

19 Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

19.1 Introduction

19.1.1 In order for communities to be successful, it is vital that they are well served by a full range of services and infrastructure which are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all.

19.1.2 One of the Council's priorities is to tackle health inequalities across the District and to improve and promote the health and wellbeing of East Herts residents. Well planned communities which are supported by accessible services and infrastructure can help create healthier environments.

19.1.3 Open space, sport, play and recreation facilities are important in enhancing people's quality of life. They also perform wider health and wellbeing functions, helping to build inclusive communities, promoting healthy lifestyles and protecting green spaces for reflection and relaxation. Similarly, community facilities play a significant role in developing the social wellbeing of individuals and communities by allowing activities and interests to grow outside of the home and the workplace. They also bring people together and help to establish new communities. Access to education is another key contributor to a sense of community and wellbeing.

19.1.4 The loss of open space, sport, play, recreation and community facilities which provide valuable public services could prove detrimental to community identity and sustainability. Safeguarding such facilities will help realise the full potential of existing buildings for community use and encourage re-use of appropriate buildings when they become available.

19.1.5 With an ageing population local access to healthcare facilities is an important part of everyday life, and the provision of such facilities within a community, accessible by a choice of sustainable travel options is vital. Facilities which assist in individuals maintaining a healthy and active old age will become more important in East Herts.

19.2 Open Space, Sport and Recreation

19.2.1 Regular physical exercise contributes to good levels of health and wellbeing. Aside from its benefits to the individual, increased participation in sport can also have wider benefits in tackling social exclusion and reducing anti-social behaviour. It is therefore important that people in all areas have access to good quality open spaces and the opportunity to participate in formal and informal recreation, including waterside and water based recreation. Open spaces often have multiple uses: those designated for outdoor recreation such as golf courses, public parks and allotments also form part of the wider green infrastructure network.

19.2.2 A high proportion of adults and children do not exercise regularly. Increasing participation rates in sport and recreation requires the co-ordinated efforts of many partner organisations. Open spaces and sports facilities are key community facilities which contribute towards health and wellbeing both directly and indirectly. Planning's role involves protecting existing assets, and promoting provision through the

planning process by making sure that demands arising from new development do not result in a shortfall in the provision of facilities. Planning also has a role in promoting the provision and enhancement of new and existing facilities through a positive policy approach towards such development, and where necessary through site allocation.

19.2.3 Sport England is the Government agency which seeks to encourage people and communities to participate in active sport and recreation. It aims to ensure positive planning for sport, enabling the right facilities to be provided in the right places, based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need for all levels of sport and all sectors of the community. Sport England, working with the provisions of the NPPF, encourage local planning authorities to make direct reference to sport in local planning policy to protect, enhance and provide sports facilities, as well as helping to realise the wider benefits that participation in sport can bring. As such, Sport England has a role in protecting sports provision and is consulted where planning applications impact on such facilities. All proposals for new sports facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls will be expected to be designed in accordance with Sport England's design guidance to help ensure that facilities are fit for purpose and of a high quality design.

Sport England guidance on Planning for Sport can be viewed and downloaded from the Sport England Website at: www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/

Sport England guidance on the Design of Sports Facilities can be viewed and downloaded from the Sport England Website at: www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/

19.2.4 The council has undertaken a number of technical studies that inform the preparation of the District Plan, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. These studies identify where there is a deficit of provision in particular sports and the need for new facilities. Applications will be expected to take account of the Council's most up-to-date evidence as appropriate. Given there are existing deficits in provision, the loss of facilities should only occur in tandem with their replacement by new and enhanced facilities, which will be required to be delivered prior to the commencement of development in order to ensure that replacement facilities are available to provide continuity for users.

19.2.5 Whilst individual open space requirements will be assessed on a site by site basis, the cumulative impacts of development on the wider network will also be considered. Open space should be central to the design of a scheme, be located to achieve good access for all residents and be designed to 'Active Design' standards. Open space should be seen as crucial to providing community cohesion and meeting the Council's health and wellbeing aspirations.

19.2.6 Where play provision is included, facilities should be fit for purpose and sensitively located. Play is essential to children and young people's physical, social and cognitive development.

19.2.7 It is recognised that in certain circumstances on-site provision may not be the best planning solution to meet the community's requirements for additional open space/ facilities. In these circumstances, developers will be expected to provide financial contributions towards off-site provision in lieu of providing open space/ sports facilities on site. This approach will only be considered appropriate where this provides a better means of providing for the open spaces / sports facilities needs arising from the development.

