

CHAPTER 9: LEISURE, RECREATION AND THE ARTS

INTRODUCTION

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- 9.1 This Chapter deals with the Borough's leisure, recreation and arts needs. This ranges from formal facilities such as sports centres, play areas and pitches, cinemas and other entertainment to informal pursuits such as opportunities for casual walks in the countryside.

DESCRIPTION OF BOROUGH AND RECENT TRENDS

- 9.2 Leisure and recreational activities play an important part in the quality of people's lives as well as having a valuable social and economic role. Participation in sports is increasing and is projected to increase further so that by 1997 over ¾ of the population of the South East will take part in some form of activity, matching the national average.
- 9.3 A wide range of leisure and recreation activities may be enjoyed within the Borough. These include a range of arts, crafts and cultural activities, organised sport and informal countryside recreation. The Council is actively involved in promoting cultural activities such as the Woking Dance Umbrella and activities to be undertaken at part of Woking's celebration of the Millennium.
- 9.4 Leisure opportunities in Woking town centre have improved significantly in recent years due primarily to the opening of the Peacocks Arts and Entertainment complex in 1992. This facility provides theatres, cinemas, restaurants and bars as well as extensive shopping. The complex has provided a major boost for the Town and is to be complemented by other leisure and entertainment facilities including a night-club, sportsbowl, multi purpose concert, exhibition and function halls at The Planets complex, also in the Town Centre. Other leisure opportunities are provided at Christ Church.
- 9.5 Woking is also now home for the Surrey History Centre in Goldsworth Road which houses historical information relating to the history of Surrey and includes space for exhibitions. A new Woking Museum and Arts and Crafts Centre is also proposed in the town centre to be complemented by a smaller, but none the less important, Heritage Centre in Byfleet Library where local history is on display.
- 9.6 To many, leisure and recreation means taking part in a sporting activity which may be indoors or outdoors, and in facilities which are either Council run or privately owned. A wide variety of activities are catered for at Woking Leisure Centre in Woking Park and the adjacent Pool in the Park, and the Council also

owns and manages facilities such as tennis courts, cricket squares, football and hockey pitches and bowling greens. These are located in recreation grounds throughout the Borough. However, increasing demand means that both more pitches are needed and that more intensive use is made of some existing pitches through the introduction of floodlighting and all weather surfaces. In some instances these improvements are a requirement for participation in sport at a higher level and reflect changing patterns of participation.

- 9.7 Other facilities to be found in the Borough include Woking Athletics Track at Sheerwater, non powered water sports and angling at Goldsworth Park Lake, as well as many other clubs providing facilities for gymnastics, snooker, tennis, squash, horse riding and ten golf courses.
- 9.8 Whilst taking part in sport is important, watching it can be an equally significant part of leisure time, and in this respect Woking Football Club plays an essential role attracting large numbers of spectators as they endeavour to gain promotion from the Football Conference League.
- 9.9 The most popular form of leisure activity in Great Britain is walking which is also true of Woking where a survey undertaken in November 1993 showed that nearly 40% of respondents who visited green space did so for walking. [Monitoring Report 3/94 - Open Space Survey Findings].
- 9.10 The Borough has a very good coverage of informal recreational land and contains 16 parks and recreation grounds and 32 play areas as well as 474 ha (1170 acres) of common land, where people can enjoy informal recreational pursuits. These areas are complemented by a network of public footpaths throughout the Borough.
- 9.11 Two other important areas for informal recreation are the Hoe Valley River Park with its extensive open areas and footpaths and the Basingstoke Canal passing right through the Borough which is now restored and offers significant potential for walking and water based activities.

NATIONAL/REGIONAL CONTEXT

- 9.12 The policies in this Plan are guided by Government guidance in the form of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG's) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's). Those of relevance to the Leisure, Recreation and the Arts Chapter are listed below.
- 9.13 *RPG9 - Regional Planning Guidance for the South East* stresses the importance of retaining open land and river environments for their recreational opportunities. The importance of tourism is also recognised which can be encouraged by improved leisure facilities and the provision of arts, culture and entertainment which are also important for the quality of life of inhabitants.

- 9.14 *PPG2 - Green Belts* indicates that the use of land for outdoor recreation which maintains the openness of the Green Belt is an appropriate use as are essential built facilities genuinely required for the use such as changing rooms and stables.
- 9.15 *PPG3 - Housing* states that open space used for recreation should be protected and that proposals for substantial new housing developments, especially family housing, may generate the need for additional open space, children's play space and informal play space. Such provision should be reasonably located in scale and location to the development and may be secured via planning obligations.
- 9.16 *PPG6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments* concerns the role and quality of town centres and stresses the role that entertainment, recreational and amusement centres can play in improving vitality and viability.
- 9.17 *PPG7 - The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* refers to the important part tourism can play in diversifying the rural economy providing it does not harm the landscape. When determining planning applications account should be taken of the effect upon public footpaths and bridleways which increase opportunities to enjoy the countryside. Development involving horses is discussed further in Annex F.
- 9.18 *PPG13 - Transport* states that leisure travel is the fastest area of transport growth. Local authorities should therefore ensure that facilities are concentrated in locations well served by public transport. Entertainment uses in town centres can improve vitality and local leisure, entertainment and recreational facilities are also encouraged.
- 9.19 *PPG17 - Sport and Recreation* provides comprehensive guidance for this Chapter, and encourages sport and recreation in its widest sense, providing a wide range of opportunities for all and protecting existing opportunities such as open space, playing fields and rights of way.
- 9.20 *Circular 1/97 - Planning Obligations* sets out the circumstances when planning obligations may be sought; they may relate to land, roads or buildings other than those covered by the planning permission, provided there is a direct relationship between the two and they are reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.
- 9.21 *Circular 09/98 - The Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998* sets out the government's new approach to the loss of playing fields. As of 1996 the English Sports Council has been consulted by local authorities on applications involving the loss of playing fields. Where a local authority is minded to grant planning permission on a site where the English Sports Council has objected, the authority must consult the Secretary of State.

