

## LP28 - Services and Facilities Within the Community

### Policy background and explanation

- 16.01 The aim of the policy is to support and safeguard key services and facilities within the Districts, which play an important role within the community.
- 16.02 While it is not the intention of this policy to protect facilities which are not economically viable or feasible (either in its current or future form), the loss of community facilities must be justified. This needs to be demonstrated through submission of evidence as identified in the policy. This required evidence must be agreed through discussion with the relevant LPA to ensure that consultation is considered appropriate and robust.
- 16.03 For the purpose of this policy, community services and facilities include: open spaces, village and public halls, community centres, places of worship, cinemas, theatres, libraries, leisure centres, museums, public houses, restaurants, cafés, convenience shops, banks, building societies, and post offices. Education and healthcare facilities are addressed in separate policies in the Plan.
- 16.04 Open spaces includes:
- a) Allotments which are valuable community spaces and offer people opportunities for food production;
  - b) Amenity green space (defined as spaces which are open to free and spontaneous use by the public but are not formally managed for a specific function such as a park or playing field; nor managed as a natural or semi-natural habitat, and for the purposes of open space provision are considered to be greater than 0.15 ha in size);
  - c) Sports and recreational facilities which include, but are not limited to, parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities, play spaces and formalised sports clubs' space (such as playing pitches and golf courses); and
  - d) Accessible natural green space which covers a variety of partly or wholly accessible spaces including meadows, woodland and copses of trees all of which share a trait of having natural characteristics and wildlife value, but which are also open to public use and enjoyment.
- 16.05 Individually or collectively all of these spaces can contribute to the overall visual amenity of an area. In addition, open spaces can also contribute to mitigating adverse impacts upon internationally designated sites. In delivering open space, the LPA may consider it is more appropriate to make improvements to / enhancing existing open space within the locality in an equally or more accessible location than the proposed development. This would depend on local circumstances and the connectivity to existing provision. The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Open Space Assessment (May 2019) and associated online mapping together with the Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (June 2021) provide the guidance and requirements for open space provision. An SPD will provide further clarification and guidance on open space design, provision and functionality.

- 16.06 Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraphs 101 to 103 of the NPPF.
- 16.07 Proposals for the total or partial loss of open space(s) must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that an open space is surplus to requirements. It is expected that this is supported by sufficient engagement with the local community. Development of and improvements to services and facilities would include for example through expansion, upgrading and diversification with or without enabling development.
- 16.08 There is also the need to ensure that open space (of all types) is incorporated into new development, on sites of 1 hectare or more. This does not necessarily mean formal play areas, as the flexible policy requires consideration of the most suitable open space to meet local needs and aspirations, informed by evidence including the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Open Space Assessment (May 2019) and associated online mapping together with the Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (June 2021). Open space will normally be required to be provided on the development site itself, but in appropriate cases off-site provision may be agreed by the LPA. The acceptability of off-site open space provision will be dependent on its proximity and accessibility to the community it serves. The mechanisms for the delivery of open space are set out in Policy LP32 – Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations.

## **Policy LP28 - Services and Facilities Within the Community**

### **1. Provision of New and / or Expanded Services and Facilities**

- a. **Proposals for new accessible local services and community facilities will be supported where the proposal is well related to and meets the needs of the local community.**
- b. **Development of and improvements to services and facilities which would assist in safeguarding a viable community asset will be supported subject to Plan policy compliance. The facility should be a proportionate scale to the settlement and should not adversely affect existing facilities. Proposals, particularly those located outside settlement boundaries, must demonstrate evidence of the community need for and/or the benefits of the new facilities and good accessibility to the community to be served.**
- c. **All development should have a high standard of design and sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and townscape, with no adverse effects on heritage assets and their settings.**
- d. **For open space, all developments in excess of 1 hectare, will be required to provide on-site open space provision to meet the needs it creates having regard to what is already in the area and the most recent Open Space Assessment. This is unless the LPA considers it more appropriate to make improvements to existing open space within the locality in an equally or more accessible location than the proposed development.**

**2. Loss of Services and Facilities**

Development involving or comprising of the loss of an existing community facility, service or a premises, which is currently or last used to provide such use, will only be permitted if either:

- a. Compensatory provision of an alternative or improved facility will be provided in an equally accessible or improved location<sup>38</sup>; or
- b. The applicant can sufficiently demonstrate that the service or facility is not viable and is no longer performing a functional role in its current or future form and it is not needed for an economically viable alternative community use.

**3. Evidence to demonstrate that a service or facility is not viable, either in its current or future form should be agreed with the relevant LPA in advance (before being gathered) and should include:**

- a. A sustained marketing period, normally of 6 months, undertaken at a realistic asking price on a range of terms and in an appropriate format by an independent qualified assessor;
- b. Regard to any material considerations, designations or adopted plans for the area; and
- c. Regard to relevant evidence on levels of community need and/or requirements<sup>39</sup>.

**4. Conversion of community facilities or premises into residential dwelling(s) must demonstrate compliance with part 2 and part 3 above and Policy LP04.**

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<sup>38</sup> For open space provision see the Open Space Assessment (as amended).

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