



13

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES



Introduction	326
Sustainable Transport	334
Parking	340
Community Facilities	344
Open Space and Sports and Recreation	348

13

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Introduction



13.1 It is important that growth and development is accompanied by required transport and other infrastructure, to ensure that new communities become thriving places that are well integrated with existing settlements.

13.2 The provision of infrastructure in the right location, at the right scale and at the right time, is therefore essential to support future growth.

13.3 Through our partnership work with infrastructure and service providers we have identified that improvements to existing infrastructure and in some cases the provision of new infrastructure will be required to support development. An Interim Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been published alongside this Regulation 18 Local Plan. This sets out our early understanding of the quality and capacity of our existing infrastructure, our infrastructure deficiencies as well as the infrastructure that will likely

be required to support the delivery of development during the plan period. It is recognised that this is a live and iterative document that will be progressed further alongside the stages of the Local Plan. The council will therefore continue to work with its partners to identify requirements to ensure that development is supported by the appropriate level of infrastructure.

13.4 There are numerous partners involved in preparing our IDP, some are private sector such as utility providers, some are public sector such as Kent County Council, the NHS and emergency services. Not all planned infrastructure and service investments require funding through

the planning process. There are a range of infrastructure requirements that may be necessary to ensure that development is acceptable in planning terms, Figure 13.1 on the right sets out potential infrastructure types that should be considered (although this should not be considered as an exhaustive list). Further detail regarding identified infrastructure projects and investments is set out in the accompanying interim IDP and delivery schedules.

Figure 13.1: Infrastructure Types

ADEQUATE HIGHWAYS ACCESS AND CAPACITY	CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS AND EQUIPMENT	FIRE, POLICE AND RESCUE SERVICES	MOBILE PHONE SIGNAL COVERAGE	REPLACEMENT / NEW HABITAT
ADULT SOCIAL CARE	CLEAN WATER SUPPLY	FLOOD DEFENCES AND DRAINAGE INFRASTRUCTURE	NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACES	SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES
AMBULANCE SERVICES	CYCLING AND WALKING FACILITIES	HIGH SPEED INTERNET ACCESS	NURSERY SCHOOLS	SPORTS FACILITIES
ALLOTMENTS	EDUCATION PROVISION - PRIMARY AND SECONDARY	HOSPITAL CAPACITY	PARKS AND OPEN SPACES	SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION
CAR PARKING	ENERGY SUPPLIES - GAS AND ELECTRICITY	LANDSCAPING	PRIMARY AND COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES	SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS
CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS	ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS	LIBRARIES	PUBLIC TRANSPORT	WASTE MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL

13.5 Once the Local Plan has been adopted the IDP will be reviewed regularly and will provide a key reference in identifying area and site-specific requirements. Not all infrastructure requirements planned in the borough are required to mitigate new development and may be required due to asset renewal or other reasons. New development is only required to provide for new or improved infrastructure that is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

Infrastructure Contributions

13.4 The funding and delivery of infrastructure is complex, often requiring funding from different sources to enable delivery. This may be undertaken directly by a developer or via a financial contribution depending on the needs of the development and site-specific circumstances. The following are the main funding mechanisms available to the council.

S106 Planning Obligations

13.1 Planning obligations also known as Section 106 development contributions, are legal agreements made between interested parties, usually the developer / landowner and the Council. They are used to secure funding for the provision of infrastructure and facilities to support the community. The council does not currently have a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regime.

13.2 Related planning obligations must meet the statutory tests in regulation 122 of [The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations \(2010\)](#). These being that the planning obligation(s) must be:

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- Directly related to the development; and
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

13.3 S106 obligations can either be in the form of on-site delivery of infrastructure such as a community hall or as a financial contribution that will be utilised by a service provider including the council for purposes outside the control of the developer. An example might be a financial contribution for education which is passed to Kent County Council for the delivery of new or improved education facilities that will serve the new community.

S278 Agreements

13.5 A Section 278 agreement (or S278) is a section of the [Highways Act 1980](#) that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the Highway Authority (Kent County Council or National Highways) to make alterations or improvements to a public highway, as part of a planning application. The details of the S278 are set out in the S106 agreement but are monitored by the relevant Highways Authority.

Infrastructure Funding Statement

13.6 In December each year, the council publishes an [Infrastructure Funding Statement \(IFS\)](#) which provides information on the developer contributions collected each year. This document also provides information on the types of infrastructure secured and the projects to which the funding received and secured will be allocated.

13.7 In liaison with and taking account of advice from infrastructure providers, the council will continue to seek funding for infrastructure projects from new development. The Local Plan plays a key role in enabling the council to secure investment, allowing providers to plan for the delivery of identified projects that will support growth across the borough.

