

Chapter 6: Social and Community Facilities

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Chapter 6: Social and Community Facilities

INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 This chapter is about land use policies for social and community facilities. These are used by residents, people who work in Westminster and visitors. Some serve local needs, while others, like universities and hospitals, are important beyond Westminster. Both the local and wider roles are important to Westminster's character and function.
- 6.2 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 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' throughout the rest of this chapter.

- 6.3 Communities also need other facilities. In this plan these are covered elsewhere as follows:

For policies about uses A1 to A5 in the Use Classes Order, including uses such as local shops, post offices, advice bureaux, restaurants and cafés, pubs and bars, and launderettes, see policies SS 1-13 in Chapter 7: Shopping and Services and TACE 8-10 in Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment and

For policies about C2 and C3 uses, such as nursing homes and special needs housing, and *sui generis* hostels, see H 6 in Chapter 3: Housing

For policies about waste recycling and open space, see ENV 10 and ENV 13 in Chapter 9: Environment.

- 6.4 There is often pressure for buildings and sites used for community facilities to be developed for other, more profitable uses, such as commerce or housing. However, community facilities are important for the communities they serve, and are difficult to replace if their sites are developed for other uses. Policies in this chapter therefore seek to protect existing community facilities and sites from redevelopment or change of use. If possible, they also seek extra facilities in areas where there are not enough at present. However, redeveloping a community facility for another use could sometimes allow a better community facility to be provided, either on the redeveloped site or elsewhere. Working with the private sector, for example, through Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes, can help to achieve this.
- 6.5 This plan will help to make sure that there is an adequate range of community facilities across Westminster. However, the operation and management of these services, are beyond its scope. These are covered elsewhere including:
- a) reports to the City Council's cabinet about its social and community, education, environment, leisure and housing services and their performance plans
 - b) the community care local delivery plan prepared by the Westminster Primary Care Trust
 - c) the City Council's Education Development Plan
 - d) the City Council's library plans
 - e) the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Plan
 - f) the Children's and Young People's Strategic Plans
 - g) the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy
 - h) the Adult Learning Plan.
- 6.6 Strategic policies for community facilities are set out in Part 1 of the UDP. These are the framework for the detailed policies in this chapter. Particularly important is policy STRA 17: Local Community Services. There are also important links to strategic policies on housing, transport and the environment.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN GENERAL

Aim

- 6.7 To protect and improve the range of community facilities in Westminster.
-

POLICY SOC 1: COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN GENERAL

- (A) The provision of community facilities will be sought on appropriate sites, including the provision of community**

facilities in new developments, and the public use of private facilities in development schemes.

- (B) Community facilities will be required to:**
- 1 be located as near as possible to the residential areas they serve**
 - 2 not harm the amenity of the surrounding area, including the effect of any traffic generated by the proposal**
 - 3 be safe and easy to reach on foot, by cycle and by public transport.**
- (C) Community facilities which involve the loss of residential accommodation will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances, where:**
- 1 the community facility meets an essential local need and**
 - 2 there is no other suitable site in the local area.**
- (D) Existing community facilities will be protected.**
- (E) Proposals which involve the redevelopment or change of use of community facilities will be required to include adequate replacement facilities. Where the facility is surplus to the needs of the existing provider, any new development on the site should include an alternative community facility. Where adequate replacement facilities are not proposed then the City Council will refuse planning permission for this type of proposal.**
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Policy application

- 6.8 Policy SOC 1 applies to all the community facilities listed in paragraph 6.2 above. Other policies in this chapter refer to specific types of community use.
- 6.9 The City Council will seek the provision of community facilities on appropriate sites. For certain sites, the City Council will draw up planning briefs, showing the sort of development it will favour in those locations. These briefs may encourage or require the provision of community facilities. Suitable locations could include sites in areas where there are not enough community facilities to meet needs, or sites previously in community use.
- 6.10 Where appropriate, the City Council will seek the provision of community facilities in association with new developments, and public access to facilities in private development schemes, for example, access for local school children to private sports facilities. Provision may be secured using legal

agreements. In addition, policy H 10, in Chapter 3: Housing, may require the provision of facilities to serve local residents, such as play space, facilities for young people, and health facilities, in large housing developments.

Developers should design new facilities so that they can be used for a range of community uses. These facilities will be treated as a planning benefit (see Part 1: policy STRA 7) and will be particularly sought

- a) where the area around the development site lacks community facilities
- b) to offset the impact of a development proposal where it will create a demand for a particular type of community facility. For example, new housing developments can increase the demand for community facilities such as health and education facilities.

