

DERBYSHIRE DALES LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MATTERS 10 and 11: STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS AND SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES WIRKSWORTH

Issue 4: Will the infrastructure to support the scale of development proposed be provided in the right place and at the right time, including that relating to the highway network, health and education?

Do the strategic allocations need to make explicit provision for a new primary school?

- 1.1 This statement has been drafted on behalf of Derbyshire County Council's Officers to set out their position on the need for, and possible location of, a new primary school in Wirksworth. The statement sets out details of the County Council's Officer representations submitted on the Derbyshire Dales Draft Local Plan (DLP) and Derbyshire Dales Local Plan – Pre-Submission Draft Plan (PSDP); and ongoing discussions between the County Council's Officers, Derbyshire Dales District Council's Officers and Tarmac, regarding the potential to locate a new primary school to serve Wirksworth on either of the proposed strategic allocation sites at Cromford Road and Middle Peak Quarry in Wirksworth.

Derbyshire Dales Draft Local Plan Consultation

- 1.2 Derbyshire County Council submitted extensive Officer comments on the DLP on 19 May 2016. On education matters, the comments provided a summary of the school place planning position relating to each of the settlements in the District affected by the proposed strategic housing allocations which were included in the DLP.
- 1.3 For the settlement of Wirksworth, the comments indicated that additional primary school places would be required to accommodate additional pupils from housing development proposed in the settlement. However, neither infant school site could be expanded, although there was some space at the junior school. It was not clear, therefore, how additional infant places could be provided. The comments indicated that Derbyshire County Council would look to negotiate a site for a primary school in the Wirksworth area. Anthony Gell School was the designated normal area school for secondary provision and was projected to have sufficient surplus capacity to accommodate additional secondary pupils from future housing development in its normal area.
- 1.4 Additional Officer comments were provided on the proposed Strategic Allocation Site at Middle Peak Quarry, which was proposed at that time for the development of 220 dwellings. The comments indicated that the scale of new

housing growth proposed for Wirksworth would require additional primary school places to be provided to accommodate additional pupils from proposed housing developments.. The comments added that Derbyshire County Council had previously safeguarded land at The Meadows in Wirksworth for a potential new school site but the physical extent of the site was insufficient to accommodate a new school of the scale required to meet housing growth in Wirksworth. The site has since been de-notified by the County Council (see below).

- 1.5 The comments went on to indicate that, given the scale and extent of Middle Peak Quarry and the proposed area that had been identified in the allocation, it was considered that the proposed allocation may have potential to accommodate a new primary school to meet the future growth needs that were proposed in the Local Plan for Wirksworth. Derbyshire County Council's Officers would therefore welcome the opportunity to explore this potential further with Derbyshire Dales District Council. It was also noted that the scale of the site in the proposed allocation could also potentially accommodate other uses such as business and commercial uses which, together with the 220 dwellings and potential site for a school, could provide for a sustainable mixed-use development.

Derbyshire Dales Local Plan – Pre-Submission Draft Plan

- 1.6 Derbyshire County Council provided extensive Officer comments on the PSDP on 22 September 2016. On education matters generally, the comments largely reaffirmed comments made on the DLP noting that the vast majority of the housing allocations set out in the DLP had been carried forward unchanged into the PSDP and so the comments previously made by the County Council remained largely relevant to the PSDP.
- 1.7 The comments went on to note, however, that some changes had been made to the proposed housing allocations in the PSDP from those set out in the DLP, particularly the deletion of a number of sites, inclusion of two new sites in Matlock and Tansley and the significant increase in the site capacity identified for the allocation at Middle Peak Quarry, Wirksworth from 220 to 645 dwellings. These changes would have some additional implications for school place provision in the normal area schools relating to the proposed allocations. In order to ensure that the assessment of school place provision was up-to-date, Derbyshire Dales District Council was requested to consult further with Derbyshire County Council's Children's Services Officers, once the final housing allocations had been confirmed for inclusion in the Submission Local Plan.
- 1.8 The comments on school place capacity in each of the settlements of the District made on the DLP were largely reaffirmed. For Wirksworth, the

comments indicated that additional primary school places would be required to accommodate the pupils from proposed new housing development in the PSDP. However, neither infant school could be expanded, although there was some space at the junior school. It was not clear therefore how additional infant places could be provided. Derbyshire County Council would therefore look to negotiate a site for a primary school in the Wirksworth area. The comments highlighted that Anthony Gell School was the designated normal area school for secondary provision and would not have sufficient places for all the secondary pupils generated from the proposed level of housing in Wirksworth if the Middle Peak Quarry allocation went ahead for 645 dwellings and therefore developer contributions could be required for secondary school provision.

