

13 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

13.1 Introduction

- 13.1.1 Community facilities include land and buildings used to help meet health, educational and social needs. The level of public and private services available to a community can make a significant contribution to the quality of life of residents. There is a need to both support and seek improvements to local services and facilities particularly in rural areas where such facilities have been in decline during the post war period. Less prosperous groups in remote rural areas are arguably in a worse position than similar income groups in towns, because their access to services, employment, leisure and shopping facilities is severely limited. Access to essential facilities and services in the rural area depends for many on ownership of a car, or on living on a public transport route. Many settlements in the County have no key facilities and no daily bus service.
- 13.1.2 There are a number of agencies with responsibility for, or an interest in, the provision of such facilities across the County including the Herefordshire Council, Health Trusts, Parish Councils and various voluntary organisations. In addition the private sector also undertakes some provision, including childcare, care of older people and health care.
- 13.1.3 The availability or capacity of infrastructure provided by utility bodies responsible for electricity, gas, water supply, sewerage and telecommunications may influence where and when development can take place. Localised constraints in terms of water supply, sewerage and land drainage are known to exist in parts of the County. Technological developments and competition are creating considerable growth in the telecommunications industry, leading to demands for new and expanded infrastructure.
- 13.1.4 The Council acknowledges an identified need within the West Midlands region to provide additional prison places to accommodate the growing prison population. In considering any proposals within Herefordshire, the Council will have regard to the criteria set out in Circular 03/98 'Planning for Future Prison Development'.

13.2 Aims and objectives

- 13.2.1 The policies in this chapter aim to:
- promote the sustainable development of facilities to address the health, educational and social needs of residents of the County
 - recognise the role of renewable energy
 - ensure environmentally sound investment in new infrastructure.
- 13.2.2 The policies have the following more specific objectives:
- to permit the provision of new and improved community facilities which satisfy local needs
 - to protect existing facilities
 - to support the environmentally acceptable use of renewable energy resources
 - to enable the provision, improvement or extension of the County's infrastructure where this is not detrimental to the environment.

13.3 Strategy and general policy

- 13.3.1 The erosion of local services and facilities in rural areas and their increasing concentration in the towns has been identified as a key issue in Herefordshire. Included within the ambitions of the Herefordshire Community Strategy are the retention and improvement of services and facilities and the provision of excellent training and learning opportunities for people of all ages within the County. The Plan's general policy recognises the importance of access to

community facilities upon the quality of life of the residents of Herefordshire. In addition to catering for the immediate needs of the local communities such facilities also have a role in meeting wider economic development and regeneration objectives.

- 13.3.2 As well as protecting existing facilities, the policy seeks to meet identified needs for new provision. However, due to resource constraints and variations in the existing pattern and quality of provision, not all communities can expect the same level of facilities. In order to reflect the guiding principles of the Plan, provision should be related to population levels and strive towards a situation where appropriate facilities are available within reasonable access of all parts of the County. Where possible they should be close to the point of need, in balance with home and work opportunities, and be accessible by modes other than the private car.
- 13.3.3 The availability of infrastructure provided by utility bodies responsible for electricity, gas, water supply, sewerage and telecommunications can support the well being of local communities. However, the provision of the infrastructure can also have detrimental impacts on the environment. These potential conflicts are acknowledged and the Plan seeks to ensure that infrastructure provision is undertaken in an efficient and effective manner without being detrimental to amenity, the environment or to natural resources. Policy S11 also recognises that Herefordshire may have potential to contribute to the generation of renewable energy, providing that any impacts upon the environment are acceptable.

