

Supplementary Planning Guidance on **Childcare Facilities**



Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan
non-statutory supplementary planning guidance

December 2003



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status of supplementary planning guidance

The guidance supplements the application of relevant policies in the adopted Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan and is a material consideration in deciding planning applications in line with Government Guidance in PPG12 (Development Plans - December 1999) paragraphs 3.15-3.17. This supplementary planning guidance was approved by the Council on 26 November 2003 following public consultation. Appendix 2 describes the result of consultation and the Council's response.

introduction

- 1** Wandsworth Council supports the provision of local facilities for childcare and education, such as day nurseries, play groups and nursery and other schools in line with the Government's childcare strategy. The Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provides the land use planning policy framework against which planning applications for such facilities are considered. The purpose of these guidelines is to explain the Council's planning policies and advise on steps you should take when seeking to provide new or expanded facilities.
- 2** There has been a continuing strong demand for all types of childcare and education facilities in the Borough. Changes in the population structure, lifestyles and economic needs have led to an increased demand for day nursery and other types of childcare and education facilities. The Borough has been a popular location for new and expanded schools and different forms of childcare provision. Between 1999 and 2003, a total of 69 planning applications were received for new or extended childcare facilities.
- 3** The Council supports the increase in provision, but problems can arise when more intensive use of existing premises is proposed, particularly in residential areas where the premises or the area may not be appropriate for the scale of use sought. Expansion usually involves greater numbers of staff, children and parents, longer opening hours, and issues of parking and traffic congestion. Scope for expansion may be limited by the nature of the existing or potential accommodation - many nurseries are in relatively small terraced houses - and also by location, frequently within a residential area. Other issues that arise can be conflict with policies for the safeguarding of premises for other purposes.

advice and information

- 4** Most planning applications are approved, but to avoid unnecessary problems arising it is useful to contact the Planning Service at an early stage. Help can be provided on whether there are likely to be problems with using or expanding existing premises. Planning officers will also be happy to discuss your proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. Various sources of information and help are listed in the Contacts section at the end of the guidelines.

do I need planning permission?

- 5** It is important to check first with a planning officer whether planning permission is required and whether what is being proposed is likely to get planning permission.
- 6** If a property is already in an educational use or other use within the same use class (D1), it may not need planning permission for the new use unless there are restrictions limiting use to a particular activity or person. D1 uses include church and community halls, meeting rooms and doctors' surgeries. The use of part of a dwelling for childminding would not normally require planning permission as long as the main use clearly remains residential in character. Depending on the circumstances, the general guideline is a maximum of six children under eight years, with no more than three under five years old. External alterations to the building will, however, usually require planning permission. Even if you do not need planning permission, you will need to obtain approval under the Building Regulations (for example, for structural and other work including providing means of escape in case of fire). The Food Team of Environmental Services enforce the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 in relation to kitchen and food preparation areas within nurseries and childcare facilities. All proprietors of childcare facilities must register their premises with Environmental Services 28 days prior to opening in order that a food hygiene inspection can be carried out.
- 7** You will generally require planning permission if you intend to:
- Change the use of a building to a childcare use
 - Erect a new building
 - Undertake external building work and possibly signage (see below)
- 8** The process of applying for planning permission can appear complex. However, the guidance below will help you work through each step
- 9** The Council carries out consultation on all planning applications. It may be helpful therefore if you discuss your proposals with neighbours and people or organisations in the local area who may have an interest in the proposal to gauge reactions before submitting a planning application.

do I need planning permission?

- 10** You may need to employ the services of a professional advisor such as an architect when preparing to submit the planning application. You will require a site plan and drawings of any work to be undertaken. Details of the number of places, age of children, catchment area and the intended opening hours should be submitted. Staff numbers, anticipated mode of travel, and details of parking arrangements should also be submitted, especially in the case of larger facilities, along with any proposal for a Green Travel Plan. A Green Travel Plan will contain a number of measures aimed at reducing the impact of traffic by promoting public transport, walking and cycling.
- 11** Further advice on submitting the planning application can be obtained on line at <http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning/plappsubmit.htm>.
- 12** You will have to pay a fee. Details of current fees are available on the Wandsworth Council website at www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning/plappforms.htm or from the Planning Service.

the council's planning policies

- 13** As the local planning authority, the Council needs to take into consideration the suitability of the premises and their location, and the potential impact on neighbours, traffic conditions and the environment generally. The UDP policies apply to all types of childcare and educational establishments and indicate the circumstances where the provision of facilities would be acceptable.