The East Herts ~~Playing Pitch Strategy~~ **Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment** can be viewed and downloaded from the Council's Website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/playingpitchstrategy www.eastherts.gov.uk/evidencebase

~~The East Herts Sports Facility Assessment can be viewed and downloaded from the Council's Website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/24811/East-Herts-Assessment-of-Indoor-Sports-Facilities~~

19.2.8 Community Use Agreements will be sought to secure community use of new sports facilities provided on sites which may not usually be available for wider community access (e.g. educational or private sites) where these are provided as part of a mixed use development and where they offer an appropriate means of providing for the sports facilities needs arising from new development.

Policy CFLR1 Open Space, Sport and Recreation

- I. Residential developments will be expected to provide open spaces, indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities to provide for the needs arising from the development. Provision of Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) will be expected to meet Natural England's ANG Standards. Local areas for play, informal and formal open spaces should be provided for on-site, while contributions towards off-site provision or the enhancement of existing facilities may be more appropriate for other types of provision. Facilities should be provided in accordance with the Council's latest evidence and in consultation with Sport England and the Council's Leisure and Environment Team. Where provision is made on-site as part of a development, applicants should detail how it will be maintained in the long term.
- II. Commercial developments will be expected to provide adequate amenity space in addition to landscape and setting features.
- III. Proposals for new open space, indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities which meet identified needs will be encouraged in suitable locations, served by a choice of sustainable travel options. The proposal and all ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and car

parking should be fit for purpose and of an appropriate scale and design. Measures should be taken to integrate such facilities into the landscape, including the creation of features which provide providing net benefits to biodiversity.

- IV. Proposals should aim to provide for the dual or multiple-use of facilities for wider community access. The use of Community Use Agreements will be expected where appropriate.
- V. Proposals that retain or enhance the provision, quality and accessibility of existing open space, or indoor or outdoor sport and recreation facilities will be supported in principle, where they do not conflict with other policies within this Plan.
- VI. Proposals that result in the loss or reduction of open space, indoor or outdoor sport and recreation facilities, including playing fields, (as defined on the Policies Map), will be refused unless:
 - (a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown that the facility is no longer needed in its current form; or
 - (b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by enhanced provision in terms of quantity and/or quality in a suitable location prior to the commencement of development (in the case of school playing fields, the timing of delivery will be negotiated on a case by case basis in accordance with Policy CFLR10); or
 - (c) The development is for an alternative open space, sport and recreation facility, the need for which clearly outweigh the loss.

19.3 Local Green Space

19.3.1 The NPPF has introduced a new policy allowing local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection. By designating land as 'Local Green Space' local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. Recognising the amenity, wildlife and leisure value of the 'green fingers' in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford, the Council has designated these areas as Local Green Spaces. Local communities, through Neighbourhood Plans, can also identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection.

Policy CFLR2 Local Green Space

~~Development will not be allowed within Local Green Spaces, as defined on the Policies Map, other than in very special circumstances. Development will be permitted only if it is consistent with the function, character and use of the Local Green Space to which it relates.~~

19.4 Public Rights of Way

19.4.1 Rights of Way are footpaths, bridleways and byways which have public access. Hertfordshire has an extensive Rights of Way network of over 5,200 paths totalling more than 3,000km. These paths are shown on a map and have a written description in a legal record called the Definitive Map and Statement, which is looked after by Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Service at County Hall, Hertford.

Further information on the County Council's Rights of Way Service can be viewed here: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/envplan/countrysideaccess/row/

19.4.2 The Public Rights of Way network has always been an asset for recreation or for the purpose of everyday use such as getting to the local shop or to a bus stop for example. This valuable resource, often taken for granted, now plays an even more important role with regards to people's health and wellbeing and can contribute towards reducing carbon emissions by encouraging travel on foot or by bicycle rather than by car. Public Rights of Way also help to boost tourism and therefore contribute towards the local economy. Without them it would be difficult for residents and visitors alike to access the countryside we have in and around East Herts.

19.4.3 Development proposals should therefore take full account of the need to protect and enhance Public Rights of Way.

Policy CFLR3 Public Rights of Way

Proposals for development must not adversely affect any Public Right of Way and, where possible, should incorporate measures to maintain and enhance the Rights of Way network.

