and the western elevation of the building and will contain 30 loading bays for 'Goods out', an additional 15 dock levellers will be provided along the western elevation to serve the chilled area. The development forming phase 1 and 2 is clearly identified on the submitted plans.

3.21 In phase 1, the refuse area is located on the southern elevation of the building in the angle of the ambient warehouse and the chilled warehouse. This area will eventually become part of the chilled area in phase 2 and as such, it will be necessary to relocate the refuse area further to the east as part of phase 2. The location of the refuse area in phases 1 and 2 is clearly illustrated on the submitted plans.

3.22 The western boundary of the site abuts the wider green belt and as such, extensive screening will be provided along this boundary, in order to minimise any impact of the development upon the green belt. Therefore, the car parking and landscaping area will be located to the west of the site with the main buildings focussed to the east in order to provide separation and extensive screening between the site boundary and the distribution centre. The office block therefore has to be located on the western elevation of the building, close to the main entrance into the site and the car parking area. As such, phase 2 has to be located to the east due to the locational requirements of the office, landscaping and car parking as once these elements have been constructed, it would not be possible to relocate them. This layout also ensures the minimum impact upon the surrounding green belt land. The various options

which were considered for the site layout are examined in detail in the accompanying Design & Access Statement and key constraints affecting the site, such as keeping the beck clear for maintenance reasons are also summarised.

3.23 The ancillary office accommodation will be housed in a 2 storey building, abutting the north western corner of the main ambient area, it will have a ground floor area of 1,798sqm, with a gross floor area of 3,596sqm comprising office space, technical plant rooms and staff facilities.

3.24 The site is partially located within the green belt and therefore landscaping will form an important and integral part of this scheme. Naturalistic planting screens and mounds will be created along the western and northern boundaries of the site in order to screen the development and create a definitive green edge to the green belt. Ground level 'cut' will be used at the southern end of the site to sit the distribution centre within the landscape, thereby further integrating it with the landscape and reducing any visual impact. Planting will include native deciduous and occasional evergreen species with shrubs and hedging to provide additional density, the proposed vegetation will maximise the wildlife value of the landscape. Further details regarding the proposed landscape treatment of the site are contained within the Landscape Assessment.

3.25 Vehicular access to the distribution centre will be provided at the junction of Dudley Drive and Commercial Road to the north of the site. The junction will be improved to include a right turn from Dudley Drive into the vehicular access in to the site, this will be facilitated by a right turn ghost island.

3.26 A car park for staff and visitors will be located in the north western corner of the site, adjacent to the office block. This will provide 161 parking spaces, 8 of which will be allocated for disabled users. A cycle stand (25sqm) to accommodate 12 cycles will also be provided in this area.

3.27 46 lorry parking spaces will be provided as part of phase I, 24 of these will be for goods in and 22 for goods out and the chilled warehouse. As part of phase II, the total number of lorry parking spaces will increase to 58.

3.28 A small service station providing an open lorry wash and fuel station will also be located in the south western corner of the site, this will be for the use of Aldi vehicles only.

3.29 In terms of public transport provision, the area is well served by public transport and there are 4 bus stops within the vicinity of the site. Bus stops to the northeast of the industrial estate provide hourly connections to Mexborough and Doncaster and bus stops to the south of the site provide half hourly services to Barnsley, Mexborough, Manvers and Rotherham. Further bus services depart from the centre of Goldthorpe providing frequent services to both the local and surrounding areas. Goldthorpe rail station is also located approximately 1.7km from the site and provides hourly

connections to Sheffield, Rotherham, Leeds and other intermediate stations. The accompanying Staff Travel Plan outlines measures that could be implemented to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport.

3.30 The public right of way which currently runs through the centre of the site (Dearne 15) will be diverted to circumnavigate the proposed regional office and distribution centre. A fork in the route will connect the footpath to the distribution centre allowing access on foot and by cycle, the public right of way will then continue north to join the original public right of way. The footpath will also be upgraded to be a wide multi-functional path way, which can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. Anti-motorbike measures in the form of specially designed gateway would deter anti-social behaviour.

3.31 Pedestrian access to the site is proposed via two access points, firstly via the new access road off Dudley Drive to the north and secondly via the aforementioned shared pedestrian and cycle access leading off Carr Field Lane to the south, this will be particularly beneficial to employees and members of the public in the residential areas to the south. Pedestrian links within the site will be provided along the most direct, convenient and practicable routes in order to provide access between the external pedestrian routes and the principal entrances to the buildings.

3.32 Cycle access to the site is also proposed via two access points, again via the proposed access road off Dudley Drive to the north and via the shared pedestrian/cycle access leading off Carr Field Lane to the south. Within the site, cycle routes will follow the internal road network and secure, covered cycle parking facilities will be provided close to the principal building entrances.

3.33 Pedestrian and cycle routes will provide safe and convenient ease of access to work for local residents and a staff travel plan has been developed for the site in order to encourage employee travel by sustainable modes of transport such as on foot, cycle and by public transport. The measures identified in the travel plan that Aldi will consider and may implement as part of the proposal include:-

- Providing a free, dedicated company shuttle bus service to bus stops, the train station, Goldthorpe town centre and surrounding residential areas.
- Discounted travel public transport.
- Provision of on site public transport information.
- High quality, convenient and secure pedestrian routes.
- Car sharing schemes and incentives.
- High quality and safe cycle routes and secure cycle storage facilities.
- Local recruitment.

3.34 The area of land to the north and west of the site forms part of a larger agricultural holding. A reserved access strip to the freeholder of this land passes through the north of the application site. Whilst this access does not exist at present, the reserved access strip will be maintained as part of the proposed development.

3.35 Further details regarding access to and within the site are contained within the supporting Transport Assessment and Staff Travel Plan.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY REVIEW

4.1 The following section summarises the main planning policy considerations which are considered as key in the consideration of the aspects of this application. A detailed review of all national, strategic and local policies relevant to the application is included at Appendix 1.

National Policy Advice

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

4.2 The Government's vision for sustainable communities outlined in *'Sustainable Communities – building for the future'* establishes that:-

> *'Planning has a key role to play in the creation of sustainable communities: communities that will stand the test of time, where people want to live, and which will enable people to meet their aspirations and potential'.*

4.3 PPS1 sets out the Government's objectives for the planning system and establishes sustainable development as the core principle that should underpin it.

