

**Supporting Communities – Options Working Draft****Introduction and Background**

The provision and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure is a key issue for local communities. Bromley's communities are supported by a wide a range of services and facilities appropriate to different catchments, examples of which include the following:

- At local community level - GPs and clinics, primary schools and early years provision, village halls, churches, libraries, police safer neighbourhood teams, public houses and local open spaces,
- Facilities such as secondary schools and colleges, ambulance & fire stations and parks, have wider catchments within the borough
- The Princess Royal University Hospital (PRU), Bromley College of Further and Higher Education and the Churchill Theatre serve Bromley and neighbouring boroughs whilst the National Sports Centre and the specialist mental health services at the Bethlem (South London and Maudsley Trust) are used by people from London, the South East and nationally.

National Planning Policy Framework Core Planning Principles (para 17) states that planning should also take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

The Equality Act (2010) general equality duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not.

**Key trends and issues****Demography**

Changes in population structure lead to different pressures on community infrastructure. The population in Bromley has risen by over 10,000 in the decade since the 2001 Census and expected to increase by a similar number over the decade to 2021. The largest increases in population are observed in both the young and the elderly:

- 0-19yr olds accounted for 24% of the Bromley population in the 2001 Census, with a marked increase in births since 2001, this group is projected to increase to 26.8% by 2026. Additionally, advances in modern medicine have resulted in more children with disabilities and complex needs surviving at birth and into later life.
- Bromley has the largest elderly population in London. The percentage of older people in the borough continues to increase and notably there is predicted to be a rise in the population aged 80 years to 5.6% of the population by 2021.

The main implications of these demographic changes include pressures on

- Health facilities
- Education facilities
- Community facilities (to support and quality of life)
- Recreational & cultural facilities (including provision specifically for youth)

It is also important to note that there are spatial implications of these changes, with the pattern of population growth varying between wards.

### Health Infrastructure

The Local Plan will need to respond to changes in health provision & the resulting implications for health infrastructure

- Recent modernisation to the structure of health provision, for example the drive nationally to bring 50% of outpatient and secondary care activity out of hospitals, including minor surgical procedures and treatments, into community primary care settings
- There is considerable variation in the capacity of GP practices in Bromley, but GPs commonly work in smaller practices and with larger list sizes than the national average. More than a third of GP surgeries are not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, about half of which cannot be adapted to achieve compliance

### Healthy Environments

Whilst the availability of health infrastructure (GP's) supports people with ill health, public health is significantly influenced by the environment. Bromley's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2011 describes the main issues relating to the life expectancy, quality of life and the wellbeing of the population as a whole and of people with specific needs. The Bromley JSNA 2011 concludes that

*“key issues for further action are those which affect a large proportion of the population and where the situation appears to be worsening, these are:*

- *Diabetes (for which obesity is a key risk factor)*
- *High blood pressure (Hypertension)*
- *Adult obesity*
- *Childhood obesity*
- *Anxiety / depression*
- *Dementia*
- *Support for Carers”*

The JSNA notes that numerous studies illustrate the direct benefits of green space to both physical and mental health wellbeing. The presence of green space also has indirect benefits, encouraging social contact and integration, provides space for physical activity and play, improves air quality. The built environment in Bromley can also support healthy lifestyles, through the encouragement of healthy modes of transport and by ensuring built environments appropriate to peoples needs (the JSNA specifically flags the impact of appropriate housing on both physical and mental health). The environments in which we live, work and relax can therefore have a significant affect on obesity and anxiety / depression, in

addition to the more obvious health impacts of the environment on asthma and pulmonary (lung) diseases.

### Education Facilities

The increases in the birth rate since 2001 impact on services for children & families and have led to significant pressures in early years provision and the primary education sector, which is set to peak in 2018. Secondary school pupil intakes are similarly forecast to increase throughout the plan period. Additionally, there has been, and is likely to continue to be, increased numbers of children with special educational needs requiring educational placements and specialist care.

The statutory age for education and training is increasing to 18+ years by 2015 and the shape of higher and further education is currently changing with the recent merger between Bromley College of Further and Higher Education and Orpington College of Further Education. It is clear from the recent White Paper on education that the nature of post secondary education will continue to evolve over the plan period.

