

Local Development Framework

Bolton's Core Strategy
Background Document – BD9
Cutacre
December 2009

Shaping the future of Bolton

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	BACKGROUND.....	2
3	CONTEXT.....	4
	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS	4
	<i>PPG2 Green Belts</i>	4
	<i>PPG4 Industrial and commercial development and small firms</i>	6
	REGIONAL POLICY AND EVIDENCE	7
	<i>North West Regional Spatial Strategy</i>	7
	OTHER PLANS, STRATEGIES AND EVIDENCE	9
	<i>Wigan Council's planning policies</i>	9
	<i>Salford City Council's planning policies</i>	9
	<i>Greater Manchester Employment Land Position Statement</i>	10
	<i>Bolton Employment Land Study</i>	10
4	COUNCIL APPROACH	11
	CORE STRATEGY KEY ISSUES	11
	CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS	11
	CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS.....	12
	SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL	12
	CORE STRATEGY PUBLICATION DOCUMENT.....	13
5	SITE SPECIFIC ISSUES.....	14
	OBJECTIVES AND AIMS	14
	SITE CONSTRAINTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS.....	14
	(a) <i>Transport</i>	14
	(b) <i>Ground conditions and other physical constraints</i>	14
	(c) <i>Flooding</i>	14
	(d) <i>Mix of land uses</i>	15
	(e) <i>Utilities / energy</i>	15
	(f) <i>Ecology</i>	15
	(g) <i>Phasing and milestones</i>	15
	(h) <i>Delivery</i>	15
6	CONCLUSIONS.....	16
	SUMMARY OF POLICY FORMULATION	16
	SOUNDNESS	16
	<i>Consistent with National Policy</i>	16
	<i>Justified</i>	16
	<i>Effective</i>	16
	APPENDIX A – OTHER DOCUMENTATION	18
	APPENDIX B – GREEN BELT CONTEXT	19
	APPENDIX C – INDICATIVE SITE BOUNDARY.....	20

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Background Document is one of sixteen produced by Bolton Council to support the autumn 2009 publication version of the Bolton Core Strategy.
- 1.2 This Background Document covers policy M3. It is structured to provide information, which demonstrates the soundness of the Core Strategy as a whole:
- Background on the site at Cutacre, its planning history and links to the Community Strategy and strategic objectives
 - Specific evidence on which the policy approach is based.
 - How the policy approach was developed at each stage of the plan making process and a summary of representations at each of those stages
 - A statement that shows how the policies contribute to the effectiveness of the Core Strategy as a whole considering deliverability, flexibility and ability to be monitored

2 Background

- 2.1 Cutacre is in the southern part of the Borough of Bolton, on the boundary with Salford and Wigan. The northern boundary of the Cutacre area is formed by Salford Road (A6). M61 Junction 4 is to the north and the edge of Farnworth lies further north. To the west there is open countryside and the settlement of Over Hulton. To the south there is also open countryside with the Manchester to Atherton railway line running in a cutting within the Borough of Wigan. To the east is the Salford borough boundary and the Lester Road industrial estate, which forms part of Little Hulton.
- 2.2 The area is currently the subject of opencast coal operations. Before they started in 2006, the area could be divided into two parts; to the west it consisted of open fields; to the east was a disused colliery spoil heap, partly covered in scrub. The opencast operations are in the process of removing the spoil heap.
- 2.3 Conditional planning permission for the opencast operations was granted on appeal in 2001. A previous planning application for opencast operations had been rejected on appeal in 1992. The 2001 planning approval allowed for after-uses of amenity, woodland and agriculture on the western part of the site, with some industrial development on the eastern part.
- 2.4 Bolton's Unitary Development Plan (2005) allocates part of the former spoil heap as an employment site. The remaining part of the former tip is neither allocated for development nor in the Green Belt. The rest of the site is in the green belt. The whole of the site is a minerals area of search for opencast coal and in the agricultural coal measures landscape character area. The central part of it is identified as a Site of Biological Importance.
- 2.5 Published Core Strategy policy M3 identifies Cutacre as a broad location for employment, including land both inside and outside the Green Belt as defined in the Unitary Development Plan. Although the policy does not specify the size of the site to be developed at Cutacre, it is likely to be around 80 hectares in total extent. This would mean a change in Green Belt boundaries with about 35-40 hectares of land losing its Green Belt status. The exact extent of the site will be defined in Bolton's Allocations Development Plan Document. The map at Appendix C shows the possible extent of the site and the Green Belt boundary changes, but this is for illustrative purposes only and does not form part of the Core Strategy.
- 2.6 The Sustainable Community Strategy, in its section on Prosperous Bolton, identifies new development sites, such as Cutacre, as crucial to the future success of Bolton's economy.
- 2.7 The identification of Cutacre as a broad area for employment helps towards the following Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:
- SO3. It will take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by the M61 corridor by ensuring the development of a site that is attractive to investors and where there is a landowner who is willing to develop for employment purposes. The size of the site will ensure that transport can be provided to allow access for employment by people living in the most deprived areas.
 - SO5. The identification of Cutacre is primarily to address the land requirements for Bolton. However its location close to the Borough border means that it can also provide employment opportunities for people living in deprived areas in Salford and Wigan.

