

Topic Paper 3 – Early years and childcare provision

This document is one of the supporting topic papers of Suffolk’s supplementary guidance “Section 106 Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk”. It is intended as a guide for landowners, developers and residents and sets out how Suffolk County Council will deal with planning applications where contributions towards early years and childcare provision may be sought.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to outline the methods used by Suffolk County Council to seek the appropriate level of contributions from developers in order to mitigate any strain that proposed developments place upon early years and childcare infrastructure.
- 1.2 This paper examines what early years provision is covered by contributions from developers; how these contributions are calculated; explain the drivers for contributions; offer examples and benchmark figures for the types of contributions that Suffolk County Council will seek.
- 1.3 The level of suggested contribution will be assessed on a case by case basis but it will take into account other factors local to the proposed development; including existing infrastructure barriers, other future developments and any initiatives from government expected to be implemented within a given time frame.

2 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – LEGISLATION

- 2.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places a range of duties on local authorities regarding the provision of sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents’ needs. Local authorities are required to take a lead role in facilitating the childcare market within the broader framework of shaping children’s services in partnership with the private, voluntary and independent sector.
- 2.2 Section 6 of the Act defines ‘sufficient childcare’ as sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the area who require childcare in order to enable them to take up, or remain in work or undertake education or training which could be reasonably expected to assist them obtain work.
- 2.3 Section 7 of the Act sets out a duty to secure free early years provision for pre-school children aged between 3 and 4. The current free entitlement of 15 hours free education was introduced in September 2010, an increase from the previous entitlement of 12 hours.
- 2.4 The Education Act 2011 places a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure the provision of early education for every disadvantaged 2 year old by 2013. Clause 1 of the Act amends Section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 introducing the statutory requirement for 2 year old education. Suffolk County Council defines ‘disadvantaged’ by a selection of primary and secondary eligibility criteria, including receipt of benefits, local Index Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data and health data.
- 2.5 The Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 placed the duty to provide sufficient children’s centre provision, to meet local need, on local authorities. The act defines local need as the need of parents, prospective parents, and young children (under the age of 5) in the local area. Sufficient provision is based on the drivers that underpinned the roll out of the national programme of children’s centres from 2003 to 2010.

3 EARLY YEARS PROVISION

- 3.1 Early years provision (EYP) covers all early education: which Suffolk County Council defines as the entitlement of free early education for 2-5 year olds. This is provided through maintained nurseries in primary schools, pre-schools, playgroups, day care and accredited childminders throughout Suffolk. Only members of the Suffolk County Council '*Directory of Providers*' are accredited to deliver this free entitlement, which is funded by Suffolk County Council direct to providers.
- 3.2 The statutory requirements imposed through the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 following the national programmes for Sure Start Children's Centres 2003-2010, mean that Suffolk County Council must ensure that there is sufficient provision of not only early education places but also children's centres.

4 PROCESS FOR DETERMINING SUFFICIENCY LEVELS

- 4.1 Early years and childcare uses the most recent and relevant information available to monitor sufficiency levels in early education, childcare and children's centres across Suffolk.

5 EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT

- 5.1 To ensure that the early education sufficiency requirements of the county are met, the number of places available needs to directly correspond to the number of children eligible for funded places.
- 5.2 Early years and childcare uses local knowledge of the registered places at maintained nurseries at primary schools, pre-schools and accredited childminders, alongside submissions from providers on funding returns to measure the capacity of early education provider provision. When examining the potential impact a development could have on the sufficiency levels, the existing capacity of providers within a mile radius of the development will be investigated.
- 5.3 Early years and childcare uses a variety of data to forecast the amount of eligible children requiring early education. This includes local birth data, the latest census, Area Health Authorities statistics, information from partners in health and GP's. It is acknowledged that whilst it is impossible to provide 100% accurate data, the forecasting offers the best possible assessment of the potential need.
- 5.4 The free entitlement for early education is for 15 hours per week. As such, each child eligible for receiving the free entitlement is classed as 0.6 FTE. Therefore to calculate the sufficiency this 0.6 FTE will be used when determining whether or not there is undue strain placed on the early education infrastructure arising from any developments.

6 CHILDREN'S CENTRE PROVISION

- 6.1 Suffolk has 48 children's centres throughout the county. The area which a children's centre covers is known as the 'reach area'. Where deprivation levels, measured by the National Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data and or population levels are high children's centres are more densely populated. A number of children's centres cover a wide rural area and as such make use of outreach points or service delivery points in order that every community within their reach area has appropriate provision. The number of children aged 0-5 within a reach area varies dependent on the local geography and deprivation scores.

- 6.2 Where the reach area is spread across wide rural areas or where there are local barriers, specific service delivery points have been developed to satellite the main centres. Children's centres were constructed to suit local need, and they come in varying sizes and types, from refurbishments of existing provisions to new builds.

