

## **CHAPTER 10**

# **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- 10.1. Social and Community facilities encompass the wide range of care facilities provided by both statutory and voluntary agencies and also clubs, societies, churches, and any relating to general leisure activities. Leisure activities may include visits to cinemas, theatres, pubs and catering facilities. This chapter also addresses the issue of the particular requirements for access and facilities for elderly people and people with movement or sensory difficulties. Both public and voluntary agencies provide a diverse range of mandatory and discretionary services and facilities which are essential in ensuring the smooth running of and care for the community. The Borough Council has responsibilities for day centres for elderly people, public halls, recreation, arts centres, sports and leisure development and social housing whilst the County Council has responsibility for education, social services, libraries, the fire service, probation and after care services. Other statutory bodies with responsibilities in the Borough include the West Surrey Health Authority, Metropolitan Police (only until 31st March 2000 and thereafter the Surrey Police), the Home Office (in the respect of the Magistrates' and County Court services) and a number of housing associations. The extent of existing provision in the Plan area is reviewed in the following section. The provision of social housing is dealt with in Chapter 5 - Housing.

## **EXISTING PROVISION**

- 10.2. Many of the existing facilities are located in the main centres of the Borough, enhancing the focus for community and business activity which they represent. Within the towns and local centres of the Borough there are a variety of social uses which are of a catering or entertainment nature. These include hotels, public houses, restaurants, cafes, clubs, and the cinema in Staines. These all serve those living in the Borough, and beyond, and are important to the diversity and successful functioning of the various centres in the Borough. The various services provided by the public bodies and voluntary agencies are outlined below.

## **SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

- 10.3. Various measures to ensure adequate care for elderly people in the Borough have been implemented by the Council. These include the provision of 5 day centres built throughout the Borough between 1982 and 1991 as part of a comprehensive programme and the provision of a community alarm system. The Borough Council directly manages both the Day Centres and Spelthorne Meals service. The Spelthorne Personal Alarm Network is a community alarm system which is capable of installation in any home in the Borough. This furthers the degree of help available to

elderly and disabled people both in sheltered housing and those who wish to remain in their own homes.

- 10.4. Playschemes are organised for children during many school holidays by the Council's Leisure Division. These offer traditional play and sport, as well as art workshops and story times in libraries throughout the year. The Council is seeking to further develop this work to include after school clubs and play centres throughout the Borough linking up with the dual use of halls.
- 10.5. The Borough Council is committed to the promotion of the Arts. In Sunbury there is a very active Arts Centre and Youth Theatre at the Riverside Arts Centre. This venue provides for a wide range of events including performances and displays for the general public.

#### **SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

- 10.6. The County Council is responsible for education for children in the Borough as well as adult education and careers advice; there are in total 28 Primary and Junior Schools, and 6 Secondary Schools. In addition there are 3 private schools in the Borough and the Spelthorne College in Church Road, Ashford provides education for sixth formers. The Adult Education facilities in the Borough are centred at the Oast House, Kingston Road, Staines. Courses are provided during the day and in the evenings both here and at other locations within the Borough.
- 10.7. The social services offices for Spelthorne are located at Stanwell Road, Ashford, at Knowle Green, Staines and Vicarage Road, Sunbury. From here the social services facilities for the Borough are coordinated.
- 10.8. Libraries are located in Ashford, Staines, Shepperton, Stanwell and Sunbury and are supplemented by a mobile library service.

#### **MEDICAL FACILITIES**

- 10.9. The West Surrey Health Authority (WSHA) has responsibility for the overall purchasing and funding of Local NHS Services. The Primary Care Agency acts on behalf of the WSHA with responsibility for General Practitioner sessions, opticians, pharmacists and dentists.

#### **POLICY CONTEXT**

- 10.10. PPG12 "Development Plans" makes clear the importance of having regard to social issues when preparing local plans. In addition to the issues of housing and recreation which are dealt with in other Chapters of this Plan, it refers to the need to make provision for education, places of worship and other community facilities and for account to be taken of any need of specific groups within the community. PPG1 "General Policy and Principles" reinforces the need to take account of the access needs, particularly of elderly people, and those with movement or sensory difficulties and people with toddlers or infants in pushchairs.

10.11. The Surrey Structure Plan (1994) seeks to ensure that, within the context of environmental and infrastructure constraints, priority is given to providing development to meet needs for social, community and health services, and specific housing needs as well as retailing, leisure and recreation. It makes access for people with sensory and mobility disabilities an essential requirement. Policy DP1 requires planning authorities to identify the social and community needs and for provision to take account of the role of town centres, the need for accessibility and convenience of facilities to all sections of the community, and the need for care in the community and other types of provision to be made within residential areas. The Policy opposes the loss of existing facilities unless alternative readily accessible provision is made. Policy DP2 requires the location, layout and design of development to maximise accessibility, availability and use to those people with movement or sensory difficulties. Particular account is to be taken of the need for access in town centres, all buildings open to the public, housing and recreation and leisure development.

