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Our ref: Barnsley/40b – Planning Conformity/Final responses/Barnsley Education Sites (Submission) Jan 08

28 January 2008

Chris Collison
Assistant Director
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PO Box 604
Barnsley
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Dear Chris

**Barnsley Local Development Framework
Barnsley Education Sites (Submission) Development Plan Document
(DPD)**

Further to your letter of 5 December 2007, I am pleased to confirm the Assembly's opinion that the Barnsley Education Sites Development Plan Document, as submitted to the Secretary of State on 28 September 2007, is in general conformity with the existing and draft Regional Spatial Strategy and the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Paragraph 4.19 of PPS12 (Local Development Frameworks) makes it clear that an RSS under preparation gathers more weight as it passes through its preparation process. It states "Where the regional spatial strategy has been through an Examination in Public, and the Proposed Changes have been published, considerable weight may be attached to that strategy because of the strong possibility that it will be published in that form by the Secretary of State". The Assembly has therefore referred to the Proposed Changes to the Draft RSS (published at the end of September 2007) in this response but would like to make it clear that the Assembly will be commenting on the Proposed Changes and that final RSS is expected to be published in Spring 2008.

At this stage in the document's development, the Assembly would like the following comments to be taken into account.

Need for General Conformity

The RSS has an important role in providing a strategic policy context for local policies. The need for there to be 'general conformity' between the RSS and the Local Development Framework is explained at the start of the Core Strategy.

General Comments

However, the Assembly would like to issue some concern over the proposed locations of the new sites which are all situated on the edge of the main urban area and on greenfield land. The Assembly has concerns that the location of the proposed sites may not be accessible.

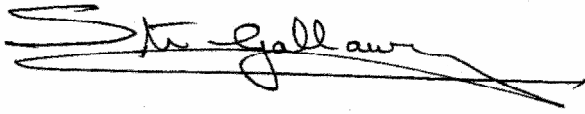
Policy SOC3 in current RSS (2004) provides for the development of education and learning facilities to be in locations that are accessible by good public transport and in accordance with locational criteria set out in Policies P1 and T2. Policy P1 in current RSS (December 2004) requires a sequential approach to site selection. YH8B of draft RSS (December 2005) also makes it clear that a sequential approach should be taken in allocating specific sites for development to ensure that developments are either reusing land or buildings within centres, infilling sites within centres or are sites that are well connected on public transport routes and that can maximise accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. Policy YH8C requires a transport-orientated approach to ensure that development makes the best use of transport infrastructure, is focussed along existing or planned public transport corridors and maximises accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the RSS amends policy YH8 of the Core Approach to reinforce and further strengthen the need for a transport-orientated approach to development.

The Assembly would also like to draw your attention to the accessibility criteria as set out in both the current and draft RSS (Table 7.1 and 7.2 of current RSS and Table 16.8 and 16.9 of draft RSS). These tables include acceptable walking and overall journey times for the population that would be travelling to the proposed sites. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the RSS amends policy YH8 of the Core Approach to reinforce and further strengthen this requirement.

Therefore it will be important for both the local authority and the Inspector to be confident that these locations can provide adequate levels of access and that this contention is supported by a strong evidence-base.

If you have any queries about these points, please do not hesitate to contact Andy Haigh on 01924 331 601.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Galloway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Cllr. Stephen Galloway
Chair, Regional Planning Board