

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Background

14.1 “Community facilities” covers the wide range of facilities and services required by any community. It includes education, health and community care, meeting halls, libraries, places of worship, burial grounds and emergency services.

14.2 Health and community care facilities include hospitals, out-patient services, nursing homes, dentists and general practice services. The role of the private sector in the provision of health care continues to be significant.

14.3 For planning purposes, a basic division is made between residential and non-residential facilities. This affects the choice of site for different facilities and is reflected in the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order as follows:

Class C1: Hotels

- Includes old peoples’ homes where no significant element of care is provided.

Class C2: Residential institutions

- Includes residential schools and colleges, hospitals and nursing homes.

Class C3: Dwelling houses

- Includes up to 6 people living together as a single household.

Class D1: Non-residential institutions

- Includes medical and health centres, day nurseries and centres, education, libraries, public halls and places of worship.

14.4 The emergency services, (ambulance, fire and police stations) do not fit into these categories but are considered as separate, individual uses.

14.5 A major factor influencing the future provision of community facilities in the Borough is the changing age structure of the population. The school age population (5 to 16 years old) will continue to increase as families continue to move into the area. At the other end of the age scale, the proportion of people aged 65 and over (currently below the national average) is likely to increase, with implications for health care facilities and specialist housing.

14.6 In the City, land has generally been allocated for new community facilities as part of the development of new housing areas. Each residential grid square has usually included sites for a meeting hall and a first or combined school; other facilities, such as health centres and emergency services serve groups of grid squares. However, there are increasing problems in funding the provision of these new facilities, in step with the surrounding housing development.

14.7 Outside the City, community facilities are concentrated in the Key Settlements of Newport Pagnell, Olney and Woburn Sands. There is public concern that some of the facilities in these areas are stretched; further housing development

in these areas may generate the need for, and help to finance and support improved facilities.

14.8 Several different agencies are involved with the provision of community facilities; these include public, private and voluntary organisations. The Council can allocate land for facilities and include requirements in the policies for new development sites in this Local Plan. However, the Local Plan can only directly influence the supply of land and buildings for community facilities rather than the quality of the service provided; that is usually the responsibility of other licensing and regulatory bodies, under different legislation.

14.9 Other than direct provision, grant-aid, and partnerships with other agencies, the Council can also use “planning obligations” to secure community facilities as a part of development proposals. The negotiation of planning obligations is now a significant means of providing funding for new facilities.

See policies on
Planning Obligations

National and Local Objectives

14.10 Government guidance emphasises the need to create sustainable settlements, where there is a close link between the development of housing, employment and supporting infrastructure – of which community facilities are a vital part.

PPG1 (1997)

14.11 Recent trends and legislation have led to significant changes and greater complexity in the way some important community facilities are planned, provided and managed – especially those relating to health and education. Service planning in these areas is subject to various statutory requirements that may have implications for the Local Plan, both now and at later stages of the process – e.g. the School Organisation Plan covers 5 years and must be reviewed annually.

Education

14.12 There are several elements of current government education policy which have implications for land use:

- Reducing class sizes in primary schools to 30 children
- A presumption against the closure of rural schools
- Enhancing lifelong learning opportunities
- The continuing commitment to the existence of an independent education sector

Health care

14.13 Government policy focuses on tackling poor health and the prevention of illness and on promoting independence by enabling people to stay at home wherever possible.

14.14 As the providers of acute, community, mental health and primary care services, the NHS Trusts develop health improvement plans in partnership with local authorities. They are required to produce strategies not only for the rationalisation of their services, but also for their sites and buildings.

14.15 Large institutions have mostly been replaced by smaller, locally based facilities for those with disabilities and mental health problems. These facilities can be provided in new buildings or by adapting existing buildings.

This Local Plan

14.16 The strategic policies of the Plan outline the principles and the locations for new development, to which the provision of community facilities is linked. Such facilities are essential for the well being of any community. This was emphasised during pre-deposit public consultation where comments highlighted the need for securing the necessary facilities at the right time, well related to the level and rate of population and housing growth.

14.17 The Local Plan Vision refers to “a high quality of life for all” and Plan Aim No.10 refers to equality of opportunity in access to community facilities, services and information. As the Plan concentrates new development on the City, the primary aim behind the policies in this chapter is to ensure that as the area develops further, the provision of community facilities is adequate and timely.

