

## **GREEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

*'Green space is a vital part of the public realm. Attractive, safe and accessible parks and green spaces contribute positive social, economic and environmental benefits, improving public health, well-being and quality of life.'*

(Green Space Strategies; A Good Practice Guide; Cabe Space May 2004)

*'Over 30 million people in England use parks and open spaces, nearly 70% use them frequently, many go every day (and most on foot).'*

(Green Spaces, Better Places; DTLR 2003)

### **1.0 National Picture**

1.1 Public parks and green spaces have received renewed attention in the last decade as awareness of how such spaces can contribute towards quality of life has grown. In response to concerns in some areas of the country about the state of our public spaces and the rise in graffiti, vandalism and neglect, the government commissioned a report by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce in 2002 to show how these concerns should be addressed and to demonstrate how parks and green spaces could play their full role in contributing towards sustainable communities.

1.2 The final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce 'Green Spaces, Better Places' 2003, identified the importance of parks and green spaces in urban regeneration and economic growth, in contributing towards healthy living, developing stronger communities, encouraging education and lifelong learning, supporting environmental sustainability and contributing towards heritage and culture.

1.3 The report made recommendations which sought to reverse the decline in urban parks, including development of a new strategic policy framework, provision of additional funding and the establishment of a new national agency to champion and to advise on urban parks. The report also identified the need for community involvement and partnership working to deliver the benefits of improved green spaces. Following the report, a number of measures were put in place and recommendations made to ensure that the importance of green spaces was recognised as a key component in the development of more sustainable communities. These initiatives included:-

- The Establishment of Cabe Space in 2003, a national body which champions and advises on Green Spaces.
- A substantial programme of funding for parks and Open Spaces through the New Opportunities Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- A recommendation from Cabe Space that local authorities develop green space strategies integrated with other local and national strategies including

Community Strategies and the work of Local Strategic Partnerships. A recommendation that these strategies aim to ensure the delivery of open space which is high quality, accessible and adequate to meet the needs of communities.

- A recommendation that local authorities to develop performance indicators and clearly identifiable standards (such as Green Flag) for green spaces.
- The inclusion of Public Space as a key indicator in Comprehensive Performance Assessments for Local Authorities.

1.4 Cobe Space published a best practice guide in 2004 for developing green space strategies; 'Green Space Strategies; A Good Practice Guide'. The guidance draws on the principles of the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and these principles form the basis of the development plan which follows. The development plan is also integrated with the Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy in line with the recommendation of Cobe Space.

## **2.0 Regional and County Picture**

2.1 The Government Office for the South East sees the provision of parks for families and young people as key towards the development of sustainable communities. The Government's initiatives for building sustainable communities led to the launch of the document 'Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future' in February 2003 along with a funding programme of £201 million for parks and open spaces. The enhancement of the use of green spaces is seen as a key part of building sustainable communities in making the public realm cleaner, greener and safer.

2.2 The Government Office for the South East is seen as instrumental in delivering these initiatives and has developed programmes to improve safety and accessibility in cemeteries, create better youth facilities in parks and to enhance urban streetscapes.

2.3 At a County Level, Surrey County Council has recognised the importance of Green Spaces in the delivery of its Cultural Strategy 'More to Life'. The substantial network of green spaces available across the county is seen as of particular significance against the challenges posed by urbanisation and population growth. Within the strategy the need to ensure that there is access to green spaces for sport and recreation and the need to recognise the intrinsic landscape, heritage and wildlife value of green spaces is acknowledged and action plans to address these issues are in place.

2.4 An important document relating to protecting and enhancing the flora and fauna of the Borough's Green Spaces is the Surrey Biodiversity Action Plan (Surrey BAP). Written by a team of ecologists from organisations including English Nature, Environment Agency, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council, the Plan seeks to conserve the biological diversity of

Surrey and contribute to conserving and enhancing both national and international biodiversity.

- 2.5 The Surrey BAP contains plans for specific habitats including urban areas and the infrastructure which it encompasses. As such, for a relatively urban Borough like Woking, the Surrey Urban Biodiversity Action Plan in particular, provides a key framework document in the strategic provision and management of Green Spaces at a County level. The plan recognises that the importance of green spaces to local communities in Surrey given that the majority of the population lives in the north of the county, which is very urbanised, and the pressures created by the county's proximity to London.
- 2.6 The plan, drawn up in 1994 identifies those actions which conservation bodies, landowners, local authorities, businesses, local communities and everyone interested in wildlife needs to take 'to safeguard and enhance the biodiversity found where people live and in doing so improve the quality of peoples lives through contact with, appreciation of, and involvement in nature conservation.' A Surrey Urban Biodiversity Project was set up in 2001 to implement and monitor the actions of the Surrey Urban Biodiversity Action Plan which is currently under review.
- 2.7 Other plans including the Lowland Heathland, Meadows and Woodlands Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) have relevance to the provision, protection and management of informal green spaces within the Borough.
- 2.8 The designation of The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) in 2005 has particular significance for Woking in that the whole of the Borough is affected by the Habitat Regulations associated with this designation. These regulations put a particular obligation on local authorities to ensure that new residential development does not adversely affect the Special Protection Areas. These heathland sites support internationally rare bird species which are particularly sensitive to disturbance by people, cats and dogs. The implication of these regulations in Woking is that either additional sites will need to be brought into use to avoid the additional impact on the Special Protection Area created by new residential development, or improvements to existing alternative sites will need to be made which improve public access and encourage greater use. An interim strategy for dealing with residential planning applications has been approved by the Council in advance of English Nature's Delivery Plan which will need to be adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 2.9 The Surrey Football Partnership's Football Facilities Strategy sets out the direction and priorities for investment in Football up to 2006. Funding for investment is available through the Football Foundation and the strategy enables the partnership to work with the Foundation to prioritise investment. The strategy has identified the need for additional junior facilities in several parts of the county including Woking, and across the county the need to invest in artificial pitches, to gain access to more school pitches and the need for more multi-use and five a-side areas. A strategy review is to take place in 2006 and there will be an opportunity for Woking's Green Spaces Development Plan to influence this strategy.