13.8 The council will also continue to seek funding through a range of other sources including central government, funding bids to partner organisations and other grant funding as this becomes available.



Policy INF1: Provision of Infrastructure and Services

- 1 Adequate infrastructure and services are important for creating and sustaining communities. New developments will be required to consider their impact upon the capacity of existing infrastructure and services. Early engagement with infrastructure providers is expected, to identify whether new or improved infrastructure and services including utilities will be required to support the growth proposed.
- 2 Planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that there is or will be, sufficient infrastructure and services to meet the requirements arising from the proposed development.
- 3 New healthcare, education facilities and other services (where required) should be provided in locations that relate well to both existing and new development. These facilities should be accessible by existing or new/improved public transport services and walking, wheeling and cycling routes.
- 4 Development that supports or provides carbon neutral utilities schemes that contribute to helping the council meet its carbon neutral target will be supported.
- 5 Applicants must work with commercial providers at an early stage to deliver broadband and mobile connectivity within their housing and employment developments, ensuring high speed connections and sufficient mobile telecommunications coverage are available.
- 6 New or improved infrastructure and services will be delivered either on-site by developers or off-site through S106 or S278 agreements. Planning obligations will be linked to development phasing or trigger points to ensure delivery occurs when required.
- 7 Long-term maintenance and management of infrastructure assets must also be considered, and , if required, contributions towards maintenance and management secured.

Phased delivery of infrastructure and services

- 8 The delivery of new or improved infrastructure and services will need to be agreed in terms of its delivery phasing and timing. This should be informed by liaison with infrastructure and service providers to ensure that infrastructure becomes become available when required to support the needs arising from the development in parallel. Some infrastructure requirements or contributions may need to be delivered prior to the commencement of development or first occupation.
- 9 Developments that are brought forward in phases or by multiple developers must ensure that infrastructure and services including utilities are delivered to the boundary of each phase or parcel, to ensure that future parcels or services can be achieved without retrofitting. The delivery of infrastructure and services will be in

accordance with any masterplan and / or phasing plan for the overall development and will be secured by S106 agreements. Proposals that would compromise existing utilities infrastructure or encroach on future connections will be refused.

- 10 All infrastructure and services must be built to the required regulatory standards as agreed with infrastructure providers with appropriate arrangements for in perpetuity management and maintenance so that adoption by the regulatory body, subject to the agreement of the local planning authority and regulatory body.

Viability

- 11 Viability reasons for non-delivery will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. To demonstrate this, applicants must provide a satisfactory viability assessment (open book) prior to the validation of the planning application. All costs associated with the development should be clearly set out including any abnormal or unforeseen costs. The assessment will be required to demonstrate how the value of planning obligations has been maximised. The council will use an independent consultant to verify the assessment, the cost of this will be funded by the applicant. All viability assessments will be published as part of the application documents.
- 12 If the full requirement of infrastructure and services mitigation requirements is not able to be delivered due to viability, including affordable housing requirements, then developments will only be permitted where their benefits outweigh the harm as a result of the lack of full mitigation and other relevant requirements, having regard to all material considerations.
- 13 Where viability is an issue in the delivery of infrastructure and services, a clawback mechanism will be included in the legal agreement(s) to ensure that the full infrastructure and service requirements can be provided, should viability, as informed by relevant viability assessments, improve following the grant of planning permission.

Reasoned Justification

13.9 The provision of adequate infrastructure and services is fundamental to the creation of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient communities. As development places increased pressure on existing infrastructure networks, it is essential that new proposals are supported by timely and proportionate infrastructure delivery. This Policy ensures that development does not outpace the capacity of essential services such as transport, education, healthcare, utilities, and digital connectivity.

13.10 Early engagement with infrastructure and service providers is critical to identifying requirements and securing delivery mechanisms. The policy supports a proactive approach to infrastructure planning, ensuring that new development contributes to the provision of necessary facilities and services either directly or through planning obligations. It also aligns with the council's carbon neutrality objectives by encouraging low-carbon utility schemes and sustainable transport access.

13.11 The Policy reflects national planning guidance and local strategic priorities, ensuring that infrastructure delivery is phased appropriately and coordinated across development parcels. It also introduces mechanisms to address viability concerns, ensuring transparency and accountability in the assessment of development contributions.

Policy Implementation

13.12 This Policy will be applied to all forms of development and seeks to ensure that infrastructure and services are planned and delivered in a timely, coordinated, and sustainable manner. Developers must demonstrate that sufficient infrastructure capacity exists or will be provided to support the development proposal.

