

Chapter 7: Community Facilities

Introduction

- 7.1 Community facilities such as community centres, village halls, and other publicly accessible buildings play a crucial role in maintaining a sense of local identity, as well as providing a base for a variety of different groups and activities, from pre-school groups to indoor carpet and short mat bowls, yoga, meetings or coffee mornings. The Councils are keen to ensure that all residents have access to facilities which are appropriate and suitable for their needs.
- 7.2 Cultural development will play a key role in how we collectively knit together existing and new communities and places. Cambridge City Council recently adopted a new Cultural Strategy in March 2025 outlining the Council's commitment to supporting culture and recognising the contribution of culture in enabling inclusive growth in the Greater Cambridge. A Cultural Infrastructure Strategy has also been commissioned to explore the specific infrastructure needed to support the area, and this will be published in due course.
- 7.3 Greater Cambridge is home to a range of new communities, which require appropriate facilities and support to make them successful. This is not only in terms of the right new buildings and facilities, but also the right support to get new communities started.

Policy Context

Cambridge

- 7.4 Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 85 states that planning permission for new developments will only be supported where there are suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision and phasing of infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. This includes community and social facilities and cultural facilities. Policy 73 provides further information on requirements for new or replacement facilities.

South Cambridgeshire

- 7.5 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 Policy SC/4 requires all housing developments to include or contribute to the provision of community services and facilities necessary to meet the needs of the development. The scale and range of this provision or contribution will be appropriate to the level of need generated by the development and will address the specific needs of different

age groups, of people with disabilities, and faith groups and will be adaptable to population growth and demographic changes. It requires proposals for larger sites of 200 dwellings or more to be accompanied by their own assessments of need. The timely delivery of services and facilities when they are needed will be required, including the provision of key services and facilities for early phases of the development. Phasing will be established through planning obligations or conditions.

- 7.6 Policy SC/6 specifically addresses indoor community facilities. It requires all housing developments to contribute towards the provision of indoor community facilities to meet the need generated by the development. Where there is sufficient scale to generate the need for a new facility this should be delivered onsite unless it can be demonstrated that there would be advantages in delivery off-site. Other developments will contribute to off-site provision, based on a standard of 111m² of such floorspace per 1,000 additional population.
- 7.7 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan explains that the standard was developed through a community facilities assessment carried out in 2009 to understand the size and condition of village halls, community halls, church halls and other publicly accessible facilities.
- 7.8 In May 2025, South Cambridgeshire District Council published a new South Cambridgeshire Communities Facilities study which audited community facilities across the district regarding the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing provision, and identified needs for new or improved facilities in the district. The study builds upon and updates previous assessments, notably the 2009 Community Facilities Study Report. The study will inform the review of policy through the Greater Cambridge Local Plan but will also be used to inform consideration of needs generated by planning applications.

Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)

- 7.9 In addition to these district wide policies, both Local Plans include a range of site-specific policies which have specific requirements for community facilities related to the nature of the development proposal.

Development types from which Obligations will be sought

- 7.10 All new residential, mixed-use (with an element of residential), and major commercial developments are to make provision for community facilities to meet the needs arising from the development proposal.

Form in which contributions should be made

- 7.11 New developments will be required to mitigate their impact on community facilities through on-site provision, or through use of financial contributions towards off-site provision for smaller developments. The scale and range of this provision or contribution will be appropriate to the level of need generated by the development and will address the specific needs of different age groups, of people with disabilities, and faith groups and will be adaptable to population growth and demographic changes.
- 7.12 Proposals for sites of 200 or more dwellings (or groups of smaller sites which cumulatively exceed this figure) within South Cambridgeshire are required to provide detailed assessments and strategies regarding community needs and how they will be met. These should be prepared in consultation with service providers and stakeholders, and for approval by the local authority. They will be required to demonstrate how the new community will be effectively supported throughout the build phase of the developments, including at the outset of development, and how facilities will be managed and maintained (including governance arrangements).
- 7.13 Large scale commercial developments (above 5,000m²) will be required to consider how the needs of their workers and visitors will be met for social and leisure facilities. If the need cannot be met through existing or additional on-site facilities an offsite contribution to address the impact on facilities is necessary and will be sought.
- 7.14 For strategic-scale developments there may be additional community facilities requirements that will need to be addressed as part of the development, depending on the scale and impact of the proposed development. These will be assessed on a site-by-site basis, through the master planning process for the individual developments.
- 7.15 These could include all or some of the following:
- Dedicated faith provision.
 - Dedicated youth facilities.
 - Itinerant facilities such as youth buses.
 - Arts and cultural facilities.
- 7.16 In some new community's, development has taken the form of community hubs, which may incorporate uses covered elsewhere in this SPD, such as libraries and health provision. It could also be based around multiuse spaces at an education facility (with Community Access Agreement to guarantee

community use in perpetuity). This would need to be agreed with service providers.

