

PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACES

8.19 The extensive network of Borough Council, Town Council, Parish Council educational and private playing fields, recreation grounds and parks is of fundamental importance in meeting a range of formal and informal recreation needs. These areas are also often of considerable importance in terms of landscape and the quality of the local environment. It is recognised that if the present and anticipated demand for playing fields and recreation space is to be met, these facilities will need to be protected and, in some cases, improved. Any improvement will, however, be carried out in such a way as not to detract from the open character, environmental and landscape value of the area involved. Government guidance in PPG17 (2002) and the associated Companion Guide is that local authorities should carry out detailed assessments of local needs and detailed audits of local provision, before setting and applying local provision standards and drafting new policies. This work is currently in progress and will be incorporated in the next local plan review. However an overall standard for outdoor sport provision has already been produced and this is incorporated in Appendix 9.

8.20 The contribution which privately owned open spaces can make to the local environment is acknowledged in PPG17 and, as with public sector facilities, it is important that this is protected. The PPG also provides justification for an assessment of the existing and potential contribution which school playing fields can make to meeting wider needs and of the environmental quality of such areas before any decision is made to pursue alternative uses. The Council will be alert to any opportunities which may arise to improve public provision in a local area through bringing private open space into greater public use.

8.21 In determining planning applications for these sites, any replacement provision will be expected to be achieved either by the imposition of conditions on any planning permission or through a formal planning obligation entered into by the developer voluntarily.

8.22 This policy is designed to implement objective rc/c and accords with Structure Plan policy 7/2.

RC5 The development of open spaces shown on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 9, will not be permitted unless:

- a) no local deficiency of open space will result; or**
- b) where such a deficiency will result, either an equivalent and equally accessible area is laid out and made available by the applicant for the same open space purpose, or it is demonstrated that redevelopment of a small part of the site will result in substantially enhanced sports or recreation facilities on the remainder of the site; or**
- c) the development relates to the improvement of the recreational potential of the land or provides ancillary facilities; and**
- d) In all of the above cases, the development will not detract from the open character, environmental and landscape value of the land.**