

City Management Plan workshop briefing notes

Social and Community Facilities

What are the issues?

Social and community facilities are essential to support the needs of Westminster's residents and workers, as well as having an important national and international role. Many of these facilities are at the heart of the community. Population growth means investment into new or existing facilities is required to support communities in Westminster.

Westminster's current planning policy approach provides protection for a range of public and private social and community facilities. The existing policies provide an effective mechanism for delivering facilities across Westminster, the content of this briefing note looks at how to strengthen these policies.

Private social and community facilities also play an important and valued role in the provision of services in the city. Some private leisure, health, childcare and education facilities provide services to local communities. However, many of these are private, essentially businesses with services solely available on a commercial basis. Examples of these are private education facilities, private hospitals, clinics and private leisure facilities including gyms. These are listed in the glossary definition for commercial uses in the Unitary Development Plan. Private social and community facilities are dealt with in this briefing note and the Commerce briefing note.

Many social and community facilities provided in Westminster are of both national and international importance. There are several centres of excellence including Harley Street, St Mary's Hospital, Imperial College London, University of Westminster, University College London, Kings College, London School of Economics and Political Science, Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, Royal College of

Art, Royal College of Nursing, University of Arts London Business and Courtauld Institute of Art. These centres of excellence, strengthen Westminster's economy, as non UK residents visit Central London for health services, to study for qualifications in the city, these facilities also provide employment opportunities. Therefore the City Council will continue to support these uses across Westminster.

What have you told us?

- Social and community uses struggle to compete for space for B1 uses in the CAZ.
- Private education and health facilities are not commercial facilities. The existing UDP policy approach COM 2 and CENT 3 should change.
- Private social and community facilities still provide a public benefit. A requirement to include housing as part of these developments could result in unviable schemes.
- Loss of facilities should be allowed where they are surplus to requirements. Redevelopment for alternative uses may help to achieve other planning benefits.
- Loss of facilities should be allowed:
 - Where improved facilities are to be provided elsewhere that better serve the target community or,
 - Where they are surplus to requirements and alternative uses would provide better planning benefits.
 - Incorporate policing within the definition of community facilities.
 - Need to make provision for places of worship and a need for greater recognition of the role of churches in supporting communities.



- Libraries are a key social and community facility and should be accessible to all.
- The policy approach should recognise the role social and community facilities play in the local community. Several responses expressed the need for more social and community facilities in Westminster.
- Ensure that community facilities (inc. health-care and education) are provided relative to the intensification of new development.
- Concerns about the cumulative loss of services and the need for service provision to meet growth. Suggested that a threshold of 10 housing units should trigger health, community and social care provision.
- Encouragement of healthcare facilities in the Harley Street Special Policy Area alone is insufficient, particularly given the physical constraints associated with many of the listed buildings in Westminster.
- Support for the co-location of services to deliver better facilities. However, some concerns have been raised about the security of these buildings.
- Concern about the lack of affordable office/community space for the voluntary sector.
- Need a publicly accessible database setting out the operational property needs of various community and voluntary sectors within Westminster and how new development may address some of these needs. A list of all social and community facilities should be developed. This should include all existing and new facilities secured via planning applications. This could be used as a resource for all public and voluntary groups.
- Concerns have been raised in responses that s106 agreements for social and community facilities are not enough.
- Land use credits used for social and community and public realm contributions.

More general information on planning obligations / S106 agreements can be found in the briefing note on Planning Obligations. The council is reviewing its detailed approach to planning obligations in the next few months. Further details will be available at this workshop on how to get involved in the development of the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

Westminster Property Association has suggested a role for land use credits to meet planning obligations, which would be secured through planning agreements. A land use 'credit' is where new off-site provision of, for example, affordable housing or social and community use, is provided in advance by a developer on the basis that it will satisfy the policy requirements of future developments. The planning obligation agreement would then link the scheme to the appropriate credit. Though this would help facilitate larger commercial, mixed use or residential developments, there is a risk that social and community facilities can be provided in inappropriate locations, or do not meet the need for localised service provision. These facilities need to be provided in locations to meet the community needs identified by the service providers; land use credit system would not necessarily provide the right facilities in the right places. It has been suggested that this type of credit system might also be used in relation to public realm contributions, although this type of mechanism would only apply in a very small number of circumstances. The current and emerging planning obligations framework does not preclude this approach although safeguards would be necessary.

