

M56 Public Toilets

Would Policy S6, in relation to public toilets, address a strategic matter of London wide importance?

a. If so, would it provide an effective and justified strategic framework for the preparation of local plans and neighbourhood plans in relation to the provision of public toilets?

b. Would it be effective in ensuring the provision and future management of free publicly accessible toilets including 'Changing Places' toilets as part of development proposals outlined in parts A and B of that policy?

c. In light of the community toilet scheme supported by many boroughs, would it be effective?

Public toilets are a strategic matter of London wide importance for the following reasons:-

Health and Health inequalities - the lack of public toilet availability for people who have conditions (acute and chronic) that require access to toilet provision can seriously restrict movement and access to the city, from work to leisure. This has been particularly noted by ageing charities who have found the lack of public toilets on high streets can isolate older people (who often need toilets more and need to access them frequently) leading to loneliness and poor mental health.

Crime safety and security - Public toilets are often cited as focal points for these issues but the lack of them also creates areas of poor safety due to street urination and defecation

Design - in order to design attractive area's that people feel they can use, especially public/leisure spaces such as parks, there needs to be public toilet provision that is also well designed to encourage access and use and therefore detract from anti-social behaviours the facilities have traditionally attracted. The provision of facilities would encourage people to engage in places and spaces for longer and help generate / strengthen a sense of place - especially for families with young children and older people.

Connectivity - toilets are an essential but often neglected element of the transport chain, especially on bus routes. The provision of toilets in key areas of the transport chain would enable many people who urgently require toilet provision due to chronic and acute health conditions, pregnancy, menopause, older people and those with young children to expand their journey(s) and access to and use of the city.

Economic Competitiveness - adequate toilet provision will encourage more people to visit areas. Having adequate provision within the transport chain would enable more people to travel with confidence for work and leisure.

Culture - care has to be taken that one cultural need is not at the expense of another. For example the shift to gender neutral provision may exclude many men and women who prefer and feel more comfortable toileting with their identified gender, as well as those whose toileting requires faith adherence. Provision needs to meet a range of cultural concerns as to dramatically shift provision to a one size fits all solution risks excluding more than it might include.

Water resources and quality - innovative toilet design that incorporates sustainable technologies could help alleviate water and energy use whilst providing a public toilet provision fit for the 21st century that meets the needs of all users that includes ability, age, gender and cultural diversity.

Policy S6 as it stands does not adequately deal with the needs of women under the Equality Act. For example, the problem of women always having to queue for public toilets.

It is also unsound and in contravention of the PSED in making no requirements of public bodies. Local Plans should be required to set a target for free, safe, accessible and clean public toilet provision and the boundary maps for designated town centres and high streets should show their location. The Mayor should use his powers to ensure the provision of free public toilets at all transport hubs.