CHAPTER 26: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE



INTRODUCTION

26.01 The Council's Haringey 2035 vision is that the borough is a place where we can all belong and thrive where:

- all our residents have the opportunity to thrive and enjoy the best possible version of their life
- the quality of life in every part of the borough is comparable to our cleanest, greenest and safest neighbourhood
- at a time of insecurity and change, Haringey is a place where people can put down roots and feel they really belong

26.02 Key to the delivery of this is the provision of high-quality and accessible social infrastructure comprising the range of services and facilities required to meet needs of our residents and communities. This includes schools, health provision, libraries, community halls, recreation and sports facilities, places of worship, youth centres, play spaces and public toilets.

26.03 Social infrastructure provides many benefits whether supporting health and wellbeing, facilitating social integration or helping instil a sense of community identity, place and pride. This is why our New Local Plan sets out a Placemaking Priority for a borough where our social infrastructure supports us to Live Well. In turn, this will help deliver on the social objective of the planning system - one of 3 objectives for the planning system outlined in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

26.04 Haringey is fortunate to have a wide array of excellent social infrastructure from the purpose-built Welbourne Health Centre in Tottenham to the Rising Green Youth Hub in Wood Green and the wonderfully preserved Grade II Listed Hornsey Library. However, not all our social infrastructure is in the right location, in good condition, or capable of responding to the changing needs and aspirations of our growing communities and the challenges posed by the economy and a changing climate. In this context it is vital that a strategic approach is taken to the future provision of infrastructure in the borough. The Draft Local Plan policies which follow set out how land use and development will protect and invest in our social infrastructure, helping deliver new and improved provision that is better connected and able to serve our residents, particularly the most vulnerable.

Policy S1: Living Well

A. The Council will plan strategically to deliver an integrated and efficient social infrastructure network which optimises the benefits of such infrastructure for residents and communities and helps them to live well, including via locality-based approaches.

B. The Council will work together with its delivery partners, local communities, and stakeholders to identify social infrastructure needs over the plan period and ensure these are met. This will be achieved through:

(1) safeguarding and enhancing existing social infrastructure and the timely delivery of new and replacement high-quality social infrastructure in appropriate locations in accordance with Policy S2.

(2) securing delivery of new and enhanced social infrastructure from new development where this is required within site allocations or otherwise securing contributions from new development towards new and improved social infrastructure where this is necessary to mitigate the impact of the development

C. To help ensure Haringey is a borough which meets the needs of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, development must provide play spaces in accordance with Policy S3 and support improved public toilet provision in accordance with Policy S4.

26.05 This policy contributes to the Haringey Placemaking objectives as follows:

A FAIR PLACE

Increases opportunities for everyone to access the services and facilities they need to enjoy a good quality of life.

A HEALTHY & SAFE PLACE

Plays a vital role in improving personal health and wellbeing both through direct service provision and fostering environments that encourage physical activity and mental resilience.

A SUSTAINABLE & RESILIENT PLACE

Creates opportunities for people to meet, interact and build relationships supporting social integration and strengthening community ties.

Supporting Text

26.06 The Council will take a strategic approach to the development of Haringey's social infrastructure network to help ensure that existing assets are used more effectively and that future provision delivers the greatest possible benefit for our residents and communities.

26.07 There is strong demand for new and improved social infrastructure in Haringey but it is also recognised that existing facilities are not always fit-for-purpose or fully utilised. This may be due to factors such as inappropriate location, limited accessibility, or issues with the quality of spaces and the limited range of uses they are designed to accommodate. There are also challenges associated with the costs of ongoing management and maintenance of social infrastructure.

26.08 A locality-based approach to social infrastructure provision, particularly through the co-location of services from different providers, enables more integrated, efficient, and responsive service delivery. By bringing together council, NHS, and voluntary sector services within neighbourhood hubs, this model provides opportunities for early intervention, reducing duplication, and fostering stronger collaboration across agencies.

26.09 Locating services within communities makes them more visible and accessible, helping to build trust and relationships with residents. It also allows for better use of public assets, with fewer but higher-quality buildings that are tailored to local needs. This approach strengthens community resilience, supports multidisciplinary working, and ensures that services are designed and delivered in partnership with the people they serve.

26.10 Planning for social infrastructure can be complex involving a diverse range of facility types, service needs, and stakeholders. A common barrier to addressing these needs through the development process is a lack of clarity around what those needs are. The Council will work collaboratively with partners, communities, and stakeholders to build a clearer understanding of local social infrastructure needs and to ensure that these are met including through the delivery of new and replacement high-quality social infrastructure in appropriate locations.