COUNTY PLANNING CONTEXT

- 9.22 The Surrey Structure Plan 1994 reflects national and regional policy and provides a strategic policy framework for the Borough. The Plan encourages development for recreation by making the best use of land and buildings, encouraging new provision and protecting that existing, especially where it overcomes existing deficiencies. Areas with recreational potential include rights of way, river and canal corridors.
- 9.23 Opportunities should be taken to improve access to the countryside but recreational development should maintain its openness and should not damage the landscape or areas of wildlife value; specific reference is made to golf and horse keeping. Noisy and disruptive sports also require special consideration.



OTHER COUNCIL POLICIES

- 9.24 The Council's revised Countryside Strategy for Woking adopted in June 1998 contains policies and projects associated with the countryside and five key aims. Two of the aims are relevant to this Chapter. These seek to:
- § ensure that there is equal opportunity for residents to have access to open spaces, wildlife and the countryside;
 - § broaden opportunities for the enjoyment of wildlife and the countryside, whilst balancing recreational demand with the need to protect the Borough's bio-diversity.
- 9.25 Areas identified as needing special attention include the informal recreational pursuits of walking, horse riding and cycling, managing the countryside for organised sports and protecting the quality and nature conservation value of the

environment. The improvement and management of the Hoe Valley is also a specific project.

- 9.26 The Council has also produced a Leisure Strategy following extensive public consultation which has identified the location and distribution of recreational facilities throughout the Borough and areas where new provision is needed or requires upgrading.

OBJECTIVES FOR LEISURE, RECREATION AND THE ARTS

- 9.27 National Guidance and the Surrey Structure Plan stress the importance of leisure and recreational activities and the need to accommodate and protect such uses. This is recognised in the following Key Objective:

The Council will seek to provide for development for leisure, recreation and the arts to meet the needs of those who live and work in the Borough, and visitors.

- 9.28 Many recreational uses are also located within the Green Belt. These proposals will be guided by policies in Chapter 5 - The Green Belt and the following Objective:

The Council will protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

- 9.29 The policies of the Leisure, Recreation and the Arts Chapter have been developed in the light of these aims and seek to achieve the following objectives:-

1. Encourage improved leisure, recreation and arts provision to meet the needs of the Borough.
2. Resist the loss of land and buildings in recreational use.
3. Expand the recreational opportunities offered by the Wey, Wey Navigation, Hoe Stream and Basingstoke Canal.
4. Encourage improved access to the countryside.
5. Ensure recreational uses are compatible with the protection of the environment and wildlife interests.
6. Promote Country Parks at Brookwood and Woking Palace.

POLICIES

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REC1 FORMAL RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE LEVEL OF PROVISION OF FORMAL RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH.

IN APPROPRIATE CASES RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON SITES OF AT LEAST 15 DWELLINGS WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE OPEN SPACE ON SITE OR MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TOWARD PLANNED OFF SITE PROVISION INCLUDING ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS AND CAR PARKING TO A LEVEL COMMENSURATE WITH THE NEED GENERATED BY THE DEVELOPMENT.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.30 This policy covers all forms of formal recreational open space including informal kickabout areas or equipped play areas for children and playing fields. Recreational open space is an important part of the urban fabric and it is essential that people have easy access to open space close to where they live to meet their sporting or leisure needs. Recreational open space is also important for the visual relief it can bring to built up areas.
- 9.31 The Council has identified that there is a shortfall in recreational open space within the Borough when assessed against the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) standards and an identified shortfall in pitch provision throughout the Borough leading to existing pitches being overused. The NPFA standards require that a minimum of 2.43 hectares (6 acres) of outdoor playing space be provided per 1000 population which is made up of 1.62 hectares (4 acres) for outdoor sport and 0.81 hectares (2 acres) for children's play space. The NPFA standards are contained in Appendix 6 and the Council will apply these when negotiating open space provision.
- 9.32 Whilst there are differences at ward level, overall the Borough fails to meet the NPFA standard and in fact provides 1.46 hectares (3.6 acres) per 1000 population resulting in an inadequate coverage of play areas and pitches; the shortfall is particularly acute in Central and Maybury where there is only 0.78 hectares (1.93 acres) per 1000 population. The Councils' assessment of playing pitch demand shows that there is an unmet demand for 8 football pitches, 3 rugby pitches and 1 cricket square.
- 9.33 To enhance the level of formal recreational open space provision within the Borough, proposals for residential development of at least 15 dwellings will be expected to provide recreational open space on site or make a contribution toward off site provision to a level appropriate to the needs generated by the development. Sites containing over 15 units are identified by the NPFA as the

minimum number which are considered to generate sufficient need to warrant open space provision being made. Details of the type and size of open space provision may be found in Appendix 6.

- 9.34 The requirement for on site provision or a contribution to off site provision will be dependant upon a number of factors and will not necessarily apply to all residential developments. For instance the type of dwellings proposed may not generate a need for play space as they are not family dwellings or the site may already be located in an area well served by open space.
- 9.35 Provision on site may be in the form of informal open play areas or equipped play areas for children. A contribution toward off site provision will be to upgrade nearby facilities, to meet the demand for playing fields together with associated ancillary buildings and car parking. The Council has identified the play areas in need of upgrading and areas of shortfall, these are shown in Appendix 7. The NPFA guidelines specify the maximum distance which people are prepared to travel to playspace, these distances are identified in Appendix 6 and shown on the accompanying Plan at Appendix 7 and will be used to determine whether a residential development should contribute toward upgrading a facility.
- 9.36 In the case of playing pitches the Borough has a fairly even distribution although there is an identified shortfall and certain areas where pitches are lacking. Clearly it would be desirable to locate new pitches in the areas of deficiency. However, the limitations of land availability mean that this is not possible and the Council will seek to meet the deficiency where suitable land can be found. Nevertheless the provision of pitches is to meet a district wide need and to take advantage of them participants are prepared to travel further; the NPFA considers that a travelling time of 20 minutes is reasonable. In this context a location anywhere in or close to the urban area of the Borough will be accessible to all of Woking's urban population and consequently new residential developments throughout the Borough will be expected to contribute toward planned off-site provision and the associated ancillary buildings in so far as additional dwellings will contribute toward the demand and be in a position to use the facilities. Planned off-site provision will be defined as sites in an approved programme for which planning permission has been granted.

