

CHAPTER 10: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Introduction

- 10.1 Charnwood's main social, community, religious, education, health facilities and utilities infrastructure are focused on the main centres of population along the Soar and Wreake Valleys. The main responsibility for the provision of these facilities rests with the County Council's Social Services and Education departments, the Health Authority and the various statutory undertakers. However, the Local Plan is an important vehicle for coordinating service provision and providing a firm basis for the programming of service development.

National and Strategic Policy

- 10.2 PPG12 confirms that local plans have a vital role to play in co-ordinating new development with the infrastructure it requires. The Local Plan can help to ensure that existing deficiencies in service provision are identified and tackled and that the requirements arising from new large scale developments are planned for in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The guidance also emphasises the need for local plans to fully consider the impact of its proposals on different groups of the population, including ethnic minorities, religious groups, the elderly and disabled and single parent families.
- 10.3 Through policies to control the location of new community facilities the plan can also ensure that decisions on additional facility provision are grounded in the concept of sustainability. PPG13 on Transport outlines the role that the local plan can play in reducing the need to travel, especially by car. One element of this approach is seeking to ensure the availability of a range of community facilities in local centres easily accessible on foot, bicycle or public transport.
- 10.4 As part of its strategy for transport choice, the Leicestershire Structure Plan supports the concentration of community, primary health care and social facilities close to district and local shopping centres which are usually well located to serve reasonably large catchment populations – thereby encouraging energy and time efficient multi-purpose trips.

The Charnwood Perspective

- 10.5 Because of the distribution of the population in the Borough, the majority of community facilities are focused on the main river valley settlements, with most of the large scale facilities located in Loughborough. This facility distribution tends to create problems of excess demand for facilities in the larger villages coupled with difficulties of access to facilities from the more rural parts of the Borough.
- 10.6 Indicators of need derived from the 2001 Census (including the distribution of children under 4, pensioners, the long term ill, lone parents and lone pensioners) tend to confirm that the existing health and other community facilities are well located to serve the main areas of "demand". For example some 46% of the Borough's lone parents live in the main urban areas of Loughborough and Shepshed. The Census also reveals that some of the smaller settlements in the more rural areas like the Forest and the Wolds do have quite high proportions of groups likely to be in need of health care and other community services, albeit the total populations involved are relatively small. 15% of residents in the Forest Bradgate Ward are lone pensioners compared with the County average of 12.9%.
- 10.7 Apart from Leicester and Oadby and Wigston, Charnwood is the only other district in Leicestershire with significant numbers of residents from ethnic minority groups. At the time of the 2001 Census, 12,788 of Charnwood's residents, some 9% of the total population were from ethnic minority groups. The majority, nearly 60%, live in Loughborough. This spatial concentration extends to Ward level where Census data shows a concentration of ethnic minority groups particularly in the Hastings and Lemyington Wards of the town.

- 10.8 This concentration of ethnic minority population can generate special needs and requirements in relation to community and other facilities that often have implications of relevance to land-use planning.

Existing Facilities and Future Needs

- 10.9 On the whole, the existing levels of community facilities cater adequately for the needs of Charnwood's population, with the majority of the larger settlements having a range of education and health facilities serving their communities.
- 10.10 No additional facility requirements over the Plan period have been identified by either the Education Officer or Health Authority. The Chief Fire Officer has pointed to the need for an additional fire station to serve the north Leicester area and this is addressed in Policy CF/8.
- 10.11 The additional housing development identified in this Plan inevitably creates pressure on existing, and demands for additional community facilities. The Plan can help to ensure that the necessary community facilities are planned and provided for as an integral part of all new developments.
- 10.12 The Local Plan therefore aims to:
- i) facilitate the provision of the full range of buildings and amenities for education, health, public services, community centres, and places of worship necessary for the social and cultural well being of all sections of the community;
 - ii) ensure that all new residential development includes adequate provision for community facilities to meet the needs of future residents.