26.11 Development should contribute positively towards meeting such needs. This policy therefore sets out as a starting point that existing social infrastructure should be safeguarded from development. In addition, to mitigate the impact of new development, development should either provide new and enhanced social infrastructure or contribute financially towards this. The Council will secure the delivery of new and enhanced social infrastructure on identified site allocations, major development sites, and sites with existing social infrastructure. Planning obligations will be used to secure provision whether in-kind or via financial contributions,

26.12 When planning to address local needs and mitigate the impact of development, applicants should consider the existing network of social infrastructure in the local area and how it is used. This should extend beyond the quantum of space available, but include the quality of that space, its accessibility, flexibility, and management of the space. Engagement with local communities and stakeholders will be crucial in understanding place-specific needs.

26.13 Applicants should also explore opportunities to complement or co-locate with existing clusters of social and cultural infrastructure, particularly in town centres and designated cultural quarters, to strengthen place-based provision and community access. The level of detail expected in undertaking this work should be proportionate to the scale of the development and its impact on social infrastructure.

26.14 Haringey seeks to be a borough which meets the needs of people of all ages, abilities and background. In this regard this chapter includes specific policies on play space and public toilets.

Policy S2: Social Infrastructure

A. The Council will support proposals for new social infrastructure where these are appropriately located and of a high-quality design and are shaped by residents, community organisations and stakeholders to reflect local aspirations and ensure shared ownership and sustainable outcomes.

B. New social infrastructure should be located:

(1) in accessible areas where people of all ages and abilities can safely reach them. Special consideration must be given to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access these spaces easily and independently.

(2) to complement the wider network of facilities, with opportunities taken to consolidate and co-locate services, address gaps in existing and future provision, and complement the development of town centres and cultural quarters.

(3) to be integrated as a prominent and visible element of the urban environment, reinforcing the role of social infrastructure in everyday community life and enhancing its accessibility and identity.

C. Social infrastructure should be designed to:

(1) provide welcoming, safe and accessible spaces for all, regardless of age, ability or background, that foster social interaction, community cohesion and a sense of belonging.

(2) include multi-functional spaces that can accommodate a range of activities and adapt over time to meet changing cultural and community needs, where appropriate for the intended use.

(3) be climate resilient, incorporating sustainable design principles and supporting environmental stewardship and community resilience to future challenges.

(4) provide free, publicly accessible toilets (including Changing Places toilets, where appropriate), baby change, Wi-Fi and drinking water facilities, where practical

(5) be durable, easy to maintain and have long-term management in mind, supported by realistic plans for ongoing operation and care.

D. Proposals for social infrastructure facilities will, where appropriate, be:

(1) secured for the specific intended use/s of the facility; and

(2) subject to a Community Use Agreement with the Council

E. Replacement facilities will be supported where replacement facilities are:

(1) of an equivalent or better quality than the facilities which are being replaced

(2) in an accessible location having regard to Part B of this policy

(3) still accessible to their existing users

(4) provided in a timely manner to ensure that the needs of the neighbourhood and wider community will continue to be met.

F. Proposals for new and replacement facilities should have regard to relevant design guidance and standards for such facilities when demonstrating that the provision is suitable for its intended uses and users.

G. Existing social infrastructure will be safeguarded and proposals involving the loss (whole or part) of social infrastructure will only be permitted where:

(1) there is no current or future need for the existing uses or an alternative social infrastructure use as demonstrated through robust evidence including active marketing for a minimum continuous two-year period;

(2) the social infrastructure is a meanwhile use; or

(3) the development is necessary as part of an agreed programme of public service transformation that supports locality-based provision, aiming to achieve or sustain service improvements and related investment in social infrastructure that will benefit the neighbourhood and wider community.

H. Where the previous use of a site was social infrastructure, redevelopment of the site will be expected to re-provide social infrastructure, unless it meets the criteria in Part G of this policy.

I. In exceptional circumstances, where the tests in Part G of this policy are not met and it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the council that it would not be feasible and/or effective to include replacement facilities in the proposed development, a payment in lieu may be accepted.

J. Where it has been demonstrated satisfactorily that there is no reasonable prospect of a social infrastructure use on a site, in town centres or designated Cultural Quarters the Council's preferred alternative use will be cultural facilities.

Supporting Text

26.15 As Haringey's population continues to grow, it is essential that new social infrastructure is provided and that this is appropriately located, well-designed, and effectively managed to meet the evolving needs of residents. Future provision must be responsive to existing and projected local needs and integrated into the fabric of neighbourhoods to support inclusive and resilient communities.