Part I policy

S11 Community facilities and services

The needs of the community for services and facilities will be addressed by:

- 1. ensuring that the provision of necessary infrastructure minimises environmental consequences;**
- 2. supporting the use of renewable energy resources where they are economically and environmentally sustainable; and**
- 3. making provision for the retention of existing community facilities, particularly where there is under provision, and for the further development of social, health, education and community care facilities which are located close to the community they serve.**

Guiding principles P2, P3, P5, P6 and P7

13.4 Infrastructure

Utility services and infrastructure

- 13.4.1 In the context of this policy, utility and infrastructure bodies include those responsible for electricity, gas, water supply, sewerage, telecommunications, education, health, fire and police services. Transport infrastructure has been considered in chapter 8. The requirement that development proposals are adequately served by infrastructure is dealt with in chapter 4.
- 13.4.2 Development plans provide the utility bodies with inputs for their own planning. Proposals may be identified in investment programmes and brought forward within the period of the Plan, some as a consequence of proposals included in this document. The provision of new infrastructure or the extension or improvement to existing services can remove constraints to new development and can reduce environmental problems encountered by existing residents and businesses. Such development can therefore have positive impacts for the community.
- 13.4.3 However, the benefits of new infrastructure provision should be balanced against the potential impact of utility infrastructure such as large electricity pylons or sewage treatment works on

the environment, and on the amenities of local residents or other sensitive uses such as schools and hospitals.

CF1 Utility services and infrastructure

Proposals for the development of new utility infrastructure or extensions to existing facilities or works designed to meet the needs of the community or the local economy or to improve the environment should not:

- 1. adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents or other sensitive uses; or**
- 2. adversely affect the character and quality of the Malvern Hills or Wye Valley AONB or significantly impact upon the landscape character of other parts of the County.**

Where necessary, proposals should include measures to mitigate any environmental impact.

Foul drainage

- 13.4.4 It is important that suitable foul drainage arrangements are in place before development is occupied. Adequate provision for the disposal of foul sewage, contaminated surface water and trade effluent is necessary if risks to amenity, public health or to the quality of surface waters and/or groundwaters is to be avoided. Such effluent needs to be disposed of by a recognised water reclamation facility, subject to capacity. It is difficult to guarantee a consistent quality of effluent from private plant and the problem can be compounded by the proliferation of such facilities. Circular 3/99 'Planning Requirement in respect of the Use of Non-Mains Sewerage incorporating Septic Tanks in New Development' offers specific advice and confirms that the use of non-mains sewerage systems where proposed is a material planning consideration. The UDP supports the sequential approach set out in the Circular to foul drainage. There are several localities in the County where drainage has proved problematic, such as Kingsthorpe (Wrigglesbrook Valley) and Cobhall Common.
- 13.4.5 Development proposals should as a first presumption be served through public sewerage. Where for reasons of cost or practicability this can be shown to be not feasible, a package sewage treatment plant offering full treatment to the standard and conditions set by the Environment Agency should be considered. Any such proposals should include details of the arrangements for means of operation and maintenance to ensure that the discharge consent is not infringed during the life of the plant.
- 13.4.6 Only where these methods can be shown to be not feasible should septic tank methods be considered. Where a septic tank method is proposed, a full assessment demonstrating and confirming that adverse effects on the environment, amenity and public health will not arise should be submitted. In particular, assessments should include a thorough assessment of the implications of disposal of the final effluent, whether to watercourse or by soakage into the ground. Circular 3/99 spells out the factors to be considered through such assessments and these are adopted within the policy below.
- 13.4.7 In the case of cesspools, whilst in principle a properly constructed and maintained cesspool should not lead to environmental, amenity or public health problems, in practice problems often arise as a result of overflows due to such factors as poor maintenance, inadequate capacity or lack of suitable access. In addition, the transport implications of cesspool maintenance do not contribute to sustainable development. The Environment Agency consider that the environmental problems associated with cesspools pose an unacceptable risk to the water environment. For these reasons cesspool arrangements will not be permitted.