REC2 Ý FORMAL RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN MAJOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

THE COUNCIL WILL EXPECT THE PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE, ANCILLARY BUILDINGS AND CAR PARKING TO BE PROVIDED AS PART OF THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS :-

- § BROOKWOOD HOSPITAL CORE
- § MOOR LANE

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.37 Major new housing developments will create additional demands for recreational open space and will be required to make new provision in accordance with the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) standard of 2.43 ha (6 acres) per 1000 population. As the populations will be made up of adults and children the provision should encompass pitches and play space. Normally open space should be provided within the development site. However, if a suitable adjacent site is identified within easy walking distance the Council may consider this as an alternative.
- 9.38 The major residential development at Brookwood Hospital will accommodate approximately 375 dwellings over and above those already permitted giving rise to a population of about 935 persons. Based on the NPFA standard, the proposal should provide 2.25 ha (5.6 acres) of outdoor playing space to include a Local Equipped Area for Play [0.36 ha (0.9 acres)], other small areas for children's play and two playing pitches [1.6 ha (4 acres)] together with associated ancillary buildings and car parking. It will therefore be this provision that will be required in conjunction with the development.
- 9.39 The residential development at Moor Lane will accommodate approximately 200 dwellings giving rise to a population of about 500 persons. Based on the NPFA standard the proposal should provide 1.2 ha (3 acres) of outdoor playing space comprising a Local Equipped Area for Play [0.36 ha (0.9 acres)] and a single pitch [0.8 ha (2 acres)] together with associated ancillary buildings and car parking. It will therefore be this provision that will be required in conjunction with the development.
- 9.40 The potential number of dwellings which may be accommodated on these sites are set out in policies HSG2, 3, 4 and 5; in the event that the actual number of dwellings approved is significantly higher additional open space will be required.

REC3 Ȳ LOSS OF LAND IN FORMAL RECREATIONAL USE

THE LOSS OF LAND IN FORMAL RECREATIONAL USE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA IS SATISFIED -

- (i) ALTERNATIVE AND EQUIVALENT PROVISION IS MADE AVAILABLE IN THE VICINITY OR,
- (ii) THE LOSS ONLY INVOLVES A SMALL PART OF THE SITE AND AN ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT WOULD ENABLE ENHANCEMENT OF THE REMAINDER TO PROVIDE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES OF EQUAL OR IMPROVED QUALITY

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.41 Land in formal recreational use includes playing fields, courts and greens whilst children's playing space includes areas such as equipped playgrounds and casual playing space in housing areas. This policy applies to all land in formal recreational use irrespective of its ownership or restrictions on its use by the public, including private sports grounds, public and private playing fields and school playing fields. Playing fields are a particularly valued asset in Woking and are extremely well used providing opportunities for recreation and team sports. The Leisure Strategy shows that playing fields in the Borough are used to capacity and there is an identified need for further provision. Also an assessment against The National Playing Field Association (NPFA) standards shows a shortfall of some 0.85 ha (2.4 acres) per 1000 population within the Borough. Because of the value to the community the loss of land in recreational use will be resisted unless one of the above criteria can be met.
- 9.42 Where the development would involve the relocation of recreational land the Council will take into account the proposed location of the replacement as well as the users of the land. For instance it would not be acceptable to relocate a pitch well used by the local community to a distant site whereas this may be appropriate if the site were used by a club whose members travel from throughout the Borough.
- 9.43 The development envisaged under criterion 2 will involve the development of "frontage land" where there is no loss of pitches or other sporting/ancillary facilities. Where additional parking is proposed this will normally only be permitted where it is ancillary to the facility and where it does not result in the loss of other facilities for which there is an established need.
- 9.44 Some recreational open space can also make a significant contribution to the character and visual amenity of an area. These sites are identified on the proposals map and subject to policy BE7. Some formal recreational land may also be important for the contribution it makes to informal needs when not in sporting use perhaps by providing an open area for casual walking.

REC4 Ỳ LOSS OF INFORMAL RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF, OR REDUCE PUBLIC ACCESS TO, LAND USED FOR INFORMAL RECREATION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS.

- (i) THERE IS ADEQUATE ALTERNATIVE INFORMAL RECREATIONAL LAND NEARBY, AND
- (ii) THE RECREATIONAL USE OF THE LAND IS LIMITED.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.45 This policy will cover the Borough's informal open spaces such as parks/gardens, Common Land, River Parks, the Basingstoke Canal as well as the network of footpaths, bridleways and opportunities for informal recreation including angling and cycling. Common Land is identified on the Proposals Map for information.
- 9.46 The loss of land in informal recreational use will not be permitted where there is no alternative provision of equal or better quality within reasonable walking distance. The Council will also only consider granting permission for proposals on land which is not used regularly by a significant number of people for informal recreational purposes.
- 9.47 REC4 deals with sites which specifically have informal recreational value, whereas land protected by policy BE7 irrespective of any recreational value it may have, contributes towards the character and visual amenity of the area in its own right.
- 9.48 Such informal recreational opportunities are a valuable asset to the Borough and offer the chance for people to take part in informal pursuits such as a simple walk in rural surroundings in close proximity to the urban area. It is important that development does not result in the loss of such land or put in jeopardy its continued informal recreational use. The improvement of informal outdoor recreational opportunities is actively pursued in the Countryside Strategy. Sites in informal recreational use are often of nature conservation value and in these cases will also be subject to policies NE1, NE2, NE3 or NE6.

