

8. Community Facilities

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Local Plan Aim

To provide for the community, social and service needs of the community.

Key Objectives

1. To facilitate a full range of services conveniently placed to serve the community.
2. To ensure the necessary services and facilities are in place when new developments are undertaken.

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The provision of a full range of easily accessible facilities is essential to the social and physical well-being of the community. Such facilities include schools, health facilities, libraries, meeting halls and the emergency services. The scale of growth envisaged in Kent Thameside will necessitate a comprehensive range of community facilities and utilities infrastructure and this must be integrated with the existing pattern of provision. Service infrastructure pre-requisite to development includes roads, sewers, surface water drainage, water supply, electricity and gas supply and communication cables. Roads, paths, cycleways and public transport provision are dealt with in the Transport chapter. Water issues, including sewage treatment and drainage are dealt with in Natural Resources chapter. Recreational facilities are dealt with in the Leisure, Recreation and Tourism chapter. Requirements specific to the major sites are dealt with in the Major Development Sites chapter. Social housing requirements are dealt with in the Housing chapter.

8.2 Policy Context

8.2.1 The principles involved in locating community facilities are similar to those for retailing. PPG6 ('Town Centres and Retail Development') requires that uses generating significant levels of travel should be centrally located. Locating such uses together in areas well served by public transport reduces the need to travel.

8.2.2 PPG13 ('Transport') has a similar message: education and public facilities should be located so that they are well-served by public transport. Facilities which form the nucleus of a community such as schools, health centres and branch libraries should be accessible on foot or bicycle. In accordance with the urban village concept, planning of facilities should be at the neighbourhood scale.

8.5 Background

8.3.1 In view of the fundamental importance of community infrastructure to the proper planning of new developments and to the well-being of existing communities, and given the scale of new housing growth on Kent Thameside, the three local authorities (Dartford, Gravesham and Kent County), with support from the Government Office for the South East, commissioned a Community Infrastructure Study of future requirements. The starting point for this work was an appraisal of the pattern and adequacy of existing provision, with a picture of future needs then being built up from an assessment of the scale, pace and pattern of future housing growth. The study has two main values: it provides the Councils in their role as planning authorities with a basis for quantifying – and securing through the planning process – the infrastructure needs of specific development proposals; and it helps the various

service providers to appreciate the long term growth prospects in the area and thus aids their future service planning.

8.3.2 The main findings from the Community Infrastructure Study are:

- there are no significant quantitative shortfalls in current facilities provision for the existing communities but some facilities need additional resources and improvements in quality;
- the volume service needs of the existing communities are unlikely to rise in the future, given the anticipated, continuing decline in average household size;
- the new, planned housing developments give rise to significant future service requirements: in the long term, these are heavily concentrated in Kent Thameside's central development zone – Eastern Quarry/Swanscombe Peninsula/Ebbsfleet, while in the shorter term, the key sites are Ingress Park, Stone Castle and North Dartford.

8.3.3 The Study identifies a number of principles which should inform the future provision of community infrastructure. Those of particular relevance to the planning process are:

- accessibility – minimise the need to travel, seek small scale and localised provision (thereby minimising journey length) and maximise accessibility through a choice of transport modes;
- co-location – grouping services together will help create a community focus, increase opportunities for linked trips and afford opportunities for the shared use of facilities that would otherwise be missed;
- integration – use new and upgraded provision to help integrate existing and new communities; assess existing provision to see if it can meet the needs of new communities (improved and extended if necessary) before new provision is made; maximise the benefits for existing communities of infrastructure investment by ensuring access to new development and facilities from existing neighbourhoods.

8.3.5 A Kent Thameside-wide study has also been carried out for utilities (electricity, gas and water supplies), looking particularly at future delivery structures. As a result of that work, a public utilities liaison organisation ('PULO') was established to co-ordinate future service delivery. No particular resource issues arise in relation to meeting the future needs of development in the Borough. Similarly, on the supply network side, no particular problems are foreseen, although significant investment in infrastructure will be needed.

