

Darlington Borough Council

Eastbourne Academy

Provision of New School Development at Hundens Park, Eastbourne

Planning Statement

June 2007



Revision Schedule

Planning Statement June 2007

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1 Statement In Support of Planning Application

1.1 Introduction

This statement deals with an outline planning application to provide a new Academy for Eastbourne on the northern half of Hundens Park and east of Arnold Road (see Figure 1).

Hundens Park lies in the Eastbourne area of Darlington, adjacent to Eastbourne Sports Centre and the new Darlington College. Comprising some 6.34 hectares, the site currently provides sports pitches for community use and informal recreation for nearby residents.

The statement sets out the case in support of the proposed new Academy and should be read alongside other relevant documentation comprising the planning application. These are as follows:

- a) Application forms and certificates
- b) Red line site application plan
- c) Conceptual layout plan for the site - this shows how the form of development could take place, gives indicative massing for the buildings and shows vehicle and pedestrian access to the site;
- d) Transport Assessment – this contains proposals for the means of access into the site and mitigation in terms of highway improvements accommodating the traffic to be generated from the proposed scheme. It also includes proposals for a Green Travel Plan in connection with the development of the site
- e) Design and Access Statement – this explains the design rationale behind the emerging development
- f) Landscape Visual Appraisal – a physical assessment of the site and possible visual impacts
- g) Cultural Heritage Appraisal – identifying possible archeological constraints
- h) Ecological Survey Report
- i) Flood Risk Assessment

This is an outline planning application with the following matters reserved;

- Layout
- Scale
- Appearance
- Landscaping

Vehicular ingress/egress will via an improved existing access to the site.



Figure 1

1.2 The Benefits of a New Eastbourne Academy

The proposed Eastbourne Academy will help deliver a higher level of educational opportunity and attainment for its pupils. An Academy is a publicly funded, all-ability, independent school established by sponsors working in partnership with the Government and local councils. Academies provide free education for every pupil. The Church of England, as the sponsor of the Eastbourne Academy, has a proven track record of delivering high quality education through its Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided and Academy Schools.

It is proposed that the new Academy would open in September 2007 on the existing site at Eastbourne School. The academy project will include the provision of a new building to replace the existing school, to be available by late 2009. Darlington Borough Council has looked at a range of options and considers Hundens Park to be the most appropriate site for the new Academy.

1.3 Existing Facilities

The portion of the park to be utilised for the Academy development comprises some 6.34 hectares although only a small proportion of that area - less than 0.5 hectares - will involve built development.

Historically the majority of the site has been undeveloped or open green field and as it is not currently fenced off is regularly used for recreation, dog-walking, etc, by local people.

The site also provides six sports pitches for community use with a small car park in the south west corner of the site area near the entrance.

1.4 Proposed Development

The proposed comprises the following elements;

- New school buildings and associated facilities for 700 pupils
- Staff and visitor car parking
- At least 3 No. new sports pitches (soccer, rugby, cricket etc)
- Multi-use games area (MUGA)
- Improved vehicular access to site

The proposal is to build new school buildings and associated facilities for around 700 pupils. Vehicle access to the school will be via the current site entrance off Hundens Lane with pedestrians using both this and other entrances shown marked on Dwg MA06395 - 1006. This access will be enhanced with improved radii.

The proposed car park and school buildings will be located close to the entrance on the western side of the site. At least three sports pitches (for soccer, rugby, cricket, etc) and a multi-use games area (MUGA) will be provided within the school grounds. These facilities will be open for public use when not in use by the school.

Although this is an outline application, the submitted drawings illustrate a potential siting and layout of proposed Academy building, car parking and recreational provision. Exact details of these elements will need to be the subject of reserved matter submissions.

1.5 Landscape & Visual Assessment

The site is located on the edge of the Darlington urban area. It is a large open site, predominantly level with a defined boundary. Mature trees along the western and northern limits of the site provide a clear boundary marker. To the south and east a small hedge defines the space, incorporating a palisade fence along the school boundary.

