

# **BIRCHWOOD SITE**

(former Needlewood Children's Home)

## **DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM AND ASSOCIATED LEARNING AND PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR PLANNING APPLICATION**

#### **1. SUMMARY**

The proposal is for the establishment on the Birchwood site of a new, purpose-built service replacing the previous children's home, which will provide a home for life for 8 young people with autism and other disabilities. This will be a long-term home, giving these young people the opportunity to settle back in their home area after a period at a specialist school or college. It is aimed at those with the more complex problems whose needs cannot be met by a Supported Living model. This is a small but distinct group who currently experience a shortfall in appropriate service provision.

The new service will have the same capacity as the former Needlewood home that it replaces, but the quality of the service will be to 21<sup>st</sup> century standards, with state of the art design and facilities to meet the long-term needs of young people with Autism.

The size of the development is large enough to function as a supportive community and integrate into the locality without developing the negative features of an institution. It is the absolute minimum size required to provide a viable service for this specialist client group and to offer them the facilities and support they need to ensure a satisfactory long-term placement. This supporting information sets out the rationale for the development of the service.

The Birchwood service will complement the Shortwood Hospital development. In particular, it will provide a move-on option for young people from the area who may have needed a period of access to the specialist services available at Shortwood, which will also have a national catchment.

#### **2. GENERAL DESIGN APPROACH**

The Birchwood Design has been developed taking the requirements of the service users as a starting point for the brief. The key features of the proposal are as follows:

- The accommodation provides 2 units each containing 4 individual flats, which can be occupied either as self-contained suites or shared flats, according to individual need, together with staff accommodation, a reception area, office, meeting and activity rooms
- The size of the unit enables the creation of a small supportive community, that can also integrate with the local community
- The nature of the site and spaces that can be provided result in good levels of personal and communal space. This is required for the personal development of the occupants providing an internal and external environment that meets their specialist needs
- The location will meet an identified need for young people from the South Yorkshire area who are currently within an Options Group Regional service such as AALPS College and who are ready to move back to their home area.

### 3. BACKGROUND TO AUTISM

Autism is a name given to a range of social and communication difficulties (known as the Autistic Spectrum Disorders). Individuals may be affected in a wide variety of ways in relation to what is known as the 'Triad of Impairments':

- Difficulty with developing imagination
- Difficulty with verbal and non verbal communication
- Difficulty with social relationships

The National Autistic Society estimates that some 500,000 people in the UK have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. With improvements in diagnosis, this number is likely to rise further. A recent report, entitled 'The Economic Consequences of Autism in the UK' (Nov 2007), put the annual cost of Autism to the economy at £28bn. Effective services to assist people with Autism can reduce this bill substantially over time.

Appendix 2 shows how the incidence of autism has increased in the UK in recent years and provides an example of this impact in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. The supply of appropriate specialist services for people with Autism has lagged behind demand and a considerable shortfall remains throughout the UK.

Autism is a condition for which there is no cure; however, in recent years, as numbers identified have increased, so has the understanding of autism, leading to the development of more effective support through specialist programmes. Individuals with autism can now make substantial progress towards successful independence. In addition, great advances have been made in the design of autism-friendly responsive environments and the use of assistive technologies to enable individuals to live more successfully. Increased independence leads to increased economic well-being and self-esteem.

### 4. THE OPTIONS GROUP

The Options Group is a specialist autism service provider which has developed a significant reputation within the field for the provision of high quality specialist services. The expertise of the Group extends to the design of appropriate environments, the use of a range of equipment and assistive technologies and an autism-friendly approach to the provision of support, care and specialist therapy.

Options Group Autism services provide full-time education and/or residential support for individuals with autism from the age of 8 upwards. This range of coordinated services is known as the "Lifelong Support Programme" (Appendix 6).

The Options Group has established a reputation for excellence in autism services due to a combination of the following elements:

- **The Options Approach to Autism.** Individually-assessed programmes provide integrated support across the range of each person's needs, helping them to progress towards their personal independence targets. It has particular expertise in the application of the best practice **TEACCH** programme, with its own internationally-renowned trainer in the field. Originally developed at the University of North Carolina in the USA, **TEACCH** helps young people to develop the skills they need to live independently by helping them to use their autistic traits positively and to their advantage in developing the strategies that they will need to become more independent. The application of **TEACCH** principles in the current proposals is believed to be the first example of its use in this context in the UK.
- **Expert Staff team.** Staff at all levels are trained to beyond National Minimum Standards and receive an ongoing programme of autism-specific training to maintain and improve their skills. The senior staff team includes acknowledged national and International experts in autism. The Group is renowned for its programme of conferences and seminars and its web-based resource library which are increasingly popular with professionals and families alike.
- **Environment.** This proposal demonstrates the Options Group's characteristic attention to detail in providing autism-friendly environments at just the right level for the particular age or dependency of the individuals who will live there. Examples of the high standard of Options Group provision in the region include the AALPS (*Adolescent to Adult Life Preparation*

Service) College near Scunthorpe and New Options School at Barton on Humber. As the third development for individuals looking for long-term accommodation the Birchwood proposal benefits from previous experience, including some design features originally included in the Group's most specialist facility to date, a school at Higford in Shropshire. This service has created such interest nationally that it will be officially opened in October 2008 by the Princess Royal.

- **Links to other Options Group services**

- **AALPS College.** Birchwood will be operated as part of the Lifelong Support Programme, the third part in the coordinated transition from New Options Schools to AALPS (Adolescent to Adult Life Preparation Service) Colleges and then to long-term individually-tailored long term placements. Young people from the South Yorkshire area emerging from AALPS College will have the opportunity to move back to settle in their home area with the right support to enable them to enjoy and continue to build their independence for the rest of their life.
- **Shortwood Hospital.** Designed as a national specialist centre for those whose autism, usually in combination with other difficulties, has had the most severe impact on their lives, Shortwood's location in Barnsley will provide a local resource for anyone at Birchwood in need of a period of more intensive support. It is also a potential move on option for any local person emerging from Shortwood.

## **5. IDENTIFIED NEED FOR THIS SERVICE**

There is a shortage of appropriate services for young people with autism of medium to high dependency, needing support into the long term, both locally and nationally (See Appendix 2). This leads to a number of individuals being placed at some distance from family and friends for extended periods of time, with a negative effect on their quality of life. For others there is little or no support available at all.

The National Autistic Society's "I Exist" Campaign (see Appendix 3 for details) is currently highlighting the profound impact that these shortages of appropriate provision are having on families throughout the country. As a consensus develops on the need to make specific provision available for adults with autism, so increases in the supply of appropriate accommodation and support in all local areas must follow. At present there is a large gap.