4.4 Paragraph 5 of PPS1 establishes that *'planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of development by:-*

- *Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve the quality of life*
- *Contributing to sustainable economic development*
- *Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside and existing communities*
- *Ensuring high quality development through good design and efficient use of resources*
- *Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.'*

4.5 Paragraph 13 of PPS1 outlines a number of key principles which should be applied in order to ensure that the planning system contributes to the delivery of sustainable development. These include the creation of development plans that pursue sustainable development in an integrated manner, address climate change, promote increased community involvement and contain policies to ensure inclusive access and promote high quality inclusive design.

4.6 Paragraph 24 establishes that economic development can deliver environmental and social benefits and that:-

> *'Local authorities should carefully consider the interrelationship between social inclusion, protecting and enhancing the environment, the prudent use of natural resources and economic development – for example by recognising that economic development, if properly planned for can have positive social and environmental benefits rather than negative impacts'*

4.7 Paragraph 26 further advises that in preparing development plans, local authorities should:

> *'recognise the needs and broader interests of the community to secure a better quality of life for the community as a whole'*.

Planning Policy Guidance 4 (PPG4) – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms (1992)

4.8 PPG4 outlines the Government's objectives with regard to commercial developments. It advises that the local planning authority should take a positive approach, with a presumption in favour of such development unless the proposal would result in *'demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance'.*

4.9 Paragraph 13 also establishes that:-

> *'Development control should not place unjustifiable obstacles in the way of development which is necessary to provide homes, investment and jobs, or to meet wider national or international objectives'*

Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2) - Green Belts (1995 (amended 2001))

4.10 Given that a proportion of the site is presently located within the green belt, the key national planning policy in respect of this matter is contained within Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2): Green Belts. This sets out the Government's policies with regard to development in such locations.

4.11 Paragraph 1.5 of this guidance establishes that the purpose of including land within the green belt is:-

- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

4.12 Paragraph 1.6 states that land included within the green belt should:-

- *provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;*
- *provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;*
- *retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;*
- *improve damaged and derelict land around towns;*
- *secure nature conservation interest; and*
- *retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.*

4.13 PPG2 establishes that there will be a general presumption against inappropriate development within the green belt unless it can be demonstrated that very special circumstances exist that would justify the inappropriate development and outweigh any harm to the green belt.

4.14 Paragraph 3.4 establishes that appropriate development within the green belt will include:-

- *New buildings for the purposes of agriculture and forestry*
- *essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do*

not conflict with the purposes of including land in it

- *limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings*
- *limited infilling in existing villages and limited affordable housing for local community needs under development plan policies according with PPG3*
- *limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites identified in adopted local plans*

4.15 In terms of inappropriate development, paragraph 3.2 of the guidance reads as follows:

> *"In appropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."*

4.16 Finally, the guidance states that all development should not detract from the openness or visual amenity of the green belt.

Development Plan

4.17 The statutory development plan for the site is currently formed by the Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber (RSS) and the Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

Regional Policy

4.18 Strategic planning advice is contained in **RSS12, 'Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber to 2016'**.

4.19 The RSS for Yorkshire and Humber was adopted in 2004 and sets out the spatial strategy for the region for the period up to 2016. The RSS supports the general aims of national planning policy documents in terms of encouraging sustainable development. The RSS provides a spatial framework to inform the preparation of local development documents and forms part of the statutory development plan for the purposes of determining planning applications.

4.20 The RSS establishes that parts of the region require significant regeneration and

identifies South Yorkshire as the main priority for such investment. Policy P1 outlines the strategic pattern of development for the region and establishes that developments which meet with the employment, regeneration and sustainable transport needs of the coalfield towns including the Dearne Valley Development Zone should be promoted. Where these cannot be accommodated within urban areas, extension sites should be considered.

Green Belt

4.21 The majority of open land located between settlements in the South Yorkshire sub-region forms part of the green belt. The RSS supports the general aims of PPG2 with regard to the protection of the green belt and establishes that:-

> *b) more localised review of green belt boundaries may be necessary in some places through development plan reviews, but only if justified by exceptional local circumstances. Any such review should clearly demonstrate that the release of land:-*
> *i) is necessary to meet the wider principles of sustainable development in comparison with other available options;*
> *ii) is justified by reference to the capacity of the existing urban area, and the need to enable development to proceed to achieve economic regeneration or to maintain a buoyant economy or to meet housing requirements;*
> *iii) does not materially harm the fundamental aim of national green belt policy in the area concerned.*

4.22 The RSS acknowledges that the development strategy for the Dearne Valley Development Zone may result in the need for a localised review of the green belt boundary in this area.

Dearne Valley Development Zone

4.23 The RSS identifies Barnsley as a main urban area where economic development should be focussed. Goldthorpe is identified as a coalfield town whose role as a service/employment centre should be facilitated through economic development of an appropriate scale.

4.24 Goldthorpe is also located within the Dearne Valley Development Zone which is identified as a regionally significant location where regeneration should be focussed and investment in economic, housing, social and transport infrastructure should be targeted.

The Economy

4.25 The RSS aims to focus economic development and employment uses within the main urban areas and regeneration priority areas within the region in order to contribute to sustainable development and regeneration objectives.

4.26 Policy E4 relates to the selection and development of employment sites. This policy establishes that initial priority for commercial development should be given to sites located within urban areas, followed by accessible sites located on the edge of existing urban centres. This policy also establishes that warehousing uses should be located on sites with good transport links.

Transport

4.27 The RSS sets out the region's strategy for the integration of transport and land-use planning in order to support regeneration, economic growth and sustainable development.

4.28 The RSS acknowledges that industries involved in the movement of freight make a significant contribution to the region's economy. Policy T4 relates to the freight distribution system and seeks to integrate developments generating freight movements into the wider system and to make the most efficient and effective use of road, rail and water networks.

4.29 The 'Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber to 2016' is currently under review and the revised RSS which covers the period up to 2021 and is expected to be adopted in early 2008.

Regional Spatial Strategy Review – The Yorkshire and Humber Plan

4.30 The replacement RSS for Yorkshire and the Humber will form part of the statutory development plan for the Barnsley area. The draft document follows the same general principles as the current RSS with regard to encouraging sustainable development. In common with most other emerging RSS documents, the plan introduces a strategy focussed upon sub areas, with Barnsley forming part of the Sheffield City Region.