8.4 Siting, Accessibility and Design

8.4.1 New community facilities should be appropriately located and should not adversely affect the amenity of the area. The preferred location for social and health facilities is in, or near to, Dartford Town Centre and the identified existing and proposed neighbourhood centres (see Development and Design chapter). Additionally, housing development at the major development sites identified in this Plan will require significant provision of community infrastructure which will generally best be provided in the form of new neighbourhood centres. By concentrating facilities in convenient central locations, the need for car travel is reduced, and an identifiable

community focus is created. In some circumstances, and bearing in mind the incremental growth in the need for new facilities at the major sites, facilities might best be provided through designing adaptable building shells whose use may change over time.

CF1 Community Facilities – Siting and Accessibility

Proposals for community facilities within Dartford Town Centre, or within or close to identified existing and proposed neighbourhood centres or within the major development sites shown on the Proposals Map, will be permitted, subject to the criteria set out below. Proposals elsewhere must demonstrate a need for the particular location which overrides the aim of promoting coherent neighbourhood centres. Community facilities should:

- 1. wherever possible be grouped together in a single location to reduce the need to travel;**
- 2. be easily accessible to those who they are intended to serve by foot, cycle and public transport;**
- 3. wherever possible be provided in accommodation which is versatile and flexible, in order to serve a range of needs. Building ‘shells’ on the ground floor of apartment blocks may be appropriate in some cases;**
- 4. take account of the existing pattern of facilities; and**
- 5. comply with other relevant development control criteria including the need to safeguard residential amenity.**

8.4.2 The scale and nature of some public utilities infrastructure can have significant environmental and visual impacts: it will be important to secure high standards of planning and design in any new provision.

CF2 Utilities Infrastructure - Siting and Design

New, additional or replacement utilities infrastructure shall be sited and designed so as not to harm the environment or appearance of existing developed areas, new developments, the Green Belt and other open land.

8.5 Provision, Timing and Coordination

8.5.1 The community infrastructure necessary for a particular development will largely depend on the scale and nature of that development. However, with a few exceptions, virtually all residential developments will potentially need to make three types of provision:

- education – the County Council applies pupil product ratios of 0.37 pupils per dwelling for primary education and 0.15 pupils per dwelling for secondary education;
- public open space – ranging from equipped playspaces to district parks. The Local Plan standards are set out in the Leisure, Recreation and Tourism chapter;
- affordable housing – the Council has adopted a policy of seeking 30% provision of affordable housing: see the Housing chapter for further details.

Other provision may be relevant, dependent on the population generated by the specific development proposal: see the guidelines at Appendix 14.