### Access to a range of Community Facilities

The availability of local community venues across the borough is essential to enable locally accessible services and support people's quality of life, through support services, cultural and social activities. Community facilities often face challenges in finding or retaining sites due to the nature of the activities, the impact on residential amenity and to financial pressures. These facilities include for example, places of worship, local shops / Post Offices and public houses. Where facilities are re-provided in more appropriate buildings the challenge is to find an appropriate use for the redundant infrastructure which may include historic public buildings which may be listed or lie within conservation areas.

### Leisure and Recreation, Play and Youth

The health and wellbeing of residents is supported by a range of sports facilities, to which private clubs make a significant contribution. There is good provision of parks across the borough however some lack the recommended quality of facilities and there are some areas outside the recommended 400m catchment for a local park.

The need for increased provision of facilities for children and young people is a recurring theme in consultations with the public, both to support the life opportunities for children and families and to divert young people from anti-social behaviour.

Allotment gardens present opportunities for outdoor activity and healthy eating. In much of the Borough there are long waiting lists for a plot

### Spatial Issues

There is a spatial dimension to the demographic changes, to the historic patterns of existing provision and to transport access (notably in some suburban and rural locations). Included amongst the range of spatial issues the Local Plan needs to address are:

- the capacity of social infrastructure to meet the needs of the Borough over the plan period, particularly,
  - in areas of planned growth,
  - in “Areas of Renewal” based on the London Plan defined “Areas of Regeneration” (note separate paper on Areas of Renewal),
- opportunities to ensure the sufficiency and flexibility of community facilities in the “Places” in Bromley, including in particular:
  - town centres and local centres,
  - rural Green Belt villages,
- the impact of increasing pressures on social infrastructure from demand beyond the Borough boundary.

## **2. Policy Options**

### **Bromley 2030 Vision**

**The Council, local people, organisations and businesses work together to ensure that we all enjoy a good quality of life, living healthy, full, independent and rewarding lives... Neighbourhoods provide a choice of good quality homes, jobs and a range of shops and services appropriate to the different town, district and local centres... Bromley has high levels of educational attainment**

### **Health and Wellbeing Vision**

The quality of life in Bromley has improved in all its neighbourhoods with all residents enjoying better health and wellbeing. Areas with a concentration of social and/or environmental difficulties are being improved. Communities are served by local shopping parades, education, healthcare, leisure, community and cultural facilities, including libraries and places of worship. New facilities are encouraged in accessible locations to deliver flexible and efficient community hubs. The environment is designed to maximise accessibility for people with disabilities. Residents are helped to improve their own places and local environments for the benefit of all the community. There is less crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Policy Objectives:**

**Produce healthier environments and infrastructure to support people in living fuller, longer, healthier, more sustainable lives.**

**Co-ordinate the improvement of Bromley’s designated Renewal Areas, and other areas with environmental difficulties, to reduce health inequalities; and encourage all communities to improve their own environments.**

**Neighbourhoods offer good quality homes and an accessible range of shops and services, appropriate to the roles of the different centres, from town centres to local neighbourhood centres and parades.**

**Ensure new community facilities are appropriately located to provide accessible effective modern services, and resist the net loss of facilities.**

“New homes are designed to minimise environmental impact and are supported by appropriate social and environmental infrastructure” (“Homes” policy objective).

### **Strategic Options**

Against the backdrop of increasing demands on community facilities outlined above. the Council will need to work with agencies and providers to ensure a wide range of accessible community, recreational and leisure facilities to support well being and enhance the quality of life of people in Bromley (in conformity with London Plan Policy 3.16).

### **Defining Community Uses**

**Option 1 (Preferred)** Define community uses as per the London Plan (Policy 3.16 Social Infrastructure para 3.86).

**Option 1a (Preferred)** Additionally define local level facilities (as envisaged by the London Plan para 3.86) including informal recreational facilities.

### **New Community Facilities**

The “Business, employment and the local economy” vision indicates that  
“...centres, together with the district, local and neighbourhood centres, provide accessible shops, services and facilities for residents and wider communities across the Borough”.