4.31 The draft RSS acknowledges that parts of the region experience problems of social and economic disadvantage and that significant investment and changes are required in order to facilitate regeneration with the area. The key spatial priorities for the region are outlined in Policy YH3 of the draft RSS which includes an aim to:-

> *'Transform economic, environmental and social conditions in the older industrialised parts of South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the Humber'*

4.32 The draft RSS seeks to promote these areas by providing employment opportunities, improved accessibility, public transport links and enhanced town centres.

4.33 With regard to the location of new development, policy YH8 outlines a sequential approach to the release of land with previously developed sites receiving priority followed by other sustainable locations close to transport links and on the edge of urban centres.

4.34 Policy YH9 of the draft RSS continues to accept that it may be necessary to review the boundary of the green belt in exceptional local circumstances

4.35 With regard to the supply of land and premises for economic development, policy E3Ai) of the draft RSS establishes that:-

> *The pattern and scale of provision of allocated employment land should be determined by local employment land reviews informed by Policy E1 & E2 and specifically take account of:*
> *i) The strategic regional employment and employment land forecasts set out in Table 14.6 and 14.7, unless more detailed sub regional or local forecasts or more up-to-date data are available, and the spatial guidelines in Table 14.8*

South Yorkshire Sub Area

4.36 The draft RSS acknowledges that the sub area continues to suffer from social and economic disadvantage and goes on to identify the Dearne Valley as an area where such problems are the most prevalent. In order to tackle these problems, the draft RSS sets out a strategy for the South Yorkshire Sub area which aims to improve the sub regional economy and create jobs in order to strengthen the role of the main towns (including Goldthorpe) with an aim to '*improve their competitiveness, sustainability, complimentary functions and ability to address social disadvantage'.*

4.37 The draft RSS contains specific policies regarding the South Yorkshire sub area, the policies that are of relevance to the Goldthorpe area seek to:-

> *ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF PLACES*
> - *Support the role of Goldthorpe as a Main Town*
>
> *ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY*
> - *Protect and enhance the biodiversity and landscape character of the Coalfield landscape character areas*

- *Maintain the strategic extent of the South Yorkshire Green Belt area policy*

TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS

- *Develop and implement the South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and its themes of improving accessibility (particularly to the former coalfield settlements), road safety and air quality and reducing congestion*
- *Improve the public transport network*

STRATEGIC PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT

- *Promote development at the Main Towns to support their regeneration and strengthen their service centre roles*
- *Allow limited development in Local Service Centres, identified by using the South Yorkshire Settlement Assessment and particularly where this helps to regenerate former coalfield settlements in the Dearne Valley*

Transport

4.38 The draft RSS continues to promote the integration of transport and land-use planning in order to support regeneration, economic growth and sustainable development, discourage the use of the car and promote the use of public transport.

4.39 Policy T4 relates to the freight distribution system and again seeks to locate developments generating freight movements close to transport networks, to integrate them into the wider transport system and to make the most efficient and effective use of road, rail and water networks. The development of Freight Quality Partnerships between businesses, the local authority, residents and other interest groups is encouraged in order to ensure effective and coordinated deliveries.

4.40 The revised RSS covers the period up to 2021 and is expected to be adopted in early 2008.

Panel Report into the Yorkshire and Humber Plan

4.41 The Yorkshire and Humber Plan, Examination in Public Panel Report was released in March 2007.

4.42 At the public examination, the Inspector raised concerns about the short time scale of the employment figures given which only extended to 2016. The accuracy of the employment figures was also challenged by several parties who were concerned that

the draft RSS had underestimated the likely employment land requirement. The Inspector acknowledged that there was a need to revise the figures to take into account the latest Regional Employment Model which shows the need for more land to be allocated for employment purposes which is not reflected in the draft replacement RSS.

4.43 As such, following the report, employment land availability remains a significant outstanding issue and the Panel report stresses that employment land availability guidelines are only very general and therefore there is a need for a localised review.

Transform South Yorkshire

4.44 The application site is located within the catchment of Transform South Yorkshire, a 'Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Area'. The Barnsley Dearne Area Development Framework (2005) outlines local strategies and policies to promote housing regeneration within the Dearne Valley area. The vision for Goldthorpe is:-

> *"Goldthorpe will be promoted as a 'market town', for residential growth with high quality homes focused around facilities and local jobs. It will become a 'transport hub' providing key service and local job opportunities to the neighbouring settlements of the Dearne Valley"*

4.45 In order to achieve this vision, one of the strategic objectives of the framework is to:

> *"Achieve a radical improvement in the character and diversity of neighbourhoods helping secure a more sustainable settlement pattern in the sub-region"*

4.46 One of the measures to achieve this objective is to '*create new locally based employment opportunities'.*

Local Plan

4.47 The Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in 2000. The eastern part of this site, occupying 12.65ha (52%) is allocated as an Employment Policy Area in the adopted Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (2000), whilst the western part of the site occupying 11.86 ha (48%) falls within the green belt. The application proposes the erection of a regional office and distribution centre (class B1 and B8) on this site. 58% of the proposed built development will be located within the Employment Policy Area and 42% within the green belt.

4.48 The Council's vision for the future of Barnsley is to re-industrialise and to improve the overall quality of life for its residents. In order to achieve this aim, the following

strategic goals are identified within the UDP:-

> *a) To bring about economic restructuring and encourage greater industrial and commercial activity in the borough so as to increase the scale and range of job opportunities*
> *b) To conserve and improve the natural environment for its own sake and in order to maintain and increase the attractiveness of Barnsley as a place to live, work, invest in and visit*
> *c) To revitalise communities and lessen disadvantage.*

Economic development

4.49 The Council's strategic objectives with regard to employment development are to concentrate development where it will:-

> *a) Provide employment opportunities for local communities, especially where there are high levels of unemployment*
> *b) Reduce journey to work distances*
> *c) Link to public transport and lorry routes*
> *d) Use derelict, degraded or vacant land, or where such land is unavailable, greenfield sites*
> *e) Meet the needs of major employment creating industries.*

4.50 The UDP aims to facilitate the creation of 22,000 new jobs throughout the plan period and acknowledges that in order to achieve this level of employment, it will be necessary to consider the release of Greenfield sites, adjacent to urban areas and close to transport links within the Dearne and north eastern areas of the Borough. An extension to the Goldthorpe industrial estate is identified as a location where such development could be accommodated. Since the Barnsley UDP was adopted in 2000, employment opportunities now exceed the anticipated land requirement and all sites of a significant size are now taken.