19.5 Water Based Recreation

19.5.1 The district's many rivers, canals, lakes and other enclosed water areas such as former quarries and gravel pits offer many opportunities for recreation such as angling and boating as well as walking and cycling. Contributing to the character of the towns through which they flow, notably Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware and Sawbridgeworth, these waterways are also primary habitats for vulnerable species of flora and fauna and as such it is necessary to ensure that recreational activities do not harm the very habitats that make them attractive to visitors.

19.5.2 Any proposals for development needed to support water based recreation which might increase the recreational use of a stretch of waterway should be considered in conjunction with the Canal & River Trust as Navigation Authority to ensure there is no detrimental impact on other recreational users of the waterway or towpath.

Policy CFLR4 Water Based Recreation

Proposals for water-based recreation will be supported in principle, where:

- (a) The proposal does not have a significant adverse impact on the nature conservation interest, the character, or appearance of the environment;
- (b) The proposal ~~does not conflict with~~ takes account of the relevant River Catchment Management Plan; and
- (c) The proposal does not have an adverse impact on any flood alleviation works and does not impede the Environment Agency's access requirements to waterworks watercourses.

19.6 The Lee Valley Regional Park

19.6.1 The Lee Valley Regional Park is an important component of the district's green infrastructure defined by its openness, attractive and heritage rich landscapes, sites of nationally significant biodiversity and varied visitor attractions. The Park also has an important role to play in mitigating the impacts of climate change, managing increased flood risk, conserving and enhancing scarce resources (in particular water resources), offsetting urban heat island effects and meeting the open space needs of a growing population.

19.6.2 The Regional Park is statutorily designated for leisure, recreation, sport and nature conservation. It covers an area of 4,000 hectares and stretches for 26 miles along the River Lea from the River Thames in East London to Ware in Hertfordshire. Established by Parliament in 1967 the Regional Park was created to meet the recreation, leisure and nature conservation needs of London, Hertfordshire and Essex.

19.6.3 Approximately 440 hectares of the Park lie within East Herts, with 98.69% of it designated as Green Belt. This is an area of predominantly high quality landscape with a rural and unspoilt character and features of heritage significance. Gravel extraction has created a number of water areas, providing opportunities for angling, sailing and the creation of important wetland habitats which contribute to the intimate and semi-enclosed landscape character of the area. The landscape both within and beyond the Park boundaries provides a setting for every event and activity within the Park making a key contribution to the quality of the visitor experience.

19.6.4 Key sites of nature conservation interest within the Park include two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at Amwell and Rye Meads Local Nature Reserves which form part of the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. Existing and new connections with adjoining green infrastructure networks (e.g. to

the west with Wormley/Hoddesdonpark Woods, to the north with Kings Meads and to the east along the Stort Valley) are to be enhanced, protected and promoted. Further information on the Council's approach to nature conservation and green infrastructure can be found in Chapter 19 20: Natural Environment.

19.6.5 The Regional Park Authority Plan guides development and the use of the waterways within the Regional Park. The current Lee Valley Regional Park Development Framework was adopted in July 2010, with Thematic Proposals adopted in January 2011, and consists of two parts:

- Part one: outlines the policies and objectives for the regional park, providing the strategic policy framework for its future use and development.
- Part two: consists of particular proposals for the future use and development of individual sites and areas that collectively form the totality of the regional park.

Full details of the Park Development Framework and Area Proposals can be found at: www.leevalleypark.org.uk/parkframework/home/

19.6.6 The District Council will support and work with the Regional Park Authority and other stakeholders to deliver the Park Plan 2000 and the Park Development Framework Area Proposals where these improve leisure and sporting opportunities for local communities, enhance access to open space and nature, and help expand educational, volunteering and health related activities.

Policy CFLR5 The Lee Valley Regional Park

- I. The District Council supports the Lee Valley Regional Park Development Framework, which will be treated as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in this area.
- II. Proposals for leisure related developments within the Lee Valley Regional Park will be supported in principle provided that intensive land-use leisure activities and associated buildings are located as unobtrusively as possible near existing settlements and do not conflict with other policies within this Plan.

19.7 Equine Development

19.7.1 Equestrian related activities are popular forms of recreation and economic development in the countryside. These uses, including riding schools and stables, can fit in well with agricultural activities and help to diversify the rural economy. The Council will support equine development that maintains environmental quality and the character of the countryside.