National and Regional Policy

PPS 1 places an emphasis on development that supports communities and contributes towards creating safe, sustainable, liveable, mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community. PPS 12 highlights the importance of providing infrastructure in all major new developments. The capacity of existing infrastructure and the need for facilities should be taken into account in the preparation of local development documents.

The London Plan policy 3A.15 seeks the protection and enhancement of social infrastructure and community facilities at the local level, advising adequate provision of these facilities in major areas of new development and regeneration. Policy 3A.16 supports voluntary and community sector in delivering accessible and affordable accommodation. Policy 3A.18 supports the locations for healthcare and Policy 3A.19 promotes London as a national and international centre for medical excellence and specialised facilities. Policy 3A.22 provides support for higher and further education facilities, supporting and maintaining international centres of excellence within London, supporting the future needs of the sector, supporting the provision of facilities in key locations close to good public transport infrastructure and support the for provision of student housing for these facilities. London Plan policy 6A.4 identifies a number of strategic priorities for planning obligations, key priorities include affordable housing, public transport, alongside learning skills, health facilities and services and childcare provision.

The outcomes recommend that Westminster's Open Space Strategy seeks the review of policies and an increase in the provision of open space, including new civic spaces, play/youth spaces by a variety of means, including s106, planning briefs and projected growth of both businesses and workers.

Current Unitary Development Plan Policy 2007

Policy STRA 4 seeks to maintain and enhance the mix of uses in central Westminster. To require equivalent provision of housing and social and community facilities (where appropriate) when there are increases in commercial floorspace.

Policy STRA 7 sets out the aim to secure planning obligations and related benefits in all types of development. It requires that these (i) have an identifiable connection with the development (ii) be in line with policies in Part 2 of the UDP (iii) be appropriate to the location scale and nature of development (iv) seek to mitigate the economic, environmental,

transportation, social community consequences of the development.

Policy STRA 19 seeks to protect and encourage an appropriate and accessible range of community facilities and shops to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors.

Policy COM 2 (C) seeks to ensure that all offices development maintain or increase the variety and mix of uses which are important to the character and function of the city and where appropriate provide housing or other uses which contribute to the character and function of that part of CAZ or the CAZ Frontage.

Policy CENT 3 seeks mixed use development in Central Westminster which includes housing where it is appropriate and practical to do so.

Policy SOC 1 aims to protect and improve the range of social and community facilities (e.g. schools, doctor's surgeries, places of worship and emergency services).

Policy SOC 2 encourages childcare facilities to be included in new development.

Policy SOC 3 encourages use of educational premises for community uses outside of teaching hours, and encourages housing for students.

Policy SOC 4 supports existing and proposed local healthcare facilities.

Policy SOC 6 strives to ensure that children's play space is provided in large housing developments.

Policy SOC 7 seeks to ensure that new public libraries and leisure facilities (e.g. sports centres) provide facilities for local community arts or social activities.

Policy SOC 8 makes sure that public toilets are included in large new developments open to the public.

Policy H 10 ensures that large housing developments provide sufficient garden space for residents and meets the need for community facilities.

This policy expects amenity space as part of new housing developments outside of the CAZ this will include providing open space. On sites suitable for large housing development the provision of a community facility as part of the development may be required. In some cases a planning contribution/ obligation proportionate to the size of development, may be secured to contribute to the share of cost of community facilities.

Core Strategy Publication Draft 2009 (subject to agreement)

The Core Strategy publication draft has a policy on Social and Community Infrastructure the policy strives to protect these uses except where re-configuration of the provision, either within the site or across a number of sites, is needed to meet identified needs as part of a published co-ordinated service provision strategy by a local service provider. Seeks to ensure that large scale development will be supported by upgrades to existing social or community floor space or provide new social and community floor space.

