

# WORKSHOP 9: SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES WORKSHOP

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009, 7th Floor, Westminster City Hall

Chairman: Councillor Argar  
Facilitator: Lisa O'Donnell  
Officer Panel: Helena Merriot, Margaret Handovsky, Sue Brown

Action points	Apologies – names of contributors were not stated in the meeting and therefore not recorded by the minute taker.
Cllr Agar	Welcome and Introduction.
	Welcome from Councillor Argar and brief introduction to workshop purpose and format from Lisa O'Donnell (LDF Lead and Lead Facilitator). She explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum to discuss policy approaches and develop options for development into the City Management Plan. Lisa O'Donnell emphasised the purpose of the meeting was not to come to a decision on the policy approach rather to generate options.
<b>1. Do the definitions for social and community facilities include the right facilities? What are the differences between public / private facilities?</b>	
Helena Merriot	Set out definition of Social & Community Facilities, and explained the difference between public/private as contained in the Core Strategy.
Comments from attendees	Several questions were raised about where certain uses fit in the definitions, such as commercial uses that still provide public facilities (sports centres), offices for the voluntary sector (HM answered public sector), academies (HM answered public sector as they are publicly funded). Question over which leisure facilities are not included under point D of the definition (MH answered cinemas, amusement arcades etc).  Concerns were raised over parks falling outside of the definitions.
Margaret Handovsky	Because they are not built areas a definition is immaterial, and parks are covered by separate policies despite being a Social and Community use.
Comments from attendees	Concerns were raised about where music/arts rehearsal venues fit in the definition, and over some wordings in the policy (should/would/ensure etc).  Query over where childcare/children's services fit into the definition (A or B).  Query over how to define privately funded public facilities as part of new developments (e.g. secured through S106). Feeling was they should be kept out of the private definition.  Discussion over what happens when a public facility becomes empty, should ensure that another public sector use takes its place.

Lisa O'Donnell	It's hard to control occupiers – issue with the Use Classes Order meaning you are able to change within a class, but not control occupiers unless specified within a S106 agreement.
Comments from attendees	Issue was raised over general access to services for immigrants and vulnerable groups.
<p><b>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.</b></p> <p><b>Should there be additional flexibility or criteria within this policy approach?</b></p>	
Comments from attendees	Flexibility was advocated, using the example of private schools moving to larger premises. Was highlighted that private schools still provide public Social and Community uses e.g. Saturday schools, facilities usage.  Query over how policy will be applied.
Margaret Handovsky	Policy will only kick in above 400m threshold.
Comments from attendees	Discussion over why restricted to 'not public funding', e.g. residential should be sought on publicly funded schemes as well.  Discussion over whether policy is too restrictive to just housing. Other Social and Community facilities could be secured.
Margaret Handovsky	Mixed use policy ensures that commercial does not dominate, and Social and Community facilities can be secured in other ways.
Comments from attendees	Example of Marshall Street baths was highlighted to discuss the lack of services in the West End and the need to protect them.  The 400 sq m threshold was discussed as a deterrent?
Margaret Handovsky	400 sq m is reasonable to allow expansion without triggering the mixed use policies.
Comments from attendees	Concerns were raised over density of residential in this clause.
Margaret Handovsky	It would be considered on a case by case basis.
Comments from attendees	Disputes over whether the term affordable housing can be changed to social housing.
Lisa O'Donnell	Social housing is covered in other policies and is too complex for this topic.
<p><b>3. The Core Strategy allows local service providers to reconfigure existing provision of where needed to meet the needs of a published coordinated service provision strategy by a local service provider. This strategy would need to be agreed by the Local Strategy Partnership and include explicit agreement of any overall losses of social or community floorspace.</b></p> <p><b>In some cases this may mean facilities will be located outside the borough, should we allow this to happen?</b></p> <p><b>and if so what criteria should be applied to these schemes?</b></p> <p><b>Are there any other circumstances where this will be inappropriate?</b></p>	
<p><b>4. How can we strengthen Policy SOC 1 to protect smaller social and community</b></p>	

<b>facilities like GP surgeries / local childcare in residential areas?</b>	
Lisa O'Donnell	Outlined what local service providers are.
Comments from attendees	The example of St John's Wood police station was raised. Is the station likely to be sold?
Lisa O'Donnell	Depends on the estate management strategy of the metropolitan police, and if they can prove it is not needed.
Comments from attendees	<p>Concern was raised that questions 3 and 4 were in conflict with each other? The focus should be on improved services, not on concentrated services in a location.</p> <p>The issue of being able to identify need in order to retain facilities was discussed, as was how you define what is considered to be 'poor quality or redundant'.</p> <p>The issue of open space and play space was discussed.</p>
Margaret Handovsky	Open space and play space is protected in the core strategy, and that local service providers have a duty to identify local need.
Comments from attendees	<p>Issue of restricting location of service providers when they serve across boundaries e.g. hospitals. Services should be allowed to move to meet need.</p> <p>Service providers are cash poor, meaning they should be allowed to manage their estates as they see fit. Service should be paramount.</p> <p>Issue of childcare was discussed. On going management and running costs can be commercially priced, creating issues. S106 can only provide initial facilities and costs.</p>
<b>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?</b>	
Comments from attendees	Where the service/demand is greatest, in accessible areas. Issue of accessibility for elderly, disabled etc was seen to be key.
<b>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?</b>	
Comments from attendees	<p>Issues over marketing were discussed. Marketing may not be very visible as an attempt to keep rents high.</p> <p>Issues of long term vacancy were discussed. No reason why building should not be marketed during/before process of relocation to avoid long period. It was suggested that the building be used for interim community offices etc during the vacant period.</p> <p>18 month period was discussed, as being too long and leading to vacancy. 3-4 months was suggested, with active monitoring and management by an officer. Having a blanket period was also disputed, especially if a building has a poor letting history.</p> <p>Hostels were discussed, as being lost to other uses such as student</p>