4.51 The eastern part of the site is allocated for employment purposes. As such, policy ED7 of the Barnsley UDP establishes that:-

> *'Areas defined on the proposals maps as employment policy areas will remain in employment use. Unless otherwise stated in community area volumes, development will*

normally be permitted for business, industry and storage and distribution. Other employment generating uses may also be permitted if they are compatible with adjoining uses. Class A1 (shops) and Class A2 (financial and professional services) will not be permitted'

4.52 With regard to acceptable uses on allocated employment sites, policy ED2 of the Barnsley UDP establishes that:-

'Development on sites proposed for employment use, other than those specified in policy ED3 or in community area volumes, will normally be permitted for business, industry and storage and distribution. Class A1 (shops) and class A2 (financial and professional services) uses will not be permitted. Other employment generating uses may be permitted if they are compatible with adjoining uses'

4.53 Goldthorpe is located within the Dearne Community Area, an area within which the UDP acknowledges that there is an identified need to address issues of high unemployment, lack of job opportunities and to promote regeneration.

4.54 In accordance with the requirements of policy ED1 as outlined above, policy DE3 relates to the provision of employment land within the Dearne Community Area and identifies an extension to the Goldthorpe industrial estate as a site where additional employment development could be accommodated. This policy states that:-

'In accordance with policy ED1, the following sites shown on the proposal map are proposed for development for employment uses:-

DE3/4 Extensions to Goldthorpe Industrial Estate, Goldthorpe (28.2 Hectares)

The following three areas, comprising proposed extensions to the existing industrial estate, will be served by a new access road from the A635 linking into the existing estate road. This will allow traffic to avoid residential areas in Highgate:

1) *4.1 hectares to the south of the estate form part of the Dearne Valley Enterprise Zone.*
2) *17.8 hectares of agricultural land to the west of the estate, approximately 8 hectares of which were in green belt defined in the Dearne Towns District Plan.*

> *3) 6.3 hectares at Bolton House Farm north of the estate were allocated for industrial development in the Dearne Towns District Plan and this proposal is carried forward. Access should be from the proposed new road connecting the existing estate to the A635 described above'*

4.55 The UDP identifies that the Dearne town link road corridor has become an important strategic location for economic development and that this will increase when the road is completed as this will improve accessibility.

Green belt

4.56 The western part of the site is located within the green belt which is identified as making a significant contribution to retaining attractive landscapes and enhancing landscapes near to where people live.

4.57 The strategic objective of the UDP with regard to the environment is to *'conserve and improve the environment'* and as such, with regard to development located within the green belt, policy GS7 of the Barnsley UDP establishes that:

> *'Development within the green belt will not be permitted unless it maintains the openness of, and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the greenbelt'*

4.58 This policy is supported by policy GS8 which restricts the construction of new buildings within the green belt, except in very special circumstances in line with the general aims of PPG2. Policy GS8 of the Barnsley UDP establishes that:-

> *'Within the green belt, the construction of new buildings will not be permitted except in very special circumstances, unless it is for the following purposes:*
> *a) agriculture or forestry*
> *b) essential facilities for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, or for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the green belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it*
> *c) the replacement of existing dwellings'*

4.59 Policy GS9 also establishes that development permitted within the green belt should not adversely affect its openness or visual amenity and states that:-

> *'Development within the green belt, or*

conspicuous from it, should not by reason of its siting, materials or design result in significant harm to the visual amenity of the green belt'

Barnsley Local Development Framework (LDF)

4.60 Work has commenced on the production of Barnsley's Local Development Framework and upon its adoption, the LDF documents will supersede the corresponding parts of the existing Barnsley UDP and alongside the RSS, will comprise the statutory development plan for the area.

Core Strategy

4.61 The production of the Core Strategy document which sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the spatial development of the district up to 2021 has reached preferred options stage. Following initial public consultation in October 2005, it is anticipated that a further round of consultation on a 'Preferred Options – Further Options' document will occur in October 2007, with submission to the Secretary of State expected in June 2008 followed by adoption in September 2009.

4.62 The principal aims of the core strategy document include:-

To help achieve a varied, distinctive and successful local economy, and to help make sure people who live in the borough have good access to job opportunities locally and in surrounding areas.

To help protect and improve the countryside and natural environment for the benefit of those who live and work in the borough and surrounding areas.

To help people make journeys efficiently and quickly between home, work and services, by walking, cycling and public transport, to reduce the need for car use."

Economy

4.63 With regard to the economy, the core strategy acknowledges that there is a continued need to provide local job opportunities within the district in order to promote economic development and regeneration and identifies that Barnsley has a particular role to play in the following area:

'Advanced storage and distribution (that is, modern manufacture and retailing needs, central distribution centres, relatively low land values,

good transport links and a central position serving its market)'

4.64 This document commits to promoting the role of Goldthorpe collectively with other Dearne towns, as attractive places to live for people working locally through:-

- *further job opportunities;*
- *better public transport to Barnsley town centre*
- *supporting and building the role of goldthorpe town centre*

4.65 The LDF will help to achieve these aims by:-

- *providing new job opportunities on employment sites within the Dearne towns and nearby at Park Springs;*
- *improving public transport links with Barnsley town centre and other settlements;*
- *supporting the Goldthorpe town centre and other local centres by focusing retail, service and community facilities in these centres;*
- *protecting the green belt around the Dearne Towns.*

Green Belt

4.66 The core strategy document continues to support the retention and protection of the green belt in line with national policy guidance contained in PPG2.

4.67 However, paragraph 205, establishes that the Council:-

'will support development which supports the role of the countryside, including its towns and villages, as long as it is consistent with green belt policy and does not harm the character of the countryside'

Employment Sites Development Plan Document (DPD)

4.68 The Preferred Options for the Employment Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) were published in October 2005, however it is anticipated that further public consultation on a 'preferred options – further options' document will be undertaken in June 2008, with the submission of this document to the Secretary of State in September 2009, followed by adoption in January 2011. The Core Strategy document estimates that 200–235 hectares of employment land will be required to support the employment needs of the district up to 2021. The Employment Sites DPD identifies 205.71 hectares of land to be put forward for employment use over this plan period

and continues to identify the Goldthorpe Industrial Estate as an area where such development could be accommodated.