Retention of Existing Community Facilities

10.13 POLICY CF/1

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would result in the loss in small or isolated communities of established community facilities and services including places of worship, local shops/post-offices, village halls/community buildings and public houses unless:

- i) **it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed by the community; or**
 - ii) **it is no longer viable to maintain the provision of the facility or service on economic grounds; or**
 - iii) **an acceptable alternative provision is made.**
- 10.14 The Borough Council recognises the importance of retaining local community facilities, particularly in the more rural parts of the Borough. They provide convenient, accessible facilities helping to reduce dependency on the private car. The Council will seek to encourage the retention of these community facilities and services where possible.

Proposals for New Community Facilities

10.15 POLICY CF/2

Planning permission for new community facilities, including new buildings or changes of use, will be granted provided that;

- i) **the proposal is well related to existing community, primary health care and social facilities, and existing or proposed public transport services;**
- ii) **the proposal would not adversely affect the amenities enjoyed by occupiers of nearby properties due to design, noise or potential traffic generation;**

- iii) **the layout of the development facilitates access for people with disabilities and impaired mobility;**
- iv) **any new buildings or alterations to existing buildings are in keeping with the scale and character of the surroundings.**

(See also in particular Policy TR/18)

- 10.16 There is a continuing demand for community facilities throughout the Borough and particularly in some of the smaller and remoter villages. The Borough Council will support the provision of additional community facilities, especially for ethnic minority groups, children and young people, the elderly, single parent families and other groups who might be socially disadvantaged, where they do not conflict with neighbouring uses or create traffic problems and are well located in relation to existing centres and public transport infrastructure.
- 10.17 An important consideration in assessing proposals will be the degree to which the design, layout and use of building facilitates multi use consistent with the original purpose of the building.

Education Land and Buildings

10.18 POLICY CF/3

Planning permission for the development of existing educational land and buildings for educational purposes will be granted provided that:

- i) **any proposed buildings are in keeping with the scale and character of the surroundings; and**
- ii) **significant trees, open space or other features important in defining the amenities of the locality would not be lost.**

Development for purposes other than education will only be permitted if:

- a) **it would not result in, or remove an opportunity to rectify, a local deficiency in recreational space or community land and buildings; and**
- b) **the criteria (i) and (ii) are met.**

(See also in particular Policy TR/18)

- 10.19 For the most part additional school buildings which may be needed to cater for an increase in pupil numbers over the plan period will be provided on existing school sites. The proposed development north of Birstall may generate a requirement for the provision of a new school.
- 10.20 Development for education purposes on existing school sites will normally be acceptable. Development for other purposes will only be considered where the Council is satisfied that the land is surplus to educational requirements, would not result in a deficiency in recreational space or community land and buildings in the area, or involve the loss of an important area of open space of amenity value.
- 10.21 The recreational requirements of an area will be determined by reference to the NPFA standard detailed in Policy RT/7 along with the consideration of any relevant local circumstances.

Loughborough University and College Campuses

10.22 POLICY CF/4

Planning permission will be granted for University and College developments for academic and ancillary uses (Class D1) and for student accommodation (Classes C1, C2 and C3) within the campus area identified on the Proposals Map provided:

- i) **segregated facilities are provided for cyclists and pedestrians affording attractive and direct linkages into the cycleway and footpath network;**

- ii) **the overall design and layout of the development remains compatible with the established character and appearance of the campus as defined by the massing, scale and form of any neighbouring development;**
- iii) **complementary hard and soft landscaping measures are employed to define and contain the development within a high quality environment; and**
- iv) **significant trees, open space or other features important in defining the amenities of the locality would not be lost.**

Development for other purposes within the campus will not be permitted unless it can be shown to satisfy the above requirements and provided it would not:

- a) **unreasonably constrain opportunities for the further expansion of the University or College; or**
- b) **result in, or remove an opportunity to rectify, a local deficiency in recreational space.**

(See also in particular Policy TR/18)

