

# WE ARE SHAPING.

# WE ARE NEWHAM.



# OUR COMMUNITY FACILITIES.

## Introduction

This topic covers a range of facilities that meet local and strategic needs and contribute towards a good quality of life. In the Local Plan, a 'Community Facility' is defined as a space for: education (from preschool to further and higher education) and training; health; older people's housing and specialist provision for other vulnerable people (falling into Use Class C2); social; leisure; children's play; playing pitches and fields (including multi-use games area (MUGAs)) and associated facilities; places of worship; burial spaces; community spaces (including pubs, certain Sui Generis uses, public toilets); cultural facilities; civic uses (including criminal justice and court facilities) and emergency services.

An area's social infrastructure is one of its greatest assets. Social infrastructure plays an important role in supporting and enriching people's lives. Both formal infrastructure (such as health and education provision) and informal spaces and services (like hairdressers, cafes and pubs) provide important social networks that make communities more connected and resilient. Social infrastructure can be thought of as an ecosystem of local organisations, networks and services. Planning for community facilities in London is complex. In Newham there many ways of providing social infrastructure and lots of differing community needs.

The current Local Plan policy that relates to this topic is:

- INF8: Community Facilities

## What does our current policy seek to achieve?

### INF8: Community Facilities

- Facilities should be kept or re-provided where a local need exists and can be demonstrated.
- Loss of a community facility is only allowed in limited circumstances.
- Community facilities should meet the needs of new and existing communities.
- Co-location of facilities and services is encouraged.
- Health, childcare and education services are prioritised on Strategic Sites.
- Facilities should be in accessible locations and directed towards town or local centres in the first instance, with limited exceptions allowed.
- New facilities should be accessible, welcoming inclusive and open and available to all members of the local community and outside of main use and any sacred areas, operate as a multifunctional space with fair and affordable access to all.



## What you've told us

- The majority of people think our community facilities are good, in particular our Libraries (84%), Leisure and sports facilities (81%), Local health services (75%), Adult education/evening classes (69%), Under 5s early education (65%), Activities for teenagers (65%), Primary education (62%) and Secondary education (62%).
- Amongst the key priorities for the borough's Community Assemblies are inclusive and improved indoor and outdoor spaces and youth activities.
- Young people want to feel welcome, with young people feeling excluded due to gentrification. They want more indoor and outdoor spaces which young people can identify with, that allow young people of all ages to spend time together safely and free of charge with seating, lighting, shelter, activities, free Wi-Fi and dedicates spaces to study. This includes safe spaces during COVID-19. Many youth activities are too far away from where young people live. There is a particular desire for more music, arts and performance activities.
- People living and working in the Royal Docks want community and social spaces for all ages (community centres, cafes and bars); activities for young people (sports and community events were emphasised) and meanwhile uses for vacant sites to test ideas and new models of community investment.

### Sources:

- Newham Survey 2019
- Youth Assembly Report 2021
- [Newham Community Assemblies](#)
- [Royal Docks and OAPF: Engagement Report](#)

## What does the data tell us?

- Newham's range of leisure provision at Atherton, East Ham and Newham Leisure Centres and Manor Park Fitness Centre had around 1,753,205 visits in 2018/2019. However, upgrades to many of these facilities are required in order to provide a high quality leisure offer for our residents.
- In addition to the facilities offered by the council, there is also a growing number of private gyms offering competitive membership to members of the public.
- According to the London Sport Borough Survey in 2017 more than 30% of all adults in Newham do not do enough physical activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are classified as inactive (less than 30 mins of moderate physical activity per week). One in five (20%) of residents never exercise, increasing to 50% of disabled residents.
- Participation in sport or physical activity is also lower in Newham (68% v 36%) than the London average and this is particularly the case for women and the white population. The tendency to be active declines as age increases.
- Previous data (Liveability Survey 2015) suggest activity levels vary considerably by Community Neighbourhood area.