At present the position for many families is that the consequence of the shortfall in appropriate placements reflected in Appendix 3 means that they face never having their needs met. Placements in settings that are not autism-friendly tend to break down, increasing support needs. Failed placements are costly, both in financial (for the Local Authority) and emotional (for the young person and family) terms. There is also a wider economic and ethical cost to society in the loss of the potential contribution of the individual to their community, for want of proper support to fulfil their capacity for independence and achievement.

This proposal helps to address the shortfall for the people of Barnsley and South Yorkshire. For more detail on the regional shortfall in provision see Appendix 2. As the majority of people with a disability move towards community-based independence, this proposal ensures that the principles of choice and independence are available to those whose needs are just too complex for conventional Supported Living solutions. This approach supports the key values set out in Barnsley's multi-agency strategy "Every Adult Matters" (2007).

The Government's approach, as set out in various documents, including "Valuing People" (2001), "Our Health, Our Care, Our Say" (2006), "Independence, Well-being and Choice" (2005) and "Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People" (2004), has consistently been to enable people with disabilities, including autism, to enjoy the maximum possible level of independence and choice and to settle in their home area. As recently as May 2008 the Government announced that it is to spend £500,000 on research to determine the true number of adults with autism, recognising that current evidence understates the actual position (see 3 above) and that almost all autism research to date has been on children. This will also provide a more accurate estimate of those needing specialist support into the long-term to sustain their potential for independence.

This will be the third development of its type by the Options Group in the past three years. The others are in Wressle near Scunthorpe covering North Lincolnshire, and in Otley, covering Leeds and were inspired by a demand from young people returning from AALPS College to their home area as well as direct referrals from Local Authorities unable to find suitable specialist provision. Both feature the same standards as characterise this proposal which also benefits from subsequent lessons learned.

The Proposal for the Birchwood site (formerly Needlewood) will provide long term accommodation for young people from the Barnsley and surrounding areas with autism, who may have completed a programme at the regional AALPS (Adolescent to Adult Life Preparation Service) College in Scunthorpe and who are now ready to move to a long-term placement in their home area, offering a purpose-built environment designed to meet their needs. As well as the shortfall identified in Appendix 2, there is no service currently local to Barnsley that provides continuity of approach with AALPS College. Continuity is vital to maintaining the progress made by young people at AALPS.

**At the time of writing (October 2008) there are nine young people from the South Yorkshire area at AALPS College who are scheduled to move on to long-term accommodation as part of their programme over the next two to three years.**

Experience shows that, once the development is known to be under way, a demand will be created for the remaining places from direct referrals, most of whom will be inappropriately placed at present. The extent of inappropriate placements for existing autistic adults and the concern of parents of autistic children as to how their long-term needs will be met is amply illustrated by the selection of comments taken from the National Autistic Society's (NAS) "I Exist" website (Appendix 3). Amongst the key features in the report are:

- 63% of adults do not have enough support to meet their needs,
- 92% of parents worry about their child's future when they can no longer care for them.
- 60% of parents believe lack of appropriate services has led to an increase in support needs.

**By providing appropriate support locally, the Birchwood project represents a significant investment in meeting the area's future needs.**

## **6. BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL**

There are three key benefits of the proposal:

**6.1 For the Young Person with Autism:** Young people with autism and a range of other conditions benefit from structured specialist support in order to sustain their maximum potential for independence. Where appropriate therapeutic and life-skills support can be given in a consistent manner, in their home area close to family and friends, it enables them to enjoy the best possible quality of life in the long term as a full member of both their specialist and the wider communities. The location of the service is significant. The Birchwood site provides an excellent setting. It is quiet and secluded, with grounds that are spacious and private, offering a safe space in which to develop life and social skills. Whilst the site is accessible to the full range of amenities in Barnsley, it also provides the peace and privacy from the outside world that individuals with autism find so important as part of their individual programme.

**6.2 For the Family:** Many families of a young person with autism will have spent years working within the system to obtain appropriate services for their loved one, to make sure that they have the best possible start in life. This may include the need for the young person to move away from home for a period to obtain the specialist care, education and support that they need to maximise their future potential. However, once they are ready to move on to an adult placement, in almost all cases they will want to return to their home area, to be near family and friends and able to play a full part in the local community. **This proposal will resolve the problem of maintaining contact in the long term for eight South Yorkshire families, in an accessible location close to the major road network, public transport and Barnsley urban centre.**

**6.3 For the Local Authority and the Community:** Individuals with autistic spectrum disorders who do not receive the support that they require do not progress satisfactorily towards meeting their potential for independence. This has a series of consequences for the community as a whole, as follows:

- **Economic:** Individuals who have not developed their full potential are unlikely to be able to achieve and sustain employment or contribute fully to the life of their community. Their situation may well deteriorate and for want of appropriate support close to home they may become increasingly forgotten in an expensive, distant placement that may simply reinforce their dependence into the long-term.
- **Policy.** It is established Government policy, on the basis of best practice and cost-effectiveness, for young people with autism to be offered placements in the least restrictive environments possible, preferably within their home area. The ultimate aim is to support people to live independently, but where this is not feasible the provision of appropriate support in purpose-designed local residential accommodation is the best option.
- **Quality of Provision:** The right environment makes a tremendous difference to the wellbeing of young people with autism. This proposal includes a purpose-built design tailored to meet the needs of the client group. The quality of design and finish, as well as the use of assistive technologies to meet the needs of people with autistic spectrum disorders is amply demonstrated in a range of Options Group facilities. AALPS College near Scunthorpe, plus the New Options (Barton) School at Barton upon Humber are facilities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region that are daily testament to this attention to detail and the Group's approach to valuing individuals through their environment. Good design matters. The proposed redevelopment will enhance the overall aspect of the site as well as being fit for its declared purpose. At the same time, it will provide a tremendous service to the community.

**6.4 Employment Creation.** The Birchwood proposal will eventually lead to the creation of around 40 jobs, the vast majority of which will be for local people. These are skilled jobs, with high-quality training and excellent career development opportunities, both locally and across the Options Group.

The majority of staff will be employed to provide cover on a shift basis. Exact numbers will depend on the actual young people in residence but, based on experience of other services at least 6 staff will be needed to cover the day shift with a minimum of four at night. To provide cover throughout the 24 hour period at least three complete shifts will be needed. In addition, there will be a range of posts covering management, administration, maintenance housekeeping and clinical support, which will mainly cover office hours and some of which may be shared with Shortwood.

The vast majority will be in the Care staff group, supported by a smaller number of trained and accredited professionals (such as psychologists or speech and language therapists) primarily on a part-time basis, together with Administrative and Maintenance staff, all under the supervision of a small, expert management team.

This work requires a balance of new and experienced staff who share certain key attributes and can apply their intelligence to learning a series of specialist skills and approaches and acquire nationally-recognised qualifications as a result.