### **PROPOSALS OF THE PLAN**

10.12. Over the Plan period as a whole there is projected to be a stable overall population. A broadly stable number of people in the 0-14 age group is forecast but an increase of those over retirement age of about 10%. Within this latter group the 65-75 population will be broadly stable but the increase in numbers of people over 75 years of age is forecast to rise from 5800 to 7905, a rise of 35%. This suggests an increasing demand for care services for elderly people with the demands for other age groups being largely unchanged. Neither the Borough nor County Council, nor the other statutory bodies involved in providing care facilities, has any requirements for additional buildings over and above existing commitments for the Plan period, although this will need to be kept under review. However, the increase in the elderly population, and the continued implementation of the approach of 'care in the community' will inevitably require changes in financial provision and organisation of resources.

10.13. The Borough Council is also conscious of the increasing need for accommodation for elderly people in the form of nursing homes and residential care homes. These facilities are normally privately funded, and locations in residential areas are normally sought; subject to appropriate environmental controls and no adverse effects on local amenities, such facilities will be encouraged. In addition the financial circumstances in which doctors and dentists now operate has a bearing on the scale and nature of facilities they need to provide. These too prefer locations in or adjacent to residential areas so that they are readily accessible. This again will be encouraged subject to appropriate environmental controls.

10.14. In recent years there has been an increase in the private provision of nursery age care. Facilities will be encouraged, again subject to the appropriate environmental controls. In assessing all forms of development proposals the Borough Council will consider carefully the needs of those with movement difficulties and seek to ensure facilities are accessible to all sections of the community. Social and community and leisure facilities contribute significantly to the vitality of town centres. The Council sets out in Chapter 8 - Shopping and Town Centres, its commitment to maintaining town

centres for reasons of vitality and their accessibility and will seek to protect existing facilities and encourage further provision as appropriate.

10.15. There are two site-specific proposals for social and community facilities included within the Plan. The first is for leisure and commercial development at the site of the MGM Cinema and Riverside Restaurant, Clarence Street, Staines. The scope of this Proposal has been amplified by a Planning Brief adopted in April 1999 which has the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance. This gives a greater emphasis to restaurant and residential uses in view of the proposed 10-screen multiplex cinema proposed as part of the Tilly's Lane scheme and which is part of Proposal P16. Further details of these proposals are set out under Proposal P27 and Proposal P16 within the schedules at the end of Chapter 12.

10.16. The overall aim of the Plan towards social and community facilities is:-

**'To maintain and enable the provision of recreation, social and community facilities to meet the needs of the local community'.**

10.17. In pursuing this aim the following specific policies will be followed:

#### **POLICY SC1**

**The Borough Council will seek to ensure that the social and community needs of people in the Plan area are met by:-**

- (a) encouraging the maintenance and where required the improvement of existing facilities**
- (b) resisting the loss of existing facilities except where:-**
  - (i) they are no longer required by the Community or**
  - (ii) suitable and accessible provision is to be made at an alternative location**
- (c) encouraging the provision of new facilities where and when required.**

#### **POLICY SC2**

**Proposals for specific social and/or community facilities must be suitable in terms of:-**

- (a) their full impact, individually or cumulatively with other similar uses, on adjoining areas in terms of noise, visual amenity and hours of use**

**(b) appropriate parking and access being provided for users of the facilities and servicing.**

- 10.18. In applying these policies the Council recognises that many facilities such as sports clubs, premises for youth organisations, churches and other clubs and societies may be appropriately located in or adjoining residential areas subject to satisfactory design, siting and landscaping of new facilities and extension and provision of adequate parking. The siting of premises unrelated to the use of land within the Green Belt is not appropriate.
- 10.19. The resources of the Borough Council during the Plan period will, in addition to its duties in respect of housing, be directed to meeting priority needs and giving continued support to the various organisations involved in caring for the community. This includes various measures to ensure adequate care of elderly people in the community and that statutory requirements on the provision of access and facilities for people with disabilities are met. The following sections of this Chapter deal with specific issues of provision.