- SO6. The provision of new transport infrastructure to serve the development and to ensure that it is accessible to people needing jobs will be an integral part of the new development.

3 Context

- 3.1 This section identifies the context against which policy M3 has been prepared and the issues, evidence and guidance which were used to inform the development of the policy.

National planning policy statements and guidance documents

PPG2 Green Belts

- 3.2 Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2) outlines the history and extent of Green Belts and explains their purposes. It describes how Green Belts are designated and their land safeguarded. Green Belt land-use objectives are outlined and the presumption against inappropriate development is set out.
- 3.3 PPG2 paragraph 2.2 states that regional guidance will set the framework for green belts, and the relationship between the North West Regional Spatial Strategy and Cutacre is considered further in paragraphs 3.22-3.35 of this document.
- 3.4 PPG2 paragraph 2.6 states that once the general extent of a green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.5 The published Core Strategy does not itself change Green Belt boundaries, but it does highlight the likely need for a change. The exceptional circumstances that would warrant a change to the green belt boundaries at Cutacre are:
- **The development of an employment site with the creation of 2500 jobs to meet Bolton's economic aspirations**
- Cutacre has the potential to deliver about 4800 gross jobs, or 2500 additional jobs for Bolton.
- **Significant job opportunities created in an area in need of economic and social regeneration**
- 3.6 There are areas of deprivation in surrounding areas of Bolton, Salford and Wigan. The close proximity of Cutacre to these communities will enable residents to access jobs on foot from Little Hulton, by public transport from Bolton, Farnworth, Atherton and Tyldesley, including a dedicated bus route from Cutacre to Atherton. Cutacre's location in relation to these deprived and traditionally marginalized communities provides a unique opportunity to enhance job opportunities, address the issue of social inclusion and offers the potential for local residents to access the site by non-car modes.
- **A lack of suitable alternative sites to meet Bolton's employment land requirements for manufacturing and distribution**
- 3.7 The section on the Bolton Employment Land Study below shows that the Borough requires between 175 and 195 ha of land for employment development up to 2026. Taking into account existing sites, the amount of land in Bolton town centre, from mill sites and at Horwich Loco Works, an additional area of around 100 -120 hectares would be needed to meet this requirement. Sustainability appraisal shows that the best way of meeting this shortfall would be by identifying a single site at Cutacre because alternatives

within Bolton are not deliverable or are in unsustainable locations. Work carried out on behalf of the site's owners shows that there are no other sites in the north western quadrant of Greater Manchester that could meet this shortfall. Neither Salford nor Wigan have indicated in their emerging Core Strategies that they are able to identify this quantum of land in excess of their own requirements.

- **The need for Bolton to contribute to Greater Manchester's requirement for employment land up to 2021, as set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy**

- 3.8 Policy W3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy identifies a need of 1904 hectares of employment land in Greater Manchester between 2005 and 2021. Incorporating a flexibility factor of 20% would give a need of 2,285 hectares. In 2005 there was a supply of 1,368 hectares and so this would result in an additional need of 536 hectares, or 917 hectares including the flexibility factor.
- 3.9 The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities' Greater Manchester employment land position statement examines policy W3, extends the period of consideration up to 2026, and recommends a distribution of land between the ten local authority areas. It recommends that there is an overall Greater Manchester need for employment land of between 1,609 and 1,863 hectares between 2007 and 2026, and that 195 hectares (plus or minus 10%) should be in Bolton.
- 3.10 PPG2 Paragraph 1.5 states that there are five purposes of including land in the Green Belt. This section considers how the proposed change to the Green Belt boundary will perform strategically against each of these five primary purposes.

To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 3.11 The Greater Manchester Green Belt is 60,070ha in extent with 7270ha of that in Bolton. The Green Belt at Cutacre is currently a part of a wider area of Green Belt restricting the westward sprawl of Bolton, Farnworth and Little Hulton. This is shown on the map in Appendix B. Adjusting the Green Belt boundary to allow employment development at Cutacre would have no effect on restricting the westward sprawl of Bolton and Farnworth. It would result in some further expansion of Little Hulton, but this would not be a strategic change, and this issue could be considered at a detailed level in the Allocations Development Plan Document.