Barnsley Policies Development Plan Document (DPD)

4.69 The Preferred Options for the Barnsley Policies DPD were published in October 2005, however it is anticipated that further public consultation on 'preferred options – further options' document will be undertaken in June 2008, with submission to the Secretary of State in September 2009 and adoption expected in January 2011. This document contains the proposed policies that will be used to implement the aims of the Core Strategy and by which planning applications will be determined.

4.70 With regard to the economy, Policy E1 advises that storage and distribution uses will be considered appropriate on allocated employment sites.

4.71 Policy GB1 continues to support the retention and protection of the green belt in line with aims of the Council's core strategy and the national policy guidance contained in PPG2.

4.72 This document also contains polices which continue to protect existing public rights of way, species and habitats and archaeological sites and which require the use of renewable energy sources.

Summary of Key Planning Policy

4.73 More than half of the application site is allocated as an Employment Policy Area in which storage and distribution uses are encouraged to locate. As such, the proposal accords with planning policy on a significant proportion of the site and will achieve the following identified national, strategic and local aims and objectives:-

- To increase commercial activity within the Borough.
- To increase the scale and range of local job opportunities available within this area of high unemployment.
- To contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the community.
- To increase investment in the area.
- To focus employment uses within this regeneration priority area.
- To contribute towards sustainable development by focusing employment uses within or adjacent to existing urban areas.
- To promote the role of Goldthorpe as a main town within the Dearne Valley area.
- To create new locally based employment opportunities which will support housing regeneration within the Dearne Valley area and contribute to the objectives of Transform South Yorkshire.

4.74 The remainder of the site is located within the green belt. Planning policy requires that very special circumstances be shown in the case of 'inappropriate development' and that these circumstances will not exist unless they clearly outweigh any harm arising. As will be demonstrated in the next section, in this instance, it is considered

that the overwhelming social and economic benefits of the scheme constitute very special circumstances and that, in addition, any potential harm arising as a result of the development in terms of the role and purpose of the green belt in this location is mitigated by the landscaping proposals with some positive benefits.

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 The planning policy review in section 4 has established the local, strategic and national planning policy considerations which are key in the consideration of the aspects of this application. This section will go on to discuss how the proposed development will contribute to social and economic regeneration within the Goldthorpe area and will demonstrate how the proposed development meets with the aforementioned planning policy guidance.

5.2 In general terms the proposed development sits squarely with the Government's central objective of locating development in sustainable locations and allowing for social inclusion (PPS1). Of importance to the region is the fact that this application represents a significant investment in a deprived area, thus according with planning policy objectives at regional level (RSS12) and with the objectives of specific initiatives, such as the Dearne Valley Development Zone and Transform South Yorkshire. At local level Barnsley Council's strategic objectives with regard to employment development seek to provide employment opportunities where there are high levels of unemployment, reduce journey to work distances, link to public transport and lorry routes and meet the needs of major employment creating industries (Barnsley UDP). This development fulfils all of those aims. The strategic objectives acknowledge that Greenfield sites may be used where derelict, vacant or degraded land is not available.

5.3 Emerging policy is equally clear on the need for social and economic regeneration of the area and specifically recognises that the Barnsley district has a particular role to play in advanced storage and distribution, i.e. development that meets the needs of modern retailer, with relatively low land values, good transport links and a central position relative to its market (LDF Core Strategy – Preferred Options).

5.4 More than half the site is allocated in the UDP as an Employment Policy Area where storage and distribution uses are encouraged to locate and would comply fully with the requirements of policies ED1 (Sites for New Development), ED2 (Uses on Employment Sites), ED7 (Existing Employment Areas) and DE3 (Proposed Employment Sites) of the Barnsley UDP, subject to more detailed design considerations which are addressed in further detail below. For this part of the site, therefore, the issue of whether or not the development accords with the provisions of the development plan is clear cut.

5.5 Nevertheless it is recognised that the remainder of the application site is designated green belt. 42% of the built development will be sited in green belt, with the remainder of the green belt allocation being used for the extensive landscaping proposals associated with the development. An assessment of the application proposals against the policy objectives of green belts is set out below

Green Belt

5.6 The proposal to partially locate a regional office and distribution centre within this green belt location does not fall within the criteria of appropriate development as set out in PPG2 and policy GS8 of the Barnsley UDP. However, as set out in the policy review such development can be justified by way of very special circumstances. These special circumstances do not exist unless any harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations. There are, therefore, two key considerations to be looked at in terms of assessing any proposal. First, that special circumstances do exist and second, the level of harm arising and whether or not this is outweighed by the special circumstances. Both issues are considered in more detail below

Identification of Very Special Circumstances

5.7 As has already been outlined Aldi wish to invest in a regional office and distribution centre in South Yorkshire. Their specific locational and operational requirements have resulted in a number of extensive site search exercises since 2004, with Goldthorpe the only available site to meet their specific requirements. The social and economic benefits which the proposal would bring, to a severely deprived area represent the very special circumstances which make this development acceptable.

5.8 Historically, Barnsley's economy has been centred around the coal mining industry. However, the rapid decline of the industry in the 1980's and 1990's subsequently resulted in the closure of all collieries within the district of Barnsley, with the last pit in the Dearne Valley closing in Goldthorpe in 1994. The decline of this industry has had a significant and long term impact upon the district of Barnsley which was one of the worst affected areas and resulted in the widespread loss of jobs throughout the coal mining and associated industries.

5.9 The coal mining industry was particularly important to the economy of the Dearne Valley towns where 85% of male employment was in the industry at the height of its success. More than 3,500 people were employed in the industry in the Dearne Valley in the 1980's; all of these jobs have now been lost and insufficient, suitable replacement jobs have been found to overcome the legacy of worklessnes in the area. This is evident in the economic inactivity rates for Goldthorpe which are discussed in further detail below and attached to this statement as Appendix 5.

5.10 Despite significant investment into the area and the introduction of regeneration initiatives, socio-economic deprivation within the Goldthorpe area continues to prevail and the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 identifies that Goldthorpe falls within the top 8% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England and is also one of the most deprived neighbourhoods within the district of Barnsley.

5.11 Unemployment rates within Goldthorpe are higher than the average for the district of Barnsley and are significantly higher than the national average for England. The 2001 census identified that within Goldthorpe, 5% of those of working age were unemployed compared with a district average of 3.9% and a national average of

3.3%. In addition, it was identified that 28.2% of those not in employment within the Goldthorpe area had last worked before 1995 compared with 15.9% for England.