**ACCESS**

- 10.20. In recent years increasing importance has been given to ensuring that where ever possible access and facilities are improved for those with movement difficulties or sensory impairment. The importance of such provision is made clear in PPG1 (paras. 33-34). Since 1990 the Borough Council has had an officer in the Planning Division with particular responsibilities for access issues. In 1992 a Borough wide group called Spelthorne Committee for Access Now (SCAN) was established comprising representatives from various relevant groups including the Council.
- 10.21. The Authority will seek to ensure that people with movement or sensory difficulties are not prevented from playing a full role in the life of the community due to the design of the environment, and are able to participate in and contribute to all community activities, whether as residents, employees or visitors in the area. The authority is committed to ensuring improved accessibility of land and buildings within the borough including those within its direct control.
- 10.22. The development of land and buildings provides the opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone, including wheelchair users and other people with disabilities, elderly people and people with toddlers or infants in pushchairs. The appropriate design of spaces between, within and around buildings and of parking provision is particularly important in ensuring good access. When a new building is proposed or an existing building is being extended or altered, consideration is to be given to the needs of people with disabilities who may use the building as a place of work, as visitors or as customers. A Shopmobility scheme has been provided to serve Staines Town Centre, and situated within the Two Rivers development.
- 10.23. Under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970, the Disabled Person's Act 1981 and Part M of the Building Regulations 1991, local authorities are required to seek suitable means of access and facilities for people with disabilities to new

public buildings including shops and places of employment. The needs of people with mobility, hearing or sight impairments must all be taken into account. When toilets are provided in such buildings reasonable provision must be made for disabled people. In addition where the premises contain audience or spectator seating, appropriate provision must be made for wheelchair users. In October 1999, Part M of the Building Regulations was extended to introduce accessibility requirements to new dwellings. The requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 must also be observed by building managers, although enforcement here rests with the courts and not local authorities.

- 10.24. Whilst recognising existing statutory requirements, the Borough Council will further seek to improve access and facilities for people with disabilities by liaison with other organisations, by negotiation, and by the use of conditions on planning permissions where appropriate. Only where necessary alterations would be detrimental to the special character or setting of a listed building will the policy be relaxed. The Council has also published "Access for Disabled People: Guidance Notes" which give detailed advice on measures that should be taken to meet the needs of disabled people. In addition access audits have been undertaken for Shepperton, and all Borough Council buildings and car parks. A Spelthorne Access Directory has been published by Spelthorne Borough Council in association with the Rotary Clubs of Spelthorne.

### **POLICY SC3**

**The Borough Council will seek to secure improved access arrangements for people with physical or sensory disabilities, elderly people and those with toddlers or infants in pushchairs by:-**

- (a) identifying the needs of such people in the Borough, and improving awareness of access issues**
- (b) making appropriate improvements to its own buildings and land, including car parks and pedestrian areas**
- (c) encouraging the improvement of other buildings and facilities**
- (d) ensuring development proposals are accessible.**

### **HEALTH CARE PROVISION**

- 10.25. The Borough Council recognises the importance of appropriate premises of the right size and location for providing health care. In recent years work has been carried out to extend and improve Ashford Hospital. Medical consultancies such as doctors' surgeries and dentists and other medical practices, for example, chiropractors and physiotherapists need to be both physically accessible to all users and located within or close to the residential area they serve, in order to provide convenient access. Increasing reliance is being placed on GPs under the 'care in the community' policy.

This has led to a need for a wider range of facilities to be provided by GPs and a consequent need in some cases for larger premises. Such uses are appropriate to residential areas and whilst it is normally the policy of the Council to resist the loss of residential accommodation, where needed such facilities will normally be acceptable subject to the following:-

- (a) the need for the practice at the proposed location is demonstrated;
- (b) there is no scope within the locality of extending existing facilities or using non-residential accommodation;
- (c) appropriate parking, and provision for the building and facilities to be accessible to all users;
- (d) wherever possible part of the house will be retained in residential use - for example retaining the upper floor as a flat. In the case of doctors' surgeries, justification by the Primary Care Agency will be required. Planning permission will be limited to medical consultancy and treatment use only. Where the proposal is to replace existing premises, legal agreements to revert the former premises back to residential occupation (where that was the previous use) will be required.

The granting of a planning permission will not be regarded as a precedent in accepting other non-residential uses.

#### **POLICY SC4**

**The use of residential premises for the purposes of medical consultancy and treatment will only be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council that:-**

- (a) the use is required**
- (b) other appropriate accommodation is not available**
- (c) there are no material car parking, amenity or access problems.**

**Where such premises are no longer needed they will be required to revert back to residential use where that was the previous use.**

#### **CHILD CARE FACILITIES**

- 10.26. The Borough Council recognises the value and importance of suitable day care facilities for preschool children. Such provision may range from a child minder looking after a few children to nurseries and playgroups providing either full or sessional day care for larger groups of children. To ensure that basic standards are

maintained registration by the County Council Social Services Department is required in most cases, in accordance with the provisions of the Children Act 1989. The Borough Council's aim is to promote the use of suitable premises and prevent the establishment of facilities at inappropriate locations to the detriment of the amenities of that area.