- 8.5.1a Government guidance requires that Local Plans give developers an indication of the type of requirements they may have to provide, based on the demands generated by their particular proposals. The guidelines in Appendix 14 act as a basic starting point from which negotiation can begin on a site specific basis. They have been devised in consultation with the relevant service providers and are subject to review. Developers are therefore advised to discuss actual requirements for sites as early as possible in the preparation of their development proposals. The Local Authority will apply appropriate conditions and/or seek to enter into an agreement with the developer under section 106 of the 1990 Act to secure relevant developer contributions.
- 8.5.1b Circular 1/97 sets out the guidance for the proper use of planning obligations. The Local Planning Authority will secure planning obligations that are:
- necessary;
 - relevant to planning;
 - directly related to the proposed development;
 - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and
 - reasonable in all other respects.
- 8.5.1c The Appendix 14 guidelines will need to be assessed for each development proposal, taking into account the scale and mix of development, the quality and capacity of existing community provision, any other proposed development in the vicinity, as well as any other site specific considerations. This is particularly important for development proposals on previously developed sites which can be more problematic with regard to the costs of basic site preparation. Further guidance on this is given in the section relating to the principles for negotiating planning obligations (Chapter 16).
- 8.5.1d The guidelines have no minimum in terms of dwelling numbers for necessary infrastructure requirements or therefore, for potentially requiring contributions. A threshold has been set, however, at which physical provision, rather than a financial contribution, must be made. This applies primarily to larger schemes where sufficient development is proposed to require an entirely new facility. Where a development does not reach a threshold, and a pro-rata cash contribution (or equivalent in some other form) is required, these will be “ring-fenced” with other relevant monies to provide the required facilities. For major development sites it may be appropriate to require a payment where there is no identifiable scheme since there can be a time lag following planning approval before such a scheme is finalised.
- 8.5.2 This Plan identifies a number of major development sites – see Major Development Sites chapter. Those capable of development in the shorter term or with the benefit of a planning permission, where there is a degree of clarity about the scale and mix of uses proposed are the subject of planning briefs, statements of development principles or S.106 agreements which set out the infrastructure requirements. Ingress Park, Stone Castle, North Dartford and Ebbsfleet fall into this category.
- 8.5.3 Other, larger, long term development opportunities are also identified in the Local Plan at Eastern Quarry and Swanscombe Peninsula. There is, at present, less clarity about the likely mix of uses at these sites and the assessment of community infrastructure requirements will be taken forward through the preparation of planning briefs in due course, in the light particularly of the guidelines at Appendix 14.

8.5.4 Proposals for new development must demonstrate that adequate community and utilities infrastructure exist in the locality to serve the development or, if there is no conveniently located existing spare infrastructure capacity, show that the provision of the necessary infrastructure is assured. To this end measures may include:

- the direct provision or the funding of such provision, either on-site or elsewhere;
- new facilities and/or up-grades to existing facilities;
- on major sites for residential development, the creation of identifiable neighbourhood centres with a full range of local facilities including convenience shops, primary school and multi purpose hall with healthcare facilities;
- planning conditions or legal agreement may be imposed to ensure the timely provision of facilities. In the case of phased provision those conditions may include 'triggers' that indicate the stage of development at which a facility is required.

8.5.5 In assessing the community infrastructure needed to be provided by a development, the Council will take account of:

- existing provision in the locality, including any spare capacity;
- the requirements for affordable housing set out in the Housing chapter of this Plan;
- the standards for open space provision set out in the Leisure, Recreation and Tourism chapter of this Plan;
- the County Council's educational requirements, given effect through its pupil product ratios;
- the guidelines set out at Appendix 14; and
- the views of the relevant service providers.

CF3 New Development Requirements

Development proposals will only be permitted if adequate social, recreational and community facilities (including educational and transport facilities, and utilities infrastructure) exists or its provision, where the need for it arises directly from the development concerned, is assured to a timescale to meet the needs of the development. Provision should be made in proportion to the scale and nature of the individual development and take account of the existing pattern of provision and capacity in the locality. The Council will seek to secure such provision having regard to the guidelines set out at Appendix 14. To ensure any such provision, the Council will apply appropriate conditions and/or seek to enter into an agreement with the developer under Section 106 of the 1990 Act.

8.5.6 It will be particularly important to ensure the timely provision of community facilities and other infrastructure as development progresses on large sites. Proposals for large developments over 1 ha must therefore include a phasing plan.

8.5.7 Where a large site is sub-divided between several developers a legal agreement will be required to ensure:

- an appropriate distribution and phasing of liability for provision of facilities and infrastructure, or payment for this;
- there is no sub-division into small parcels that evade the thresholds in the standards and in other related policies.

8.6 Existing Community Facilities

8.6.1 Existing community facilities should be protected, unless they are no longer needed or changes to the pattern or nature of service delivery would result in

better provision being made. Where a specific community use ceases, the Council will first consider whether the site might accommodate another community use before considering uses for non-community purposes.