26.16 When planning for social infrastructure provision, applicants should have regard to the Haringey Infrastructure Delivery Plan, placemaking aspirations set out in the relevant neighbourhood chapters, engagement with local communities and stakeholders and relevant plans, and strategies and needs assessments from social infrastructure providers.

26.17 The Council will seek opportunities to improve access to facilities through Community Use Agreements, enabling shared use by the wider community and extending hours of community access where appropriate. These agreements will also address the ongoing revenue costs associated with operating the facility, helping to ensure its long-term sustainability. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how the future of the facility will be secured, including through partnerships and management arrangements that support locality-based provision and maximise community benefit.

26.18 Where replacement social infrastructure is provided, it should be demonstrated that the replacement provision is equivalent to or better than the existing provision. New provision should not usually result in a net loss of floorspace of community uses, however flexibility may be applied where it would improve and not compromise the provision of facilities and delivery of services and/or is part of a wider strategy to secure more efficient locality-based provision that will sustain service delivery and benefit the neighbourhood and wider community.

26.19 Social infrastructure will be protected unless there is strong justification for its loss or provision of replacement facilities. Where there is a loss of a facility, other social infrastructure uses should be actively sought before alternative uses are considered. This includes sites where the previous use was social infrastructure and are now vacant or have been demolished.

26.20 Proposals will be required to provide robust evidence to demonstrate there is no current or future need for the existing uses or appropriate alternative social infrastructure. An active marketing campaign for community or cultural uses should

be designed to attract social infrastructure providers that will address local need. Applicants should work with the Council and social infrastructure partners to ensure that relevant providers are reached through the marketing campaign. The marketing campaign should be conducted continuously for a minimum period of 2 years and offer rent or sale prices that align with the reasonable local market value for the relevant social infrastructure.

26.21 Evidence of a marketing campaign is not required where it can be demonstrated that redevelopment of the social infrastructure is required to support the viability of replacement provision or the wider public service transformation plan.

26.22 Where appropriate, the Council will seek confirmation in writing from the relevant social infrastructure provider that the proposed loss is consistent with the agreed strategy for delivery of that service in Haringey.

26.23 Payment in lieu of replacement facilities will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Applicants will need to justify why in-kind provision would not be feasible and/or effective. Payments in lieu will be calculated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the facility lost, the impact of the development and local context and need

Policy S3: Play Space

A. The Council seeks to ensure that all children and young people in the borough have safe access to good quality, well-designed, secure and stimulating play and informal recreation. To help achieve this:

(1) New development must provide at least 10sqm of play space per child based upon expected child yield indicated by the GLA Population Yield calculator.

(2) Provision of play space in new development should accord with the benchmark standards and guidance in the GLA's Play and Informal Recreation SPG or any subsequent adopted London Plan Guidance. In areas identified as deficient in public play provision, major developments should exceed the minimum standards to address local need and improve spatial equity.

(3) Provision of play space should be considered from the very start of the design process with play for all ages of children and young people considered and opportunities maximised to embed 'playable' spaces into the landscape and public realm.

B. Play spaces should be located in appropriate and accessible locations and:

(1) prioritise locations adjacent to residential and community uses that enable informal surveillance and foster a sense of ownership.

(2) avoid sites that are isolated, severed by major roads, or affected by poor air quality, noise, or other environmental hazards.

(3) support the co-location of children's amenities (e.g. play, early years, schools) to create compact, walkable neighbourhoods.

(4) ensure doorstep play opportunities are provided, particularly in higher-density developments, to support independent mobility and social interaction.

(5) be located at ground floor level wherever possible.

C Play spaces must be designed to respond to the local context, demographic needs, and inclusive design principles, including:

(1) ensuring full accessibility for disabled children, parents, and carers, in line with inclusive design standards as well has considering the needs of neurodiverse children.

(2) engaging children, families, and local communities early in the design process to ensure spaces reflect their needs and aspirations, particularly groups of children who are under-represented in the use of play spaces.

(3) integrating play into the wider public realm, creating multifunctional, intergenerational spaces that support informal recreation, social interaction, and biodiversity.

(4) incorporating natural elements such as trees, planting, and water features to enhance sensory play, shade, and environmental quality.

(5) providing ample wayfinding signage so it is easy for children to identify where nearby play spaces are.

(6) not being segregated by housing tenure.

D. All play spaces must be supported by a clear management and maintenance plan, including detail on funding mechanisms, responsibilities, and community involvement.

