

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Introduction

10.1 The provision of adequate social and community facilities is essential to ensure that the needs generated by residential development are met. The assessment of need and the provision of facilities is often the responsibility of agencies, developers and authorities other than the District Council. The local plan identifies the extent and nature of future housing development so that the relevant agencies can determine the necessary provision. Any detailed land requirements are shown on the Proposals Map but where only a general expression of interest has been made it has not been possible to safeguard sites. In such cases the District Planning Authority will note the needs and seek to identify possible means of meeting the requirements as opportunities arise.

Social and community aims and objectives

10.2 The Plan's Social and Community Facility broad aims are:-

1. To seek to ensure that adequate provision is made to meet the requirements of agencies responsible for providing social and community facilities in the area.
2. To seek to maintain and improve the level of social and community facilities within the District.

10.3 The Social and Community Facility objectives of the Plan are:-

1. To safeguard land which has been identified as necessary to provide new or improved social or community facilities.
2. To require the provision of adequate facilities in conjunction with new developments.
3. To resist the loss of social and community facilities where this would lead to a reduction in the quality of service provided.

Development contributions

10.4 The Government has made it clear, especially in Circular 1/97 on Planning Obligations, that it may be reasonable for the District Planning Authority to seek development contributions towards the cost of social and community facilities where this is necessary, relevant in planning terms and where the need for facilities is directly related to the development proposed. If development takes place without adequate provision of community facilities, a strain is placed on existing facilities to the detriment of the wider community. The proper use of development contributions can enhance the overall quality of a development and enable proposals to go ahead which might otherwise be refused (hence removing the strain on existing facilities from a new development).

POLICY SCI In dealing with planning applications for new housing development, the District Planning Authority will seek to enter into an agreement with the developer under Section 106 of the 1990 Act to

provide for new social and community facilities where the need for these facilities arises directly from the development concerned. Provision should be made in proportion to the scale and nature of the individual development and take account of the existing pattern of provision and capacity in the locality.

Provision may be made on site or contributions may be made to the provision of facilities elsewhere provided their location can adequately serve the development site.

10.5 Social and community facilities can include, for example, open space, recreational and educational facilities, libraries, healthcare, Social Service facilities, Youth and Community services, community / village halls and places of worship. Planning obligations may also be sought for the provision of other infrastructure, particularly highway / transport improvements. The Kent Planning Officers' Group has prepared a 'Good Practice Guide on Development Contributions', which provides advice on policy and development control procedures for developer contributions. The District Planning Authority has adopted this Guide as supplementary planning guidance, for use in the determination of planning applications where it is appropriate to negotiate contributions. Further information on the contributions likely to be sought under Policy SC1, is contained in Appendix 10.

10.6 Affordable housing helps to create more balanced communities and it is therefore important that an adequate supply of this type of housing is maintained. Schemes wholly comprising of subsidised housing, such as those involving a registered social landlord and low cost rural needs housing, may not be viable if substantial additional financial burdens are placed upon them. Where developers of wholly subsidised housing schemes can clearly demonstrate that the provision of full contributions would significantly impact on the viability of the proposal, the District Planning Authority will consider accepting a reduced level of contribution. This could include the prioritisation of contributions to first seek the provision of essential physical infrastructure such as highway improvements. For market housing schemes which include an element of affordable housing, the District Planning Authority will seek contributions to meet the needs generated by the whole of the development. Any reduction in the level of contribution normally sought will only be considered where a developer can satisfactorily demonstrate that the making of full contributions would significantly impact on the viability of the whole scheme or on the viability of the affordable housing element, including the level of housing affordability.

10.7 The redevelopment of previously used land may involve remediation works and costs beyond that normally required for a 'Greenfield' site. These costs will vary depending on a number of factors, most notably the nature of proposals and the particular constraints of a site. Certain sites may also generate a need for significant new or improved physical infrastructure. Where a developer considers that the full funding of all necessary facilities and infrastructure is not possible, the District Planning Authority will expect developers to provide validated 'open book' accounts to substantiate their case. If a developer is unwilling to participate in this approach, the District Planning Authority will have no justification for setting aside the requirement for full contributions. Information obtained through 'open book' accounting will be treated as confidential.

Provision and protection of facilities

10.8 Social and community facilities perform an essential function in meeting the social needs of people, with facilities often being a focus for local community life. It is therefore important that this infrastructure is available as locally as possible which has the additional benefit of reducing the need to travel. This is particularly vital for many of the District's villages due to their relative isolation and hence, difficulty for local people to reach alternative provision.

10.9 Whilst Policy SC1 outlines the mechanism for providing social and community facilities through new residential development, Policy SC2 sets out the criteria against which proposals for new facilities will be assessed, including proposals where the District Council is not the statutory determining Authority. Specific Policies relating to the provision (and protection) of open space and recreational facilities are contained in Chapter 7 on Leisure and Recreation. Where detailed land requirements for particular social and community facilities are known, these are shown on the proposals map and accompanied by a site-specific policy. Policy SC3 seeks to maintain the stock of existing social and community infrastructure.