- 7.17 Reflecting the aspirations of the Cambridge Cultural Strategy we will seek to ensure development contributes to the delivery of necessary cultural infrastructure. This could be through the mix of development, secured by condition, or through a s106 obligation.
- 7.18 With regard to faith space, the starting point for negotiation for provision in new communities will be the recommendation within the 2008 Cambridgeshire Horizon's Facilities for Faith Communities in New Developments of 0.5 hectares of free or heavily discounted land per 3,000 dwellings. South Cambridgeshire District Council has a Faith Land Allocation policy (March 2020) which will guide the allocation of land secured. Where standalone faith space is not feasible, the enhancement of other community meeting spaces to accommodate faith uses may be required.
- 7.19 Where dedicated new community provision is sought, the planning obligations requirements will likely require the new facility to be built by the developer. An alternative may be the provision of free serviced land and a financial contribution to cover the capital cost of the new facility and its fitting out. Contributions to support the initial staffing and running of the facility will also be sought.
- 7.20 In addition to dedicated community facilities in new communities there will also be a need for commercial facilities important to community life, including childcare nurseries, local shops, restaurants and cafes and public houses.
- 7.21 In large scale new development such as urban extensions or new settlements developments will be phased over several years and critical to its success will be making sure that a sense of place and community is developed from the start. This also requires consideration of specific groups, such as children and young people. Research into new communities has established clear links between loneliness, poor mental health, and antisocial behaviours when there is a lack of community cohesion and social networks. Moving may isolate people from their normal support networks making them more vulnerable to everyday stresses and strains, which can be a greater challenge when there are no established social networks into which new residents can readily slot.
- 7.22 These issues should be considered in community strategies accompanying the developments, as well as the Health Impact Assessment. Where a need is identified planning obligations may be sought including:

- Meanwhile uses: Temporary ‘meanwhile’ projects, subject to viability, which create community services, small-scale business and retail spaces can achieve this, supporting local skills development and entrepreneurship, and meeting short-term gaps in the delivery of permanent community infrastructure.
- Community Support Workers: Funding for community workers could be required to address a range of issues, such as youth workers, health workers, or community development workers.
- Small grants scheme (community chest): A contribution (in the region of £12.50 per dwelling based on recently secure obligations), to be agreed, will be required for the development of community grants or an investment fund to support local residents of the new development, and or, to support the development and growth of social businesses in the local area.

Off Site Contributions

- 7.23 For smaller developments, and other developments where facilities are not delivered on-site, contributions may be required to address the needs generated by a new development. Such funding could be pooled to enable the delivery of a new facility or could be used to enhance capacity and use of an existing facility. Where funding is required, the project it will benefit will be identified. This may be a nearby facility in the ward or village, or it could be a more central facility where the need generated could most effectively be met.
- 7.24 Within Cambridge projects will be identified in consultation with the Cambridge City Council Communities Group who manage a range of Community Centres and facilities across the city.
- 7.25 In South Cambridgeshire, facilities are generally owned and managed by town and parish councils (or by local charities or trusts). Projects will be identified in consultation with the relevant organisations. The planning obligation will secure funding for the organisation to complete the project directly rather than the district council.
- 7.26 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 sets a standard of 111m² per 1,000 population. A price per square metre has been identified and benchmarked against recent local projects.
- 7.27 The cost of providing community centres is £4,020 per m² (Source of costs: Infrastructure Costing Review – Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD July 2025) which is to be used as a starting point for a developer contribution towards community facilities.

- 7.28 The cost associated with maintaining (utilities, decoration, services, etc) community facilities is £117.57 per m2 (Source of costs: Infrastructure Costing Review – Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD July 2025).

Table 7-1: Community facilities contributions by dwelling size

Number of beds	Capital cost by dwelling size (£)	Maintenance cost per dwelling (£)	Total cost per dwelling (£)
1 Bed	548.85	240.78	789.63
2 Bed	919.21	403.25	1,322.47
3 Bed	1,262.80	553.98	1,816.79
4 Bed+	1,454.68	638.15	2,092.84

Exemptions

- 7.29 Housing provision consisting of Extra Care housing, and residential and nursing homes will not normally be required to contribute towards community facilities, but this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Applications comprising retirement accommodation will be required to pay contributions in full.

Further guidance

Cambridge

- [Community centres - Cambridge City Council website](#)
- [Cambridge Community Wealth Building Strategy - Cambridge City Council 2024](#)
- [Cambridge City Council Cultural Strategy 2024-29](#)

South Cambridgeshire

- [South Cambridgeshire Community Facilities Study 2009](#)
- [South Cambridgeshire Community Facilities Study 2025](#)