Policy CS3 states that:-

“New or improved education facilities and facilities for childcare will be permitted provided that:

- (a) the nature and scale of the proposal, including hours of operation, do not harm the amenities of the area through noise, disturbance, or traffic generation;**
- (b) the premises are adequately served by public transport;**
- (c) the proposal would not result in an over concentration of similar facilities in any residential area.”**

Policy CS4 guides the development of new facilities where a change of use is involved:

“The redevelopment or use of former schools, institutional buildings, shops and other commercial buildings for new educational establishments, day nurseries and other childcare facilities will be permitted. The use of residential property for childcare purposes will be permitted where only part of a dwelling is used and the remainder continues to be used for residential purposes.”

Policy CS5 aims to exploit further opportunities for childcare:

“Childcare facilities, including those for employees, will be permitted in large developments such as those for shopping, leisure and visitor attractions.”

- 14** Advice is set out below on the following options:
- residential property
 - shops
 - other commercial premises
 - other non-residential premises
 - new development and extensions
 - temporary buildings

use of residential property

- 15** The loss of residential accommodation is contrary to UDP policies. However, it may be possible to convert part of a house to a childcare facility, so long as the remainder of the property provides a self-contained flat with independent access, or if there are no suitable alternative premises available. The proposal must not have a significant detrimental effect on neighbouring properties caused by noise and disturbance, or unacceptable effects on car parking, congestion and traffic generation. The number of similar uses in the street or neighbourhood will affect the outcome of your application, for example other childcare facilities, schools and doctors' surgeries, together can adversely affect the character of a residential area by giving it an "institutional" feel and lead to an unacceptable increase in peak-time activity which would be inappropriate to a residential area.

points to consider

- Location and Type of Building - It is important that the size and location of the building is suitable for the type and scale of the proposal. While childcare provision may be encouraged in your area, the likely impact of noise and disturbance on neighbours will need to be taken into account.
- Size of the Proposal, Suitability of Building and Outside Space - The number of children that will use the facility and the hours of operation will be taken into account as well as the building's relationship with the adjoining area. For example, a large detached building with a large garden is more likely to be able to cope with larger numbers of children for all-day care than a modest sized terraced house with a small garden.
- If an extension is unavoidable, it should impinge as little as possible on adjoining properties. It is important to pay careful attention to its design to make sure that it is in scale with the rest of the building, that the materials used and the window and door openings are in character and appropriate to the existing building and to the character of the area. This is particularly important in conservation areas, although where a uniform design does not prevail, high quality contemporary designs may be acceptable.
- The location of too many similar facilities (doctors, dentists, childcare and schools) near to each other will tend to have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of a residential area, so over-concentration of such facilities in an area should be avoided.
- Large facilities are best avoided in residential areas as they are likely to dominate the area and the activity they generate would be unacceptable.

use of residential property

- Staggered operating hours and sessional care can help to dilute the effect of peak hours activity. Restricting a facility to serve a local clientele and/or the provision of a Green Travel Plan can also help to reduce the impact of traffic and parking congestion.
- A location near to public transport can also help to reduce the impact of traffic.

shops

- 16** Shop premises may provide good opportunities for new or expanded childcare facilities. Usually they are well located for public transport, provide large and readily adaptable accommodation, and may not lead to many of the amenity problems associated with the use of residential accommodation.

points to consider

- The use of shops is generally acceptable except for certain protected ground floor shopping frontages in Town and Local Centres. You can contact a planning officer to check which properties are involved or check this in the Unitary Development Plan list of protected shopping frontages in the Town Centres and Shopping chapter.
- A shopfront should be retained or provided, with an entrance of sufficient width (ideally 900mm) to allow access for pushchairs.

other commercial property

- 17** Generally the use of former business premises such as offices and warehouses is acceptable in principle, except in Industrial Employment Areas (IEAs). However, there is a need for education, day nurseries and other community buildings to be located close to the community they serve and, in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear and proven need for such uses and where there are no other suitable premises nearby, community uses may be acceptable in IEAs, providing they are of a scale and nature such that they would have no adverse impact on the operation of existing firms.

other commercial property

points to consider

- The type of premises involved must be suitable for conversion into a childcare facility. For example it must provide adequate daylight and ideally should not be on multiple levels.
- If you are considering a commercial property, it is important that the childcare facility will be safe and compatible with adjoining uses. For example you should look for locations where neighbouring uses do not employ heavy machinery, are not unduly noisy, do not involve a large number of heavy vehicle movements or create pollution which would provide an unsuitable environment for childcare.
- Information on the availability of commercial property can be obtained from estate agents and the South London Business property database at www.properties.southlondonbusiness.co.uk or by telephoning 020 8666 0288.