CF5 Existing Community Facilities

Proposals for the change of use or development of existing community facilities to non-community uses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- 1. there is no longer any need for the facility, or the service it provides can be better delivered elsewhere or through other means, and**
- 2. there are no other community needs which could be met on the site.**

8.7 Safeguarded Future Community Facilities

8.7.1 Substantial investment is being made in community facilities in Kent Thameside, for example Swan Valley School and the Darent Valley Hospital. Future investment will be focused on the major development sites, meeting the needs of the residents of the new communities, typically at new neighbourhood centres, but also through the improvement and expansion of existing facilities. Other than at Bexley Hospital – where a new primary school will not only meet the needs of new residents but will also replace the existing Maypole School – the major development site notations on the Proposals Map do not separately identify sites for community facilities. They will be planned integrally with the main uses, through the planning brief, masterplanning and planning application stages.

8.7.2 Firm proposals by the service providers having a land-take implication or planned provision needing to be safeguarded are currently limited to three sites for primary schools, although other needs may emerge during the Plan period. School sites at Bexley Hospital, Craylands Lane and Southfleet are shown on the Proposals Map and will be safeguarded through Policy CF6. Proposals for residential development being brought forward at Ingress Park and Stone Castle will, respectively, make land available for a primary school on-site and provide for the expansion of Stone CoE Primary. Housing proposals at North Dartford, Swanscombe Peninsula, Eastern Quarry and Ebbsfleet will need to make on-site provision for primary schools. Additionally, secondary provision will be required at Eastern Quarry and possibly at Swanscombe Peninsula.

8.7.3 In addition to educational requirements, the Local Plan also identifies the potential to develop a crematorium at the former Mabledon Hospital site (see policy GB10) and a community hall at Sutton-at-Hone.

CF6 Safeguarded Future Community Facilities

Land shown on the Proposals Map for the development of community facilities will be safeguarded for that purpose and no other development which would prejudice such provision will be permitted thereon.

Appendix 14

Guidelines and Thresholds for Community Facilities (Policy CF3)

The Process

Set out below are the guidelines to be applied as a starting point for assessing the community facilities requirements related to residential development proposals. They do not include affordable and low cost housing requirements, playground/open space/Green Grid provisions, or transport requirements. Developers are advised to consult the relevant sections of the Local Plan for further advice on these matters. The guidelines have been devised in conjunction with the relevant service providers and are subject to review. They can therefore change during the lifetime of the Local Plan and, as a result, developers are reminded of the importance of discussing developer contributions with the Local Planning Authority at an early stage to clarify and discuss the requirements for a particular site.

Paragraph 16.2.11 gives guidance for developers when dealing with brownfield conditions on development sites. The Local Planning Authority will take a realistic view of these matters when negotiating provision.

Delivery

Provision should be made on site, or elsewhere if an alternative location can better serve the needs of the development. Provision can be made in the form of entirely new facilities, or upgrades to existing provision. New provision can also be co-located and/or integrated if this satisfies the relevant service providers. Temporary solutions involving phased or incremental provision may be appropriate in the early years of a development.

With regard to provision, the developer will be expected to meet the full cost of the required facility, including the provision of serviced land, the design and construction of the buildings and, where appropriate, the fitting out costs. In some cases, the provision of land or the safeguarding of a site, is the only requirement, and this is indicated in the table below.

Triggers for provision, in the table below, refer to numbers of dwellings completed.