Options Group services always seek to recruit and train a very high proportion of staff locally. This "grow your own" approach has been extremely beneficial in other areas, where the presence of a new Options Group facility has led to the expansion of the local workforce in the care sector. In pursuit of this objective the Group is keen to work collaboratively with local training initiatives.

Because of the specialist nature of the work, the best recruits are not always those from elsewhere in the care sector, or with particular qualifications. In the past the group has successfully recruited former steelworkers, engineers, policemen, office and factory workers, as well as graduates and those starting their first job to train in care and support work.

This approach makes services such as Birchwood particularly valuable in areas undergoing regeneration or with a skills imbalance.

**Shortwood.** The proximity of the Shortwood development will provide increased career opportunities for individuals to progress within the Options Group locally and widen the range of skills required. The Birchwood and Shortwood services each have distinctive functions but they also complement each other in the services they provide (see Section 4 above).

This will encourage a more extensive programme of recruitment to expand the care sector locally, provide more professional and career development opportunities within the area and contribute to greater job satisfaction and staff retention. These opportunities are greatly appreciated in neighbouring Options Group services in other parts of the country.

**Training.** The Options Group has its own accredited Qualifications Centre (NVQ Verifications from Levels 2-5), which is based in Barnsley and oversees Options highly regarded internal and external Autism training programmes and seminars on behalf of the Group. Options Staff working in the Barnsley area will benefit from integrated training covering both Birchwood and Shortwood and will contribute to training across the care sector..

The presence that the Group will develop locally will enable it to make an increased contribution to the success of local training and employment initiatives, in collaboration with the Local Authority, Colleges and Employers Groups.

Options Autism services have a good reputation as an employer, for the following reasons:

- Competitive rates of pay and staff benefits.
- Full, high quality training that exceeds national standards.
- A supportive structure at work to help staff to provide excellent standards of service.
- The opportunity to progress through a professional career structure to achieve one's personal potential, with the support of a personal development plan.

The quality of the Options Group's training and professional development in the field of Autism is such that the programmes it makes available to professionals from outside the group and families, as well as Options staff are always heavily over-subscribed.

## **7. SCALE, LOCATION AND COMMERCIAL VIABILITY**

The experience of the Options Group demonstrates that there is a minimum size for a specialist service of this type needed to sustain the degree of trained staff cover, professional support and range of facilities required to deliver the quality of care and support required by the young people involved. Based on previous experience, normally a figure of 12 would be considered the minimum for this service. However, in view of the planning issues in relation to this site, a bare minimum figure of 8 has been calculated. This creates the essential community to ensure the following needs are met:

- The need for young people starting off in adult life to be part of an "autism-friendly" community, with appropriate support and a choice of companion in similar situations with whom they can learn, socialise and make friends. Eight is the bare minimum to achieve this aim.
- The need to be able to provide the range of facilities and resources to ensure that these young people can be actively encouraged to engage in activities that are beneficial to their long-term health and wellbeing and prepare them for future integration into the community. Flexible Internal and external spaces have a key role in providing this environment. These enable activities to be organised on an individual or collective basis, as required for each individual.
- The need to provide appropriate levels of trained staff, supported by acknowledged professional experts, to maintain the delivery of a viable autism-friendly service.
- The ability to use staff resources flexibly to meet short term fluctuations, whilst maintaining standards.

The building was previously used for a less specialised purpose and its re-use for this project could not be considered on the basis that it would be unfit for purpose and unviable in terms of size, layout and general condition. The improved layout of the new building, with two self-contained units of four places each and an autism-friendly design and features, supported by the necessary levels of professional input, provides a greatly improved layout. Such a facility can only be financially viable as a stand-alone service for the Barnsley and surrounding area at a bare minimum size of eight beds, providing a good balance between the concept of an "ordinary house in an ordinary street" and the economic provision of the range of support required by individuals with medium to high dependency needs. Young people with autism require safe and spacious environments, both internal and external, where they can choose to be alone or socialise as they practice their independent living skills.

Whilst the site is ideal in terms of its location and ability to provide the type of environment that will be beneficial to future residents, the existing building on the site falls well below the needs of the service that will be provided.

**Barnsley as a location:** As a base to provide local accommodation for the South Yorkshire area, Barnsley is ideal for the Options Group for the following reasons:

- **Communications:** The proximity of the site to excellent motorway links makes it very accessible to the whole of South Yorkshire, whilst being very accessible to Barnsley.
- **Environment:** Barnsley is located in a very attractive area of the country, with very good access to a wide range of rural and urban amenities.
- **Amenity:** Barnsley is just the right size to offer all of the amenities of an urban centre whilst retaining a strong community feel. A thoughtfully-designed, safe and pleasant environment, such as Birchwood, is essential to the long-term wellbeing of this client group. The grounds offer a safe environment for outdoor recreation and relaxation, in preparation for community integration. This can be a long-term process and the ability to concentrate on developing the necessary skills is greatly assisted by a lack of distractions. Thus the location enables community integration to be programmed and controlled to suit individual needs and anxieties.
- **Workforce:** The Group is confident that it will be able to recruit and develop the workforce it needs in the Barnsley area to provide this important specialist service.

## **8. LINKS / LIAISON / INTEGRATION WITH LOCAL SERVICES**

The proposal lends itself ideally to meeting needs identified by Local Authorities in the area for the provision of services. The Options Group is proud of its record in working collaboratively with families and Placing Authorities and this team approach to the provision of services is a fundamental principle which is carried into this proposal.

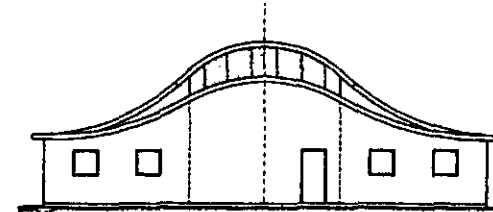
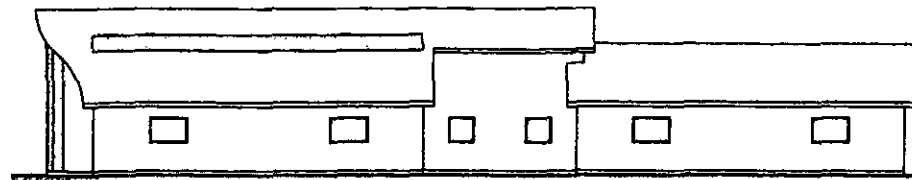
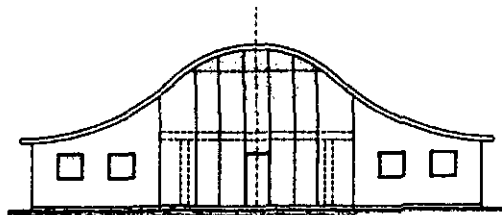
## **9. SUPPORT**

