

## Community facilities

- 4.19 A diverse range of community facilities helps to enhance quality of life and social cohesion, improve personal health and wellbeing, instil a sense of community identity and belonging and may help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. They can often support valuable services for the most vulnerable and least well-off in society.
- 4.20 Policy C2 sets out how the Council will ensure that there is provision of community facilities to meet the needs of a growing population and safeguard against the loss of viable community facilities. This is linked to the Camden Plan's aims of 'investing in our communities to ensure sustainable neighbourhoods' and 'creating the conditions for and harnessing the benefits of economic growth'.
- 4.21 The term "community facilities" in this section refers to a wide range of social infrastructure that provides a service to the community. This includes childcare, education, adult learning and training, healthcare, police stations, youth provision, libraries, public houses, community halls, places of worship and public toilets. These facilities form a vital part of town centres and neighbourhoods and address the local community's needs. However, it is acknowledged that some facilities offer large-scale or specialist provision, in some cases for a specific community and serve a wider catchment. Camden is home to health, education, scientific and research facilities with global reach and impact, which in many cases enjoy links with the local community, including in the provision of services.
- 4.22 For the foreseeable future, many of these community facilities are expected to experience reductions in funding, increased levels of demand and rising expectations. The long-term sustainability of facilities is a particular concern as funding continues to decline. The Council's Community Investment Programme is helping to re-invest proceeds from the disposal and redevelopment of land and buildings back into new and updated community facilities. For example, the Netley campus project has delivered a nursery, primary school and pupil referral unit, a multi-purpose hall and accommodation for the Adult and Community Learning Service.
- 4.23 Increasingly, complementary services are managed by a variety of different providers and are being brought together within the same site or building, improving accessibility, the user experience and helping to realise savings and efficiencies.
- 4.24 As technologies have developed, a far greater range of services are now capable of being delivered on-line. However, the presence of physical infrastructure will continue to be an important feature of service delivery in many cases. The Camden Infrastructure Study (2015) sets out the existing capacity and future need for social infrastructure in the borough. Its findings have informed the 'Infrastructure Schedule' in Appendix 1 to this Local Plan. Area/neighbourhood and site-specific infrastructure needs are also set out in other policies in the Local Plan, other development plan documents and by neighbourhood plans.

## Policy C2 Community facilities

The Council will work with its partners to ensure that community facilities and services are developed and modernised to meet the changing needs of our community and reflect new approaches to the delivery of services.

The Council will:

- a. seek planning obligations to secure new and improved community facilities and services to mitigate the impact of developments. The Council may also fund improvements to community facilities using receipts from the Community Infrastructure Levy where this is identified on the Council's CIL funding list;
- b. expect a developer proposing additional floorspace in community use, or a new community facility, to reach agreement with the Council on its continuing maintenance and other future funding requirements;
- c. ensure that facilities provide access to a service on foot and by sustainable modes of travel;
- d. facilitate multi-purpose community facilities and the secure sharing or extended use of facilities that can be accessed by the wider community, except for facilities occupied by the emergency services due to their distinct operating needs;
- e. support the investment plans of educational, health, scientific and research bodies to expand and enhance their operations, taking into account the social and economic benefits they generate for Camden, London and the UK. In assessing proposals, the Council will also balance the impact proposals may have on residential amenity and transport infrastructure;
- f. seek the inclusion of measures which address the needs of community groups and foster community integration;
- g. ensure existing community facilities are retained recognising their benefit to the community, including protected groups, unless one of the following tests is met:
  - i. a replacement facility of a similar nature is provided that meets the needs of the local population or its current, or intended, users;
  - ii. the existing premises are no longer required or viable in their existing use and there is no alternative community use capable of meeting the needs of the local area. Where it has been demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction there is no reasonable prospect of a community use, then our preferred alternative will be the maximum viable amount of affordable housing;
- h. take into account listing or nomination of 'Assets of Community Value' as a material planning consideration and encourage communities to nominate Assets of Community Value.

### Meeting the need for community infrastructure

4.25

It is important that the growth in Camden's population does not place unacceptable pressure on existing community facilities and there is sufficient provision to support new developments. It is also recognised that some

community facilities serve a catchment extending outside the Borough boundary and the needs of residents in adjoining boroughs will be taken into account, where appropriate.

