



No 10

Meeting Places



'The Council is currently carrying out a partial Review of the Unitary Development Plan. Please note that some of the UDP policies mentioned in Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes may be affected by the Review and that you should contact a Planning Officer for further information.'

INTRODUCTION

The Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is the statutory planning framework for the future of the whole Borough.

To help you when you apply for planning permission, and give the background to both the UDP and other Council policies, the Planning Division has produced a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs).

Although not a formal part of the UDP, the guidance is a material consideration, when the Council is dealing with planning applications.

These Guidance Notes:

- Identify the relevant UDP policy; (for a full statement of the policy, the UDP itself should be consulted);
- Give planning guidance on design and standards;
- Provide general advice as well as some information on non-town planning matters such as Building Regulations and Highways, which may need separate approvals from the Council.

The word 'normally' is implied in much of what follows, but has been omitted to keep the text short.

Most of the design principles will be well known to architects and other qualified designers, who can use the document as a checklist.

This guidance has also been prepared as a practical tool to help those who submit planning applications.

This guidance is updated more frequently than the Plan itself, and you are encouraged to discuss your proposals with planning staff before you make a formal planning application.

Please remember that this is guidance only, and your application will always be considered on its merits.

WHY GUIDANCE?

The Council is aware that there are a large number of groups who find it difficult to find and acquire premises or sites for their own community use. The types of groups looking for appropriate premises in which to locate their activities, cover

a wide range of interests from religious and cultural organisations to social and activity groups. The types of premises required are similarly varied, ranging from occasional hire of a room or hall, to requests for multi-activity community centres and purchase of properties.

Many groups turn to the Council seeking advice on how to obtain a site or premises. Unfortunately the Council does not have a list of suitable vacant premises. The purpose of this guidance note is to help community groups in their search for suitable premises, by listing useful contacts, identifying suitable locations and advising on how to obtain planning permission.

The guidance is divided into 5 sections:

Preparation and where to look;
Suitable locations;
Making a planning application;
Granting of planning permission;
Additional information and requirements.

PREPARATION AND WHERE TO LOOK

Before contacting the Council or other bodies, community groups should give consideration to the requirements of their activities. The following list will help provide the necessary information which will be needed by the Council or other bodies to help groups find a site or building.

- (i) What type of tenancy is required? e.g. freehold, leasehold, license or casual use.
- (ii) How long is a tenancy required for?
- (iii) How much space is required? This should be broken down into the various types of space such as office space, storage space etc.
- (iv) What additional facilities will be required? e.g. kitchen, parking, toilets etc.
- (v) What financial resources does the community group have already?

Depending on whether you want to buy, lease or hire a property or piece of land, the following are places where you can look:

a. Local Estate Agents

These will normally have a list of various commercial buildings or sites which could be used. The addresses and telephone numbers can be found in local telephone directories.

b. Newham Council Valuation and Estates Division

The Council sells off land and property which is surplus to its requirements. Some of this may be suitable for community use. For information on this and sites available please contact:

Valuation & Estates Division

455 Barking Road

East Ham,

E6 2LN

Phone: 0181-472 1430

c. Newham Council Education Department and Leisure Services Department

If you wish to hire or rent accommodation, there may be Council properties in your local area which have rooms for community use, for example schools, community centres, halls or libraries. For information, please contact:

(Schools)

The Education Department

322 High Street,

Stratford,

E15 1AJ

Phone: 0181-555 5552

(Community centres, libraries, East Ham and West Ham Town Halls)

Leisure Services Department

292 Barking Road,

East Ham,

E6 3BA

Phone: 0181 552 6756

d. Local churches, public houses or sports clubs

Additionally, your local church, public house or sports club may have a room or hall that it rents out. The addresses or telephone numbers can be found in local telephone directories.

SUITABLE LOCATIONS

The exact type of building/site suitable for use as a meeting place will depend entirely upon the nature of the particular activities which are proposed. For example, a former shop premises in a shopping area may be suitable for small groups who wish to provide a local facility.