Visual Assessment of the site has highlighted that the proposed development will be visible from the surrounding area, and could particularly impact upon the residents of Arnold Road and the neighbouring Hundens Park Care Home. Houses on The Causeway and The Broadway will be affected to a minor extent with views of the new development in the distance. The three storey block of flats off Throstlenest Avenue may also be affected, as south facing windows on the upper storey will have clear views into the site. The industrial and commercial development on Banks Road and Red Barnes Way will also be affected to a minor extent although few buildings have windows facing onto the site.

Due to the open nature of this location there are clear views from the site out into the surrounding area. The neighbouring buildings are clearly visible including the tall industrial buildings on Red Barnes Way, Hundens Park Care Home and the line of electricity pylons alongside the site, although, when in leaf, the surrounding trees will screen some of these views.

To mitigate the effect of the proposed development a woodland belt is recommended along the northern and western boundary of the site, to help screen and enhance the views of the school from neighbouring houses. To achieve a successful visual barrier, the existing tree line should be composed of a tiered planting structure approximately 15m in width.

1.6 Flood Risk Assessment

A full Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for the proposed Academy is provided as part of the planning application. The FRA, which is compiled in accordance with PPS25 'Development and Flood Risk', assesses if the proposed development is likely to be affected by flooding and whether there will be an increase in flood risk elsewhere as a result of the development.

In line with Government policy and advice from the EA, the development will use sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) to control the rate of surface water run-off into the adjacent NWL surface water system.

The report confirms that the site is not at risk from flooding for both a 1 in 100 year and 1 in 1000 year events.

Recommendations are also made regarding the proposed storm water drainage system for the inclusion of appropriate storage and discharge rates limited to the greenfield runoff rate.

1.7 Ecology

The report was based upon an ecological walkover survey.

The proposed site consists of amenity grassland playing fields, with woodland, trees and scrub bordering the perimeter of the site. A minor watercourse runs along the eastern perimeter, and to the north of the study area there is an immature woodland belt, and semi-improved grassland with a pond and associated marshy grassland habitats.

No habitats of significance were noted within the survey area, but trees and scrub have potential for bat roost habitat and breeding birds. It is recommended that all scrub, trees and vegetation be retained on site. The minor watercourse along the eastern side of the site will need to be protected against direct encroachment and pollution. Should trees, scrub and vegetation be removed, removal should be undertaken outside the breeding bird season (mid March to August inclusive) and, immediately prior to removal, trees should be checked for bats by a trained Ecologist.

To the north of the site the Arnold Road Pond supports a low great crested newt population, (based on surveys carried out in 2005 for E3 Partnership for their survey work along the Eastern Transport Corridor. Arnold Road Pond is just over 110m from the amenity grassland and associated habitats of Hunden's Park and therefore Hunden's Park provides potential for newt terrestrial habitat. Mitigation will need to be put in place to prevent legal implications in relation to great crested newts and to protect the newt population at Arnold Road Pond. This should include a newt Exclusion Programme, carried out in consultation with Natural England, DEFRA, Darlington Council, and possibly E3 Partnership, so as to co-ordinate newt mitigation for this project with other schemes planned in the vicinity.

Ecological Enhancement measures are also suggested; these include landscape planting based upon native plants of local provenance, and creating a partnership with a local wildlife group to provide refuges and habitat for species of interest, e.g. Species on the Durham Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Particular reference is made to possible enhancement measures for the newt population in Arnold Road Pond, to protect this low population of newts. These enhancements will need to be co-ordinated with work proposed by E3 Partnership to ensure success and best use of resources.

1.8 Cultural Heritage

The aim of the Cultural Heritage appraisal was to assess the archaeological, historical and built heritage significance of the proposed development area.

A 1km radius study area was defined around the proposed development site and records of archaeological activity within the area were obtained from the Durham Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record.

