

## CHAPTER 9

# COMMUNITY SERVICES

### Introduction

- 9.1 Community services in the context of this Plan are the majority of services other than retailing or employment uses, either commercially or non-commercially operated, which support or enrich the lives of local people, and which have land use planning implications. Community services include such facilities as hospitals, schools, day centres, libraries, nurseries/crèches for children and places of worship. A more comprehensive list is included in the Glossary. One of the themes underlying the plan is the development of a greater sense of local community.
- 9.2 Local community services will change as the needs of local people, and ways of meeting these needs, change. They will be provided by a mixture of the Council, central government, the private and voluntary sectors and not-for-profit organisations, often operating in partnership within particular projects.
- 9.3 The government requires each local authority to produce an annual Community Care Plan. The Royal Borough's plan is prepared jointly with the local family health services authority and the district health authority in collaboration with local voluntary and private organisations. The Community Care Plan explains the arrangements to be made during the year to develop health and social care services for the borough's adult residents and their carers. A Children's Services Plan is also published setting out the plans to assist local children in need and their families.
- 9.4 The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 introduced substantial changes to the way in which residential provision is made for people requiring a high level of care, with provision increasingly made by private and voluntary sectors and charitable organisations in addition to public authorities. The emphasis is shifting away from traditional patterns of care (in large acute hospitals) to primary care facilities. This has land use planning implications in respect of:
- the need to review special housing needs (as detailed in the Housing Investment Programme Strategy);
  - the provision of day-care for elderly people (Policy CS2).
- 9.5 Most developments relating to utility services have quite different locational requirements, and impacts, from the majority of community services. In some cases they are referred to specifically in the UDP (for example in relation to uses on open land, Policy OL2 and waste disposal in Chapter 10); other proposed developments requiring planning consent will need to be judged against the environmental and other policies in the plan. The utility companies enjoy extensive permitted development rights under the General Development Order with regard to the exercise of their functions.

## **Community Services STR9**

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**EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES REQUIRING A STRATEGIC LOCATION IN ORDER TO SERVE THE BOROUGH OR A WIDER AREA WILL BE ENCOURAGED WITHIN KINGSTON TOWN CENTRE. OTHER MORE LOCAL SERVICES WILL BE ENCOURAGED IN DISTRICT CENTRES AND OTHER SUITABLE LOCATIONS.**

- 9.6 Kingston town centre is a strategic centre serving a wide geographical area, and has a number of functions, acting as a retailing, employment, education and recreation centre. It also enjoys good access by road and rail and is therefore an appropriate location for the kind of community services described in this policy, which would include centres of higher and further education and other facilities which have large catchment areas which extend into neighbouring districts and beyond.
- 9.7 Priority uses for Kingston Town Centre are set out in policy STR21 which includes community uses. These are clearly interdependent. For example, the University and College are important to the town centre not only because of their contribution to the local and wider economy in educating and training borough residents to compete in the job market, but also in terms of their contribution to supporting shopping, commercial and cultural facilities.

## **New Community Facilities and the Extension of Existing Community Facilities CS1**

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**THE COUNCIL WILL NORMALLY PERMIT PROPOSALS FOR NEW EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISTRICT CENTRES, AND PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE OR EXTEND EXISTING FACILITIES (INCLUDING HOSPITAL FACILITIES) WHERE REQUIRED FOR OPERATIONAL REASONS, PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:**

- (A) ADEQUATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS AVAILABLE FROM ALL PARTS OF THE CATCHMENT AREA;**
- (B) TRAFFIC CONDITIONS ARE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED;**
- (C) RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED.**

- 9.8 The Council wishes to enable the provision of suitable services in appropriate locations, so that all the organisations involved can offer an effective service. When considering the necessity for, and location of, new community facilities the Council will take into account the benefit or improvements to the service that will arise for borough residents, and the availability of resources and suitability of the site, especially its accessibility to the users of the service.

