



## PLANNING STATEMENT

FOR:

# SOUTH WOLVERHAMPTON & BILSTON ACADEMY WOLVERHAMPTON BSF PROGRAMME SEPTEMBER 2010

PREPARED BY:



ON BEHALF OF INSPIRE

# CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1.0 INSTRUCTIONS AND INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.0 THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.0 PLANNING HISTORY.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5.0 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan 2001-2011.....</i>	
<i>PPS 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development.....</i>	
<i>PPS5 : Planning for the Historic Environment.....</i>	
<i>PPS9 : Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.....</i>	
<i>PPG13 : Transport.....</i>	
<i>PPG14 : Development on Unstable Land.....</i>	
<i>PPG17 : Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation.....</i>	
<i>PPS24 : Planning and Noise.....</i>	
<i>PPS25 : Development and Flood Risk.....</i>	
<i>Sport England Planning Policy Statement : Playing Fields.....</i>	
<b>6.0 SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL REPORTS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Heritage.....</i>	
<i>Landscape.....</i>	
<i>Ecology.....</i>	
<i>Transport.....</i>	
<i>Engineering and Ground Conditions.....</i>	
<i>Flood Risk.....</i>	
<i>Noise Impact.....</i>	
<b>7.0 KEY ISSUES AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Need for the Development.....</i>	
<i>The Principle of Development.....</i>	
<i>Suitability of the Site.....</i>	
<i>Heritage Matters.....</i>	
<i>Consideration of External Sports Facilities.....</i>	
<i>Community Involvement.....</i>	
<i>Sustainability.....</i>	
<b>8.0 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>36</b>

## 1.0 INSTRUCTIONS AND INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 *The Proposal*

- 1.1.1 The planning statement has been prepared by Tweedale Limited and is submitted on behalf of *Inspire* for the erection of a new educational establishment, the South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy (SWABA), to the south of the Bilston Town Centre. The new Academy is one of two which is being developed within the City under the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme over the next few years.
- 1.1.2 The development which forms the basis of the planning application itself proposes the demolition of the existing buildings, known as the South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy, Bilston campus, the redevelopment of the whole site and its replacement with a new Academy together with associated outdoor sports facilities and play areas and other ancillary facilities.
- 1.1.3 The application now submitted to the Wolverhampton City Council (WCC) seeks to gain full planning permission for the following proposed development :-

***“Demolition of Existing School and Associated Buildings and the Erection of New Educational Facilities, Associated Outdoor Sports and Play Facilities, Vehicular Accesses, Car Parking, Landscaping and Ancillary Works”.***

- 1.1.4 This Planning Statement forms one of a number of documents being submitted in support of the planning application which include the following:-
- ***Application Forms and Certificates of Ownership and Notices***
  - ***Plans, elevations and illustrative material***
  - ***Design and Access Statement***
  - ***Transport Statement and Travel Plan***
  - ***Environmental Information (Ecology, Landscape, Environmental, Heritage/Archaeology etc.)***
  - ***Engineering Information (Ground Conditions, Contamination, Flood Risk and Drainage etc.)***
  - ***Noise Assessment***
  - ***Development Options Appraisal***
- 1.1.5 It has been determined by the WCC that, although the site is larger than 0.5 hectares and falls within the Schedule 2 type of development as defined under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999, it is the opinion of the LPA that the preparation and submission of a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required in support of the current application.

## **1.2 Background to the Proposal**

- 1.2.1 The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme is the Central Government's initiative to renew the provision of secondary school facilities in England over a 10-15 year period and was initially introduced by the previous Government in 2003. The intention of the BSF programme is to transform the provision of secondary school education to children and to ensure that they have access to educational facilities fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In addition, a significant aspect of the BSF programme is that the improved facilities are also made available for the use and enjoyment of the local community outside of normal school hours.
- 1.2.2 The BSF programme seeks to bring significant educational reform of the secondary school system through investment in new educational buildings and ICT in order to achieve a step change in the quality of educational provision in England. The vision for the BSF programme will seek to improve standards in secondary level education across the country by raising the attainment, achievement and ambitions of all learners across the City of Wolverhampton, as well as improving the availability and accessibility of such facilities to the whole community.
- 1.2.3 The site now under consideration has been brought forward under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme to accommodate one of Wolverhampton's two proposed new Academies. A Local Education Partnership (LEP) has been established with the developers, *Inspire*, which has access to £370 million to invest in secondary school buildings and facilities across the City. Construction of the City's sample schools schemes began in Summer 2010 and, subject to the granting of planning permission, in early 2011 for the South Wolverhampton & Ballston Academy (SWABA) proposals which are the subject of this application.
- 1.2.4 The SWABA will also play a critical role as part of the wider regeneration proposals in the area in and around the Bilston Town Centre which includes a new leisure centre currently under construction on the site adjacent to the current application site, and a new Primary and Community Care Centre. A new pedestrian link to the Bilston High Street, immediately adjacent to the site, is also being progressed.
- 1.2.5 In addition, some 900 new homes, and 17,000m<sup>2</sup> of new employment space, together with new infrastructure and public open space, will be delivered for the proposed Bilston Urban Village (BUV) project for which outline planning permission has already been obtained. It is anticipated that the lead developer for the BUV site will also work in partnership with the LEP to ensure a coherent and joined up approach for the development of the new Academy and how it fits into the overall BUV site.

## **1.3 Form, Purpose and Content of the Planning Statement**

- 1.3.1 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide a clear explanation of the development in order to help the WCC in the consideration of these development proposals. Additionally, the Statement includes relevant Planning Policy and other material considerations that are required to be considered in addressing the current application. The Statement includes the following sections;
- *Section 1 : Introduction and Instructions*
  - *Section 2 : The Site and It's Surroundings*

- *Section 3 : The Proposed Development*
- *Section 4 : Planning History*
- *Section 5 : Planning Policy Background*
- *Section 6 : Summary of the Technical Reports*
- *Section 7 : Consideration of the Main Issues*
- *Section 8 : Conclusions*

## 2.0 THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site is located on land off the A463, Black Country Route, immediately to the south of the Bilston Town Centre in the south-eastern part of the Wolverhampton City Council's administrative area, the Local Planning Authority for the area in which the application site is situated. Bilston Town Centre lies approximately 4kms to the south-east of the City Centre and is one of two strategic centres. The Proposals Map for the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan indicates that the application site lies just outside of the defined boundary for the Bilston Town Centre.
- 2.2 The A463 provides a link from Junction 10 of the M6 at Walsall to the A4123, Birmingham New Road which links Wolverhampton to Junction 2 of the M5 at Oldbury and to other major towns in the Black Country such as Dudley.
- 2.3 The site itself lies approximately 250 metres to the south of the High Street and is accessible from the Town Centre via a pedestrian footbridge across the A463. There are also additional pedestrian crossing points along the A463 which provide access to the Morrisons supermarket which also lies to the south of the Black Country Route and to the east of the site. Between these two sites is the site for the town's new leisure centre which is currently under construction.
- 2.4 The site itself measures approximately 5.7 Hectares (14.1 acres) in size and falls gently from north to south. The school site lies at a generally lower level than the areas surrounding the outside of the site boundary.
- 2.5 The bus station lies approximately 450 metres to the north-east of the site which also has a station on the Midland Metro route linking the City Centres of Wolverhampton and Birmingham.
- 2.6 In the north-western corner of the site is a range of existing buildings which comprises the South Wolverhampton Academy complex. The original Stonefields Primary School was constructed in 1905-06 and further additions, the two storey element fronting onto Prosser Street, were added later between 1924 and 1937 when the site also served as a secondary school. In addition, there are two later 20th century additions, a science block and sports hall, which lie away from the main building complex.
- 2.7 The southern part of the site comprises the school's playing fields and outdoor sport facilities, including an area of four, hard surfaced tennis courts in the south-eastern corner of the site along the Dudley Street boundary. The playing fields are within an area defined as a flood zone, although the watercourse is culverted, which includes much of the playing field area between the main building complex and the wooded areas along the south-eastern corner of the site.
- 2.8 Beyond the site boundary in the north-eastern corner of the site are sited 5 pairs of semi-detached houses served by Linton Croft which is accessed from Prosser Street. The rear elevations and gardens to Nos.3 to 8 Linton Croft face into the application site.

- 2.9 Prosser Street is accessed directly from the westbound carriageway of the A463, Black Country Route, and, via a dedicated right turning lane, from the eastbound side of the dual carriageway. Previously, Dudley Road, which forms the eastern boundary of the site, was accessed directly from the Black Country Route, however, with the construction of the new leisure centre, the road has been diverted to the rear of the supermarket.
- 2.10 The western boundary of the site is formed by the line of a public footpath that leads from Prosser Street to the south towards areas of public open space. The land to the west of the site will be developed for housing in the future as part of the Bilston Urban Village proposals.
- 2.11 To the south of the site, there is public open space within which there are large areas of woodland. Again, these woodlands will be encompassed within the wider Bilston Urban Village proposals. Other existing trees within the site which are not affected by the development proposals will be incorporated into the proposed landscaping scheme.
- 2.12 An aerial photograph of the existing site can be seen below.



