

Note for Examination Inspectors
Provision of community business space

On day 5 of the Examination, under Matter 5, the Inspector asked for a note setting out the rationale for community business space, and the nature of the facility that is being sought.

One of the “Transformational Initiatives” identified in the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy (EGS)(November 2016) is “designing enterprise into communities”. This is particularly important in Thanet, where a significant proportion of jobs growth is expected in the SME and micro-business sector.

The EGS identifies two main ways in which this can be supported through new housing development:

1. Supporting working at home with good-quality broadband - this is addressed in the draft Local Plan through draft policies E02 and E03; and
2. The provision of active working space and networking opportunities for the self-employed and sub-contractors. This is the basis for seeking “community business space” within draft Policy SP12. The intention is that within community buildings, there should be some smaller, flexible spaces that could be used for a variety of purposes, including by small businesses or sole traders to work, hold business meetings and so on, to support business activity. This approach is also supported by draft Policy CM01, which makes provision for broadband in community facilities. CM01 could also be modified to include a reference to flexible community business space.

It is noted that the Inspectors have suggested that such a reference might be more effectively be added to the individual strategic sites policies, and the Council would support such a modification.

The Council proposes the following modifications to address this point:

New para after 3.19:

One of the “transformational initiatives” identified in the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy (EGS)(November 2016) is “designing enterprise into communities”. This is particularly important in Thanet, where a significant proportion of jobs growth is expected in the SME and micro-business sector. As well as supporting working at home with good-quality broadband as provided in policies E02 and E03, the provision of active working space and networking opportunities for the self-employed and sub-contractors is seen as a means of enhancing this aspect of Thanet’s employment profile. This is the basis for seeking “community business space” within the strategic housing allocations. The intention is for community buildings to be provided which make provision in whole or in part for small, fully serviced and flexible spaces suitable for use by small businesses and sole traders to support business activity. This approach is also supported by draft Policy CM01, which makes provision for broadband in community facilities.

Clause at end of draft Policy SP12:

Applications for A Statement of Social Impacts will be required for developments of for 50 or more dwellings shall provide an assessment of the need for community facilities (other than those required for educational or medical purposes) and the amount of floorspace required to meet this need to be approved by the Council. addressing any needs for community facilities identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Where such facilities are required, they shall include Strategic Sites will also be expected to provide complementary uses such as community business space, for the purposes identified in para 3.21 above.