6.11 The City Council will have regard to national planning guidance in seeking these facilities. In some cases a financial contribution, rather than direct provision, may be an acceptable alternative and will be appropriate where

- a) it funds the upgrade of existing facilities
- b) there are a number of developments in an area and each contributes to a share of the cost of community facilities.

6.12 When considering a proposal for a social or community facility, the City Council will take into account the proposed role of the facility. Some types of community facility have a wide range of functions which may vary from very local to regional. In health, for example, there is a great difference between a general practitioner's surgery which serves a small local area and a main hospital which may serve the whole of London. The City Council will take the different impact of each facility into account when assessing the effect of any proposals on local amenity. For proposals that are important beyond Westminster, like universities, higher education colleges and hospitals, regard will be given to policies in Chapter 1: Westminster's Central Area.

6.13 Occasionally, proposals for community facilities may involve a loss of residential accommodation (see Chapter 3: Housing, policy H 1[A]). This will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances, as the UDP aims to protect and increase the housing stock. This circumstance might arise where the community use is essential for local residents and there is no alternative suitable site for the community facility nearby. Essential uses include facilities such as doctors' and dentists' surgeries, and are unlikely to include private nurseries and language schools. Once such an exception has been made, the community facility will only be allowed to change back to residential use.

6.14 The City Council will consider allowing the loss of a community facility if an adequate replacement is provided. In order of preference, the replacement should be provided:

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- a) on the same site
 - b) in parts of Westminster where there is a need for the facility
 - c) elsewhere in Westminster.
- 6.15 The loss of a community facility may also be permitted if it is no longer needed. For example, a changing population structure could mean that a nursery is no longer needed. Also, the community facility may not be needed by the organisation using it or by any other community organisations in the area. In assessing such applications, the City Council will ask relevant organisations whether they have any interest in using the facility in question. If the facility is surplus to need, any new development on the site should include an alternative community facility which is needed in the area.
- 6.16 When considering a proposal for a new community facility, the City Council will refer to other relevant policies in the UDP. These will include policy DES 1(B) covering access for people with disabilities and the incorporation of crime prevention measures (see Chapter 10: Urban Design and Conservation).
- 6.17 The amount of secure car and bicycle parking spaces which new community facilities must provide will depend on the individual circumstances of the proposal. Cycle and car parking standards and considerations are set out in policies TRANS 11, TRANS 21, TRANS 22 and TRANS 24 in Chapter 4: Transport.

Reasons

- 6.18 Community facilities are essential for local residents, workers and visitors, so they must be easy to reach and use. This means that they need to be distributed all over the City, close to where people live and work. Facilities serving a wider catchment require good access by public transport. The City Council will help by protecting existing community uses and taking suitable opportunities to provide further community facilities. The protection and enhancement of provision of community facilities is supported by policy 3A.15 of the London Plan. Ensuring communities benefit from development using section 106 agreements is also encouraged in the London Plan, in policies 3A.23 and 3A.25.
- 6.19 As well as their important local role, Westminster's community facilities are often of regional, national and international importance. For example, many of the university colleges and educational facilities in the City are internationally renowned, and the Harley Street area is known world-wide as a centre of medical excellence.

- 6.20 The City Council will continue to monitor:
- a) trends in Westminster's population which affect the need for community facilities
 - b) changes in practice which require new types of community facilities to be provided.

CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Aim

- 6.21 To ensure new developments consider the needs of children and their families through developing childcare facilities or providing options which are publicly accessible.

POLICY SOC 2: CHILDCARE FACILITIES

The provision of childcare facilities will be sought where appropriate, as part of employment, shopping, higher education, tourism, entertainment, health and leisure developments.

Policy application

- 6.22 Childcare facilities will be sought as a planning benefit in development schemes which will attract large numbers of visitors or accommodate many employees (see Part 1: policy STRA 7). Such developments include large offices, shops, hotels, leisure centres, secondary schools and large colleges, hospitals and large clinics. New childcare facilities will be particularly encouraged in areas that do not have enough childcare facilities to meet their needs.
- 6.23 If a single large development cannot provide a viable childcare facility, opportunities for combined provision with other users or contributions to the funding of childcare schemes in the local area should be explored.
- 6.24 The childcare facility should be large enough to cope with expected demand and well located within the development, preferably on the ground floor with associated play space, kitchen and laundry. It should be fully accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Reasons

- 6.25 Childcare facilities include nurseries, integrated nursery centres, playgroups, crèches and childminding networks. The City Council has a statutory duty to

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provide certain types of childcare. The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide after-school care for children in need up to the age of eight. The private and voluntary sectors also provide childcare facilities. More childcare facilities in employment, shopping, education and leisure developments will allow more people to take part in these activities. The London Plan notes at paragraph 3.155 that the Mayor supports the provision of affordable childcare facilities as part of planning obligation agreements to remove barriers to access to work. This is strengthened by Policy 6A.4 in the Plan, which identifies childcare provision as a priority in planning obligations.