Facility	Pre-School Nursery
Dwellings catchment to support facility	300
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	300
Size of facility	1 class (30 children) – 200 sq m
Provision per dwelling	0.1 children per household
Location	80% of dwellings within 400 m walking distance 100% of dwellings within 600 m walking distance
Note	Standards assume 100% provision for 3-4 year olds but make no allowance for children below the age of 3
Facility	Primary School
Dwellings catchment to support facility	570
Minimum size of new facility	1FE= 210 pupils
Provision per dwelling	0.37 primary aged pupils per household
Location	80% of dwellings within 400 m walking distance 100% of dwellings within 600 m walking

	distance
Note	<p>If a new facility is not required, a financial contribution will be sought pro rata to the number of pupils. Education contributions will only be sought from developments exceeding 10 dwellings.</p> <p>KCC's optimum size of a primary school is two forms of entry, the minimum would be a one-form entry. An assessment is made on the existing capacity of schools within a 2 mile radius of the proposed site (for primary schools) to determine the "need" for contributions. Where there is a proven need for a new facility, the housing exceeds roughly 300 units and where there is no capacity to expand within existing schools, the LEA will also seek land at nil cost. For information a one-form entry school is 7 classes at 30 pupils a class, giving a total of 210 pupils.</p>
Facility	Secondary School
Dwellings catchment to support facility	6,000
Minimum size of new facility	6FE = 900 pupils (excludes 6 th Form)
Provision per dwelling	0.15 secondary aged pupils per household
Location	<p>80% of dwellings within 1000 m walking distance</p> <p>100% of dwellings within 1,500 m walking distance</p>
Note	<p>If a new facility is not required, a financial contribution will be sought pro rata to the number of pupils. Education contributions will only be sought from developments exceeding 10 dwellings.</p> <p>KCC's optimum size of a secondary school is six forms of entry. An assessment is made on the existing capacity of school within a 3 mile radius of the proposed site (for secondary schools) to determine the "need" for contributions. Where there is a proven need for a new facility and where there is no capacity to expand within existing schools, the LEA will also seek land at nil cost. For information 1 form entry at a secondary school is 30 pupils for 5 years, giving a total of 150 pupils.</p>
Facility	Community Hall
Dwellings catchment to support facility	1,500
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	150 (temporary), 500 (permanent)
Size of facility	190 sq m
Provision per dwelling	0.13 sq m
Location	Transport node
Note	A temporary community hall is necessary at the early stages of development to help enable a community to become established

Facility	Sports and Leisure Centre
Dwellings catchment to support facility	1,500
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	500
Size of facility	0.2 ha – provision of land only
Provision per dwelling	n/a
Location	Transport node
Note	A site area of 0.2 ha assumes a building of 300 sq m in area
Facility	Social services (Family Centre used as basis)
Dwellings catchment to support facility	3,000
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	1,000
Size of facility	240 sq m
Provision per dwelling	0.08 sq m
Location	Transport node
Facility	Place of Worship
Dwellings catchment to support facility	3,750
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	1,250
Size of facility	0.1 ha – provision of land only
Provision per dwelling	n/a
Location	Transport node
Note	0.1 ha assumes building of 180 sq m
Facility	Health Centre
Dwellings catchment to support facility	3,750
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	250 (temporary), 1,250 (permanent)
Size of facility	1000 sq m
Provision per dwelling	0.27 sq m
Location	Transport node
Note	A doctor's surgery to be provided in the early stages of development
Facility	Library
Dwellings catchment to support facility	5,000
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	1,670
Size of facility	200 sq m
Provision per dwelling	0.04 sq m
Location	Transport node
Facility	Local Shopping Facility
Dwellings catchment to support facility	1,000
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	250
Size of development	0.2 ha – safeguarding of site only
Provision per dwelling	n/a
Location	Within 500 m walking distance of all properties in the catchment area and at a transport node
Notes	The scale of provision should be appropriate to the needs of the catchment area. No individual retail unit to exceed 300 sq m (gross floorspace).
Facility	District Shopping Centre
Dwellings catchment to support facility	3,000
Threshold to trigger provision (dwellings)	750
Size of development	0.5 ha – safeguarding of site only
Provision per dwelling	n/a

Location	Transport node
Notes	The scale of provision should be appropriate to the needs of the catchment area. No individual retail unit to exceed 1,000 sq m (gross floorspace).

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