- 10.27. The provision of full or sessional (less than 4 hours per day) day care facilities for services such as nurseries, creches and playgroups which require registration will normally also require planning permission. Where such facilities are run from a private home the number of children allowed will be carefully controlled and 10 children will normally be regarded as a maximum and any permission granted will normally be on a temporary and personal basis. It will be important that any proposals have appropriate parking on site and that there will be no adverse highway problems created by the arrival and departure of parents cars. Close regard will be had to the impact of any proposal on adjoining residential accommodation.
- 10.28. Where a childminder looks after pre-school and school age children in their own home planning permission will not normally be required, provided registration with the Social Services Department is in accordance with the standard recommended ratios for one childminder (without assistance).

#### **POLICY SC5**

**The Borough Council will consider favourably proposals for the use of premises to provide either full or sessional day care for pre-school children, or childminding services, subject to the following criteria:-**

- (a) where facilities are provided in a private home the number of children allowed will be carefully controlled and 10 children will normally be regarded as a maximum**
- (b) the proposal must not result in the loss of any units of residential accommodation**
- (c) the proposal must not lead to conditions prejudicial to the safety and free flow of traffic on the adjoining highway**
- (d) the proposal must include provision for on site parking for staff at the level of one space per member of staff employed at the premises and additionally, in the case of premises retaining a residential unit, provide residential car parking spaces in accordance with the Borough Council's current standards**
- (e) the proposal, by reason of noise and general activity, must not adversely affect the amenities of nearby residential properties.**

## CARE IN THE COMMUNITY AND RESIDENTIAL HOMES

- 10.29. The Government's 'Care in the Community' initiative, introduced some years ago, and Surrey County Council's own Community Care Plan, have implications for planning, social service, and housing functions. As referred to in paragraph 10.12 above there is likely to be a significant increase in the population over the age of 75 with an attendant increase in demand for places in residential and nursing homes. There are currently 16 establishments in the Borough providing for 514 residents. It is likely that there will be a demand for further facilities and it is appropriate in the context of 'care in the community' for them to be located in residential areas subject to no adverse impact on amenity or necessary support services. New facilities are likely to be private.
- 10.30. In addition to the needs of the elderly population, 'care in the community' is also requiring facilities for people with physical and/or mental disabilities and other special needs groups. Appropriate proposals to meet such needs in the community will be encouraged and, subject to the qualifications in the policy below, can be acceptable in most residential areas. Planning permission will however be required for any home providing a form of care, other than where no more than 6 residents live together as a single household (with or without care provided). Policy SC6 below applies to all special needs groups including those with learning difficulties and the young homeless.

### **POLICY SC6**

**Proposals for new accommodation and extensions and/or change of use of existing premises to provide residential care facilities for elderly people or those with disabilities or special needs, will be permitted subject to:-**

- (a) new buildings or extensions having no adverse impact in terms of scale and design on the locality in which they are located, including by producing a ratio of ground floor building area to plot size, similar to that of existing properties in the area**
- (b) appropriate provision for parking and necessary servicing in accordance with the Borough Council's current standards, and access and facilities for disabled people**
- (c) no adverse impact on adjoining uses individually or cumulatively in terms of activity levels, access or the character of the area.**

The views of the Primary Care Agency will be sought when assessing any likely impact of proposals on medical support facilities such as local GP services.

## OTHER FACILITIES

- 10.31. For many years a Remand Centre was located on land to the west of Woodthorpe Road, Ashford and north of the Staines By Pass. Despite objections by the Borough Council outline planning clearance was granted by the Secretary of State in 1987 for the construction of a 600 place "Category B" prison. In 1989 detailed planning clearance was granted for the scheme. The site was cleared in 1990 and, apart from the formation of a vehicular access, construction did not proceed due to changes in the prison building programme. A substantial part of the site was subsequently grassed and the land, which was held under licence by the Council, was made available for public recreation. Outline planning clearance and an outline planning application for a 450 place female prison was granted by the Council on 6th January 1999, subject to the prior signing of a legal agreement. Should the proposed prison ever be abandoned then the Borough Council will expect the Home Office to remove any remaining hard landscape features and turn the majority of the site over to public open space.
- 10.32. Until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000, Spelthorne Borough was within the Metropolitan Police Area. The Spelthorne Division is now in the Surrey Police Authority area. There are Police Stations located at Staines, Sunbury and Ashford

## **SUMMARY OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROPOSALS**

- 10.33. Chapter 12 - Implementation contains a schedule of all proposals contained in this Plan with relevant additional background information. Proposals which relate to the Social and Community Facilities chapter are made for the following sites:
- P16 Land north of Staines High Street
  - P27 Site of Cinema and Riverside Restaurant, Clarence Street, Staines