- 9.9 District centres will often be the most appropriate location for facilities which do not require a strategic location in Kingston town centre, but which many people need to visit. Provision within district centres will capitalise upon the availability of public transport and public off-street car parking, enhance their focal role, allow multi-purpose trips to be made, and minimise the disturbance to residents that can occur as a result of traffic movements, parking etc. Community uses may prove a satisfactory alternative use of vacant shop premises. Uses such as primary health care facilities/one stop health centres can generate high visitor numbers and enable users to make multi-purpose trips by combining their health visit with a trip to the local shops or other facilities.
- 9.10 As an alternative to a district centre location, some community services may be most appropriately provided at a more local level. Local shopping centres may provide appropriate locations (see Policy S3). A key factor is that disturbance and loss of residential amenity is avoided, and provision within residential areas and away from the primary and secondary road network will only be considered where this is the case and there is a proven local need for the service (see Policy H2).
- 9.11 A similar approach will guide the Council's consideration of improvements or extensions to facilities, when proposals will be judged against criteria designed to protect the environment.
- 9.12 At the time of writing the borough contains four hospitals, three with NHS Trust status and the other privately run. The way primary health care is delivered is changing. "The NHS Plan: A Plan for Investment, A Plan for Reform" (July 2000) sets out the Government's latest plans for change. This includes moving some services currently provided in hospitals to more accessible locations (including co-locations with other community services) and increasing the number of, and accessibility to, public primary care and intermediate care facilities. These facilities will be provided in the form of one stop multi-purpose premises where GPs will work alongside a range of other health care providers e.g. nurses, therapists, dentists, opticians, health visitors, pharmacists and social workers, in highly accessible locations such as town centres. It should be noted that traffic generation and parking for large facilities such as hospitals can have considerable effects on surrounding residential areas, and will be a significant consideration in any proposal.
- 9.13 Such reform means existing facilities will need to be extensively reviewed and modernised as appropriate throughout the plan period requiring the refurbishment or redevelopment of outmoded and overcrowded health care facilities. Premises may also need significant refurbishment or redevelopment to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act requirements and to enable them to deliver the kind of health care envisaged in the NHS Plan. The Council will continue to liaise with the NHS and Kingston Primary Care Trust in order to meet the changing health care needs of the local population in line with Government policy. The Council will also support and encourage the appropriate efficient re-use of surplus institutional land and/or buildings arising from this modernisation to be determined in the light of other relevant policies in the UDP.

- 9.14 The Council will encourage the provision of good quality childcare to serve the needs of borough residents, employees and visitors. In assessing planning applications for such development the above criteria will be used to ensure that these uses are not detrimental to the local environment. It should be noted that under the provisions of the Children Act 1990 the Borough's Community Services Directorate has an important role in ensuring that premises are suitable in terms of size, play provision, staffing levels etc.

## Facilities for Care in the Community CS2

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**IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR THE CARE IN THE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND THOSE WITH LEARNING OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES INCLUDING THOSE RESULTING FROM AGEING, WILL NORMALLY BE SUPPORTED WHERE:**

- (A) THE ACCOMMODATION IS SUITABLE FOR THEIR NEEDS;**
- (B) APPROPRIATE DAY CARE AND OTHER SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO SUPPORT THEIR LIVING MORE INDEPENDENTLY;**
- (C) THEY ARE SITED WITH CONVENIENT ACCESS TO TRANSPORT, SHOPS AND OPEN SPACES (WHERE POSSIBLE); AND**
- (D) IN THE CASE OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION IT CAN BE SATISFACTORILY LOCATED WITH CONVENIENT ACCESS TO LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICES.**

- 9.15 Changes in the provision of care to those suffering from mental health problems have focused attention on the need for a variety of support services which range from group homes and hostels to day centres and accommodation for carers' support groups. A further change has been that an increasing variety of organisations are involved in the provision of these services. Similar facilities are also required to cater for people with certain types of mental health problems or physical disability. Services for elderly people are planned to provide support to enable them to retain their independence as long as possible. They range from home care and mobile meals to day and respite care. Residential care is provided for the most frail (see also Policy H13).
- 9.16 Where new services are being provided they should enable the users to make maximum use of the ordinary resources of the community. This will mean a location within an established residential area, close to, or with easy access (by foot or public transport) to, local community services, shopping facilities and open space. It should be noted that a change of use from a dwelling house to a use where not more than six residents live as a single household, including where care is provided for the residents, does not require planning permission under the Use Classes Order.

