



# Coventry City Council

Coventry Local Plan Review

**Communities Chapter**

**Background Paper**

**November 2024**



Coventry City Council

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Policy Context.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Regulation 18 summary of responses.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Evidence.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Policy Changes.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>9</b>

# 1. Introduction

This background paper considers social, community and leisure facilities that are addressed through the Communities chapter of the Local Plan Review. These include provisions for sporting uses, including swimming pools, leisure centres and sporting venues, health centres and hospitals, educational establishments including nurseries and universities, meeting places, libraries and places of worship.

The policies in the chapter set out the approach to safeguarding and improving social, community and leisure premises and providing support for the development of new facilities where there are identified gaps in provision. The policies will support and facilitate the implementation of existing and future strategies for the provision and improvement of social community and leisure premises across Coventry.

The first stage of the Local Plan Review process was undertaken in summer 2023 when the 'Regulation 18' ('Issues and Options') consultation was held between 18<sup>th</sup> July and 29<sup>th</sup> September. It should be noted that at this time the NPPF was the version published on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021, and it was this version under which the consultation documents had been prepared.

Since then, further versions of the NPPF have been launched, in September and December 2023. The latter version is the one under which the Regulation 19 (Proposed Submission) Plan has been prepared and any implications for this are set out in this paper. It should also be noted that at the time of writing a new NPPF is anticipated having been consulted by Government in summer 2024. Whilst the plan has been prepared under the 2023 NPPF, regard has been had to any potential forthcoming changes which might have implications for plan-making and so this is also referenced in the narrative.

The NPPF promotes the creation of healthy communities and vibrant and viable town centres both of which help support local communities and provide a focal point for services over and above retailing facilities. The NPPF recognises that these two objectives can complement one another by providing for social, community and leisure

uses within designated centres. The provision of such facilities can make significant contributions to the diversification of designated centres, helping to promote sustainable development and sustainable travel through the creation of linked trips and mixed use developments.

The Council will encourage applications that promote the re-use of existing facilities which support and enhance existing local communities, with a view to protecting those particular features of the neighbourhood valued by its residents. It is also recognised that local shopping parades and public houses can play an important role in local communities. Shopping parades sit outside of the 'centres hierarchy' because of their small very localised scale. Public houses are classed by the NPPF as 'main town centre uses', yet both shopping parades and public houses can, in some circumstances perform a broader function in serving a local community and, this needs to be recognised and planning judgement exercised on a case by case basis depending upon local context.

## 2. Policy Context

### National Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF promotes the creation of healthy communities and vibrant and viable town centres both of which help support local communities and provide a focal point for services over and above retailing facilities. The NPPF recognises that these two objectives can complement one another by providing for social, community and leisure uses within designated centres. The provision of such facilities can make significant contributions to the diversification of designated centres, helping to promote sustainable development and sustainable travel through the creation of linked trips and mixed-use developments.

### Local Policy Context

#### Coventry Local Plan (adopted 2017)

The following paragraphs summarise current adopted policy to help provide the context for their review.

### Chapter 6 – Communities

This chapter considers social, community and leisure facilities that are not defined as Main Town Centre uses by the NPPF. These include provisions for sporting uses, including swimming pools, leisure centres and sporting venues, health centres and hospitals, educational establishments including nurseries and universities, meeting places, libraries and places of worship.

The policies also set out the approach to safeguarding and improving social, community and leisure premises, providing support for the development of new facilities and the provision of Neighbourhood Planning. The policies will support and facilitate the implementation of existing and future strategies for the provision and improvement of social community and leisure premises across the city.

**Policy CO1: New or Improved Social Community and Leisure Premises**

Policy seeks to promote new provisions to designated centres or towards other related uses to encourage clustering and linked trips. This will help to promote single destinations for multiple uses and promote community hubs.

**Policy C2: Re-use or Redevelopment of Facilities**

This policy looks to resist the loss of community, social or leisure premises to other uses unless it is proven to no longer be required for such use and/or is no longer viable or suitable.