- 1.9 Specific comments were also made in respect of the proposed Middle Peak Quarry allocation. The comments indicated that, given the scale and extent of the Middle Peak Quarry site and the proposed area that had been identified in the allocation, it was considered that the proposed allocation may have potential to accommodate a new primary school to meet the future growth needs that were proposed for Wirksworth in the PSDP. The increase in proposed housing provision on the site from 220 to 645 dwellings could provide appropriate justification for the provision of a new primary school on the site to serve both the needs of the new pupils generated by the housing development itself and other housing growth identified for Wirksworth. Consequently, the comments indicated that Derbyshire County Council's Officers would welcome the opportunity to explore this potential further with Derbyshire Dales District Council and the site owners / promoters (Tarmac).
- 1.10 The comments concluded by stating that in the meantime, it was welcomed and supported that Policy DS7: Land at Middle Peak Quarry had been amended from that set out in the DLP to include recognition that the proposed housing allocation would require the 'provision of a replacement primary school for Wirksworth'.

Notification of Site at Cromford Road, Wirksworth

- 1.11 On 2 February 2016, Derbyshire County Council's Cabinet approved the notification of a site at Cromford Road, Wirksworth for a new primary school to serve the town. Cabinet also approved the de-notification of a site at The Meadows in Wirksworth, which had previously been formally notified for a new primary school site by Derbyshire County Council on 11 March 2002. The Cabinet report noted that a plan to replace the two infant schools and the junior school in Wirksworth on the site at The Meadows was initiated under the Church of England's Private Finance Initiative in 2004/05 but did not come to fruition. Officers of the County Council had been involved in discussions with the Head Teachers of the infant and junior schools, which had identified

the need to consider a potential new location for a primary school, which had led to the proposal by Derbyshire County Council's Officers that the existing notified site at The Meadows should be de-notified and a more appropriate site be identified within the District Council's emerging Local Plan.

- 1.12 The Cabinet report indicated that a new site had been identified for notification at Cromford Road, Wirksworth (which was owned by Tarmac /La Farge), which had been discussed with the District Council's Officers. The County Council's Officers considered that The Meadows site had many issues of concern for its potential development as a school site, whilst the area proposed for notification at Cromford Road could have a positive impact on the community and future housing development. Subject to Cabinet's approval of the notification of the Cromford Road site, Officers would approach the owner of the site formally for more detailed discussions in the future.
- 1.13 The Cabinet decision on the proposed notification of the Cromford Road site, was made prior to the publication of the Derbyshire Dales DLP and PSDP, which identified the site and a wider area of land in Tarmac's ownership as a mixed-use housing and employment allocation. Discussions have been ongoing since then between Officers of the County Council and District Council regarding the proposed notification of a suitable site in Wirksworth. The DLP and PSDP also proposed the allocation of land at Middle Peak Quarry in Wirksworth in Tarmac's ownership as a Strategic Housing Allocation Site. During the course of public consultation on the DLP and PSDP, Derbyshire County Council's Officers held discussions with Tarmac regarding the potential of the Middle Peak Quarry site to accommodate a new primary school. These discussions are still ongoing for which further details are set out below.
- 1.14 Pending the outcome of further discussions on the Middle Peak Quarry site, Derbyshire County Council's Head of Planning Services wrote to the Corporate Director and Deputy Chief Executive of Derbyshire Dales District Council on 11 January 2017 to give formal notice to the District Council that in accordance with sub-paragraph (4) of paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, that the County Council proposed to carry out development of the land at Cromford Road (Hill), Wirksworth; and confirm that the County Council was not continuing to propose to carry out any development of the land at The Meadows, Wirksworth and that the notification previously made on 11 March 2002 was withdrawn.
- 1.15 The notified site at Cromford Road is on land which forms part of a mixed-use allocation for 126 dwellings and 2 hectares of employment land under Policy DS6 of the PSDP. The notified site also forms part of a wider site which is identified in the Adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan (ADDLP) of 2005 for

'General Industrial and Business Development' under Policy EDT1 (c). The notified site is also covered by a much wider designation in the ADDLP as a Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) covered by Policy NBE3 of the Local Plan.

