

Cherwell District Council

Executive Meeting

1 February 2016

Community Spaces and Development Study

Report of Director of Operational Delivery

This report is public

Purpose of report

The Local Strategic Partnership has been instrumental in framing and commissioning a study to better evidence the need for neighbourhood community spaces and development activity across the District, in line with the development plans identified by the Local Plan. The study also proposes a model for community development activity to be undertaken in the establishment of thriving and well integrated new neighbourhoods.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to

- 1.1 Approve the Community Spaces and Development Study (appendix 1) as a basis for developing CDC's community development approach in new neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 Agree the principle of housing developers contributing to CDC co-ordinated community development work, to establish thriving and well integrated new neighbourhoods across the District.
- 1.3 Agree the principle of housing developers providing new (or contributing to the expansion of existing) neighbourhood community halls, based on an allocation of community space per head of proposed population.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Cherwell District Council has a history of securing contributions from developers for building new, or improving, community centres on strategic development sites, as well as a financial contribution towards community development activity.
- 2.2 One of the means by which the Cherwell Local Plan (Policy BSC12) will deliver appropriate provision of community facilities is: "Ensuring that development proposals contribute towards the provision of new or improved facilities where the development would generate a need for sport, recreation and community facilities which cannot be met by existing provision."

- 2.3 The Local Plan and the changes to planning legislation that include the Community Infrastructure Levy have necessitated a comprehensive review of the evidence offered to developers to make the case for such contributions. The study's purpose is to quantify the contributions sought from developers, based on Cherwell's established practice, benchmarked with comparable areas elsewhere in England and identify best practise in this area.
- 2.4 The study also seeks to evidence best practice in relation to community development activity, to establish an approach that provides optimum conditions for new residents to participate in their community.
- 2.5 The detail of developer contributions will be set out in the new Developer Contributions SPD. Following some further refinement, The Community Spaces & Development Study will be able to form part of the evidence base for Local Plan Part 2, and inform the preparation of any additional planning policies on community facilities and development to be included within it.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 In order to best provide for the new communities being built in Cherwell over the lifespan of the next Local Plan there must be clarity over the current community space provision, its proximity to new development and whether it has capacity to serve a larger community. The study establishes the current position and there will be an annual renewal of information to keep the dataset up to date.
- 3.2 On identified strategic sites it is highly unlikely that existing local provision will suffice and so new facilities must be built to offer residents comparable standards of living and access to community-led services. The study seeks to identify an optimum measure of space needed, the threshold sizes for developments requiring a new community space, and makes the distinction between urban and rural space.
- 3.3 Urban community spaces rarely have a requirement to meet the need for indoor sports, as there are dedicated Sports Centres in towns that have separate standards and contribution obligations. In villages there may be a need to consider indoor sports provision within the context of a new community hall and so a different measure is considered, that incorporates the Sport England guidance for stand-alone, multi-use facilities.
- 3.4 The study makes community space recommendations for each of the strategic sites where the allocation is yet to receive planning permission. The exception is Upper Heyford, which due to its location and constraints is being assessed separately, so as not to delay the rest of the study.
- 3.5 The ownership of new community spaces is an interesting topic for discussion and will be considered as part of the on-going Cherwell District Council Asset Review; however all new space should be built to minimise environmental impact and offer sufficient space to be operationally sustainable for whichever ownership and governance structure is considered and ultimately agreed.
- 3.6 Community development is essential for the integration of new residents. The Local Strategic Partnership has concerned itself with the role Cherwell District Council, as planning authority, and other partners can have in supporting integration and

community participation. Without initial support, new communities can struggle to become established, and integration can be a lengthy process.

- 3.7 Research shows that targeted community development work can have a big impact and that in communities where development work has taken place, residents associations and community-led activity develop and thrive. Practice highlighted in the study shows good results where community development workers are employed by external agencies. The success of work undertaken by Cherwell officers gives an alternative scenario for the future employment of staff to carry out this work. A mixed economy of employed and third-party community development workers may offer an effective and flexible solution. As developer contributions are sought to cover the costs of this work there should, overall, be no financial implications for the council.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Through the commissioning of this report Cherwell District Council has been able to:
- Determine a sound basis for the calculation of developer contributions towards community spaces (either the construction of new space or the extension and improvement of existing spaces).
 - Present a comprehensive analysis of existing community spaces that can be updated annually to inform future development requirements.
 - Present a requirement for community development activity to ensure new residents are integrated and engaged in the life of their new neighbourhood
 - Identify further research opportunities into the ownership and management of community buildings to coincide with the Cherwell District Council Asset Review
- 4.2 Pending the Developer Contributions SPD, the findings and recommendations of this study can be used as a basis for negotiations on planning applications.

5.0 Consultation

Adrian Colwell – Head of Strategic Planning & the Economy

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not develop standards for the provision of indoor community recreation.

Reason: Without evidence to justify them, developers would be likely to contest contribution requests, resulting in new neighbourhoods having no, or inadequate community hall space.

Option 2: Not develop standards for the provision of community development activity.

Reason: Without evidence to justify them, developers would be likely to contest contribution requests, leading to new neighbourhoods struggling to develop as thriving, well integrated communities.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The Community Spaces and Development Study has been financed from within existing budgets. The study makes the case for new community development and facilities in the district to be financed by housing developers.

Comments checked by:

Paul Sutton, Head of Finance & Procurement, 0300 003 0106,
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Legal Implications

- 7.2 Any Section 106 contribution or obligation to provide community facilities must comply with the 3 tests (necessary, directly related and fair/reasonable in scale) in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 and the requirements of Cherwell Local Plan Policy BSC12

Comments checked by:

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No (Impact will be on communities yet to be built)

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Corporate Plan 2015/16

Thriving Communities:

- Secure social and community Infrastructure for housing developments across the district.

- Support the growth and development of neighbourhood community associations.
- Increase access to leisure & recreation opportunities through development and outreach work.

Local Plan Policy BSC 12: Indoor Sport, Recreation and Community Facilities

The Council will encourage the provision of community facilities to enhance the sustainability of communities, and encourage partnership working to ensure that built sports provision is maintained in accordance with local standards of provision by the following means:

- Protecting and enhancing the quality of existing facilities
- Improving access to existing facilities
- Ensuring that development proposals contribute towards the provision of new or improved facilities where the development would generate a need for sport, recreation and community facilities which cannot be met by existing provision.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Tony Illott, Lead Member for Public Protection

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Cherwell District Council Community Spaces and Development Report, plus appendices
Background Papers	
None	
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