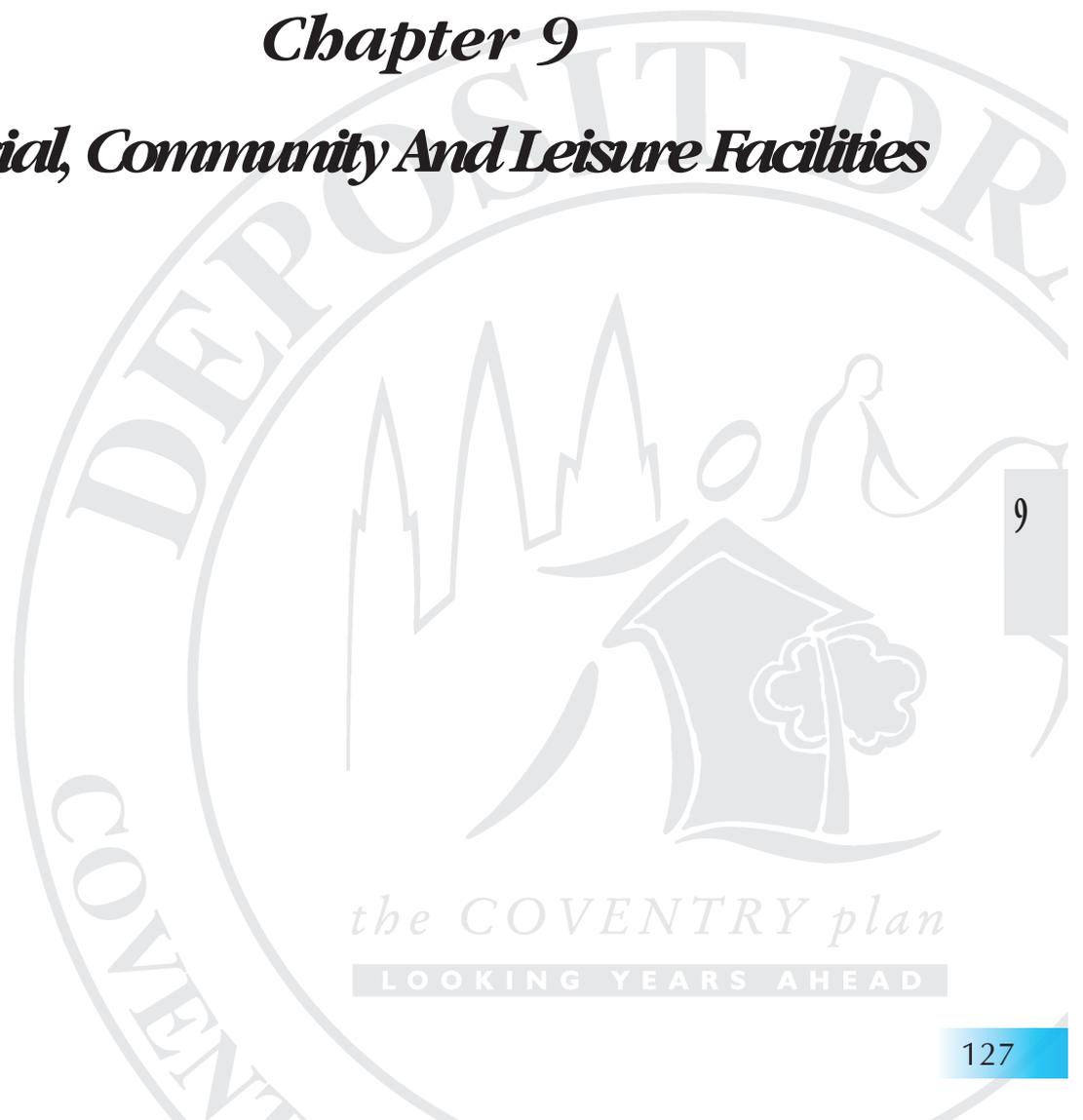


Chapter 9
Social, Community And Leisure Facilities





the COVENTRY plan

LOOKING YEARS AHEAD

List Of Contents

Title	Page
Introduction and Policy Aim	130
National and Regional Policy Context	130
Local Policy Context	130
Social, Community, Leisure and Indoor Sports Facilities	131
The Scale and Location of facilities	132
Childcare	132
The Butts Stadium	133
Education	133
Schools and Colleges of Further Education	133
Universities	134
Health and Social Care	135
Enhancement, Re-use or Redevelopment of Facilities	136

