

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Lack of Primary School Places in Blagreaves

One of the foremost concerns arising from Planning Application Reference 25/01544/OUT relates to the acute shortage of primary school places within the Blagreaves area. Primary education provision across Derby is already under significant strain, and the addition of further residential development will exacerbate this situation. Latest government datasets and Derby City Council's own assessments consistently indicate a mismatch between rising pupil numbers and school capacity, with many primary schools either full or exceeding their formal limits. National statistics show that, as of 2023-2024, 16% of primary schools in England are at or over capacity, but local authorities such as Derby see even starker figures in hotspots like Blagreaves, particularly when new families are clustered from large-scale developments. The Department for Education's school capacity forecasts project a persistent and, in some areas, worsening deficit of primary school places through to the end of the decade, with "additional need as positives and spare places as negatives" highlighting a consistent upward trajectory of unmet demand in Derby's planning areas.

This deficit is not hypothetical; parents in Blagreaves and adjoining wards are already experiencing difficulties securing placements for their children at local schools, often being offered alternatives several miles from their home. Such forced dispersal disrupts community cohesion, undermines the safe, 'walkable' school principle, and places a further logistical and financial burden on local families. Additionally, it disproportionately affects disadvantaged or lower-income households, whose children may be less able to travel further afield. The introduction of the planned development would bring hundreds of new homes, adding to the ballooning population requiring primary education in a catchment already near breaking point. Derbyshire County Council's own Developer Contributions Protocol highlights the need for "required school places from new housing developments" to be provided in line with Department for Education guidance, but there is rarely evidence that contributions actually keep pace with population growth, especially where capital projects cannot be rapidly implemented. Without a guaranteed, timeline-committed plan for permanent new primary places in Blagreaves, this application represents an unsustainable addition to an education landscape already at crisis point.

Pressure on Secondary School Capacity in Littleover

The situation is similarly grave at secondary level, especially in the Littleover area. Littleover Community School, the principal state secondary in the vicinity, is already operating in excess of its official capacity—with 1,822 pupils enrolled against a capacity of 1,801 for the current year. This overcrowding is more than a statistical anomaly; it manifests daily in stretched resources, reduced ability to offer choice over subject

options, increasing class sizes, and pressures on shared facilities such as sports, science laboratories, and extracurricular provision. The school's own communications, as well as DfE capacity datasets, underscore a system that is operating in 'crisis management' mode rather than delivering optimum outcomes for all students.

The demand-side problem is forecast to intensify. Department for Education projections show that the overall number of students seeking secondary places in Derby will continue to rise until at least 2031, outstripping planned expansions and the slow drip-feed of rebuilt or new school facilities. The geographic concentration of housing in Littleover and adjacent development areas further exacerbates the pressure on particular schools, creating significant stress points within the admissions system and eroding the Council's ability to guarantee local access. While Derby City Council's plans cite long-term ambitions for new school sites tied to even larger expansion areas, such as the Infinity Garden Village and Mickleover extensions, there is no short-term mitigation for cohort bulges and the risk that parents will have to send children out-of-area or to under-resourced alternatives.

Critically, the issue is not simply one of numbers, but of quality and equality of access to education. Overcrowded schools struggle to maintain academic standards, pastoral care, and inclusive provision for vulnerable pupils. Section 106 developer contributions, while theoretically available for education, often arrive too late or are insufficient to underwrite new build costs, leaving schools to 'make do' in the interim. Permitting further housing development under 25/01544/OUT, without concrete, near-term solutions for secondary school expansion, will worsen overcrowding, depress educational standards, and entrench inequality for local families.

Insufficient Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision

Demand for specialist education provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Derby has surged over recent years, reflecting both national trends and Derby City's own rising rates of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Several high-profile media and council reports forcefully assert that SEND capacity is "under significant pressure" and existing facilities are only barely coping with their current caseloads. The council and partners are investing nearly £2 million in upgrades and attempting to create 400 new specialist places, but as confirmed by Derby City Council itself, "locally and nationally, the SEND system is experiencing increasing demand and is under significant pressure as the cost of provision outstrips funding provided by the Government".