5.12 A significant proportion of the population in Goldthorpe are classed as low skilled workers, with 34.5% employed as 'process, plant and machine operatives or in elementary occupations' compared to the average for England of just 20.2%. Only 20% were employed as 'managers, senior officials, professionals, associate professionals and technical' compared to the national average of 40.3%.

5.13 Travel to work statistics indicate that 16.9% of the workforce in Goldthorpe travel to work on foot compared to the national average of 10%. This indicates that a significant proportion of residents in work are employed locally and live within walking distance of their place of work and also indicates a lack of mobility.

5.14 The above statistics identify that unemployment continues to be a prevailing problem within the Goldthorpe area and that a significant proportion of the economically inactive population are long term unemployed. The majority of the workforce in the Goldthorpe area are seen to have unskilled or low skill levels compared to the national average and a significant amount of people are employed locally and therefore walk to work. These socio economic patterns have improved but appear to have prevailed over a number of years since the decline of the coal mining industry in this area.

5.15 As such, it can be seen that appropriate job opportunities for local people are required in order to reduce unemployment, boost the local economy and contribute to social and economic regeneration. The location of the proposed distribution centre within this area will bring significant socio economic benefits to both the Goldthorpe and Barnsley areas but will also bring indirect benefits to the wider region, these issues are discussed in further detail below.

5.16 The distribution centre will initially create 150 jobs, this will rise to around 250 once the centre is fully operational. Of these jobs, it is anticipated that approximately 205 positions will be created in the warehouse, in driving and administration, with an additional 30 managerial positions, based in the office, warehousing and logistics. It is estimated that an additional 50 jobs would be created by phase 2 of the development, 25 of these would be in the warehouse, 5 in the office plus 20 additional drivers.

5.17 Aldi are strongly committed to creating jobs for the local workforce and are involved in ongoing discussions with Barnsley Development Agency and Jobcentre Plus with regard to local recruitment and training initiatives were they to be successful in gaining planning permission. It is anticipated that the majority of the jobs created within the proposed distribution centre will be filled by the local workforce.

5.18 The proposed development would create new job opportunities for a workforce which has significant difficulties in accessing jobs beyond the local area. It would also have

the potential to reduce out commuting by offering new opportunities for the more mobile elements of the workforce whose limited time and income is reduced by travel out of the area.

5.19 As part of the proposed development, Aldi will include measures to overcome the following identified barriers to employment which local residents may face:-

- Training – The majority of the jobs that will be created at the proposed distribution centre will be suitable for those with no or low qualifications. As part of their induction programme, Aldi provide full training for staff and also provide staircasing opportunities to enable long term career progression and enhanced job prospects.
- Transport – The proposed regional office and distribution centre will be situated within a sustainable location close to the existing centres of Goldthorpe and Bolton-upon-Dearne. As part of the proposed development, safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes will be provided to encourage and enable easy access to work for local residents. As previously discussed, the site is also easily accessible by public transport from the Dearne Valley and the wider area and a staff travel plan will be implemented to promote and facilitate access to the site by non car modes of transport, thus overcoming this potential barrier to employment for local residents.
- Childcare – Barnsley MBC's Children's Information Service offer a matching service with local childcare providers such as nurseries and childminders and Surestart Goldthorpe is located in very close proximity to the application site.

5.20 In addition to the jobs created within the distribution centre itself, construction jobs will be created during the development period and again Aldi will work with Barnsley Development Agency to maximise local recruitment and training initiatives during this period. The proposed development will also benefit associated industries involved in the ongoing servicing and maintenance of the building and this will enable existing local businesses to expand. Aldi has a strong commitment to using local businesses to provide such services. The investment by Aldi into this area represents a total of £25 million in terms of build costs and over £5 million per year in subsequent payroll and local spend, this will increase further as the region grows.

5.21 Aldi also contribute significantly to local charities, for example from their Darlington regional office and distribution centre, Aldi have supported the Darlington Disability Association, Butterwick Children's Hospice and Yorkshire Cancer Research over the past few years. In addition, Aldi have rebuilt a playground for a local school in Catterick and are about to start working with St Teresa's which is another local children's hospice in Darlington. Aldi also support many charities and events locally by donating products as prizes or to assist in events, plus they also make non charitable donations such as planting along local roads.

5.22 In addition to the direct economic benefits to the Goldthorpe area, the development will bring indirect benefits to the Yorkshire region as the establishment of a distribution centre in this location will enable Aldi to efficiently service existing stores

and expand to create up to 100 stores within the region which will create a significant number of additional jobs, provide services and contribute to the economy of other areas within this region.

5.23 One of the main aims of Aldi as a company is to provide secure employment for staff and to ensure that employees have long term, well paid, quality jobs. The success of this initiative can be seen in other Aldi distribution centres such as Darlington which opened in 1995 and where 50 of the 141 staff (35%) have been employed for more than 10 years.

5.24 As such, the proposed development will promote commercial interest in the area, it will create a significant number of jobs to meet the skills of the local workforce and will create jobs for associated industries in an area characterised by high and sustained long term unemployment. The development will also create jobs within the wider Yorkshire region as it would facilitate the roll out of 30 - 50 new stores. This will help to boost the local economy, will improve the quality of life for local residents and will seek to lessen disadvantage within an area in need of social and economic regeneration.

5.25 The proposed development will support the housing market renewal objectives of Transform South Yorkshire for the Dearne Valley area as it will provide significant and suitable employment opportunities for local residents which for the aforementioned reasons will contribute to social and economic regeneration and renewal within the Dearne Valley area, will support the local housing market and will contribute to sustainable communities.

Assessment of Harm

5.26 As outlined in the policy review, paragraph 1.5 of PPG2 identifies the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, whilst paragraph 1.6 defines how land within Green Belts can fulfil certain objectives. However the guidance is clear that it is the principal purpose of including land within Green Belt that takes paramount importance. At local level the Barnsley UDP policy GS7 reflects this by stating that development should not conflict with the purposes of including land in green belt. It also goes further by saying that it should maintain the openness of the green belt. Policy GS9 states that development should not cause harm to the visual amenity of the green belt by virtue of siting, materials or design.