### 3.0 Local Picture

- 3.1 The strategies which influence green spaces at a local level are The Woking Borough Local Plan, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, The Community Strategy for Woking and the Woking Cultural Strategy. The Council's Countryside Strategy also has relevance to the protection and management of green spaces within the Borough. (It should be noted that the Green Spaces Development Plan and The Local Development Framework Core Strategy are linked in that some of the base information used to develop the Core Strategy (the ppg 17 audit) is the same as that used to inform the Green Spaces strategy. The Green Spaces Development Plan is also identified as the delivery mechanism for some of the policies within the Core Strategy.) These strategies have undergone extensive public consultation in their making and contain policies and objectives which reflect local priorities
- 3.2 There are a number of consistent themes running through these key documents which are relevant to green spaces and which can be summarised as follows-
- At a strategic level, the need to be able to **cope with existing and future demands** for green space and outdoor recreational facilities and the ability to **respond to issues such as climate change**.
  - The need to ensure that there is **good access to locally based green space** and outdoor recreation facilities which can support both casual use and organised programmes of activity for residents and for those who visit or work in the Borough.
  - The need to **provide opportunities for individuals and organisations to take part in activities** which develop personal health and well being, encourage community spirit, provide for life-long learning and promote Woking as an attractive place.
  - The **need for quality standards** which provide for a clean, healthy and safe environment and ensure that recreational facilities meet the standards expected by the community for formal and informal activity.
  - The **protection and enhancement of the environment** including landscapes, wildlife habitats and sites of cultural interest. The ability to balance these needs against the needs for development for more formal recreational provision.
- 3.3 An understanding of the current pattern of local provision of green space and outdoor recreational facilities in Woking was gained through three studies undertaken between 2005 and 2006.
- a) A comprehensive audit of open space, sports and recreation facilities was completed in 2005 in line with the requirements of Government Policy detailed in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17-Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17). In addition to identifying all significant open spaces across the Borough, the audit assessed the quality of each site and

included a needs assessment based on a survey of the Woking Citizen's Panel. The audit, undertaken in preparation for the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, also provides part of the evidence base for this green spaces development plan.

- b) A stock take of all leisure and recreational provision in the Borough, including local authority and private facilities, was undertaken in 2005 and this also provided valuable information towards the PPG 17 Audit.
- c) The third study completed in 2006 focused on outdoor sports pitches and was part of a wider playing pitch strategy commissioned by the Council. This study concentrated on provision for football, cricket, rugby and hockey, with a selection of other sports including athletics, basketball, tennis and bowls for less rigorous examination.

3.4 In addition, detailed habitat surveys for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and common land, are held by the Council. A Habitat Monitoring Programme with photo-monitoring points for key countryside sites is currently reviewed on a 5 yearly basis. All of these surveys give information on the quality and biodiversity interest of land within the Borough and provide key information to inform the management of green space within the Borough.

#### 4.0 Borough Profile

4.1 A profile of the Borough's Green spaces, derived from the PPG 17 Audit undertaken in 2005 is summarised in the table below. The types of open space follow the definitions and advice contained in the Cabe Space Good Practice Guide. The methodology for assessing accessibility, quality and needs are explained in more detail below.

	Type of Space	No. of Sites	Total Area	Accessibility	Quality	Needs Assessment
1	Parks and Gardens; Includes Woking Park and recreation grounds	11	47 Ha	Most areas with the exception of part of Mount Hermon East served by at least one facility.	Medium, to High.	91% say needs met
2	Natural and Semi Natural Urban Green Space; Includes Horsell Common, Prey Heath, Smarts Heath, Brookwood Lye Brookwood	49	503 Ha	All areas of Borough are in good proximity to at least one natural or semi natural open space or	Medium to High	93% say needs met

	Type of Space	No. of Sites	Total Area	Accessibility	Quality	Needs Assessment
	Country Park and Pyrford Common			area of accessible countryside.		
3	Green Corridors- Includes areas alongside Basingstoke Canal and River Wey	n/a	34 Km	No threshold	High	90% say needs met
4	Outdoor Sports Facilities; Includes private golf courses, and recreation grounds set out for sports	39	734 Ha	As parks and gardens. Separate Study undertaken	Medium to High-one site low (former Astra site)	89% say needs met
5	Amenity Green Space; Includes green spaces within housing areas and village greens.	82	41Ha	No threshold	Generally High-Medium two sites low.	87% say needs met
6	Provision for Children and Teenagers ie play areas/multi use games areas/skateparks/ youth shelters	Includes 37 play areas, 5 skate - parks 3 multi -use games areas		Urban area well served but some areas outside thresholds.	Generally Medium to High	83% say needs met
7	Allotments	9	15Ha	Uneven distribution	Generally Medium to High	78% say needs met
8	Burial Grounds and Cemeteries; Includes closed burial grounds and Brookwood Cemetery	6	148 Ha	Uneven distribution – but provision adequate given level of use	Generally High	95% say needs met

4.2 Of the 1600 Hectares of green space identified, approximately 320 Ha is owned and managed by the Borough Council. Of the remainder, 734 Ha is made up of 12 privately owned golf courses, 351 Ha of Common Land is held in private trusts and the Brookwood Cemetery accounts for a further 145 Ha. The remaining 50

Ha includes school playing fields in the ownership of Surrey County Council and areas alongside the Basingstoke Canal and River Wey.

