

# **Ashfield Local Plan Examination**

## **Matter 11: Transport and Infrastructure**

### **Nottinghamshire County Council Hearing Statement**



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Nottinghamshire County Council is the Local Education Authority, Local Highway and Transport Authority, and Waste Disposal Authority for Ashfield District, with respect to infrastructure provision.
- 1.2. The County Council has registered to participate in the hearing session scheduled for Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 with respect to the following issue identified by the Inspectors in their Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs): *Whether the Local Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to transport and infrastructure (Matter 11).*
- 1.3. This hearing statement sets out the position of the County Council in relation to each of the inspectors' questions listed in the MIQs. Section 2 covers Infrastructure Overall and Section 3 covers Transport.

## 2. Infrastructure Overall

### **Q11.1 How will key infrastructure be delivered and funded?**

- 2.1. The County Council has worked with the District Council to produce the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (SEV. 36.1). The infrastructure schedule appended to the IDP lists the key items of infrastructure which are anticipated to be required during the plan period, together with details of the anticipated cost and funding sources. In relation to the responsibilities of the County Council this includes items of education, transport, waste, and library infrastructure. The County Council would be the responsible body for delivering these items of infrastructure utilising developer contributions and other funding, where this is available, and in conjunction with other bodies as needed, such as academy trusts.
- 2.2. The County Council will seek to secure proportionate contributions towards the listed items in accordance with Policy SD5 of the Local Plan, which requires development to meet all reasonable infrastructure costs associated with proposal, including *ii. education provisions/facilities; v. new and expanded community facilities; and vii. transport infrastructure including the strategic transport network, public transport, cycleways and pedestrian access to town centres.* The County Council would recommend that the list of eligible infrastructure under Policy SD5 includes waste management facilities for parity with the IDP which lists a new household waste recycling centre as a medium priority item to be funded in part through developer contributions. The County Council has an adopted Developer Contributions Strategy (DCS) which provides guidance on how it will calculate such contributions and it is recommended that this be listed under relevant guidance in Policy SD5.
- 2.3. It should be noted that whilst some items of infrastructure in the IDP are intended to be funded solely from developer contributions, some items are required to be funded through a combination of developer contributions and other funding sources. This is especially relevant in relation to transport infrastructure where there is a dependency on the Department for Transport and/or East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) to provide a significant contribution towards some schemes. This is due to the scale and cost of the schemes and the fact that the need for these interventions is not generated solely by the development allocated in the plan. At this time, this funding has not been secured.

### **Q11.2 Do the Plan's Strategic Policies clearly identify and make provision for infrastructure including, but not limited to, transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, flood risk and community facilities as required by paragraph 20 of the Framework?**

- 2.4. Policy S9 (Aligning Growth and Infrastructure) refers to various types of infrastructure which are relevant to the County Council, including provision of school places, community infrastructure (which may include libraries) and sustainable transport networks and states that development will meet the reasonable cost of new infrastructure, facilities or services, on or off site, required as a consequence of the proposal, enabling the cumulative impacts of development to be managed. Further details are provided in the IDP, and this document should be listed in the evidence base for the policy, together with the County Council's DCS which should be included under policy guidance relevant to the policy.

- 2.5. Policy S9 does not refer to waste management infrastructure and it is recommended that this is listed under the priorities for infrastructure provision in the district, to align with Paragraph 20 of the Framework and the IDP which lists a new waste recycling centre as a medium priority item, eligible for developer contributions. The County Council considers this to be a key piece of infrastructure to meet the needs of the new and existing population within Ashfield and is exploring options for delivery.
- 2.6. Policy 10 (Improving Transport Infrastructure) provides further detail on the main arterial, pedestrian and cycle routes which development should seek to enhance. This is supported by the County Council which will work with the District Council to support their enhancement utilising a combination of developer contributions and funding secured through government grants in accordance with the priorities in its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- 2.7. Policy S3 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change) makes provision for flood management infrastructure with reference to the utilisation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).

**Q11.3 Does the Plan's spatial strategy rely on any critical infrastructure which is subject to phasing?**

- 2.8. The spatial strategy does not allocate any strategic sites which would deliver its own infrastructure onsite, such as a new school, and therefore there is a need to pool contributions to deliver the required offsite infrastructure across the duration of the plan period. This may involve a phased approach to the delivery of infrastructure and where necessary forward funding from the County Council.