REC5 ÿ NEW RECREATIONAL/ARTS DEVELOPMENT

NEW PROVISION AND/OR EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS FOR SPORTING, LEISURE AND ARTS FACILITIES WITHIN THE URBAN AREA WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED :-

- (i) THE PROPOSAL WOULD BE OF A SCALE AND CHARACTER APPROPRIATE TO THE AREA AND
- (ii) THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT GIVE RISE TO LOSS OF AMENITY AND
- (iii) SATISFACTORY PROVISION IS MADE FOR ACCESS AND PARKING AND
- (iv) TRAFFIC GENERATED CAN BE SATISFACTORILY ACCOMMODATED ON THE SURROUNDING ROAD NETWORK AND
- (v) NEW BUILDINGS ATTRACTING A LARGE NUMBER OF VISITORS ARE APPROPRIATELY LOCATED WITHIN EXISTING CENTRES AND ARE HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE BY MEANS OTHER THAN PRIVATE TRANSPORT AND
- (vi) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF LAND PROTECTED BY OTHER POLICIES IN THIS PLAN.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.49 The Council recognises the important part that sporting, leisure and arts facilities can play in peoples lives, the significant role they have in bringing vibrancy to places and their valuable economic role attracting visitors to the Borough.
- 9.50 Major proposals covered by this policy will include such uses as cinemas, leisure complexes, museums and places of entertainment which will generally be best suited to highly accessible locations where they will complement existing uses and not give rise to loss of amenity. Woking town centre is the most appropriate location for such uses although other larger village centres may also be able to accommodate proposals provided they are of an appropriate scale. Further guidance can be found in Chapter 12 - Woking Town Centre and Chapter 13 - Village Centres.
- 9.51 This policy also covers many existing buildings in use for sporting, leisure or cultural activities which may wish to extend and whilst the Council will not seek to restrict such proposals they will be carefully examined to ensure that there is no resultant loss of amenity or traffic problems. All proposals whether new or extensions will be expected to be of a high standard of design and comply with policy BE1.
- 9.52 The Council will also encourage the community use of school facilities so that they are made available for public use outside normal school hours. Agreements for formal community use have been negotiated at Winston Churchill School, Monument Hill School and Horsell High School and further

arrangements will be sought following consultation with Surrey County Council. Proposals for built recreational facilities in the Green Belt will be considered against policies GRB1, GBR2 and GRB3.

- 9.53 In the case of Woking Football Club proposals for additional facilities at the football ground may be permitted subject to the compliance with the above criteria.

REC6 Ȳ LOSS OF BUILDINGS IN RECREATIONAL USE

THE LOSS OF BUILDINGS IN FORMAL RECREATIONAL USE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA IS SATISFIED -

- (i) THERE IS NO LONGER A DEMONSTRABLE NEED FOR THE FACILITY OR,
- (ii) SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IS ALREADY LOCATED NEARBY OR,
- (iii) ALTERNATIVE AND EQUIVALENT PROVISION IS MADE AVAILABLE NEARBY.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.54 In order to meet the recreational needs of the Borough it is essential that the existing provision of buildings available for formal recreational use is maintained. Recreational needs are catered for in a variety of buildings and on a variety of sites in both public and private ownership and are spread throughout the Borough, mainly within the urban area, where they are accessible to the population.
- 9.55 Built recreational facilities fulfil an important role providing the location for participation in sport in specially constructed facilities which can range from public and private sports centres to clubhouses and pavilions. The Council will be particularly vigilant resisting the loss of buildings which would reduce the recreational potential of the associated land, examples would include the loss of changing facilities or a pavilion available for spectators.
- 9.56 In certain circumstances a building put to recreational use may no longer be required for that purpose and an alternative use sought. In such cases the Council will critically examine the proposal to determine whether there is a continued need for the facility. Where the development would involve the relocation of a building the Council will take into account the proposed location of the replacement as well as the users of the building. For instance it would not be acceptable to relocate a building well used by the local community to a distant site whereas this may be appropriate if the building were used by a club whose members travel from throughout the Borough. Where built recreational facilities are located within the Green Belt proposals

will be subject to policies GRB1, GRB2 and GRB3 and where located on urban open space subject to policy BE7.

REC7 Ý INTENSIFICATION OF USE OF LAND IN FORMAL RECREATIONAL USE.

THE COUNCIL WILL PERMIT PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE INCREASED USE OF EXISTING FORMAL OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL LAND PROVIDED THERE WOULD BE NO MATERIAL ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT OR AMENITY IN RELATION TO :-

- (i) NOISE GENERATION;
- (ii) LIGHT POLLUTION;
- (iii) ON AND OFF-STREET PARKING;
- (iv) TRAFFIC GENERATION;
- (v) CHARACTER OF THE AREA;
- (vi) TREES AND FEATURES OF ECOLOGICAL INTEREST
- (vii) THE OPEN CHARACTER OF SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

JUSTIFICATION

9.57 This policy deals with the intensification of use of existing land in formal recreational use such as pitches, courts and athletics tracks. Whilst other policies in this Chapter generally support the recreational use of land the Council recognises that the intensive use of recreation facilities may give rise to some disturbance, especially if the use is in close proximity to residential uses. Changing demands in recreational requirements with regard to times of participation and surfaces on which to play often mean there is a need to use facilities more intensively, perhaps during the hours of darkness which will necessitate the use of floodlighting. Where the intensification requires new or extended buildings these will be subject to policy REC5.

9.58 Whilst most recreational uses can be compatible with their surroundings this policy will ensure that amenity is protected and, if necessary, the Council will attach conditions to control the use. Proposals for noisy activities and golf courses are covered by policies REC9 and REC10 within this Chapter. Where intensification is proposed within the Green Belt, the Green Belt policies will be strictly applied.