POLICY SC2 The District Planning Authority will grant planning permission for new or improved social and community facilities where the proposal would meet all of the following criteria: -

- a) Compatible with surrounding land uses;
- b) Acceptable in highway, infrastructure and environmental terms;
- c) Accessible by a range of transport alternatives to the car and;

d) Includes adequate provision for access for disabled persons.

Where appropriate, new facilities should be designed so that they can accommodate a range of social and community activities.

POLICY SC3 The District Planning Authority will not grant planning permission for development proposals that would result in the loss of social and community facilities unless:

a) alternative facilities of equal or better community benefit would be made in the locality or;

b) there is no longer a need for the facility and it is unsuitable for conversion to an alternative social and community use related to local needs.

10.10 Under the provisions of Policy SC3, in assessing whether or not there is still a need for the facility, the District Planning Authority will consult with the service provider, local community groups etc. Regard will be had to the accessibility and spare capacity of other existing similar facilities and also the local demand for the particular service. In evaluating suitability for conversion to an alternative social and community use, the District Planning Authority will take into account any genuine attempts to appropriately market the premises as such over a period of generally not less than six months.

Education

10.11 As a result of population change and recent housing development primary and secondary school rolls, particularly in the Folkestone area, are now generally under pressure. Owing to a number of factors, secondary school rolls are expected to rise significantly during the first half of the Plan period and increases will be further exacerbated by proposed new housing allocations. Further secondary and primary provision is being planned by the Local Education Authority (LEA) including measures to replace mobile classrooms with permanent facilities when possible.

10.12 A replacement primary school on land to the rear of the former school buildings in Brenzett has been completed and monies have been secured for substantial improvements to Stelling Minnis Church of England School and George Spurgeon CPS in Folkestone. Other school improvement projects are also in hand/proposed.

10.13 The new additional housing allocations (proposed in Policy HO2) will increase Secondary school rolls further and also generate the need for additional primary places. The LEA anticipate that further enhanced provision at certain existing schools will likely be required, and possibly a new primary and secondary school to help serve the Folkestone area. Should the LEA confirm a requirement for a new secondary school, a site has been identified at the former Officers Mess site west of Elvington Lane, Hawkinge as defined on the Proposal Map. Additional land would also be needed to accommodate associated school playing fields.

POLICY SC4 The District Planning Authority will safeguard the land identified on the Proposal Map at Hawkinge for a new [secondary school](#).

10.14 A new primary school was required at Hawkinge to meet the need generated by the major development programmed for the village, and to supplement the existing school, which was operating above capacity. A site for the new school which is safeguarded on land on the former Hawkinge aerodrome, is of sufficient size to match the scale of housing allocated in the area.

Libraries

10.15 Folkestone Central Library at Grace Hill is located on the periphery of the main area of current town centre activity. Ideas for relocation by Kent County Council have been shelved and instead library facilities at Grace Hill have been improved. Implementation of regeneration proposals for the area will increase activity in the locality and potentially strengthen links between the library and town centre, thereby enhancing the library's accessibility and usage

10.16 New Romney's library facilities are cramped and inadequate and have access including disabled access problems. Larger premises are required, preferably in the High Street, but as yet no specific site has been identified.

10.17 Improved library services will be required to serve the Hawkinge area where a major increase in

population is anticipated within the plan period. The Kent County Council is considering a number of options for the delivery of these services, including co-location with other local community facilities.

POLICY SC5 The District Planning Authority will negotiate proposals for an improved [library facility at Hawkinge](#) within the areas identified on the Proposals Map for social and community facilities.

Health

10.18 "Tomorrow's Health Care for East Kent" was a strategy published by the East Kent Health Authority to put forward options for the delivery of acute hospital services across East Kent. Following consultation and a number of amendments, the Secretary of State approved the plans for hospital services in East Kent. These are now progressing and will ensure adequate provision of hospital services for the whole population of East Kent. It is envisaged that while services at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Folkestone will be modernised, there are no specific plans for expansion.

10.19 The Shepway Primary Care Group (comprising of local family doctors and community nurses and other health professionals) will prepare a plan for the further development of local health services. At present the East Kent Health Authority considers that the current scale and distribution of doctors' surgeries overall in Shepway is adequate to meet anticipated health needs. However in Hythe the general practices are housed in converted buildings and these do not meet the needs of modern general practice. In addition, housing growth in the area will require additional doctors to be accommodated to meet the needs of the growing population. There is a need for new premises for at least 2 of the practices if they are to be able to cope with additional patients moving into the area.

10.20 All Primary Care Groups became Primary Care Trust status by 2004. This means much closer working between general practitioners and community nurses and other staff. They also took on the responsibility for rehabilitation of the elderly and continue to manage many of the chronic diseases once looked after in hospital. More health care will be provided outside main acute hospital sites and this may have implications for the nature of services provided at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Folkestone.