Glossary

Commercial Uses - Unitary Development Plan
Uses including offices, industry warehousing, showrooms, hotels, retail, entertainment and private educational, health and leisure facilities other than social and community uses that are principally provided by the public sector. This does not include residential use.

Central Activities Zone are where the City Council envisage the maintenance of growth of Central London Activities including office uses, shops, entertainment facilities, health uses and other uses that provide a service to visiting members of the public.

Social and Community Uses
Most social and community facilities are in classes C2, D1 and D2 of the Use Classes Order 1987. The City Council's policies on social and community facilities policies cover:

- a) social service uses such as day-care centres,

luncheon clubs and drop-in centres; facilities for children and families, elderly people, people with physical disabilities or HIV/AIDS and people with mental health or substance misuse problems

- b) education facilities
- c) health facilities, including hospitals
- d) some leisure and recreation facilities such as playgrounds, leisure centres, sports pitches and associated buildings, youth centres and local arts facilities
- e) libraries
- f) places of worship
- g) general social uses such as community meeting facilities and community halls
- h) public toilets
- i) facilities for utilities, including telecommunications equipment, and for the emergency services, fire, ambulance, police.

These facilities are referred to as 'community facilities'.

Further Information

The London Plan – Consolidated with Alterations Since 2004 (February 2008)

Adopted Unitary Development Plan (January 2007)

Core Strategy Publication Draft

PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (January 2005)

PPS 12 Local Spatial Planning (June 2008)

Open Space Strategy Westminster City Council (February 2007)

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The Format of the Social and Community Facilities workshop is as follows:

Welcome and introduction

by Councillor Argar – 10 minutes

What should we do?

1. Do the definitions for social and community facilities (above) include the right facilities? What are the differences between public / private facilities.
2. The Core Strategy carries forward the approach in the UDP towards commercial development. This means where proposals seek to increase the amount of commercial floor space for private education, health and leisure uses (facilities that are not subject to public funding) by 400 sq m or more we will require these facilities to provide the equivalent amount of residential floorspace. Should there be additional flexibility or criteria within this policy approach?
3. Should we amend Policy SOC 1 to allow local service providers to sell off redundant or poor quality facilities provided they can demonstrate that this will fund better facilities in a different location (within or outside Westminster) which are part of a coordinated strategy?
4. How can we strengthen Policy SOC 1 to protect smaller social and community facilities like GP surgeries / local childcare in residential areas?
5. The models of service provision have changed from a more dispersed location of social and community facilities in residential areas, towards a focus on co-location, with facilities serving a wider catchment of people. Are there appropriate locations for these facilities?
6. If an existing social and community use remains vacant, over what time period should it be marketed prior to the City Council consider an alternative use, 18 months?
7. After marketing a site and it is still surplus to requirements it should be used for housing. Should there be any exceptions where this is not the case?

8. If private D1 or D2 floorspace becomes surplus should we treat it any differently to public D1/D2 floorspace, if so how?

1 hour 25 mins

BREAK – 15 mins

9. All development produces a requirement for social and community facilities. Under what circumstances should facilities not be provided on site?
10. Does a list of social and community facilities already exist amongst partners which could be used by the public, voluntary and private sector?
11. Should we change our current policy approach to securing adequate children's play space by requiring schemes of 40 or more residential units to make a contribution towards children's play space in the vicinity or elsewhere?
12. Should we have a policy approach which seeks to ensure that public toilets are provided and maintained in large new commercial developments and that if any of these facilities are lost through redevelopment they are re provided in the vicinity?
13. Opportunity Areas will see significant growth and pressure on social and community facilities. Therefore should we have a set formula to capture investment into all social and community facilities? Should this be pooled and used when required?
14. Should we change the UDP policy approach to the provision of gardens and community facilities to require specific type of amenity space to meet the priority requirements of the area, for example community gardens or play space (or formal and informal play) or to support the communities service needs (policy H10 UDP)?
15. Are there any other issues that have not been covered above?
16. Are there any other issues the council should be aware of in its lobbying process?

1 hour 10 mins

Workshop time – 3 hours



City of Westminster

PLANNING & CITY DEVELOPMENT

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