13.13 Developers should review existing infrastructure provision at the outset of the planning process, and consideration should be given to the most recent IDP and other evidence available on the council's website. These will provide guidance on any deficiencies that may exist by infrastructure and service type and indicate what provision may be necessary to mitigate development impacts. Developers will be expected to discuss infrastructure provision at the pre-application stage and engage with providers. The area and/or site-specific infrastructure identified will determine the type and level of contribution(s) that are likely to be required including ongoing maintenance funding as relevant.

13.14 Infrastructure delivery may be secured through on-site provision or off-site contributions via S106 or S278 agreements. These will be linked to development phasing or trigger points as relevant to ensure infrastructure is available when needed. Long-term maintenance and management arrangements must be agreed to ensure infrastructure remains fit for purpose.

13.15 Where development is phased or involves multiple developers, infrastructure must be delivered to the boundary of each phase to enable future connections. Proposals that compromise existing infrastructure or future delivery will not be supported.

13.16 In cases where viability is a concern, applicants must submit an open-book viability assessment prior to validation. The council will independently review these assessments, and clawback mechanisms will be used to secure full infrastructure delivery if viability improves post-permission. Viability will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and must be robustly justified.



Sustainable Transport



13.17 New development across the borough will add pressure onto existing transport networks, this will require suitable mitigation to ensure that development does not have unacceptable highways impacts. The Policy approach for transport is now vision led, not the traditional approach of 'predict and provide' where highways capacity and related mitigation is the primary focus.

13.18 This approach is being pursued due to a recognition that new highways capacity is not the only solution, and a need to respond to the climate crisis by aiming for carbon neutrality and better transport mode choices. Decarbonising transport can be achieved by reducing the need to travel and prioritising sustainable transport, including better integrated and accessible active travel options.

13.19 The [Kent Local Transport Plan 5](#) (2024) sets out the following development management principles:

- To ensure Local Planning Authorities and developers work effectively with KCC to effectively design development and local transport so as to reduce its pressure on the existing road network and embed sustainable travel from the start.
- To implement an infrastructure-first approach to secure initial improvements to the whole transport system to reduce pressure on the road network.
- To recognise the uncertainty in how occupants of new developments will travel by assessing a range of outcomes and ensuring the right mitigations are implemented in response to observed impacts.

13.20 This will be achieved with a ‘decide and provide’ approach, which supports achieving a greater choice of transport modes to help reduce traffic generation onto the existing highway network whilst also addressing impacts that do require mitigation. This will be delivered by ensuring planning agreements make provisions for uncertainty in transport impacts and by applying a monitor and manage approach.

13.21 The current high level of car ownership and vehicular trips, and gaps in sustainable transport infrastructure with poor connectivity particularly within Tonbridge and other district centres, are key challenges. The Local Plan therefore seeks to address this by allocating development in sustainable locations therefore reducing the need to travel long distances for key services and ensuring that the connections between places can be achieved through the improvement of sustainable modes.

13.22 The council has been working with Kent County Council and National Highways to undertake transport modelling to inform this Regulation 18 stage 2 Local Plan. The council has also commissioned local junction modelling covering the hotspot areas to assess junction performance in detail. The council is continuing to work with Kent County Council and National Highways to define mitigation for the identified roads and junctions that require this. Details of currently known mitigation schemes are provided in the IDP.

13.23 The council will continue to work with partners as the Plan progresses to Regulation 19 stage to develop its understanding of transport matters, to ensure that development can be supported by sustainable transport solutions and mitigated appropriately.

Policy INF2: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

Public transport and active travel

- 1 The council recognises the importance of delivering and enhancing sustainable and active travel infrastructure which is essential to support the vitality of new and existing communities. Adopting a 'decide and provide' approach, the council will work in partnership with Kent County Council, Highways England and transport providers to ensure that developments mitigate their travel demand and traffic impacts.
- 2 Proposals as relevant will be required to design schemes that will contribute to healthy places and streets and enable an integrated and improved transport network for all users, reducing car journeys and providing greater sustainable travel choices.
- 3 It is acknowledged that mitigation options will vary from site to site. Site promoters should however prioritise:
 - a Supporting and enhancing existing bus services especially those connecting rural service centres and larger villages, to make these more attractive and commercially sustainable through enhanced service frequency, hours of operation and through the provision of high-quality vehicles and kerb-side facilities (as required). There will also be support for measures that are identified in the [Kent Bus Services Improvement Plan](#) (BSIP);
 - b Supporting rail services through the provision of access and station facilities improvements, that make it more desirable, convenient and safer for passengers to undertake linked non-car journeys;
 - c Including measures for on-site public rights of way improvements for walking, wheeling and cycling as appropriate; and
 - d Having regard to the [Kent Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#) and borough Active Travel Strategy, in protecting and enhancing off-site public rights of way to achieve a high-quality network of routes for walking, wheeling, cycling and equestrian use which where possible are compliant with (Local Transport Note 1/20 or any subsequent guidance);
 - e Providing a contribution towards the borough council's car club scheme (subject to operational coverage), in-particular where on-site parking provision is restricted.
- 4 Active travel infrastructure should be accessible and inclusive. Cycleways should provide enough space for adapted cycles such as tricycles, tandems, wheelchair cycles.