- 10.23 Loughborough University, Loughborough College, Loughborough College of Art and Design and the Royal National Institute for the Blind's Vocational College combine to form a major educational complex in the town vitally important to its economic base, status and reputation. The ability of these institutions to respond to the new commercial imperatives which govern development and growth in the educational sector will determine their future standing and influence, and in no small measure, that of Loughborough as a whole.
- 10.24 Loughborough University has increased student numbers to approximately 11,300 while the Loughborough College provides for some 8,000 full time and part time students.
- 10.25 The importance of these institutions to the local economy is enhanced by their contribution to local amenities in the form of playing fields, open space and landscaped areas. The overall impression is one of an assemblage of large buildings set in extensive open grounds enabling the penetration of a green and pleasant landscape deep into the urban area. While some further development within this extended campus area will be unavoidable it will be desirable to maintain a balance to safeguard the amenities of both the colleges and the town.
- 10.26 The availability of undeveloped land within the urban area is a diminishing resource. Such land, whether in public ownership or not, is often used by surrounding communities as an informal recreation area. Once developed the opportunity to secure adequate provision to meet the needs of local people is lost for ever. Therefore before permitting development on remaining open land the Borough Council will have regard to the need for public open space to properly serve the surrounding community. In applying these tests the Council will apply the standards set out in Policy RT/7.

Loughborough Hospital, Epinal Way

10.27 POLICY CF/5

Planning permission will be granted for development for medical and ancillary uses (Class C2) within the site reserved for the Loughborough Hospital identified on the Proposals Map provided:

- i) **the overall design and layout of the development remains compatible with the established character and appearance of the existing hospital as defined by its mass, scale, form and material; and**
- ii) **complementary hard and soft landscaping measures are employed to define and contain the development within a high quality environment.**

(See also in particular Policy TR/18)

- 10.28 It is intended to consolidate hospital facilities in Loughborough in modern purpose built premises off Epinal Way. The first phase of the development has now been completed enabling the closure and redevelopment of the former Regent Street Hospital. Sufficient land has been reserved within the Epinal Way site to permit the development of a second phase when resources are available, to accommodate health care services to be relocated from the Town Centre Baxter Gate site. Policy CA/5 acknowledges the redevelopment potential of the Baxter Gate site in its designation as one of four town centre Opportunity Sites.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

10.29 POLICY CF/6

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals at the cemetery and crematorium sites shown on the Proposals Map which would detract from their predominantly open character, and/or diminish the amenity value and general visual character of the locality.

- 10.30 There are several existing cemetery sites in the Borough which contribute to the open character of built-up areas. Some sites such as Loughborough Cemetery, contain buildings of historic importance. Such areas will be safeguarded from development which would damage their special character, or which would harm the amenity of neighbouring land uses.

Extension to Cemeteries

10.31 POLICY CF/7

Planning permission will be granted for extensions to cemeteries outside the defined Limits to Development provided the scale and visual appearance of the extension would not damage the amenity and general visual character of the locality.

- 10.32 There may be occasions when existing cemeteries reach capacity and extensions are required which could encroach into areas of countryside, Green Wedge or local separation. Such proposals will be acceptable where the impact would damage neither the amenities of the area, nor the general character and appearance of the locality.

Fire Station Site A6/A46 Junction, Wanlip

10.33 POLICY CF/8

Some 0.6ha of land within the employment allocation north of Birstall is reserved for the development of a new fire station. Planning permission for the development of the fire station will be granted provided the following requirements are met:

- i) **the station is located close to the proposed junction on the A6 with direct access to the new local distributor road forming part of the proposal for major development north of Birstall;**
- ii) **the heights of any associated buildings, including any necessary training buildings, are carefully controlled to minimise the impact on the wider landscape, particularly to views from north of the A46 bypass and from Birstall. The provision of a training tower would not be appropriate in this sensitive location.**

(See also in particular Policies E/5(g), TR/22, TR/29, CA/10)

- 10.34 In response to the draft Plan the Chief Fire Officer pointed to the need to identify land for the provision of an additional fire station to the north of Leicester. Locationally, because of the need to service communities in the Soar Valley as well as those on the north Leicester fringe, the A46/A6 junction represents a logical location that meets the Fire Services requirements for ready access to the principal road network.

- 10.35 In the context of major development proposals north of Birstall proposed in this Plan, the fire station, in land-use terms could be located within the proposed employment area close to the A6. One of the critical issues for development in this location is its visual impact. Because of the sensitive nature of the location and the likely impact on the wider landscape, a drill tower would not be appropriate, and should not form part of the proposal.
- 10.36 The suitability of the site for the provision of a fire station has been considered in the context of the major development proposals for land north of Birstall presented in this Plan. The development of a fire station in isolation in this location would not be permitted.