

TO: EXECUTIVE
23 SEPTEMBER 2014

COMMUNITY HUBS – STRATEGIC HOUSING AREAS
Director of Corporate Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To get the Executive's endorsement of proposals to seek the provision of community hubs at the Warfield and TRL strategic housing sites and the expansion of the Farley Wood Community Centre to provide community facilities to support new and growing communities across the borough. The report also seeks the Executive's endorsement of the management strategy for the hubs.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Endorse the development of community hubs at the Warfield and TRL sites and the expansion of Farley Wood community centre using S106 funds;**
- 2.2 **Endorse the proposed approach to the management of the centres outlined in paragraphs 5.26-5.29 and discussions on this with the Parish and Town Councils and other interested parties.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) needs to be able to defend its requests for infrastructure contributions from new development. The LPA indicates that the proposed community hubs are needed to support new and existing communities and have identified their inclusion in the newly adopted Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP). The two proposed community hubs and one extended community centre are likely to be viable for delivery but they need to be supported as Council policy to strengthen our case for provision. Community hubs are listed as infrastructure in SALP policy and in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan; however, the LPA needs to ensure that CMT and the Executive are committed to the development of community hubs to support their negotiations with developers and the prioritisation of these facilities as these will be subject to negotiation from developers. Details of the provision are in section 5.4 'Multi-functional Community Hubs' of the draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning document May 2014.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to provide community hubs in the new housing development. However, evidence from Jennetts Park and The Parks shows that community centres are highly valued by residents as a place to meet, get to know each other and access services and activities, supporting community cohesion and engagement. The Jennetts Park Community Centre is very well used and the Community Association running it is generating significant income from it to reinvest in community activities such as a Kids Club.

- 4.2 The provision of these hubs is also a requirement of the policies in the SALP adopted by the Council in July 2013.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The SALP (July 2013) (policies SA1-SA9) proposes significant residential development across the Borough. In order to identify infrastructure requirements, such as school places, transport improvements and community facilities, the Council developed an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). This is a product of extensive engagement and evidence gathering with infrastructure providers to ascertain their requirements to serve projected planned housing development in the Borough.
- 5.2 Within the IDP, community facility requirements for the major urban extensions are listed in infrastructure schedules, with overall area and phasing requirements. However, formal Council support for the provision of, and ongoing support of, these facilities has not been sought until now. Developers in negotiation over current S106 agreements have been challenging the Council's commitment to see delivery of, and revenue support for, such facilities.

Policy context

- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Authorities to develop policies that promote social interaction and create healthy, inclusive communities (Para 69). To deliver this vision, Para 70 states that planning policies should 'plan positively' for the provision of shared space and community facilities and ensure an 'integrated approach' to the location of housing and community facilities.
- 5.4 At a local level, Policy CS6 of the Council's Core Strategy requires development, which leads to an increased pressure on community facilities, to contribute towards the delivery of additional provision needed to support growth.
- 5.5 Other facilities and services have formal policies, strategies or plans in place to support the infrastructure being sought. For example, the Local Transport Plan supports transport infrastructure and the School Organisation Plan supports where we seek support for new or improved schools. This supporting evidence helps the Council to secure infrastructure provision for new development.

Securing Community Facilities

Role of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.6 Once the Council adopts a CIL charging schedule, dependent on the type, scale and location of development, the Council will receive revenue that must be spent on infrastructure projects needed to support development in the Borough. This money is not ring-fenced, and within the Regulations, the Council has some flexibility on what it chooses to spend the money on. Parish and Town Councils will receive either 15% or 25% (if a Neighbourhood Plan is in place) of CIL revenue.
- 5.7 There are provisions within the CIL Regulations that allow CIL liability to be offset by the provision of land and/or buildings. This would be at the request of the developer and could not be required by the Council. However, the process for this is long and complex. This provision has been in place for land since CIL was first introduced but has not yet been used by any charging authority.