- There is extensive evidence about the impact of loneliness and social isolation on people's lives, their relationships and wellbeing. It is a serious public health concern, leading to higher rates of premature mortality comparable to those associated with smoking and alcohol consumption. In Newham 1 in 5 people report feeling lonely often and 23,412 people live alone in Newham.
- Research has found that in the UK young adults, women, people with lower education or income, the economically inactive, people living alone, and urban residents had a higher risk of being lonely.
- Schools are well-recognised as facilitators of community relationships.
- Previously, Newham experienced continual increases in the number of births resulting to an increase in its overall child population. The Council responded to this need with an extensive program of schools expansions, with the majority within the primary sector. Whilst the pace of growth in births has now receded, Newham still has the third highest 0-15 aged child population in London. The greatest area of need is now in the secondary sector with the increased primary cohorts transitioning through the school system.
- Sufficiency of places for those with Special Educational Disability Needs (SEND) is a major focus of work and investment over the next five years, particularly for autism.



- There is only around 1 early years place for every 6 eligible children in the borough. There is a wide variation in the number of early years places available per resident child at ward level. East Ham South, Boleyn, Plaistow North, Plaistow South and Green Street East have the least places available.
- Many pubs play an important role at the heart of their local communities. In 2001 there were 105 pubs in Newham, this number has now fallen to 45, the second lowest in London.

#### Sources:

- [London Development Database](#)
- [Well Newham 50 Steps to a Healthier Borough. Part 2: The Evidence for Action](#)
- Loneliness in Newham initiative
- [LGA: Loneliness, social isolation and COVID-19](#)
- [Newham, Places for All, A School Place Planning Strategy 2020 - 2025](#)
- [Newham Childcare Sufficiency Assessment](#)
- [Public Health England: Spatial Planning for Health. An evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places](#)
- [RTPI Mental Health and Town Planning; IPPR](#)
- [Pubs and Places – the Social Value of Community Pubs](#)

### National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- Strategic policies should make sufficient provision for community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure).
- Planning should enable places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meeting between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other.
- Provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs by planning positively for community facilities.
- Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.
- Policies should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing community facilities (such as places of worship, pubs, music venues and sports clubs).

### The Use Class Order and Permitted Development Rights (amended 2020)

- The changes outlined in the High Streets section also impact on the delivery and protection of community facilities.

### London Plan 2021

- Boroughs should ensure the social infrastructure needs of London's diverse communities are met, informed by a needs assessment of social infrastructure, existing health and social care facilities.
- Local Plans should identify sites for future health, social care, education, sport and recreation facilities, as justified by the relevant needs assessment.
- New facilities should be easily accessible by public transport, cycling and walking and should be encouraged in high streets and town centres.
- Shared and co-location of facilities should be encouraged.
- Identify opportunities to make better use of existing sites and proposed new social infrastructure, through integration, co-location or reconfiguration of services, and facilitate the release of surplus buildings and land for other uses.
- Ensure development proposals for housing and commercial facilities incorporate suitable child care provision, encouraging nursery provision in primary schools, where there is a need.

Relevant London Plan Chapters and Policies: Chapter 5: Social Infrastructure (Policies S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6).

### **Relevant London Plan Chapters and Policies:**

- Chapter 5: Social Infrastructure
- Policy S1 Developing London's social infrastructure
- Policy S2 Health and social care facilities
- Policy S3 Education and childcare facilities
- Policy S4 Play and informal recreation
- Policy S5 Sports and recreation facilities Policy S6 Public toilets



## What new trends and objectives do we want to address?

- **15 minute neighbourhood approach:** Pillar 5 of Newham's [COVID-19 Recovery Strategy](#) sets out that the Council will enable every resident to live in an accessible and inclusive neighbourhood which will provide all their social, civic and economic essentials. The design, characteristics and detail of our 15-minute neighbourhoods will be informed by resident engagement through our emerging Characterisation Study. It is likely that primary schools, spaces for recreation and community health and wellbeing facilities will be an important part of the mix.
- **Healthier lives for all:** The Local Plan refresh provides an opportunity to support the delivery of '[50 Steps, Newham's Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)'. The Strategy sets out a commitment to supporting our young people to be healthy and ready for adult life (Priority 2) by enabling schools, youth zones and other young people settings to be health promoting environments. It also looks to improve health and care service provision to all (Priority 3), support schools to be active travel beacons and increase the participation of young people in physical activity and sport (Priority 7). It also seeks to develop of a universal sport and physical activity offer as well as looking to community facilities (parks, libraries, community centres and faith settings) as being hubs of physical activity (Priority 8). We want to use the Local Plan to protect existing and deliver additional community facilities in the right locations, which can help deliver these outcomes.
- **Building back fairer in Newham:** The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated just how crucial our social infrastructure is to our collective resilience and wellbeing. The pandemic has exacerbated existing social and economic inequalities. The impact of the lockdown restrictions, the closure of schools, places of worship and recreational facilities has been coupled with a renewed reliance on our hospitals, parks, mutual aid groups and online advice services. It has often been the most vulnerable in our communities who have depended on these things the most. The [COVID-19 Marmot Review](#) calls for a commitment to social justice by putting equity of health and wellbeing at the heart of all policy making. Newham's '[Towards a better Newham – COVID-19 Recovery Strategy](#)' and '[Social Integration Strategy](#)' echo this approach. The pandemic has increased the need for access to and funding of community facilities such as those for early years (including Children's Centres), mental health services (especially for young people who have been hugely impacted) and youth services, such as youth centres ([Marmot Review](#)). The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in significant changes to how schools operate and manage the safe return of pupils within existing building space; the longer term implications for provision including any impacts on the design of school buildings are as yet unknown, and will need to be taken account of in future plans.