**3. Transport**

**Q11.4 How have the potential impacts of the development proposed in the Plan been tested, and how will the necessary highways mitigation be delivered?**

- 3.1. A strategic transport modelling assessment (SEV.39.1) was commissioned by the District Council which has used the East Midlands Gateway Model (EMGM) to assess the impact of the development proposed in the plan. The EMGM is a multimodal transport model and the proposed Local Plan developments have been tested in one assessment year (2040). The assessment identifies various junctions which are anticipated to be over capacity by the end of the plan period. These junctions are listed in appendix to the IDP, together with details of the anticipated cost and funding sources.
- 3.2. In many cases, the improvements identified through the study are necessary because of cumulative growth and therefore, in the absence of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), proportionate contributions would need to be secured through planning obligations. To date, no model has been established for calculating how much each site should contribute towards each scheme and several of the sites are already subject to planning permission. It may therefore not be possible to secure the required amount of developer funding and there is likely to be a dependency on grant funding from the Department for Transport and/or East Midlands Combined County Authority, which is uncertain.
- 3.3. Where the transport assessment for a given site identifies any improvement as being necessary to directly mitigate the impact of that development, it is assumed that the developer would be responsible for delivering the works under a Section 278 Agreement with the Local Highway Authority.

**Q11.5 Does the Plan clearly identify necessary transport mitigation measures that arise from the overall spatial strategy, but also from specific site allocations?**

- 3.4. Transport mitigation measures that are necessary to support specific site allocations will be established through the transport assessment for that given site, which may include works to the highway or provision of enhanced public transport services. The strategic transport assessment is concerned with the collective impact of all the allocations and thus the impact of the overall spatial strategy.

**Q11.6 What effect does the Plan's strategy and site allocations have on the Strategic Road Network? What evidence is there that the mitigation measures proposed in the Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment Report (SEV.39.1) will be effective? Is this evidence sufficiently clear?**

- 3.5. The Strategic Road Network (SRN) is managed by National Highways and therefore the County Council does not have any comment on this question in relation to the impact and mitigation on the SRN.

**Q11.7 What effect does the Plan's strategy and site allocations have on the Local Highway Network?**

- 3.6. The EMGM network indicators show that there is a significant change in congestion levels as a result of the proposed development over the plan period in the 'no highway mitigation' modelling run. Tables 4 and 5 from the Ashfield Local Plan Development Assessment Report produced by Systra (SEV.39.1) show that congestion is expected to increase by 53% in the AM Peak and 18% in the PM Peak (Over Capacity Queues indicator). The Total Travel Time (PCU hrs) within the model is predicted to increase by 3% (AM Peak) and 2% (PM Peak) respectively and Average Speed (km/hr) will also fall when compared to the 2040 Reference Case. The Systra report goes on to state "*these statistics also indicate that due to the congested network, traffic is taking longer to get around the network leading to a reduced average speed*".
- 3.7. The report goes on to list the junctions that are most affected by the site allocations (3.4.2 and 3.4.3). The junctions named in 3.4.3 are junctions that were assessed as being already congested in the reference case and the addition of the Local Plan development will result in these junctions becoming noticeably more congested with a tolerance exceeding a +10% increase.

**Q11.8 Is there clear evidence that the proposed highway interventions in the full mitigation scenario have been suitably assessed and any critical transport improvements identified and costed?**

- 3.8. The County Council is content that the proposed mitigation measures identified as part of the assessment have been suitably assessed in the EMGM. The modelling exercise included public transport and active mode mitigation schemes in the first instance which showed that whilst there is an increase in travel by these sustainable modes it only has a minor impact in mitigating the overall impact of the Local Plan developments on the highway network. Highway interventions which focused on increasing junction capacity were needed to bring about meaningful changes to the various network statistic indicators. The biggest predicted impact is on the PM peak with 58% of the congestion on the network mitigated as a result of the highway improvements.
- 3.9. The Council is however of the opinion that the costs quoted to deliver the various highway mitigation interventions are relatively low estimates based on recent experience of delivering highway improvements elsewhere in the County. The designs for each mitigation measure will need to be developed in due course to a sufficient degree so that a robust cost estimate can be produced.

**Q11.9 What does 'large scale development' mean in the context of requirement in Policy SD10 for a Transport Assessment? Is there a threshold? If so, what is it and is it justified by evidence?**

- 3.10. The Road Network Policy in the County Council Highways Design Guide sets the threshold at which the Local Highway Authority would require a transport statement, transport assessment or travel plan. Policy SD10 should refer to the County Council Highways Design Guide. The Highways Design Guide includes thresholds for submission of a transport assessment or travel plan for all land use types. The County Council would require transport consultants to provide detailed junction modelling if a development was predicted to increase the number of trips through a junction by 30 vehicles in either of the peak hours (AM or PM peak).