

## **Local Plan Hearings – statement by Rt Hon Maria Miller MP**

### **Issue 8: Infrastructure**

#### **17 Infrastructure Delivery**

I consider Policy CN6 and the associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan to be unsound. They fail the soundness test on grounds that they are neither justified (not the most appropriate strategy and inadequate evidence) nor effective (not deliverable over its period).

The National Planning Policy Framework, in paragraph 9, sets out an overarching principle that “pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (*inter alia*)... improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure”. Given the shortcomings identified in Policy CN6 and the Infrastructure Development Plan, I do not consider that the Plan will improve the quality of life for current residents of Basingstoke and as such I consider that a further ground on which the Plan is unsound is that it is not consistent with national policy.

Specifically, the infrastructure delivery described in the Plan:

- does not demonstrate how infrastructure provision will be brought on stream at the appropriate time, in line with the timing and phasing of site development;
- does not provide sufficient evidence of how infrastructure will be funded;
- does not take account of the impact on the local population in terms of disruption and inconvenience of the cumulative works that will be required to deliver the necessary infrastructure; and
- such impact should be assessed by means of public consultation specifically on infrastructure.

CN6 states that development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that infrastructure can be provided and phased to support new development, and that new infrastructure should be provided prior to occupation of the development.

However past experience has been that in many cases, infrastructure has been promised, but has not been delivered, either in a timely fashion, or in some cases, not at all. Examples include Chineham railway station (promised for Taylor’s Farm)

schools (a primary school was promised also for Taylor's Farm and Rooksdown, the latter only recently delivered), GP surgeries (Rooksdown residents will have waited more than 10 years for delivery of a doctor's surgery), community facilities at Beggarwood and local shops (promised for Marnel Park).

To avoid this situation we should in all cases insist on infrastructure being put in place ahead of occupation, and stipulate that no development should be permitted unless and until all infrastructure associated with the development, both on-site and off-site, has been identified, sources of funding agreed, and phasing of works planned. If there is any risk that development takes place without the necessary infrastructure being provided, then that development is not sustainable and detracts from the quality of life for residents, which should be a guiding principle of the Plan.

In terms of the deliverability of the necessary infrastructure, I remain extremely concerned about the very significant funding gap identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, amounting to some £191 million. The IDP identifies S106 and CIL as potential sources of funding, but this is not guaranteed revenue. At a time of constraints on public expenditure, it is not realistic to expect that central Government is going to be able to meet significant expenditure costs, particularly given that the emphasis for the foreseeable future is on expenditure to support the development of the "Northern Powerhouse". Furthermore, the £191 million does not take account of other measures that will be needed, such as expansion of GP surgeries, improvement of open space infrastructure and provision of off-site habitat mitigation measures.

Provision of infrastructure of any nature causes inconvenience for residents, either on a very local basis or more generally. Building work and road upgrades can be very disruptive, and often take much longer than initially anticipated. For example, Basingstoke residents have been experiencing significant inconvenience due to works to improve the Black Dam roundabout. These works have considerably overrun, largely due to unforeseen problems as a result of inaccurate historical mapping of utilities. In a situation where numerous road improvements are envisaged across the local road network at the same time, the potential for disruption and inconvenience is multiplied; against this background it is all the more important that the necessary preparatory work is undertaken in good time, and that timing and phasing is carefully planned to minimise inconvenience to residents, and that such planning is submitted for public consultation to help ensure that residents are fully sighted on proposals. Policy CN6 does not demonstrate any awareness of this important factor.

### Proposed amendments

In order to be sound, therefore, Policy CN6 needs to be amended (proposed amendments in italics).

Policy CN6 needs to state more clearly that “development proposals will *only* be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that infrastructure *will* be provided and phased to support the requirements of proposed development, *including where multiple development sites exacerbate the infrastructure requirements.*”

The penultimate paragraph of the Policy also needs to underline the need for infrastructure to be in place prior to occupation, along the following lines:

“New infrastructure *must* be provided prior to occupation of the development...”

Policy CN6 also needs to include a commitment to consult residents on infrastructure planning. This could be achieved through use of a planning condition. I would therefore suggest an additional paragraph to Policy CN6 –

*“Development proposals will be required to include a detailed analysis of the infrastructure requirements, together with details of how this is to be funded, and the timing and phasing of its provision. Provision of such details should form part of the planning consent process, in order to ensure that residents are fully consulted and have the opportunity to comment on the proposals. The planning authority should use a planning condition to prohibit occupation of developments until such time as the supporting infrastructure has been provided.”*

### Comment

As evidence of the importance of this issue I would underline that one of the most frequently expressed concerns expressed by my constituents in relation to housing development, is that of infrastructure provision. Residents fear that, as has happened previously, development may take place without the necessary on-site and off-site infrastructure being provided and funded.

Many residents have told me that the Plan needs to contain a Policy with “real teeth” such that development can only occur when the necessary off-site infrastructure is in place or is at least committed and funded with a clear time limit for completion. This, they consider, is especially critical in the areas of education, health and, most importantly, transport and roads.

Rt Hon Maria Miller MP  
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