INTRODUCTION AND POLICY AIM

9.1 Social, community and leisure facilities are a vital element within the life of the City and it is important that policies take account of changing needs. Community groups require places to meet; an adequate provision of health care services at both the local and City-wide level is needed; and there has been a growth in demand for indoor leisure facilities which needs to be accommodated in accessible locations. A wide range of facilities need to be dealt with including those for:

- social, community, leisure and indoor sport;
- education facilities; and
- health care facilities.

9.2 The policy aim is to promote the continued development of well located social, leisure and community facilities to meet the needs of the Coventry community both locally and City-wide.

National and Regional Policy Context

9.3 Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments" 1996 and PPG 13 "Transport" 1994 state that facilities which have a wide catchment area should be located so that they are well served by a choice of means of transport. These include:

- higher and further education establishments;
- hospitals;
- conference centres;
- public offices; and
- entertainment and leisure uses.

These uses should be encouraged to locate in city, town and district centres. Major leisure uses are specifically required to follow a sequential assessment of sites. The first choice will be an in-centre location followed by an edge-of-centre location planned with complementary uses and finally, an out-of-centre location which is accessible by a choice of means of transport.

9.4 Smaller scale facilities, including health centres, local offices, branch libraries, restaurants and pubs, should also be encouraged in centres of an appropriate scale and function which should be accessible on foot or by bicycle.

9.5 PPG 17 "Sport and Recreation" 1991 indicates that plans should promote sport and cover specific needs for both mainstream and specialist sports facilities, indoor and outdoor, including large sites. This Chapter is particularly concerned with indoor sports and commercial leisure provision. Outdoor sport is dealt with in the Green Environment Chapter. The provision of indoor sport and outdoor synthetic or other surfaces capable of intensive use, in urban areas, may help meet the demand for sports facilities.

9.6 "Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands" 1998 echoes the locational aspects of PPGs 6 and 13. It also stresses the importance of encouraging sport, cultural and recreation attractions to aid urban regeneration, and places particular emphasis on strengthening the role and provision of local leisure facilities.

Local Policy Context

9.7 The Coventry Community Plan has, as part of its underlying principle, to celebrate diversity of culture, as set out in paragraph 1.10.

9.8 Creating more jobs for Coventry people includes improving skills by working towards a high level of educational achievement, advancing skills by training, providing affordable child care and other facilities. Tackling poverty again includes raising educational achievement and also improving access to high quality health services and the provision of accessible leisure and recreation services. Investing in young people again refers to high quality education and training and also opportunities for leisure based activities. Creating an exciting vibrant City Centre includes providing facilities which meet the needs of all the community.

9.9 The City Council plays an important role in providing access to leisure and recreation facilities and will be developing a Leisure Strategy within the framework of this Plan for leisure provision which meets City-wide and local needs within the context of a City-wide transport policy. This will also provide a framework to assess lottery bids.

9.10 The Community Care Plan is prepared jointly by the City Council and the Coventry Health Authority, is updated annually and addresses health and social care issues. It is concerned with improving access to high quality health services for all, but particularly for people facing poverty, and tackling health inequalities. It is linked to other policies which improve the environment generally and contribute initiatives to people's improved health prospects. There are currently concerns about the accessibility of services to users and the design of dwellings in relation to the trend of more care taking place in the community.

SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

SCL 1: SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

The City Council will promote and encourage the provision of social, community, leisure and indoor sports facilities in locations which are accessible to and meet the needs of the people of Coventry by a choice of means of transport.