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Role of Regulation 123 List

- 5.8 This list sets out what projects the Council intends to fund wholly or in part by CIL. It neither binds the Council to funding these projects nor is it exhaustive, in that the Council can spend money on projects not on the list. The Council cannot however secure s106 obligations for projects or types of project on the list. It therefore informs developers which infrastructure items the Council will not be seeking s106 obligations for once CIL is introduced; it is intended to prevent double-charging.
- 5.9 Unlike the Borough Council, Parish and Town Councils will be free to spend their CIL receipts (either 15% or 25%) on any development-related project, whether it is on the Regulation 123 list or not. It can be used to assist the funding of projects that have been secured by S106 – even those S106 contributions secured once CIL is in place. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the potential for Parish and Town Councils to assist in the funding of community facility build cost and fit-out, or the management and maintenance.
- 5.10 The Council's approach to CIL must be consistent with Planning Policy, therefore the draft Regulation 123 list reflects planning policies in the SALP. Currently community facilities are not listed on the Regulation 123 list.

Role of Section 106

- 5.11 Once either CIL has been adopted by the Council, or after April 2015, whichever is sooner, the Council's use of s106 requirements will be scaled back to those matters that are directly related to a specific site, and are not included in the Regulation 123 list.
- 5.12 Where an infrastructure project is directly related to a specific site and its provision would not be undermined by the CIL Regulation 123 pooling restriction, s106 agreements will continue to play an important role in the delivery of essential infrastructure on development sites. This approach is consistent with SALP planning policy requirements, helps ensure that the right infrastructure gets delivered at the right time and reduces the burden on the Council to deliver the project using CIL receipts.
- 5.13 In this respect, community hubs specifically related to a development(s) are proposed to be secured by S106 and are therefore omitted from the Regulation 123 list. Within the S106 agreements for sites there will be a ring fenced amount specified for community facilities. Planning officers recommend securing the planned community facilities and improvements using S106 as they are specifically related to a development and the CIL regime has not yet been set up and planning applications for the sites have already been submitted by developers. While we could place such facilities on our Regulation 123 list it would stop us from securing S106 contributions for them. If they were on the Regulation 123 list it would be hard to imagine community hubs being a priority for spending through CIL when there are much larger and more expensive infrastructure items on that list (e.g. Blue Mountain Education Village). They can be added to the Regulation 123 list at a later date if appropriate,

Facility requirement

- 5.14 In accordance with SALP Policies and details set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, multi-functional community hubs are proposed which can provide the following community-based functions, none of which need to be Council run:

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- Community Centre
- Police Point
- Community Café
- Outdoor playspace
- Parish Council Office (Warfield only).

There is also the potential for health facilities to be accommodated, though further discussions would be needed about the space and funding with the Bracknell and Ascot CCG. There should be sufficient space in the centres to accommodate voluntary and community or private sector early years and youth provision.

- 5.15 Details of facility specifications and estimated build costs are set out in Appendix One.
- 5.16 The benefit of combining these facilities under one roof includes the ability to share space and reduce overheads from running separate buildings. There are some excellent examples of multi-purpose community hubs, including the Finchampstead Baptist Church in Wokingham, which are modern and fit for the 21st century and which generate good levels of revenue through bookings and facilities like community cafes, kids clubs and exercise classes.

Location

- 5.17 Multi-function community hubs are proposed for the Warfield and TRL developments with an extension of Farley Wood Community Centre in Binfield planned to absorb the increased levels of housing from Amen Corner North and South. A feasibility study has already been completed on this extension. Additionally, there is likely to be a community facility at the Blue Mountain site but as plans for this are at a very early stage this paper does not cover this.
- 5.18 Community Hubs will be there to serve residents on the new developments. Being located near to any school and/or neighbourhood centre, facilities would benefit from a high footfall, attracting those actively looking for a particular service within the facility, such as early years or pilates classes, and those who see it as a convenient place to meet for coffee and happen to find what else the facility has to offer.
- 5.19 Being easily accessible and offering a range of community services should help ensure that the Community Hubs are financially viable vibrant hubs of activity.

Delivery

- 5.20 The community hubs will be delivered using S106 receipts. If any additional funding is needed to enhance the existing specification for the hubs or to run them then the Parish and Town Councils or other partners could if they wished contribute funding through their CIL receipts and own resources.
- 5.21 The following briefly outlines progress that has been made in the delivery of Community Hubs.

TRL Community Hub

- The Planning Committee of 23rd January 2014 resolved to approve the mixed-use residential-led development including 1000 dwellings subject to the completion of a s106 agreement.