The proposal's benefits include the extent to which it meets a need which is increasingly identified both by parents of children with autism, Local Authorities and the general public. This is a service which enjoys significant support:

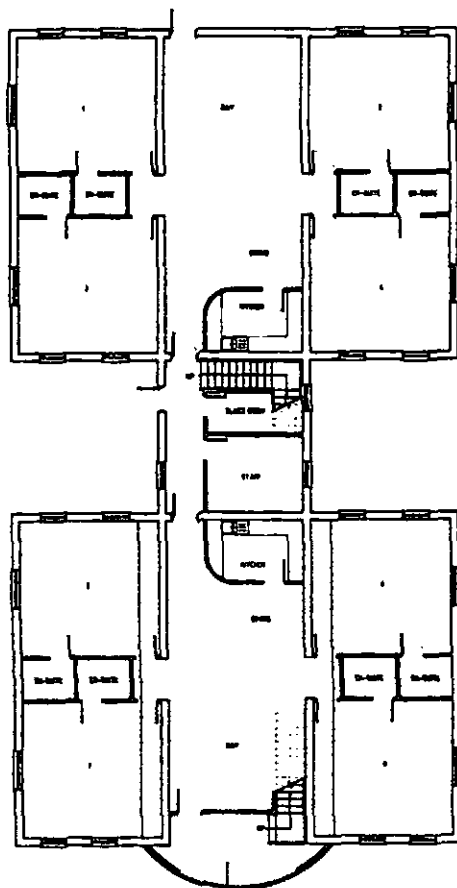
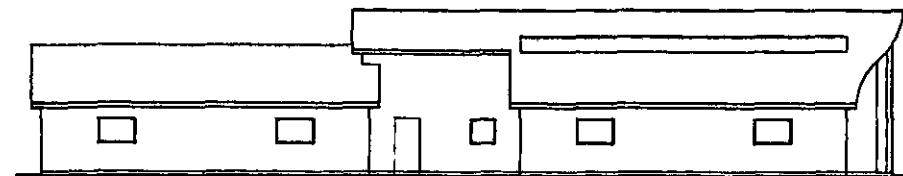
- 9.1 **Support for the need for long-term provision for young people with autism:** Appendix 3 reproduces a summary of the results of a recent National Autistic Society survey and resulting "I Exist" campaign, which illustrated the national shortage of accommodation for this group. More details of the "I Exist" campaign can be found on the NAS website ([www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)).
- 9.2 **Support from Professionals:** Appendix 4 provides copies of letters of support received from key professionals working in this area with a detailed and intimate knowledge of the value of and need for this particular service.
- 9.3 **Locality Support:** Appendix 5 includes examples of support for the project from in and around the area.

## **10. CATEGORY OF USE**

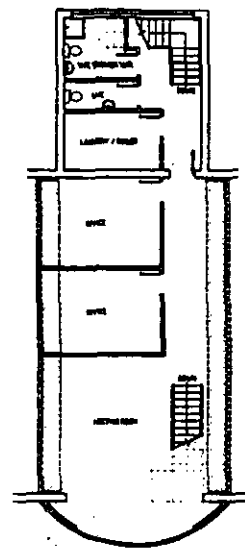




PROPOSED ELEVATIONS 1:100



GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:100



FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1:100

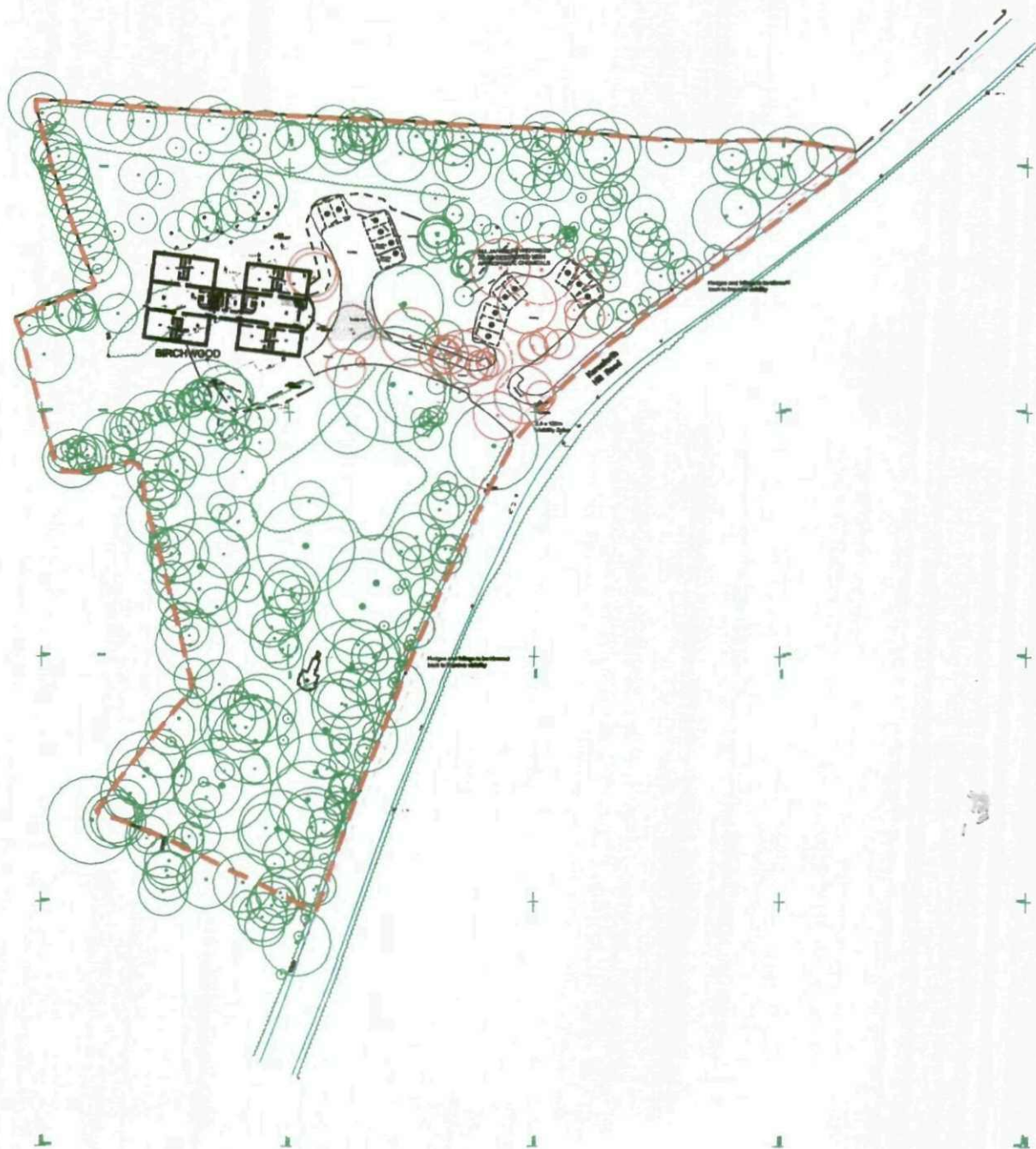
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| Client:  | Shelton Development           |
| Project: | Proposed New Facility         |
| Drawn:   | Proposed Plans and Elevations |