Policies

LOCATION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Objectives of policy

- To ensure community facilities are accessible and well-related to the locality
- To ensure that buildings are designed to enable maximum flexibility of use by community groups.

14.18 Some community facilities are best located in or adjacent to shopping centres. Residential facilities are likely to produce less traffic, noise and other problems and often require a relatively quiet location for their occupants.

LOCATION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY C1

Planning permission will be granted for:

- (i) Non-residential community facilities within, or adjacent to Central Milton Keynes, town, district and local centres
- (ii) Residential community facilities within housing areas preferably in locations well related to local centres

Proposals will need to show that buildings are designed to be adaptable for multi-use

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Objectives of policy

- To protect existing facilities and sites proposed or reserved in this Plan to meet future needs.

- To ensure that replacement facilities are at least of the same standard
- To provide a framework for dealing with the disposal of surplus education land.

14.19 New proposals may be submitted which seek to replace community facilities with other forms of development, particularly where the facilities are regarded as surplus to requirements. The Council will need to be satisfied that there is no longer a need for the building or site in any form of community use, or that an acceptable facility can be quickly provided elsewhere.

14.20 An acceptable facility is one at least equivalent - in terms of size, function, adaptability and accessibility - to that existing, which meets the needs of the local community. To ensure the timely provision of a replacement facility, the Council may impose a condition on the planning permission or seek an obligation for the facility to be made available at the same time as the occupation of any associated development.

14.21 Every Local Education Authority in England publishes annually a School Organisation Plan (SOP), which sets out its strategy for managing the provision of school places in its area. The SOP sets out a strategy the Borough.

14.22 In many parts of the City, the defined areas for schools no longer match the population and demographic mix. By removing surplus places, for example, through the amalgamation of schools, it is likely that there will be land that is surplus to education requirements. This policy provides a framework for ensuring that through its redevelopment, the community benefit is not lost where there is a proven need for provision of community facilities in the location.

14.23 Proposals for the change of use of education land will need to be accompanied by a statement from the Education Department which sets out how the proposals will improve Milton Keynes schools and that there will be other community benefits. Examples of compensating community benefit could include:

- school classrooms improved so that they are able to be used after school for the purposes of life long learning;
- school sports facilities improved so that they can be used by the local community;
- provision of facilities to meet local community needs, to compensate for the loss of a school.

“local community needs” will be assessed on an individual basis but could include a community hall, local play area, public open space.

14.24 Since April 2001, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has been responsible for post-16 provision across the area. This has implications for the funding and organisation of post-16 provision in secondary schools and MK College. This policy will also apply to proposals arising from the LSC’s management of post-16 provision in the Borough.

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY C2

Planning permission will be refused for proposals that involve the loss of an existing community facility or the loss of a site allocated for such a purpose, unless:

- (i) There is no longer a need for the facility for any type of community use, or

- (ii) An acceptable alternative facility can be provided elsewhere

Where surplus education land is identified, planning permission will be granted for other uses provided it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) The income from the sale of the land will be reinvested to secure improvements to Milton Keynes schools and;
- (b) The proposed development will include the provision of facilities for the local community where there is a proven need for such provision locally and it fairly and reasonably relates to the development proposed.

MEETING HALLS / COMMUNITY CENTRES

Objective of policy

- To identify areas where new meeting halls are to be provided

14.25 Meeting halls are an important focus for community activities, particularly in newly developed areas and may be sought as a part of a package relating to new development. Halls should be located as centrally as possible to the areas they will serve, to maximise access for pedestrians and cyclists and encourage the use of public transport. They should be designed as multi-use buildings, either freestanding or integrated with other facilities. New indoor leisure facilities may also have some potential for use for community activities. CMK/Campbell Park may be the most appropriate location for facilities needed to serve citywide communities.

14.26 The standard for provision in the City is one hall, (usually 220 sq m) per 3,600 people. Outside the City, community centres / village halls have been long established in most of the larger settlements, although some parishes such as Haversham are seeking new or upgraded facilities. In some cases, the upgrading of existing facilities by refurbishment or extension will be sought in association with new housing development.

