

Date:	17 June 2015
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Communication:	Appendix to communication BB_TPC_Let-1 Summary of site options
Purpose:	To convey information related to a specific action taken from a public meeting on 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2015

<b>1</b>	<b>Summary of site options</b>
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A total of eleven potential sites were selected by the Property Services Team for consideration. Each site was assessed for its suitability and ranked.

Three particular areas impact on the suitability of a site for development for educational use. These are the cost of the site and any additional abnormal costs, planning and highways/accessibility.

Comments provided by West Berkshire Council Planning and Highways Teams to date are high level, without prejudice and based on no detailed information. In respect to land cost, Planning take no account of this and it is a matter for the developer (here West Berkshire Council Education Service) to manage land cost.

Since formally evaluating the sites at the end of 2014 and drawing up a list of sites in order of preference, further information has become available reinforcing the preference of one site option and highlighting the non-deliverability of some sites previously considered possible. The summary of all the sites below describes the situation as understood and as explained to the community on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Nothing has changed since that meeting.

**1.1 Site 1**

From a Highways point of view the site is deliverable with highways mitigation works. These works, which have been subject to an initial high level independent highways assessment, focus on a new zebra crossing, extensive reduced traffic speed zone along the length of the Green combined with traffic calming road gateway feature, traffic island crossing points in addition to zebra crossing and possibly extra street lighting. The cost of these mitigation works would be in the region of £60K.

In planning terms, this site is at one end of the village reducing a new school's connectivity to the existing community and is likely to increase driving to the school as opposed to further reducing it; the school has a 70% walk to school uptake by parents and this is viewed as likely to diminish if the school moves to Site 1.

Though Site 1 is at present in agricultural use, its purchase price will reflect that this site has the potential to be allocated for housing in the near future. As such the open market value for this site will lie close to values associated with land already earmarked for residential development. . The purchase price of this site will significantly exceed the available fixed project budget . Aside from Planning's view, financially this site is wholly unviable.

In terms of ground conditions site 1 has running across it a major fuel line which cannot be overbuilt for building foundation purposes. Site configuration is such that this situation reduces site layout flexibility but is not a barrier to project delivery.

## 1.2 **Site 2**

This site has not been independently assessed by external highways engineers, but due to restrictions on how new buildings could be sited, there are issues known about now that reduces this site's ability to deliver an appropriate new school site. Moreover highways mitigation works are likely to be extensive and costly in relation to other sites. The three road junction where The Green meets Deadman's Lane would need remodeling as would possibly the bus park up lane (subject to agreement with Theale Green Academy) if a new access point was attempted at this point. Safe pedestrian access along Deadman's Lane might have to be considered involving major highways improvements along the length of the lane combined with speed restrictions.

This site is partially leased to Theale Green Academy over whom WBC has no control. In planning terms, it is not acceptable to site a new school on either the Northern or Western boundaries of this site, which it is viewed will leave the school isolated and disconnected from the built environment generally. Additionally all agricultural land outside of playing fields on site 2 is subject to an existing farm tenancy which the landlord does not have the ability to justifiably extinguish. Thus a new school would have to be built on the Academy playing fields which in turn would require extra land to reprovide lost Academy playing fields. Shared use of school playing fields and the creation of an education 'campus' combining the two schools are not appropriate for either WBC or the Academy. In terms of cost, the land values of site 2 are not insurmountable but difficult – again there is Hope Value on this site. This cost situation deteriorates further if major highways mitigation works have to be implemented – this combination makes viability marginal and reduces the Council's ability to fully deliver a fit for purpose new school.

In terms of ground conditions site 2 poses no known construction delivery issues.

### 1.3 **Site 3**

Delivery of a redeveloped school using both the existing site and part of site 3 was looked at in detail during the course of 2013 / 14.

In order to develop a new fit for purpose school, the school would need to expand onto the existing community recreation land; the minimum land up take would be 1000sqms. This was not deemed acceptable by the parish council. Moreover such permanent loss of central village community open space would still deliver a school with shared space for playing fields, thus not resolving existing management and safeguarding issues, and also not resolve long term parking issues on site. Parking on site would have to be permanently on church ground and the remaining parking space required would have to be delivered by permanent shared arrangement elsewhere in the community and thereby create a split school site. .

In terms of cost, delivery of a new school with inherited issues both on the existing site and utilizing village green land, would in the end be comparable to delivering a brand new school elsewhere. Finally a substantial part of this cost would be entirely abortive; approximately £1M would have to be spent on housing the school in temporary accommodation while a new school is being built. The move would not only be disruptive to pupils, the same pupils would have to live next door to a building site.