- 4.26 The Council will seek section 106 planning obligations, where it is legitimate to do so, to ensure that the additional demand a development places on existing community infrastructure and services is met. The Council began collecting the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 1 April 2015 and over the plan period, this will provide funding towards community infrastructure projects identified on the Council's CIL funding list (sometimes referred to as the 'Regulation 123 List'). The funding list sets out the infrastructure projects and types of infrastructure to which CIL funding will be applied and which, by default, section 106 planning obligations will not be sought. The funding list will be updated in light of changing priorities and the availability of funding. The Council has developed a ward member-led spending system for the local element of CIL. It is expected that a significant proportion of this income will provide funding for community infrastructure.
- 4.27 When we use Section 106 agreements, we will take into account viability as a factor in determining the types of facilities or services that are required and the timeframe in which these can be delivered. In addition, the Council recognises that the pooling of planning obligations is limited to a maximum of five section 106 agreements per infrastructure project or type of infrastructure. The Council will also not seek contributions for community infrastructure and services from small scale and self-build developments in line with the circumstances set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance. The Council will use strategies relating to the accommodation requirements of the public and voluntary sectors when establishing need and local priorities for community infrastructure identified through consultation on neighbourhood and ward CIL spending.
- 4.28 The sustainability of the funding arrangements for new community facilities, including maintenance and management, is a serious concern. Where the Council is unable to enter into an agreement to meet the ongoing revenue costs of a facility itself, it will expect the applicant to demonstrate how the successful long-term future of the facility will be secured.
- 4.29 Providers of new community provision are encouraged to engage early in the development process with ward members and local communities, including Neighbourhood Forums where they exist. This ensures that local people can meaningfully input into a scheme's development.

### **Ensuring facilities are accessible for their users**

- 4.30 The Council will also assess the potential accessibility of a new or extended facility for its intended users. Where a facility is anticipated to generate a large number of visits, we would expect it to be provided within the Central London Area or the town centres of Camden Town, Kentish Town, Kilburn High Road, Swiss Cottage/Finchley Road and West Hampstead.
- 4.31 To help sustain community facilities and improve accessibility for our residents, we will expect opportunities to be fully assessed to co-locate different services or activities from one site or premises. The Council will also seek opportunities to improve access to facilities through agreements allowing the shared use of a

facility by the wider community or increased hours of community access where this is practicable. A number of these arrangements already exist, e.g. schools allowing access to their premises out-of-hours. This provides a cost-effective and sometimes the only viable means of addressing deficiencies in provision and reduces the need to travel.

### **Managing the concentration of community uses and addressing the needs of all sections of the community**

- 4.32 There are significant numbers of health, education, scientific and research facilities in Camden. These facilities may perform a largely local role and function but there are many institutions in the borough with a national or international orientation. This is helping to deliver solutions for society's problems, for example new medical treatments and models of healthcare. These institutions contribute to the local and national economy by supporting enterprise and innovation, the generation of jobs and the procurement of goods and services. A cluster of research-based organisations is based around an area of King's Cross, Euston Road and Bloomsbury, known as the Knowledge Quarter. Their geographical proximity and concentration is a catalyst for collaborative-based working. In order for these institutions and enterprises to meet changing standards and requirements and sustain their leading edge, there is often an ongoing need to update and modernise facilities. It is important this is realised in a way which balances the impact on residential amenity, local transport infrastructure and the character of the local area.
- 4.33 The scale and intensity of use of some community facilities, such as schools, colleges and higher education facilities can lead to adverse impacts on residential amenity. This is principally related to the movement of large numbers of people at certain times of day, impacts such as noise and air pollution and the pressure on the transport system. The Council will ensure schemes satisfactorily address the impacts of changes to the balance and mix of uses in the area, including the cumulative impact of schemes with planning permission or awaiting determination. Hampstead and Belsize Park have a very high concentration of schools where significant issues exist concerning the 'school run'. We will refuse applications for new schools or the expansion of existing schools in these areas, unless it can be demonstrated the number of traffic movements will not increase. "Policy A1 Managing the impact of development" refers to how the Council will manage the impact of traffic movements.
- 4.34 Some community facilities offer particular support and safe, welcoming environments for protected groups or communities which in turn contribute to Camden's diversity and social and economic wellbeing. The sometimes dispersed nature of minority groups means this benefit may extend far beyond Camden's administrative boundary. Under the Equality Act 2010, we are required to assess the impact of policies against the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex/gender and sexual orientation. We would expect proposals for new community facilities to take into account the particular disadvantages that can be experienced by individuals and groups with these characteristics. Paragraphs 4.35 to 4.42 provide examples of facilities which are important in meeting the needs of protected groups.

**Child care facilities**

- 4.35 There is a wide range of nursery education and childcare options in Camden. These include children's centres operated by Camden Council, those run by local primary schools and nurseries operated by the independent, voluntary and private sector. Childcare provision is an important means of tackling the Borough's inequalities as a lack of childcare can prevent our residents from taking up employment opportunities or restrict parents to part-time work close to home. The Council will, therefore, encourage non-residential developments to include provision for child care facilities.