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| Client Group Ltd. |     | Date:  | 02     |
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|--------------|-----------------------|
| Job Location | Birchwood Development |
| Description  | Proposed New Facility |
| Drawing      | Proposed Site Plan    |

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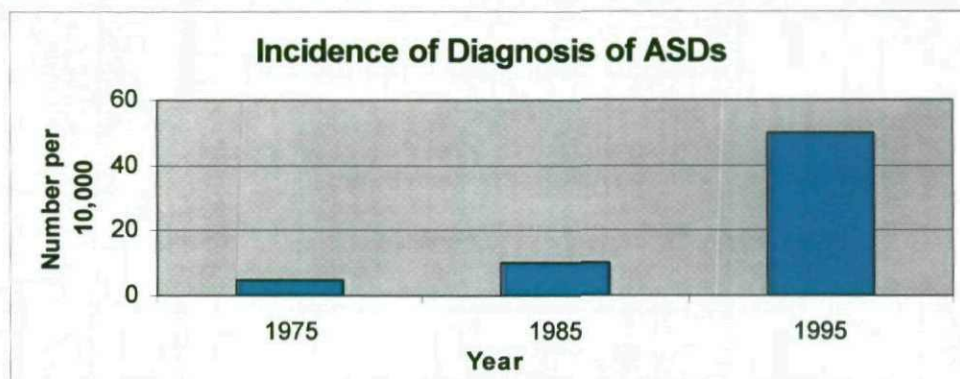
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| Revisions |     |         |     |

## APPENDIX 2

### INCIDENCE OF AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS IN THE UK AND THE YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGIONS

#### National Issues

- Over recent years the diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders in the UK has increased from between 5 to 10 children per 10,000 in the 1970s to between 50 and 80 in the 1990s. This **ten-fold increase** in identification has led to substantial growth in services.

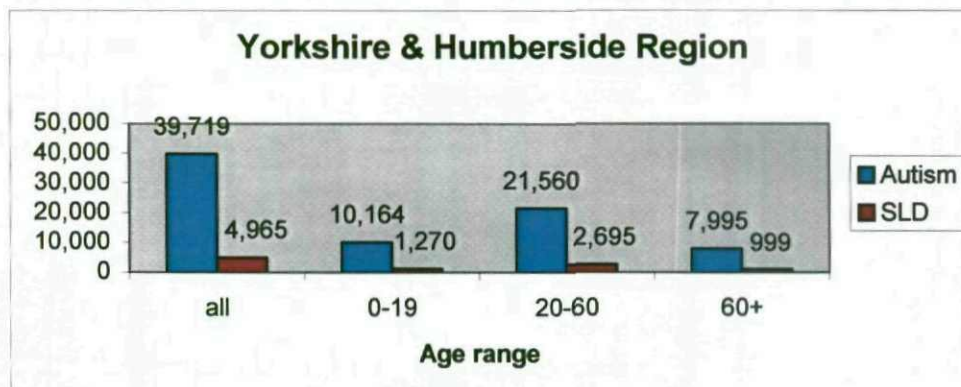


However, professionals in the field continue to report that the additional resources available for people with autism are full and still further provision is required.

- As yet the bulk of this expanded group identified as having autism are being provided for by children's services and there will therefore be an increasing number of young people requiring services over the coming 5 to 10 years. The National Autistic Society's (NAS) "I Exist" campaign during 2008 has pointed out the shortfall in long-term accommodation for adults with autism and the fact that 92% of parents are concerned that inadequate provision will be available for their child when they are no longer able to support them.
- There is increasing agreement amongst professionals that many of the approaches that have helped to support those with autism are often also appropriate for those with severe learning difficulties.
- All providers – LEAs, Social Service Departments, health services and the charitable and independent sector – have been rapidly developing direct service provision, from diagnosis and assessment, through mainstream and special schooling to residential and day services for young people. There has been much less development of the additional specialist support services that these new services require.

#### Yorkshire and Humberside Region

- Yorkshire & Humberside's population of was almost 5 million at the 2001 census. An incidence of 80 per 10,000 implies the following regional incidence of ASD or severe learning difficulty



## Identified Needs for Clinical Support Services and Research and Proposed Response

### The Northern Region

- Certain specialist services have been developed by the Options Group in this region over the past 5 years and a significant level of highly qualified individuals recruited to operate these services.
- Despite this the need for further services has been identified by Options Group, as follows:-
  - For tailored specialist services for those whose needs cannot be met by existing services,
  - For additional clinical and professional support services for people with a high level of dependency within an Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
  - For the continuing development of specialist long-term residential facilities for young people as they become adults, to meet a shortfall in all areas.

### Need for Specialist Clinical Support Services

- The NAS lists 270 organisations in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region for people with autism; including:

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| ○ Schools:                | 47 |
| ○ Residential services:   | 27 |
| ○ Day services:           | 14 |
| ○ PCTs:                   | 34 |
| ○ LEAs & Social services: | 15 |

Many of these require additional specialist support services. For example:

- One PCT has no psychiatrist support for learning disabilities and has indicated a willingness to purchase limited specialist support services from AALPS.
- It is known that at least two independent agencies in the region are keen to purchase additional professional support services if they could be made available.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some local providers in Yorkshire and Humberside do not have adequate access to professional support services.
- Unmet demand has been identified for specialist assessments of sensory difficulties for people with autism.

### In Summary

- Demand for the following specialist clinical, residential or day services has been identified:
  - A service within a hospital setting for people with autism and additional medical/psychiatric conditions.
  - A service for people with autism and sensory impairments.
  - A service for people with a dual diagnosis of Autism and acute psychiatric disorders.
  - Specialist day care for hard to manage clients.
  - Continued incremental provision of long-term specialist residential provision for young adults with autism and complex support needs.

## APPENDIX 3

### **"I EXIST" – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY'S SURVEY AND SUBSEQUENT CAMPAIGN ON SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

**NAS have recently started a campaign called 'I Exist' to highlight the lack of support for young people and adults with Autism.**

The campaign is based on their report that states the following key findings:

- Nearly two thirds (63%) of adults with autism do not have enough support to meet their needs.
- 92% of parents are worried about their son or daughter's future when they are no longer able to care for them.
- 61% of adults with autism rely on their family financially and 40% live with their parents.
- 60% of parents believed that a lack of support has led to higher support needs later on.
- At least 1 in 3 adults with autism are experiencing severe mental health difficulties due to a lack of support.
- 67% of local authorities do not keep a record of how many adults with autism there are in their area and 65% do not even know how many adults with autism they actually support.