New housing on the scale proposed in Blagreaves and Littleover will directly increase the local population of children eligible for specialist SEND support, both in mainstream settings and specialist units. In practical terms, however, Derby's efforts to

expand provision face delays, construction constraints, and staff shortages. Recent attempts to convert buildings, such as St James House, to SEND schools have met with public skepticism—including from staff and families—about the “suitability” of such accommodations, further limiting viable options in the near term. Even with planned expansions, Derby regularly places SEND students in out-of-area placements at considerable financial and emotional cost to families. Moreover, early years and childminder providers in city-wide surveys note that they are now limiting the number of available SEND places—44% of group providers and 62% of childminders in Derby are restricting SEND admissions due to staffing or resource limitations.

The cumulative impact of a large new housing development will further tip a fragile system into oversubscription, delay statutory assessments, and erode support for some of the most vulnerable children in the borough. Without a parallel, developer-funded, and time-bound increase in local SEND capacity, including specialist classrooms and trained staff, Planning Application 25/01544/OUT will be directly responsible for undermining Derby’s statutory obligations to children with SEND and their families.

Overburdened GP Practices and Deteriorating Access to Primary Healthcare

Significant expansion in local population invariably spikes demand for primary healthcare services, particularly general practice (GP) and associated out-of-hospital provision. Derby’s GP surgeries, like many across the East Midlands and the UK, are already struggling to absorb existing and anticipated population growth from new housing developments. Recent local reporting confirms that GP practices are seeking to expand their physical premises specifically to cope with the “significant influx in new patients from housing developments,” and that current facilities are “outgrown” by patient list increases that have outpaced workforce growth. For example, nearby Park Medical Practice in Borrowash recently applied to double its consultation space due to overwhelming pressure and uncertainty over how to triage incoming patient loads, with similar dynamics present across Derby.

The planned development under 25/01544/OUT sits within the catchment of practices that already maintain excessive patient lists compared to national and regional averages. NHS Digital data from January 2025 reports more than 63.7 million patients registered at GP practices nationally, an increase of over 17,000 in just one month; Derby’s rapid urban expansion contributes disproportionately to these figures, and GP access issues are a perennial concern among local residents. The Derby City Council Delivery Plan for 2025-2028 explicitly identifies “improving accessibility of health offer to most deprived & new communities” as a critical public health goal and acknowledges existing gaps in GP provision and the need for “early intervention and prevention of health issues leading to increased care demand”.

Crucially, increased population is not only a matter of more appointments required, but of degraded continuity of care, growing waiting times for routine and urgent consultations, staff stress and burnout, and rising risk of missed or delayed diagnoses. Unless the planning application is accompanied by a fully funded health infrastructure plan and binding commitments to expand GP capacity—including both space and clinical staff—the result will be unacceptable delays for local residents, increased health inequality, and mounting pressure on secondary care and urgent services as overflow is forced elsewhere.

Worsening Crisis in Public Dental Service Access

Pressure on dental health services is a well-established public policy challenge in Derby and nationally, and recent changes to NHS England's data collection highlight the urgency of the problem. From August 2025, Community Dental Services (CDS) will publish monthly waiting list data to shine a light on what have previously been “unacceptable ... yearlong waits for treatment, in particular for extractions under general anaesthetic,” especially for children and vulnerable adults. Advocacy groups and the BDA have warned that routine and specialist dental care is at breaking point, and that access in many regions—including Derby—entails long waiting times, rationing of adult service slots, high out-of-pocket costs, and frequent difficulties even identifying local NHS practices accepting new patients.

The effect of increased demand from hundreds of new residents within the Blagreaves and Littleover catchment will be to further erode already stretched provision, leading to longer waits, increased emergency dental presentations (often at GP or hospital A&E, which are not equipped for dental care), and direct harm to both routine and acute oral health. NHS commissioning guidance notes that all CDS contractors must begin tracking and disclosing waiting times by banded time periods—revealing the scale of backlog that will only increase as population grows without matching workforce and facility investment.

This public health challenge is further compounded by the fact that population growth includes higher proportions of young children (as evidenced by school place demand), who require both preventive and remedial dental interventions. Local service gaps also have equity implications, as lower-income and vulnerable households are less able to absorb private dental costs and travel for out-of-area provision. Without clear, up-front evidence that new practices or expanded local NHS dental contracts will accompany the development, the public service impact of this planning application cannot be mitigated in real terms.