## 3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The planning application proposes the provision of a new educational establishment on the southern side of Bilston Town Centre, one of two new Academies being proposed within the City of Wolverhampton.
- 3.2 The Design of the proposed new academy results from the requirements of the Strategic Educational Design Brief (SEBD) which has been prepared for the development and in line with the general and project specific design brief prepared by City Council. In addition, the building will also provide accommodation for the Bilston East and Ettingshall Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) which will provide co-ordinated services for children, young people, their families and schools.
- 3.3 The City Council's site specific Design Brief states that the design of the new Academy *"should provide a distinctive, accomplished building warranting the recognition that the site and the community deserve"*. The Brief goes on to note that the chosen site *"is strategically located amongst a cluster of proposed new developments which will attract community use and engagement in their own right"* including the proposed new leisure centre and PCT Health Centre developments. In addition, it notes that there will be a significant amount of new residential accommodation being developed in close proximity to the site in the future under the Bilston Urban Village proposals.
- 3.4 With this in mind, the project architects, Capita Architecture, have developed a design for the proposed development through close collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, other appropriate bodies within the City Council and the design team. For further information relating to the process and design stages through which this project has evolved, reference should be made to the Design & Access Statement prepared by the project architects that accompanies the planning application.
- 3.5 The proposed new academy building is to be constructed upon part of the existing school playing fields and the site of the existing, disused tennis courts in close proximity to Dudley Street from which the principal access to the site, both vehicular and pedestrian will be taken. Dudley Street will also provide access to visitor and disabled parking areas and a bus 'drop-off' point. The existing vehicular access from Prosser Street will serve the main staff car park.
- 3.6 There is a significant change in levels between Dudley Street and the centre of the site and the new academy building has been purposely designed to take advantage of this difference with the ground floor level sitting below the level of the first floor off Dudley Street, the level at which pupils, staff and the public will generally enter the building. The layout of the site takes advantage of the change in levels across the site and careful consideration has been given to how the various elements relate to each other.
- 3.7 The overall height of the building is four storeys and regard has been paid in the layout of the building to the known issues relating to the amount of 'made ground' across a significant proportion of the site, which would have an influence upon the bearing capacity of the new building, and with regard to the abundance of mineshafts present upon the site.

- 3.8 The design and internal layout of the academy which led to this design solution was led strongly by the SEBD and is covered in greater detail in the Design & Access Statement. The spatial relationship between the proposed academy and the new leisure centre building is also important given that both new buildings will play an important community role in the regeneration of Bilston Town Centre.
- 3.9 In terms of the disposition of development across the site, the main built element of the development is located in the eastern part of the site and comprises the new academy building itself. The proposed main car park for the use of staff and visitors is located in the north-western corner of the site. There are other smaller parking areas, for disabled drivers and visitors, adjacent to the academy building. The remainder of site is given over to outdoor sports facilities, external teaching areas and other open spaces. The impression of the overall site is one of significant openness.
- 3.10 In terms of outdoor sports facilities, the intention is to bring back into appropriate use, all of that which is not currently used by the existing school. Sport England has been consulted upon the overall level of provision within the development. The new academy will be provided with the following :
- *A floodlit, all-weather sports pitch (100m x 64m) capable of being used for multiple purposes (primary focus is the use for hockey);*
  - *A formal MUGA (37.5m x 18.5m)*
  - *2No. football pitches for U15-16 (86m x 49m)*
  - *Cricket Pitch (3No. wickets)*
  - *400m grass athletics track*
  - *0.5km running track*
- 3.11 The use of the above facilities will be available to the general community following the close of the normal school day. It is also the intention that the use of the academy site for outdoor sports will be closely linked with the operation of the leisure centre so that a wide range of sporting activity can be undertaken within the locality. Other more informal open spaces will also be provided adjacent to the academy building for pupils to use.
- 3.12 In order to meet the requirements of the SEDB, the external areas immediately around the academy building will be used to aid teaching and various 'teaching courtyard' spaces have been provided to facilitate this. In addition, provision has been made for a kitchen/sensory garden and an allotment and orchard to meet certain curriculum requirements.
- 3.13 In terms of car parking at the site, the Design Brief encourages a distinct separation between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists within the site. To this end, car parking for some 156No. vehicles has been provided. This figure is broken down as 120 spaces for academy staff, 20 spaces for the MAST accommodation, 8 for disabled and 8 for visitors.
- 3.14 Some 104 spaces have been located adjacent to the academy on its north-western side and is accessed via the service link road to the proposed new leisure centre directly off the Black Country Route. The smaller 40 space car park is accessed directly from Prosser Street using the existing vehicular access. The car park and academy building are linked by a gently sloping walkway.

- 3.15 The intention for the academy is to encourage more sustainable methods of transport and, in line with the school's own travel plan (to be updated under these proposals), pupils will be encouraged to walk, cycle or utilise public transport to visit the site. Bilston Town Centre is a highly accessible location to the proposed academy with the bus and Midland Metro stations being within easy walking distance.
- 3.16 In this regard, provision has been made for some 5No. cycle shelters for some 120No. bicycles in front of the academy along Dudley Street.
- 3.17 With access direct from Dudley Street, provision has been made for a drop-off point for 3No. mini-coaches. The academy aims to positively discourage the dropping-off of pupils by parents in order to encourage the use of more sustainable methods of transport such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport.
- 3.18 Provision for some 4No. disabled spaces has been made adjacent to the mini-coach drop-off point which are convenient for the main entrance to the building. A further 4No. disabled spaces are provided within the main car park where staff access into the building is available, making 8No. spaces in total across the site.
- 3.19 As part of the general open space provision within the site, as much of the existing planting and landscaping will be retained except where it does need to be removed for the layout of the building or for any other purpose. Additional tree planting is proposed in the south-eastern corner of the site where it adjoins a substantial woodland area just outside the site boundary and within the general site where appropriate.
- 3.20 Planting will also be used to mitigate against any impact around the edges of the site, particularly adjacent to the northern boundary and the rear of the existing houses in Linton Croft. A habitat area will also be created within the site. An overall landscaping strategy for the site has been designed by Capita Lovejoy and is submitted along with the other application documents.
- 3.21 Given the proximity of the new leisure centre to the proposed academy, there will be the potential of each use to share each other's facility when appropriate. In particular, the academy car park could be utilised by patrons of the proposed leisure centre outside of normal school hours in order to maximise functionality of the two sites.

## 4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 As part of the process involved in the preparation of this supporting planning statement, a review of the previous planning history of the site has been undertaken by utilising the search facility on the WCC website. It is accepted that this is not a full planning history of the application site and only includes applications considered by the LPA since 1977.
- 4.2 The existing site has been used for educational purposes since the erection of the initial phase of building upon the site which dates from 1905/06 when the school was built as Stonefields School and formally opened in 1906. Further additions were made to the rear of the original school buildings between 1924 and 1937/38.
- 4.3 **A/D/1988/77.** *“Erection of two mobile classrooms”* at the Hall Green School, Prosser Street, approved on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1977.
- 4.4 **A/D/2911/77.** *“Sports Hall and ancillary accommodation”* on site adjacent to Dudley Street/Prosser Street, approved on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1977.
- 4.5 **A/D/1943/78.** *“Provision of two additional mobile classroom units for educational purposes”* at the Hall Green School, Prosser Street, approved on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1978.
- 4.6 **A/C/2195/79.** *“Provision of two mobile classroom units for educational purposes – to be transferred from Palmers Cross”* at the Hall Green School, Prosser Street. Approved but date not known.
- 4.7 **A/D/2383/80.** *“Provision of three additional mobile classroom units”* at Hall Green School, Prosser Street, approved on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1980.
- 4.8 **A/D/0073/81.** *“Provision of two additional mobile classroom units for educational purposes”* at the Hall Green School, Prosser Street, approved on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1981.
- 4.9 **D/2333/91.** *“New entrance to school, including new access ramp”* at the Hall Green School, Prosser Street, approved on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1992.
- 4.10 **96/0023/DW.** *“Improvement of existing sports hall facilities consisting of new reception, new fitness room, partial refurbishment of changing rooms and provision of locker storage area, additional storage extension, re-surfacing and flood-lighting...”*, approved on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1996.
- 4.11 Prior to the submission of the application, the proposals have been the subject of pre-application discussions with the WCC, as the Planning Authority, and other bodies where appropriate, in accordance with the guidance in PPS1.

## 5.0 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

5.1.1 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Approved Development Plan for the site is, as of 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010, now comprised of just the following document :-

- ***Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan 2001-2011 (June 2006)***

5.1.2 The above document has been examined to ascertain which policies are relevant to the consideration of the current application.

5.1.3 Prior to the recent Government announcement on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010, RSS11, the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands, adopted in January 2008, formed part of the development plan for the purposes of the consideration and determination of planning applications by local planning authorities. Advice to LPAs issued alongside the announcement states how they will consider various planning matters.