REC8 Y HORSE KEEPING AND RIDING FACILITIES

THE FORMATION OF, OR EXTENSION TO, HORSE RELATED FACILITIES WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT THEY MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA :-

- (i) THE BUILDINGS ARE OF AN APPROPRIATE DESIGN AND SCALE.
- (ii) THERE IS NO ADVERSE VISUAL IMPACT.
- (iii) THERE IS NO DAMAGE TO SENSITIVE WILDLIFE HABITATS.
- (iv) THE PROPOSAL IS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO BRIDLEWAYS.
- (v) THE USE DOES NOT GENERATE UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITY OR GIVE RISE TO LOSS OF AMENITY.
- (vi) THERE IS SUFFICIENT GRAZING LAND AVAILABLE.
- (vii) THE PROPOSAL COMPLIES WITH POLICY GRB5

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.59 The keeping and riding of horses is increasingly popular and it is necessary to ensure facilities are provided in a way which protects the environment. As the Borough of Woking is surrounded by Green Belt the vast majority of proposals for horse related activities fall within this area, often on land in agricultural use. Whilst the erection of appropriately sized stables which are ancillary to the open use of the land can be regarded as an appropriate use in the Green Belt *in principle* it is essential that proposals do not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt and do not result in the loss of high grade agricultural land. Policies GRB1, GRB2 and GRB5 provide the appropriate guidance.
- 9.60 Horse related facilities include stables, shelters and other structures including fencing and jumps which can have a significant impact upon an area, particularly if located in open countryside. Careful consideration will need to be given to the location and design of buildings to ensure they blend in with their surroundings, cumulatively do not erode its character and are necessary to support the enterprise. Proposals to re-use existing buildings will be encouraged, particularly if the proposal is located within the Green Belt. Policy GRB3 provides the appropriate guidance.
- 9.61 The level of activity generated by a stable is also an important consideration and can include the general activity of the comings and goings of owners and visitors as well as the actual riding of horses. The level of activity is dependant upon the type of stabling proposed; some stabling for private use can generate little activity whereas larger commercial uses where there are a large number of horses which may be used by different riders can generate significant activity.
- 9.62 The riding of horses can result in the degradation of the surrounding land, particularly if there are no bridleways in close proximity which can result in conflict with other users of the countryside and the comings and goings of visitors and owners can result in loss of amenity and may be incompatible with the surroundings. Where the Council is concerned that loss of amenity or

degradation of the surrounding land may result it will attach conditions to control the type of use permitted. This is particularly important where the proposal is located in an area of sensitive wildlife value subject to policy NE1, NE2 and NE3. When considering planning applications for horse related development the Council will expect proposals to follow the recommended standards for the safety and comfort of horses and the amount of grazing land.

REC9 Ľ GOLF DEVELOPMENT

THE COUNCIL WILL ONLY PERMIT PROPOSALS FOR NEW GOLF COURSES AND EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING GOLF COURSES WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE PROPOSAL :-

- (ii) WOULD NOT ERODE THE OPEN CHARACTER NOR INJURE THE VISUAL AMENITY OF THE GREEN BELT AND;
- (iii) WOULD NOT HARM SENSITIVE WILDLIFE SITES AND;
- (iv) PRESERVES AND RESPECTS IMPORTANT NATURAL FEATURES AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE LANDSCAPE INCLUDING TREES AND WATER FEATURES AND;
- (v) PRESERVES AND ENCOURAGES ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AND;
- (vi) PROVIDES SUITABLE ACCESS AND PARKING ARRANGEMENTS AND;
- (vii) COMPLIES WITH POLICY GRB5 AND,
- (viii) DOES NOT HARM SITES OF HISTORIC VALUE AND,
- (ix) ONLY INCLUDES BUILDINGS WHICH ARE GENUINELY ANCILLARY AND WHICH ARE SITED SO AS TO AVOID DAMAGE TO THE OPEN CHARACTER OF THE AREA AND MINIMISE NOISE AND DISTURBANCE TO RESIDENTS. THE RE USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS WILL BE ENCOURAGED AND,
- (x) DOES NOT RESULT IN CUMULATIVE IMPACT UPON THE LANDSCAPE.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.63 The Council has prepared supplementary planning guidance for assessing golf course proposals. New golf courses and extensions to existing golf courses will be expected to conform with the guidance.
- 9.64 The Borough of Woking contains ten golf courses, one of which is public and located at Hoebridge, Old Woking. Golf is recognised as a sport that is consistent with maintaining the open nature of the countryside and can therefore be acceptable in the Green Belt. However, golf courses require extensive areas of land and careful assessment is required to ensure their acceptability in terms of impact upon the landscape, wildlife habitats, rights of way, historic features such as Listed Buildings and archaeological sites and agricultural land.

- 9.65 Extensive earthworks should be avoided and courses should seek to reflect the nature, character and diversity of the local landscape, particularly in areas designated as canal and river corridors (Policy NE6) or escarpments and rising ground of landscape importance (Policy NE7). In addition courses will be carefully considered within or affecting sensitive nature conservation sites to ensure no material harm occurs. (Policies NE1, NE2 & NE3). The impact of courses is also an important consideration where courses are proposed in close proximity to one another which cumulatively may result in a change in the character of the landscape. The implementation of a landscaping plan supported by an agreed management plan can be an important method of mitigating any impact.
- 9.66 Clubhouses should be designed to provide ancillary facilities for golfers. Whilst buildings may include a bar and refreshment facilities, such areas will be critically examined to ensure they are kept to the minimum necessary for the reasonable use of golfers. Conditions will be attached to control the use of such facilities by non-golfers. The re use of existing buildings will be encouraged in accordance with policy GRB3.
- 9.67 Proposals will be expected to comply with other policies in this Plan, in particular policies REC11 and REC13 which seek to ensure that opportunities are taken to protect and enhance the public rights of way network to improve access to the countryside. The Council may seek the provision of parking and improved signing for users of public rights of way in conjunction with the development of the golf course.