The appraisal found that there are no recorded archaeological or historical sites within the proposed development site; however, the wider study area contained evidence of activity

dating from the medieval period to the modern period. Evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation was identified in a number of archaeological reports, but was not observed on the aerial photographs of the site, and it is possible that the earthworks were associated with a caravan park which closed in the 1980s.

The post-medieval period saw the construction of the historic Stockton & Darlington Railway, a branch line of which ran to the north of the proposed development site. Five structures (bridges and tunnels) and remnants of track associated with the railway were also identified within the study area. The railway was a catalyst for the growth of Darlington and by the modern period there had been a significant increase in the number of houses in the study area. This expansion is mirrored by the growth in the population of the area as reflected in the two churches that were built in the later 19th century. The available historic mapping of the area suggests that the site was first developed in the early 20th century as a municipal park which contained tennis courts and a bowling green.

By the late 20th century, the Stockton & Darlington Railway had been dismantled within the study area. The municipal park had fallen out of use and, subsequently, six football pitches were created within the proposed development site. Notably, the results of a geotechnical survey carried out as part of this development have demonstrated that the ground has been raised up and levelled to create a flat surface for the pitches.

An assessment was made of the built heritage baseline within the study area, with particular reference to statutory designations (conservation areas and listed buildings). The built environment of the study area mainly comprises 19th and 20th century development, including concentrations of residential buildings along Houghton Road to the north and Hundens Lane to the east. Much of the western half of the study area contains light industrial and mixed-used premises, including modern warehouses and business premises. There are no conservation areas or listed buildings within the site. However, the centre of the site is located c. 1.25km southwest of the Houghton Village Conservation Area, centred on Houghton Green.

The absence of any recorded archaeological and built heritage assets on or near the site of the proposed Academy site indicates that there is a low risk to cultural heritage from future development of that site.

1.9 Consultation

Prior to the site selection process the council undertook wide consultation. This included;

- pupils of the current Eastbourne school and nearby primary schools;
- parents and carers;
- teachers;
- school governors;
- school staff;
- nearby residents; and
- other interested parties

Feedback from the consultation exercise showed widespread support for the proposed Academy.

Two pre-application consultation meetings were held during the early design stage to seek opinion on aspects such as access, boundary treatment and building height. These meetings were held at Eastbourne Sports Centre on the 26th March at 4pm and 6pm and were attended by four and eight people respectively. Approximately 1100 letters of invitation were sent to publics and nearby residents. The meetings highlighted several areas of concern:

- There is no physical boundary with the care home which could cause problems;
- Will the school be capable of being extended in response to changing population and demand;
- Playing fields will be available for community sports use, but not for residents to use informally. Residents will lose their recreation space;
- Corridor for public access follows rough, sloping ground;
- Could the buildings be located towards the east end of the site away from Arnold Road, with a longer access road from Hundens Lane?;
- Parked vehicles on Hundens Lane would prevent buses turning into the entrance; congestion is already bad on Hundens Lane due to College parking, and this would add to it; the access drawing is not correct;
- Abusive behaviour and damage to property in Fairway and Bourne Avenue;
- Concern that the proposals are designed to increase use of the sports centre;
- Timing of refuse collection in The Fairway results in bin bags being out on the footway when pupils leave school and bags being kicked and burst open; and
- What are the plans for Eastbourne School after the academy transfers to Hundens Park?

The meetings were followed by a two week consultation period where any interested party could view the plans and submit comments. Four responses were received; these echoed the concerns of those at the meetings but also added further, sometimes conflicting, comments.

- No other areas were considered or investigate for the Academy;
- Sports pitches will only be available to the community at a cost and by booking with the Sports Centre; residents will lose their recreation space;
- Creating 'narrow' access corridors around the school will promote litter and vandalism;
- A two storey building will impact too heavily on surrounding properties;
- A two storey building is the most acceptable;
- Fewer football pitches would be preferred;
- Would like to see family council housing on the site of the old school which would not be privately sold;
- The Academy should have been located at the top of Yarm Road; and
- This site is the most viable option for the Academy

All the consultation responses have been taken into account in formulating the preferred option for the outline planning application.