Local Roads and Traffic Network at Capacity: Risks to Safety, Air Quality, and Access

The local highway and transport infrastructure of Blagreaves, Littleover, and the adjoining road network is at or near capacity, and further significant population increases from new housing will create adverse impacts on traffic volumes, congestion, road safety, and air quality. Multiple Derby City Council and environmental statement chapters, including the recent assessments supporting other South Derby Growth Zone projects, demonstrate that new residential and mixed-use developments typically contribute to at least “minor” or “moderate” increases in traffic on surrounding links, with key junctions and corridors classified as “of greatest sensitivity”—including those near schools, GP practices, and community centres.

Transport Assessments prepared for Derby explicitly apply Institute of Environmental Assessment (IEA/IEMA) guidance, which holds that increases of over 10% in traffic flows trigger a requirement for detailed environmental scrutiny, and that levels above 30% are “likely to produce ‘slight’ to ‘moderate’ changes in severance, delay, and pedestrian amenity”. For local residents, this translates to:

- Longer journey times during peak hours;
- Increased risk of traffic accidents, especially for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly crossing roads near schools and amenities;
- Deterioration in the safety and pleasantness of walking and cycling routes, thus inhibiting sustainable travel behaviours encouraged by both local and national policy.

Specific Derby bus routes, such as service 234 (Notts and Derby), and the No. 5 Arriva Derby line serve the area, but existing frequencies—particularly outside peak times—do not match the modal shift required to offset car usage from dozens or hundreds of new households. Efficiency of public transport is further hindered by road congestion, as buses are not immune to gridlock effects. The result is a feedback loop: overloaded roads deter walking, cycling, and bus use, and push more journeys onto already congested highways.

Without substantial, developer-funded upgrades to both highway and sustainable transport infrastructure, including coordinated road safety, traffic management, and capacity-building investments explicitly tied to the magnitude of planned new housing, the risk of cumulative, long-term damage to local safety and connectivity is severe and unmet by the developer’s current offer.

Strain on Early Years and Childcare Place Provision

The ability of Blagreaves and Littleover to absorb additional young families is fundamentally constrained by a lack of early years and childcare place sufficiency, an issue documented in every recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment produced by both Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council. The most recent (Autumn 2024) Derby City CSA records a decrease of 7.2% in 0-5 childcare places compared to Spring

2023, with Normanton (4.8), Blagreaves (3.9), Sinfin & Osmaston (3.7), and Chaddesden West (3.7) recording the highest child-to-place ratios across the city. The report warns that, “in some wards within the city... there may be a shortfall of 0- to 5-year-old childcare places,” and that further population increase from new developments will exacerbate these squeeze points.

The areas most at risk of place shortages are precisely those most likely to see incoming families under planning application 25/01544/OUT. Furthermore, 43% reduction in the number of registered childminders over the past six years in Derby has dramatically reduced parental choice and market resilience, creating a sector that is fragile, often unable to cater for children with SEND, and vulnerable to further workforce pressures. Provider surveys report that 44% of early years group providers and a staggering 62% of childminders have to restrict SEND childcare due to resource limits, compounding the capacity gap for families needing more specialist support.

Despite recent government expansion of funded places for working parents from September 2025, providers in Derby indicate that staffing and space constraints mean many may be unable to meet this demand. The evidence is unequivocal: any further growth in the population of under-fives in Blagreaves and Littleover, in the absence of pre-funded and recruited new places, will leave substantial numbers of families unable to access early years education and care. This undermines parental return to work, adolescent educational progress (by delaying school-readiness), and perpetuates cycles of deprivation already apparent in local indicators.

Water Supply, Sewerage, and Utilities Infrastructure Nearing Critical Thresholds

The addition of hundreds of new dwellings within the catchment of Blagreaves and Littleover will place extra demands on the existing water supply and wastewater (sewerage) systems, which are already showing signs of strain. Severn Trent Water, the main supplier, reported in October 2025 that its reservoir storage levels were at only 51.5% of capacity, with local sources such as Derwent Valley at 52.9% and several Derbyshire reservoirs well below 50% following a prolonged drought. This is the lowest recorded level since 2023, reflecting both climate-driven stress and exponential regional demand increase. The company is compelled to focus capital investment on “storm overflow reduction, sewer flooding improvements and making sure our sewage treatment works can handle more people as communities grow,” according to current Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans.

The planned housing scheme’s contribution to both routine and peak demand risks accelerating system breach points, leading to:

- Reduced resilience to drought and water supply interruption events;
- Increased occurrence of surface water flooding from overwhelmed drainage;

- Higher risk of emergency measures such as hosepipe bans and water rationing;
- Potential for environmental infractions as storm overflows are unable to handle additional residential runoff.

Given Derby's current vulnerabilities and the immense scope and cost of any remedial infrastructure expansion, the planning application's contribution—if any—on water and sewerage must be both immediate and proportional to the risk imposed. Otherwise, the local area and city as a whole risk falling below statutory minimums for water supply security and wastewater management, particularly in the context of climate and population shocks. Permitting new large-scale development under these conditions is contrary to sustainable planning principles and constitutes an unacceptable risk to public health and environmental stewardship.

Inadequacy of Section 106 Developer Contributions for Education, Health, and Social Infrastructure

While Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) exist to facilitate contributions from developers toward offsetting the public cost of new residential expansion, in practice, these contributions rarely match the real and immediate needs imposed by substantial housing growth, especially in the complex education, health, and social care landscapes of urban Derby. Recent policy updates and Derbyshire County Council's own Developer Contributions Protocol emphasize that contributions “may be sought to provide better outcomes to facilitate health and wellbeing,” for the delivery of “required school places from new housing developments,” and for upgrades to public facilities such as libraries and community centres. However, the provision and spend of these resources lags behind the scale and pace of actual need.

This gap widens in schools, where the cost, time, and planning for new classrooms or entire schools are rarely met ahead of population uplift, resulting in years of overcrowding, increased class sizes, and diminished educational outcomes. For health, contributions often cannot fund new GP surgeries or dental practices due to NHS capital and workforce limitations. For libraries and community centres, per-head contributions do not address the actual cost of modernizing facilities, extending hours, or upgrading collections and equipment, as seen in the limited service scope and opening hours at Blagreaves Library.

Furthermore, Section 106 and CIL processes are complex and subject to developer contest—sometimes resulting in viability assessments that reduce agreed sums or delay infrastructure delivery until after peak demand. For developments the size envisaged in 25/01544/OUT, this creates a scenario where public services are overwhelmed in the short to medium term, with remediation years behind real community need. Unless this application is accompanied by a legally binding, front-

loaded infrastructure delivery plan, guaranteeing capacity increases prior to occupation, public service provision will degrade for both new and existing residents.

Overstretched Community Services: Library and Community Centre Capacity

Finally, the scale of new population envisaged by this development outpaces the ability of existing community infrastructure, especially libraries and community centres, to maintain accessible and high-quality public services. Blagreaves Library—one of the few remaining community libraries in the area—already offers restricted opening hours (open only three days per week for limited hours), and city-wide, library usage and funding have suffered in recent years. Usage data from 2021-2022 show a modest 5,742 items loaned and fewer than 3,000 visits in a year, reflecting both service and resource constraints.

Library services, vital for early literacy, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, and community cohesion, are at further risk as city budgets fall and demands for digital and face-to-face support climb. The arrival of hundreds of new households will overload already busy staff, further restrict user access, and dilute the quality and reach of enrichment activities (e.g., children’s Storytime, adult learning, job-seeking support) that are especially important as populations diversify and face cost-of-living pressures.

Similarly, local community centres already report high usage for clubs, wellbeing activities, and support services. Without developer-funded expansion of community facilities (whether by extension, new build, or operational subsidy), residents new and old will find themselves increasingly cut off from the shared social and educational spaces that underpin a resilient and healthy local community. This undermines not only individual opportunity but social integration and the inclusive ethos of Derby’s urban neighbourhoods.

In summary, Planning Application Reference 25/01544/OUT poses serious, multifaceted risks to educational and public service provision in Blagreaves and Littleover, Derby. These eight interconnected areas—school places, SEND provision, healthcare and dental access, infrastructure capacity, early years and childcare, utilities security, adequacy of developer contributions, and community service provision—are each already facing acute strain. Approving new, large-scale housing without up-front, evidence-based capacity expansion and resourcing is likely to produce enduring harm to public wellbeing, health equity, and quality of life for both new residents and existing communities. The cumulative case for refusal, or at minimum, for deferment until robust mitigation plans are in place, is thus overwhelming.