4.3 The sites in Woking which are part of The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area are parts of Horsell Common, Sheets Heath, and Brookwood Heath. (It should be noted that, with the exception of play areas and burial grounds, the study excluded individual sites of less than 0.2 Hectares and Civic Spaces such as the Town Square).

4.4 Accessibility was assessed by reference to community needs, using the following thresholds.

Type of open space	Accessibility threshold (straight line distance)	Reason
Allotments	800m (15 mins walking)	People are expected to drive to allotments but 800m is considered a reasonable walking time to allotments
Cemeteries	Size greater than 20ha =5,000m Size less than 20ha = 800m	To reflect the more strategic role that large open spaces perform.
Children's play areas	400m	Based on the National Playing Fields Association standard
Natural/ semi natural open space	Size greater than 20ha =5000m Size 2-20ha =2000m	Based on English Nature recommendations. Reflects the more strategic role that large open spaces perform.
Outdoor sports facilities	800m (15 mins walking)	Considered a reasonable walking time
Parks/ gardens	800m (15 mins walking)	Considered a reasonable walking time
Amenity greenspace	None	Found where appropriate
Civic spaces		Found where appropriate
Green corridors		Access where feasible

4.5 Qualitative judgements were made using a standard assessment sheet used to survey the site and which set clear benchmark. Both the quality and value of sites for recreational use was assessed. In addition to this the PPG 17 audit considered the landscape and ecological quality and value of sites where appropriate.

4.6 The needs assessment was undertaken through consultation with Woking Borough Council's Citizen's Panel and is based on a 68% response rate from 1400 questionnaires. However it should be noted that this survey does not reflect fully the needs for specialised sporting activity which has been assessed through the pitch strategy work. (Further details of the methodology and results are

available on Woking Borough Council's web site at [www.woking.gov.uk/council/planning/ldf/ldfresearch/ppg17.pdf](http://www.woking.gov.uk/council/planning/ldf/ldfresearch/ppg17.pdf)

- 4.7 The study also compared open space provision within the Borough against the standards set for new development set by the Woking Borough Council 1999 Local Plan. Overall the findings were that the Borough is deficient both in sports provision and children's play provision.

	<b>Minimum requirement based on Census 2001 (ha)</b>	<b>Current provision (ha)</b>	<b>Shortfall (ha)</b>
<b>Outdoor sports facilities</b>			
Lower limit – 1.6ha	143.7	131	12.7
Upper limit – 1.8ha	161.7	131	30.7
<b>Children's play</b>			
Lower limit – 0.6ha	53.9	47.9	6
Upper limit – 0.8ha	71.9	47.9	24

- 4.8 The shortfalls in sports and play and recommendations to address these shortfalls are covered in the playing pitch strategy undertaken in 2006 and the outline play strategy approved by the Council in 2004. The key findings from these two documents have also been used to inform this Green Spaces Development Plan.

## 5.0 Key Issues and Priorities

- 5.1 A strategic vision for Green Spaces across Woking was determined following a workshop attended by key stakeholders in 2005 and further consultation. The vision is-

**'To develop a network of high quality open spaces which enhances quality of life, builds on and respects the best elements of the past, supports sustainability and biodiversity, meets the needs of residents and visitors, engenders local pride, especially amongst young people and makes the best use of land.'**

- 5.2 Steps towards achieving this vision were also identified following this workshop, these are:

- **support national, regional and local policy objectives-** i.e. strategic planning

- **address shortfalls in provision, improve accessibility and provide links between green spaces;** to ensure that green spaces contribute towards the quality of life for residents and visitors- i.e. access and participation
- **ensure that the quality of green spaces is in line with community needs** and expectations
- **enhance and conserve biodiversity and landscapes, and respect heritage**
- promote green spaces and programmes of activity - i.e. **marketing and communication**

5.3 The priorities for action for each of these steps is influenced both by external issues e.g. national and regional policies and also by internal factors i.e. needs expressed by the local community and identified shortfalls. The following part of the report considers each of the steps in more detail and identifies the key factors which determine priorities for action.

#### **Objective A -Strategic Planning**

5.4 It is essential that the management and provision of green spaces continues to develop in response to national and local policy frameworks. In addition to ensuring that there is a consistency of approach, this will assist in maximising opportunities for partnership working, funding and promotion. The Green Spaces Development Plan needs to be aligned with the objectives of The Surrey Biodiversity Action Plan and the Woking Climate Change Strategy and will also influence the Surrey County Football Strategy.

A key area is to continue to support preparation and delivery of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and ensure consistency with this strategy. The Core Strategy for the Borough sets out a vision, objectives and planning policies as a framework for how the Borough will be developed up to 2018. One of the key objectives stated within the strategy (p16) is '*A Green Borough where the countryside is never far away. Open Green Belt land is not built on unless there is no other way to deliver key priorities. Green space and wooded areas are a feature of all parts of the Borough. Plenty of open space and countryside is accessible to the public and rich in wildlife. Biodiversity and the quality of the natural environment is protected and enhanced.*'

The strategy to achieve this is

- No change to the Green Belt boundary
- No development on existing areas of public open space
- Improvements to the accessibility and attractiveness of existing public open space
- Providing new open space as part of new housing developments
- No preferred locations for development within 400 m of the Thames Basin
- Heaths Special Protection Area

- Tariff system to include the provision of mitigation against the environmental impact of development on the Special Protection Area.
- Continued protection and enhancement of biodiversity, particularly on designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

The Green Space Development Plan is identified within the Core Strategy as one of the delivery mechanisms for achieving some of these aims and the action plan therefore reflects this need.