The following quotes have been taken from thousands of messages left on the NAS's campaign website [www.think-differently.org.uk](http://www.think-differently.org.uk) by Campaign Champions, Parents and Adults with Autism.

#### **Campaign Champions**

Care Services Minister Ivan Lewis said: "This campaign will make a major contribution to tackling the ignorance and prejudice faced by people with autism and their families. Our commitment to Independent Living for Disabled Adults and planned New Deal for Carers will help to make a major impact on the support available to adults with autism and parents. We will work with the NAS and other organisations to ensure services have a greater awareness through access to specialist expertise on the distinct needs of adults with autism."

Actress and NAS President, Jane Asher, said: "For too long adults with autism have found themselves isolated and ignored; they struggle to access support and are often dependent on their families. It does not have to be like this - 'I Exist' is the message from adults with autism who want their needs understood and the barriers to support removed. The right help at the right time can have a profound effect - we are calling on the government to think, act, and transform lives."

Model and mother, Emma Noble, said: "Being a mum to a son who has autism I was naturally concerned to learn that there is a real lack of support for adults with autism. My son will grow up to be an adult with autism and more needs to be done by the Government and social and healthcare professionals to ensure that anyone with autism, child and adult, receives suitable and tailored support to help them throughout their lives. Please back the NAS and show how much you think the Government should be doing to make a difference to the lives of those affected by autism."

Actress, Helena Bonham-Carter, said: "The Government must sit up and take notice - more has to be done to help adults who have autism. Right now too many are 'hidden away' and are often reliant upon ageing parents for support. There is an urgent need for appropriate services and support for adults with autism - please support the NAS and urge the Government to take action."

Actress, Sheila Hancock OBE, said: "We would like the government to recognise that more needs to be done to help adults who have autism. Too many are 'hidden away' and are often reliant upon ageing parents for support. The Government should take action to help people with autism and provide the services and support they need to achieve their potential."

Chef and broadcaster, Antony Worrall-Thompson, said: "Autism is a complex disability and this must be recognised. All too often adults with autism can fall through the gap between learning disability and mental health services – and more must be done to ensure that action is taken to help them before they reach a crisis point. I call upon the Government to make every effort possible to help those affected by this disability. Taking action will transform lives."

Singer, actress and CBeebies presenter, Sarah-Jane Honeywell, said: "Every child with autism will grow to be an adult with autism - and I am shocked that there is no record anywhere of how many people that might be. The UK Government urgently needs to find out just how many adults there are living with autism in the UK right now and take the necessary steps to help these individuals and provide the services and support they need."

Actor, Ben Miles, said: "So many people think that autism is a disability that only affects children but each and every child with autism will grow to be an adult with autism - and it's shocking to think that we simply have no idea just how many people this may be. There is a long way to go to ensure that people with autism can achieve their potential in society but the first step is for the UK Government to take the lead and undertake the necessary research to find out just how many adults there are living with autism in the UK right now."

Soprano singer and TV personality, Lesley Garrett CBE, said: "It's shocking that so many adults with autism are effectively 'hidden away' and are all too often reliant upon ageing parents to support them. It shouldn't be like this. We must encourage anyone affected by autism to achieve their potential and the Government must recognise that they have to take action."

TV presenter, Gaby Roslin said: "Right now the future for adults with autism looks pretty bleak - it is impossible to provide adequate services and support if you don't know how many people this is for. That's why I am so shocked that there are no reliable studies or records of the number of adults with autism. The Government has the power to change this and must take action."

Actress, Tamzin Outhwaite, said: "Adults living with autism are often isolated and ignored; there are so many obstacles preventing them from accessing the services and support they so desperately need. There has to be more training amongst health and social care professionals - the right support at the right time will change lives. Why not visit [www.think-differently.org.uk](http://www.think-differently.org.uk) to find out what you can do to help."

Actor, Robert Powell, said: "It must be incredibly isolating when you are unable to access the support that you so desperately need and this is why the Government must do something and find out just how many people are affected. Autism is a serious, lifelong disability and there must be support and service provision for adults with the condition. The current situation is simply not acceptable."

Prunella Scales, CBE, said: "The right support at the right time can make a huge difference but without knowing the number of adults who have autism it's impossible accurately to plan and deliver the appropriate services they need. We need to know how many people have autism to be able to start to support and help them achieve their potential in society."

Timothy West, CBE, said: "According to this study there is a huge gap between the level of need and the support available for people with autism once they become adults. Far too many adults with the condition face a lack of recognition and understanding, a lack of suitable services and a lack of support, all of which can have a devastating impact on adults and their families."

TV presenter, Eamonn Holmes said: "The Government must make changes. It is not acceptable that adults with autism can fall through the gap between learning disability and mental health services. Everyone with autism needs appropriate support so please back the NAS and call for the Government to think, act, and transform lives."

TV presenter, Ruth Langsford said: "How can we expect support for adults with autism when there is no record of exactly how many people are affected by this lifelong and disabling condition? I want to see a change to the support and services for anyone affected by autism. Receiving the right support at the right time can have a huge impact on peoples' lives."

Weather presenter, Siân Lloyd, said: "The Government should sit up and take notice of this survey, the largest ever of adults with autism. They have a duty to ensure that their needs must be understood and I urge everyone to back the NAS and ask the Government to commit to finding out just how many people have autism in the UK. This would be a step in the right direction towards meeting the needs of adults with autism and ensuring they can reach their potential."

## **Parents**

Nicola F said "My 5 year old son has autism. I worry about him so much now, but I also have a pain deep down to the pit of my stomach about how he will be as an adult. I hope that supporting this

campaign will enable my son to get the future he deserves. We are all human beings ... we should all have an equal chance to live like it!"

Susan M said "I am a Mum to two sons with autism and Asperger's Syndrome ages 16 and 12. They are wonderful boys but I do worry about them for when they are adults. There is just not enough help or guidance in the local community. My 16 year old son worries a lot about life when he reaches adulthood. I would like to see more support given to families helping their adult children with ASD settle into work placements and living in the community with as much independence as they can".

Douglas D said "My son is 9 years old and is on the autistic spectrum. He's a lovely wee boy but I, like the others here, worry for him when he gets older. He gets loads of support from a terrific school he attends. He also gets lots of love and support from family and friends."

Wendy G said "I am the parent of an autistic child but also work with youngsters with disabilities and feel the lack of services, support and understanding of autism and people who have this condition is a disgrace."