CF2 Foul drainage

Development should make satisfactory arrangements for foul drainage. A sequential approach should be taken to the consideration of foul drainage options. This should be based on the demonstrable feasibility or otherwise of alternative arrangements, taking into account their cost and/or practicability:

- 1. as a first priority connection should be made to public sewerage infrastructure;**
- 2. where this is not feasible, as a second priority the use of package sewage treatment plant offering full treatment to recognised standards may be proposed. Proposals should include full details of means of operation and maintenance;**
- 3. only where the above options not feasible should the use of septic tank systems be proposed as a third priority. Any such proposals should include a full assessment of the scheme having regard to the effects on public health, amenity and the environment, and addressing any evidence in respect of the following factors:**
 - contravention of recognised practices**
 - adverse effect on water sources or resources**
 - health hazard or nuisance likely to arise**
 - damage to controlled waters**
 - damage to the environment and amenity**
 - overloading of the existing capacity of the area**
 - absence of suitable outlets**
 - unsuitable soakage characteristics**
 - high water table**
 - rising ground water levels**
 - flooding**

Where significant adverse environmental, amenity or public health effects are likely to arise through either permanent or temporary use of septic tank drainage, the development concerned will not be permitted.

Development dependent upon cesspool drainage arrangements will not be permitted.

Use of a sustainable foul drainage system will be considered as an alternative to the provisions of this policy only where the particular treatment proposal has the approval of the Environment Agency.

Telecommunications

- 13.4.8 Telecommunications are an essential and beneficial element in the life of the local community and in the national economy. New telecommunications technology is now spreading rapidly to meet the growing demand for better communications at work and at home, in business and in public services. Modern telecommunications can benefit the environment through reducing the need to travel and hence reducing vehicle emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants.
- 13.4.9 The Government's general policy on telecommunications, as set out in PPG8 (August 2001), is to facilitate the growth of new and existing systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. Local planning authorities are asked to respond positively to telecommunication development proposals.
- 13.4.10 It is recognised that some visual impact may be inevitable because of the functional needs and that locational requirements may restrict the choice of alternative sites. Nevertheless, there is a need to ensure the visual impact of telecommunication infrastructure is kept to a minimum. This can be done through utilising existing buildings and other structures,

encouraging shared facilities and ensuring siting and appearance considerations are given sufficient emphasis.

- 13.4.11 Applications for new masts will be expected to include supporting evidence that the possibility of erecting antennas on existing masts, buildings or structures has been fully explored. With the closure of analogue networks, the re-use of existing sites by second and third generation base stations is encouraged. To aid this, Herefordshire Council maintains a register of existing telecommunications apparatus within the County. Pre-rollout and pre-application discussions with telecommunications operators are strongly encouraged at an early stage.
- 13.4.12 In line with the Communications Act (2003), The Code of Best Practice (2002) and operators' licence obligations and any other relevant legislation for the time being in force, operators will be required to remove any existing equipment rendered obsolete or redundant by the proposal or improvements in technology and reinstate the land.

CF3 Telecommunications

Applications for planning permission for telecommunications development and for prior approval determinations should meet the following requirements:

- 1. demonstrate that there is no opportunity for mast or site sharing or use of an existing building or structures. Shared facilities will not be permitted where this would result in a substantial increase in the height of the facility which would detrimentally impact on the surrounding area;**
- 2. ensure that the siting and external appearance of the apparatus have been designed to minimise the impact on the surrounding countryside or urban area and residential amenity; and**
- 3. where appropriate and technically possible, provide a scheme for landscaping screening.**

High priority should be given to the need to safeguard areas of particular environmental importance. In the Malvern Hills or Wye Valley AONB, within conservation areas, and where listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and other designated sites and areas valued for their biodiversity, landscape or geological importance may be affected, proposals should be sensitively designed and sited. In such situations applicants must demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative sites.

When determining applications and prior approvals, the significance of the proposed development as part of a national network and the special siting needs and technical and operational constraints of the operation will be taken into account.

Renewable energy

- 13.4.13 Renewable energy is the term used to cover forms of energy that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment - energy from the sun, the wind and the fall of water. Plant material, combustible or digestible industrial, agricultural and domestic waste materials are also sources of renewable energy. It is accepted that renewable energy resources can often only be developed where they occur. Government policy provides a positive strategic approach to planning for renewable energy, including targets for renewable energy provision to facilitate its development, while continuing to protect the countryside. Investment in renewable energy development can make an important contribution to the national economy, and can help to meet international commitments on limiting greenhouse gas emissions. The Council's policy is intended to reflect the advice in PPS22 and the related companion guide as well as the Regional Spatial Strategy and the West Midlands Regional Energy Study. The guidance in PPS 7 will be relevant particularly in AONBs

13.4.14 The planning system has an important role to play in helping to deliver the Government's targets and goals for renewable energy and climate change, which are central to achieving sustainable development, while continuing to protect the countryside. A positive approach for planning for renewable energy is essential and such development should be capable of being accommodated in the County in locations where the technology is viable and environmental and other impacts can be addressed satisfactorily. When considering proposals, the wider environmental, economic and social benefits of renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material considerations that should be afforded significant weight. Community-based renewable energy projects and those which contribute to the regeneration and diversification of the rural economy have an important role to play. Developers should also demonstrate how any environmental and social aspects can be minimised through the careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures.

CF4 Renewable energy

Development proposals for the production of renewable energy will be permitted providing that:

- 1. they would not adversely affect the integrity of sites of international importance for nature conservation (such as Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites), except where there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature;**
- 2. the objectives of the designation of nationally important sites and areas (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONB, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other nationally important archaeological remains) will not be compromised and any significant adverse effects on the qualities of the area are clearly outweighed by the environmental, social and economic benefits;**
- 3. outside of nationally designated sites and areas, there would be no significant detrimental effect upon the character of the particular landscape qualities of that location; and**
- 4. they would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents, including through noise, odour or electro- magnetic interference.**

In assessing proposals, regard will be had to the wider environmental, social and economic benefits to be gained from the use of renewable energy sources.

13.5 Community facilities

New community facilities

13.5.1 In terms of this policy, community facilities would include provision of new facilities and use of existing buildings for youth, provision aiming to satisfy health, welfare and social needs whether provided by the public, voluntary or private sector. They could include a wide range of facilities such as youth centres, doctors surgeries, educational accommodation, village halls, libraries, places of worship and provision of graveyards or day nurseries for children. In rural areas access to community facilities is often limited and the provision of new facilities face more unfavourable conditions than similar efforts in urban areas. The provision of accessible new facilities and services will be supported as long as they do not impact upon the area in which they are proposed.

CF5 New community facilities

Proposals which would result in the provision of new or improved community facilities or the enhanced use of existing facilities will be permitted where they:

- 1. are appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community and reflect the character of the location;**
- 2. are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve;**
- 3. would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents; and**
- 4. incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision of car and cycle parking and operational space.**

Retention of existing facilities

- 13.5.2 The existence of community facilities contributes significantly to the social and economic well-being of communities. Therefore existing facilities available to communities throughout Herefordshire, and in particular, rural parts of the County, should be retained if possible. Where an existing facility ceases to exist, consideration should be given to whether the land and buildings could accommodate an alternative facility which is needed locally, prior to other uses being considered. Once facilities are established care must be taken to ensure that any proposals upon adjacent land should not lead to pressure to curtail the community use. This policy complements policy TCR14 which aims to retain commercial facilities, such as shops and public houses, in villages and policy RST4 which seeks to prevent the loss of open space and recreational facilities.

CF6 Retention of existing facilities

Development proposals that would result in the loss of existing facilities which contribute to the needs of the community, will not be permitted unless:

- 1. alternative provision of at least equivalent community benefit is provided in a convenient and accessible location; or**
- 2. the facilities can be best enhanced or complemented through the development of a small part of the site; or**
- 3. there is continuing evidence that the facility is no longer required and that it could not accommodate an alternative community facility for which there is a need.**

Other development which would reduce or restrict the ability of such facilities to be used for the function they are intended to fulfil will not be permitted.

Residential nursing and care homes

- 13.5.3 Residential care homes should be located within areas that are suitable for other forms of residential accommodation and ideally be situated close to local services and public transport routes. It is important to ensure that a satisfactory standard of accommodation is provided for residents, with appropriate levels of external amenity space. In addition, and recognising that such facilities are likely to be established within existing residential areas, it is important that the levels of noise and activity arising, for instance through social functions or traffic, does not significantly impact upon the amenity of local residents.

CF7 Residential nursing and care homes

Proposals for the provision of residential nursing and care homes will be permitted in areas where new residential development is acceptable or where they involve the environmentally acceptable conversion of existing buildings and where they:

- 1. have adequate external private amenity space commensurate with the numbers of residents and staff;**
- 2. are accessible by a choice of means of transport and have reasonable access to services and facilities; and**
- 3. would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents, due to levels of noise, traffic or other activity.**

School proposals

13.5.4 The Herefordshire Council, as education authority, will continually review the need to provide new school buildings and associated facilities during the Plan period. In addition, the role of schools in providing for wider community activities is likely to increase. Such proposals, when they require planning permission, will be considered against policy CF5. However, two specific proposals for new schools, at Whitecross High School, Hereford and Sutton St Nicholas Primary School are identified within the Plan.

(a) Whitecross High School

13.5.5 Herefordshire Council and the School Governors have acknowledged that the deterioration in the physical condition of the existing school premises at Whitecross High School will not provide an appropriate environment for the education of children. Given the site's constraints, in terms of its access and overall site area, it is considered that relocation to a new site is the most appropriate solution. As a result, land for a replacement school is identified off the Three Elms Road in Hereford. Within the site, school buildings should be located to respect residential amenity and landscape. In the north east of the site, the brook should form the basis of an open corridor to accommodate land liable to flood, nature conservation interests and public access. A flood risk assessment for the proposal will be required from the developer. Consideration should be given to establishing safer routes to school utilising the open space corridor associated with the Yazor Brook, which extends into the urban area to the east. This proposal has now been completed. The existing school site is identified as a mixed-use development (see Plan policy H2).

(b) Sutton St Nicholas

13.5.6 The need for a replacement Primary School at Sutton St Nicholas was initially raised in the South Herefordshire District Local Plan. Land opposite the existing school has now been identified for a replacement primary school and community facilities, including playing fields with the support of the Parish Council. The proposal is being advanced with an element of new housing (see policy H5). The proposal will be guided through the preparation of a development brief.

(c) Folly Lane Campus

13.5.7 The further education colleges in Folly Lane have discussed and set out their requirements for Further and Higher educational services to the community. Such requirements are expected to result in a redevelopment of the current campus. Whilst proposals still need to be finalised, the redevelopment is likely to be within the existing use boundaries. Any emerging proposals will therefore be considered initially against Plan policy CF5 but also with regard to other Plan policies particularly those governing layout and design and access.

CF8 School proposals

Land for the provision of new schools is identified at:

- 1. Three Elms Road, Hereford, as a replacement for Whitecross High School; and**
- 2. Sutton St. Nicholas, in conjunction with other community facilities and housing.**

Community facilities at Bradbury Estate, Hereford

- 13.5.8 Bradbury Estate in the South Wye area of Hereford forms one of the largest areas of previously-developed land in the County. The site is allocated for a range of uses. The bulk of the site is proposed for housing through policy H2. However, the site is located within the South Wye Regeneration Area and the development of the site provides an opportunity to consider the needs of the wider community. In addition to housing, the provision of public open space will be sought under policy RST5 and an area of land or buildings should also be set aside for the provision of community facilities. In addition, a requirement has been identified for a new graveyard in association with St. Martin's Church. A development brief will be prepared in order to provide detailed guidance for the development of the site.

CF9 Community facilities at Bradbury Estate, Hereford

The development of the former military base at Bradbury Estate will be expected to include an appropriate area of land and/or buildings for community facilities to help to meet the needs of the residents of new housing and the wider community.