- 5.5 The plan recognises the impact of the designation of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas (SPA) i.e. the need to reduce recreational pressure on these sites and to encourage use of alternative sites. Two alternative sites have been identified in an Interim Strategy prepared by Woking Borough Council. These sites are White Rose Lane (Hoe Valley) and Brookwood Country Park. A third site on Horsell Common is under consideration.
- 5.6 In terms of improving access to facilities by addressing shortfalls in provision, the PPG 17 audit suggests that there are some issues to be addressed in respect of-
- play areas for children and young people
  - formal sports provision
  - allotments
- 5.7 The PPG 17 report and a report to the Council's Executive in 2004 identified localised shortfalls in play provision at
- Barnsbury,
  - Goldsworth Park East,
  - Byfleet
  - Maybury
  - Pyrford Village
  - Brookwood.

These shortfalls still need to be addressed and are included in the accompanying action plan.

- 5.8 It should be recognised that further residential development in the Borough will create additional demand for play facilities and it is important that provision is made by inclusion of facilities within the new developments or through a contribution towards improvement of play provision in an appropriate location nearby. Which option is selected will depend in part on the scale and type of new development and the proximity and scale of alternative facilities.
- 5.9 A separate study of sports pitch provision has been carried out in order to establish the true nature of supply and demand and to predict future use requirements. This study has been carried out in accordance with the Sport England methodology for undertaking Pitch Strategies 'Towards a Level Playing Field'.

- 5.10 The study has reviewed quantity and quality of pitches, identifies how facilities could be improved, identifies current and projected demands, develops policy options and makes recommendations for future provision including the use of synthetic turf. The development of local standards to reflect qualitative and quantitative issues is recommended.
- 5.11 This study was carried out in 2006 and a summary of the key findings relevant to strategic planning is set out below:
- § Findings from the study suggest the provision of pitches in Woking per head of population is very low by comparison with the rest of the U.K. (1 adult pitch per 1248 people compared to 1 pitch per 951 nationally)
  - § By comparison with the recommended National Playing Field Association standards the amount of space dedicated to sports pitches in Woking is also low. (69 Ha per 1000 population compared to 1.21 Ha per 1000 population recommended \*. (see footnote); .
  - § With regard to football there is currently an estimated shortfall of some 7 junior 11 a side pitches. However if all pitches with some degree of community use on school sites is secured, there are sufficient pitches to meet current demand. By 2011 it is estimated that there will be an additional shortfall of 5 senior, 3 junior and 2 mini soccer pitches.
- 5.12 The report concludes that current and future shortfalls for soccer could be alleviated by new pitch provision at appropriate locations, improvements to existing pitches to ensure more frequent use, the scheduling of multiple games for junior and mini soccer matches on the same day and by bringing school pitches into secured community use (i.e. by negotiating agreements to guarantee use.)
- 5.13 These findings are in line with the views expressed by sports clubs consulted as part of the Leisure Stock take exercise in 2004.

\* Footnote

This shortfall is significantly higher than the shortfall identified through the PPG 17 study because a difference in approach to calculating areas of sports provision was adopted. The PPG 17 study calculation for sports provision is based on the total area of each recreation ground where sports pitches are provided. The pitch strategy calculation is based on a standard size for each pitch plus 50 % for run off and buffer zones.

5.14 The pitch strategy has identified the following school sites where it is recommended that negotiation for secured community use of soccer pitches be explored -

- |                              |                                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Broadmere School           | One Junior, Two Mini Soccer Pitches |
| • Byfleet Primary School     | Two Mini Soccer Pitches             |
| • St John the Baptist School | Two Senior/Junior Pitches           |
| • Bishop David Brown School  | Three Senior/Junior Pitches         |
| • Winston Churchill School   | One Senior/Junior Pitch             |
| • West Byfleet Junior School | Three Junior Pitches                |
| • Woking Sixth form College  | Two Senior/Junior Pitches           |

5.15 The pitch strategy has also identified the following sites where it may be possible to provide additional pitches -

- Unwin's Site, Old Woking-subject to securing land through future planning agreement-One senior pitch.
- Kings Head Lane, Byfleet (former Astra Site) subject to securing land through planning agreement - Two Junior Pitches
- St Johns Lye -subject to improved drainage and provision of pavilion- One Junior Pitch
- Goldsworth Park -subject to consultation and review of changing provision- Three Junior Pitches
- New Monument School, Maybury -subject to agreement with Surrey County Council- Two Junior Pitches
- Sussex Road Recreation Ground, Knaphill -subject to access agreement for changing provision at Knaphill Junior School ,and the school-Two Mini pitches

5.16 In the case of Sussex Road Recreation Ground there is an opportunity to explore the release of additional unused school playing field land subject to arrangements with Knaphill Junior School which requires exclusive use of a parcel of play space on the recreation ground, close to the school during breaktime.