use of other non-residential premises

- 18** The use of buildings formerly used for health or medical purposes and buildings such as former day nurseries and schools, day centres, halls or places of worship may also be appropriate. Their use for childcare or education purposes may not require planning permission as they are in the same use class (D1). However, external alterations are likely to require planning permission. It is important to check this and whether there might be any planning restrictions on the use, for example limiting occupancy to a specific organisation.

extensions and new development

- 19** Extensions and new buildings should be well designed and appropriate to the character of the building, adjoining properties and the street. Conservation areas and other areas of special character will require particular care. In all cases, particular care must be taken to avoid an overbearing impact on neighbouring properties.

temporary buildings

- 20** The Council recognises that temporary accommodation may be needed while permanent buildings or extensions are being constructed, or other alterations are being carried out. Given their appearance and means of construction, temporary buildings should be retained for as short a period as practicable. A more flexible approach to considering applications may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances, such as scale, sensitivity of the proposed location and timescale of the proposal, as the impact on the surrounding area will be short-term. Relocating temporarily in nearby vacant premises may be more appropriate in some instances.

opportunities for new development

- 21** There may be occasions when a vacant site is suitable for the development of a new childcare facility, or such a facility may be appropriate as part of a mixed development. For example the development completed on the Thames riverside near Wandsworth Bridge, known as at Riverside West, included a new day nursery.
- 22** The Council prepares development briefs for important sites or buildings that become available for development, redevelopment or re-use. These indicate the type of uses considered appropriate within any future development.

provision for disabled people

- 23** Provision should be made to make the building accessible for people with disabilities. This will also benefit access for those using buggies and prams. For example, double buggies will usually require at least a 900mm opening in a doorway. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 introduced legislation covering Rights of Access, and a Code of Practice on Employment includes a list of considerations that service providers and their employees should consider in order to comply with their duties under the Act. Further duties under the DDA will come into force in October 2004. Further details, including the Act itself can be obtained at www.disability.gov.uk

provision for disabled people

- 24** The Council has produced Access Design Guidelines which provide non-statutory supplementary planning guidance to the Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan. These are available on the Council's website.

points to consider

- Is level access being provided?
- Is the front door wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or double buggy and are the entrance lobby and other internal circulation space sufficiently large to accommodate these?
- Are the colour contrast, lighting and signage helpful for people with impaired vision?
- Is the position of furniture likely to cause a hazard?
- Is any reception desk at an appropriate height for wheelchair users?
- Are there facilities on upper floors? Do they really need to be there or are there other options that can be achieved through internal rearrangement?
- Is a toilet suitable for use by someone in a wheelchair being provided?
- Are the needs of the hard of hearing catered for - is an induction loop provided?
- Is there parking space of appropriate dimensions for people with disabilities?

signs

- 25** Some advertisements or notices can be displayed without the need for consent. The advert regulations allow advertisements referring to the business or activity on the premises, the name or qualification of the person(s) providing the services. The advertisement must not have any letters, figures, symbols etc in the design over 0.75m in height. It must be no more than 4.6m above the ground - the advert's highest point should be no higher than the bottom of the first floor window on the wall where it is situated. The sign should not be illuminated. Further advice on whether consent is required and, if so, whether it is likely to be granted can be sought from the Planning Service.

sustainable travel

- 26** The Council discourages the use of cars for the “school run” and to that end has developed a Safer Routes to School programme. Many of the “safer routes” measures being introduced for schools in School Travel Plans should improve safety for journeys to childcare facilities as well. For large schemes, it may be appropriate to develop a Green Travel Plan, covering staff and children.

who to contact

Registration

Matters relating to the regulation of day care for children under 8 (i.e. childminding, day nurseries, play groups, after school clubs etc.) is the responsibility of a national regulatory body - the Early Years Directorate of Ofsted.

The address for the manager covering the Wandsworth area is:

Area Manager
Early Years Directorate, Ofsted
90 Union Street
London SE1 0FS
Telephone 020 7560 7014

However, your first port of call for advice on starting a childcare facility issues not concerning planning permission should be the Wandsworth Children's Information Service on 020 8871 7899 or edearlyyears@wandsworth.gov.uk

Parking

Information on parking restrictions (including Controlled Parking Zones - CPZs) can be obtained on the Council's website, or by telephoning 020 8871 8871

Highways and Traffic

General information on Highway and Traffic matters can be obtained by telephoning Engineering Services (Development team) on 020 8871 6661.