EDUCATION FACILITIES

Aim

- 6.26 To ensure that needs for education and training facilities are met.
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POLICY SOC 3: EDUCATION FACILITIES

- (A) Education facilities will be encouraged to be designed so that they can be used for other community uses outside teaching hours.**
- (B) The provision of student housing for those in higher education will be encouraged.**
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Policy application

- 6.27 The City Council will support the provision of new facilities for education, bearing in mind the anticipated growth in the City's population and the part played by some educational institutions in the City's 'capital city' role, in so far as the development proposed is compatible with other objectives of the UDP. Examples include out-of-school activities organised by schools themselves, adult education, play centres, youth centres and sport.
- 6.28 New higher education facilities will put pressure on the City's housing supply, particularly in the private rented sector. Higher education establishments will be particularly encouraged to provide their own student housing. Proposals for such accommodation will be assessed in terms of policy H 6 in Chapter 3: Housing. Provision of student accommodation is supported by policy 3A.22 of the London Plan.
- 6.29 In addition to policy SOC 1 protecting existing educational facilities, policy TACE 7 in Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment aims to protect and enhance educational uses within the Arts, Culture and Education

Special Policy Area shown on Map 8.1, based around the Royal Albert Hall and Imperial College.

Reasons

- 6.30 Education facilities include:
- a) primary, secondary and special schools
 - b) further, higher and adult education facilities
 - c) private education facilities
 - d) employment training facilities.

Education facilities are important for Westminster's residents, workers and students. The City Council is the local education authority for Westminster, and its Education Development Plan and Adult Learning Plan set policies for the overall development of its education service.

- 6.31 The City Council is responsible for forecasting future pupil numbers and the demand for school places. There are also duties to ensure that school premises conform to prescribed space standards and to secure sufficient schools for the local area. The City Council must prepare and consult on an annual School Organisation Plan covering the next five years, which looks at the supply and demand for school places in the area. This statutory plan is published following approval by the local School Organisation Committee. A separate, statutory Asset Management Plan considers the suitability of existing school buildings.
- 6.32 Westminster also contains many further and higher education institutions of local, national and international importance, which can contribute to Westminster's role as a world and capital city. These include the London Business School, the London School of Economics and Political Science, City of Westminster and Westminster Kingsway Colleges, the University of Westminster, the London College of Fashion, teaching hospitals and commercially-run language and computer schools.
- 6.33 Training and retraining opportunities are important because they help people to get jobs and can support lifelong learning.

HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Aim

- 6.34 To ensure that Westminster's residents, workers and visitors have easy access to health care facilities.

POLICY SOC 4: HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

The retention, improvement and redevelopment of facilities for health service uses that meet local needs will be supported.

Policy application

- 6.35 The City Council will consult NHS London, with the Westminster Primary Care Trust, local hospital trusts and other appropriate National Health Service organisations proposals involving local health care facilities.
- 6.36 When it considers development proposals, the City Council will balance the need to meet demand for health services and the needs of the Health Service against the effect of the proposals on the surrounding area and nearby activities.

Reasons

- 6.37 Local health facilities include a full range of community and primary care services, including doctors' and dentists' surgeries, opticians, pharmacies and associated services, hospitals and some complementary medical services such as acupuncture. Some local health facilities may be wholly or partly private in nature. In the future, Government proposals for walk-in centres, one-stop local centres that bring together NHS and local authority services, and healthy living centres may also add to the range of local health facilities.
- 6.38 Local health facilities are particularly important for communities and should be easy for all people to reach. The National Health Service plans and provides health care services and places great importance on patient access to services. Its structure is being changed following the Health Act 1999 and the Health and Social Care Act 2000. This will have land use implications, two of which are particularly important:
- a) The encouragement of general practitioners to share larger, group premises, so that they will be less likely to operate from houses or flats, as some practices now do. The City Council will work with the Westminster Primary Care Trust and GPs to identify suitable sites and facilities. Current examples of GPs sharing facilities include the Soho Centre for Health and the South Westminster Centre for Health. Despite this trend, there will still be a demand for small or individual practices in residential areas, as a number of existing premises, particularly in Victoria, Pimlico, Paddington and the West End, are unsuitable for the delivery of modern health care