5.17 It is proposed that a two stage approach is adopted towards tackling the shortage of soccer pitches

Phase 1 will meet the short term shortfall of 7 junior pitches and is as follows-

- Improving drainage at Sheerwater Recreation Ground to provide one junior pitch.
- Bringing unused land into use at Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground to provide two junior pitches. (subject to provision of adequate changing facilities with existing pavilion. )
- Negotiating use of changing Facilities at Knaphill Junior School and improving drainage at Sussex Road Recreation Ground to provide 2 junior pitches

- Negotiating a Secured Community Use agreement with New Monument School including access to changing facilities to provide 2 junior pitches.

Phase two, to tackle the longer term shortage of two mini pitches, three junior pitches and five adult pitches is proposed as follows-

- Provision of two mini pitches on unused land at Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground
- Provision of 2 junior pitches at the former Astra site(Kings Head Lane,Byfleet) subject to transfer of this land to the Council and construction of a new pavilion.
- Provision of One junior pitch at St Johns Lye, subject to construction of new changing facilities (possibly as part of a New Memorial Hall) and drainage of the pitch area.
- Provision of one adult pitch on the Unwins site subject to transfer to the Council
- Negotiating Secured Community Access to existing adult sized pitches at Woking College, St John the Baptist School and Bishop David Brown School (potentially up to 7 pitches in total)
- **And/Or** provide a new purpose built facility for up 5 adult pitches – preferably to the East or South of the Borough where demand is likely to be greatest.

5.18 The need for additional training facilities is also identified in the pitch strategy along with a proposal to meet the demand through a network of floodlit ‘club standard’ tarmac multi use games areas. Such areas could also meet the needs of teenagers for areas for casual ball games including 5 a side and basketball. The following sites are suggested for the development of such ‘club standard’ multi use games facilities.

- Brookwood Country Park (adjacent to existing pitches)
- Kings Head Lane (Former Astra Site, subject to transfer of the site to the Council)
- Loop Road
- Westfield Primary School (subject to agreement with school and Surrey County Council)

5.19 A network of smaller, ‘recreational standard’ floodlit multi use games is suggested to meet the demand for casual use of such facilities by the local community including teenagers. These areas could also facilitate some skills development by football clubs. The locations suggested are:

- Byfleet Recreation Ground
- West Byfleet Recreation Ground
- Queen Elizabeth Gardens Horsell
- St John’s (subject to finding suitable location)
- St Peter’s Recreation Ground
- Vyne Field
- Waterer’s Park (possible conversion of existing casual use tennis court)

- 5.20 It is also recommended that a floodlit artificial turf (3rd generation) pitch at Woking Park on the site of existing tarmac 5 a side and eight a side courts be developed in order to meet demands for matches and training.
- 5.21 The development of a network of sites with junior pitches and tarmac multi use games areas or artificial turf available for skills development would allow the opportunity for the establishment of mini-soccer centres at strategic locations and the pitch strategy suggests that the possibility of establishing such centres at the following sites be investigated-

- Loop Road
- Westfield/Woking Park
- The Vyne Field
- Kings Head Lane (Former Astra Site- subject to transfer of the site to the Council)
- Mayford Centre (subject to agreement of the landowner, Surrey County Council)

Such centres could be established in partnership with others such as those existing junior soccer clubs which are particularly active in Woking.

- 5.22 The phased sports centre proposals for the Bishop David Brown School site which include improved soccer pitch drainage, changing facilities to enable community use, and two new multi-use games areas could also provide an opportunity to develop this site as a mini soccer centre.
- 5.23 The report concludes that the demands for cricket appear to be met from the existing pitch supply subject to some qualitative improvements at existing Borough Council sites, (dealt elsewhere in the report) and the provision of new changing facilities to enable the pitch at St John's Lye to be brought back into use. The opportunity to develop New Monument School as a local site for junior cricket development, subject to access to changing facilities and a guaranteed use of the pitch is also acknowledged. The use of this field for cricket was raised as a particular need for the local community within the report of the Leisure Stocktake exercise in 2004. A further suggestion raised in the Leisure Stocktake report by the Task Group that there might be a need for a multi pitch site for cricket was not borne out by the pitch strategy survey and is therefore not included in the Action Plan.
- 5.24 With regard to rugby, again the pitch strategy advises that needs are being met. However, the report identifies the opportunity to review pitch and changing provision at Byfleet Recreation Ground when new pitches for soccer become available at the former Astra site at Kings Head Lane in Byfleet. This could enable the displacement of junior soccer to this new site, allowing further expansion of rugby facilities at Byfleet Recreation Ground. Such an expansion may require the acquisition of additional land
- 5.25 The pitch strategy notes that Woking Hockey Club, which is the main Hockey provider in the Borough, is exploring the possibility of converting one of its two

sand filled all-weather pitches to a water based pitch in order to improve playing characteristics. The knock on effect of this would be the displacement of existing soccer training which takes place at this site, as water based pitches are unsuitable for football.