Green Travel Plans

For information on developing travel plans, including identification of sustainable travel measures and other road safety issues, please contact the Transportation team on 020 8871 7984 or transportation@wandsworth.gov.uk

If you have any queries or require further assistance about the Council's planning policies, please phone 020 8871 6649 or write to:

Borough Planner's Service

Technical Services Department
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU
e-mail: boroughplanner@wandsworth.gov.uk

appendix 1: relevant UDP policies

Depending on the circumstances of the planning application, different policies of the UDP will apply. The following is a list of the main policies likely to be applicable.

UDP Chapter		Policies
Community Services	Education and Childcare Facilities	CS3, CS4, CS5
Housing	Loss of Residential Accommodation Extensions and Alterations to Residential Properties	H1, H2, H4
Townscape and the Built Environment	Design and External Appearance	TBE5
	Advertisements	TBE9
	Conservation Areas	TBE10
Regeneration and Development Principles	Creating Accessible Environments	RDP6
Business and Industry	Appropriate Uses on Land/ Buildings Currently/Last used for Business or Industrial Purposes	BIN2, BIN5
Town Centres and Shopping	Appropriate Uses Allowed in Different Shopping Frontages	TCS4-6 and Table 1, TCS8
The River Thames and the Riverside	Appropriate Uses in the Wandsworth Thames Policy Area	R1
Transport	Transport Impact of Development	T1, T2

appendix 2: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 November 2003

Executive 1 December 2003

**Report of the Borough Planner on draft UDP
supplementary planning guidance
on childcare facilities
Paper no. 03-953**

summary

This report sets out planning guidance on the provision of new childcare facilities. It explains the Unitary Development Plan policies and the considerations that should be taken into account in building, converting or using premises for such purposes, as well as providing information on the availability of suitable premises and other sources of advice. It describes the results of consultations on a draft of the guidance, and recommends the approval of amended guidance as supplementary planning guidance to the Unitary Development Plan.

recommendations

- 1** The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.
- 2** If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or recommendations on this report, these will be reported to the Executive for their consideration.
- 3** The Executive are recommended to approve the guidance appended to this report as supplementary planning guidance to the Unitary Development Plan.

appendix 2

background

- 4 Changes in population structure, lifestyles and economic needs have led to an increased demand for day nursery and other types of childcare and education facilities. The Borough has been a popular location for new and expanded schools and different forms of childcare provision. In addition, in accordance with Government policy, the Council has been committed to providing universal nursery education for all 3 year olds in Wandsworth. The Council has been expanding nursery education in schools as well as encouraging non-maintained providers to expand nursery education and childcare facilities. The Government's national childcare strategy set targets nationally for additional out-of-school childcare places. In Wandsworth, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has a target of 1,978 new childcare places between 2001 and 2004. This is made up of a mixture of pre-school and out-of-school places, including childminding places.
- 5 The Council's Early Years and Childcare Team has been promoting this initiative by publicity and by holding seminars for existing and potential providers. The Planning Service has provided assistance and support with this initiative, and this guidance has been drawn up to further supplement this. There has been an increase in enquiries and in planning applications seeking to provide childcare facilities from a wide-range of people including many unfamiliar with the planning process. Between 1999 and July 2003, a total of 69 planning applications were submitted for different types of childcare facilities. Planning applications for childcare facilities are expected to carry on at high levels in the future.

planning policy

- 6 It is important that appropriate support is provided to planning applicants and that planning policy and procedures are fully understood to enable this expansion to take place and to avoid unnecessary refusals of planning permission. Problems have arisen in the past where the facility proposed is too large for the location, leading to traffic congestion, where the property or location is unsuitable, or where children playing outdoors have caused disturbance to neighbours for example.
- 7 Proposed supplementary planning guidance covering all these considerations is set out in the Appendix to this report. This indicates the types of accommodation that would may be appropriate including commercial premises. It is aimed at childcare providers, including the larger operators and their builders and architects. The guidance sets out the Council's requirements that can be considered at the pre-application stage, and should help childcare providers formulate proposals that will be acceptable in planning terms.

appendix 2

consultation

- 8** A draft of the proposed guidance has been circulated for comment to Ofsted, which is responsible for registering premises, to the Council's Early Years and Childcare Team, to relevant groups, local amenity societies and major childcare providers in the Borough and to attendees at the Early Years seminars for new childcare providers. It was publicised in the local press and placed on the Council's website. The consultation on the guidance was also covered by an article in Nursery Market News - August/September 2003.