5.1.4 Section 4 of the advice note has regard to the consideration of planning applications and states that LPAs must continue to have regard to the development which will now consist of adopted DPDs; 'saved' policies, and any 'old style' plans that have not lapsed. They should also have regard to other material considerations, including national policy. Also, "*evidence that informed the preparation of the revoked Regional Strategy may also be a material consideration.*"

5.1.5 On 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010, the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect in a letter from the Chief Planner at the DCLG. The legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through subsequent legislation to be introduced in the current Parliamentary session. As such, the RSS for the West Midlands now no longer forms part of the development plan for the consideration of these current proposals.

5.1.6 Attached to the letter was some further guidance and clarification to LPAs regarding the revocation of Regional Strategies. Amongst other things, it states how LPAs should proceed in the meantime with their development plans and with the determination of planning applications.

### 5.2.0 ***Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan 2001-2011***

5.2.1 The approved document for local planning purposes remains the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan 2001-2001, adopted in June 2006.

5.2.2 The following policies are relevant to the consideration of the current planning application.

- ***Policy AM1 : Access, Mobility and New Development***
- ***Policy AM7: Travel Plans***
- ***Policy AM9: Provision for Pedestrians***
- ***Policy AM10: Provision for Cyclists***
- ***Policy AM12: Parking and Servicing Provision***
- ***Policy AM15: Road Safety and Personal Security***

- **Policy C1: Health, Education and Other Community Services**
- **Policy C4: Education Facilities**
- **Policy D1: Design Quality**
- **Policy D3: Urban Structure**
- **Policy D4: Urban Grain**
- **Policy D5: Public Realm (public space/private space)**
- **Policy D6: Townscape and Landscape**
- **Policy D7: Scale - Height**
- **Policy D8: Scale - Massing**
- **Policy D9: Appearance**
- **Policy D10: Community Safety**
- **Policy D12: Nature Conservation and Nature Features**
- **Policy D13: Sustainable Development Natural Energy**
- **Policy D14: The Provision of Public Art**
  
- **Policy EP4: Light Pollution**
- **Policy EP5: Noise Pollution**
- **Policy EP6: Protection of Groundwater, Watercourses and Canals**
- **Policy EP7: Protection of Floodplains**
- **Policy EP9: Sustainable Drainage Arrangements for Development**
  
- **Policy HE18: Preservation and Enhancement of Local List Buildings and Sites**
- **Policy HE19: Development Affecting a Local List Building or Site**
- **Policy HE20: Demolition of a Local List Building or Site**
  
- **Policy N1: Promotion of Nature Conservation**
- **Policy N9: Protection of Wildlife Species**
  
- **Policy R1: Local Standards for Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities**
- **Policy R2: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Priority Areas**
- **Policy R3: Protection of Open Space, Sport and Recreation**
- **Policy R5: Sports Grounds**
- **Policy R8: Dual-Use of Open Space, Sport and Recreation**

5.2.3 The above policies will be considered further in this report where they are relevant to the issue under consideration.

### **5.3.0 National Planning Policy Guidance**

5.3.1 In addition to the policies and provisions of the development plan, there are various national planning policy documents issued by Central Government that provides guidance on specific matters. In relation to the consideration of the current proposals, the following guidance is of relevance :-

- **PPS 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development**
- **PPS5 : Planning for the Historic Environment**
- **PPS9 : Biodiversity and Geological Conservation**
- **PPG 13 : Transport**
- **PPG14 : Development on Unstable Land**
- **PPG17 : Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation**
- **PPS24 : Planning and Noise**
- **PPS25 : Development and Flood Risk**

5.3.2 Each of the above documents are now considered in turn.

#### **5.4.0 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)**

5.4.1 PPS1 identifies that Sustainable Development is the core principle under-pinning town planning and emphasises the importance of good quality inclusive design.

5.4.2 Para. 5 of PPS1 states *“that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by :-*

- ***Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people’s 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 and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources and,***
- ***Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access and key services for all members of the community.***

5.4.3 Para. 12 states that pre-application discussions are critically important and benefit both developers and local planning authorities in ensuring a better mutual understanding of objectives and the constraints that exist. Proposals can be adapted to ensure that they better reflect community aspirations and that applications are complete and address all the relevant issues. A positive attitude towards early engagement in pre-application discussions will allow formal applications to be dealt with in a more certain and speedy manner and the quality of decisions can be better assured.

5.4.4 Para. 13 (v) states that community involvement is an essential element in delivering sustainable development and creating sustainable and safe communities. The nature of community involvement is further outlined at paras. 40 to 44 inclusive.

5.4.5 Paras 17 and 18 regarding the protection and enhancement of the quality, character and amenity of urban areas and the need to improve the local environment through positive design, conservation and the provision of public space.

5.4.6 Paras 21 and 22 concerning the prudent use of resources in a way that respects the needs of future generations and the promotion of efficient use of existing resources along with the promotion of creating sustainable and energy efficient buildings.

5.4.7 Para 23 regarding sustainable economic development, particularly part (iii) which seeks to ensure suitable locations for education, part (vi) which seeks to actively promote good quality development and part (viii) which seeks to ensure infrastructure and services are provided to support new and existing economic development.

5.4.8 Para 27 regarding a general approach to delivering sustainable development, in particular part (ii) which seeks to promote urban regeneration to improve the well being of communities, improve facilities and promote high quality and safe development, part (v) which seeks to ensure improved access to education by ensuring the appropriate location of development and part (viii) which seeks to promote the reuse of previously developed land and buildings.

- 5.4.9 Paras 34 to 38 inclusive, relate to design and the need to provide high quality, inclusive design to any new development with a strong premise on reinforcing local distinctiveness, following good practice and providing high quality, sustainable designs.
- 5.4.10 In 2007, the Government published a Supplement to PPS1 entitled “*Planning and Climate Change*” that “sets out how planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change and take into account the unavoidable consequences”.

### **5.5.0 PPS5 : Planning for the Historic Environment**

- 5.5.1 PPS5 was published earlier in 2010 as a replacement for the guidance in PPG15, *Planning and the Historic Environment (1994)* and PPG16, *Archaeology and Planning*. At para 5 of PPS5 it notes that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called ‘*heritage assets*’.
- 5.5.2 These heritage assets are defined at Annex 2 at the rear of the guidance (World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Movements, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas etc.) However, the statement also identifies which are of heritage interest and thus a material consideration. Locally listed buildings and sites are to be considered under this.
- 5.5.3 In terms of the current application site, the WCC advised that the development proposals should be considered in the light of Policies HE6, HE7, HE8, and HE12 of PPS5.
- 5.5.4 Policy HE6, *Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets*, states that it is for the applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. Where an application site includes...heritage assets with archaeological interest, LPAs should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment.
- 5.5.5 Policy HE7, *Policy Principles Guiding the Determination of Applications for Consent Relating to All Heritage Assets*, is a matter for the LPA to take into account in the consideration of all of the information provided with the planning application submission.
- 5.5.6 Policy HE8, *Additional Policy Principle Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Heritage Assets* that are not covered by Policy HE9 indicated that heritage assets such as locally listed buildings which are not ‘designated heritage assets’ are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications affecting them.
- 5.5.7 Policy HE12.3, *Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Relating to Heritage Assets*, states that, where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset’s significance is justified, LPAs should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate.

### **5.6.0 PPS9 : Biodiversity and Geological Conservation**

- 5.6.1 PPS9 sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system working within the Government's vision for conserving and enhancing biological diversity in England, together with a programme of work to achieve it.
- 5.6.2 One of the Government's objectives for planning is to promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development.
- 5.6.3 Para.13 notes that the re-use of previously developed land for new development makes a major contribution to sustainable development by reducing the amount of countryside and undeveloped land that needs to be used. However, where such sites have significant biodiversity or geological interest of recognised local importance, LPAs, together with developers, should aim to retain this interest or incorporate it into any development of the site.

### **5.7.0 PPG13 : Transport (2001)**

- 5.7.1 PPG13 has regard to the Government's aims to extend choice in transport and secure mobility in a way that supports sustainable development. The contents have been amended marginally following the recent publication of PPS4 where they relate to maximum car parking standards for new development.
- 5.7.2 Para.4 of PPG13 states *"the objectives of this guidance are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level to:-*
- ***promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;***
  - ***reduce the need to travel, especially by car.***
- 5.7.3 Para.6 of PPG13 states that *"in order to deliver the objectives of this guidance, when preparing development plans and considering planning applications, local authorities should, amongst others:-*
- ***actively manage the pattern of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport, and focus major generators of travel demand in city, town and district centres and near to major public transport interchanges.***
  - ***protect sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choices for both passengers and freight movements.***
- 5.7.4 Para.19 states that *"a key planning objective is to ensure that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services are accessible by public transport, walking, and cycling... In preparing their development plans, local authorities should give particular emphasis to accessibility in identifying the preferred areas and sites where such land usage should be located, to ensure they will offer realistic, safe and easy access by a range of transport modes, and are not exclusively by car"*.