19.7.2 While equestrian development can be appropriate in the open countryside, the cumulative impact of horse related activities and associated buildings can have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of rural areas. Existing

buildings should, wherever possible, be re-used. New buildings for horse related activities, including stables, field shelters and tack rooms should be no larger than is essential. In most cases isolated development is unlikely to be acceptable.

19.7.3 All equestrian development, whether domestic or commercial, should be of an appropriate scale and design and careful attention should be given to siting, materials and landscaping to avoid an adverse impact on the countryside. Particular care will be needed where floodlighting is proposed in order to avoid an unacceptable impact on residential amenity. In assessing any application, regard will be had to the British Horse Society standards for grazing. Where commercial development is proposed in the Green Belt, the requirement to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' in accordance with the NPPF will apply.

Policy CFLR6 Equine Development

- I. Proposals for ~~small-scale~~ equine development (~~up to 10 stables~~), whether domestic or commercial, will be permitted when the following criteria are met:
 - (a) The proposal is sited or landscaped to minimise visual intrusion;
 - (b) Where new buildings are proposed, applicants must demonstrate that existing structures cannot be re-used;
 - (c) The siting, scale and design of the proposal is in keeping with the character of the area, with adequate pasture to support horses. Particular regard will be had to the cumulative effect of proposals on local landscape or biodiversity interests;
 - (d) The amenity of nearby residential properties is not adversely affected, for example, in relation to floodlighting, noise and disturbance;
 - (e) The proposal would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse impact in terms of traffic generation;
 - (f) The proposal does not result in harm to the ecological network, including partial or complete loss or degradation of Local Wildlife Sites or priority habitats;
 - (g) The proposal does not conflict with other policies within this Plan.
- I. Where commercial equestrian development is proposed in the Green Belt, the requirement to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' will apply in accordance with the NPPF.
- II. Proposals that result in the loss of equestrian facilities should be accompanied by an Equestrian Needs Assessment which demonstrates that the facilities are no longer needed.

19.8 Community Facilities

19.8.1 Community facilities provide for the health and wellbeing, social, educational, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community. Community facilities include, but are not limited to: art galleries; cinemas; community centres; crèches/nurseries; healthcare facilities; household waste recycling centres; museums and libraries; music and concert halls; places of worship; schools; post offices; public houses; village halls; local/village shops. Such facilities act as the focus of community activity and contribute towards community cohesion. Community facilities are provided by a wide variety of agencies including local authorities, other public service providers, churches and the voluntary and business sectors and can sometimes be provided on single multi-use sites.

19.8.2 Urban and rural communities require access to core community facilities. The requirement for facilities is evolving in response to changes in the needs of the local population. As the proportion of people over 65 increases, so demand for facilities catering for older people will rise. New facilities and services including crematoria and burial space may be needed, particularly where a significant amount of new housing is proposed.

19.8.3 Planning can help co-ordinate the provision of new facilities and new housing development, and obtain appropriate developer contributions. It can also resist the loss of existing facilities. The District Council will require that proposals for change of use are supported by evidence that the particular facility is no longer viable and explain the options that have been investigated to maintain the service. As new developments require good access to facilities and create additional demand for existing facilities, so any shortfall in provision arising as a result of new development, must be addressed as part of the development.

19.8.4 Within villages and the rural area, community facilities are vital to residents, often providing a lifeline for those unable to get into town on a regular basis. The loss of local village shops, post-offices and pubs can be a substantial loss to the local community.

19.8.5 Under the Localism Act, voluntary and community organisations can nominate an asset to be included on a list of 'assets of community value'. This list is managed by the Council. If a landowner wants to sell a registered property, they must tell the Council. If a group wants to buy the asset, they can trigger a six month moratorium to give them a chance to raise the money but the landowner can still sell at the going market rate. This period gives community groups some time to develop a proposal and raise the required capital to bid for the property when it comes onto the open market at the end of the moratorium period, thus retaining a valued facility for community use.

More information on Assets of Community Value can be found on the Council's Website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/communityassets

19.8.6 Village halls also play a valuable role within rural communities, accommodating a variety of uses such as crèches, youth clubs, doctor's surgeries, as well as providing a venue for social events. New facilities can be designed to accommodate both indoor and outdoor sporting activities, and even small scale business hubs, further boosting the viability of the facility to all age groups and users.

