

Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

Issue 1 – Will Policy S11 ensure that the necessary infrastructure is delivered and in a timely fashion?

Policy S11 of the Local Plan sets out clear and sound objectives for ensuring that developer contributions for the wide range of necessary infrastructure are provided to ensure that sustainable development is a reality rather than simply an aspiration. Unfortunately there is no evidence to demonstrate how these policy objectives are being implemented either at a District level or a local level.

Over the last few years there have been many Section 106 agreements on development schemes in the Ashbourne area with a total allocation of S106 funding in excess of £9 million. Ashbourne Town Council, through the Ashbourne Neighbourhood Plan Group, has asked for the latest information with regard to Section 106 agreements and is still waiting for an updated (2017) figure. The latest schedule of Section 106 agreements is included in the draft Ashbourne Neighbourhood Plan.

Derbyshire Dales District Council does not have, as far as I am aware, an 'action plan' for the delivery of necessary infrastructure projects related to development agreements for the Ashbourne area. Without such a plan it is impossible to know whether these infrastructure improvements, particularly for crucial education, health and highway schemes, will be delivered in a timely fashion.

Ashbourne Town Council agreed at its planning committee on 5 April 2017 that it would prepare an Ashbourne Sustainable Development Action Plan which clearly identifies where Section 106 monies will be invested in Ashbourne. This Action Plan will then be included in the final Ashbourne Neighbourhood Plan, in the Implementation section, to ensure that there is a transparent and clear programme for timely investment in Ashbourne.

Currently there appear to be major issues with the way infrastructure projects required to support sustainable development in Ashbourne are being progressed. The immediate problem is the implementation of education growth plans specifically in Ashbourne's two infant schools and one junior school. In 2015 Derbyshire County Council (the Education Authority) supported proposals from Ashbourne's infant and junior schools to move to full primaries, in part, to respond to the new growth pressures on education from the increasing demand from new housing development in Ashbourne.

In November 2015 Derbyshire County Council (DCC) agreed a two-phased approach to improving Ashbourne's infant and junior schools to support sustainable development in line with funding coming forward through S106 agreements. This funding was for six new classrooms (180 additional spaces) over the three schools (three at Hilltop, two at St Oswald's and one at Parkside). The total spend on these new classrooms was £1.92 million. The increase in classrooms was based on a Derbyshire County Council formula for the provision of new place based on housing growth. Housing planning consents in Ashbourne in recent years have been towards larger family homes and therefore this classroom growth forecast by DCC may be an underestimate.

The November 2015 DCC Education strategy paper for Ashbourne's infant and junior schools was subject to extensive consultation with the schools themselves, with parents and other organisations. The consultation was transparent and clear and provided a sound way forward for the provision of sustainable education growth to support the Local Plan's growth strategy approach.

Between November 2015 and February 2017 DCC prepared a new education development strategy for Ashbourne's infant and junior schools which now proposes three new classrooms (90 places – 50% less than planned in November 2015) for a total spend of £1.865 million. This new development strategy has not been the subject of consultation with parents of children at the schools or the wider Ashbourne community. The new funding formula appears to be part based on S106 monies plus a new method of capital financing by DCC. This new method is based on reclaiming S106 funding as development is built and as monies become available.

This new education development strategy is based on three classrooms being built in 2017 and the remaining three built when additional housing with planning permission is constructed. It is not clear to what degree the expansion and improvement of Ashbourne's schools will be funded entirely from S106 funding since, based on the capital funding forecasts made in the November 2015 education development paper by DCC, an additional £1.325 million will be required. This will result in DCC spending £3.19 million to provide 6 new classrooms in total for Ashbourne's infant and junior schools to meet the demand from new housing development across Ashbourne already granted planning consent up to 2017. This does also not include additional demand from the 883 new homes for Ashbourne contained in DDDC's Local Plan. The total of £3.19 million exceeds what Derbyshire Dales District Council has currently negotiated in S106 agreements for education spend on Ashbourne's three infant and junior schools.

The result of this education planning by DCC is that one classroom will be provided at Parkside School in central Ashbourne, which is the school furthest away from completed or part constructed housing developments in Ashbourne in 2017. It also furthest away from the proposed new housing in the south and the top of Derby Road hill. A further two classrooms at Hilltop are currently the subject of a planning permission. Lastly there will be no additional classrooms at St Oswald's despite the school being allocated two classrooms in the November 2015 DCC education development strategy paper.

The two proposed classrooms at Hilltop will be in a modular construction block at the rear of the school. It was made clear at an Ashbourne Town Council planning committee on 24 April that this is not what the school prefers. A fully comprehensive development plan for Hilltop school, comprising a new hall and brick built facilities providing the school with the facilities it really needs for now and the future is not currently being proposed by DCC.

The position at St Oswald's is even worse. With no additional classrooms proposed in the near future, the school will have to do its best to cope with increasing demand for school places. It has even been suggested that the school can use its hall as a classroom to meet increasing demand. A solution which does not, I contend, promote quality education growth

in line with the planning policy objectives behind promoting real sustainable development in Ashbourne.

The current DCC education development strategy for Ashbourne's three infant and junior schools is exposing fundamental issues concerning the provision of quality education to support the sustainable development growth strategy of the Local Plan. Both Hilltop and St Oswald's schools are worried about what DCC is proposing. These proposals do not meet the needs of the schools and appear to be a cost ineffective way of using the S106 agreed for education on Ashbourne development schemes. Equally these proposals are likely to increase traffic movement across town as parents have to take their children to a school that is further away from their nearest school. These journeys would not be necessary if the November 2015 DCC education development strategy had been fully implemented.

A new approach is urgently required to ensure that the necessary education infrastructure required in Ashbourne is actually delivered in a timely fashion to promote the sustainable growth of Ashbourne outlined in the Local Plan.

In addition at this point in time no Section 106 funding has been allocated to health projects through South Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group. This is despite the clear and obvious need for local GP practices to plan properly so as to expand to meet the new demand from over 900 new homes already permitted in Ashbourne and another 883 allocated in the Local Plan.

There are also no clear local highway traffic management plans to meet the need, identified in recent planning permissions for new housing in Ashbourne, specifically to improve the key junctions across the town. A comprehensive traffic management plan for Ashbourne is urgently required to ensure that much needed traffic improvements are implemented in a timely fashion to support sustainable development.

The Ashbourne Housing Needs Assessment, one of the few local housing needs assessments that has been produced across Derbyshire Dales, identified a need for new affordable housing to be provided. Over £3 million has been agreed in Section 106 agreements for affordable housing on Ashbourne developments over the last four years. Yet there is no plan from Derbyshire Dales District Council indicating where and when this investment will take place.

I contend, that without a clear and transparent Section 106 plan indicating the timely expenditure of this important source of regeneration funding for local infrastructure, then this aspect of the Local Plan is flawed

With regard to the specific question put by the Planning Inspector to DDDC on the Local Plan the answer appears to be clear. No. Policy S11 will not ensure that necessary infrastructure is delivered in a timely fashion unless it is supported by a credible action plan that is embodied in the final Local Plan.

Councillor Albert Golding

Ashbourne Town Council

21 April 2017