John R said "My son is autistic. I need to know he will be looked after when I can no longer do so".

Debra B said "My son is on the autistic spectrum. He is still young (9) but I am afraid what will happen when he is an adult: will he have the support to enable him to be independent?"

Annemarie B said "My son is an autistic adult of 20. He NEEDS to be supported to live independently. He has a disability, but in a year or two will have to prove his right to financial help. The forms overwhelm him as does the ability to find his way around without getting lost".

Sue M said "My little boy, who is 6 years old, has autism and I want to support / *Exist* as obviously one day he will be an adult and will need all the support he can get."

Andy C said "We have a four year old daughter who is autistic. Fortunately she has recently had a statement so we know that help is at hand for when she starts full time school. However, I know that we will face difficult times ahead of us as a family unit, because the journey so far has been both physically and emotionally tiring. That said, my daughter is a beautiful, lovable and funny little girl who is intelligent for both her age and condition, but is misunderstood as she lacks the social awareness that is so necessary to be accepted by children of her age. My wife, myself and her brother love her unconditionally and will look after for as long as she needs it, but what happens when she becomes an adult and we are no longer there for her? It would be unfair to put this burden on her brother who is only one year older. We need to raise the profile and awareness of this condition so that people like my daughter will be able to contribute to society, be understood by society, and hopefully, understand society."

Joanne W said ". I am frightened for my son. We all are affected by autism. Life will never be the same. We need to show the way and support and protect our fellow human beings."

Gillian S said "I need to know my son will be cared for when I am no longer around."

Debbie H said "both my teenage kids have autism and lets face it one day they will be adults with autism. The services out there are abysmal, and I want things to change before they do become adults."

Julie C said "It's about time people with autism were recognised. It has been hidden too long and as parents we have struggled on our own for long enough."

### **Adults with Autism**

John H said "I am John and I have a dog Rocky. I cope up to an extent, but agree that support is lacking."

Clare-Louise said "I am 26 years old and was not diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome until I was 21 years old. An understanding GP saw the signs of it in me (I already suspected AS and had asked him about it) after plunging into a deep depression after a series of job losses. Two years later I acquired a Social Worker through voluntary advocacy from a local NAS Lancashire manager and eventually, in January 2007, I moved into supported living. I am not without emotional scars however: the stress of spending a lifetime unsupported, living alone for 3 years, took its toll on me. I am regularly suicidal and have been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder as a result of the emotional distress I suffered, spending a lifetime misunderstood and rejected."

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM SECTOR PROFESSIONALS AND INTERESTED PARTIES**

The proposal has met with enthusiasm from many professionals within the sector who are well aware both of the lack of appropriate provision and the quality of the proposed service. This appendix includes copies of 8 letters of support from professionals who appreciate the value of this service.

A local parents group, Rainbow Shine, have expressed their support for the Options Group's proposals to improve Autism services in the area.

Appendix 5 also includes a petition of support from parents and professionals from the Barnsley area.

# Cruckton Hall School

Cruckton Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 8PR  
Tel: 01743 860 206 Fax: 01743 860 941 E-mail: pdm@cruckton.com



Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

05 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Development of Autism Services for Young People at Birchwood, the former  
Needlewood Children's Home site in Barnsley  
Support for Planning Application – Ref:**

I am writing to you to support the above application to develop a much needed residential service for young people with autism in the Barnsley area.

As a professional working within special needs services for young people with autism, I am regularly struck by the continuing shortfall in appropriate provision for young people as they move towards independence. It appears that the improvement in techniques and design of environments that has enabled young people with disabilities to progress so much further towards independence has concentrated on schools and colleges at the expense of move-on accommodation for young people. The result is that many young people fail to sustain the progress made and need increased support as a result.

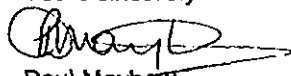
A large part of the problem is a simple matter of supply and demand. At present, demand for services for these young people is outstripping the supply of appropriate services by a considerable margin. Furthermore, a lot of what is available is not purpose designed or built, thereby reducing the potential benefits which a well designed environment can offer to young people.

It is my considered view that the Birchwood proposal will provide exactly the right environment and service structure to help address a substantial proportion of unmet demand in the most effective manner conceivable. The design will include a number of "autism-friendly" features which will directly benefit the young people. Furthermore, an attractive redevelopment of the site to Options Group standards will undoubtedly provide a service which is an asset to the local community as well as providing skilled employment with excellent career prospects.

In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

  
Paul Mayhew  
Headmaster

Meadow Bank House  
Eaton Constantine  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire  
SY5 6RF

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

13 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

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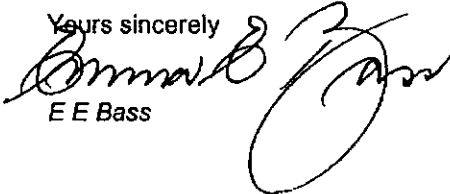
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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

  
E E Bass

9 Moorside  
Preston  
Nr. Wellington  
Telford  
Shropshire  
TF6 6DH

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

11 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

*K L Stubley*

Mrs K Breen  
15 Candleberry Meadow  
Red Lake  
Telford  
Shropshire  
TF1 5TD

10 June 2008

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

Dear Sir/Madam,

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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



Mrs Breen

35 Hermitage Close  
Westbury  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire  
SY5 9QL

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

09 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

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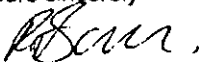
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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

  
Miss Rachael Ball

Charlotte J Owens  
27 Orchard Croft  
Llandrinio  
Llanymynech  
Powys  
SY22 6US

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

06 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

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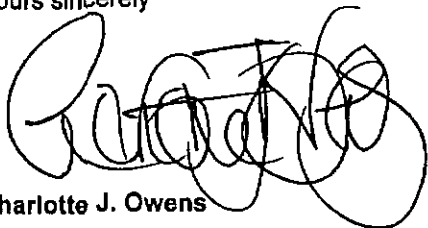
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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlotte J. Owens', written over a horizontal line.

Charlotte J. Owens

Sarah Lee  
2 West Street  
Shrewsbury  
SY1 2JN

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

06 June 2008

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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



Sarah Lee

8 Hollinwood  
Whixall  
Whitchurch  
SY13 2NW

Planning and Transportation Services  
Development Control Team  
Barnsley MBC

06 June 2008

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In conclusion, I warmly recommend your committee to approve this planning application.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

*AJ Birch*

Mrs Alison Birch

## **APPENDIX 5**

## **SUPPORT FROM IN AND AROUND BARNSELY**

The following 25 signatures were obtained from delegates attending a seminar on how to support young people with Autism which was held at Priory Campus Hall, Barnsley, on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Delegates included professionals working in social services, health and education, as well as parents and other family members of children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Plans for the proposal were on display for delegates to view, as indicated in the introductory statement.