REC10 NOISY AND DISRUPTIVE ACTIVITIES

THE TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT USE OF SITES FOR NOISY SPORTS, ADVENTURE GAMES OR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON :-

- (i) NEARBY OCCUPIERS WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON NOISE DISTURBANCE, LIGHT POLLUTION AND VISUAL INTRUSION AND
- (ii) OTHER LEISURE USES BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL; AND
- (iii) THE AREA BY WAY OF TRAFFIC GENERATION, PARKING AND ACCESS REQUIREMENTS AND
- (iv) THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION.

IN APPROPRIATE CASES THE COUNCIL WILL ATTACH SUITABLE CONDITIONS TO RESTRICT TIMES AND FREQUENCY OF USE.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.68 Whilst leisure proposals will generally be encouraged within the Borough certain types of sport may give rise to conflict with neighbouring uses (especially residential uses) or be incompatible with their surroundings. Such sports can include motor sports, war games, clay pigeon shooting and water sports such as water skiing and power boating. Such uses will not necessarily be rejected. However, each will need to be considered carefully against the above criteria and subject to the use of proper controls and codes of practice can be acceptable.
- 9.69 Leisure activities can also give rise to loss of amenity because of the vehicular traffic generated. The Council will give careful consideration to the level of traffic generated and its impact upon amenity and the surrounding road network. Particular care will need to be taken to ensure that parking arrangements are acceptable and suitably located. In certain circumstances a particular leisure use may be considered acceptable but controls needed to avoid conflict with other policies in this plan, where appropriate the Council will attach conditions to control the use.
- 9.70 Some leisure activities, because of their nature, may require large sites located within the countryside. Special attention will be given to the impact of such uses upon the countryside, especially if the site has a nature conservation or other recreational value. Policies GRB1, NE1, NE2, NE3 and REC4 provide the appropriate guidance.
- 9.71 Whilst this policy is not concerned with the use of sports pitches and playing fields the use of such facilities can also cause disturbance dependant on the level of activity, times of use, spectators attracted and level of floodlighting. Policy REC7 provides the appropriate guidance against which to assess proposals for the intensification of such uses.

REC11 IMPROVED INFORMAL RECREATION PROVISION

WHERE APPROPRIATE THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE PROPOSALS WHICH ENHANCE INFORMAL RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OR WHICH ENABLE AREAS TO BE BROUGHT INTO INFORMAL RECREATIONAL USE.

PRIORITIES WILL INCLUDE :-

- (i) IMPROVING PUBLIC ACCESS FOR ALL.
- (ii) PROVISION OF VISITOR FACILITIES WHERE APPROPRIATE.
- (iii) PROVIDING SIGNING AND INFORMATION FOR VISITORS.
- (iv) PROVISION OF LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.72 This policy, in common with the Countryside Strategy, seeks to improve the informal recreational opportunities within Woking for the benefit of residents

and visitors alike. Such informal opportunities will include stimulating the use of underused facilities including footpaths, river and canal corridors and the improved use of Common Land. The Countryside Strategy includes projects to improve visitors' awareness by the provision of signing and interpretative leaflets.

- 9.73 Many proposals, especially major outdoor recreational uses in the countryside, such as golf courses, offer the opportunity to enhance existing informal recreational facilities. This may be achieved by providing signing, improving access especially for people with disabilities, undertaking appropriate management regimes or providing visitor facilities such as car parking and toilets. Such proposals may also allow new areas of land to be brought into informal recreational use, such as the provision of footpaths or extending existing land in informal use. Such enhancements may be achieved as part of planning proposals or may be subject to a planning obligation. Sites in informal recreational use are often of nature conservation value and will also be subject to policies NE1, NE2 and NE3.

REC12 Ÿ ALLOTMENTS

PROPOSALS WHICH INVOLVE THE LOSS OF ALLOTMENT LAND WILL NORMALLY BE RESISTED EXCEPT WHERE :-

- (i) THE COUNCIL IS SATISFIED THAT THE ALLOTMENTS ARE GENUINELY REDUNDANT OR;
- (ii) ALTERNATIVE AND SUITABLE PROVISION IS MADE AVAILABLE.

THE PROVISION OF NEW ALLOTMENTS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THEY ARE APPROPRIATELY SCREENED, PROVIDE SUFFICIENT CAR PARKING AND DO NOT CONFLICT WITH OTHER POLICIES IN THIS PLAN.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.74 Allotments provide a valuable opportunity for gardening and may represent the only alternative for those without their own gardens. Within the Borough of Woking there are nine public allotment sites varying in size from 0.81 ha (2 acres) to over 2.43 hectares (6 acres). The total acreage of allotment land in the Borough in January 1994 was 15 ha (37.07 acres) [MR 1/95 - Allotments].
- 9.75 The existing provision is slightly below the Thorpe Committee recommended standard of 0.2 ha (0.5 acres) per 1000 people (Ministry of Agriculture 1969) at 0.17 ha (0.427 acres) per 1000 persons. Regular monitoring of the vacancy rate at allotment sites shows that in general they are well used and the number of vacant plots low. In order to maintain the provision in line with the Thorpe Committee the Council will resist the loss of allotment land to alternative uses unless one of the above criteria is met.

- 9.76 The provision of new allotments will be supported but can often have a significant impact on the character, landscape or historic value of an area, particularly as there can often be a proliferation of associated structures and gardening paraphernalia. Where there is no conflict with other policies in this plan new allotments will require appropriate screening and the Council will consider attaching conditions to prevent the erection of structures.

REC13 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

THE COUNCIL WILL SUPPORT THE CREATION, MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH PROVIDED THERE WOULD BE NO HARM TO THE AMENITY AND ECOLOGY OF THE SURROUNDING AREA.

DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING LARGE AREAS OF COUNTRYSIDE WILL BE REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT ACCOUNT HAS BEEN TAKEN OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING PUBLIC ACCESS.

THE LOSS OR SEVERANCE OF EXISTING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY WILL BE RESISTED UNLESS SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IS MADE.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.77 Public rights of way offer excellent opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside and are important links between different locations to encourage walking and cycling rather than using other means of transport, particularly private cars.
- 9.78 The Borough has a good network of footpaths although opportunities exist for improvement by extending existing routes especially where they will join with other footpaths or form circular routes. The bridleway network in Woking is less comprehensive with a lack of linkages and large areas uncovered, the result can be conflict with riders using footpaths or other undesignated paths with consequent damage or erosion.
- 9.79 Many developments offer the opportunity to enhance the existing networks, perhaps by providing signs, gates or undertaking to maintain routes or by extending the network by providing new public rights of way such as footpaths, bridleways or permissive riding routes and designated cycle routes. New provision should be suitably located, safe and avoid conflict with other users and neighbouring uses. Policy REC9 identifies golf course developments as an opportunity to enhance public rights of way. In some instances a new development may result in the severance or re routing of a public right of way.

In such circumstances suitable alternative provision will need to be made. The extensive diversion of well used routes will rarely be acceptable.

REC14Ÿ RECREATIONAL USE OF RIVER VALLEYS

A ROUTE IS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP TO ENABLE THE COUNCIL TO WORK TOWARD THE EXTENSION OF THE HOE VALLEY RIVER PARK SOUTH OF MAYFORD AND EAST OF HOE BRIDGE TO FORM LINKS WITH THE WEY NAVIGATION AND OTHER FOOTPATHS/ BRIDLEWAYS.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.80 River valleys offer considerable opportunities for enhanced recreation and have a unique amenity providing scope for informal pursuits such as walking, cycling, angling and relaxation for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.
- 9.81 The Hoe Valley passes through the Borough and links the town to the Countryside and represents a valuable amenity for both recreation and wildlife. The Council has successfully implemented part of the River Park between Hoe Bridge in the East and Mayford Bridge in the South and a Management Plan has been prepared.
- 9.82 This policy identifies a route on the Proposals Map to the south and east of the Hoe Valley River Park where a footpath and/or bridleway may be provided to create a route along the entire length of the Hoe within the Borough. The Council will implement this route by negotiating with land owners, securing access as part of planning applications or, in appropriate cases the acquisition of land. As the area where the proposed route falls within the open countryside and is subject to Green Belt policies the recreational use should be low key and informal such as footpaths to link with those existing, signing and improved access. The creation of the route will need to be carefully designed to ensure that the environment and wildlife interests of the Hoe Valley are protected (see Policy NE6).
- 9.83 The River Wey and Wey Navigation pass through the South and East of the Borough, forming the Borough boundary in places. The Wey Navigation is owned and managed by the National Trust. The capacity for increased recreational use of the Wey and Wey Navigation is more limited and the Council's objective will primarily be to maintain and improve existing public access and work together with the National Trust to maintain the quality of the water course and resist damaging development. The area to the east of Old Woking adjoining the River Wey is within the area of the proposed Woking Palace County Park (Policy REC17) and facilities associated with the works to Woking Old Palace detailed in policy BE15. Where appropriate the Council will reach agreement with land owners and seek the acceptance of planning obligations to secure access.
- 9.84 The routes are shown on Proposal Sites 11R & 15R.

REC15 Y BASINGSTOKE CANAL

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO MAXIMISE THE RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL AND WILL PERMIT RECREATION AND LEISURE USES WHICH RESPECT THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE CANAL AND ADJOINING AREAS.

THE FOLLOWING FACILITIES IN RELATION TO THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL WILL BE GIVEN POSITIVE CONSIDERATION AND ARE IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP :-

- § PUBLIC SLIPWAY AND CAR PARK AT BOUNDARY ROAD COMMON.
- § MOORINGS AND PICNIC AREA AT BOUNDARY ROAD COMMON.
- § CANALSIDE COUNTRY PARK AT BROOKWOOD HOSPITAL.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.85 The Basingstoke Canal is an important feature of Woking acting as a strategic footpath link contributing significantly to the Borough's townscape as well as the recreational needs of its residents. The canal is now fully restored throughout the majority of its length and to realise its recreational potential the Council commissioned a study in 1991 to investigate the enhancement of the canal. [Basingstoke Canal through Woking]
- 9.86 The Canal has the potential to be a thriving waterway capitalising upon its historic roots and catering for such recreational uses as pleasure and narrow boating, angling and walking as well as acting as a focus for new developments within the town centre which will increase vitality and attract visitors. Further proposals within the town centre are discussed in Chapter 12 - Woking Town Centre.
- 9.87 Outside the town centre the canal passes through the urban area as well as tracts of open countryside; recreational and leisure uses within these areas will generally be encouraged but should respect the canals environment and setting including its conservation area designation throughout its length in Woking and the status of part of it as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Proposals will also be assessed against policies NE1, NE3, NE6, BE7, BE8 and BE9.
- 9.88 Where development proposals directly adjoin the Canal or are in close proximity to it the Council will seek to ensure that they are designed so that they take advantage of the opportunity to capitalise upon the setting and to relate to the Canal rather than turn their back on it. This will include careful design which makes a positive contribution to enhancing the Canal and including, in appropriate cases, the provision of canalside enhancements such as

mooring facilities or landscaping. The areas of open space in close proximity to the Canal are often of significant townscape value and are identified on the Proposals Map and protected under policy BE7.