- b) The NHS often pays for the modernisation of facilities and further developments by selling property. As a result, rationalisation and closure of buildings in health use has already taken place in Westminster and is likely to continue
- 6.39 The National Health Service plans other changes for the delivery of health care. It proposes the development of one-stop primary care centres to bring together primary and community services, such as general practitioners, dentists, opticians, health visitors, pharmacists and social workers, to make access more convenient for patients. Policy 3A.17 in the London Plan promotes the objectives of local delivery plans and local health improvement and modernisation programmes. In Westminster, the improvement and modernisation programme is combined with the Community Care Plan in the 'Programme for a Healthier Westminster'. The London Plan, in policy 3A.18, also supports proposals for the provision of additional health care as identified by the strategic health authorities and primary care trusts.
- 6.40 These changes are intended to improve the quality of service offered. However, this rationalisation could reduce the health services available to Westminster's residents, workers and visitors. The City Council will use its planning powers to help ensure that health facilities remain accessible to the people they are intended to serve.
- 6.41 Hospitals play a wider role than local health facilities. Hospital functions include:
- a) meeting the general health care needs of residents, workers and visitors for health care services
 - b) providing specialist services which serve people from the rest of the UK and the world
 - c) accident and emergency services
 - d) benefiting the local economy by providing jobs
 - e) helping London to respond to disasters and civil emergencies.
- 6.42 The City Council will seek to ensure that these roles can continue to be fulfilled when assessing development proposals involving hospitals.
- 6.43 The City Council will work with NHS London, with the Westminster Primary Care Trust, local hospital trusts and other appropriate National Health Service organisations over plans for hospital development. For example, it may produce planning briefs to guide the development of hospital sites. See also Chapter 5: Policies for North West Westminster and policy PSPA 7 for proposals involving St Mary's Hospital.

PRIVATE MEDICAL FACILITIES AND THE HARLEY STREET SPECIAL POLICY AREA

Aim

- 6.44 To protect and encourage the provision of private medical facilities and related professional and support services, particularly in the Harley Street area.
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POLICY SOC 5: PRIVATE MEDICAL FACILITIES AND THE HARLEY STREET SPECIAL POLICY AREA

In the Harley Street Special Policy Area:

- (A) private medical facilities must:**
- 1 complement and enhance the area's character and function**
 - 2 not significantly alter the balance of medical and residential uses in the area**
 - 3 not have harmful effects on local amenity**
- (B) the change of use of medical and associated uses, particularly medical consulting rooms, to other non-residential uses will be resisted**
- (C) the loss of medical and associated uses to residential use will only be approved if:**
- 1 the character and function of the area would not be affected**
 - 2 the loss of the medical use will not significantly affect the demand for that particular specialism.**

Outside the Harley Street Special Policy Area proposals for private medical facilities will be assessed in relation to the demand for them, the scale and location of the facility and its impact on the area in environmental terms.

Policy application

- 6.45 Map 6.1 shows the Harley Street Special Policy Area where policy SOC 5 applies.
- 6.46 The City Council recognises the special character and role of the Harley Street area. Policy SOC 5 particularly applies to medical consulting rooms, a key part of the character of the Harley Street area. Planning powers will be

used to protect and enhance the Harley Street area's character and role by allowing the development of private medical facilities in this area subject to the criteria in policy SOC 5(A). When considering proposals for medical uses, the City Council will protect the area's dual character as a residential and medical area.

- 6.47 In considering a proposal to change the use of a medical facility, the City Council will consult the relevant professional body. This will help the City Council to determine the significance of any proposed loss of medical facilities.
- 6.48 Outside the Harley Street Special Policy Area, private medical facilities of regional, national and international importance will also be assessed against Chapter 1: Westminster's Central Area, and policies CENT 1 and CENT 2 as regards appropriate uses within the Central Activities Zone and Central Activities Zone frontages. Whilst the Plan seeks to guide central London activities to the CAZ, it is recognised that there are certain existing central London activities located outside central Westminster which are of sufficient regional, national and international importance that they should be protected and supported, including certain private hospitals. Facilities that cater primarily for local needs of Westminster's residents and workers will also be considered in the light of policy SOC 4.