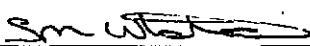
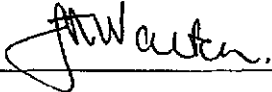
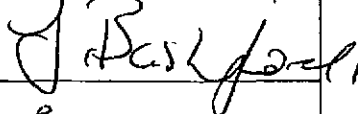
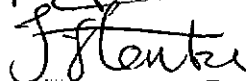
It is anticipated from a range of local contacts that a quantity of individual letters of support from Barnsley residents will be submitted separately before the conclusion of the consultation period.

## SUPPORT FOR PLANNING APPLICATION BIRCHWOOD DEVELOPMENT

**Development of a residential service for young people with autism  
and associated learning and physical disabilities**

The Proposal for the Birchwood site (formerly Needlewood Children's Home) will provide a home for life for young people from the Barnsley and surrounding areas with autism and associated disabilities. This will be a purpose-built service, integrated into the local community, with state of the art design and facilities replacing the current, outdated building.

I have seen the plans for the above development and would urge the Planning Committee to approve this proposal.

| Print Name     | Address                 | Signature                                                                             |
|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Susan Wharton  | 8noorside Ave Penistone |  |
| Joelynn Walton | Sheffield               |  |
| DONNA BOOTH    | BOLTON - ON - DEANE -   |  |
| CHERRY WILSON  | " "                     |  |
| J-Baskford     | " "                     |  |
| Imortien       | " "                     |  |
| GILL KURT      | Rotherham               |  |
| Anthony Foster | Sheffield               |  |
| J. Stent       | Barnsley                |  |
| WOMIS          | Leeds                   |  |

| Print Name           | Address            | Signature    |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Penny Branson        | Bawtry Doncaster   | P Branson    |
| GORDON FERN          | Preston            | Gordon Fern  |
| Janice Jinks         | Doncaster          | J Jinks      |
| Debbie Hughes        | Sheffield          | D Hughes     |
| Kell Hobbs           | Nottingham         | K Hobbs      |
| Vickie McLaughlin    | Rotherham          | V McLaughlin |
| Carla Marie Fletcher | Doncaster          | C Fletcher   |
| Nicola Keene         | Pentefract         | N Keene      |
| D CLARK              | RETFORD            | D Clark      |
| C BRAUN              | DONCASTER          | C Braun      |
| L. Myers             | Dodworth, Barnsley | L Myers      |
| C. Myers             | Doncaster          | C Myers      |
| EVA KEYS             | Scunthorpe         | E Keys       |
| RACHEL CORREAU       | BARNSLY            | R Correu     |
| MARK JACKSON         | BARNSLY            | M Jackson    |
|                      |                    |              |
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## APPENDIX 6

## GENERAL INFORMATION



**Options  
Group**

# LIFELONG SUPPORT PROGRAMME

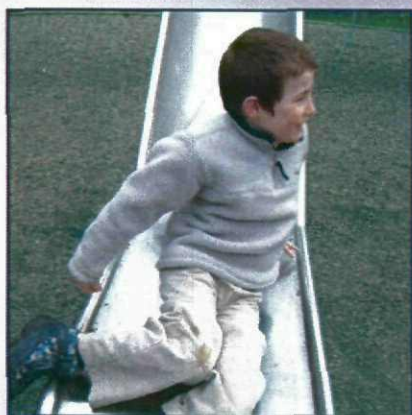
FOR PEOPLE WITH AN AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

Developing individual pathways using a consistent approach  
to increase long-term success for individuals.



## New Options

SCHOOLS for  
young people  
aged 8 to 19

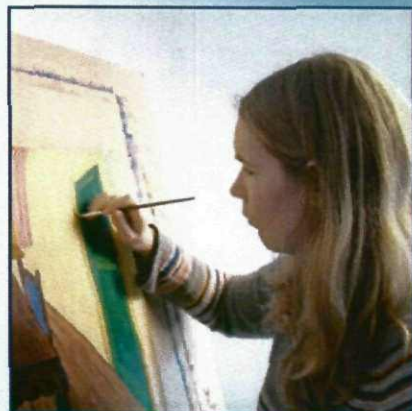


- For children aged 8-19 with ASD and associated difficulties
- Integrated, holistic specialist care and education through a network of residential special schools
- Individually assessed and tailored programmes
- 52-week placements available
- High educational standards - child specific targets
- Excellent outcomes
- Expert multi-disciplinary teams

Cruckton Hall - Shropshire (Asperger's Syndrome specialism)  
New Options - Barton upon Humber, North Lincs  
New Options - Kinsale, Holywell, North Wales  
New Options - Higford, Shropshire (exceptional complex needs)

## AALPS COLLEGES

TRANSITION  
PROGRAMMES  
16 to 30 years



- Adolescent to Adult Life Preparation Service
- Key transition between school and adult life
- 16-30 age group
- Comprehensive, individually assessed programmes
- Builds on progress at New Options
- Aims to develop the skills needed for adult living
- Individuals progress at their own pace

AALPS College (North) - near Scunthorpe, North Lincs  
AALPS College (Midlands) - near Worcester



## Wider Options

LIFELONG  
SUPPORT



- For those individuals needing medium to long-term support to succeed in adult life
- Individually-designed solutions
- Emphasis on enabling choice and further independence at a pace to suit the individual
- Range of service options:
  - Specialist Residential Services
    - North Lincs
    - Leeds
    - Worcester
  - Respite and Outreach Support
  - Specialist Support for Daily Life

**Continuity is provided throughout the Options Lifelong Support Programme,  
through the OPTIONS APPROACH.**

#### **Lifelong Learning**

*Autism is for life, our life skills learning provides the tools to make it enjoyable.*

#### **Individually-Tailored Programmes**

*Professional assessments produce individually-tailored programmes for unique needs.*

#### **Communication Tools**

*We use a variety of tools to alleviate the frustrations caused by impairments in communications.*

#### **Measurable Progress**

*We use SMART targets, evaluated regularly to measure progress and plan future programmes.*

#### **Low-Arousal Settings**

*Designed to encourage concentration and progress in a calm environment.*

## **The Options Approach**

**Helping people with  
Autism make sense of  
the world they live in**

#### **Structured Environments**

*Anxiety around change is minimised by our predictable, structured programmes.*

#### **Flexibility of Thought**

*We increase flexibility of thought through a range of experiences and use of community facilities.*

#### **Multi-Agency Approach**

*All of our services are delivered as part of a partnership with families and statutory agencies.*

#### **Vocational Services**

*We support individuals, as appropriate, to acquire skills that can lead to real work opportunities.*



Should you require any further information on the Options Group Lifelong Support Service,  
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