(Part 1 Policy)

9.11 The opportunity for people to meet to pursue activities together is vital to support the social fabric of the community. These facilities can range from small places like meeting rooms and doctors' surgeries, to large ones like sports centres, temples and churches. There are two key factors in locating these uses: accessibility and scale.

9.12 It is important that social, community, leisure and indoor sport facilities are readily accessible to the people who want to use them. People should be able to walk or cycle to the smaller and more local facilities, or be able to conveniently catch a bus or train to the larger facilities, particularly those used less frequently.

9.13 Some small scale local facilities such as smaller doctors' surgeries and small meeting rooms can be accommodated in residential areas providing that residential amenity is protected. Their need to be easily accessible to the local community, within walking distance, will be crucial. Larger facilities such as clubs, public houses, religious buildings, libraries, sports centres and swimming pools are appropriate at the district scale. This may be in one of the defined Centres but may also be at an educational facility. Walking and cycling may be possible, but accessibility by public transport will be important. The largest facilities such as major religious buildings, bingo halls, cinemas, theatres, ice rinks, bowling alleys, night clubs, casinos and major entertainment centres have a City-wide or even sub-regional catchment. Since they generate large amounts of traffic, they should be located where accessibility by public transport is greatest. This will usually be the City Centre or the Major District Centres.

9.14 However, not all uses fall neatly into this range of scales. Some larger religious buildings include large halls which can cater for hundreds of people and small meeting rooms for local groups focused on a local area. These serve both a local and wider catchment area. In a multi-cultural city like Coventry such religious facilities include Christian churches, Sikh and Hindu temples and mosques. Conversely, some indoor sport and leisure facilities are small and specialist in nature but cater for a City-wide or sub-regional need. Child-care facilities are in a separate category again. This range of facilities require differing levels of accessibility.

The Scale and Location of Social, Community, Leisure and Indoor Sports Facilities

SCL 2: LARGE SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Proposals for large social, community, leisure and indoor sports facilities will be encouraged in the City Centre, the Major District Centres, the District Centres and education centres. Where no suitable sites are available, an edge-of-Centre location may be acceptable.

Proposals will be considered on the basis of:

- compatibility with nearby uses;
- accessibility by a choice of means of transport; and
- compatibility with other Plan policies.

Where it can be shown that large social, community, cultural and leisure facilities cannot be located in or at the edge of a centre, additional considerations will be:

- whether the facility will meet an important unmet need; and
- any significant adverse impact upon the role of a defined Centre.

9.15 Large facilities are those which serve a wider catchment than local facilities, usually having a capacity of more than 30 users at any one time. The categories of Centres above are defined in Policies S 1 to 3 of the Shopping Chapter. Education centres include secondary facilities and above. This Policy does not apply to those sites allocated for outdoor sports development by Policy GE 12.

9.16 In the categories of Centres listed in the Policy, there will not usually be a problem of compatibility with nearby uses. However, uses which generate late night noise and traffic such as nightclubs, which could affect residential amenity, will need to be considered more cautiously. A District Centre location may not be suitable even with planning conditions limiting hours of operation.

9.17 Information on the catchment area which the facility is intended to serve and the numbers of people expected to be using the facility at different times of the day, will be required in order to fully assess the implications of the proposal. There may be a need to consider both “day-to-day” level of use and any special occasions attracting large numbers of people. Some proposals may require a Traffic Impact Assessment.

SCL 3: SMALL SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Proposals for the provision or improvement of small social, community, leisure and indoor sports facilities will be considered in any location on the basis of:

- compatibility with nearby uses;
- accessibility by pedestrians and cyclists; and
- compatibility with other Plan policies.

9.18 Local facilities are those, usually with a capacity of less than 30 users at any one time, which serve people within a reasonable walking distance (up to approximately 400m) without having to cross a major physical barrier. Therefore pedestrian and cycle access will be more important than access to public transport.