To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 3.12 The Green Belt at Cutacre is currently a part of a wider area of Green Belt that separates the urban areas of Bolton, Farnworth and Little Hulton to the east from Tyldesley, Atherton (including its northern extension of Over Hulton) and Westhoughton to the west. Adjusting the Green Belt at Cutacre would not have a fundamental effect on the separation of Bolton, Farnworth and Little Hulton from Tyldesley, Atherton and Westhoughton. At a more local level, it would result in a narrowing of the gap between Over Hulton and Little Hulton, but the remaining Green Belt would still meet this primary aim provided the gap were sufficiently wide. This is an issue for the Allocations Development Plan Document. However, the need to retain a sufficiently wide gap between Over Hulton and Little Hulton limits the area of land that could be developed.

To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 3.13 The Green Belt at Cutacre is currently part of a wider area of Green Belt safeguarding the countryside from encroachment from the surrounding urban areas of Bolton, Farnworth, Little Hulton, Tyldesley, Atherton and Westhoughton. At a more detailed local level it safeguards countryside from the encroachment of the urban areas of Little Hulton and Over Hulton. Most of Cutacre currently does not have a countryside appearance because of the opencast coal operations being carried out there, although some fields remain which are not the subject of coal operations. Before those operations started, the Green Belt area consisted of fields with a more rural appearance. If the restoration conditions of the current planning approval were implemented, then the land would regain a rural appearance.
- 3.14 An adjustment to Green Belt boundaries at Cutacre would have little effect at a strategic level on safeguarding the countryside from encroachment since only a very small part of the wider Green Belt area would be lost. At a more detailed local level the proposed changes would involve the loss of some open countryside compared to the situation if the restoration proposals were implemented, and this issue can be considered in the Allocations Development Plan Document.

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 3.15 This primary purpose is not relevant to the Green Belt at Cutacre.

To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

- 3.16 The Green Belt at Cutacre is part of the Greater Manchester Green Belt, which over the last 25 years has been a factor in encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land in Bolton and other parts of the conurbation. However, continuing to rely entirely on urban sites would not provide sufficient land to meet Bolton's employment land requirements up to 2026. Maintaining existing Green Belt boundaries would therefore be harmful to urban regeneration by restricting the number of employment opportunities for people living in nearby urban areas.

PPG4 Industrial and commercial development and small firms

- 3.17 Planning Policy Guidance 4 explains how the planning system can help to implement the key aim of encouraging continued economic development in a way that is compatible with stated economic objectives.
- 3.18 Paragraph 6 states that development plans should aim to ensure that there is sufficient land available (for industry and commerce), which is readily capable of development and well served by infrastructure. They should also ensure that there is a variety of sites available to meet differing needs.
- 3.19 Cutacre's landowner supports development of the site for industrial and commercial purposes, and once the opencast coal operations are complete, it will be physically available for development. Necessary infrastructure can be provided to serve the site. The provision of Cutacre as an employment site is part of Bolton Council's comprehensive

approach of providing a variety of sites for different uses across the Borough, with the other key locations of Bolton Town Centre and Horwich Loco Works.

- 3.20 Paragraph 10 states that the locational demands of businesses are a key input to the preparation of development plans. New development should be located where motor vehicle use is minimised, and where congestion is minimised.
- 3.21 Chapter 5 of Bolton's Employment Land Study shows that there is a strong commercial appeal in sites along the M61 corridor. Cutacre is of sufficient size to allow for mitigation against over reliance on motor vehicle use and against congestion on the surrounding road network.