- 5.7.5 Para.21 states that *“local authorities should seek to make maximum use of the most accessible sites, such as those in town centres and others which are, or will be, close to major transport inter-changes. These opportunities may be scarce. They should be proactive in promoting intensive development in these areas and on such sites”*.
- 5.7.6 Para 23 to 26 concern Transport Assessments, their benefits to a sustainable development, and the importance of early consultation between the developer and Council in order to agree a suitable, acceptable and sustainable scheme.
- 5.7.7 Paras 28 and 29 stress the importance of good design in ensuring sustainable development in which people come before traffic and community safety is considered throughout. An emphasis is also placed on ensuring safe travel to all whatever their chosen mode of transport, therefore community should be considered from the outset, and suitably addressed within the Transport Assessment.
- 5.7.8 Para 31 seeks to ensure both public and private transport options are available to disabled people and to ensure that their needs are met in new developments by ensuring suitable and adequate disabled parking is available, buildings are designed giving attention to the needs of disabled people and ensuring developments are accessible and usable by disabled people as motorists, public transport users and pedestrians.
- 5.7.9 Para 38 with respect to education seeks to ensure such proposals are located to maximise their accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, with these options being improved on proposals to redevelop existing educational sites.
- 5.7.10 Paras 49 and 51 relating to parking and the desire for reduced car parking and increased cycle parking in new schemes in order to promote more sustainable travel choices.
- 5.7.11 Paras 52 to 56 that set out the importance of enforcing maximum parking standards with no minimum standards, other than for disabled parking and the importance of justifying parking requirements, where appropriate, through a Transport Assessment.
- 5.7.12 Para 76 regarding the importance and encouragement of walking as the most important mode of transport with the safety of pedestrians to be given priority in the determination of applications.
- 5.7.13 Paras 79 and 80 that seek to encourage cycling in new and existing developments, particularly section 6 that seeks to encourage education providers to promote cycling to and from schools, ideally in the context of a travel plan.
- 5.7.14 Paras 87 to 89 regarding Travel Plans and the Government’s desires to raise travel decision awareness, along with the key objectives to achieving sustainable transport objectives which include; increased use of public transport, walking and cycling and increasing pedestrian and cyclist safety. The importance of creating a Travel Plan that has been worked up in consultation with the local authority and local transport providers is also stressed within para. 90.

### **5.8.0 PPG14 : Development on Unstable Land**

- 5.8.1 PPG14 acknowledges that the Government wishes to encourage the full and effective use of land in an environmentally acceptable manner although difficulties have been experienced in developing land in areas of past and present mining and in other areas where land is unstable or potentially unstable.
- 5.8.2 The purpose of the guidelines is to advise LPAs, landowners and developers on the exercise of planning control over development on land which is unstable or is potentially unstable. Any scope for remedial, preventive or precautionary measures must also be fully explored so that land is not sterilised unnecessarily.
- 5.8.3 Para.16 notes that the responsibility for determining whether land is suitable for a particular purpose rests primarily with the developer and it is in the developer's own interests to determine whether land is unstable or potentially unstable since this will affect the value of the land and the costs of developing it. The developer should therefore make a thorough investigation and assessment of the ground to ensure it is stable or that any actual or potential instability can be overcome by appropriate remedial, preventive or precautionary measures.

### **5.9.0 PPG17 : Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation**

- 5.9.1 PPG17 fundamentally states that the key to delivering government objectives is the provision of well-designed and implemented open space, sport and recreational space. High quality, well managed and well-maintained sports and recreational facilities can significantly enhance urban environments as well as promoting social inclusion and community cohesion if spaces are well planned and maintained.
- 5.9.2 Sports and recreational facilities play a vital role in promoting healthy living and well being, particularly in children, and PPG17 also recognises the social development opportunities that good quality sport and recreation facilities can provide. The location of these sports and recreational facilities can also play a major part in creating sustainable development through their well-planned locations that are well served by public transport and easily accessible by public transport, particularly those in urban areas.
- 5.9.3 Para 18 notes where recreational land is poor quality or under-used, facilities should be improved through means such as promoting compatibility of open space, sports and recreational facilities with adjoining land uses; encouraging better accessibility to existing facilities and promoting the better use of facilities through good design.
- 5.9.4 Para 20 sets out the general principles for new open space, sport and recreational facilities that local authorities should adhere to in identifying suitable areas for recreational purposes, with the relevant criteria including; the promotion of access by walking, cycling, public transport, and disabled access; avoiding any significant loss of amenity to residents, neighbouring uses or biodiversity; utilising good design to improve the quality of the public realm; enhancing the range and quality of existing facilities; considering the security and safety of people, especially children; utilising brownfield sites rather than greenfield sites and assessing the impact of new facilities on social inclusion.

- 5.9.5 Para 22 concerning local facilities and highlighting the need to ensure provision is made for local sports and recreation, through both new facilities and improvements to existing ones.

#### **5.10.0 PPG24 : Planning and Noise (1994)**

- 5.10.1 PPG24 guides LPAs on the use of their planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise and outlines the considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications both for noise sensitive developments and for those activities which generate noise.
- 5.10.2 Para 5 acknowledges that noise sensitive developments should be located away from existing sources of significant noise, and para 6 confirms schools within the generally excepted list of 'noise sensitive developments'.
- 5.10.3 Para 10 states that the planning system should not place unjustifiable obstacles in the way of such development whilst ensuring disturbance is minimised and para 11 notes that the impact of noise from sport and recreation will depend largely on the frequency of use and the design of the facility.
- 5.10.4 Para 12 concerns new noise-sensitive developments and the need for local planning authorities to carefully consider whether the proposals are compatible with existing activities, with an emphasis on avoiding areas that are subject to unacceptably high levels of noise. Para 13 discusses potential measures to limit exposure to noise, of which include good engineering, a well-designed layout and suitable administrative limitations.

#### **5.11.0 PPS25 : Development and Flood Risk (2010)**

- 5.11.1 In March 2010, a revised version of PPS25 was issued entitled "Development and Flood Risk" to replace the earlier version from 2006. The aims of planning policy on development and flood risk are to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk (para 5).
- 5.11.2 The guidance states that a risk-based approach should be adopted at all levels of planning and that a sequential risk-based approach to determining the suitability of land for development in flood risk areas is central to the policy statement and should be adopted at all levels of the planning process. (para 14).
- 5.11.3 Para.22 notes that "*landowners have the primary responsibility for safeguarding their land and other property against natural hazards such as flooding*" and that "*individual property owners and users are also responsible for managing the drainage of their land in such a way as to prevent, as far as is reasonably practicable, adverse impacts on neighbouring land.*"

#### **5.12.0 Other Material Considerations**

- 5.12.1 In support of the current proposal, there is another document that is particularly relevant to the consideration of the proposed development. This is now considered.

### **5.13.0 Sport England: Planning Policy Statement. A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England**

5.13.1 Sport England have their own Planning Policy Statement which, further to the guidance in PPG17, sets out their stance regarding planning applications that relate to, or directly affect, playing fields. Sport England believe that “*playing fields are one of the most important resources for sport in England*”. Policy P1 states that Sport England will:

***“Oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit local plan, unless, in the judgment of Sport England, one of the specific circumstances applies”***

5.13.2 In relation to this document, the following specific circumstances are relevant to the consideration of the current proposals.

5.13.3 E1: A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interest of sport.

5.13.4 E2: The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use.

5.13.5 E3: The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss or inability to make use of any planning pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting / ancillary facility on the site.

5.13.6 E4: The playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.

5.13.7 E5: The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by loss of the playing field or playing fields.

5.13.8 How the current proposals will accord with the desires and requirements of Sport England’s statement is explored in the key issues section of this Planning Statement. Sport England is, of course, a statutory consultee in the determination of the planning application.

## 6.0 SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL REPORTS

6.0.1 In support of the planning application, various technical reports have been prepared by consultants, both on behalf of the Wolverhampton City Council and *Inspire*, and which are summarised below. Full copies of these reports are submitted with the formal planning application documentation, both in printed format and as an electronic pdf copy on disk.

### 6.1 *Heritage Matters (Birmingham Archaeology)*

6.1.1 Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by the WCC in March 2009 to undertake a desk-based archaeological assessment and historic building assessment of the existing school complex which would serve in the consideration of the site in respect of development proposals being brought forward under the BSF programme.

6.1.2 The report acknowledges that the buildings, the earliest parts of which date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, are included on the WCC's non-statutory local list of buildings of special or architectural interest, added to the WCC's local list in November 2001, and also the Black Country Historic Environment Record.

6.1.3 In terms of methodology, a desk-based assessment was undertaken of the site making use of all relevant and readily available published and unpublished documentary source material from various local sources. In addition, a walkover survey of the site was undertaken in order to assess the topography of the site and any above ground archaeology, including standing buildings. The building assessment comprised an examination of the entire building stock within the study area where each building was briefly described, photographed and its position mapped and assessed.

6.1.4 In summary, the report notes that, despite having been removed from their historical context by more recent developments, the school buildings remain a "*visible landmark and an important feature of Bilston Town Centre*" and represent a well regarded community asset and, as such, their retention within any proposed redevelopment of the school site can be seen to be desirable, and in line with the WCC's stated conservation aims.