For the above reasons – where there would be a bad outcome for education and an undesirable impact on critical village centre open space, the option to redevelop on both the existing site and part of site 3 was rejected by WBC and Theale PC.

In terms of ground conditions site 3 poses no known construction delivery issues.

### 1.4 **Site 4**

From a Highways point of view the site is deliverable with highways mitigation works. These works, which have been subject to an initial high level independent highways assessment, focus on: creating new and / or widening existing pavements; the extension of existing speed restrictions and enforcing them by moving West existing gateway / pinch point features; by creating a formal pedestrian footpath through the existing school site thereby linking Church Street and Englefield Road and creating formal access from Play Plat and the Crescent onto site 4. The cost of these mitigation works are in the region of £100K and in the context of overall project costs comparable to Site 1 mitigation works.

In planning terms, site 4 is not only a good one in relation to the form of the village as it is now but also potentially a good site in relation to how the village could grow over the coming decades. The location and connectivity have the best ability to maintain existing levels of 'walk to school' take up, not increase car use.

Site 4 continued over page/...

Site 4 will require the loss of 5 acres of open public space a proportion of which is used for sport. However, by leaving the community with a uniform rectangular land holding of just under 9 acres and which will retain suitable vehicle access (both maintenance and for sports purposes), it has been shown the community will be able to deliver three full size over 18s FA standard football pitches with recommended full run offs and also enough space to provide ample parking for players and spectators. This does cover off sports provision but it is accepted that in terms of general open space (dog walkers etc), there is a community loss. However, it is hoped that any community loss is seen as balanced by the public benefit of a new fit purpose school that will serve the community well in the years ahead and will not involve the calling for more land in the years ahead.

In terms of cost, site 4 will not be available at pasture / pony paddock land cost, but the costs are affordable within the overall budget and do not represent an undue burden. WBC has funding to secure the site and deliver a good new school. Generally it is a quiet space and one where children should be able to flourish.

In terms of ground conditions site 4 poses no known construction delivery issues.

#### 1.5 **Site 5**

The major highways issue with site 5 is vehicle accessibility. The site cannot be appropriately serviced by Blossom Lane and it is neither financially viable nor acceptable to deliver an adoptable standard road from Englefield Road onto site 5. From a general Planning point of view the site, even if accessible, is in the very North of the community and not favourable in planning terms.

In terms of cost, site 5 would not be available at pasture / pony paddock land cost, but the land costs would be manageable. However, a major site issue is the existing golf club. The land owner cannot justifiably bring closure to the golf club and there would be compensation issues.

For the reasons of access and existing business use, site 5 is unviable.

In terms of ground conditions site 5 poses no known construction delivery issues.

#### 1.6 **Site 6**

Site 6 suffers from the same accessibility issues as site 5. In terms of cost, land values is not so much of an issue, but this site is a former Thames Water sewage treatment site and is contaminated. The cost of contamination remedial works are not affordable in the context of the new school budget, thus making this site unviable; generally it is a noisy location close to the motorway and over which electrical pylons run and as such this site is unsuitable as a location for a new school.

1.7 **Site 7**

Site 7 as a location for new school buildings with dedicated school playing fields located on site 8 was considered as an option. It was believed that site 7 was in the control of WBC and though public open space, this site was looked at in the same way we have looked at site 4 though the options would involve the potential loss of open public space.

However, not only is site 7 covenanted open public space and thus not available for use, the site suffers again from comparable accessibility issues as sites 5 & 6.

In terms of ground conditions site 7 poses no serious delivery issues. However, due to the inability to build on site 7 and the inability to deliver playing fields on site 8 where there are very serious ground condition issues as well as electrical pylons, site 7 is considered undeliverable.

1.8 **Site 8**

Site 8 does have accessibility issues. The existing truncated High Street could be extended onto the site to give access, but the cost of the road would be prohibitive not only in itself but also because the site suffers from very serious ground conditions. Even if site 8 was acceptable, other access solutions such as a slip road are undeliverable due to the enormous cost of such works.. Site 8 sits in a flood zone and has very poor ground conditions, is a very noisy location and is under electrical pylons; the site is both undeliverable and wholly undesirable for a new school.

1.9 **Site 9**

Site 9 has accessibility issues but which are less serious than site 8 – access could be gained off the end of the High Street. However, beyond this advantage, the site again sits in a flood zone and as such has very poor ground conditions. Generally it is a very noisy location and again under electrical pylons. As with site 8, this site is both undeliverable and wholly undesirable for a new school.

1.10 **Site 10**

Site 10 has similar highways accessibility issues to sites 6 & 7 in that it cannot be readily serviced from a small lane like Volunteer Road. However, the overriding problem with site 10 is that it is allotment garden space and even if the allotments could be moved to a new location with the full approval of all users (no existing precedent), WBC would have to reprovide the same size and quality of space in a neighbourhood environment. This space does not exist / is not available and nor could the project budget manage the purchase of such space.



**2.11 Site 11**

In planning terms, this site is similar to site 1 in that it is at one end of the village, thereby reducing the school's connectivity to the existing community and is likely to increase driving to the school as opposed to further reducing it. The school has a 70% walk to school uptake by parents and this is viewed as likely to diminish if the school moves to Site 11.

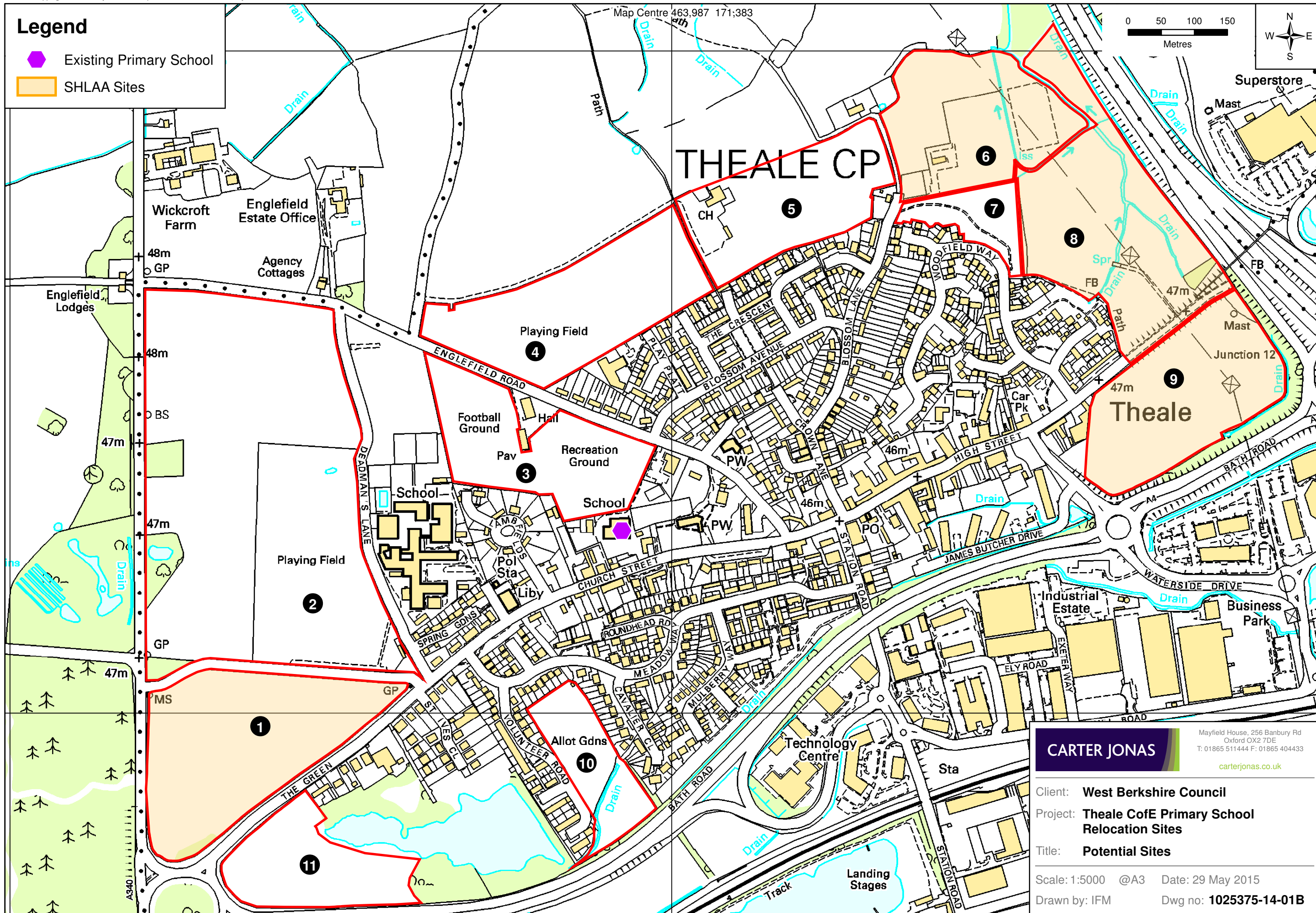
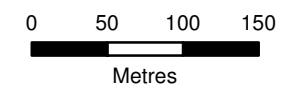
In addition to the above there are land value issues associated with site 11 in that the land has existing residential planning permissions on it and thus the market values would be unaffordable.

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### Legend

-  Existing Primary School
-  SHLAA Sites

Map Centre 463,987 171,383



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