Regional policy and evidence

North West Regional Spatial Strategy

- 3.22 RSS provides a framework for development and investment in the region over the next fifteen to twenty years.
- 3.23 Policy RDF4 states that there is no need for any exceptional substantial strategic change to the Green Belt within Greater Manchester before 2011. After 2011 the presumption will be against substantial strategic change to the Green Belt. Strategic studies, undertaken by the Regional Planning Body, together with relevant stakeholders should investigate both the need for change and options for implementation. The findings will inform future reviews of RSS and subsequent reviews of plans and strategies. Subject to the agreement of the Regional Planning Body, any local detailed boundary changes should be examined through the LDF process.
- 3.24 4NW have issued a Green Belt Guidance Note, which gives advice on Green Belt boundary changes and strategic studies. In assessing Green Belt boundary changes, 4NW will take into account national guidance contained in PPG2; the policy framework in the Regional Spatial Strategy; and the available evidence base relating to the land use proposed for the area of Green Belt to be removed.
- 3.25 Issues relating to PPG2 are addressed in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.9 of this document, and those relating to the Regional Spatial Strategy (other than RDF4) are considered in 3.29-3.35.
- 3.26 Bolton's Employment Land Study and the Greater Manchester Employment Land Study provide the fundamental evidence base for supporting a change to Green Belt boundaries. The former shows a requirement of 175-195 hectares of employment land in Bolton up to 2026: the latter considers the requirements of all districts in Greater Manchester, and for Bolton proposes a figure of 195 hectares up to 2026 plus or minus 10%. An area of land of 100-125 hectares would be required to meet the employment land requirement. There are insufficient sites within the urban area to accommodate the requirement, and the sustainability appraisal shows that the development of an area of land at Cutacre is more sustainable than any deliverable alternative. Work carried out on behalf of UK Coal shows that there are no alternative sites in the north-west quadrant of the Manchester City region, and that Cutacre fills an important void. This evidence shows that the development is necessary in this location.
- 3.27 Other evidence on matters such as flood risk, transport implications and ecology are available, but none of them indicates any strategic reason that development should not take place at this location.

- 3.28 Core Strategy Policy M3 is in line with Policy RDF4. Any changes to the Green Belt boundary at Cutacre will only be of a local nature and the Allocations Development Plan Document will take this into account when it determines what the boundaries of the site should be.
- 3.29 Policy W1 states that plans and strategies should promote opportunities for economic development to strengthen the economy of the North West. It identifies the Manchester City Region as having growth opportunities in advanced manufacturing and engineering, financial and professional services, media, creative and cultural industries, biomedical, ICT/digital, and communications. The policy also refers to other factors, including transport, skills, growth in service sectors and linking opportunity to need.
- 3.30 The development of Cutacre supports policy W1 by
- Promoting economic development that strengthens the economy of Bolton, and therefore the North West
 - Providing a location that is attractive to companies in advanced manufacturing and engineering, biomedical and ICT/digital sectors
 - Ensuring that opportunity and need are matched
- 3.31 Policy W3 addresses the supply of employment land. In Greater Manchester, an extra allocation of 536ha is required over and above the 2005 supply for the period between 2005 and 2021. Taking into account a flexibility factor of 20% this would mean an extra allocation of 917ha. The policy also sets down a series of bullet points on the location of sites, including market attractiveness and social, environmental and economic sustainability; and meeting the full range of needs.
- 3.32 The development of Cutacre supports policy W3 by
- Forming a crucial element of Bolton's contribution to the Greater Manchester requirement for additional allocation for employment land. Bolton's Employment Land Study shows that there is a strong commercial appeal in sites along the M61 corridor
 - The provision of Cutacre as an employment site is part of Bolton Council's comprehensive approach of providing a variety of sites for different uses across the Borough, with the other key locations of Bolton Town Centre and Horwich Loco Works.
- 3.33 Policy MCR1 sets out a vision for the Manchester City Region. The policy is based on a dual approach which is to support growth in those parts of the City Region that are already performing strongly while generating additional growth in those part which are lagging. The City Region should deliver its full potential by ensuring that policies connect areas of economic opportunity to areas of greatest need.
- 3.34 Policy MCR5 states that plans and strategies for the northern part of the City Region should support the transformation of the local economy, regenerate communities, and enhance the environment. They should secure improvements that enable the area to compete more effectively for economic investment and focus employment development in the towns and cities set out in policy RDF1.
- 3.35 The development of Cutacre supports policies MCR1 and MCR5 by
- Generating economic growth in an area of the City Region that is lagging
 - Connecting areas of opportunity to areas of need
 - Locating an employment development in accordance with policy RDF1

Other plans, strategies and evidence

Wigan Council's planning policies

- 3.36 Wigan's Unitary Development Plan was adopted in 2006 and is the current development plan for the Borough. Its vision is to make the Borough a more attractive place to live and visit and to attract new employment and investment through a sustainable balance between economic growth, social progress, and environmental protection and enhancement. Land adjacent to Cutacre is in the Green Belt.
- 3.37 The development of Cutacre will support the vision of Wigan's UDP by attracting new employment and investment in a location that is accessible to Wigan residents. The development will be designed to allow direct public transport, cycling and walking access from Atherton and other parts of Wigan.
- 3.38 Wigan Council published its Core Strategy Issues and Options paper in February 2008, putting forward five different spatial options. Cutacre is specifically referred to in two of these options.
- 3.39 In June 2009 Wigan Council published its Core Strategy Preferred Options. The overall preferred option is to focus development on the east-west core of the Borough, focussing largely on the inner areas of Wigan, Hindley, Platt Bridge, Leigh and Atherton, also extending eastwards to include all of Leigh, Atherton and part of Astley. Wigan Council is proposing to identify 275 hectares of employment land, which is marginally less than the requirement derived from their Employment Land Study and in the Greater Manchester Employment Land Position Statement.
- 3.40 The development of Cutacre supports planning policies in Wigan by providing additional opportunities for employment for residents living in some of Wigan's more deprived areas.