9.19 Within a residential area, it may be necessary to balance the desirability of the proposed facilities with the protection of the amenity of the area where they are proposed. It may also be necessary to obtain information on the membership, the pattern of use of the facility and the extent of the catchment area if these are not clear.

Childcare

SCL 4: CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Proposals for childcare and pre-school facilities will be considered on the basis of:

- compatibility with nearby uses;
- the provision or retention of a unit of residential accommodation if the facility is in a residential area; and
- compatibility with other Plan policies.

9.20 Childcare and pre-school facilities are used in a different way to others in that they may be sought close to the home or the workplace, or on the route between them. The provision of childcare facilities is important so that parents can continue, or return to, work while taking care of their children. This, in turn, helps to assist economic regeneration and improve social equity. Facilities include crèches, day nurseries (including workplace nurseries) and playgroups.

9.21 Compatibility with nearby uses will include more detailed consideration of any noise or traffic problems that may be caused and planning conditions may limit the number of children allowed to play outside at any one time and specify staggered starting and finishing hours. Compatibility with other policies includes highway considerations such as the traffic impact of people dropping and collecting their children. If the proposal is in a residential area it will be important to retain some residential character and occupation for the sake of compatibility and security. Where the facilities are attached to or within the site of a school or place of further education it will not be necessary for there to be residential accommodation within the facility.

The Butts Stadium

SCL 5: BUTTS STADIUM

The Butts Stadium is allocated for sport and leisure development.

9.22 The Butts Stadium is a 2.5 ha site formerly in sport and leisure use but which has been disused for some time. It has been suggested as a possible site for a number of sport and leisure activities and meets the criteria set out in Policy SCL 2.

EDUCATION

SCL 6: EDUCATION FACILITIES

The City Council will support new, expanded and improved education facilities in suitable locations where the environmental impact of the proposal is acceptable in the nearby area.

(Part 1 Policy)

9.23 Education is vital to the development, prosperity and welfare of individuals and the community and underpins every aspect of the Vision on which this Plan is based. If training can be provided locally it is more sustainable. Education centres can also provide social, cultural, leisure and indoor sports facilities.

Schools and Colleges of Further Education

SCL 7: SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Proposals to provide or improve schools or colleges of further education will be considered on the basis of:

- **compatibility with nearby uses;**
- **accessibility by a choice of means of transport; and**
- **compatibility with other Plan policies.**

9.24 Schools play an important part in the life of a local community. They provide, not only a centre for children’s education, but also a resource for the wider social benefit of that community. Certain schools are designated as Community Schools or Colleges and have additional resources to facilitate this wider role. Schools often provide the main meeting place for local groups, and school playing fields are often a valuable resource for local recreational activities.

9.25 Within Coventry there are four colleges of further education which offer a wide range of courses for school leavers, unemployed adults, people in work, women returning to work, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people. They are:

- Coventry Technical College,
- Henley College,
- Hereward College, and
- Tile Hill College.

Hereward College is a residential college serving the particular educational and training needs of disabled people and is recognised as a national centre for these facilities.

- 9.26 Compatibility with nearby uses includes consideration of both the impact on and the impact from the educational facility. For example, a school may be undesirable next to an employment site which generates a lot of traffic, and/or smell and noise. The school may cause a noise nuisance and there may be additional traffic from dropping off children and young people.
- 9.27 Ideally primary schools need to be in the centre of their catchment areas and within reasonable walking distance of most homes within the catchment area. The need to cross major roads should be minimised (see Policies AM 8 and AM 12). Secondary schools, colleges of further education and universities need good access to public transport and safe cycling routes as well since they serve wider catchment areas. Large education facilities may also require a "Green Travel Plan".
- 9.28 Alterations to existing buildings in the light of changing educational requirements should not result in the loss of social, community, leisure and indoor sports facilities. Planning considerations will include the physical constraints on expansion at each site and the need to protect the amenity of surrounding areas.
- 9.29 Education facilities need to have adequate access to the highway network and there should be pedestrian and vehicular segregation on site for safety reasons, together with adequate access for cyclists and service and emergency vehicles away from the main pedestrian flows. Vehicular access to car parks should also be separate if possible. Car parking provision should meet the appropriate standards as set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). As with all new development proposals there is a need to ensure that there is high quality of design in both the buildings and their settings.