MEETING HALLS/COMMUNITY CENTRES

POLICY C3

New meeting halls are to be provided in the following areas:

- 1 Broughton (West)
- 2 Caldecotte (Lakeside)
- 3 Emerson Valley (North)
- 4 Grange Farm
- 5 Oxley Park (South) / Kingsmead (Shenley Common Farm development)
- 6 Monkston (South)
- 7 Monkston Park
- 8 Tattenhoe Park (East)
- 9 Tickford End, Newport Pagnell (Site NP5)
- 10 Walnut Tree (East)

11 Bletchley

Meeting halls will be also be required as part of new housing development in City Expansion Areas

EDUCATION

Objective of policy

- To identify and protect sites areas for the location of new schools

14.27 Most new school building will continue to be within the City, including in the new Expansion Areas. However, there is a need for a further secondary school outside the City at Olney. A site has been allocated in Olney, north of Barnfield, west of Aspreys and development of this as part of the Ousedale Campus began in July 2005 for opening in September 2006.

14.28 Further and higher education in the Borough is provided by Milton Keynes College and the Open University. The College is currently implementing a development strategy that is supported by the Council, which aims to consolidate its facilities at Chaffron Way and the Bletchley Campus. The Council has granted planning permission for the redevelopment of the former Wolverton Campus for residential development, in order that the entire proceeds can be reinvested into improving facilities at Chaffron Way and the Bletchley Campus. The Council has also granted planning permission for the redevelopment of the Bletchley Campus to provide a new and improved College facility with sports hall.

EDUCATION

POLICY C4

Sites in the following areas are allocated for the provision of new education facilities:

Combined Schools

- 1 Broughton
- 2 Grange Farm
- 3 Middleton
- 4 Monkston
- 5 Monkston Park
- 6 Shenley Brook End
- 7 Tattenhoe
- 8 Tattenhoe Park
- 9 Wavendon Gate (Phase 2)
- 10 CMK
- 11 Oxley Park

Secondary Schools

For further details of the CMK school, see Policy CC12 and supporting text.

- 1 Olney (Site OY3)
- 2 Shenley Brook End (additional phases)
- 3 Walnut Tree (Walton High, additional phases)
- 4 Hazeley

Independent

- 1 Shenley Church End

Higher Education

- 1 Walton Hall
- 2 Kents Hill

New schools will also be required as part of new housing development in City Expansion Areas (see Policies EA3 and EA5)

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES

Objective of policy

- To identify and protect sites for major health facilities

14.29 The policy below covers sites for major facilities, in particular the Hospital campus at Eaglestone where land is reserved to meet long-term health care needs for the City and Borough as a whole. Such facilities may be provided by either the public or private sector.

14.30 At the local level, many Reserve Sites may be suitable for small-scale health care facilities – e.g. health centres, dentists etc.

See Policy C9

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES

POLICYC5

The following sites are allocated for the provision of major health and community care facilities:

- 1 Blakelands – Community Hospital
- 2 Land adjoining Milton Keynes General Hospital, Eaglestone – extensions to the Hospital and other health related facilities

New health care facilities will be required as part of new housing development in City Expansion Areas.

CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Objectives of policy

- To provide criteria to assess proposals for childcare facilities
- To minimise the impact of childcare facilities on surrounding properties.

14.31 Such facilities can take a variety of forms - a purpose-built building, a child-minder's house, a converted house, a parent's workplace, and in schools and meeting halls. The purpose of this policy is to ensure such developments do not cause unacceptable levels of car parking, noise and disturbance to occupiers of neighbouring residential properties. The Council will consider each proposal for childcare facilities against the detailed policy guidance in Appendix C6.

CHILDCARE FACILITIES

POLICY C6

Planning permission will be granted for crèche, nursery and similar childcare facilities if they are consistent with the detailed policy guidance in Appendix C6

BURIAL AND MEMORIAL GROUNDS

Objectives of policy

- To provide criteria for assessing proposals for burial and memorial grounds
- To identify and protect sites allocated for burial and memorial grounds

14.32 Many existing cemeteries in the City are nearly full. The Council also recognises that there is a shortage of burial spaces in the settlements outside the City. In addition, as the local population ages, demand for new burial grounds will increase. The Council needs to make further provision for burial grounds and associated facilities for funeral parties and visitors. There is a particular demand for burial space from ethnic and religious groups, which is likely to increase in the future. As well as the sites listed in Policy C8, the Council is also seeking to identify a new site in the Bletchley area.