5.27 Only part of this development falls within green belt and much of the green belt section of the site is proposed to be landscaped. Whilst it is acknowledged that the application site will not remain open as a result of the proposed development and that the development will encroach into the countryside within this localised area, the principal purpose of green belt in this area will continue and will not be adversely affected by this development. A very significant area of green belt will remain and the development of this area of green belt land will not result in the sprawl or merging of existing urban centres or affect the setting and special character of an

historic town. Similar very special circumstances have already been accepted by the Council on previous occasions, for example in the approval of an extension to the Goldthorpe Industrial Estate and also when the boundary of the green belt was altered as part of the revised UDP which was adopted in 2000.

5.28 Similarly, the roles defined in paragraph 1.6 of PPG2, whilst not stated to be of primary importance, will also not be compromised. In particular the scheme will continue to allow for, and improve upon, opportunities for access to the open countryside, retention of an attractive landscape and secure nature conservation interests. Indeed the scheme has a number of positive benefits:

- Creation of a distinct edge to green belt
- Enhancement of ecological value of this area of green belt
- Upgrade of a public right of way (Dearne 15) and improvement of overall setting

5.29 The scheme will provide the opportunity to improve the visual amenity of the urban boundary through an extensive landscaping and screening programme, which will create a clear, defined edge to the green belt and will introduce appropriate screening to lessen the impact of the existing industrial estate and proposed development upon the surrounding landscape. This will also improve long distance views to Goldthorpe which currently are of the edge of an untidy industrial estate. By contrast this scheme will create a verdant edge to the industrial estate, in keeping with its proximity to green belt. This will improve visual amenity overall.

5.30 The ecological survey has found the site to have little wildlife value. The landscaping scheme proposes to introduce a number of different ecological habitats to provide a net gain for biodiversity. These are made up of reed wetlands, native hedgerow, wildflower meadows, marginal wet conditions planting, standing water and primarily native woodland. The existing unmade footpath is proposed to be upgraded to a surfaced foot and cycle route which will also benefit from the landscape it adjoins.

5.31 The impact of the proposed regional office and distribution centre buildings will be mitigated by detailed design, site layout, materials and the aforementioned landscaping scheme. As part of the proposed development, naturalistic planting screens and mounds will be created along the northern and western boundaries of the site in order to screen the development and create a definitive green edge to the green belt. Ground level 'cut' will be used at the southern end of the site to sit the distribution centre within the landscape, thereby further integrating it with the landscape and reducing any visual impact. Planting will include native deciduous and occasional evergreen species with shrubs and hedging to provide additional density, the proposed vegetation will maximise the wildlife value of the landscape.

5.32 Further details regarding the proposed landscape treatment of the site are contained within the Landscape Assessment and Design and Access Statement.

5.33 In summary the scheme will result in the development of an area of green belt land, but will not prejudice the overall purpose of green belt in this location. Harm will not be caused to the visual amenity of the green belt in this location, indeed the Landscape Statement accompanying this application concludes that overall residual landscape impacts would be minor beneficial overall. Exhaustive measures will be implemented to screen the site and reduce the impact of the proposed development upon the immediate and surrounding area and for the aforementioned reasons, it is considered that the proposal complies fully with policies GS7 and GS9 (Development within the Green Belt) of the Barnsley UDP and the guidance contained within PPG2: Green Belts.

5.34 The aforementioned benefits that the development will offer in terms of direct and indirect job creation and social and economic regeneration within this provide the very special circumstances as to why the development should be allowed within this green belt location. Indeed given the level of deprivation and unemployment in the Goldthorpe area, such levels of job creation and regeneration alone are considered as such circumstances where land should be released from green belt. In the absence of any harm arising to green belt function or visual amenity as a result of these proposals it can be concluded that the development fully accords with national planning guidance and the development plan.

Other Planning Policy Considerations

Transport and Highways

5.35 The proposed development will provide adequate access to the existing highway network for private and commercial vehicles, it is sited in a sustainable location close to established transport links to the local and wider area and will be accessible by a range of modes of transport including cycling and walking.

5.36 A Transport Assessment has been undertaken which identifies that the proposed development will not have any significant impact upon the surrounding highway network. The proposal will also enable the Yorkshire region to be serviced from a distribution centre located within the region rather than goods being distributed from the Darlington centre as is the current situation. Therefore the proposal will facilitate more efficient and sustainable transport patterns and will reduce the travel distances for HGV's and other associated vehicles.

5.37 In terms of public transport provision, the area is well served by public transport and there are 4 bus stops within the vicinity of the site. Bus stops to the northeast of the industrial estate provide hourly connections to Mexborough and Doncaster and bus stops to the south of the site provide half hourly services to Barnsley, Mexborough, Manvers and Rotherham. Further bus services depart from the centre of Goldthorpe providing frequent services to both the local and surrounding area. Goldthorpe rail station is also located approximately 1.7km from the site and provides hourly connections to Sheffield, Rotherham, Leeds and other intermediate stations. High

quality, safe and secure pedestrian and cycle facilities will also be provided as part of the scheme.

5.38 The public right of way which currently runs through the centre of the site (Dearne 15) will be diverted to circumnavigate the proposed logistics centre. A fork in the route will connect the footpath to the distribution centre allowing access on foot and by cycle, the public right of way will then continue north to join the original public right of way. The footpath will also be upgraded to be a wide multi-functional path way, which can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. Anti-motorbike measures in the form of specially designed gateway would deter anti-social behaviour.

5.39 A staff travel plan has been developed for the site, this outlines measures that could be implemented to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport such as on foot, cycle and public transport. The measures identified in the travel plan that Aldi will consider and may implement as part of the proposal include:-

- Providing a free, dedicated company shuttle bus service to bus, stops, the train station, Goldthorpe town centre and surrounding residential areas.
- Discounted travel public transport
- Good provision of on site public transport information
- High quality, convenient and secure pedestrian routes.
- Car sharing schemes and incentives
- High quality and safe cycle routes and secure cycle storage facilities
- Local recruitment

5.40 Further detail regarding access to and within the site is contained within the supporting Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.