Universities

- 9.30 Apart from their educational roles, Coventry University and the University of Warwick are major employment centres, assisting Coventry in the diversification of its employment base. They also provide a variety of social, community, leisure and sports opportunities of considerable value to the wider community of the sub-region. The Committee of Vice Chancellors have published guidelines on good practice in planning matters affecting universities.

SCL 8: COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

The development of Coventry University will continue to be encouraged in order to assist its contribution to the educational, social and economic needs of the City.

- 9.31 Coventry University's main teaching space, social space and student accommodation are located within the City Centre and are referred to in Policies CC 33 to 34. The University is also a major partner in the development of the Parkside Area referred to in Policy CC 31.
- 9.32 The University has prepared an Estates Strategy which guides elements of its development. It has expanded into the southern edge of Hillfields where it adjoins the City Centre, including the development of buildings in Alma Street for social uses and Singer Hall in Canterbury Street for student accommodation. There may be some further expansion in this area.
- 9.33 The University's sports pitches at Westwood Heath form part of land designated for outdoor sport development. The proposals involve re-arranging the University's playing fields and providing space for the relocation and expansion of the Midland Sports Centre for the Disabled (See Policy GE 11).

SCL 9: UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

The area covered by the University Development Plan is shown on the Proposals Map. Proposals directly associated with the growth of the University of Warwick will be considered in relation to the University Development Plan as well as other relevant Plan policies.

- 9.34 The University's Central Campus straddles the boundary between Coventry and Warwickshire and the overall University site is split into 3 inter-linked sites. It is an important institution which contributes in many ways to the City and sub-region. In recent years it has developed its role in relation to the business and commercial community. This has been most clearly manifested in physical terms by the development of the University of Warwick Science Park and the post-experience centres on the Campus. It also contributes substantially through the facilities in the University Arts Centre, its sports centres, open space and playing fields.

- 9.35 The growth of the University will be encouraged in line with the University Development Plan which will be taken into account as SPG. This relates to the 10 year period up to 2004 and will need to be updated and agreed by the relevant local planning authorities in due course. The Development Plan covers the context and objectives for development and includes consideration of the built environment, landscape and movement.
- 9.36 The part of the Campus within the City include Central Campus East, Westwood Site and Gibbet Hill. Central Campus East is the main focus of the academic, social, administrative and cultural functions and land remains for its further development. The Westwood Site includes the main education training departments, post-experience training centre and major sports facilities and is unlikely to have any further major developments. Gibbet Hill contains the academic departments of Biology and Mathematics which are also expanding and this also is the proposed site of the medical school linked to the City's Hospitals. The site in Warwickshire, Central Campus West, mainly contains student residences, post-experience centres and playing fields. The majority of expansion on this site will be for further residential accommodation.
- 9.37 The movement proposals strike a balance between car, cycle, public transport and pedestrian access to and within the University. Safety has been the prime consideration in the design of all the existing and future proposals. Improvements will take place as development of the University proceeds.
- 9.38 The City Council will support the health and social care providers by helping to identify suitable sites and premises where they are required and to provide a high quality environment for users. A main thrust of health and social service provision is to provide more services in the community. This means an expansion of existing health and social services and the provision of new facilities like mental health resource centres within existing urban areas. The main demographic impact is the increase in numbers of elderly people during the Plan period. This links in with the provision of more local services and has implications for living accommodation. Resources can be directed to parts of the City which require additional services.

SCL 11: HOSPITALS

Proposals for new hospitals will require a comprehensive development plan for the specific site and will be considered in accordance with the relevant Plan policies.