- 5.26 The report concludes that the needs for bowls and athletics also appear to be met, but that there may be a need to monitor the current number of bowling greens and that consideration may need to be given in future to the replacement of grass surfaces with all weather bowling greens.
- 5.27 The pitch strategy recommends the development of a further 5 tennis courts as part of private club provision by 2011, but concludes that the number of public courts is adequate. These findings are generally in line with those of the Community Services Task Group on the Leisure Stocktake. However the Task Group suggested that access to a second court at Horsell be considered, and that this second court could also be used as a multi-use games area when not in use for tennis. This recommendation is included in the Action Plan. The Task Group also suggested that use of the casual use tennis courts at Knaphill be re-evaluated as there was concern that they were little used and that an evaluation of tennis requirements West of the Borough be undertaken as it was felt that there was a shortage in this area. Neither of these findings was borne out by the more in depth evaluations undertaken through the pitch strategy.
- 5.28 Whilst the PPG 17 Study has concluded that levels of allotment use per head of population are low relative to the use of other forms of open space, and that needs are generally being met, there is generally a high take up of plots across the Borough with the exception of sites at Byfleet and Maybury. The remainder of the Boroughs allotment sites were almost fully occupied in November 2006 (99%) with waiting lists at 7 sites. It is proposed that with the exception of allotments at Byfleet and Maybury that existing sites continue to be promoted as valuable community resources. In the case of sites to the North West of the Borough, there is some evidence that demand exceeds supply, with waiting lists at both Horsell and Knaphill. It is suggested that this position be monitored in order to determine whether further provision is necessary in future. These findings and recommendations are also in line with the findings of the Task Group on the Leisure Stocktake.

### **Objective B - Participation**

- 5.29 Key issues identified here through the PPG 17 Audit and the Council's Cultural Strategy are to increase opportunities for local communities to access and enjoy semi natural countryside and green corridors, to identify the needs of young people and to put in place programmes of activity to encourage greater use and enjoyment of all green spaces.
- 5.30 The designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) at three sites within the Borough has also led to the need to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities at other semi natural green spaces in order to reduce visitor pressure on the SPA's. A series of enhancements to Brookwood Country Park, White Rose Lane (Hoe Valley) and a part of Horsell Common is proposed in an Interim Strategy prepared by the Council in order to ensure public pressure on the SPA's is

reduced. These include arrangements to ensure there are adequate parking, signposting and way marking, improved footpaths and landscape enhancements.

- 5.31 Although the Borough is served well by linear open spaces alongside the River Wey, the Hoe Stream and the Basingstoke Canal, there is an a need to further exploit the opportunities to promote access to these spaces particularly where they link more substantial open spaces. The Borough Council in partnership with others is actively exploring projects to increase awareness and access to the River Wey and the Hoe Valley through The Wey Valley Project and the flood alleviation scheme associated with the Westfield Tip project. The Council is also working closely with the Basingstoke Canal Society and the Canal Authority to enhance access to and use of the Canal. These initiatives are aligned to the aims of the Green Spaces Development Plan and are therefore included in the accompanying action plan.
- 5.32 There are also a number of other sites which could provide opportunities for increased public access and enjoyment not specifically required to meet any SPA needs. These include areas of woodland managed by the Council which have limited access or are not promoted in any way such as the Inkerman Escarpment Woodland.
- 5.33 With regard to teenage provision, most of the improvements and initiatives to increase participation in healthy activity identified in the 1997-2002 Leisure Strategy have been completed with the exception of provision at St Johns Village, largely as a result of the lack of suitable land to develop a facility.
- 5.34 An additional network of outdoor recreation provision for young people is proposed as part of this development plan, based on an assessment of current provision and taking into account population profile of individual communities. These suggestions are in line with the recommendations of the Task Group on the Leisure Stocktake which recommended a review of facilities for youth play at Goldsworth Park, Boundary Rd. (Maybury) , Sussex Rd. (Knaphill) , West Byfleet and Pyrford in particular. These proposals have yet to be tested through consultation with residents and young people but will form part of a new play strategy for children and young people to be implemented from 2007 onwards. Priorities for investment in new provision need to take account of patterns of residential development in order to ensure that infrastructure requirements for new development are in place at an early stage i.e. before new homes are occupied.
- 5.35 Additional provision is proposed at the following sites-
- Byfleet Recreation Ground
  - West Byfleet Recreation Ground
  - Sheerwater Recreation Ground
  - Pyrford Village-(at a site to be determined)
  - Boundary Road Recreation Ground
  - Queen Elizabeth Gardens Horsell
  - Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground
  - The Vyne Field Knaphill

- Sussex Road Recreation Ground
- Brookwood Village-site to be determined
- St Johns-site to be determined
- Mayford Recreation Ground
- Bonsey Lane, Westfield
- Loop Road Recreation Ground
- St Peters Recreation Ground
- Woking Park

5.36 Types of facilities could include, Climbing Boulders, Teen Shelters, Skate Parks, Cricket Practice Nets and Fitness Equipment. At some of these sites, the network of Multi Use Games Areas identified in the Strategic Planning Section of this report would assist in meeting this need as well as the need for facilities for soccer skills training. However, it should be recognised that such facilities will need to be sited in locations where there will be good natural surveillance, but where they will not cause a nuisance to residents.

5.37 The development of green spaces as a community resource should also include measures to develop programmes of activity and facilities which have as their primary aims the promotion of the enjoyment of open spaces and the development of community spirit. Such programmes can also

- encourage healthy lifestyles, for example ,through walks, organised use of fitness equipment and trim trails, ,
- promote lifelong learning for example through talks and activities which increase understanding of the natural environment, the arts and cultural heritage.
- encourage direct involvement through volunteering and the formation of 'friends groups'
- provide diversionary activities to discourage antisocial behaviour such as coaching in skateboarding, five a side football,basketball,bmx cycling etc.

Initiatives to develop such programmes of activity are included in the Action Plan.