1.10 Planning Policy and Development Plan Provisions

In accordance with Section 54 (A) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the provision of the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Following amendments made by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) a Development Plan, in generic terms, now comprises the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and Development Plan Documents (DPDs) contained in the Local Development Framework (LDF). Until new DPDs have been prepared the existing Structure Plan and Local Plan continue to form part of the Development Plan.

Accordingly, the adopted Development Plan for Darlington Borough Council comprises the Tees Valley Structure Plan (adopted 2004) and the Borough of Darlington Borough Local Plan (adopted 1997, alterations adopted 2001), read together with the current Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to 2016 and the Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (RPG1) which was published in 2002.

On 28th September 2004, the North East Regional Planning Guidance (RPG1) became the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and as such forms part of the development plan. The RSS sets out a strategy and vision for land use planning in the region over the next 15 to 20 years.

1.10.1 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG1)

RPG1 is based on the vision of: “a dynamic economy, a healthy environment and a society where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.” The new Academy wholly supports this vision and will assist the Borough of Darlington to improve education attainment and potential of its young people.

1.10.2 Tees Valley Structure Plan

Section three of the Structure Plan deals with Sustainable Development and a vision for the future of the Tees Valley. The proposed Academy wholly supports this vision for sustainable development. Paragraph 3.2 outlines the educational problems in the region and states that the Tees Valley is ‘one of the poorest performing sub- regions for GCSE results’. Consequently, in seeking to improve educational attainment in Darlington and the Tees Valley, the proposed Academy will help fulfill a pressing need for the area.

Policy SUS1 seeks to ensure all new development in the Tees Valley makes ‘a positive contribution to all three strands of sustainable development, namely enhancing environmental quality, social wellbeing and economic prosperity.’ The Academy proposals would not only improve the educational achievement of its pupils but also contribute to social wellbeing, economic prosperity and improve the environment in Eastbourne.

Policy SUS2 states that:

The Tees Valley authorities, through their local plans, development control decisions and partnership activities, will

- i. encourage physical and social regeneration in urban and rural areas;
- ii. give preference to the development of brownfield sites, and prevent the unnecessary use of greenfield sites;
- iii. promote the re-use of vacant land and buildings;
- iv. make best use of existing infrastructure, services and amenities;
- v. encourage development in locations which minimise the need for travel and can be well served by public transport;
- vi. encourage the creation of new employment opportunities close to areas of high unemployment;
- vii. provide accessible opportunities for recreation, education, employment and public services;
- viii. maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of town and district centres;
- ix. protect and enhance the quality and character of the built and natural environment;
- x. conserve the use of natural resources and encourage the generation of power from renewable energy sources;
- xi. minimise pollution to land, air and water; and
- xii. reduce the amount of waste produced and encourage reuse and recycling.

Accordingly Policy SUS2 aims to encourage a more sustainable approach towards the way in which we live, work and travel and provides guidance to the Tees Valley authorities in making development control decisions. The Hundens Park proposal provides a very accessible opportunity for the new Academy; it is within the current school's catchment area and close to the existing facilities so all those who walk to school can continue to do so

Chapter nine of the Structure Plan discusses leisure, recreation and tourism, and the use of playing pitches and educational facilities. In accordance with Policy L9 the Academy will make full use of adjoining leisure facilities at the Eastbourne Sports Complex and in turn will make its leisure facilities available for public use.

Development on playing fields is discussed in section 9.50 and covered by Policy L10. Although the policy states that playing fields should 'be protected from development' there are some exceptions to this rule,

'Development will only be permitted if:

- i. alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is provided;
- ii. sport and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through redevelopment of a small part of the site; and
- iii. there is an excess of sports pitch provision and public open space in the area, taking account of the recreation and amenity value of such provision.'