Salford City Council's planning policies

- 3.41 Salford's Unitary Development Plan was adopted in 2006. Its vision is that in 2016 Salford will be a beautiful and welcoming city, driven by energetic and engaged communities of highly skilled, healthy and motivated citizens, who have built a diverse and prosperous culture and economy, which encourages and recognises the contribution of everyone for everyone. Land adjacent to Cutacre is identified as a wildlife corridor key area of search; a small part is also in the Green Belt and a site of biological importance.
- 3.42 The development of Cutacre will support the vision of Salford's UDP by attracting new development and investment in a location that is accessible to Salford residents. The development will be designed to allow direct public transport, cycling and walking access from Little Hulton and other parts of Salford.
- 3.43 Salford Council published its Core Strategy Issues and Options Report in October 2008, putting forward a range of different spatial options. The land adjacent to Cutacre is put forward as an allocated strategic site in three of the four options. Salford expects to publish preferred options in autumn 2009.
- 3.44 The development of Cutacre supports planning policies in Salford by providing additional opportunities for employment for residents living in some of Salford's more deprived areas.

Greater Manchester Employment Land Position Statement

- 3.45 The ten districts of Greater Manchester and other partners have worked together to agree how to distribute between the districts the Greater Manchester employment land figures as set out in Regional Spatial Strategy policy W3. The Statement also considers the period from 2021 to 2026, which is not specifically considered by RSS.
- 3.46 For Bolton the Statement shows that there should be provision of 195 hectares between 2007 and 2026 plus or minus 10%, and this is in line with both Bolton's own Employment Land Study.

Bolton Employment Land Study

- 3.47 The general approach of the Bolton Employment Land Study is set out in the Prosperity Background Document. The Study considered 44 sites in total, and ranked them according to Availability and Deliverability, and Planning Policy and Sustainability. For Availability and Deliverability, Cutacre scored 38 out of a possible 45 points and ranked joint third out of the 44 sites. For Planning Policy and Sustainability, Cutacre scored 32 out of a possible 60 points, and ranked 34th.
- 3.48 The allocation of Cutacre as an employment site reflects its excellent availability and deliverability. Its lower ranking for planning policy and sustainability is addressed by the possible proposed change in the Green Belt boundaries, and because the size of the site enables a comprehensive approach to improving its sustainability through improvements to public transport and the opportunities for biodiversity.

4 Council Approach

Core Strategy Key Issues

- 4.1 The Key Issues Report highlighted a number of relevant economic and environmental issues, especially the following:
- Providing enough land and buildings for employment related uses
 - Ensuring that new development has good transport access
 - Protecting and promoting Bolton's biodiversity
- It asked whether this was the appropriate range of issues.
- 4.2 Consultation responses identified the possibility of reviewing Green Belt boundaries generally to give greater flexibility for economic growth. Respondents specifically identified Cutacre as a potentially important strategic location for development to promote the economic growth of the Borough.

Core Strategy Issues and Options

- 4.3 The Issues and Options Report put forward four overall spatial options.
1. Dispersed urban development, which would keep Green Belt boundaries as they are, and not include the whole Cutacre site as an economic development opportunity
 2. Concentrated urban development, which would keep Green Belt boundaries as they are, and not include the whole Cutacre site as an economic development opportunity
 3. Dispersed urban development combined with some peripheral development, which would not keep Green Belt boundaries as they are, and not include the whole Cutacre site as an economic development opportunity
 4. Dispersed urban development combined with some peripheral development including green belt land; Cutacre was specifically identified as a possible development site in this option
- 4.4 The Issues and Options Report also put forward different approaches to employment land.
- A Providing for about the same amount of development land as over the last five years
- B Providing for an increased rate of development for employment land compared to the last five years.
- 4.5 The sustainability appraisal considered Cutacre as an element in Option 4.
- 4.6 Pages 110-111 show that Option 4 performed strongly for improving the economy and employment opportunities, but options 1 and 2 performed generally better on environmental grounds, including reducing the need to travel and the loss of green areas.

Option 4 therefore needed to mitigate against adverse environmental effects if it was to be pursued.

- 4.7 The Sustainability Appraisal showed that option B on employment land had similar effects to one another, but option B would make a better contribution to the local economy.
- 4.8 Consultation responses showed support for overall spatial option 4 from developers, landowners and the Bolton Economic Forum, but local residents across the Borough opposed development in the Green Belt.
- 4.9 More consultation responses favoured an increase in the rate of development for employment land than favoured maintaining the same rate.