Traffic and highways

- 5 In terms of traffic and highway design, developments will be supported where:
 - a The nature and level of traffic can be accommodated without adversely impacting upon the safety, amenity or character of the surrounding area;
 - b Roads and junctions within the development, including those to be altered or added as a result of the development, are designed and delivered in accordance with appropriate highway design standards;
 - c Suitable and safe vehicle access and turning and access provision for service vehicles e.g. refuse and emergency service vehicles can be made in a forward direction;
 - d The development provides a design and layout that will encourage slower driving speeds prioritising non-motorised travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) where segregated provision for these modes can't be achieved.
- 6 A Transport Assessment or Transport Statement and Sustainable Travel Plan, as relevant to the scale and nature of the development should be submitted with all applications (in line with Kent County Council guidance). Where assessments are required, they must cover the full extent of transport implications arising from the development.
- 7 Any transport improvements required will be secured by legal agreement.



Reasoned Justification

13.24 It is vital that growth is supported by necessary transport mitigation so that negative impacts are avoided and the ambition and outcomes of the Kent Local Transport Plan 5 are achieved. In particular delivering a safe, reliable, efficient and affordable transport network which prioritises emission free travel, increasing the use of public transport and making walking, wheeling and cycling more attractive.

13.25 Not delivering necessary transport mitigation will have unwanted development impacts which are likely to include the following. Worsening congestion, queueing and related journey time delays, sustained poor air quality, worsening public health indicators due to inactivity as people avoid active travel options due to perceptions of safety and a lack of dedicated infrastructure for walking, wheeling and cycling. These impacts must be proactively avoided by all parties involved in the development process, to ensure that Tonbridge and Malling becomes a more successful and attractive place to live and work.

Policy Implementation

13.26 Where on-site transport improvements are required; these should be clearly set out within the detail of proposed site layout, access and other plans that are submitted as part of the planning application. Where off-site transport improvements are required, these should also be clearly set out within the detail of the planning application, including the supporting Transport Assessment or Transport Statement and Travel Plan where these are required. Kent County Council has published '[Transport Assessment and Travel Plan Guidance \(2025\)](#)', this sets out related requirements in further detail.

13.27 A Transport Assessment is a comprehensive technical document that assesses in detail, the transport proposals, issues and implications arising from a development proposal, for all transport modes. It also sets out measures to improve accessibility to and from the site to an appropriate level for the intended use and reduce the impacts of the development on the local highway network.

13.28 It is an impartial report, typically undertaken by a competent professional employed by the developer and usually includes evidence to support the application including safe and suitable access for all modes, and strategic / detailed junction capacity modelling.

13.29 Whether or not a Transport Assessment will be required will depend on the size, nature and location of the development. Applicants should liaise with KCC at an early stage in the planning application process to determine whether a Transport Assessment is likely to be needed to support an application. It is recommended that applicants engage in separate pre-application discussions with KCC, to agree what level of assessment is required (Transport Assessment, Transport Statement, Travel Plan) and the key contents.

13.30 A Travel Plan is a long-term strategy for managing multi-modal access to a site, promoting sustainable modes and reducing the proportion of car-based trips. Travel Plans help to enhance the accessibility and transport efficiency of the site, while minimising any adverse impact on either the local highway network or on other elements of the local transport system.

13.31 The KCC guidance sets out the general thresholds for when a Travel Plan will be required. However, the size of a site should not be the only determining factor when considering the requirement for a Travel Plan. In some cases, the location of the site, such as those located in congested areas or within an Air Quality Management Area, may warrant a Travel Plan to be prepared and subsequently implemented.

Parking

13.32 The NPPF is clear that parking along with other transport considerations is integral to the design of developments and contributes to making high quality places. The council requires the appropriate provision of parking in new developments and will ensure that this is both provided and adequately maintained to meet the needs of occupants. This includes parking for private vehicles, visitors and bicycles as well as other uses.

13.33 Currently for all development the council applies the parking standards set out in the [KCC guidance](#), this sets out the requirements for new developments in Kent. It considers parking for all types of vehicles and seeks to balance the need to provide an appropriate parking provision, ensure the safe operation of the public highway and encourage travel by sustainable modes. It provides advice on parking design and layout, disabled parking and mobility aids, parking for residential and non-residential uses, electric vehicles, as well as motorcycles, cycles and adaptive cycles.