5.38 Levels of participation in programmes of activity and visits to Green Spaces are influenced greatly by accessibility and it is important that barriers to access are understood. These barriers may be physical, cultural or economic and an understanding of the influence of each of these needs to be gained as part of the wider marketing and communication activities covered later in the report, for example through surveys and questionnaires. However, the need to gain an understanding of the potential physical barriers through surveys is one which is included for specific action here. This understanding should be achieved through site access audits with measures identified where appropriate and practicable. The aim should be to ensure that all sectors of the community have access to a range of Green Space facilities to meet their needs. This action will build on the audits already in place for play areas and pavilions.

5.39 The availability of sufficient car parking space to cater for needs has previously been identified as an issue at three specific sites; West Byfleet Recreation Ground, Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground and Sussex Road Recreation Ground. It

is proposed that a review of parking needs be undertaken at these three sites, and where necessary options for developing new provision be developed.

#### Objective C - Quality of Provision

- 5.40 The main issues here are putting in place quality targets at key sites in order to raise and maintain standards, establishing management plans for sites which set out objectives for maintenance and development and carrying out refurbishments to key facilities including play areas and pavilions.
- 5.41 There is a need to recognise the importance of developing a consistent approach towards strategic management of green spaces which will assist in driving up standards and ensuring that these sites meet the needs of the community.
- 5.42 It is suggested that all key sites should have management plans and that measures should be put in place to enable Woking Park, Sheerwater Recreation Ground and Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground to qualify for Green Flag awards which is becoming the nationally recognised benchmark for quality of such spaces.
- 5.43 In order to achieve Green Flag Award for Woking Park it is likely that the management plan will have to show further progress is intended on the restoration scheme which was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 1997. Although much work has been undertaken since the unsuccessful bid was submitted, there are some significant areas within the historic core of the Park which still requires investment. The need to identify further funding and a programme of works to address this area to include redesign of paths and walkways, replanting and new messing and storage arrangements is proposed within the action plan. There is also a need to examine management arrangements for refreshment and games facilities including crazy golf and putting, as the quality of these facilities needs to be improved if participation is to be increased.
- 5.44 This review of refreshment facilities available at Woking Park should include an examination of whether there are opportunities in other parks and recreation grounds to secure additional income through refreshment franchises. This could include mobile facilities to serve sports fixtures.
- 5.45 Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground similarly will require evidence of an intention to invest further in new facilities in order to achieve a Green Flag Award. The need to update the children's play area is included elsewhere in this plan as is a review of pitch provision and changing accommodation. The Council is developing plans for a new centre for Woking Sea Cadets (to be relocated from their current site at Westfield Avenue) which will enable greater use of the lake for sailing and boating activity. This proposal includes measures to improve existing parking arrangements and is included as an initiative to be supported in the Action Plan. A master plan for the Recreation Ground was prepared in 1997 and much of the work identified has been undertaken with the exception of provision of public conveniences and work to develop land north of the lake as a wildlife habitat. A business case for the provision of Public Conveniences has been accepted by the Council's Executive and will be considered for funding in

2007/08. It is suggested that the remaining elements of the 1997 master plan be reviewed through the Council's Goldsworth Park Lake and Recreation Ground User Group in order to determine whether these are still required.

5.46 A survey of play provision undertaken in 2004 identified 16 sites for refurbishment, 14 of which were refurbished in 2005/06. The remaining 2 from this programme (Loop Road Recreation Ground and Bonsey Lane) and a further 11 play areas will be due for refurbishment between 2006 and 2008, with the rest of the Council's sites requiring review thereafter. The 11 play areas due for refurbishment between 2006 and 2008 are-

- Woking Park
- Goldsworth Park
- Horsell Moor
- Queen Elizabeth Gardens
- Byfleet Recreation Ground (2 Sites plus review of paddling pool provision)
- West Byfleet Recreation Ground
- Lakeside
- Oakfield
- Sutton Green
- Westfield Common

5.47 These improvements will pick up the recommendations of the Leisure Stocktake Task Group which requested a review of facilities at Queen Elizabeth Gardens and Sussex Road, Knaphill.

5.48 Although the playing pitch strategy identified that generally playing surfaces are average, the study identified a number of Council owned sports pavilions which require improvement. The need for these improvements was also a finding of the task group which undertook the Leisure Stock take in 2004. The following table sets out the position at February 2006.

	Pavilion	Condition	DDA Compliant	Potential Funding
1	Brookwood Country Park	New at 2005	Yes	None required
2	Brookwood (Sheets Heath) Recreation Ground	Requires Refurbishment/Rebuilding to meet Sport England Standards. Priority 2	No	WBC
3	Byfleet Recreation Ground	Requires Refurbishment/extension to meet Sport England Standards. Consider meeting needs for Rugby at this site Priority 2	No	Football Foundation, WBC

	Pavilion	Condition	DDA Compliant	Potential Funding
4	Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground	Requires refurbishment/extension to meet Sport England and resident club standards alongside any additional pitch provision. Priority 2	No	Football Foundation, WBC
5	St Peter's Recreation Ground	Requires rebuilding to meet Sport England Standards. To be relocated in Recreation Ground. Priority 1	No	Football Foundation, WBC
6	Sheerwater Recreation Ground	To be refurbished in 2006 Athletics pavilion condition to be reviewed.	Yes following 2006 works	WBC
7	The Vyne Field Toilets and storage only	New in 2000-needs extending to provide changing accommodation to meet Sport England Standards for mini soccer. Priority 1	No	Football Foundation, WBC, Section 106 Monies
8	Waterer's Park	Rebuilt 2005	Yes	
9	West Byfleet Recreation Ground	Requires Refurbishment to meet Sport England Standards Priority 3	No	WBC
10	Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground	To be refurbished in 2006	Yes following 2006 works	
11	Woking Park	Rebuilt 1995	No	
12	Loop Road	Requires bringing up to Football Foundation Standards. Priority 1	No	Football Foundation, WBC, Section 106 Monies
13	Westfield (Woking Park)	Requires rebuilding in new location to meet Sport England Standards		Football Foundation, WBC, Section 106 Monies
14	Horsell Bowls Pavilion	Changing provision does not meet required standards for space/facilities/energy use.	To be refurbished in 2007 subject to funding.	Woking Borough Council, Horsell Bowls Club, Foundation for Sports and Arts.