**Schools and colleges**

- 4.36 As part of its statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient places within the Borough, the Council undertakes annual place planning for primary and secondary schools. This takes into account the current capacity of schools, the projected future demand for places, variations in demand across Camden, housing developments and proposed changes in other boroughs. Capacity from year-to-year can fluctuate rapidly due to factors such as parental choice and housing developments.
- 4.37 The 2014 primary school assessment identified a high need in the north-west of the Borough, which the expansion of Kingsgate school (with 2 forms of entry) is expected to help address. Provision has also recently increased through the opening of free schools. The 2014 secondary school assessment notes there is capacity for two further forms of entry at Regent High School. This is considered sufficient to meet needs to 2022/23 although further expansion will be needed over the longer-term.

**Faith facilities**

- 4.38 Camden has many meeting places, churches, synagogues, community facilities and Islamic prayer centres that cater for a range of faiths and beliefs. It is expected that further provision will be required to meet the needs of faith communities during the Plan period. The main sources of demand arise from the inadequate size of Islamic prayer spaces in the borough and the growth in forms of evangelical Christianity.
- 4.39 The Council welcomes investment by faith communities to develop new space to meet or worship, subject to other policies in the Local Plan. The Council will also encourage faith communities to consider sharing facilities where one community has spare capacity and another has a need for space. Where new spaces are provided, the Council will expect applicants to submit an Equality Impact Assessment examining the balance between maintaining Camden's unique diversity and community cohesion.

**Provision for older people**

- 4.40 Camden has a much lower proportion of older people aged over 65 compared to the national average for England and Wales, although one which is growing rapidly. A 'person centred approach' to social care support is helping older people to live more independently and for longer.

- 4.41 Older people generally have greater health needs than the wider population. It is important that development schemes take into account the physical, sensory and mental health barriers they experience. Modifications to the internal layout of buildings and features such as tactile surfaces, hearing loops, good signage and lighting and additional seating can provide significant benefits. Policy C6 of the Local Plan requires all buildings and places to meet the highest practicable standards of accessible and inclusive design.

### **Public toilets**

- 4.42 The need for public toilets is more prevalent amongst certain groups such as the elderly, disabled, children and people suffering from bladder or bowel conditions. The lack of provision can deter people going out in the community, increasing the risk of social isolation and poor mental health. The Council will expect major schemes with large numbers of visitors to provide public toilets. We will also continue to encourage schemes whereby businesses allow the public to use their facilities.

### **Safeguarding community facilities**

- 4.43 Community facilities are vulnerable to pressure from uses which attract higher land values and once they are lost cannot easily be replaced. The Council will normally seek the retention of community facilities except in defined circumstances. This includes where there is suitable replacement provision secured through the use of a planning obligation. We will assess whether the accessibility of the replacement provision satisfactorily addresses the needs of the facility's users and how this addresses relevant plans or programmes of re-provision of public sector bodies. In exceptional cases, the Council may seek a financial contribution based on the cost of providing a replacement facility. The Council will expect that replacement facilities are sufficient in size and a high quality design which facilitates the successful operation of the community use.
- 4.44 There may also be circumstances where a community use, either wholly or in part, is no longer required or viable in its current use. In this instance, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that the loss of the facility would not create, or add to, a shortfall in provision for the existing community use and if it would not, that the facility is unable to address a need for any other community use in the local area. The Council may require marketing evidence to show that the premises have been offered at a reasonable charge to community groups or voluntary organisations. We will set out further details in Camden Planning Guidance. The loss of a facility may also be acceptable where this forms part of an asset management strategy of a public or voluntary body and the loss is necessary to allow the service to continue operating successfully, for example where a facility is underused or no longer fit for purpose.
- 4.45 Where an alternative community use cannot be found for the existing facility, the Council will seek the provision of affordable housing as its preferred alternative use. Community facilities generally have a relatively low capital value compared with housing sites. We will seek the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing in accordance with "Policy H4 Maximising the supply of affordable housing", having regard to financial viability. We will expect the proportion of

affordable housing to reflect the value of the development site in its former community use.

### **Assets of Community Value**

- 4.46 The Council supports the community, including Neighbourhood Forums, wishing to nominate 'Assets of Community Value' (ACV). An ACV is a building or piece of land which currently, or in the recent past, furthers the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational or sporting interests of the local community and is expected to do so in the future. The Council will formally register the asset if it meets certain criteria. If it does, if and when the owner decides to sell the asset, a local group can trigger a six month moratorium on the sale giving them time to raise the funds to purchase it (sometimes referred to as a 'right to bid'). Owners have to consider bids, but they do not have to accept them.
- 4.47 The Council, when determining planning applications involving loss of community facilities, will treat the listing of an Asset of Community Value as an indicator of local support and evidence that it furthers the social wellbeing and interests of residents.
- 4.48 "Policy C3 Cultural and leisure facilities" provides more detail on how we will protect cultural and leisure facilities and "Policy C4 Public houses" relates to the safeguarding of pubs.