For larger organisations who wish to provide social, community and religious facilities, the most suitable buildings/sites are generally those previously used for community/public purposes or as commercial/industrial premises (i.e. redundant churches, schools and places of public entertainment such as cinemas and social clubs). Most of these types of buildings/sites will be found outside housing areas, often in town centres or on major roads.

In general, the preferred location of meeting places would be in such locations where there is easy access to public transport and where there is already a mixture of commercial uses.

Areas which are predominantly residential do not normally lend themselves as suitable locations for larger organisations, due to the potential disturbance which may result. As a general guide, meeting places that attract 100 persons at any one time would be considered inappropriate in a residential area unless all the physical needs of the use could be accommodated within the site.

The scale and range of facilities of the proposed use should be related to the physical capacity and character of the premises. The existing number and concentration of meeting places/community facilities within a particular locality would be taken into account. Where it is considered that the cumulative impact of a proposed use and the existing facilities would have a negative impact upon the area's amenity an application would be resisted. Houses are not considered to be suitable for use as meeting places as disturbance to neighbours can result from the use of such properties for such purposes.

MAKING A PLANNING APPLICATION

Planning permission will be required for the following categories of development:

- (i) change of use to a meeting place;
- (ii) construction of a new building;
- (iii) an extension to an existing building.

Once you have identified a site or building, there are a number of things that the Council will want to examine before deciding to grant planning permission. Planning officers are available to discuss any proposals that you might have, prior to the submission of a planning application. They may be contacted either in person or by telephone between 9am. and 5pm. Please note

that planning officers may not be available without a prior appointment. The address is:

Environment Department

Planning Division

Town Hall Annexe, Barking Road

East Ham, E6 2RP

Phone: 0181-472 1430

To help the planning officers consider your application with regard to factors (a) to (f) below, the following information will be required:

- (i) What you intend to use the various parts of the building for, eg. prayer hall, schoolroom, kitchen, etc.
- (ii) What kind of regular activities you have each week. When are they held? How many people?
- (iii) Will there be music, dancing, or amplified sound? If so will it be heard by people living nearby?
- (iv) At what times will you want to use the building? Will there be times when the building will be used at night?
- (v) What special activities do you hold, eg. weddings, annual festivals and so on. How often are they held? How long do they last? How many people attend?
- (vi) How will people get to the premises? i.e., by walking, cycling, private car, minibus, coach or public transport. If by car where will cars be parked? If by coach what drop-off facilities will be provided?

(a) The development plan

The Unitary Development Plan sets the planning framework for the whole Borough. The Council will take this into account when considering planning applications. The Plan will tell you the types of uses that would be permissible in different locations, and the reasons behind these. You will need to check to see whether any other use is being considered for the site. For further details on the UDP and the policies that may affect you, please contact the Planning Division.

(b) New buildings or extensions to existing buildings

If you want to erect a new building or extend an existing one, the Council will want to ensure that:

- (i) The appearance and size of the building or extension does not look out of place with its surroundings. This is particularly important if your site is located in a conservation area.
- (ii) The building or extension will not result in overlooking of adjoining properties so as to interfere with their privacy or be overbearing and result in overshadowing, a loss of light, or outlook.
- (iii) There is no demolition of any building or structure which the Council wishes to protect or the removal of any protected trees.
- (iv) Where possible any new development will be required to provide a scheme for landscaping such as the planting of trees and shrubs.

(c) Nuisance and disturbance

The Council will want to make sure that neighbours are not disturbed by noise or late night activity. This is particularly important if the site or property in which you are interested is in or near a residential area.

It is considered therefore, that the reception areas where visitors to meeting places are likely to congregate, are fully contained within the building and sited as far away as possible from neighbouring properties. Noise and disturbance can also be caused by private motor vehicles parking on the street. As the Council is unable to control the way in which people get to premises, on site parking should be sought and locations which are easily accessed by walking and cycling and benefit from good public transport links will be encouraged.

(d) Car parking and traffic assessment

Wherever possible the Council will want to see space provided for visitors to park their cars off the street, so as not to cause congestion and/or disturbance. This will be particularly important if large numbers of people will be visiting at any one time. Car parking provision, and if necessary coach parking, will be required in accordance with the Council's parking standards contained in the Unitary Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance Note No.16 "Parking Standards" available from the Planning Division. Additionally, the Council will need to ensure that the entrance and exit will not be a hazard to pedestrians or other road users.