6.1.5 The case for retention applies principally, though not exclusively, to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century range of buildings at the rear of the complex, although the 1924-1937 extensions at the front of the site also form an integral part of the development of the school over time. The report goes on to note that, should limited demolitions and/or alterations be required as part of any redevelopment scheme, a further stage of detailed historic building recording may be required.

6.1.6 In terms of archaeology, the walkover revealed no obvious upstanding features of archaeological significance or interest within the site due to the fact that the site has undergone phases of significant earth movement in the past. The report goes on to suggest that any further programme of archaeological mitigation would need to be designed as and when details of the redevelopment proposals become available in discussion with the WCC's archaeologist.

## **6.2 Landscape (Capita Lovejoy)**

- 6.2.1 The Bilston Academy site is located to the south of Bilston Town Centre, Prosser Street, Wolverhampton, just off the Black Country Route. The site contains Prosser Street School buildings on the northern boundary; these buildings date from the early 1900s, and enjoy local listing status. A detailed options appraisal report has been carried out in relation to the future buildings and is included with this planning application.
- 6.2.2 The school grounds show evidence of former coal mining activity that as a result have formed a site contained by raised embankments and major level changes around the boundary to the sites centre. The site is generally level in the centre of the site. The landscape in this location has over the years run into disrepair and former playing fields and tennis courts have become overgrown, making them unusable.
- 6.2.3 The external proposals bring the landscape up to a standard expected to facilitate the educational needs of the Academy. The landscape design aims to create a setting for the building that enhances the feeling of synergy and movement between architecture, landscape and its surrounding context whilst working within the site constraints and opportunities. The approach has been strongly influenced by the existing site conditions and the relationship between the new Academy and the adjacent Bilston Leisure Centre, currently under construction.
- 6.2.4 The main Academy entrance will be used by SWABA pupils together with all visitors and community users of the building. The staff will use a secondary entrance located on the garden level in close proximity to the proposed staff car park.
- 6.2.5 Behind the proposed Academy building at garden level, sports pitches will be provided, utilising and upgrading the existing playing fields. Canopied learning courtyards, allotments and hard social spaces will be provided around the Academy building at garden level. On the upper terrace where the former school buildings are located, it is proposed to locate an All Weather Hockey Pitch, Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and hard recreation space for pupils to play.
- 6.2.6 Vehicular access for staff and deliveries will be off Prosser Street whilst visitor car parking, mini bus drop off and disabled parking will be from Dudley Street, managed through the use of controlled gates.
- 6.2.7 The scheme seeks to separate all vehicular access from that of the pedestrian user, through the use of secure boundaries and pedestrian priority spaces.
- 6.2.8 A more detailed explanation and justification of the various aspects of the development proposals is provided in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies this application.

## **6.3 Ecology (Capita Symonds)**

- 6.3.1 The following ecological surveys have been carried out at SWABA:
- *Ecological Walkover*
  - *Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey*
  - *Great Crested Newt survey*
  - *Badger surveys*

- *Reptile surveys*
- *Bat surveys (building inspections and dusk/dawn surveys)*

6.3.2 The surveys have identified that:

- *Great Crested Newts are not present on or adjacent to the site*
- *No bat roosts have been identified on the site at the current time*
- *The habitats on site do support foraging and commuting bats*
- *Badger setts have been identified on the school site and immediately adjacent to it*
- *The hedgerows, trees and some of the buildings on site have the potential to support nesting birds*
- *The habitats around the periphery of the site have the potential to support common reptile and amphibian species.*
- *Habitats of the most biodiversity value include semi-improved grassland, hedgerows, and trees.*

6.3.3 Currently the anticipated impacts of the SWABA scheme on ecological features on the site will be limited to:

- *Demolition of existing buildings resulting in the loss of potential nesting sites for birds and potential roosting site for bats*
- *Loss of some existing habitats on site (amenity grassland, semi-improved grassland, scattered trees)*
- *The risk of disturbance to badger setts in the south east of the site from development activities.*

6.3.4 The following measures will be adopted within the BSF development to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the site:

- *Prior to demolition of the main school buildings in 2012 internal and external building surveys and emergence/re-entry surveys will be undertaken to check whether bat roosts have become established since the surveys in 2010.*
- *The site will be monitored throughout the demolition and construction phases to establish badgers' movements on the site and the location of badger setts in case any additional badger setts become established in areas that are likely to be impacted upon by the development. If a badger sett is established and active, and likely to be impacted by the development, a licence from Natural England will sought and implemented prior to works continuing in this instance.*
- *Any removal of vegetation that could support nesting birds (trees, hedgerows) will be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March-August). However, if any vegetation is required to be removed during this period it will first need to be checked for nesting birds and will only proceed if it can be confirmed that no nesting birds will be affected by the works.*

- *Any buildings to be demolished will be checked for the presence of nesting birds prior to demolition. If nesting birds are present the demolition will be delayed until after the nesting period or after the young have fledged and left the nest.*
- *Site clearance and vegetation removal will be undertaken under specific methods of working which will ensure if reptiles or amphibians are found throughout these activities they will be moved to an area of safety and not harmed through development activities.*
- *Habitat enhancement on the SWABA site will include increasing connectivity of habitats through new habitat creation such as hedgerows and tree planting around the periphery of the school site connecting woodland and grassland habitats.*
- *New ponds will be created to provide additional pond habitats increasing connectivity of wetland habitats in the landscape and which will also benefit a range of amphibian species such as smooth newts that have been identified through species surveys.*
- *All new planting and habitat creation will incorporate native, locally characteristic species.*

#### **6.4 Transport (Mott MacDonald)**

- 6.4.1 The WCC commissioned Mott MacDonald to undertake a Transport Assessment (TA) in relation to the redevelopment of the application site.
- 6.4.2 In terms of existing conditions, in policy respects, public transport access to the application site is good with access to public buses and the Midland Metro. Pedestrian linkages to the site are also good, particularly between Bilston Town Centre and the academy site across the Black Country Route.
- 6.4.3 There is no significant accident record in the vicinity of the application site which might be attributable to the existing academy activities.
- 6.4.4 The junction capacity assessments indicate that all of the junctions operate within capacity, although the Black Country Route/Bankfield Road junction operates close to capacity.
- 6.4.5 The TA identifies potential issues relating to the proximity between the pupil catchment area and the site. With the closure of the Wolverhampton Road East site, this could lead to a significant rise in car trips to the new site if not responded to, to the detriment of sustainable modes of transport. In the long-term, it has been assumed that pupil catchment area will move closer to the new site bringing the modal split in line with suggested parameters.
- 6.4.6 In the short to medium term, it has been recommended that consideration should be given to the provision of additional school buses to the areas previously served by the Wolverhampton Road East site in order to prevent any significant increase in private car use.

- 6.4.7 A draft School Travel Plan Framework has been produced to provide a framework for addressing travel to and from the site. This will evolve in conjunction with the academy itself and will accommodate improvements in local and regional transport infrastructure as their effects upon the academy becomes known.
- 6.4.8 In summary, the TA indicates that the proposed development supports the policies outlined in both national and local policy in terms of locating the development in a sustainable and highly accessible location through the use of sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling.

## **6.5 Engineering and Ground Conditions (Jacobs)**

- 6.5.1 Jacobs have prepared a desk-top study with regard to the geotechnical and geo-environmental conditions at the application site which is submitted in support of the planning application.
- 6.5.2 In terms of geotechnical matters, it is acknowledged that there are a number of recorded and unrecorded mineshafts across the site, together with shallow mine workings in the area. There is also a thick, variable coverage of Made Ground across the site that may include factory spoil, colliery spoil and possibly refuse-type material. There are also possibly soft deposits; other structures, cellars and basements, foundations and wells (some possibly unrecorded) across the site. There may be some shallow, perched groundwater and other aggressive ground conditions within the Made Ground.
- 6.5.3 In terms of geo-environmental constraints, these relate to the potential detrimental impact to a minor aquifer and human health caused by elevated levels of contaminants in Made Ground; physical contaminants in landfill-type Made Ground; ground gas production in Made Ground and soft deposits in former ponds/ditches, and potential hazard to human health caused by asbestos containing materials in Made Ground.
- 6.5.4 The key issues relating to mining include the risk of settlement associated with historic shallow mine workings, and dealing with known and unknown mineshafts within the site. It is known that a number of shafts within the consideration zone for the site have been identified and were treated where appropriate.
- 6.5.5 In terms of foundation design for the new academy building, due to the significant thickness of fill across the site, it is recommended that a raft foundation design will be required to guard against settlement associated with the shallow mineworkings and the potential for unrecorded mineshafts to be present.
- 6.5.6 The desk study recommends that an intrusive ground investigation is carried out relevant to the proposed site development to address the specific issues referred to above, following which it is recommended that an interpretative report is prepared.
- 6.5.7 It is also recommended that the details of the previously treated mineshafts is reviewed and the risks to the proposed development is assessed by a qualified geotechnical/mining engineer. If further investigations are required, and other mineshafts are located, the mineshafts should be treated as necessary.
- 6.5.8 In line with the above recommendations, further probing work for unrecorded mineshafts in the vicinity of the proposed academy building has been undertaken as part of the current proposals. A Site Investigation has been commissioned.