- **Addressing loneliness:** People who felt most lonely prior to COVID-19 in the UK now have even higher levels of loneliness. Community facilities offer the opportunity to socialise and build connections. Faith groups, pubs, sport clubs and other community facilities play an important role in creating stronger communities. We want to consider how we protect and promote facilities which can help combat loneliness.
- **Social integration:** The important role which social infrastructure plays in breaking down the barriers of class, ethnicity and religion that can sometimes separate us is being increasingly recognised. We can better plan for, design and manage social infrastructure to help facilitate social interaction. Co-location of services in new civic hubs is a common model across London. Bringing together unlikely activities in the same space can facilitate social integration between people who may not have otherwise met.
- **Protecting and increasing social value:** Social infrastructure are shared resources within which experiences and social value are created. We want to protect this social value, by better understanding and acknowledging the importance of existing local assets and providing new social infrastructure that address gaps in provision, to ensure existing communities benefit from development.
- **Importance of co-design – engaging local organisations and community groups in the design and governance of facilities:** Co-design is particularly important in areas undergoing significant levels of change. The design of social infrastructure can benefit from the involvement of operators, community groups, residents and workers.
- **Spaces and places for children and young people:** The GLA's [Making London Child-Friendly](#) report stresses the importance of ensuring that young people's needs are taken into account. This is important for helping Newham's young people reach their potential, particularly in Newham's Year of the Young Person. We need to think about how the built environment impacts on how young people develop and behave. It is important for them to be independently mobile with safe access to play and informal recreation. Spaces away from home and school, such as parks, recreation facilities, libraries and other forms of social infrastructure provide an important space for social interactions to occur.

#### Sources:

- [Towards a Better Newham: COVID-19 Recovery Strategy](#)
- [Newham Social Integration Strategy](#)
- [2021-Newham Year of the Young Person](#)
- [Newham, Places for All, A School Place Planning Strategy 2020 – 2025](#)
- [DDCMS: A connected society – A strategy for tackling loneliness](#)
- [LGA: Loneliness, social isolation and COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Marmot Review](#)
- [TCPA: 20-Minute Neighbourhoods](#)
- [GLA. Good Growth by Design Connective Social Infrastructure](#)

## What evidence will we use?

### Community Facilities Needs Assessment

- An audit of existing facilities and services, informed by an understanding of the demographic make-up and socio-economic data with evidence drawn from the Characterisation Study.
- It will seek to understand better what facilities we have and where, identifying any gaps in provision.

### Sports and Recreation Needs Assessment (led by Newham Sport and Leisure)

- Update to the 2017 Sports and Recreation Needs Assessment, to include all types of leisure including those not operated by the Council, to identify, classify and audit all existing leisure facilities.
- Understand where there is unmet demand both now and in the future, based on the forecasted growth in housing.
- By their nature, sports facilities often form a part of open space. As such, this assessment will have to have regard to the open space needs assessment.
- The assessment should inform a co-produced Leisure Strategy, working with our community and the different users of the leisure spaces in Newham. This will plan strategically for future provision

### Playing Pitch Strategy (led by Newham Sport and Leisure)

- Update to the 2017 Playing Pitch Strategy.
- Summarise the current supply of playing pitches and outline the demand both now and in the future, based on the forecasted growth in housing.
- To inform where we protect and need to enhance the use of existing playing fields and help plan for where more are needed.