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- The planning application is expected to be approved before CIL comes into play.
- SALP Policy SA5 requires developers at TRL to provide the “On-site in-kind provision of a multi-functional community hub, on sufficient land to allow expansion.”
- Developers are currently considering the Council’s first draft s106 Heads of Terms, which includes floorspace and site area requirements.
- S106 will be used to secure the build and fit-out of the facility and there could be scope for the Parish Council, if they wished, to use CIL receipts to manage and maintain the facility in addition to revenue receipts from facility users/tenants.

Warfield Community Hub

- The Planning Committee of 27th March 2014 resolved to approve the Berkeley Homes (BH) planning application for a residential-led development including up to 750 dwellings subject to the completion of a s106 agreement. This is just over one third of the 2,200 homes allocation at Warfield.
- SALP Policy SA9 requires “On-site in-kind provision of a multi-functional community hub”.
- BH are currently finalising the s106 agreement, which requires developers to make a financial contribution towards the Community Hub.
- Funding secured from BH will make a significant contribution towards the estimated cost of the facility which will be required to be built as part of the neighbourhood centre, east of Newell Green.
- S106 will be used to secure the land at which it will be located, in addition to further financial contributions for the build and fit-out by s106 agreement from other planning applications directly-related to the project.
- There could be scope for the Parish Council to use CIL receipts to manage and maintain the facility in addition to revenue receipts from facility users/tenants. The specification of the facility reflects the Parish Council’s intention to relocate into the Hub.
- Additionally, Warfield Church has confirmed its interest in using the facility and becoming involved in the management and maintenance.

Farley Wood Community Centre

- SALP policy SA8 for land at Amen Corner South requires “In-kind provision or financial contributions towards the enhancement and expansion of the Farley Wood community centre into a multi-functional community hub” and policy SA6 for land at Amen Corner North requires “Off-site in-kind provision or financial contributions towards a multi-functional community hub”.
- Council Planning Officers are in advanced negotiations with developers at Amen Corner North and Amen Corner South. Developers are aware, and there is a general acceptance, of the requirement for community facilities to serve the developments.
- At the time of writing this report Planning Applications for both sites were due to be considered at the meeting of the Planning Committee on 21 August 2014.
- For each site, a draft s106 Heads of Terms is likely to be drafted shortly which will include the requirement for a financial contribution towards the enhancement of Farley Wood Community Centre into a multi-functional Community Hub.
- Funding secured from these current planning applications will make a significant contribution towards the estimated project cost at Farley Wood,

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leaving a relatively small funding gap that could be filled from other s106 agreements from residual development planned in the vicinity.

- Currently the facility is managed by a Community Association of residents. However, there could be scope for the Parish Council, if it wished, to use CIL receipts to manage and maintain the facility in the future in addition to revenue receipts from facility users/tenants.

Phasing & Cost

- 5.22 It is anticipated that the facilities will be built and fitted out over one or two phases, depending on the site, either through on-site in-kind provision or following receipt of financial contributions from developers. However, third party partners may also wish to invest some of their own resources to the community hubs if they have a stake in their management/ownership.
- 5.23 Any planning obligation could include a financial allowance, as a start-up fee, to cover the cost of supporting the development of community activities and services over a period of 2 years from the completion of the community facility. This is critical to the development of a sense of community in new neighbourhoods and will assist the integration of new residents into existing local communities. It is anticipated that developers may resist this “pump-priming”.

Stakeholder engagement

- 5.24 In the design and delivery of the facilities, developers will be required to engage closely with community facility stakeholders in order to understand user requirements and configuration. These stakeholders include, but not exclusively, BFC Corporate Services, Spatial Policy and Property Services, Thames Valley Police and the Parish and Town Councils.

Transferral arrangements

- 5.25 Upon completion, the facilities could be transferred either to Bracknell Forest Council or directly to a Parish and Town Council or other third party subject to this being written into the S106 agreement. The Executive are asked to consider transferring the freehold of the hubs to the Parish and Town Councils, as democratically elected bodies these would be the preferred lead partner, or another third party to incentivise them to manage the centres. They would then pick up responsibility for all planned and reactive maintenance on the hubs so reducing pressure on the Council's budget. This will require consultation with the respective Parish and Town Councils.