19.8.7 Facilities used for the practice of faith or culture are important buildings within communities and offer the opportunity to bring people together through the sharing of space and facilities.

19.8.8 Public houses play an important role in rural communities, providing a social venue, local employment opportunities and adding to the vitality of a village.

19.8.9 In circumstances where minor extensions or alterations to existing premises are essential to the continued viability of the business and the vitality of the village then these may be permitted in accordance with Policy CFLR7 below.

Policy CFLR7 Community Facilities

- I. The provision of adequate and appropriately located community facilities will be sought in conjunction with new development.
- II. Developers will be expected to provide either on-site provision, or where appropriate, a financial contribution towards either off-site provision, or the enhancement of existing off-site facilities. Where provision is made on-site as part of a development, applicants should detail how it will be maintained in the long term.
- III. Proposals for new and enhanced uses, buildings or land for public or community use will be supported in principle where they do not conflict with other policies within this Plan. Such proposals:
 - (a) Should be in suitable locations, served by a choice of sustainable travel options;
 - (b) Should be of an appropriate scale to meet needs and be of a flexible design to enable multiple uses throughout the day;
 - (c) Should take measures to integrate such facilities into the landscape, including the creation of features which provide providing net benefits to biodiversity; and
 - (d) Should be constructed in tandem with the development to ensure they are available for the new and existing community from the start of occupation.
- IV. Proposals should aim to provide for the dual or multiple use of facilities for wider community activities. The use of Community Use Agreements will be sought where appropriate.

~~V. Limited extensions/alterations to existing community facilities in the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt may be supported in principle, where they do not conflict with other policies within this Plan.~~

V. As part of proposed strategic development, consideration will be given to the need to provide new Household Waste Recycling Centres in suitable locations, taking account of neighbouring land uses.

Policy CFLR8 Loss of Community Facilities

- I. Proposals that result in the loss of uses, buildings or land for public or community use will be refused unless:
- (a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown that the facility is no longer needed in its current form; or
 - (b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by enhanced provision in terms of quantity and/or quality in a suitable location; or
 - (c) The development is for an alternative community facility, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.

19.9 Health and Wellbeing

19.9.1 The NPPF requires planners to consider health in a range of different ways. The framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development highlights the importance of achieving social, economic and environmental objectives (health and wellbeing encompasses all three). The Health and Social Care Act, which came into force in April 2013, introduced a new public health landscape. Within Hertfordshire, the previous NHS Primary Care Trust configuration has been reshaped into the Herts County Council Public Health Directorate working with District and Borough Councils in a two-tier formation, along with other vital health partners, statutory and voluntary, addressing local health need.

19.9.2 The Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2016) was developed at this time with nine priorities and is to be refreshed in 2016. Hertfordshire County Council also has its own Public Health Strategy (2013-2017). In addition, the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013) supports the life course approach to health which looks at the people, places and communities they live in, seeking to provide the best potential for improved health outcomes from birth to grave.

19.9.3 The following priority elements are foundation principles of the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy:

1. Healthy children starting off well;
2. Empowering children, young people and adults to achieve their life potential;
3. Creating health and work together;

4. Promoting positive health and wellbeing life quality for all;
5. Healthy places and sustainable communities;
6. Pro-active health prevention.

19.9.4 Priorities 2, 5 and 6 have particular links with planning. Priority 2 refers to enabling the best possible life opportunities for all ages of population. Examples of this which relate to planning opportunities could involve the design of communities and towns that enable good community cohesion.

19.9.5 Priority 5 connects with the contribution planning can have in shaping infrastructure from residential dwellings and office developments to the ways in which these are sustainably connected and enable a richer environment for encouraging behaviour change and healthy lifestyle living.

19.9.6 Priority 6 is an active contributor in balancing economic burdens that are associated in treating individuals affected by illness and poor health. Examples of life-long homes that can be adapted easily as an individual passes through different life stages can help maintain independence. A community setting where these homes are located with opportunities to walk and exercise could impact a person's health potential positively both in terms of physical health and their social wellbeing because of a supportive neighbourly environment, enabling social connections.