- 1.16 In respect of the above, DCC's Officers are aware that the area of the notified site has been identified as a 'Potential Local Wildlife Site' by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) under the name 'Wirksworth Station Yard'. This essentially means that the area of the notified site has been drawn to DWT's attention as a possible Local Wildlife Site but that it is awaiting an assessment against their standard criteria. The broad description of the site by the DWT notes that the site has 'open mosaic habitats on previously developed land; invertebrate assemblage; and species rich grassland'.
- 1.17 In the context of the above, the notified site has no current formal status as a Local Wildlife Site that might otherwise preclude its development. However, should the Cromford Road site be developed for a school, careful consideration would need to be given to the detailed design and layout of the new school on the site to ensure that it caused no net loss of the habitat of the site and included compensatory new habitat on the site (where possible) for any lost and included other appropriate mitigation measures.
- 1.18 DCC's Officers are aware of Tarmac's concerns regarding the area of land which has been notified on the Cromford Road allocation and its potential environmental constraints referred to above, which could potentially have implications for siting the school elsewhere on the site that could impact on the viability and deliverability of the mixed housing and employment development. In this context, DCC's Children's Services Officers have commenced preparatory work with a view to seeking the approval of the County Council's Cabinet to carry out a public consultation exercise on the need for a new school in Wirksworth, including the potential de-notification of the Cromford Road site and notification of an alternative site for a new primary school on the Middle Peak Quarry site. Timescales for seeking Cabinet approval are dependent on the County Council's elections on 4 May 2017. In the meantime, however, the County Council's Officers have commenced evidence gathering work to support a report to Cabinet and potential public consultation exercise, which would involve discussions with Head Teachers of the infant and junior schools in Wirksworth.

Strategic Allocation Site at Middle Peak Quarry Wirksworth

- 1.19 Since the site at Middle Peak Quarry in Wirksworth was identified in the DLP as a strategic allocation for housing, DCC's Children's Services Officers have been in discussions with the District Council's Officers and Tarmac to explore the potential of the Middle Peak Quarry site to accommodate a new primary

school for Wirksworth. These discussions have focused on the potential broad location on the Middle Peak Quarry site for the new school, which would best serve the needs of the population of the town; timescales for the delivery of the housing site and the proposed school, particularly in the context of development costs and viability; and the financial commitment that Tarmac is making to the development of the site and how this would link with Derbyshire County Council's contributions to the delivery of the new school.

- 1.20 In February 2017, discussions took place between the County Council's Officers and Tarmac regarding an illustrative masterplan that Tarmac's consultants had produced showing the layout of the two strategic allocation sites at Cromford Road and Middle Peak Quarry. The masterplan identified an area of land on the south-western part of the Middle Peak Quarry site for a proposed primary school and associated playing fields. However, subsequent discussions also considered potential alternative locations for the school on either of the allocated sites including a location on the eastern part of the Middle Peak Quarry site adjacent to Cromford Road and the proposed new vehicular access to the site; and two locations on the Cromford Road strategic site – one on the area which has been notified by the County Council and another on land to the north-west of the site, identified on the masterplan as accommodating employment development. Discussions have continued between Derbyshire County Council's Officers and Tarmac on these potential locations for the primary school.

School Funding

- 1.21 The County Council has a duty to secure sufficient school places and receives 'basic need' funding from the Department for Education (DfE) on an assessed need basis. It is the DfE position that growth in pupil numbers due to housing development should be funded from developer contributions rather than basic need. The Authority does aim in its discussions with planning authorities and housing developers to ensure that S106 contributions are triggered sufficiently early to allow new provision to be delivered before an overall shortage of places arises due to the housing development. In some cases, a combination of demographic growth and or S106 timing means that basic need funding is used to provide additional places in advance of the receipt of S106. The basic need funds are reimbursed once the S106 is received.
- 1.22 The County Council also receives an allocation of funds from the DfE to address condition problems in the maintained schools for which it is responsible for capital maintenance. In some cases, it is possible to combine some of these funds with S106 funding to ensure condition / improvements can be delivered as a single project along with S106 expansion. Combining funds in this way can be a cost effective way of achieving an investment.

1.23 Any such decisions are made by the County Council on the basis of the merits of the individual case and taking account of the funds available and other priorities for funding.

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