- 5.49 Through a survey of users and individual site assessments the playing pitch strategy also established the need for some further qualitative enhancements to playing pitch sites. Such enhancements would also pick up some specific concerns about quality of facilities reported through the Leisure Stocktake process, where concerns over the carrying capacity of pitches was mentioned as a specific issue. This could in part be addressed through works to improve drainage. The recommended improvements are as follows-
- 5.50 Resurface and replace surround fences to tennis courts at:
- Woking Park (5 no.)
  - Brookwood (2no.)
  - Byfleet (1no.)
- 5.51 Resurface casual use tennis and games courts at:
- Sussex Road (2No),(as part of a review of facilities at this site)
  - Waterers Park (1 No), (convert to multi use area)
  - West Byfleet (4no)
  - Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground(1no)
- 5.52 Resurface car parks at:
- Loop Rd
  - Waterers Park
  - Sussex Rd-consider enlargement to meet needs of bowls users.
- 5.53 Improve pitch drainage at:
- Loop Rd Recreation Ground-localised problems here
  - Waterer's Park-two pitches scheduled to receive improved drainage in 2006
  - Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground-drainage problems reported on two senior pitches
  - St Johns Lye (football area)-drainage problem here prevents use of pitch in winter
  - Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground-localised drainage problem on senior pitch reported by clubs,affects use in January/February.
  - Sheerwater Recreation Ground-poor drainage prevents use site nearest canal for soccer
  - Sussex Road Recreation Ground-poor drainage often prevents use of site in January/February
  - Provide new ball stop fence at St Peters Recreation Ground following reconfiguration of pitches.

#### **Objective D - Landscape, Biodiversity and Heritage**

- 5.54 In addition to the obvious benefits of green space for recreation, it is important to ensure that the intrinsic value of these spaces is recognised, and that measures are in place to protect and enhance these values.
- 5.55 The Countryside Agency has recommended to the Council that the Local Development Framework Core Strategy contains explicit policies which:

- promote the management of countryside and other green spaces around the urban areas of the Borough as a multi-functional resource,
- protect and expand networks of green spaces, recreation routes, and foot and bicycle paths through good management arrangements
- conserve attractive landscapes and enhance damaged ones, with a particular attention to sensitive design, scale, form and materials of any extension
- consider new opportunities for rural-urban initiatives e.g. community forests, green space networks etc.

5.56 The Agency has also strongly recommended the use of Area Action Plans to focus particular areas and concept statement approaches. However, Woking Borough Council has taken the decision to include these policies as actions in this Green Spaces Development Plan where they are relevant to the local situation in Woking, rather than include this level of detail in the Core Strategy. Similarly, the Agency has recommended that the Core Strategy promotes a spatial countryside recreation framework, to ensure that local open space for people and wildlife is provided, protected and enhanced and that the framework should

- Meet a range of recreational needs through different types and destinations
- Allow easy access to countryside Recreation.
- Promote the management of recreation opportunities within the capacity of the landscape and natural environment.
- Recognise the need for formalised rural recreation activities.
- Include policies protecting and promoting existing or potential recreational and amenity value of inland water areas.

5.57 Again, there are actions in this Green Spaces Development Plan which address these issues where they are relevant to Woking. The best route for addressing some of these particular issues is likely to be through the preparation of robust management plans. In the case of land not in Council ownership the aim will be to seek to influence individual land management agencies in the development of their own management objectives

5.58 It is proposed that management plans are prepared or updated for the following sites:

- Prey Heath
- Sheets Heath
- Brookwood Heath
- Woking Park
- Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground
- Sheerwater Recreation Ground
- St Johns Lye
- Smarts Heath
- Brookwood Country Park
- Woking Palace

5.59 Owners of land not on public ownership e.g. owners of SNCI' s also need to be encouraged to enhance landscape, increase biodiversity and respect heritage.

This is particularly important in a Borough where less than one quarter of all open space is owned and managed by the Council. Areas of particular note where such actions need to be encouraged are:

- Brookwood Cemetery
- Horsell Common
- Golf Courses

### **Objective E - Marketing and Communication**

- 5.60 Barriers to access which may be physical, economic or cultural should be addressed through an action plan which recognises the importance of information gathering in the first place, followed by practical measures which may include marketing, site improvements or new pricing structures. The action plan should also recognise the opportunities presented by new technology.
- 5.61 For example, as discussed in the strategic planning section of this report although levels of use of existing allotment sites are generally high, there remains a perception that use is skewed towards white males over 60. It is suggested that further survey work is undertaken to determine whether this is the case, whether there are any barriers to use of this service which need to be addressed and whether there is a need to promote greater use of allotments by women and ethnic minority groups in order to reflect the local population profile. This type of approach could be examined in respect of all open space use.
- 5.62 A project to replace all existing information signs within parks and recreation grounds managed by the Council has been approved by the Executive and monies released in 2006 to undertake this project with aims which include ensuring that ownership and identity of sites is clear.

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