## **6.6 Flood Risk (Jacobs)**

- 6.6.1 The site of the proposed new Academy is one which is potentially at risk from flooding from the Bilston Brook although it runs in a culvert and does not pass directly through the site. However, given the topography of the site, which is at the bottom of a valley, floodwaters from the watercourse could potentially gravitate onto the site if the culvert surcharged or collapsed.
- 6.6.2 The findings of an initial Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) suggested that the site was at risk from both fluvial flooding, in the 1 in 1000 year event, and from surface water from a towpath passing through the site. The FRA supported the re-profiling of the site using spoil from an adjacent site.
- 6.6.3 However, with more detailed topographic data being made available for the site, further hydraulic modelling suggests that, following the filling exercise, the development site will not be at significant risk from flooding from either surface water or fluvial flooding as any water would pond in an area upstream of the site.
- 6.6.4 Given the probable low level of risk, therefore, it is highly unlikely that the proposed academy design will be required to incorporate mitigation measures in order to manage the risk. However, it will still be required to manage its runoff in order to ensure that no increase in flood risk occurs elsewhere.

## **6.7 Noise Impact (Jacobs/Capita Symonds)**

- 6.7.1 In June 2010, Jacobs carried out an environmental noise survey to establish the existing local noise levels in the vicinity of the proposed new academy in order that, once established, the existing external noise levels would be used as the basis for the architectural/acoustic design of the proposed new academy buildings.
- 6.7.2 At the end of June 2010, Capita Symonds undertook a further noise survey at the representative positions of the proposed facade of the new building in order to determine the existing noise environment, the ventilation strategy for the school buildings and noise emission levels from any plant that will be installed. The report noted the dominant noise source from the four locations as being road traffic noise from either the A463, Black Country Route, or Dudley street which runs along the eastern boundary of the site.
- 6.7.3 In summary, and in accordance with BB93, *Acoustic Design of Schools – A Design Guide*, the report recommends that a natural ventilation solution (openable windows) maybe appropriate for the north facade of the building, and that an allowance for attenuated natural ventilation is made for other facades. Rooms which require a lower limit for internal noise (music, drama, dance and creative media) will need to be mechanically ventilated.
- 6.7.4 With regard to plant noise, it is suggested that any plant installed is at least 10dB below the lowest measured background noise period during hours of operation as those measured at the site boundary. This recommendation was supported by both Jacobs and Capita Symonds

## 7.0 KEY ISSUES AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

7.0.1 A number of key issues are required to be addressed in this planning statement which accompanies the current planning application and these will now be considered.

7.0.2 These include:

- ***Need for the Development***
- ***Principle of Development***
- ***Suitability of the Site***
- ***Heritage Issues***
- ***Consideration of External Sports Facilities***
- ***Residential Amenity***
- ***Community Involvement***
- ***Sustainability***

### 7.1 ***Need for the Development***

7.1.1 The South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy currently operates from two sites within the city, namely, the existing school complex in the north-western corner of the current application site, and a second site at Wolverhampton Road East, Parkfields, which is approximately 2.5 kilometres (1.5 miles) to the west of the application site. For this twin site at Wolverhampton Road East, Parkfields, the decision has already been taken by the City Council to close this site in 2012.

7.1.2 Therefore, there is a requirement to give consideration to the loss of those school places and a need to provide alternative arrangements for the continuation of the pupil's education provision elsewhere within the City. As the Bilston site is part of the same educational establishment, it is logical to look to that location for the continuation of provision.

7.1.3 In support of the current planning application, an Options Appraisal Assessment (OAR) has been prepared and is included within the application submission which sets out the options for the future of the existing school buildings complex at the site in the light of their locally listed status, and in the light of the need to replace those places being lost through the closure of the Parkfields campus. The OAR, as well as considering the potential for the re-use of the existing buildings for the proposed academy, must also take into account all other factors regarding the provision of education for what is essentially two schools at this site.

7.1.4 The OAR concludes that, in order to meet the specific requirements of the Strategic Educational Design Brief for the new academy, it would not be possible to accommodate all of those needs and requirements within the existing school buildings complex and they could only be achieved through the provision of a purposely designed and built, all new academy.

- 7.1.5 As such, the need for the development is established by the requirements to provide alternative facilities within which to provide the most up-to-date educational provision to serve the requirements of the BSF Programme in general and the SEDB in particular. These requirements can only be met with the construction of a new academy.

## **7.2 Principle of Development**

- 7.2.1 As part of the BSF documentation initially prepared and submitted by the WCC in 2008, a letter of comfort dated 24th November 2008, was prepared by the Director for Sustainable Communities in which the principle of the use of the site for the purposes now proposed was considered. In that letter, the planning merits of the proposed scheme were considered in basic terms, having been considered by the WCC planning officers.
- 7.2.2 It was noted that the majority of the site was currently in educational use; was not located in the Green Belt; was not located in a Conservation Area (although the existing school buildings were locally listed); and that there were no environmental issues. The letter also notes that there are localised issues relating to contaminated land within the site; that there are adverse land conditions in relation to former mine workings and made ground; and that there may be travel issues as a result of the development.
- 7.2.3 In summary, the letter indicates that effective communications have been established between the WCC's planning officers and the BSF team. It goes on to note that, in spite of regulatory constraints, the *"WCC is supportive of the BSF project as consistent with the statutory development plan and other relevant strategies for the area. It is committed to continuing to provide appropriate support as the BSF programme progresses into procurement. On the basis of the extant land use of the school site, and the information available about the proposed development in this case, there is no reason at this stage why planning permission could not be granted for this BSF proposal in Wolverhampton within a timescale consistent with the overall programme for developing the detailed schemes in due course."*
- 7.2.4 On the basis of this statement, and the provisions and objectives of Policies C1 and C4 of the Wolverhampton UDP, it is considered that the principle of the redevelopment of the application site for a new educational establishment at this site, is acceptable in town planning terms.

## **7.3 Suitability of the Site**

- 7.3.1 As noted in the previous section above, the site which is the subject of this planning application is already in existing educational use, defined as Class D1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). As such, it is accepted that the site is suitable for the redevelopment of the site for the proposed purposes as the site will remain in the same use class in planning terms.
- 7.3.2 In terms of the ability to physically construct the development upon the site, whilst it is acknowledged that there are various technical issues to be resolved with regard to various constraints within the development site, these are all capable of resolution

and have been considered in the various reports now submitted in support of the planning application.

## **7.4 Heritage Issues**

- 7.4.1 As noted previously in this statement, the main complex of existing school buildings in north-western corner of the site, are included on the WCC's list of buildings of local importance. The report by Birmingham Archaeology submitted in support of the current planning application, makes reference to the history of the school buildings on the site and also addresses the archaeological history of the site and immediate surrounding area. Those existing school buildings of heritage value were added to the WCC's local list in November 2001.
- 7.4.2 In pre-submission discussions relating to the redevelopment of the existing site for the new Academy, as it was recognised that there was a local listing upon the greater part of the existing buildings upon the site, it was hoped that a credible use for a part of those buildings could be found. It was known that, following the grant of outline planning permission for the Bilston Urban Village (BUV), the area around the existing school and current application site, would be transformed through new development and the retention of the school would provide a sense of continuity and place to the area.
- 7.4.3 Section 6.5 of the adopted Wolverhampton UDP (June 2006) has regard to Local List Buildings and specifically, Policies HE18, and HE20 refer.
- 7.4.4 Policy HE18 has regard to the Preservation and Enhancement of Local List Buildings and Sites and states that *"the conservation of locally listed structures and sites through their retention, proper maintenance, sympathetic use and, where appropriate, restoration, will be encouraged."*
- 7.4.5 Policy HE19 has regard to Development Affecting a Local List Building or Site and states that *"Development affecting local list buildings or sites will not be permitted if it involves alterations, extensions or change of use which would have an adverse effect on features of special character or histories interest, or any adverse effect on the setting of a local list building or structure"*.
- 7.4.6 In the second part of the policy, having regard to the statement in the previous paragraph, it goes on to note that such development will be permitted if it can be demonstrated that *"the proposed development is essential to the success of a scheme which would provide other, overriding planning benefit, and, all reasonable alternatives which would avoid the adverse effects have been investigated and proved not to be feasible."*
- 7.4.7 Policy HE20 has regard to the Demolition of a Local List Building or Site and states that *"Development which involves the total demolition of a Local List building or site, or partial demolition of a Local List building or site, or partial demolition which would result in the loss of special character or histories interest, will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: the proposed demolition is essential to the success of a scheme which would provide other, overriding planning benefits; and, all reasonable alternatives to demolition have been investigated and proved not be feasible."*