And the related policy objectives read:

- Encourage a diverse offer in town centres, including shops and markets, services, leisure and cultural facilities as well as homes.
- Maintain and improve neighbourhood centres and parades across the borough to ensure locally accessible facilities.

**Option 2 (Preferred)** Develop a “Town Centre First” sequential test approach for community uses to prioritise:

- Town Centres / Village centres,
- existing community sites (hub creation),
- as part of major mixed use developments where no appropriate town centre location available,
- relocations to more accessible locations  
(noting that for some uses e.g. day nurseries, a desirable geographical spread may also involve provision, additional to the locations identified as priority locations).

**Option 3 (Preferred)** Support for “hubs” - develop Policy to support mixed community use of existing buildings and encourage new community buildings to be designed flexibly for multiple use.

### Burial Space

There is insufficient burial space capacity for the Plan period in parts of the Borough. The use as a cemetery and related facilities “which preserve the openness of the Green Belt” are appropriate within the Green Belt and there is therefore potential to examine opportunities to address this future need.

**Option 4 (Preferred)** To explore the opportunities for Burial Sites and allocate sites.

### Options for Education

The London Plan (draft alterations 2012) highlight that “Local authorities’ strategic role in the new system will be to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to development that will widen choice in education, promoting a good supply of strong schools and encouraging the development of Academies and Free Schools. Local authorities will still be required to fulfil their statutory duty to secure sufficient school places within their areas.”

**Option 5 (Preferred)**  
Work with agencies to ensure provision of appropriate educational facilities to cater for life long learning from early years.

**Option 5a (Preferred)**  
A criteria based policy approach which considers the “need” for the proposed provision. The NPPF attaches great importance to the meeting the needs of existing and new communities.

**Option 5b (Preferred)**  
Designate the sites of schools / colleges and purpose built day nurseries as “Education Land” and protect for the period of the plan. (This reflects approaches in neighbouring boroughs).

**Option 6 (Preferred)**  
Assess pressure areas over the plan period and allocate sites as required.

### Options for Health & Healthy Environments

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 (highlighted in the London Plan draft amendments para 3.9) gives boroughs an enhanced role in improving public health in their area. It advises that the implementation of a joint health and wellbeing strategy (through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process) will provide an opportunity to align strategies and programmes, including informing plan-making and development management.

**Option 7 (Preferred)**  
Work with relevant health professionals to develop policies to support the appropriate provision of modern services (in conformity with London Plan Policies 3.2 & 3.17).

**Option 8a (Not preferred)**

Develop an explicit policy relating to producing healthy environments.

**Option 8b (Preferred)**

The impact of environments on health to be referenced throughout Local Plan policies.

**Options for Leisure and Recreation**

The “Open Space and the Natural Environment” vision indicates  
“Bromley’s natural environment supports the wellbeing of its communities, with open spaces and trees providing healthy environments and space for leisure and sport”.

Smaller open spaces make an important contribution, not only to the physical appearance & sense of place, but to the physical and emotional health of local residents.

**Option 9 (Preferred)**

In addition to resisting the loss of Urban Open Spaces (UOS) designate and protect smaller open spaces where they make a contribution to the local community.

**Option 10 (Preferred)**

Assess the demand for allotments and seek to allocate additional sites.

**Development Management Policies**

“Supporting Communities” strategic options will be supported by development management policies be likely to include the following:

- Policy to support the needs of particular groups or communities and resist the loss of community facilities without appropriate re-provision (along the lines of UDP Policy C1).
- Specific protections for facilities important to local communities,
  - a local community / corner shops,
  - b pubs,
  - c theatre & local arts.
- Maximise opportunities for community activities to develop by requiring vacant retail units to be marketed for community use before (along the lines of UDP Policy S5).
- Encourage the cultural & leisure use of the public realm.
- Encourage the provision of health and sports facilities.

- Explore a criteria based policy to resist the over concentration of hot food outlets (e.g. proximity to schools).
- Policy to require community facilities appropriate to the scale of new developments (along the lines of UDP Policy C2 and in line with the NPPF para 38).
- Encourage effective use of education land e.g. dual use encouraged (along the lines of UDP Policy C8). new buildings should be designed to minimise the loss of open space (subject to other policies of the plan e.g. impact on amenity).
- Additional policies in response to Strategic Options.