Core Strategy Preferred Options

- 4.10 The Council's preferred spatial option was for concentrated urban development with an element of peripheral development consisting of Green Belt land at Cutacre. The preferred option for the amount of employment land was to provide a range of 155ha to 175ha in the period between 2008 and 2026. This was at a lower rate than over the previous five years.
- 4.11 The Sustainability Appraisal shows that the development of Cutacre would perform strongly because it would support employment opportunities and because it is close to areas of deprivation. It would have the potential to generate unacceptable traffic and would cause the loss of green areas and biodiversity. If Cutacre is to be developed then it must mitigate against these issues.
- 4.12 On employment land, the Sustainability Appraisal showed that the Preferred Option performed well in improving economic performance, and better on environmental issues than the two options put forward at the Issues and Options stage.
- 4.13 Consultation responses showed very widespread local opposition to the development of Cutacre on grounds including Green Belt, biodiversity and opinions that there were preferable sites elsewhere. Other responses from public sector organisations did not express opposition, but stressed that there was a need to show that the proposals met national and regional policy.

Sustainability appraisal

- 4.14 For the publication document a further sustainability appraisal has been carried out measuring an alternative way of meeting employment land requirements by identifying a number of smaller greenfield sites in the Green Belt and on Protected Open Land, rather than one large one at Cutacre, and by retaining the Horwich Loco Works as all for employment, rather than a mixed use site. These smaller greenfield sites had been identified by developers and landowners as part of the consultation procession on the Local Development Framework, including a call for sites. Although the Core Strategy does not support the development of these sites, they are deliverable sites in that they are supported by developers and landowners. Other sites have not been considered because they are not realistic, deliverable alternatives.

- 4.15 The appraisal shows that this option would perform less well than the chosen option on narrowing the gap between rich and poor, matching jobs and investment to those most in need, and promoting walking, cycling and public transport. This is because Cutacre is well positioned to provide employment for people from deprived areas in Bolton, as well as deprived areas in Salford and Wigan. Its large size would enable a comprehensive and integrated approach on providing public transport links to those derived areas. The option would also perform less well on retaining local businesses, on improving the prosperity of the borough as a competitive regional centre, and raising the profile of Bolton to attract more investment. Cutacre would be a more attractive location for both local and regional companies than smaller sites in other locations.

Core Strategy Publication Document

- 4.16 The Publication Document puts forward a different approach on Cutacre from the Preferred Options. It shows a broad location for development for employment on the Key Diagram, rather than a specific allocation on a map base. Although the policy does not specify the size of the site to be developed at Cutacre, it is likely to be around 80 hectares in total extent. This would mean a change in Green Belt boundaries with about 35-40 hectares of land losing its Green Belt status. This would be a smaller site than envisaged at Preferred Options stage, which put forward a total site of 144 hectares and a net Green Belt change of 92 hectares. This reduces the impact of development on local residents to reflect consultation responses, and reduces losses to the Green Belt, so that it is in line with regional planning policy.

5 Site specific issues

Objectives and aims

- 5.1 The aim is to develop a sustainable manufacturing and distribution site to provide a vital contribution to Bolton's two main aims of ensuring economic prosperity and narrowing the gap between the most and the least well off.

Site constraints and infrastructure requirements

(a) Transport

- 5.2 The A6 runs to the north of Cutacre linking Walkden (in the borough of Salford) with Over Hulton and Westhoughton. The A6 has access to the M61 at Junction 4 via two roundabouts. The current opencast operations are accessed by a temporary road running from the A6 roundabout. A bus service runs along the A6 linking Walkden, Little Hulton, Over Hulton and Bolton town centre; this runs at hourly intervals in each direction on weekdays and weekends, including evenings. A more frequent service runs between Bolton town centre, Over Hulton, Atherton and Leigh on St Helens Road / Newbrook Road to the west of Cutacre; this service runs frequently (at least every 10 minutes) during weekdays and Saturdays, and at least every half hour on Sundays and evenings. The nearest railway station is at Atherton (in Wigan Borough) about 1.5 kilometres to the south-west.
- 5.3 New road access will be required to serve the new development at the site, but the location of this will be dependent on the extent of development. UK Coal has carried out transport modelling of the maximum possible development and an acceptable level of traffic accessing the M61 has been agreed with the Highway Agency. It is anticipated that off site junction improvements will be necessary at the M61 access and on the local road network. UK Coal, as a developer, is also willing to support bus services to surrounding areas, including deprived areas of Bolton, Salford and Wigan, and to the railway station at Atherton. These are issues that will be considered in more detail in the Allocations Development Plan Document.
- 5.4 Pedestrian and cycling routes will be provided within the site and with the new road accesses. In addition green routes will link into the adjoining built-up area of Little Hulton.

(b) Ground conditions and other physical constraints

- 5.5 Work carried out on behalf of UK Coal show that there are physical constraints to the development of the site. These include the existence of power lines, gas mains and the Thirlmere Aqueduct; mining constraints from previous workings, such as service shafts; and ground contamination issues from previous mining. All these issues would need to be addressed, but there is no reason in principle that development could not take place. Details will need to be considered in the Allocations DPD and in a planning application.

(c) Flooding

- 5.6 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment does not show any significant flooding issue and any land that could be developed would be in Flood Zone 1, the lowest risk. Work carried out on behalf of UK Coal confirms that there are no flooding issues that cannot be overcome through the use of reasonable measures including the use of sustainable drainage systems.

(d) Mix of land uses

- 5.7 Cutacre would be developed for a mix of B2 and B8 uses, that is general industry and warehousing. A Country Park will be provided to the west and south of the development site, extending into Wigan and Salford. Open space will also be provided within the development. Details will need to be considered in the Allocations Development Plan Document and in a planning application.

(e) Utilities / energy

- 5.8 Utilities and energy requirements will be considered in the Allocations Development Plan Document.

(f) Ecology

- 5.9 Some of Cutacre is included within the Ponds near Lomax Brow Grade A Site of Biological Importance. The SBI includes land within and outside the Green Belt. The Greater Manchester Ecological Unit describes the site as an amphibian breeding area of major importance in the county, including 16 ponds of which 11 contain great crested newts and 2 have all five common amphibian species. The ponds also contain a rich invertebrate fauna and aquatic flora. The surrounding habitats are also included in the SBI and mostly consist of neutral/basic species poor grassland.
- 5.10 Planning permission for opencast coal operations was conditional on an ecological mitigation scheme for the period when the operations were being carried out, followed by a restoration scheme that incorporates habitats for great crested newts and other species. The details of this are set out in the planning permission and Applied Ecological Services Limited have carried out a Review of Ecological Assessments and Current Status on behalf of UK Coal.
- 5.11 Development of Cutacre will need to take into account the ecological importance of the site. This will need to be addressed in the Allocations Development Plan Document and any planning application.

(g) Phasing and milestones

- 5.12 Phasing and milestones will be considered in the Allocations Development Plan Document

(h) Delivery

- 5.13 The Allocations Development Plan Document will define the boundaries of the site. The Cutacre area is in the single ownership of UK Coal, who will develop the area themselves.

6 Conclusions

Summary of policy formulation

- 6.1 The development of Cutacre formed an element in one of the overall options considered at Issues and Options stage. In the Core Strategy Preferred Options, it was identified as a strategic site with defined boundaries. In the Core Strategy publication document it is a broad location for development, and its size has been reduced to reduce the impact on the Green Belt and on local residents.

Soundness

Consistent with National Policy

- 6.2 This Background Document shows that the policies for Cutacre are consistent with national policy as set out in PPG2 and PPG4. It is also consistent with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the existing and emerging policies of adjoining local authorities.

Justified

- 6.3 This Background Document shows the policies for Cutacre are founded on a robust and credible evidence base.
- 6.4 Different alternatives to the overall development of the Borough have been considered at Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages and have been subject to consultation and sustainability appraisal. In addition a Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out showing that the development of Cutacre would be more sustainable than a combination of other smaller greenfield sites as a means of helping to meet Bolton's requirement for employment land.

Effective

- **Deliverable**

- 6.5 Bolton Council will implement the policies through its development management powers. UK Coal, the owner of the site, will be responsible for its development, together with potential occupiers.

- **Flexible**

- 6.6 There will be a comprehensive development approach delivered in phases with employment land being developed throughout the plan period after 2012. Annual monitoring will assess whether the target has been reached and whether any adjustment to them is necessary.

- **Capable of being monitored**

- 6.7 The Core Strategy identifies an indicator of the amount of employment land developed annually, and the target is an annual average of 8 hectares after 2012. This will be reported in the Annual Monitoring Report.

Measuring Delivering – The M61 Corridor - Broad location for employment development (M3)
Strategic Objectives met: SO3, SO5, SO6
Indicators (and targets)
Amount of employment land developed (a target will be determined in the Allocations Development Plan Document)
Flexibility and phasing
There will be a comprehensive development approach delivered in phases with employment land being developed throughout the plan period after 2012. Annual monitoring will assess whether the target has been reached and whether any adjustment to it is necessary

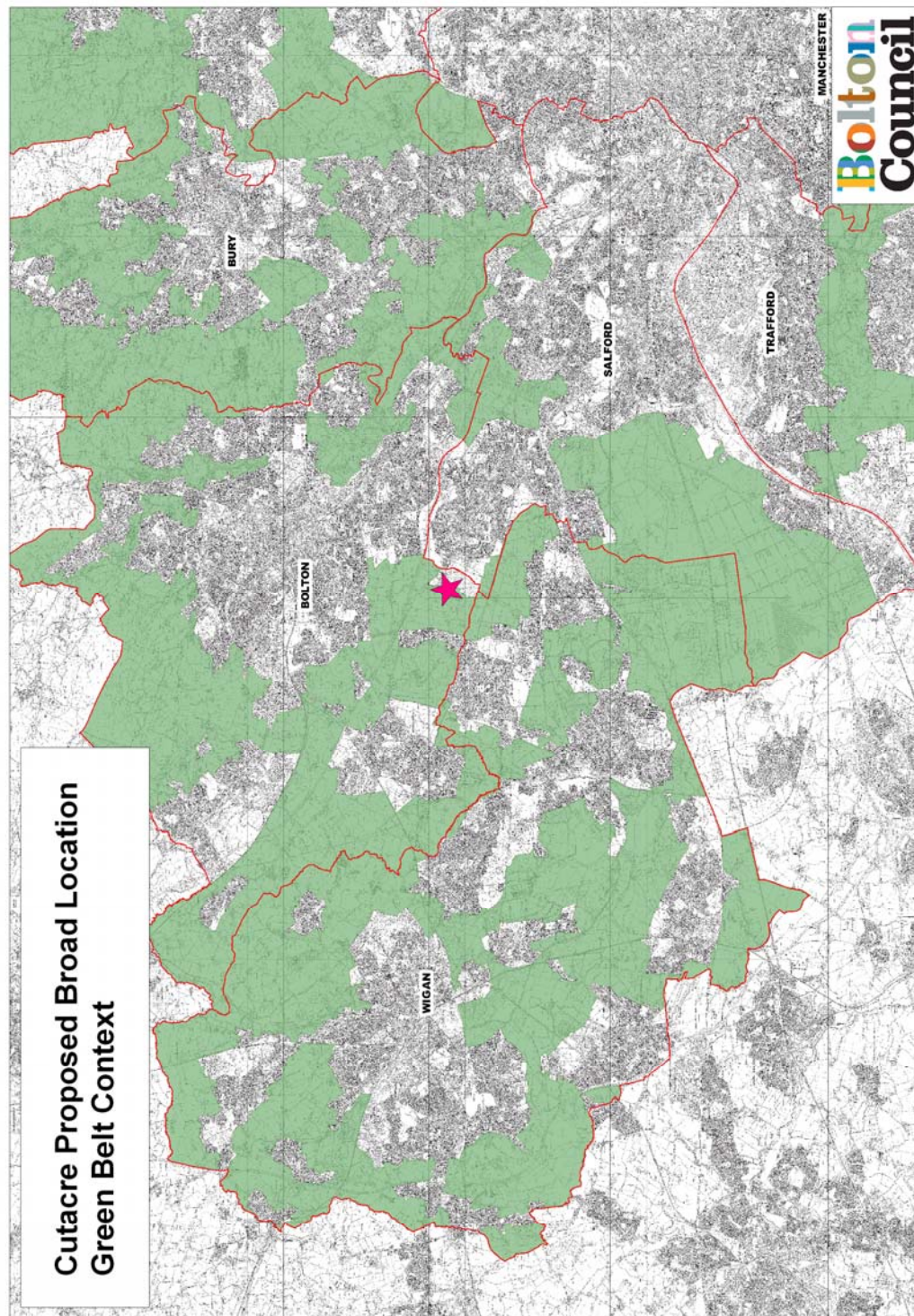
Appendix A – Other Documentation

UK Coal, the owners of land at Cutacre, have commissioned consultants to produce a series of documents to support the development of the site, and these form part of the evidence in the consideration of the Core Strategy. However they have not been approved by the Council and they have been prepared on the basis of a site size that is not supported by the Core Strategy Publication Document.

These documents are:

1. Justification statement (Prepared by DTZ)
2. Economic assessment (DTZ)
3. Sub-regional employment site analysis (DTZ)
4. Review of ecological assessment and current status (Applied Ecological Services Ltd)
5. Initial status report (Geotechnical) (RSK Group plc)
6. Accessibility report (Scott Wilson Transport Consultancy)
7. Sustainability statement (Cass Associates)

Appendix B – Green Belt Context



Appendix C – Indicative site boundary