- 7.4.8 The policy goes on to note that, in such cases, the LPA may request the survey and recording of the building, provision of replacement buildings of comparable quality and design; salvaging of special features or elements for re-use in the replacement development scheme, and, the use of road or building names in any new development reflecting this historic origins of the area.
- 7.4.9 In addition to the above planning policy operating in the area through the development plan, initial advice from the WCC indicated that, in the preparation of any planning application at the site, account should also be taken of the guidance in PPS5, *Planning for the Historic Environment*.
- 7.4.10 As noted previously, PPS5 was published earlier in 2010 as a replacement for the previous guidance in PPG15, *Planning and the Historic Environment (1994)* and PPG16, *Archaeology and Planning*. At para 5 of PPS5 it notes that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called '*heritage assets*'.
- 7.4.11 These heritage assets are defined at Annex 2 at the rear of the guidance (World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Movements, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas etc.) However, the statement also which are of heritage interest and thus a material consideration. Locally listed buildings and sites fall to be considered under this.
- 7.4.12 In terms of the current application site, the WCC advised that the development proposals should be considered in the light of Policies HE6, HE7, HE8, and HE12 of PPS5.
- 7.4.13 In terms of Policy HE6, Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets, the report prepared by Birmingham Archaeology in respect of the existing school building complete, and submitted with the current planning application, should satisfy those requirements.
- 7.4.14 Policy HE7, Policy Principles Guiding the Determination of Applications for Consent Relating to All Heritage Assets, with regard to the current application, it is considered that sufficient information has been provided for the LPA to make an informed decision upon the heritage assets and how they have been affected by the development proposals. If any additional information is required to inform the recommendation, this can be provided.
- 7.4.15 Policy HE8, Additional Policy Principle Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Heritage Assets that are not covered by Policy HE9, indicated that heritage assets such as locally listed buildings which are not '*designated heritage assets*' are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications affecting them. In the consideration of the current proposals, this is accepted in relation to the existing school complex.
- 7.4.16 Policy HE12, Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Relating to Heritage Assets, is acknowledged and is analogous to the requirements of UDP Policy HE20.
- 7.4.17 In the early consideration of the development proposals, the WCC indicated that it would require evidence that all options for the future complex of the locally listed school buildings have been explored and their viability has been assessed in the form of an options appraisal for the site. This appraisal would be required as evidence to

support the planning application and would be required to examine the constraints and opportunities relating to the buildings; provide an assessment of a range of possible uses to which the buildings could be adapted, and full justification for any demolitions proposed. In this regard, an Options Appraisal Report (OAR) has been prepared by the BSF Team and is submitted in support of the current Planning Application.

- 7.4.18 The OAR considers the whole of the site in the light of the existing buildings, including their current state of repair and their heritage value; the state and ground conditions of the existing site itself; the transport/highways situation, and also the ecological and landscape value of the site.
- 7.4.19 The OAR goes on to note that the physical characteristics of the site need to be balanced against the educational requirements for the proposed Academy in the light of the schedule of accommodation required for the school arising from the Strategic Educational Design Brief (SEDB) which was the initial step in the whole design process.
- 7.4.20 Armed with the SEDB, the architects, Capita Architecture, in consultation with the Academy Trust and other relevant bodies, established the design solution now presented in this planning application submission. The chosen design solution provides a new purpose built school building without recourse to the re-use of the existing locally listed, academy complex.
- 7.4.21 The OAR provides the reasons behind this decision resulting in the demolition of the existing building complex in an appraisal table and are summarised at Section 6 of the report. It should be noted that consideration had been given to re-use of the buildings by other LPA and Third Party users, including the continued use of the site for educational purposes, however, no alternative uses for the building were forthcoming from the Authority or other parties.
- 7.4.22 As a result, and with the specific educational requirements and aspirations of the SEDB in mind, the preferred option for the existing buildings is, unfortunately, for their demolition.
- 7.4.23 In pre-submission consultations with the WCC'S Conservation Section, discussions have been undertaken with regard to the further recording of the buildings beyond the findings of the Birmingham Archaeology report. In addition, and in accordance with comments made by the Conservation officer, it will be the intention to salvage architectural elements from the existing school complex which could be reused within the new academy development. This would accord with the requirements of PPS5 Policy HE12 and UDP Policy HE20 which has specific regard to the recording and salvage of materials following the demolition of Local List buildings.
- 7.4.24 The loss of the existing school complex is, unfortunately, unavoidable in this instance if the aspirations of the BSF programme, and those of the Academy Trust and LEP, are to be realised. These are explored further in the Options Appraisal Report which supports the planning application. Links with the school's past can be achieved with the incorporation of elements of the old buildings into the new Academy complex, as can the erection of interpretation panels highlighting the history of the site within and around the new Academy site.

## **7.5 Consideration of External Sports Facilities**

- 7.5.1 The adopted Wolverhampton UDP acknowledges that *“open space, sport and recreation facilities makes an important contribution to the health and wider quality of life of residents and visitors to Wolverhampton”* (para.12.1.1). School playing fields make a valuable contribution to this overall provision.
- 7.5.2 The existing school is provided with a significant area of external sports and play facilities within its boundaries. In general terms, this equates to the provision of a large playground at the rear of the existing buildings and some playing fields to the south of this although, for various reasons, not all of this is currently being used for formal playing fields.
- 7.5.3 Policy R1 of the UDP notes that the Council will carry out assessments of the existing and future needs of the City for different types of open space, sports and recreation facilities and these will be used to set local standards for different types of provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.
- 7.5.4 The Options Appraisal Report for the site acknowledges the findings of the City Council’s Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study of October 2008 which found that Bilston is predicted to have a deficit of 18.32 hectares of such land by 2021. This is further confirmed at para.12.2.8 of the UDP where, in relation to Policy R2, *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Priority Areas*, that Bilston Urban Village is one of a number of areas across the city which has less than 2.6ha of recreational open space per 1,000 residents.
- 7.5.5 Para. 12.2.9 of the UDP notes that *“there is usually little potential to create new open space, sport and recreation facilities in priority areas, except via new developments, so it is often more appropriate to improve the quality and accessibility of existing facilities, increase the range of facilities available or bring private facilities into public use through dual-use arrangements.”* This statement encompasses much of what the current proposals for the new academy are about in relation to the provision of suitable facilities for use, not only by the academy’s pupils, but also by the wider community. The improvement of existing facilities is, of course, also a key objective of the guidance in PPG17.
- 7.5.6 Policy R3 of the UDP has regard to the protection of open space, sport and recreation facilities and states that, until appropriate needs surveys have been completed, development which results in the loss of any part of an open space, sport or recreation facility, will not be permitted unless it meets a series of criteria. It is the intention of the current proposals, not to reduce the overall amount of such provision within the site but, through the development of the new academy, to bring those parts of the whole site back into such use and to help to address the known shortfall in provision as described within the 2008 survey mentioned above. As such, it is considered that the current proposals accord with the provisions of Policy R3.
- 7.5.7 Policy R5 has regard to development involving the loss of sports grounds. Para 12.5.1 states that playing fields are outdoor areas for formal sporting purposes which accommodate one or more playing pitches and other land which allows for the proper use of the pitches. Sport England must also be formally consulted on any planning application for development which will affect a playing field of 0.4hectares or more.

- 7.5.8 As noted previously, Policy P1 of the Sport England Planning Policy Statement states that they will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, or land last used as a playing field, unless one of five specific circumstances applies.
- 7.5.9 In terms of the first specific circumstance, E1, this has regard to an excess of playing field provision in the catchment being demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England by a carefully quantified assessment of current and future needs.
- 7.5.10 As stated previously in this section, the 2008 study undertaken by the City Council predicts an 18.32 hectare deficit in provision by 2021. The current proposals will not add to that deficit, rather they will bring back existing provision into more formal use. Whilst there is a large area of open space within the existing site, not all of the available area is currently being utilised for formal playing fields by the school. Whilst the proposals would result in the loss of the existing tennis courts, currently unused, the loss of this facility would be compensated for by the provision of a new MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area).
- 7.5.11 The second specific circumstance, E2, states that the proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use.
- 7.5.12 The playing fields in this instance would be ancillary to the use of the site as an educational establishment, this also being the existing use of the site. As stated above, whilst the existing provision is significantly underutilised, the proposals will improve both the quantity and, significantly, the quality of the existing provision. They will also extend their availability for use, not just by the academy's pupils, but also for their use by the wider local community in the catchment area.
- 7.5.13 The third specific circumstance, E3, has regard to the proposed development only affecting land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and not resulting in the loss or inability to make use of any playing pitch, a reduction in size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities of the site.
- 7.5.14 As stated above, the development proposals will result in the loss of the tennis courts along the site's eastern boundary. However, that loss will be tempered with the creation of the MUGA and the provision of a large, new all weather pitch within the western part of the site, a facility which currently does not exist at the site.
- 7.5.15 The fourth specific circumstance, E4, has regard to the loss of playing fields resulting from development, being replaced by facilities of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.
- 7.5.16 The current proposals will bring back into formal use, the existing playing fields at the school. Not only that, the proposals will provide an improved range and quality of provision over that which currently exists at the site in the same location which will be to the advantage of the academy's pupils and the wider community.