The Health Summary for the East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group area can be viewed and downloaded from the NHS East and North Hertfordshire CCG Website at: www.enhertsccg.nhs.uk/

Local Health Profiles can be viewed on the Public Health England Website at: www.apho.org.uk/

The East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018) can be viewed and downloaded from the Council's Website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/wellbeing

19.9.7 The planning system can play an important role in creating healthy, inclusive communities. This could include, for example, measures aimed at reducing health inequalities, encouraging physical activity, improving mental health and wellbeing, and improving air quality to reduce the incidence of respiratory disease.

19.9.8 The County Council's Public Health Department is preparing a Health and Wellbeing Planning Guidance document defining its expectations to developers in the delivery of healthy development and communities, with signposts to further advice. This will be available at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/healthsoc/healthherts/

19.9.9 Sport England and Public Health England have produced 'Active Design', a set of guidelines and principles on creating developments that encourage physical activity and to promote opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and

layout of development: Sport England's Active Design guidance can be viewed and downloaded from the Sport England Website at: www.sportengland.org

19.9.10 Major applications will be expected to demonstrate how they will make provision for additional healthcare facilities. Strategic allocations will be expected to make full provision on-site, or in agreement with NHS England and East & North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group, improvements to existing facilities may be appropriate where this provides the most effective provision for patients.

Policy CFLR9 Health and Wellbeing

- I. All development shall be designed to maximise the impact it can make to promoting healthy communities and reducing health inequalities. In particular, regard shall be had to providing the necessary infrastructure to encourage physical exercise and health, including accessible open space, vegetation and landscaping, sport and recreation facilities, cultural facilities and safe, well promoted, walking and cycling routes.
- II. Where new health facilities are planned, these should be located where there is a choice of sustainable travel options and should be accessible to all members of the community.
- III. Contributions towards new or enhanced health care facilities will be sought to ensure the health care requirements arising from new developments are met and to prevent a shortfall or worsening of provision.
- IV. Where new facilities for community use, including for the practice of faith, are planned, these should be of a flexible design to enable multiple uses throughout the day and should be located where there is a choice of sustainable travel options.

19.10 Education

19.10.1 Access to education is a key contributor to a sense of community and wellbeing. Often schools are the focus of a community, particularly where early years education, extra-curricular activities or public access to facilities are offered. Educational attainment is the keystone of any economy and it is important that access to such facilities is available to the very young through to adult learning opportunities. Ensuring that sufficient school places are available to support development is an integral part of delivering sustainable communities.

19.10.2 The Government is committed to ensuring that there is sufficient provision to meet growing demand for school places, through increasing choice and opportunity in state funded education. This commitment is reflected in the NPPF. Local authorities are required to give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions.

19.10.3 Hertfordshire has experienced a significant rise in the demand for school places across the County in recent years in line with the picture nationally.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places within its area. However, HCC does not control the admissions or management of many schools across the County. As the district's population grows demand for school places will continue to increase, placing pressure on existing facilities. It is therefore vital that where housing growth results in increased demand this should provide for investment across each education tier to ensure there are enough places to serve the district's pupils within their community.

19.10.4 Applicants should work with Hertfordshire County Council, the District Council and other neighbouring local authorities to identify the education needs arising from development and to ensure that appropriate provision is made in the form of new or enhanced facilities. Major applications will be expected to demonstrate how they have provided for additional school places. The strategic allocations will be expected to make full provision on-site, or contribute towards improving or extending existing facilities where this is the most effective option.

Policy CFLR 10 Education

- I. Development that creates a potential increase in demand for education will be required to make appropriate provision for new facilities either on-site or by making a suitable contribution towards the improvement or expansion of nearby existing facilities. Applicants will be expected to work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and other neighbouring local authorities with a duty for ensuring that there are sufficient school places available to serve new housing developments, to ensure appropriate facilities are provided.
- II. Proposals which fail to make appropriate provision for the education of its future residents will be refused.
- III. Proposals for the creation of new or extended education facilities for all ages should:
 - (a) Be in an accessible location, served by a choice of sustainable travel options;
 - (b) Be of the highest quality of design which offers flexible use of facilities, in order to ensure the various needs of the community can be met, in accordance with Policy ~~DES3~~ DES4 (Design of Development) (see also Policy ED6 (Lifelong Learning));
 - (c) Provide or retain a suitable provision of outdoor recreation space and playing fields, in accordance with Policy CFLR1 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation); and
 - (d) Be designed to facilitate the community use of facilities, in accordance with Policy CFLR7 (Community Facilities) and Policy CFLR1 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation).