

Chapter 9

Community Services

9.1 Introduction

Overview

- 9.1.1 Community services and facilities provide essential support for the borough's residents and help to create viable, healthy and sustainable communities. The provision of such facilities can therefore have an impact on the quality of people's lives and can be important for the social and economic wellbeing of the borough as a whole.
- 9.1.2 This chapter sets out detailed policies which aim to provide an appropriate range and distribution of community facilities to meet the needs of the borough's population. Facilities referred to include:
- Community meeting halls;
 - Places of worship;
 - Schools and colleges;
 - Health and social care facilities; and
 - Cemeteries and public utilities.

National Planning Policy Context

- 9.1.3 The government's land use objectives are set out in a series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). PPG12 – *Development Plans* emphasises the importance of taking the capacity of existing infrastructure, and the need for additional facilities, into account when preparing development plans. "Infrastructure" is defined as services such as education, community and health facilities, water supply and sewerage. It also states that development plans should take social considerations and social exclusion into account, and should make provision for land for schools, further and higher education, places of worship and other community facilities.
- 9.1.4 PPG12 also supports the inclusion of policies in development plans relating to the use of planning obligations. Planning Circular 01/97 on *Planning Obligations*¹ highlighted the use of legal agreements with developers, and made it clear that planning obligations could be used to provide community facilities such as educational buildings and community meeting halls, providing that such facilities are directly related to the proposed development.
- 9.1.5 Development of open space, sports or recreational facilities may provide an opportunity for local authorities to remedy deficiencies in provision. Where the council has identified a surplus in one type of open space or sports and recreational facility, but a deficit in another type, planning conditions or obligations will be used to secure part of the development site for the type of open space or sports and recreational facility that is in deficit.

Regional Planning Policy Context

- 9.1.6 The *London Plan* places emphasis on ensuring that the needs of communities are addressed. Accessible and affordable community facilities are key to enabling a community to function. Local assessments of need will help to identify gaps in the provision of social infrastructure which the development process can then seek to address. This is in line with concepts of sustainable communities.

Borough Context

- 9.1.7 The council recognises the importance of providing adequate community services and facilities to meet the needs of residents in the borough. One of the key aims of its Corporate Plan is to create a sustainable, healthy environment, and to improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the borough. As part of this process, the Corporate Plan recognises a need to establish a framework for development, to enable the provision of community facilities to meet local need and to enable the quality of services and access to them to be improved. Another key aim of the Corporate Plan is to maintain and improve standards of education in the borough. It recognises the need to provide sufficient school buildings to deliver an efficient education service, and highlights the need to expand secondary and nursery education to cope with increasing school rolls. A third key aim addresses health issues, and highlights the need to provide adequate health services to meet people's needs and to improve health and social care facilities in the borough.

¹ Replaced by Circular 05/05 in July 2005.

- 9.1.8 The council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy also sets out a commitment to improving the quality of people's lives by providing training to meet community needs and to enable local people to obtain employment, and by providing community facilities to meet the needs of Barnet's multiracial community, and by increasing the use of community centres.
- 9.1.9 The theme of providing services to meet the needs of residents is one of the guiding principles of this Unitary Development Plan – to sustain local communities by ensuring that adequate education, health and welfare services are provided to meet the requirements of Barnet's diverse communities.

Strategy

- 9.1.10 The overall strategy of the Plan for community services is as follows:
- To ensure that there continues to be an adequate supply of land and buildings in Barnet to meet the needs of local residents for education, health care and social welfare services and community and religious activities. This objective will only be met by the council working in conjunction with the local health authorities, social welfare and voluntary services, schools, further and higher educational establishments and the major communities and faiths.
 - To ensure adequate burial space and facilities to meet the needs of Barnet's diverse communities.
 - To ensure that sufficient land and buildings are available to meet the requirements of utility companies and statutory undertakers.

9.2 Strategic Policies

- 9.2.1 The major strategic policy that will provide essential support for the borough's residents and help to create viable, healthy and sustainable communities is given below.

Policy GCS1 – Community Facilities

The council will seek to ensure that an adequate supply of land and buildings is available for community, religious, educational and health and social care facilities to meet the needs of residents in the borough.

9.3 Detailed Policies

9.3.1 Community and Religious Facilities

Provision of Community and Religious Facilities

- 9.3.1.1 Community and religious facilities are an important local resource which support the development of communities. Facilities include community centres, places of worship, meeting halls and club houses for youth and social groups. School halls may also be used out of school hours for community purposes, as addressed by Policy CS5 in this chapter.
- 9.3.1.2 The council recognises that there is a need for a range of community and religious facilities in Barnet to support the requirements of different ethnic, religious, social and interest groups in the borough. The council will monitor and review provision of community and religious facilities in the borough, and will encourage proposals for such facilities that meet identified needs.
- 9.3.1.3 Community and religious facilities should be easily accessible to users. Facilities may be appropriate in residential areas and in District and Local Town Centres, or in other locations which are well served by public transport, and therefore accessible to users. However, it should be ensured that the development of such facilities in residential areas does not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses in terms of noise and traffic generation, or on the character of the surrounding area. Both new buildings and the conversion of existing buildings will be considered. In town centres, community facilities should not be located in primary retail frontages. The council recognises that if several different community organisations share the use of the facilities, this can be a more efficient use of buildings. The council will therefore encourage the shared use of such facilities.

- 9.3.1.4 Where new housing development creates a demand, the council will, where appropriate, seek to enter into planning obligations with developers to secure the provision of community and religious facilities, or contributions towards their provision. Such opportunities are likely to arise in connection with large housing or mixed use commercial development schemes.

Policy CS1 – Community and Religious Facilities

Development proposals for community and religious facilities will be permitted where they:

- Are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling;
- If in a town centre location, would not be situated within the primary retail frontage;
- Would not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area and the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses; and
- Are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Policy CS2 – Community and Religious Facilities – Planning Obligations

The council will seek to enter into planning obligations, where appropriate, in conjunction with new developments, to secure the provision of community and religious facilities.

Protecting Existing Community and Religious Facilities

- 9.3.1.5 The borough contains a number of existing community and religious buildings and there is a continuing demand for these facilities from various local groups in the borough. The council recognises the importance of retaining existing community and religious facilities and will refuse development proposals which result in their loss. Exceptions may be considered where planning obligations with the developer can be used to secure community and religious facilities of at least equivalent quality and quantity on the site, or at an alternative location which is more accessible to users, or to secure improvements to other community and religious facilities. Exceptions may also be considered where it can be demonstrated that there is no current or future community and religious need for the facility, and therefore an excess of provision in the area. Where practicable, the council will encourage the re-use of facilities by other groups or for other community purposes.

Policy CS3 – Community and Religious Facilities – Protection

The council will not grant planning permission for development which results in the loss of an existing community or religious facility. Exceptions may be considered where:

- i. New community or religious facilities of at least equivalent quality or quantity are provided on the site or at an alternative location more accessible to users; or
- ii. Improvements are made to community or religious facilities at other sites; or
- iii. There is an excess of community or religious facilities in the area, and a particular development will not create a shortage of provision.

9.3.2 Education

Provision of Educational Facilities

- 9.3.2.1 Education is important, not just for children, but throughout the course of a person's life. By updating or learning new skills and gaining knowledge, people can improve their employment prospects, retrain for new careers, or just study for personal enjoyment. There are a variety of types of educational facilities in the borough to meet the needs of residents, including primary, secondary and nursery schools, and further and higher education establishments. The council as the Local Education Authority (LEA) has a statutory duty to provide primary and secondary school places for children aged from 5 to 16 years, and a part-time nursery place for three-year olds where requested. The council also has a responsibility to ensure that there is adequate provision for adult, youth and nursery education in the borough. In addition to state run establishments, there are also a number of schools, colleges and further and higher education institutes in the borough run by private or voluntary bodies.

- 9.3.2.2 To meet the educational needs of Barnet's growing population, the council will seek to ensure that there is an adequate provision of education facilities in the borough. It will encourage proposals for facilities which will help meet identified needs. Any facilities should be easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, and provide for the needs of disabled people. When considering proposals for new education facilities, or the expansion of existing ones, the council will also have regard to their impact on the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses, and the character of the surrounding area.

Policy CS4 – Educational Facilities

Proposals for the development of educational facilities will be permitted where they:

- Are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling;
- Would not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area and amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses; and
- Are designed to be accessible by people with disabilities.

Multiple/Shared Use of Educational Facilities

- 9.3.2.3 The council recognises that educational facilities are an important resource with potential for wider use for community purposes. The use of educational buildings and land to provide arts, entertainment, childcare and other educational and sports activities to the wider public can benefit the community, make more efficient use of resources and help to strengthen links between educational establishments and the communities they serve. The council also recognises that the use of education playing fields by the wider public can be particularly beneficial in areas of open space deficiency (see the "Leisure, Recreation and Tourism" chapter). School buildings, playing fields and other school facilities are especially suited to multiple use, as they can be used in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays.
- 9.3.2.4 The council will encourage the multiple use of educational facilities and seek to ensure that new facilities are designed and sited to allow the potential for multiple use. The multiple use of facilities will only be appropriate where it would be ancillary to the main education use, would not interfere with the normal schooling or educational activities of the establishment, and would not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area and amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses.

Policy CS5 – Educational Facilities – Shared Use

The council will encourage the multiple use of existing and new educational facilities for community or leisure activities, provided that the proposed uses would:

- Be ancillary to the main use of the facility for education;
- Not interfere with the delivery of the education service; and
- Not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area or amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses.

School Sites

- 9.3.2.5 Many local authority-maintained schools in the borough have little spare capacity, and the demand for primary, secondary and nursery places is expected to increase over the Plan period as a result of natural population growth and net inward migration (largely generated by housing development in Barnet). The council will continue to monitor the need for additional school places, and will seek to identify and safeguard new sites and sites at existing schools for educational expansion, in order to help ensure that sufficient provision is made to meet identified need. Sites for proposed new schools should be situated in the area which they serve, and be easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling (refer to Chapter 7 on "Movement" for information on the Safe Routes to School programme and related policies).

Policy CS6 – New School Sites

The council will identify and safeguard sites for new schools and sites at existing schools for expansion, in order to meet identified needs for additional school places.

- 9.3.2.6 The council will seek to identify suitable alternative uses for surplus educational land or buildings. Wherever possible, the council will seek to ensure that the community use of the land and buildings is retained, and will give priority to their continued use for community and leisure purposes – for example, as a community centre, arts centre or sports facility. Where such establishments are well located or otherwise suitable for some educational use, it is important to ensure that any alternative use or disposal will not lead to future deficiencies of education facilities.
- 9.3.2.7 Some schools may also have an over provision of playing field space, according to the standards set by the Department for Education and Skills. The council will consider development proposals on these sites (in accordance with policies in the “Leisure, Recreation and Tourism” chapter) which seek to retain the open character and/or sporting or recreational use of sports grounds and playing fields. PPG17 – *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (2002) recognises that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements. In advance of an assessment of need, the council will give very careful consideration to any planning application involving development on playing fields. The council will consult Sport England for guidance about development that affects land used as playing fields.

Policy CS7 – Surplus Educational Land and Buildings

The council will seek to identify suitable alternative uses of buildings and land that are surplus to educational requirements. The preferred alternative will be for the buildings and land to be used for community, leisure or recreation purposes.

Education Needs Generated by New Housing Development

- 9.3.2.8 New housing development, including conversions, can increase the number of children in an area and has the potential to place an even greater demand for pupil places on local schools. If a proposed residential development is situated in an area where there is a shortage of school places, or will create a shortage of places, the council will seek to enter into a Section 106 agreement with developers in order to help meet the educational costs of the residential development, and seek to secure contributions to fund the extra school places required. The council recognises that certain types of housing, such as specialist housing for the elderly, will not generate an increase in the numbers of children, and therefore contributions towards educational facilities will not be sought by the council in respect of such development. Special considerations will also apply to social housing developments accommodating local needs, where the council has nomination rights.
- 9.3.2.9 Further guidance on the use of Section 106 agreements for educational purposes is contained in the council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance on *Educational Needs Generated by New Housing Developments*. This guidance will be replaced by a *Supplementary Planning Document on Contributions to Lifelong Learning From Development* (the timetable for the production of this SPD is set out in Barnet’s *Local Development Scheme*, available on the council’s website).

Policy CS8 – Educational Needs Generated by New Housing Development

Where a residential development creates a need for additional school places, the council will seek to enter into planning obligations with the developer to secure contributions to their provision.

Improving Existing School Sites

- 9.3.2.10 A number of schools in the borough are located on restricted sites and fall below the space standards and/or the playing fields standards for schools set by the Department for Education and Skills. These include schools maintained by the local authority and independent schools. The council as the Local Education Authority is required to resolve deficiencies where possible, and will seek to expand existing sites to enable the development of new buildings or playing fields through the use of adjacent land. The council will also encourage proposals for similar expansion by independent schools. The use of adjacent land for educational purposes will only be appropriate providing that it conforms with other policies in this Plan.

Policy CS9 – Enlargement of School Facilities

The council will encourage proposals to enlarge school buildings and sites to meet Department for Education and Skills space and playing field standards, or otherwise improve educational facilities and playing fields, where adjacent land becomes available.

9.3.3 Health and Social Care

Health Care Facilities

- 9.3.3.1 Health care facilities, such as doctors' and dentists' surgeries and health centres, should be easily accessible to users, and may therefore be appropriate in residential areas or in District and Local Town Centres, or in other locations which are well served by public transport. However, it should be ensured that the development of such facilities in residential areas does not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses in terms of noise and traffic generation, or on the character of the area. In town centres, proposals for the change of use of shops/offices to health care facilities will generally be acceptable except in the identified primary retail frontage.
- 9.3.3.2 There is now a trend towards larger doctors' practices where more than one doctor plus other ancillary medical staff work from a single service outlet. The size requirements for such outlets may mean that purpose built accommodation is more suitable than converted residential properties. The council will consider proposals both for new buildings and the conversion of existing buildings.
- 9.3.3.3 With the help of lottery funding a network of 'Healthy Living Centres' has been established across the country. These centres are intended to address the whole issue of healthy lifestyles, and could include health care facilities and social care facilities such as Day Centres and Early Years Centres. Therefore, when considering planning applications for new, or the expansion of existing, health facilities, the council will encourage the provision of space to enable the multiple use of such facilities.

Policy CS10 – Health Care Facilities

Development proposals for medical and dental surgeries and other primary health care facilities, including changes of use of existing buildings, will be permitted where they:

- Are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling;
- Would not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area or the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;
- If in a town centre location, would not be situated within the primary retail frontage; and
- Are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Policy CS11 – Health Care Facilities – Multiple Use

The council will encourage new health care facilities to be designed to be capable of multiple use, for both health care and social care purposes.

Social Day Care Facilities

- 9.3.3.4 A wide range of social day care facilities for the elderly, the mentally ill and adults and children with learning disabilities, are provided by public, private and voluntary organisations in the borough. These facilities are an important community resource, and it will be necessary to ensure that there are appropriate facilities available to meet the needs of the borough's residents throughout the lifetime of this Plan. The provision of residential accommodation for those sectors of the community with special needs is dealt with by policies in the "Housing" chapter.
- 9.3.3.5 Proposals for day care centres will be encouraged where they can be located close to users. This particularly applies to luncheon clubs which will need to be easily accessible to the elderly. Such facilities can either be purpose built or in re-used existing buildings. When assessing development proposals for social day care facilities, the council will have regard to the impact on amenities of residential properties and other uses, in particular noise and traffic generation, accessibility for disabled people and car parking requirements. The facilities will also need to be easily accessible by public transport.