Development and management strategy

- 5.26 Given the Council's reducing budget over the coming years it is proposed that the Council should work with the Parish and Town Councils, and other interested parties such as local faith groups, to deliver the development of the hubs. The Parish and Town Councils will have an interest in the build of these facilities and will have CIL receipts which could be pooled with the developers S106 contributions, to contribute to their build and ongoing running costs.
- 5.27 The Parish and Town Council will be approached by the Council to lead on the management and running of the centres. As democratically elected bodies they would be the Borough Councils preferred partners for ownership and management of the centres. However, other partners could play a key role in the development and management of the centres working in partnership with the Parish and Town

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Councils. Initial discussions have started with the Parish and Town Councils about the delivery of the community hubs through the Parish and Town Council Liaison Group as the first step.

- 5.28 Warfield CoE Church is also very interested in the Warfield community hub and has already contacted the Council and also had some initial discussions. The Church would like to own and manage the Warfield community hub and invest its own resources to expand the size and facilities on offer from the proposed hub. A partnership between the Parish Council and Church could be developed and supported to deliver the facility.
- 5.29 At this time, there is no allocated BFC budget to support the ongoing running costs of the centres.

Conclusion

- 5.30 The Executive's endorsement is sought on the provision of the community hubs and the proposed management approach above. The Executive's endorsement is also sought in order to support the LPA's negotiations with developers and the prioritisation of these facilities.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 If the proposals are endorsed the schemes would have to be incorporated into the draft Capital Programme in due course, with any Council contribution being approved via the normal budget setting process. Similarly any potential revenue costs that may fall on the Council would need to be incorporated into the normal revenue budget setting process. If external funding is not secured or is not sufficient then the Council will need to consider how these facilities will be funded in the interim and long term. At the inception of each project a business plan needs to be in place identifying the revenue streams required to operate these facilities and contingency plans reviewed where a shortfall occurs. Liabilities associated with the long-term maintenance of these facilities will also need to be considered and budgeted for if these cannot be transferred to third parties.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The provision of community hubs will advance equality of opportunity for those living in the new strategic housing areas contributing to community cohesion, engagement and facilitating access to services and activities.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There is a risk that developers will challenge the need and case for their development to support a new community centre. This could lead to incremental payment for a new facility which the Council would have to spend within 7 years or return the money.

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- 6.5 There is a risk that some developers will challenge the sum and evidence. The LPA would have to take a view, if a viability argument was successfully provided by the applicants, whether it was prepared to refuse the planning permission if this sum was not collected.
- 6.6 Development will be phased in South Warfield and TRL, for example, so it will be difficult for the facility to be managed if it is built at an early stage. Demand will also be lower at early stages of the housing development so additional revenue support may be needed to run the centres. Alternatively they can be built at a later stage.
- 6.7 If the Parish and Town Councils (or another third party) manage the centres and run into financial difficulties, the Council will need to decide if it will provide interim or long term support.

Chief Officer for Planning and Transportation

- 6.8 Input from the CO:P&T was sought in drafting the report. A robust evidence based and Council commitment to specific projects increases our chances to secure funding significantly from viable developments across the borough. The Development Industry is challenging our infrastructure assumptions in the IDP and it is clear that without evidence and commitment to back these up, the Local Planning Authority may not be able to secure planned infrastructure from and for new communities.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 CMT, Planning officers, Executive Members.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Meetings and emails.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Incorporated into the report.

Background Papers

Site Allocations Local Plan (July 2013)

Infrastructure Delivery Plan (October 2012)

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

Contact for further information

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Appendix One – Proposed Community Hub specifications and costs

Location (& SALP Policy ref.)	Proposed facility	Floor area (c. GIA)	Estimated build cost	Securing Mechanism
Land at TRL – SA5 (also serving Broadmoor – SA4)	New multi-functional community hub	856m ² (+ 120m ² outdoor playspace)	£1.95m	Build, fit-out and land secured by s106: In-kind delivery secured from developer at TRL, followed by financial contributions from Broadmoor towards the extension.
Farley Wood Community Centre (serving Amen Corner North – SA6 & Amen Corner South – SA8)	Enhancement of existing community centre into multi-functional community hub	1,176m ² (+ outdoor playspace)	£2.27m	Build and fit-out secured by s106: Financial contributions secured from developments at Amen Corner North and South.
Land at Warfield – SA9	New multi-functional community hub	1,452m ² (+ 180m ² outdoor playspace)	£3.18m	Build, fit-out and land secured by s106: Financial contributions and land secured from development comprising the Warfield development area.