- 7.5.17 The fifth specific circumstance, E5, relates to where the provision of an indoor or outdoor sports facility would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.
- 7.5.18 As stated previously, there is no significant loss of provision at the site by virtue of the current proposals. Any small losses will be more than adequately compensated for by improvements in the provision of other, additional and improved facilities at the site. Indeed, with the construction of the new leisure centre adjacent to the academy site, this will significantly improve the provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities within the wider Bilston catchment area and beyond.
- 7.5.19 Policy R8 of the UDP has regard to the encouragement for the dual use of sports grounds and other sport and recreation facilities provided at places of education or on privately-owned land. It is an essential element of the BSF programme that the dual use of educational facilities, both the schools themselves and the associated sport facilities, becomes available to the wider community. As stated in the previous paragraph, the opportunities which will become available to the wider community as a result of the new academy and leisure centre developments will support the provisions and aspirations of this policy.
- 7.5.20 As Sport England will be a statutory consultee to the consideration of the planning application, the Midlands office has been consulted by the Applicants as part of the pre-submission consultation exercise. Sport England was presented with four options for the layout of site having regard to how much of the existing school buildings complex would be retained. The final option for the redevelopment scheme proposes the total demolition of all existing school buildings.
- 7.5.21 In their initial response, Sport England indicated that the external sports provision at the site seemed acceptable in principle. The proposals whilst they would result in an area of playing field adjacent to the existing science block, would be more than adequately compensated for with the provision of the full sized all weather pitch which would enable the retention of natural turf winter and summer provision.
- 7.5.22 In terms of the loss of the existing tennis courts, located where the academy building is proposed to be built, the scheme initially evaluated by Sport England indicated the provision of 2No. MUGA pitches, and they responded that the loss of the tennis courts would be adequately replaced by the 2 new MUGAs.
- 7.5.23 However, in the intervening period, and as part of the formal Stage 1 Submission document to the City Council, the MUGA provision has been halved to a single pitch. Prior to the submission of the planning application, a revised layout was also subject to further consultation with Sport England.
- 7.5.24 With regard to the revised layout with the single MUGA, Sport England have indicated that they would wish to comment further upon the sports pitch provision during the formal consultation process following the submission of the planning application.
- 7.5.25 In summary, it is considered that the proposals are fully supportive of the policies and provisions of the adopted UDP in relation to open space, sport and recreation facilities.

- 7.5.26 In addition, they address the national planning policy guidance in PPG17, and the specific planning policies in relation to development on playing fields published by Sport England.

## **7.6 Residential Amenity**

- 7.6.1 In terms of existing residential provision in the area immediately surrounding the application site, this is restricted to those 10 houses adjacent to the northern boundary of the application site. These are comprised of 5 pairs of semi-detached houses arranged around the access known as Linton Croft which is accessed directly from Prosser Street.
- 7.6.2 The rear gardens of Nos. 1&2 face the access into the proposed new leisure centre site. Nos. 3-8 face the proposed new academy and Nos. 9&10 face the proposed all-weather sports pitch and the smaller of the two academy car parks (40 spaces). The access to this car park is in the same position as that which serves the existing school. It is expected that this will be no busier than the existing school for occupiers of the houses in Linton Croft, particularly Nos. 9&10. There is an existing brick wall which will be retained and which will maintain the separation between the proposed car park and the existing houses as it does at present.
- 7.6.3 Along the rear boundary of Nos.3-8, the service road serving the main car park and service area for the academy, directly from the service access to the new leisure centre. New landscaping will be planted which will help to screen the new academy from the existing houses and help to preserve their amenity, the detailed design of which would be the subject of a condition on any planning permission.
- 7.6.4 The proposed Bilston Urban Village will be developed around the academy site over the next few years, it already having been granted outline planning permission. The indicative layout plan for the BUV proposes that new houses will be built alongside the western boundary of the site adjacent to the car park, all weather pitch and other sport pitches.
- 7.6.5 Of course, at this time, the final layout and design of the houses in this general location is not known and, as such, it is difficult to provide any firm opinion as to any impact upon residential amenity that might be attributable to the use of the sports facilities. However, given that these will be in place before the proposed housing, it will be for the developers and designers of that new housing to take the academy development into account and to plan accordingly.
- 7.6.6 In overall terms, it is considered that there will be no significantly greater impact upon residential amenity arising from the proposed new academy than that which currently exists.

## **7.7 Community Involvement**

- 7.7.1 One of the most important factors of the BSF programme is that, whilst the various developments will provide significant improvements in secondary education provision across the city by either new or significantly upgraded facilities, a major function of the programme is that these facilities will become available for community use in the evenings, both for vocational training and leisure pursuits, but also for the use of the sports facilities at the academy.

- 7.7.2 The proposed new academy, together with the new leisure centre which is currently under construction, will bring together two major developments which will widen the scope for greater community use of the most up-to-date facilities which the population of Bilston, and even across the City and the wider area, will be able to utilise.
- 7.7.3 The future Bilston Urban Village proposals will also help to support the use of the new facilities in this area. When completed, the facilities available to the local community in Bilston and within the wider area will be second to none across the whole of the City.
- 7.7.4 Consultation events about the new academy were held at the Parkfields Campus on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> September and at the existing school complex in Prosser Street on Thursday, 23<sup>st</sup> September, where pupils and the local community could engage with the developers and the architects. A Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared and is submitted with the planning application.

## **7.8 Sustainability**

- 7.8.1 The development of the proposed new academy has been carefully assessed by the Design Team in relation to its sustainability. The sustainability measures considered for incorporation within the development and infrastructure have been structured in accordance with the West Midlands Sustainability Check List; derived from various sources including National Planning Policy; Local Sustainable Development Policy and Consultations.
- 7.8.2 These matters have been summarised in a section in the Design & Access Statement prepared by the project Architects, Capita Architecture, which accompanies the planning application.
- 7.8.3 It is intended that the proposed development will seek to achieve a 'excellent' rating under the BREEAM requirements.
- 7.8.4 It is considered that this document demonstrates a strong commitment to the 'sustainability' aspects of the development.

## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.0.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the proposals to develop the site for one of two brand new academies for the City of Wolverhampton over the next few years.
- 8.0.2 There is an excellent fit between the current proposals which are seeking to improve levels of educational attainment through the Building Schools for the Future programme which will develop facilities of a first class nature in the town, and the regeneration initiatives and strategies across the City and at the Local level in Bilston itself, all of which have a sharp focus in supporting the local community
- 8.0.3 Furthermore, the scheme forms a cornerstone of the overall development proposals for the regeneration of Bilston Town Centre which can be seen with the current development of the adjacent site for the town's new Leisure Centre, the proposed PCT Health Centre development, and the proposal for the Bilston Urban Village which already have the benefit of an outline planning permission and the support of the City Council. The current proposals for the South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy add further support to the regeneration of the wider Bilston Town Centre.
- 8.0.4 In planning terms, it is considered that the current proposals put forward within this planning application are in accordance with the suite of National and Local planning policies where they are applicable. In particular, the site :
- *Is located within the heart of the local Bilston community;*
  - *It will help to facilitate the local regeneration of the Town Centre;*
  - *Maintains the long established use of the site for educational purposes;*
  - *Is highly accessible by a variety of modes of transport including public transport (buses and Metro), cycling and walking;*
  - *Will create a high quality design for the building;*
  - *Is able to meet requirements for Playing Pitch provision*
- 8.0.5 A number of site specific factors have also been considered in the development of the current proposals and include :
- *Existing land uses;*
  - *Existing site and ground conditions;*
  - *Landform and topography;*
  - *Access and highways;*
  - *Open space and sports provision;*
  - *Heritage issues;*
  - *Community use;*
  - *Environmental and ecological constraints;*
  - *Design;*
  - *Flood risk.*
- 8.0.6 In general terms, it is considered that, not only is this redevelopment of the site for these purposes entirely appropriate for educational use, but the chosen configuration is the optimum way to develop the site for the purposes specified within the Strategic Educational Design Brief. In particular, the following points should be noted:

- *The new academy will provide first-class secondary education in purpose designed facilities;*
- *The optimum solution for the site will only become available with the demolition of the existing school buildings complex;*
- *The proposals will be important in the wider regeneration of Bilston Town Centre;*
- *The location of the site in the Town Centre lends itself very well to offering a choice of sustainable modes of transport for students and staff alike;*
- *Enable the provision of more modern, suitable leisure facilities that the community and the Academy will have access to and which will be a key focus of the campus;*
- *Provide qualitative improvements to the provision of sports provision and ancillary facilities and help to rebalance the deficit of such provision which has been identified within Bilston;*
- *Impacts on the openness of the playing fields and informal open space are minimised;*
- *There are minimal impacts upon existing trees and vegetation on the site and scope for new landscaping proposals to provide an improved and unified setting to the new development;*
- *There are no significant ecological issues associated with the site which cannot be mitigated for;*
- *At the level of site investigation carried out, there is nothing to suggest that the site cannot be developed for its intended purposes. As is usual with a scheme of this scale, additional ground investigations are being carried out prior to the development of the site.*

8.0.7 Public Consultation has also been undertaken on the proposals and there have been a number of helpful suggestions that the Council will endeavour to take on board wherever possible as part of the design development of the scheme.

8.0.8 This planning application is, therefore, commended to the City Council for approval.

**Tweedale Limited**  
**September 2010**



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