### Characterisation Study

- Working with residents, this piece of work will help to better understand how Newham's neighbourhoods are served by existing social infrastructure.

### Infrastructure Delivery Plan

- Identifies what infrastructure is required in what locations to support growth and deliver the Plan's objectives.
- It pulls together best-available information from a range of sources including TfL, the NHS, other external bodies and other Council departments.





## Proposed policy changes:

1. **Facilitate 15 minute neighbourhoods:** The delivery of community facilities will be an integral part of the delivery of 15 minute neighbourhoods. The Characterisation Study and Community Facilities Needs Assessment will help to identify the range of community facilities that people need in order to live well locally, taking into consideration local preference and movement patterns, as well as wider market trends and service delivery models. To deliver this objective we propose to consider:
  - a. **Reviewing the town centre first approach to the location of community facilities.** Our evidence base will review the location and mix of existing community facilities, how this is aligned with community need and the affordability of space to consider if a different approach is needed. We could amend the policy to provide more flexibility on location. Schemes located outside of a town centre could be permitted where the demand for up-to-date need is demonstrated and detailed sustainable travel plans are provided.
  - b. An alternative approach which would also enable more flexibility on the location of community facilities, would be to **change the definition of town centre uses.** Currently, the Local Plan has an expanded definition of town centre uses to include community facilities. Combined with the policy preference for a town-centre-first approach, this may not lead to the optimum location of facilities to meet local neighbourhood needs. We will explore how this is working in our emerging evidence base and could removing certain uses from this definition.
2. **Public toilets as a vital community facility.** Currently, the Local Plan includes public toilets as a defined community facility but our current policy provides no guidance on where they should be located, the hours of operation or accessibility. They are especially important for certain groups of society and the policy could give more emphasis on the need for public toilets, when and how we would expect them to be provided as part of new developments.
3. **Better reflect the need for community facilities within our neighbourhoods and on specific strategic sites.** There is a current lack of detail on the need for certain community facilities at the scale of neighbourhoods and sites. Our policy approach on Newham's Neighbourhoods and Site Allocations could provide better guidance on the types and scale of community infrastructure needed.
4. **How spaces are managed – embedding social value:** We could introduce a requirement for new community facilities to meet key defined principles of social value through a management plan or design and access statement. A similar approach to the draft Public London Charter could be applied to the management of community spaces. This could be secured through a legal agreement linked to the planning permission (such as an s106 agreement).
5. **Create a new policy structure:** Our existing policy on community facilities is long and intricate. It is proposed to split it into two separate policies, one on existing community facilities and the other on new and enhanced community facilities. Both will provide greater clarity, in the implementation text, regarding what evidence is required to support applications. In addition, we are considering the introduction of new policies to set out further detail on specific community facilities:
  - a. **Education and childcare facilities.** A new policy, informed by an evidence of need could provide greater clarity on how we bring forward new educational settings and facilities for childcare. It could set out those sites identified for schools and how and when they will be brought forward and a requirement for development proposals, for housing and commercial facilities, to ensure that there is suitable child care provision. The policy could specify the locational, design and management parameters we would expect to see in such facilities. For example; sites being accessible by foot, cycling or public transport; entrances and playgrounds being located away from busy roads; seeking traffic calming measures at entrances to benefit from reduced levels of air/noise pollution and road danger; creating settings which embrace nature through the planting trees and plants – encouraging species which provide educational value and those which are edible; accessible and inclusive approach to design and support for extended out of hours use by the surrounding community.
  - b. **Public houses.** A new policy could provide further detail on our approach to the loss of public houses.



## You tell us

- Do you agree with the proposed changes?
- Are there other changes we should consider?
- Is there anything missing?
- How far (considering travel mode and duration) do you usually travel to access community facilities?
- Which community facilities are missing from your neighbourhood?
- What community facilities do you feel are always needed in an ideal 15-minute neighbourhood?
- Would any other community facilities benefit from a standalone policy?
- Should we reconsider the town centre first approach to the location of community facilities?
- Should we have a specific policy approach on public houses and their protection?
- Are there any pubs which are important to you in your neighbourhood?