E. Existing play and informal recreation facilities will be safeguarded. Proposals that result in the loss of such spaces will only be supported where replacement provision of equal or greater size, quality, and functionality is delivered either on-site or within the surrounding neighbourhood. Replacement spaces must be well-connected, publicly accessible without restriction, and designed to meet the needs of both existing and future users

Supporting Text

26.24 Access to safe, inclusive, and high-quality play spaces is a key priority for the Council, reflected in the Haringey Vision's 'call to action' to support children and young people's experiences and skills. Over 20% of Haringey's population is under 18 and many of the borough's youngest communities are located in areas expected to undergo significant change over the plan period.

26.25 To ensure development supports the play needs of children and young people, the Council will protect and enhance existing play space and maximise opportunities to deliver additional play space, particularly in communities with the greatest needs.

26.26 On-site play provision is expected in line with the London Plan. Off-site provision will only be acceptable where on site provision is not possible due to site-based constraints and where off-site provision of that element of play space continues to meet the needs of the development and benefit the wider community. This is more appropriate for older children and is only acceptable provided facilities are within a safe walking distance of 400 metres measured by actual routes rather than straight-line distance.

26.27 Where there are deficiencies in access to public play space, major developments will be expected to exceed minimum standards to help address the need. Where minimum standards cannot be exceeded this may be achieved by delivering part of the formal play space requirements within the public realm. Deficiencies will be considered across different age groups to ensure inclusive and equitable provision.

26.28 The location of formal play spaces should be considered from the earliest stages of the design and planning process, as part of a holistic public realm strategy. Play should be embedded throughout the development, not confined to isolated zones, ensuring that children encounter opportunities for play and social interaction as part of their everyday movement through the neighbourhood.

26.29 Play spaces must be easily and safely accessible, with clear sightlines and informal surveillance from surrounding homes and community uses to foster a sense of safety and ownership. Care should be taken to avoid locating play areas near sources of poor air quality as children are especially vulnerable to the health impacts of pollution.

26.30 Play spaces must be designed to reflect the local context and the diverse needs of children and families. This includes ensuring full accessibility for disabled children, parents, and carers, and considering the sensory and spatial needs of neurodiverse children. Inclusive design should be embedded from the outset, avoiding segregation by tenure and ensuring all residents can access shared spaces equally.

26.31 Early engagement with children, families, and community groups is essential to ensure play spaces reflect lived experiences and aspirations, particularly those of children who are under-represented in the use of public space. Girls often feel less welcome in public play spaces due to design biases that favour competitive or physically dominant activities. To ensure play spaces are inclusive and equitable, it is essential to consider how girls use and experience space differently. This includes designing for social interaction, creative expression, and safety

26.32 Play should be integrated into the wider public realm, creating multifunctional, intergenerational environments that support informal recreation, social interaction, and biodiversity.

26.33 Without ongoing care, even well-designed spaces can quickly fall into disrepair, limiting their use and undermining their value to the community. Maintenance plans should set out, at a high-

level, long-term responsibilities, funding arrangements, and mechanisms for regular upkeep, including cleaning, repairs, and replacement of equipment and planting.

26.34 Community involvement in stewardship of theses spaces, such as through resident groups, schools, or local organisations, can help foster a sense of ownership and ensure that spaces are responsive to changing needs. This is particularly important in high-density areas, where play spaces may serve a wide range of users and require active oversight to remain welcoming and accessible.

Policy S4: Public Toilets

A. Large scale developments that are open to the public and large areas of public realm should provide and secure the future management of public toilets in accordance with London Plan Policy S6.

B. Major developments in areas of deficiencies should provide or contribute to the delivery of public toilets.

C. All public toilets must be supported by a clear management and maintenance plan, including funding mechanisms and responsibilities.

Supporting Text

26.35 Public toilets are essential infrastructure that supports health, dignity, and inclusion. Their absence can restrict mobility, increase social isolation, and disproportionately affect older people, disabled people, families with young children, and those with long-term health conditions. In Haringey, many residents report avoiding public spaces due to a lack of accessible toilets, a phenomenon known as the "loo leash." This has direct implications for physical and mental health, economic participation, and community wellbeing.

26.36 Provision of public toilets should be integrated into large-scale developments and public realm schemes, particularly in areas identified as having poor access, known as "loo deserts". Facilities must be clean, safe, and accessible to all users, including gender-neutral and Changing Places toilets. In parks and high streets, where footfall is high and needs are diverse, toilet provision should be treated as a core component of the social infrastructure network.

26.37 To ensure long-term viability, all public toilets must be supported by a clear management and maintenance plan, with defined responsibilities and adequate funding. The Council is working with the local community to produce a borough-wide public toilet strategy which should guide provision, with mapping of existing facilities, identification of gaps, and coordination across departments.