14.33 Proposals for new cemeteries in the open countryside to serve the rural settlements can be considered as an exception to Policy S10: Open Countryside, where the proposal is small scale (no larger than 0.4ha) and would not have an unacceptable impact on the character of the surrounding countryside.

14.34 Whilst the demand for traditional burial continues, there is now a slowly developing demand for natural or "green" burial. This involves environmentally friendly burial where the coffins are biodegradable and trees and/or wild flowers are planted by graves instead of headstones. Locations which would be considered appropriate for green burial would include city parkland and informal open space and the open countryside, subject to meeting the criteria in Policy C7 below. However, some areas of City parkland will not be suitable for this use, for example, where it lies in a flood plain or has nature conservation or archaeological value. As a pilot project, the Council is developing a "green" burial site as part of the Crownhill cemetery.

14.35 Planning permission will be required for proposals for burial or memorial grounds outside existing churchyards or cemeteries where they involve:

- the marking out and/or disturbance of any land to provide parking and visitor facilities
- the widespread and frequent use of mechanical diggers

Burial grounds should preferably be accessible by public transport.

BURIAL AND MEMORIAL GROUNDS

POLICY C7

Planning permission for the use of land as a burial / memorial ground or “green” burial / memorial ground will be granted providing that:

- (i) The site is accessible by public transport
- (ii) Surface water drainage is adequate and there is no threat to groundwater quality
- (iii) The proposal would not have an adverse impact on the surrounding landscape
- (iv) The proposal includes a land management and maintenance programme

POLICY C8

The following sites are allocated for the provision of burial and memorial grounds:

- 1 Land adjoining Wolverton Cemetery
- 2 Land within the Western City Expansion Area
- 3 Land adjacent Stonepit Field, New Bradwell.

RESERVE SITES

Objectives of policy

- To identify and protect Reserve Sites
- To identify uses for Reserve Sites

14.36 “Reserve Sites” is the term used to describe small sites in residential housing areas that are left undeveloped to accommodate unforeseen local needs. There is a range of uses to which these sites can be put – e.g. sheltered housing, hostels, meeting places, health centres, dental surgeries, workshops places of worship and local shops.

14.37 Undeveloped Reserve Sites are shown on the Proposals Maps and Appendix C9 lists the intended or approved uses for each site (as at April 2000). Appendix C9 denotes which Reserve Sites are designated for social and community uses (e.g. meeting places, health centres) and which are designated for commercial uses (shops, offices, private housing).

RESERVE SITES

POLICY C9

Within Milton Keynes City, a number of sites are allocated as Reserve Sites for future local commercial or community uses. These sites are identified on the Proposals Map and details of the approved uses for each site are set out in Appendix C9.

New Reserve Sites will also be required as part of new housing development in City Expansion Areas. The standard of provision will be 0.75 hectares per 1,000 population.

LIBRARIES

Objectives of policy

- To state the need for new libraries in the east and west flanks of the City.
- To set out the criteria against which proposals for new libraries will be assessed.

14.38 The Council's library service is currently provided via a network of 8 static branch libraries and one mobile library. As demographic growth continues, particularly on the east and west flanks of the City, the Council is considering future library provision, guided by new Government standards for library provision. The criterion for Unitary Authorities is that 88% of households should live within 1 mile of a static library or 100% within 2 miles.

Comprehensive,
Efficient and Modern
Public Libraries -
Standards and
Assessment (DCMS.
2001)

14.39 There is no direct service provision on the east flank of the City apart from a mobile library service. This is a major concern for the Council and has been identified as a priority.

14.40 West flank provision in the City has been addressed through the opening of a branch library in the Westcroft District Centre in 1996, housed in 2 converted shop units. Various options are being looked at to secure long term accommodation at Westcroft. One option could be to develop a multi-purpose, adaptable, building that could offer training and learning facilities in addition to being used as a library. This type of service model is one which reflects the changing and widening roles of libraries as centres for lifelong learning and cultural activities.

LIBRARIES

POLICY C10

Planning permission will be granted for new public libraries that are:

- (i) Located within or adjacent to CMK, Town, District or local Centres or;
- (iii) In locations where the libraries' use would be complementary to an existing or proposed educational service

New libraries will be sought in both the East and West Flanks of the City. A site for a new library is reserved at Westcroft District Centre. New library buildings should be designed to be capable of multi-use.