response to consultation

- 9** **Ofsted:** The guidelines appear to be very clearly written and informative. It would be beneficial for the guidance to clarify the circumstances where planning permission would be required for the use of premises for childminding. This will have financial implications for the childminders currently doing it without planning permission, and new childminders who want to do it in the future.
- 10** **Wandsworth Primary Play Association (WPPA):** Contents very useful to new providers. Early knowledge of new developments proposing childcare facilities would be beneficial to voluntary organisations seeking premises.
- 11** **The Putney Society:** Generally welcomed. Welcome shared use with residential. Advertising boards in front gardens should be discreet. Play equipment should be modest as it can give rise to overlooking into neighbours gardens, and noisy play can also be disturbing. Should not be too many conversions in one area. "Safe Routes to School" initiative should be extended to nursery/day care facilities.
- 12** **Eger Architects:** A very clear and comprehensive document. However, the acceptability of high quality contemporary design should be recognised without any qualification.

appendix 2

comment

- 13** The issues raised about over-concentration, overlooking, noise and disturbance are covered by UDP policy CS3 which will be set out in the final guidance. Reference to the Safer Routes to Schools Initiative and Green Travel Plans can be added to the guidance. Information that becomes available about suitable premises and development proposals is passed on to the Early Years and Childcare Team and this is an appropriate way for potential childcare providers to be informed of these possibilities. The section of the guidance dealing with the need for planning permission covers childminding. This has not been a major issue and the guidance provided is considered sufficient. Any specific proposals are best addressed on an individual basis, where the actual circumstances can be considered and the document provides contact details for this purpose. High quality design is always welcomed, but one aspect of high quality design is respect for the prevailing scale of development and character of the area. Particular care must be taken with the design of new development in conservation areas.
- 14** **Comments of the Director of Education.** The draft guidelines are welcomed by the Education Department as the basis for sound advice on premises issues for new and potential providers of childcare or integrated services for young children and their families. Information based around the draft guidelines would be used in briefings for providers and would be made available through the Children's Information Service and development officers within Early Years and Childcare Services. Identification of suitable premises has proved to be a significant issue affecting the growth in childcare provision, and the draft guidelines will contribute to addressing this.

conclusion

- 15** The draft guidelines have generally been welcomed and supported by the consultees who have responded. Although the number of responses was limited, they represent a cross-section of groups involved in different aspects of childcare and the planning process. Following the consultation, the guidance appended to this report now incorporates the adopted UDP policies CS3-5 and additional reference to the Safer Routes to School initiative. The guidance can now be confirmed as supplementary planning guidance to the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan.

I. Thompson

Borough Planner

The Town Hall

Wandsworth SW18 2PU

18 November 2003

appendix 2

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

1. The Wandsworth UDP, adopted August 2003
2. Guidance on Access to Buildings and Spaces for People with Disabilities (revised February 2002)
3. Early Years Development and Childcare Implementation Plans (2001/02; 2002/03; 2003/04)
4. OFSTED Protocol for Planning and Building Control (October 2001)

If you wish to inspect any of these documents, please contact initially the Committee Secretary on 020 8871 6005.

English

If you have problems understanding this in English please contact

Wandsworth Interpreting Service
Bedford House
215 Balham High street
SW17 7BQ
Tel: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Bengali

এই লিফলেটটি বুঝতে অসুবিধা হলে দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

ওয়ান্ডসওয়ার্থ ইন্টারপ্রিটিং সার্ভিস
Bedford House
215 Balham High Road
SW17 7BQ
ফোন:(020) 8672 1043/3649

Hindi

यदि आपको इसे अंग्रेज़ी में समझने में कठिनाई होती है, तो कृपया सम्पर्क करें:

वॉन्डज़वर्थ इन्टरप्रिटींग सर्विस
Bedford House
215 Balham High Road
SW17 7BQ
टेलीफोन:(020) 8672 1043/3649

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਮਝਣਾ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

ਵॉन्डज़वर्थ इन्टरप्रिटींग सर्विस
Bedford House
215 Balham High Road
SW17 7BQ
ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Gujarati

જો આને અંગ્રેજીમાં સમજવી તમારા માટે મુશ્કેલ છે, તો મહેરબાની કરી સંપર્ક સાધો:

વોન્ડઝવર્થ ઇન્ટરપ્રિટિંગ સર્વિસ
Bedford House
215 Balham High Road
SW17 7BQ
ટૅલિફોન: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Urdu

اگر اسے انگریزی میں سمجھنے میں آپ کو کوئی مشکلات ہیں تو برائے مہربانی رابطہ قائم کریں:

وانڈزور تھ انٹرپریٹنگ سروس
Bedford House
215 Balham High Road
SW17 7BQ
(020) 8672 1043/3649 : ٹیلی فون

For more information write to:

The Borough Planner

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Wandsworth High Street

London SW18 2PU

Phone: (020) 8871 6636

Email: boroughplanner@wandsworth.gov.uk

Website: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning

**Borough Planner's Service
Technical Services Department**

