

Matter 6.16 (e) Should policies SP7, 8, 9 & 10 include specific reference to places of worship as part of their requirement for community facilities?

Statement by Mrs Carol Richards, Regeneration Adviser, Diocese of Chelmsford
04/12/17

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide more information than that which I was able to submit using the Planning Portal.

I do not consider that the North Essex Authorities' publication draft Local Plan (Section 1) is consistent with national policy, as the NPPF clearly includes reference to "places of worship" as part of the requirement for community facilities at Section 70 and elsewhere. It is, therefore, unsound unless modified.

I am surprised that there is no reference to "places of worship" in the joint Section 1, as the Section 2 publication draft Local Plans of each of the three Authorities includes specific reference to "Places of Worship":

Colchester Borough Local Plan (section 2)

Glossary

Community Facilities - are buildings, which enable a variety of local activity to take place including, but not limited to, the following:

Schools.....Places of worship

Braintree District Local Plan (section 2)

Local Community Services and Facilities

7.53 and will aim to ensure new facilities are created with the establishment of new communities. These facilities can include village and community halls, shops, public houses, post offices, banks, **places of worship**, doctors surgeries and other services. Together, they provide facilities to meet local needs, create sustainable communities and reduce the need to travel. (My highlighting in bold)

Tendring District Local Plan (section 2)

4.2.1 Community facilities (sometimes referred to as Community assets) provide for health and wellbeing, recreational and leisure and education and culture. They include community halls, libraries, museums, arts venues, post offices, public houses, **places of worship**, sports halls, health and fitness facilities and swimming pools. They are key part of sustainable communities and contribute to their self-reliance.

(My highlighting in bold)

It seems perverse for each Local Authority to list "Places of Worship" in its individual Local Plan and not include "Places of Worship" in the Section 1 document.

The Diocese of Chelmsford, (The Church of England in Essex & East London), is very keen for a modification to be made so that "Places of Worship" are included in the NEGC Local Plan, because we want to make a positive contribution to building

community in the new housing areas. The local clergy in the three areas are working hard to serve the people in the existing communities, and they want the opportunity to expand their work to include the new residents who will move in. I have asked these local clergy if existing facilities will be sufficient, and they say that new facilities will be needed for the number of new people who will be moving into the area. They also believe that community facilities, including places of worship, should be provided to meet local needs and reduce the need to travel.

As a Diocese, we do not expect stand-alone facilities to be provided as places of worship in the new communities, and we are also mindful of the need to make provision for people of other faiths. There are examples in Chelmsford Diocese and elsewhere of shared facilities, including buildings which provide community and worship space for people of all faiths and none.

As a Diocese we want to have reasonable discussions with the people planning the new garden communities about the best way to make provision for places where people of faith can worship. The problem is that it will be very difficult to have a discussion about places of worship unless this draft Local Plan is modified to include reference to “Places of worship”, in line with the NPPF. Accordingly, for the plan to be effective and consistent with national policy, I respectfully ask that these modifications are made to the following policies:

- Policy SP8 Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community, paragraph E12: insert ‘including places of worship’ between ‘Community meeting places’ and ‘will be provided...’
- Policy SP9 Colchester/Braintree Borders Garden Community, paragraph E13: insert ‘including places of worship’ between ‘Community meeting places’ and ‘will be provided...’
- Policy SP10 West of Braintree Garden Community, paragraph E12: insert ‘including places of worship’ between ‘Community meeting places’ and ‘will be provided...’

As an alternative, following a conversation today with a representative of the Planning department, an amendment could be made to the joint section 1 draft Local Plan to insert the Glossary definition of Community facilities from section 2 of the Colchester Borough draft Local Plan (which includes mention of “Places of worship”) into the joint section 1 draft Local Plan.

Carol Richards