- 9.89 Certain facilities and improvements have been identified which would make significant improvements to the environment and recreational potential of the Basingstoke Canal and are listed above. Boundary Road Common is an area of Common Land adjoining the Canal and in close proximity to the town centre. It contains an existing slipway and has recently been planted with trees to improve the environment. Further improvements to provide better access, parking facilities, a replacement permanent slipway as well as a picnic area would be a significant improvement (Proposal Site 24R). The proposal for a Country Park at Brookwood is set out in detail in Policy REC16 (Proposal Site 10R).

REC16 Y BROOKWOOD CANALSIDE COUNTRY PARK

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF A CANALSIDE COUNTRY PARK AND OTHER RELATED FACILITIES ON LAND NORTH OF THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL, AS SHOWN ON PROPOSALS MAP.

FACILITIES MAY INCLUDE :-

- § BOAT HIRE CENTRE
- § PUBLIC SLIPWAY
- § MOORING FACILITIES
- § CANALSIDE VISITOR FACILITIES
- § CAR PARKING
- § IMPROVED ACCESS
- § FORMAL/INFORMAL RECREATIONAL AREA(S)
- § ENHANCED NATURE CONSERVATION FEATURES.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.90 This proposal stems from a commitment in the 1993 Local Plan to designate an area for informal countryside recreation in Brookwood based around the Basingstoke Canal. The site previously identified comprised some 20 hectares of land to the North of the canal. The current proposal is to create a Country Park on an extended area which includes land to the West of Bagshot Road, bringing the total area to 44.5 hectares. The extent of the site is shown on the Proposals Map.
- 9.91 The site has an attractive rural character and is the first significant area of countryside the canal passes through from its junction with the Wey Navigation and includes a number of important features including the old flash pond and water meadows stretching up to a small wooded knoll known as The Mount. The potential of this site for recreational uses was also recognised in the study

of the canal which the Council commissioned in 1991 [Basingstoke Canal through Woking]. The Council will undertake a feasibility study to establish the extent, nature and location of the facilities within the Country park. Detailed proposals will be made available for public consultation. The feasibility study will include the aim of trying to retain and not build on Grade 3A agricultural land. It will also consider the potential for inclusion of land to the north which is in the ownership of SSAFA.

- 9.92 The provision of a Country Park in this location would realise a number of significant benefits. It would serve the existing local population as well as providing open space for the projected increase in population when the housing developments at Brookwood Hospital are complete. It would also help meet local deficiencies in informal open space identified in the Countryside Strategy. The site will attract visitors from a much wider area thereby meeting leisure demands as well as stimulating interest in the Canal.
- 9.93 The site lies within the Green Belt, is adjacent to the Basingstoke Canal conservation area and SSSI and is also an important wildlife habitat itself. The creation of a Country Park is not at odds with these designations but necessitates careful design and access arrangements to ensure that valuable wildlife interests are not damaged. The Country Park will also give the opportunity to enhance and expand the nature conservation role of the site through sensitive management and new landscaping.
- 9.94 Along the canal frontage there is an opportunity to provide a range of facilities to encourage the recreational use of the canal and stimulate interest. Elsewhere land may be used for formal and informal pursuits including cycling, angling, picnic areas, walking and nature trails (Proposal Site 10R).

REC17 WOKING PALACE COUNTRY PARK

LAND FOCUSED ON WOKING PALACE ANCIENT MONUMENT IS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP TO ALLOW THE PROVISION OF A COUNTRY PARK.

JUSTIFICATION

- 9.95 Woking Palace is an ancient monument and historically important as a royal palace during the medieval and post medieval period notably in connection with Edward III and Henry VIII. In September 1994 the Council adopted a strategy for the long term conservation, repair and public presentation of the monument. However, progress in achieving its aims have been frustrated by the inability to secure full public access to the monument.
- 9.96 The development of a Country Park, as identified on the Proposals Map is intended to secure the aim of making the monument fully accessible and protect its setting in the wider landscape. The site extends to some 56 ha (135 acres) and offers considerable opportunity for a range of low key leisure, recreation and heritage uses. There is also scope to enhance the nature

conservation value of the site. Much of the area designated is believed to have formed part of the historic grounds of the Palace and may have considerable archaeological significance.

- 9.97 The proposed Country Park will focus upon the historic potential offered by the ancient monument by providing an enhanced setting with site interpretation, presentation of the historic remains, landscaped car parking and footpath links to enable full public access. Regardless of ownership, the 18.5 ha (45.7 acres) of Grade 2 and 3A agricultural land (north of footpath 61) within the proposed Country Park is to be retained in agricultural use as far as possible during the lifetime of this plan. However, there will be the opportunity for additional footpath creation to improve the links between Woking Palace and the Hoe Stream and along the Hoe Stream, and possibly access to and/or the provision of a small informal car park.
- 9.98 The provision of the Country Park will also enable the achievement of other proposals in this Plan. The Country Park includes land identified on the Proposals Map for an extension to the Hoe Valley River Park (Policy REC14). The proposed Country Park will enable this proposal to be brought to fruition and enhance the footpath links in the vicinity to provide circular routes. In addition opportunity will be taken to enhance the nature conservation value of the site adjoining the valleys of the Hoe and Wey.
- 9.99 Any proposals for the various uses within the Country Park will be expected to comply with other policies within this plan and pay particular attention to its Green Belt status, the setting and nature conservation interests of the River Wey and Hoe Stream (Policy NE2 and NE6) and the setting of the ancient monument (Policy BE15). Archaeological assessment of the entire site will be required under Policy BE16 prior to any development. Proposals for intensive recreational uses, associated buildings and car parking are unlikely to be acceptable where they would adversely affect the setting of the ancient monument or the environment of watercourses. In the event that built visitor facilities are considered appropriate these will need to be strictly limited and small scale. Such facilities would also be unlikely to be acceptable near to the monument.
- 9.100 The Council will seek to secure the acquisition of the necessary land for the Country Park through negotiation. However, the use of compulsory purchase powers will be considered if necessary (Proposal Site 14R).