13.34 The guidance provides provision standards for town centre, edge of centre, suburban and rural developments, which are intended to be a starting point in considering the provision required. This no longer sets maximum levels of parking provision, which have proven problematic previously in increasing pressure for on-street parking in edge of centre and suburban developments. A pragmatic approach is therefore encouraged that is also informed by site-specific considerations.

13.35 The Local Plan has sought to respond to the challenges of climate change, as well as the need to optimise the density of development in locations that are well served by public transport provision. This may result in some residential and employment developments requiring less parking provision, where this is centrally located with easy access to frequent rail and bus services, for example in Tonbridge town centre.

Policy INF3: Parking

- 1 All new developments will be required to consider and provide adequate and well-integrated parking for all types of vehicles, taking account of KCC's Parking Standards (2025) for these or any subsequent replacement guidance. This guidance is the starting point for engagement with the Local Planning and Highway Authority on parking and layout matters relating to new developments and early engagement on the quantity and design of parking is encouraged.
- 2 In considering new parking provision for all types of vehicles, the applicant shall consider local circumstances including:
 - a Reasonable demand that will derive from the development including visitor use / parking requirements;
 - b The proximity, accessibility and availability of public transport;
 - c How to encourage travel by sustainable modes of transport;
 - d Levels of car ownership;
 - e Existing parking controls;
 - f Local travel patterns;
 - g The safe operation of the public highway; and
 - h access to and from the residential development.
- 3 For residential developments, the consideration of the amount, location, layout and design of parking will be required to be considered at an early stage and as an integral part in the design of the development. It will be important to ensure that parking provision is appropriate to the development including:
 - a How the parking spaces / infrastructure will be used in practice,
 - b Ensuring that parking provision does not detract from the public realm; and
 - c Ensuring that parking is as secure as possible to encourage use.
- 4 For non-residential uses, parking should be considered on a 'first principles' approach taking into account predicted parking requirements and local circumstances. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that demand for parking (including staff) is either met on-site or mitigated and managed as appropriate.
- 5 New developments should also provide an appropriate level of disabled parking, parking for mobility aids, parking for adaptive bicycles and provision of electric vehicle and bike charging, with appropriate signage, which takes into consideration Kent County Council guidance. Parking and storage for bicycles, e-bicycles and motorcycles should also be provided in accordance with the guidance.
- 6 Transport assessments and Travel Plans will be required to support and justify proposed parking arrangements including their effective operation. Where the proposed supply of parking deviates significantly from the Kent County Council recommended standard, a detailed justification will be required to be submitted with the planning application.



Reasoned Justification

13.36 There are few issues that can anger residents and others more than the inadequacies of parking provision. The implications of having badly designed or too little provision can have serious effects on highway safety because of unintended levels of on street parking, while over provision can result in poor design, wasted space and apparent encouragement to use cars in preference to walking, cycling and public transport.

13.37 Parking problems can also manifest themselves in pavement parking, obstruction of driveways and accesses, hindrance to larger vehicles, damage to soft landscaping and footways, and cluttered, unsightly streets. Such outcomes can lead to tension between neighbours, affect people's perceptions about highway safety and reduce the likelihood of children using streets for play. Otherwise, well-designed neighbourhoods can be compromised in terms of their appearance and enjoyment by ill-considered approaches to the provision of parking for residents and visitors.

13.38 Parking is therefore a key issue for all new developments, getting it right is not just about minimising conflict it is also about ensuring the quality of life for occupants, and good management of the public realm. It is important that adequate parking provision for all is provided which takes account of the KCC guidance. Access to alternative sustainable modes of transport should inform the level of car parking provision that is provided for both residential and non-residential development.

Policy Implementation

13.39 The KCC standards are intended to be flexible and a starting point for dialogue with the Local Planning and Highway Authorities. KCC recognise that travel patterns, car ownership and transport technologies are evolving. As such, parking design will need to be flexible in the face of technology-driven changes to the way we use vehicles, and therefore it is expected that their guidance will be updated in the future as innovation that impacts the way we travel requires.

13.40 Parking must be provided at a level that is appropriate for the size, type and location of development it is to support, and should consider future demand for plug-in hybrid and electric vehicle charging as well as other assisted modes such as e-bicycles.

13.41 Developers must have a realistic expectation of the impact that modal shift will have on the level of parking, as informed by relevant Local Plan transport and other evidence. Insufficient vehicular parking or reliance on unallocated or visitor spaces, can lead to unforeseen parking stress. Where this impacts local roads due to increased on-street parking, this can hinder the flow of traffic and access for service and emergency vehicles, subsequently requiring retrofitted restrictions, and must be avoided.