Social services

10.21 In partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies, Kent County Council provides care management and social services for elderly, disabled and mentally ill people, children and their families. The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 emphasises the need for people to be cared for in their own homes or in "homely settings in the community" and this affects the nature of the delivery of social services. As part of this "Care in the Community" approach, facilities such as day care centres may be required although no specific proposals are currently identified. Any relevant proposals coming forward will be considered against Policy SC2.

Nursing homes

10.22 Nursing homes are registered by 'Kent Registration', and provide nursing care to supplement and support the health service in the fields of post-operative, convalescent and geriatric care. Provision of nursing and residential homes will be subject to Policy HO13 in the Housing chapter.

Age Concern

10.23 Age Concern operates day centres that provide accommodation and a range of other services for the elderly at Folkestone and Cheriton, Hythe, Lyminge and New Romney. With the current high proportion of elderly people in Shepway it is considered important that the activities undertaken by Age Concern are encouraged.

Community centres and village halls

10.24 A number of halls in Shepway are reaching the end of their useful life and require replacement or upgrading to meet modern needs. The Council will negotiate to assist in the replacement of community halls. New, replacement or improved facilities are being sought at Old Romney, Stanford and Ivychurch. At Hawkinge the additional provision of facilities to meet the needs generated by the new development involved the construction of a new multi-purpose hall on a site within the area identified on the Proposals Map for social and community facilities. There may also be a need to provide a new community hall as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of [Nickolls Quarry, Hythe](#) – see Policy HO2 in the Housing chapter.

~~**POLICY SC6** The District Planning Authority will permit the development of a new village hall / community centre to meet identified local needs on land between Canterbury Road and the A260 by-pass, Hawkinge, as shown on the Proposals Map.~~

Seapoint Centre, Seabrook

10.25 Buildings on the Seapoint Centre site have been used for a variety of uses including for the Seabrook Youth Club and the Kent County Council Canoe Centre, providing valuable facilities for the local community. The canoe centre also serves wider populations.

10.26 Development Proposals will only be acceptable where adequate provision can be made for the continuation of community uses. This may be achieved through retention and upgrading of existing buildings or alternatively through the provision of replacement facilities that are of at least equivalent community benefit in terms of meeting user needs. A Development Brief will be prepared to set out more detailed guidance on the development principles that will be applied by the District Planning Authority.

POLICY SC7 Planning permission for redevelopment of the [Seapoint Centre](#) site, as shown on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted where a facility of at least equivalent community benefit to the Seabrook Youth Club and Canoe Centre is provided, either on site or on nearby land.

Fire, police and ambulance services

10.27 The Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority currently has no detailed proposals for development although reviews of provision will take place within the Plan period in the context of nationally changing approaches to fire cover and assessments of local demand.

10.28 The Kent Policing Plan sets out a new approach for the provision of services to better utilise staff resources and target criminals. Effective implementation requires many services to be co-located on a single site. To this end, The Kent County Constabulary has established a South East Kent Headquarters (covering the former Police Command Areas of Folkestone and Dover) at Bouverie House in Folkestone. The police offices at Hythe and Lydd fulfil a valuable local policing role and will be retained for the foreseeable future.

10.29 The Kent Ambulance Service has stations at Folkestone and Lydd. There are no proposals for expansion of the service during the plan period.

Children's play areas

10.30 Children's play areas make a valuable contribution towards the social and recreational needs of young children, but if badly sited can cause noise and nuisance to adjoining residents. It is therefore essential that children's needs are taken into account in the early stages of development proposals to achieve safe, convenient, sensibly sited and adequately sized play areas. Policies to safeguard existing children's play space and sites for new areas are contained in Chapter 7 on Leisure and Recreation.

Single regeneration budget challenge fund

10.31 The 'Believing in Folkestone' Partnership was formally established in 1996 to tackle problems of poverty and deprivation in east and central Folkestone. The Partnership has been successful in securing over £10 million of Government finance through SRB Rounds 3,4 and 5, leveraging in some £23 million in other public and private investment for a range of locally based projects. Substantial funding for projects in the South Kent Rural Development Area was also awarded under SRB 5.

10.32 A number of these SRB funded projects involve the provision of new and improved social and community facilities within the Plan period and have already obtained planning permission where required. Regeneration initiatives are likely to evolve into a District-wide regeneration strategy led by a Strategic Regeneration Panel.

Cemetery provision

10.33 Sufficient burial land exists within Shepway as a whole to meet needs up to and beyond the end of the Plan period although there is a mismatch in supply with inadequate provision locally within the Romney Marsh area. The Hythe Town Council also considers that additional cemetery space is required for Hythe. The New Romney Town Council has secured planning permission for a new cemetery at Church Road, New Romney

which, if implemented, could help address this deficiency. In addition, Dymchurch Parish Council is also seeking individual facilities in Dymchurch although a specific site has not been identified. The District Council recognises the importance of having burial grounds well related to local populations and will support appropriate proposals that enhance existing provision.