7 CONTRIBUTIONS

7.1 Early education contributions

- 7.1.1 For 2015-16 the contribution per new pupil is £6,091, where extensions and/or improvements to existing facilities are required.
- 7.1.2 Where larger scale development justifies the need for new early years and childcare facilities, this will be based on actual costs.
- 7.1.3 Contributions to negate any negative impact on sufficiency for early education will be sought through a number of ways, the method applied to individual development proposals will be on a case by case basis and dependent on the local level of sufficiency and other proposals in the area.
- 7.1.4 Where a development proposal is anticipated to create over 20 FTE places, then a new provision will be sought. This will include the land and the construction of suitable premises for a new provision.
- 7.1.5 Where there is less than 20 FTE places anticipated to arise from development proposals, Early years and childcare will look at alternative ways to manage the increase in demand for places. This can include extensions to existing provision, improvements to the staffing structures to increase registered places, and training and encouragement for accreditation for childminders.
- 7.1.6 The exemplar briefs and case studies aim to give greater understanding of the financial and size implications that may arise from development proposals.

8 CHILDREN'S CENTRE CONTRIBUTION

- 8.1 When considering the possible impact a development could have on children's centre provision, early years and childcare will look at the local demographics, the latest IMD data, current Reach and local provision for children's centre services. If it is deemed necessary and appropriate, Suffolk County Council will look to receive adequate contributions to increase capacity for the children's centre infrastructure. Usually this will be financial contributions to provide a service delivery point or to improve current provision to enable the current centre to offer services to an increased reach number. Where evidence leads Suffolk County Council to deem it necessary to provide a new hub centre, both land and a capital contribution to construction of the new hub will be sought at an appropriate level.

9 MINIMUM SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE FACILITIES

- 9.1 Early education for 2-5 year olds include the following:
- 9.1.1 Main play space with 2.5m² per 2 year old and 2.3m² for 3-5 year olds.
- 9.1.2 Adequate storage for resources.
- 9.1.3 Toilets at ratio of 1 toilet and 1 hand basin for 10 children over the age of 2.
- 9.1.4 Nappy changing facilities.
- 9.1.5 Staff toilet.

- 9.1.6 Office and secure storage for files.
- 9.1.7 Kitchen area for meal preparation.
- 9.1.8 External play area of at least 3m² per child to include a covered area from the external doors to provide free flow play/shade and shelter.
- 9.2 Children's centres
 - 9.2.1 Main play space 30-40m² with additional integral storage.
 - 9.2.2 Foyer/social space 30/40m².
 - 9.2.3 Kitchen/beverage area 10-20m².
 - 9.2.4 1:1 space 10m².
 - 9.2.5 Office space 10m².
 - 9.2.6 Meeting room 20m².
- 9.3 Children's centre outreach point
 - 9.3.1 Main play space with storage 40m².
 - 9.3.2 Kitchen/beverage area 10-20m².
 - 9.3.3 Office/1:1 group space 10-15m².

10 CASE EXAMPLES

10.1 Sunflowers Pre-School at Boxford Primary School

- 10.1.1 Grant funding of £240,000 towards build and canopy costs. Purpose built, timber clad pre-school building within the grounds of a primary school, offering early education for 29 children. The setting has a gross internal area of 120m² with external play area directly from the main play space; 14m² of which is covered to allow free flow play. The internal accommodation comprises a main play space, kitchen, office, secure entrance hall, toilets and store with cleaning cupboard.

10.2 Old Felixstowe Nursery with Rhymes Out of School Club

- 10.2.1 Grant funding of £230,000 toward build and canopy costs. Modular building to provide accommodation for pre-school and out of school club for the local area, based on a Primary School site. The pre-school is registered for 26 children aged 2-5 and the out of school club can accommodate 16 children aged up to 11. The facility is 130m² and includes a flexible main room with toilet and kitchen facilities, office and reception area, disabled WC and stores within the main play space. Covered outside play area, with both hard and soft landscaping.

10.3 Cherry Blossom Children's Centre and Nursery at East Bergholt

- 10.3.1 Sure Start Funding and Grant funding of £750,000 (including £50,000 for external play). Purpose built timber clad building with 304m² of internal space with 150m² of external play areas direct from the two main internal play spaces. Shared entrance with large foyer/social space meeting room and children's centre office leading to main play space for children's centre, kitchen, toilets and 1:1 room. The nursery has a designated secure area with main play room for 30 children aged 2-5, kitchen, and toilets for staff and children, storage and office space. Both play rooms lead directly to external play space and the roof provides sufficient overhang for covered play for both facilities. Works also included associated car parking and lay-by with pedestrian access route to adjacent primary school.