Community Facilities

13.42 The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities, these may be privately or publicly owned. The council recognises that community facilities play an essential role in sustaining the long-term health and well-being of local communities. The ability to access local services that are in close proximity to where people live, has a significant relationship with well-being and a positive quality of life.

13.43 There are a range of community facilities across the borough including community centres and village halls, local shops, places of worship, education facilities, healthcare facilities, libraries, public houses and cultural venues. These facilities are used for a wide range of social,

educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural purposes, and are valued by those who use them. The use of local facilities for a broad range of activities is key to strengthening community cohesion and social interaction.

13.44 The council wishes to ensure that existing facilities are sustained, that new facilities are provided where these are required, and that all are protected against future loss. The council will support the diversification of local business to fulfil a wider range of local services for the community they serve, particularly where this will improve the long-term sustainability and viability of these premises. For example, the role of long-term vacant public house could be adapted by introducing a range of other valued services, such as a post office/banking hub, convenience store or dentist.

13.45 The council will also support proposals that seek to enhance the range of local services, particularly in rural settlements and within strategic residential site allocations, subject to them satisfactorily meeting all other relevant policies within the Local Plan. Development proposals for new community facilities should create flexible and adaptable premises, that, if required, can be used for a range of different purposes, such as meeting places, drop-in services and private hire. This will ensure that buildings can maximise their usage and role in serving the local community, securing their long-term future.

13.46 The council will protect buildings and premises that provide services that benefit the local community both socially and economically, resisting the loss of these where it is demonstrated that they are valued by the community they serve, and the relevant criteria of Policy INF4 are not met.

Policy INF4: Community Facilities

- 1 The council will encourage the retention, extension and provision of new community facilities, particularly in areas where there are poor levels of provision and where community facilities are required to meet identified needs arising from new development. Improvements to existing facilities should ensure that quality standards and service provision remain or are enhanced to ensure that all residents have access to facilities to meet their needs.
- 2 New or enhanced community facilities will be delivered via on-site measures and / or through off-site financial contributions, secured through planning obligations.

New and additional facilities

- 3 Proposals for new or improved community facilities will be supported, where the below criteria are met:
 - a Provision is within, adjoining or physically near to a built-up settlement boundary, unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed location is the only suitable option, is well-related to the community it will serve and will ensure that the character of the area is not harmed;

- b Accessible to the majority of the community it serves by walking or wheeling;
- c Designed, where possible, for flexible use and facility sharing to encourage a range of uses and activities and to ensure adaptability if demand for the facility changes;
- d Designed to ensure all potential users can access the facility and include accessible public toilet facilities for childcare and for those with a disability; and
- e Be designed in a way that will reduce the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Loss of existing facilities

- 4 Development proposals that will result in the loss or partial loss of a community facility will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that:
 - a The activities provided by the facility are adequately served by an existing or new accessible facility within the community at an alternative location. Where a new facility is proposed this should be of equal or higher value than the lost facility;
- 5 Proposals that would result in the loss of features associated with a community facility, that are likely to undermine a sites viability, such as but not limited to car parking or function rooms, will be refused planning permission unless the impact can be sufficiently mitigated and there are clearly justified circumstances for such a proposal to proceed.

- b The facility is no longer required by the community or is no longer feasible, financially viable or operational reasons for closing or moving the facility can be demonstrated;
- c The facility has been vacant for 12 months and it can be demonstrated via an active market campaign that there is no current or alternative use demand for the facility; and
- d The partial loss will contribute to the continuation of the existing community use (should the existing use require less floorspace) and it can be demonstrated that the existing use would otherwise be unviable but can be retained by cross-subsidy.



Reasoned Justification

13.47 Community facilities play a vital role in supporting the health, wellbeing, and cohesion of local communities. They provide essential services and spaces for social interaction, education, recreation, and support. The retention and enhancement of such facilities is particularly important in areas with poor provision or where new development generates additional demand.

13.48 This Policy seeks to ensure that community facilities are protected and enhanced, and that new facilities are delivered in accessible and appropriate locations. It supports flexible, inclusive, and safe design to meet the diverse needs of users and to adapt to changing community requirements over time. The policy also sets out clear criteria for the loss of existing facilities, ensuring that any such proposals are robustly justified and do not undermine community infrastructure.

Policy Implementation

13.49 Planning applications will be assessed against the criteria set out in the Policy to ensure proposals for new or improved facilities meet location, accessibility, and design requirements. Proposals should promote flexible use, inclusivity, and safety, including features such as accessible toilets and crime prevention measures

13.50 At an early stage in the planning application process applicants should consider local needs assessments for community facilities, infrastructure delivery plans, and community engagement (as relevant) to identify gaps in provision and to help inform the design and type of community facility.