5.41 As such, we consider that the proposal complies fully with the requirements of transport policies T2, T14, T26 and T27 of the Barnsley UDP which seek to ensure that developments do not adversely impact upon the highway network, that they provide adequate access and parking facilities and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Design

5.42 The design of the distribution centre and the wider site is discussed in further detail within the Design and Access Statement. However, careful design and the use of appropriate screening will ensure that the proposed development has the minimum possible impact upon the openness and character of the green belt and the visual amenity of the immediate and surrounding area. The impact of the development will be mitigated and it is not considered that the development will form a prominent or obtrusive feature within the landscape. As such, it is considered that the proposal complies fully with the requirements of PPS1, policies GS7 (Development in the Green Belt), GS9 (Amenity) and BE6 (Design Standards) of the Barnsley UDP which require high quality development within green belt locations.

Noise

5.43 Having regard to noise generation, the areas of the development most likely to generate noise i.e. the access road, service yard and loading/unloading bays have been located as far away as possible from existing noise sensitive uses located to the south east. The main building will also act as a noise screen and the proposed earth bunding to be provided around the perimeter of the site will act as a further acoustic barrier.

5.44 An Acoustic Assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken, this report suggests a range of other mitigation options that will be incorporated into the scheme as necessary. The report concludes that the detailed design of the scheme should ensure that the overall noise impact of the development is controlled to be no worse than 'marginal significance' following the requirements of the British Standard BS4142 'Method for rating industrial noise affecting mixed residential and industrial areas'. The development will not have any significant impact upon the amenity of adjacent occupiers and as such we consider that the proposal complies fully with the requirements of policies BE6 (design standards) and ES1 (pollution) of the Barnsley UDP which establish that developments should not have any adverse impact upon any neighbouring noise sensitive land uses.

Habitats

5.45 A baseline ecological survey has been undertaken and the site has been found to have very little wildlife value. Whilst this will not be further compromised by the development proposed, additional measures to enhance and consider local biodiversity will be incorporated into the scheme where appropriate. As such, the proposal is considered to comply fully with the requirements of policy GS15 which seeks to ensure the protection of habitats and species during the development process.

Flood Risk

5.46 The application site lies within the Environment Agency's identified flood zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding. An assessment of potential flood risk has been undertaken, this report concludes that it is not anticipated that there will be any flood risk issues on this site provided that sufficient attenuation measures are provided. As such, the proposal fully complies with the requirements of policy ES4 (washlands) of the Barnsley UDP which establishes that development should not affect washlands or be put at risk from floor debris or pollution.

Archaeology

5.47 A desk based Archaeological Report of the site has been undertaken, this concludes that the impact of the development upon any archaeological remains will be investigated and mitigated if required. The precise nature of any archaeological

works required will conform to a written scheme of investigation that will be agreed with South Yorkshire Archaeological services prior to the commencement of any works. As such, we consider that the proposal fully complies with the requirements of policies BE3 and BE4 (archaeological sites) of the Barnsley UDP which seek to ensure the protection and preservation of archaeological remains where necessary.

Lighting

5.48 A Lighting Assessment has also been undertaken, this report advises that the external lighting scheme for the Goldthopre site will incorporate measures to reduce the impact of the proposal upon the surrounding environment following the guidance and standards outlined in the report. As such, it is not envisaged that the scheme will have any adverse impact upon the surrounding area and it is therefore considered that the proposal complies fully with policy BE6F (light pollution) of the Barnsley UDP.

Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental

5.49 A Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental desk study report of the site has been undertaken, this report concludes that the site is unlikely to be contaminated. The report also identifies a geological fault that crosses part of the site, however this does not cross the phase 1 development. The report recommends that further ground investigations are undertaken prior to development commencing. It is therefore considered that subject to any necessary mitigation measures, the proposed development complies with policies ES5 (Land Stability) and ES8 (Contaminated Land) of the Barnsley UDP.

Sustainability

5.50 The proposal will incorporate sustainable design features to promote energy efficiency and reduce emissions. Further details are regarding the sustainability proposals are outlined in the Design and Access Statement.

Summary

5.51 For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the proposal fully complies with all relevant local, strategic and national planning policies and all other material planning considerations.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application proposes the construction of a regional office and distribution centre (Class B1 and B8) on this site. The development will also include the provision of ancillary facilities including a service station and refuse area, the formation of a new access and car park, lorry parking, associated ground works and extensive landscaping.

6.2 The eastern part of the application site is allocated as an Employment Policy Area in the adopted Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (2000), whilst the western part of the site falls within the green belt.

6.3 Following the guidance contained within policies ED2 (Uses on Employment Sites), and ED7 (Existing Employment Areas) of the Barnsley UDP, the proposed storage and distribution warehouse is accepted as an appropriate use on this allocated employment site.

6.4 Both Policy GS8 (Green Belts) of the Barnsley UDP and the guidance contained within PPG2: Green Belts establish that in very special circumstances, development proposals will be allowed in green belt locations.

6.5 There are very special circumstances which justify the granting of planning permission for the regional office and distribution centre in this green belt location. In summary, these are the overwhelming social and economic benefits that the scheme will bring to the local area. The proposal will eventually create approximately 250 jobs for local people in a range of positions from warehouse operative to management roles and will boost the local economy in an area identified as a priority for on-going social and economic regeneration.

6.6 A precedent has already been set for commercial development to be allowed within the green belt within this area following the previous approval of an extension to the Goldthorpe industrial estate and an associated access road.

6.7 There are no alterative or more suitable sites available to accommodate the proposed development in the identified search area within South Yorkshire. This view is supported by the South Yorkshire Land and Property Study undertaken by GVA Grimley in February 2007 which identified 47 non-constrained sites within South Yorkshire. Of these sites, only 4 were over 20 hectares in size; these were West Moor Park in Doncaster, Manvers Brookfields Park in Rotherham, Waverley in Rotherham/Sheffield and Park Springs in Grimethorpe. This view is further confirmed in the emerging Renaissance South Yorkshire commissioned report by Crossland Otter Hunt surveyors which establishes that there are no alternative or more suitable freehold sites available to accommodate the proposed development within the Barnsley area.

6.8 The proposal will provide the opportunity to improve the visual amenity of the area

by creating a defined edge to the green belt and providing extensive mounding and appropriate screening to lessen the impact of the existing industrial estate upon the surrounding landscape.

6.9 The proposal would not detract from the overall purpose of including land within the green belt in this area and exhaustive measures will be implemented to mitigate any impact on the existing green belt.

6.10 For the aforementioned reasons outlined in this statement, it is considered that the proposal complies fully with all relevant local, strategic and national planning policy and all other material planning considerations. As such, we consider that planning permission should be granted for the proposed development of a regional office and distribution centre on this site.