Reasons

- 6.49 Westminster contains many private medical facilities which operate outside the National Health Service. These increase the range of health facilities available in Westminster and are important to the national and local economy. Many of these facilities are concentrated around Harley Street. This area is internationally important for its concentration of medical uses, in particular medical consulting rooms. Related uses, like laboratories and diagnostic facilities, are also important. There is also a long-established residential community. Thus the Harley Street area has a dual role and character, which features both residential use and medical-related uses, particularly consulting rooms at ground and first floor levels.
- 6.50 It is important to protect and improve the character of this area, which meets a community need and contributes to the local and national economy. The London Plan promotes the continued role of London as a national and international centre of medical excellence at policy 3A.19. Outside the Harley Street Special Policy Area there are also a number of long established medical uses that provide a valuable service.
- 6.51 Market trends suggest that demand for private medical facilities will continue. Proposals for private medical facilities, particularly those of regional, national and international importance, should be directed towards the Harley Street

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Special Policy Area, where they can benefit from being close to other related services.

CHILDREN'S PLAY PROVISION

Aim

- 6.52 To achieve an adequate supply and distribution of children's play space.
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POLICY SOC 6: CHILDREN'S PLAY PROVISION

- (A) Children's play space and facilities will be required to be provided as part of new housing developments which include 25 or more family units.**
- (B) New developments in or near the Priority Areas (for additional play space and green open space for play) will be encouraged to provide new play space and facilities for children, or make improvements to existing facilities.**
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Policy application

- 6.53 The City Council recognises that there may be occasions where the provision of play space in certain housing developments may be difficult, for example, in conversion schemes. The City Council will seek new play facilities or improvements to existing play facilities as a planning benefit (see Part 1: policy STRA 7), particularly in or near the priority areas. Provision may be secured using legal agreements. Map 6.2 shows the City Council's priority areas for play space provision.
- 6.54 Play areas should be designed to be safe. In particular, it should be easy to keep children under surveillance from nearby buildings.

Reasons

- 6.55 Play is essential for the healthy development of children, and they need a safe, high quality environment for it. This policy covers play spaces and facilities for younger and older children, which are groups having different play needs. Opportunities for play outside formal play space in Westminster have reduced because of:
- a) the growth of traffic
 - b) the limited availability of private gardens
 - c) the conversion of houses into flats.
- 6.56 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) suggests that children should not have to walk more than 400 metres from home to a play area. Barriers to easy movement, like busy roads or unsafe routes, should be taken into

account when assessing how easily children can get to play areas. The City Council has used the NPFA standard to identify priority areas for more play space provision. This takes into account the distribution and concentration of children in the City, the degree of housing stress and access to other play facilities like private gardens and play space in adjoining boroughs. The London Plan, in Table 3D.1, also notes that all Londoners should have access to a local park or open space within 400m of home.

- 6.57 There is, however, a difference between play space and facilities for play. Many play spaces have inadequate play equipment and staff. A suitable range of play facilities should be made available in existing play spaces. Sometimes it may be better to improve existing facilities than to provide extra play space. Improvements to play spaces could also include opportunities for improving wildlife sites. The temporary use of vacant land for amenity open space and for other uses of benefit to the public, including children's play, is encouraged by the City Council: see policy ENV 3 in Chapter 9: Environment.

INDOOR LEISURE, LIBRARIES AND ARTS FACILITIES

Aim

- 6.58 To ensure that there are adequate leisure and sport facilities, libraries and arts facilities in Westminster.

POLICY SOC 7: INDOOR LEISURE AND LIBRARIES

Proposals for indoor leisure facilities and public libraries will be required to include facilities for local community arts or social activities, where appropriate.

Policy application

- 6.59 Proposals for public libraries and some leisure facilities, such as sports centres and pitches, are considered by policy SOC 1. In addition, SOC 7 requires that where appropriate, these proposals include facilities for local community arts or social activities, such as space for performances, rehearsals, meetings and exhibitions. Proposals for entertainment type leisure facilities are considered by policies in Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment.

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- 6.60 Using such facilities for different types of recreation can be difficult, however, where incompatible activities, such as children's play and adult sports, have to share space. Intensive use can be encouraged by choosing suitable surfaces and siting activities carefully, so that use for one activity does not preclude use for another. Also, using facilities intensively could lead to security problems or create noise and activity which could disturb local residents. Proposals will need to take safety and security into account.