The Council should be supplied with an assessment of the traffic and transport impact of the proposed development and details of the off-street car parking, disabled parking and coach parking provision. The assessment should also include the availability of and the effects upon public transport services.

Advice can be obtained by reference to the Institute of Highways and Transportation (1994) "Guidelines for Traffic Impact Assessment".

These guidance notes recommend that a traffic impact assessment should normally be produced where one or other of the following thresholds are exceeded:

- traffic to and from the development exceeds 10% of the two-way traffic flow on the adjoining highway;
- traffic to and from the development exceeds 5% of the two-way traffic flow on the adjoining highway, where traffic congestion exists or will exist within the assessment period or in other sensitive locations.

(e) Access for disabled people

When considering planning applications, the Council will seek to ensure that sites and properties are designed so as to be accessible to disabled people. The Council has produced Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No.2 "Access for Disabled People" which gives further details and is available from the Planning Division in the Town Hall Annexe.

(f) Public consultation

Once you have submitted your application, the Council will seek the views of various people or organisations who may be interested. These could include neighbours, and bodies such as the Fire Brigade. The Council will take these views into account before deciding whether to grant planning permission.

GRANTING OF PLANNING PERMISSION

The grant of planning permission would be restricted to activities stated by the applicant and if considered acceptable by the Council, conditions would be attached to the planning permission to restrict any further expansion of the facility. This may be done in the following ways:

- (i) Temporary permission - This may be used to enable the Council to assess the effects of a particular group or to give a group time to find

other premises, or time whilst they are waiting to move into permanent accommodation;

- (ii) Limited to the applicant only - Such a restriction may be used to enable the Council to have greater control over future groups who wish to use a particular premises. This is because the number of visitors and/or cars or opening hours for example can differ between groups;
- (iii) Planning obligations - These are legal agreements which may be entered into by the applicant and/or other party with the Council which:

- (a) restricts the development or use of the land;
- (b) requires certain operations or activities to be carried out on the land;
- (c) requires the land to be used in a specified way, either indefinitely or for a fixed term.

The Council would seek community groups to adopt a Code of Practice covering the future operation of the meeting place.

The Code would include the following:

- A named contact officer within the group with the responsibility for liaising with the local community;
- The establishment of regular meetings between representatives of the group and the surrounding community;
- The requirement to formally notify the local community of large events;
- The use of stewards/police at large events to limit the impact upon neighbouring residents of traffic and disturbances.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

(a) Contacts:

Planning Division
Town Hall Annexe, Barking Road
East Ham, E6 2RP
0181 472 1430 ex.22282

Offices are open 9am. - 5pm. Please note that planning officers may not be available without an appointment.

For advice regarding possible grant aid for certain voluntary organisations and possible technical assistance, please contact:

The Community Development and Grants Unit,
292 Barking Road,
East Ham, E6 3BA.
Phone: 0181-472 1430

For independent professional town planning advice service, please contact either:

Planning Aid for Londoners,
Calvert House
5 Calvert Avenue
London E2 7JP.
Phone: 0171 613 4435

London Planning Aid Service,
c/o Town and Country Planning
Association.
17 Carlton House Terrace,
London SW1 5AS

(b) Other consents

Planning permission is only one of a number of consents that you may require for your proposal. In addition to planning permission and to the agreement of the owner of the site, you may also need consent from various other bodies, such as Newham Building Control, Newham Environmental Health and the Fire Brigade.

(c) Further information

For further information about making a planning application, please refer to Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No.1 'Making a Planning Application'. This is also available from the Planning Division in the Town Hall Annex.

(d) Useful publications

The following documents are available from the Planning Division:

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 1 'Making a Planning Application';

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No.2 'Access for Disabled People';

Newham Council's Register of Development Opportunities;

L.B. Newham Unitary Development Plan;

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No.16 'Parking Standards'.

Monday - Friday
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