13.51 Applicants proposing the loss of a facility must demonstrate that it is no longer viable or needed, including evidence of active marketing over a minimum period of 12 months. Independent reviews may be commissioned at the applicant's expense.



Open Space and Sports and Recreation



13.52 The provision of accessible, high-quality and well-maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities is important to support people in living active and healthy lifestyles and in providing opportunities for people of all abilities and ages to participate in sport and recreation. They also contribute to positive social, economic and environmental benefits, improving public health, well-being and quality of life. In addition, outdoor recreational space can also contribute to the public realm as well as providing other functions associated with green infrastructure also.

13.53 To understand both the current and likely future position in relation to the need for open space, sports and recreation provision a number of studies have been progressed. This includes:

- [Open Space Study \(2025\)](#) identifies those areas in the borough that have an open space deficiency in relation to the differing types of open space. These deficiencies are identified in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.
- [The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy \(2025\)](#) presents a supply and demand assessment of all formal playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the borough.
- [The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy \(2025\)](#) presents a supply and demand assessment for indoor sports facilities across the borough.

13.54 On a general basis, the evidence identifies a need to protect provision, improve the quality of existing provision, improve the maintenance of provision, and provide additional provision to support future development.

13.55 The facilities covered by this Policy include:

- Parks and Gardens - including country parks, parks and formal gardens;
- Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces - including heathland and nature reserves, woodland, wetlands, water courses, ponds and unimproved grassland;
- Amenity Greenspaces – including informal recreational open space, green space in residential development, village greens, other incidental landscaped areas and private greenspace that has visual or other value, even if no physical public access is possible;
- Play Areas for Children and Young People - including equipped play facilities, wheeled sports facilities (e.g. Skatepark), ball courts, meeting places and shelters;

- Outdoor Sports Facilities – including sports pitches & Tennis courts, bowling greens and athletics tracks, school playing fields (where there are local agreements for community use or where the field is crossed by a public right of way);
- Indoor Sports Facilities – including multi-use sports halls, competition and leisure swimming pools, health and fitness facilities, squash courts, indoor tennis facilities and indoor bowls facilities;
- Allotments – including allotments, community gardens and city farms; and
- Cemeteries and churchyards – including public cemeteries, burial grounds, churchyards and crematoria grounds.



Policy INF5: Outdoor and Indoor Sports, Recreation and Open Space Provision

- 1 The council will protect existing and support the provision of new and enhanced high quality open space, sports, and recreation provision to ensure that residents and visitors can enjoy the benefits that such facilities bring including contributing to health and wellbeing.

The provision of new or enhanced open space provision

- 2 Residential developments of 6 or more dwellings (use classes C3 and C4) will be required to provide or contribute towards the provision or improvement of open space, sports and recreation facilities in accordance with Annex 5.
- 3 High quality on-site provision should be sought as per Annex 5 unless exceptional circumstances exist where off-site provision would better provide for the community, there is already excess provision or where site constraints cannot be overcome to deliver on-site provision.

- 4 The type(s) of open space, sports and recreation provision to be provided will be discussed with the applicant at the pre-application stage taking into account the most up-to-date published Open Space Study, Annex 5 and other information as relevant, that provides a qualitative and quantitative assessment of open space requirements. An early consideration of open space requirements and designing high quality provision into the scheme from the outset will be required.
- 5 Where provision is negotiated off-site, contributions will be sought to provide or improve open space within the ward or nearby ward to which the development is located, to ensure provision is locally specific, with contributions secured through a S106 legal agreement.

Sports provision (including indoor facilities, playing pitches and ancillary facilities)

- 6 Proposals for sports provision will be supported where they meet the needs of the local community and/or unmet need within the borough. The requirement for new or enhanced sports provision will be informed by the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facility Strategy (2025) and the Indoor Sports facilities Study (2025) (or any subsequent updates to these) and any further information in relation to the distance and capacity of existing facilities. The Sport England Sports Facility Calculator and Playing Pitch Calculator will also be used by the council to help determine whether a development will be required to provide new provision or contribute to existing provision.