Reasons

- 6.61 The demand for leisure services in Westminster and the high cost of new premises mean that it is important to make the best use of facilities. Indoor leisure facilities complement outdoor open spaces used for leisure. They house sports and allow people to play outdoor games whatever the weather. Indoor premises for local community arts and social activities (e.g. for youth services) are also needed. Space for these activities can often be provided in conjunction with leisure centres and public libraries.
- 6.62 Public libraries are used by Westminster's residents, workers, visitors and students. They provide books and other resources to borrow, opportunities to support learning and to encourage children's reading, and access to information on the internet. They also play an important role as public space acting as a focal point for community activities. Libraries must be easily accessible to the people they serve. Some existing libraries are poorly accessible and a number are in unsatisfactory buildings. The City Council is responsible for the planning and development of public library services in order to achieve compliance with national standards.

PUBLIC TOILETS

Aim

- 6.63 To ensure that public toilets are accessible, safe and adequately distributed throughout Westminster.

POLICY SOC 8: PUBLIC TOILETS

(A) Safe and secure public toilets will be sought in proposals for:

- 1 large retail developments
- 2 large leisure / entertainment developments
- 3 tourist attractions
- 4 transport interchanges.

(B) Public toilets should include baby changing and feeding facilities.

Policy application

- 6.64 The City Council will seek, and where appropriate require, developments that will attract large numbers of people to provide adequate numbers of public toilets. The City Council will take into account the relevant British Standard, BS 6465-1. For the purposes of this policy, large retail developments are those having 1,000 sq m of gross floorspace or more. Large entertainment uses are those having 500 sq m of gross floorspace or more. The City Council will require that the needs of less mobile people be taken into account in the design of new toilets. The City Council will continue to provide secure public toilets in all areas of the city and review areas which do not have enough.
- 6.65 When considering applications for bars and restaurant uses, developers may be requested to provide funding for additional nearby public toilets through the use of legal agreements (see Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment, policy TACE 10).

Reasons

- 6.66 Public toilets are important for residents, workers and visitors. They are particularly important for people with disabilities, older people, carers with children, and tourists. Inadequate provision or unsafe and insecure facilities can restrict people's activities. Public toilets are also important in protecting the local environment where high levels of activity can cause degradation. This problem has occurred in parts of the West End where the growth in night-time activity has caused environmental 'stress' through anti-social behaviour, including street fouling.

UTILITIES, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Aim

- 6.67 To help the utilities industries and emergency services to locate facilities that are essential to their operation, whilst protecting local amenity and townscape.

POLICY SOC 9: TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

Planning permission for telecommunications equipment will be granted where:

- 1 there is no possibility of sharing existing facilities and, in the case of radio masts**
- 2 there is no reasonable possibility of erecting antennae on an existing building or other structure.**

Proposals for base station equipment should be accompanied by a statement to confirm that, when operational, the emissions will not exceed guidelines by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

Policy application

- 6.68 The City Council will help the emergency services to locate facilities that are essential for their operation. It will assess proposals for development in terms of policy SOC 1 and other relevant policies in the plan.

- 6.69 The City Council will assess proposals involving utilities equipment in terms of policies SOC 1 and other relevant policies in the plan. SOC 9 applies specifically to telecommunications equipment (both ground based and that located on buildings or other structures) and will ensure that alternatives to providing new equipment are explored. Applications for telecommunications equipment on or near to schools and colleges should also be accompanied by evidence of consultation by the operators with the relevant body of the school or college.

- 6.70 Regard must be given to policies in Chapter 10: Urban Design and Conservation (in particular DES 5, DES 6 and DES 7) in order to ensure that utilities do not locate or design their equipment insensitively. In particular, telecommunications equipment should be designed so as to blend in with the townscape, using sympathetic design and camouflage to minimise the impact of a development on the surrounding environment. Conditions will be imposed to control the design, siting and maintenance of equipment, where appropriate.

- 6.71 The City Council will liaise with public utilities in the implementation of their programmes for modernisation and investment.

Reasons

- 6.72 Utilities (including telecommunications) and emergency services (fire, ambulance and police) are essential for the local community. They have particular site and location needs. When assessing development proposals which involve the utilities and emergency services, the City Council will ensure that local amenity is not harmed.

- 6.73 There is continuing pressure for further provision of telecommunications equipment. PPG 8: Telecommunications recognises the public concern over the health effects from exposure to electromagnetic fields from telecommunications base stations. It recommends that if a proposed development meets the ICNIRP guidelines, it should not be necessary to consider health effects further.