- 9.39 Where a significant hospital development is proposed, a comprehensive hospital site development plan will be required to ensure that the proposal takes into account the impact of the proposals on the existing area and any future developments. The health sector generates up to 5% of all trips in the City, with two thirds of these being by people other than patients. Preparation of a "Green Travel Plan" will be required to ensure the sustainability of the proposal. It may also be necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 9.40 The Walsgrave Hospitals NHS Trust provides all the hospital services within the City. Most of these are currently provided at the Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital and the Walsgrave Hospital sites although a small number are provided at the Gulson site. Most of the services from the Gulson site will be withdrawn when alternative accommodation becomes available. The Walsgrave Hospitals NHS Trust will be developing a major new hospital for Coventry and Warwickshire during the Plan period. Several alternative locations are being considered involving the Coventry and Warwickshire site or the Walsgrave site with the possibility of the provision of an inner city facility at Fairfax Street. All these options include the provision of a new mental health unit at the Walsgrave site.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

SCL 10: HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The City Council will support the development and the improvement of health care facilities well distributed to meet the needs of the people of Coventry.

(Part 1 Policy)

SCL 12: LOCAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE FACILITIES.

Proposals for new or improved non-residential local health and social care facilities will be considered on the basis of the criteria in Policies SCL 2 or SCL 3 depending on the scale of the facility.

- 9.41 The City Council's Social Services Department and Coventry Health service organisations are involved in providing and buying social care and health services in Coventry at both the local level (care in the home and from doctors' surgeries) and in hospitals. This includes services provided by general practitioners, additional community services and hospital services. Coventry Healthcare NHS Trust provides most of the community and mental health services.
- 9.42 There needs to be a balance of health care needs between the local level, where care in the community is provided, and acute care in the hospitals. Local care facilities need to be conveniently located for the population they serve and hospitals need to be accessible by a variety of modes of travel because they attract many trips. Policy SCL 3 will apply to local facilities serving people within reasonable walking distance (see paragraph 9.18) and Policy SCL 2 applies to larger facilities.
- 9.43 The trend for more care in the community creates pressures to expand local facilities like doctor's surgeries to accommodate care in the community teams and to find more locally based sites and accommodation for people returning to the community. A proposal to expand a doctors' surgery may be considered under Policy SCL 2 depending upon the scale of the final development. There are also issues relating to the design of dwellings to accommodate older people and those with disabilities so that it is easier for people to continue to live in their homes (see Policy OS 11).

ENHANCEMENT, RE-USE OR REDEVELOPMENT OF FACILITIES

SCL 13: ENHANCED FACILITIES

Where housing or commercial development adds significantly to demand for social, community, leisure, indoor sport, education, health or social care facilities, the provision or improvement of such facilities will be required as part of the development or by way of financial contribution.

- 9.44 Residential developments and commercial developments often increase pressure on local services. This social and community infrastructure may include schools, nurseries, social services facilities, parks and libraries. Where the nature and scale of development is such as to increase significantly demand for facilities then developments should make commensurate contribution to their provision or improvement through a planning obligation (see Policy IM 2).
- 9.45 Developers should make appropriate provision for infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by their development, either through providing facilities within their schemes or through contributions towards enhancing existing facilities. This again may be the subject of a Planning Obligation.

SCL 14: RE-USE OR REDEVELOPMENT OF FACILITIES

Proposals for the re-use or redevelopment of social, community, leisure, indoor sport, education, health or social care facilities will be considered on the basis of:

- any need for those or alternative facilities at that location;
- the suitability of the location for such facilities having regard to the criteria in Policies SCL 2 and SCL 3;
- compatibility with nearby uses; and
- compatibility with other Plan policies.

9.46 From time to time, as needs and patterns of provision change, land and buildings become surplus to operational requirements or, in the private sector, owners may see the opportunity for a more profitable use. The first consideration should be whether there is still a local need for social, community, leisure, indoor sport, education, health or social care uses. Given the limited supply of land for facilities within the City it is important that if they are no longer required for their existing purpose, they should be considered positively as a potential opportunity to help meet other needs.



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