- 7 Residential development of 6 or more dwellings (use classes C3 and C4) will be required to contribute to the provision or enhancement of sports provision (in addition to open space and recreation provision) to meet the needs and demand of its future occupants. Where shortfalls are identified but do not require the provision of new facilities or provision on site, the council will seek developer contributions for the enhancement and maintenance of existing sports provision secured through a S106 legal agreement.
- 8 The scale of development and the site-specific context will inform whether provision should be made on site or through contributions towards existing sites. New provision will need to include appropriate ancillary facilities and parking.
- 9 Sports provision will be supported where it will facilitate community access including sports provision within schools, secured with a community use agreement.
- 10 In accordance with other policies in this plan, the provision and design of new open space, sports and recreation provision will be expected to provide safe and accessible facilities, be sustainably located, include opportunities for habitat creation and sustainable urban drainage, and consider use of lighting including LED heads and switching gear.
- 11 Publicly accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities once provided, need to be maintained to a good standard. As such a clear management plan and operational arrangements that will sustain the provision in perpetuity, need to be identified and agreed with the council. Contributions towards maintenance will be secured by S106 legal agreement.



Reasoned Justification

13.56 As the borough continues to grow, it is essential that new development contributes to the creation and enhancement of accessible and inclusive recreational spaces. Residential developments, particularly those comprising six or more dwellings, generate additional demand for such facilities. Without appropriate planning and investment, this can lead to increased pressure on existing infrastructure and a decline in service quality.

13.57 This policy ensures that new development responds to both the quantitative and qualitative needs identified in the council's evidence base, including the Open Space Study, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facility Strategy (2025), and the Indoor Sports Facilities Study (2025). These documents provide a robust framework for assessing local provision and identifying gaps in accessibility, capacity, and quality.

13.58 The Policy also recognises the importance of flexibility in delivery. While on-site provision is generally preferred to ensure direct access for new residents, off-site contributions may be appropriate where they offer greater community benefit, where existing provision is sufficient, or where site constraints limit feasibility. In all cases, contributions will be secured through legal agreements to ensure transparency and long-term stewardship.

13.59 Furthermore, the Policy promotes inclusive access to sports facilities, including those located within educational settings, through community use agreements. It also supports sustainable design principles, encouraging biodiversity, sustainable drainage, and energy-efficient infrastructure.

13.60 By securing appropriate provision and long-term management arrangements, this Policy aims to ensure that open space, sports, and recreation facilities remain fit for purpose, resilient, and beneficial to the community in perpetuity.

Policy Implementation

13.61 This Policy will be applied to all residential developments of 6 or more dwellings (use classes C3 and C4). This includes both market and affordable housing, older persons housing (where occupants are active) and permanent mobile homes). This threshold reflects the scale at which new development begins to generate meaningful demand for such infrastructure.

13.62 The type and scale of provision required will be determined through reference to the most up-to-date evidence base including those studies mentioned above as well as Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator and Playing Pitch Calculator. Details relating to thresholds and standards taken from the council's open space, sports and recreation evidence base are provided in Annex 5. Annex 5 sets out the standards for on-site provision for open space including amenity green space, natural green space and parks. It also sets out calculations for the provision of equipped children's play provision and allotments / community gardens.

13.63 Applicants will be expected to engage with the council at the pre-application stage to discuss open space, sports and recreation provision requirements. Early consideration will ensure that provision is integrated into the design of the development and reflects local needs.

On-site vs off-site provision

13.64 High-quality on-site provision will be sought in accordance with Appendix 4. Off-site contributions may be considered where:

- On-site provision is not feasible due to site constraints;
- Off-site provision would better serve the community;
- There is demonstrable surplus provision in the locality.

13.65 Off-site contributions must be locally specific and will be secured via Section 106 legal agreements.

Securing Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities

13.66 Both on and off-site contributions will be secured through either planning conditions and / or S106 planning obligations at a level that is proportionate to the proposed development. Where a development is for 100% affordable housing and qualifies for a regulation 49 exemption ([Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 \(as amended\)](#)), financial contributions where required for off-site provision and / or maintenance contributions, will be secured via S106 agreement.

13.67 In relation to indoor and outdoor sports provision, the council will use the Sport England Indoor Sports Facility Calculator and/or the Playing Pitch Calculator to help determine requirements for financial contributions. This will be used alongside other relevant information as relevant to determine financial contributions for both the provision and long-term maintenance of sports facilities.

13.68 Where sports facilities are required to be delivered on site, [Sport England provide comprehensive guidance on the design, cost and delivery](#) of recreational and sports facilities, which applicants should refer to in relation to designing on-site facilities. The guidance sets out the minimum standards developers should aim for to deliver best practice solutions.

Maintenance Contributions

13.69 There will be a requirement for developers to demonstrate that where on-site provision is to be provided, it will be well managed in the future. Options for the ongoing maintenance of new on-site facilities may include:

- The developer being responsible for maintenance of the asset(s) or facility for an initial agreed defined period or as part of an estate management structure.
- Sums to cover the maintenance costs of the asset(s) or facility once transferred to an agreed body, intended to cover an agreed defined period.