## **Adult Education Facilities and Youth Centres CS3**

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**THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK SUITABLE SITES FOR ADDITIONAL YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRES WHERE THERE IS A DEMAND FOR THEIR PROVISION AND WILL CONSIDER THE REQUIREMENT TO REPLACE THESE AND ADULT EDUCATION FACILITIES AFFECTED BY REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS IN THE LIGHT OF EXISTING AND EXPECTED FUTURE DEMAND.**

- 9.17 The Council will continue to review the provision of youth and community centres and adult education facilities. These are a valuable resource in helping to meet a wide range of social, educational, and leisure needs within the community. The Council will pay particular regard to:
- co-ordinating the planned provision of adult education facilities;
  - seeking sites for additional youth and community centres and improving such facilities where required. The Council will wish to see that all areas of the borough are served and that facilities are available to permit this. Any replacement facilities will be required to be of an adequate standard.
- 9.18 The Council would like to ensure that suitable accommodation is available throughout the borough for the use of Youth Clubs and community organisations as these facilities provide a valuable community service. The Council will aim to enhance the partnership with the voluntary sector and, wherever possible, assist voluntary groups in the provision of community activities. The Council recognises the need for a partnership between itself, the private sector and voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, to assist in the provision of services.

## **Customer Facilities and Conveniences CS4**

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**THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE DEVELOPERS OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ATTRACT LARGE NUMBERS OF VISITORS/CUSTOMERS, SUCH AS SHOPPING CENTRES, PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES, LEISURE FACILITIES, AND LARGE RETAIL OUTLETS, TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE TOILETS AND BABY CHANGING FACILITIES FOR THE USE OF THEIR CUSTOMERS. SUCH FACILITIES SHOULD MEET THE NEEDS OF CARERS WITH CHILDREN AND SHOULD BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.**

- 9.19 The presence or absence of these features can make a considerable difference to the experience of using the borough's shopping, recreational or social facilities, both for residents and visitors. This policy will be of particular significance to retail developments where people may spend a great deal of time in a particular store.

## **Gypsies and Travellers**

### **CS5**

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**THE COUNCIL WILL RETAIN THE EXISTING TRAVELLERS' CARAVAN SITE AT HOOK RISE. ANY PROPOSAL FOR A NEW SITE SHOULD INCLUDE PROVISION FOR BASIC AMENITIES AND SERVICES AND WILL BE ASSESSED IN RELATION TO OTHER POLICIES IN THE PLAN, ESPECIALLY THOSE CONCERNED WITH ACCESS, TRAFFIC GENERATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.**

- 9.20 Given the highly developed nature of the borough, and the large proportion of open land designated as Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt, opportunities for suitably located gypsy sites are unlikely to arise. Any new proposals should pay particular attention to minimising visual intrusion by the provision of adequate landscaping. Ideally sites should be suitable for mixed residential and business uses.
- 9.21 In many instances of unauthorised parking of caravans, sometimes in substantial numbers, considerable damage to the local environment has resulted. The Council has therefore taken steps, and will continue to do so, to physically restrain the re-use of sites previously affected, and will bear this problem in mind when managing its own property and land. The Council can obtain an order authorising the removal of caravans stationed on occupied land without the owner's consent. This procedure has been followed in the past and will, whenever necessary, be followed in the future.

## **Retention of Public Houses in the Community**

### **CS6**

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**THE COUNCIL WILL NORMALLY RESIST THE CHANGE OF USE OR DEMOLITION OF PUBLIC HOUSES WHICH ARE USED AS MEETING PLACES OR ACT AS FOCAL POINTS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY UNLESS IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT ALTERNATIVE PROVISION EXISTS WITHIN THE LOCALITY OR IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE USE OF A PUBLIC HOUSE HAS BEEN MARKETED AT REALISTIC PRICES FOR A PERIOD OF AT LEAST TWO YEARS.**

- 9.22 The Council will resist the loss of public houses which play an important role in the local community. Many public houses provide a valuable social role in the community as a meeting place for local people, providing leisure facilities and through organising functions. Several local pubs have recently been lost, often because the sites or buildings can be developed more profitably for higher value uses such as housing. For the same reason it is unlikely that new sites will come forward for this type of use. In some areas of the Borough there are also few or no alternative venues within reasonable walking distance which is particularly important where consumption of alcohol is involved. It is therefore

considered important to retain those buildings or sites where it is reasonable to do so.

- 9.23 Favourable consideration may be given to a proposal involving the loss of a public house where the applicant is able to demonstrate that alternative provision exists within the local area.