	accommodation , and therefore need better advertising and protection.
Margaret Handovsky	Hostels are protected in housing policy, a list of hostel providers is maintained, and providers are contacted if premises are vacated.
<b>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?</b>	
Comments from attendees	Opinion that it should be handled on a case by case basis, and why does the policy restrict to housing, if strategies and other research indicates a need for other uses?  The issue was raised that other facilities can be lost that support residential areas.
Lisa O'Donnell	This only happens when it can be demonstrated that Social and Community facilities are no longer needed.
<b>8. If private D1 or D2 floorspace becomes surplus should we treat it any differently to public D1/D2 floorspace, if so how?</b>	
Comments from attendees	The general consensus was that it should not be treated differently. The example of loss of a private school was mentioned, which still provide public services).
<b>9. All development produces a requirement for social and community facilities. Under what circumstances should facilities not be provided on site?</b>	
Lisa O'Donnell	Introduced the question sighting small development as an example, and asking whether there should be a size trigger for on site provision.
Comments from attendees	It was suggested that the overall development pipeline for an area be examined to explore long term sustainability.  A social and community fund was widely supported as the way forward to pool developer contributions and direct funds to those areas in need.  The provision of children's play facilities was discussed, especially gaps in provision for teenagers. The location of such sites was discussed, in addition to the management and opening hours of facilities. Issues of developers sighting play space in the worst part of a site was discussed.  Sharing facilities was discussed, such as facilities owned by other local service providers being opened up to the wider community. The suggestion of mobile facilities was also discussed, and community outreach.  Developers highlighted site by site issues. E.g. hard to provide play space in an office to res conversion, compared to a large redevelopment site.
<b>10. Does a list of social and community facilities already exist amongst partners which could be used by the public, voluntary and private sector?</b>	
Comments from attendees	Voluntary action Westminster has a list of facilities, as does the faith exchange and residents associations were also discussed as possible sources of information.

<b>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?</b>	
Comments from attendees	<p>Having a figure at all was discussed, where it should be focused on local need instead. And why is it restricted to children's services, instead of Social and Community facilities in general. Facilities should provide for a whole lifetime, not just children.</p> <p>The shortage of play space, and play space management was also discussed, making the policy more important. A levy across all development regardless of size was proposed.</p> <p>The issue of management and restrictions on spaces was discussed e.g. Queen Anne's Churchyard, Soho was discussed.</p> <p>A social and community fund was discussed again, with a need for it to extend to the long term management and running of spaces.</p> <p>It was noted that the UDP threshold for family housing is 25 units, so should this threshold not match that?</p>
<b>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?</b>	
Lisa O'Donnell	Highlighted the issue of disability access to toilets.
Comments from attendees	<p>The need for changing facilities was discussed, as were issues of public urination and the use of closed subways.</p> <p>A lack of toilets was discussed, leading to people asking to use the toilets in public buildings (especially the elderly) e.g. Chinese Community Centre.</p> <p>Public toilets should be free and visible, located prominently (cardinal place was highlighted as a poor example).</p> <p>It was suggested that all public buildings should have toilets accessible to all (theatres, hotels etc), and pay for it themselves, not taxpayer. The mayor's plan along these lines was discussed.</p>
<b>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?</b>	
Comments from attendees	General consensus was strong support for a pooled community fund, as used in Paddington.
<b>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)?</b>	
Helena Merriot	Introduced policy H10
Comments from	The provision of more allotments was discussed as a possible

attendees	approach, as they require little supervision and can be used widely.
Lisa O'Donnell	Such community garden and allotment schemes are happening in Church Street and other areas already.
Comments from attendees	Counter points were made about allotments, saying that they do not use space efficiently, and are run by individuals and not communities, meaning they can be quite territorial by nature (boundary issues).  General comments were that space should be accessible to all and inclusive.
<b>15. Are there any other issues that have not been covered above?</b>	
Comments from attendees	South West area are asking for affordable shops and more local community facilities such as cinemas etc. The shops in the area are expensive (Sainsbury's market etc), and much more so than other local areas such as Church Street, which is fairly far away to travel to conveniently.
Lisa O'Donnell	Raised the suggestion of affordable shops being offset against other community facilities.
Comments from attendees	Query over whether the council can take possession of an open space managed within/by a housing development which is paid for by residents, to get access for community in general.  General comments and support for pooled developer contributions, to be linked to wider strategies identifying need and areas for spend.
<b>16. Are there any other issues the council should be aware of in its lobbying process?</b>	
Comments from attendees	Mayor of London use of toilets in public buildings.
<b>Other questions</b>	
<b>END</b>	