Six of the ten pitches on Hundens Park will be lost and approximately 6 hectares of the open space will be enclosed for school use. However all sports facilities will be open for public use and the new pitches provided by the school will be of higher quality with better drainage. Sports Pitch provision is discussed below in the context of the Local Plan.

1.10.3 The Borough of Darlington Local Plan

The main issue within the local plan is the location of the proposed development on designated open land and thus its protection under policy E3 and recreation policies R4 and R9.

Policy E3 seeks to protect open space within the development limits of the borough of Darlington. Permission will not be granted for development which inflicts material net harm on:

1. The visual relief afforded by the system in built-up areas;
2. The character and appearance of the locality through loss of openness and greenery;
3. Facilities for organised sport which contribute to meet the standards set out in Policy R4;
4. Facilities available for other formal recreational and leisure activities, for informal recreation or for horticulture;
5. The internal continuity of the system, or on its linkages with the open countryside; or
6. Areas recognised for their nature conservation of wildlife interest.

The proposed Academy site covers approximately half of the existing Hundens Park. Of this less than 10% will be built upon so the site will stay very much open. Locating the new-build elements of the school close to the existing built environment which abuts the western and southern boundaries of the site will help integrate the proposal within the urban form.

Policy R4 seeks to ensure that a level of open space provision is provided within the urban areas of the borough. The policy requires a figure of 3.6ha per 1000 population which is then broken down to cover major and local open space. Major open space, like Hundens Park, serves a town wide population. Policy R4 requires a level of 1.6ha per 1000 given

over to playing pitches and 0.8ha per person for informal/passive recreation. A recent audit has been undertaken as part of the Greenspace Strategy (currently published as draft) which shows current levels of open space are at 9.8 Ha per 1000 population (Table 1, draft Open Spaces Strategy, Executive summary 2006). For outdoor sports facilities the total area is 297.9 Ha (Table 3, draft Open Spaces Strategy, Executive summary 2006) which equates to approximately 3 Ha per 1000 population.

Policy R9 deals more specifically with playing pitches:

“Development which would result in the loss of any playing field, pitch or court will not be permitted unless one or more of the following circumstances applies:

1. The development is for new or improved facilities related to the use of the playing field;
2. The development involves a small part of a playing field and will bring about the enhancement of the remainder and an overall improvement in the quality of the facility;
3. Alternative provision will be provided by the developer; or
4. The council's monitoring of playing pitch provision against demand for facilities indicates an excess of playing pitch provision.

In the urban area the impact of development proposals will also be assessed within the terms of POLICY E3”

The proposed Academy will be built on land which provides six football pitches which are well used by local leagues and residents. The new Academy will replace these pitches with at least three high quality pitches with new drainage to alleviate the current problems with water logging and flooding.

1.11 Summary & Conclusion

To aid consultees and decision-makers, this statement has identified the planning context and material considerations for a new educational academy on part of Hundens Park in the Eastbourne Area of Darlington

This statement is supported by a raft of other reports, drawings and documentary evidence each of which underscores the robustness of the decision to locate a new Academy at Hundens Park.

- The site lies within the catchment area of existing schools.
- Accessibility, particularly by foot, makes this a highly sustainable location.
- The development can be satisfactorily accommodated in terms of highways and access considerations.
- A landmark building of modern design - evolved to meet the needs of today's aspiring pupils and students - will contribute to Darlington's urban regeneration.
- There is no significant flood risk to future development of the site.
- Existing playing fields will benefit from improved re-orientation and drainage.
- New and strengthened landscaping, including mitigation for nearby protected species, will enhance the visual, ecological and habitat amenity of the area.
- A large proportion of Hundens Park will remain as open space.
- In all the above considerations the proposed development is consistent with the goals aspirations and detailed policies of regional and local planning policy.

There is little doubt amongst the vast majority of the local community that this proposed educational facility is not only required but will make a significant contribution to the local community without significant adverse impact upon the local environment.

Accordingly this proposal is commended to the local planning authority.