**Policy C3: Neighbourhood and Community Plans**

This policy provides a basis and a commitment to support local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans or Parish Plans and to identify Assets of Community Value.

### 3. Regulation 18 summary of responses

#### **Policy CO1: New or improved social community and leisure premises**

As result of the Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation, a variety of responses were provided, responding to the question '*Do you have any comments on our review of Policy CO1?*'. The policy relates to new or improved social, community and leisure premises and the consultation suggested that the policy was working well and did not need to be changed.

Responses included several comments on the need to cite Liveable Neighbourhoods / Neighbourhood Planning and the 20-minute toolkit, planning for shared spaces, protecting green spaces, ensuring leisure facilities in Keresley supporting new facilities.

#### **Policy CO2 Re-Use of or Redevelopment of Facilities**

This question was asked in response to suggested changes to the scope of the policy to include community uses beyond the current Local Plan definition of 'community premises' where they could be demonstrated as being important e.g. a local pub or a shopping parade. A review of proposals involving loss of education facilities was also suggested.

Responses were made with many in relation to the types of community uses. NHS properties were constrained by marketing requirements and that flexibility needs to be afforded in respect of the evolution of the NHS estate. A separate policy was requested for educational premises distinct from community use as these are not subject to market demand. Some felt a wider definition was a positive change others requested a definitive list for clarity. A site-specific policy to guide the former Coventry Baths Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre was requested as was a comprehensive masterplan for City Council assets. It was commented that Assets of Community Value do not need Local Plan policy protection or support as they are already covered in national policy. It was commented that the existing policy part 1 lists 3 criteria – suggestion that the word 'or' should be added to clarify that if one of the criteria are met then redevelopment can be supported.

### **Policy CO3: Neighbourhood and Community Planning**

A minor update was proposed through the consultation in order to bring terminology up to date in line with the NPPF. Question 70 attracted general support with comments relating to the need to be proactive and support Neighbourhood Planning and to recognise this is done voluntarily within the wider community.

## **4. Evidence**

Given the very limited changes that are being proposed to the policies within this chapter, it was not considered appropriate or necessary to commission any new evidence to help support policies CO1, CO2 or CO3.

The policies of this chapter support other strategies and policies of the Council and its partners.

## **5. Policy Changes**

Policies CO1 and CO3 have not been changed as they are in accordance with the NPPF and still hold good in the Coventry context. The only change relates to policy CO2 which includes Inserting the word 'and' in relation to part 1 to ensure any re-use or redevelopment properly assesses community facilities as the intention of this element of the policy has always been applied by insisting that each criteria need to be met rather than just one element. Education uses have always been considered as community uses and this has been operating successfully.

It is considered that the supporting text also needs to include a recognition that pubs and shopping parades can operate as community uses and planning judgement will need to be exercised on a case-by-case basis depending on the local context and specific circumstances.



## 6. Conclusions

Through the review of the Communities chapter a very limited number of small changes have been identified and proposed. Community policies remain an important role in the planning policy landscape which help to maintain and develop facilities for the benefit of all Coventry residents and users of such facilities.

Finally, policy CO3 sets out the Councils approach to Neighbourhood Planning. We will take decisions at key stages in the neighbourhood planning process within the time limits that apply, provide advice or assistance to a Parish Council, neighbourhood forum or community organisation that is producing a neighbourhood plan or Order. The key commitments include the following:

- be proactive in providing information to communities about neighbourhood planning.
- fulfil our duties and take decisions as soon as possible, and within statutory time periods where these apply.
- set out a clear and transparent decision-making timetable and share this with those wishing to prepare a neighbourhood plan or an Order.
- constructively engage with the community throughout the process including when considering the recommendations of the independent examiner of a neighbourhood development plan or Order proposal.

If you need this information in another format or language  
please contact us

**e-mail: [planningpolicy@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@coventry.gov.uk)**