Policy CS12 – Social Day Care Facilities

Development proposals for social day care facilities will be permitted where they:

- Are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling;
- Would not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area or the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses; and
- Are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Provision of New Health and Social Care Facilities

- 9.3.3.6 New housing development may increase the population in a particular locality, and as a result could place increased pressure on health and social care facilities in an area. When new housing developments are proposed, the council, in partnership with the local health authorities and other relevant organisations, will assess the likely demand arising from such schemes, and whether existing health and social care facilities are adequate. Where a need for additional health and social care facilities can be demonstrated as a result of new housing development, the council will seek to enter into a Section 106 agreement with developers to secure contributions to help fund the facilities required.

Policy CS13 – Health and Social Care Facilities – Planning Obligations

Where a proposed residential development creates a need for additional health and social care facilities, the council will seek to enter into planning obligations with developers to secure the provision of such facilities.

Surplus Health Care Facilities

- 9.3.3.7 The rationalisation of facilities in the health service and the move towards care in the community mean that certain health care facilities may become available for other uses. In such circumstances, the council will liaise with the local health authorities and other agencies to identify suitable alternative uses for surplus land and buildings. Wherever possible, the council will seek to ensure that the community use of the land and buildings is retained, and will give priority to their use for community, leisure, education and recreation purposes. Where such establishments are well located or otherwise suitable for use as health facilities, it is important to ensure that any alternative use or disposal will not lead to future deficiencies of health care facilities. Other uses will be considered on their individual planning merits.
- 9.3.3.8 The move towards care in the community means that many health and social care services will be provided outside of hospitals, which will increase the need for such facilities at a local level. Proposals for health and social day care facilities are covered by Policies CS10, CS11 and CS12, and proposals for residential care facilities are covered in the "Housing" chapter.

Policy CS14 – Surplus Health Care Facilities

The council will seek to identify suitable alternative uses of buildings and land formerly used for health purposes that are found to be surplus to requirements. The preferred alternatives will be for the buildings and land to be used for community, education, leisure or recreation purposes.

9.3.4 Other Services**Cemeteries and Crematoria**

- 9.3.4.1 Although there are eight cemeteries in Barnet, only a limited amount of this burial space is available to meet the needs of local residents. Four of the eight cemeteries are owned by other local authorities, with the majority of burials in these involving people that were not resident in Barnet. Of the other four cemeteries, Hendon Cemetery is owned by the council and is the main source of non-denominational burial space for the local population, and also has a crematorium. Information on the privately owned cemetery at New Southgate is not available, but it is possible that some non-denominational and denominational reserves may be available for future use by Barnet residents. The two private cemeteries at Hoop Lane and Edgwarebury Lane (with a crematorium at Hoop Lane) are reserved for use by Jewish people, and provide for the needs of the borough's Jewish population.
- 9.3.4.2 Given current burial and death rates, it is estimated that all the non-denominational burial space in the borough available for Barnet residents will be used by the year 2010. Information on the availability of reserved burial spaces for other religious communities in the borough is limited, as is an understanding of the specific burial requirements of different groups. The council will seek to ensure that adequate provision is made in Barnet to meet the burial needs of all sections of the borough's community. As part of this process, the council will liaise with the different religious communities in the borough to determine their specific requirements and the demand for, and/or the availability of, reserved burial spaces. The council will, in conjunction with other authorities and the GLA, seek to identify sites to meet these needs.
- 9.3.4.3 The council will also encourage measures to maximise the capacity of burial sites, such as multiple burials where appropriate, in accordance with London Planning Advisory Committee's advice in *Planning for Burial Space Needs in London*.

Policy CS15 – Cemeteries and Crematoria

The council will seek to identify appropriate sites for cemeteries or crematoria to meet the needs of the community.

Utility Companies and Statutory Undertakers

- 9.3.4.4 Utility companies and statutory undertakers provide utilities and services such as gas, electricity and water supplies, sewerage disposal, post offices and emergency and police services. The efficient operation of these services is important for the economic and social wellbeing of the community. The council will support the provision of new operational facilities to meet the needs of the borough's residents, and will assist utility companies and statutory undertakers in identifying suitable sites.

Policy CS16 – Utility Companies and Statutory Undertakers

The council will seek to ensure appropriate land and buildings are available to meet the operational needs of utility companies and statutory undertakers.