

# CHAPTER 4 - OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

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## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 4.1.1 An outstanding feature of the Borough which makes a major contribution to its distinctive character and high standard of residential amenities is the extent of its areas of open space much of which is available for public use. Epsom Common, Nonsuch Park and Epsom and Walton Downs are large areas of open space which have long been popular locations for walking, rambling, horse riding, picnicking and other informal activities. In more recent years other areas such as the Hogsmill open space and Horton Country Park have become popular as the Council has improved public access. There are numerous recreation grounds and public parks particularly in the northern half of the Borough which are also popular. They all provide relief to the urban character of residential areas and provide opportunities for informal or formal recreational use.
- 4.1.2 Most of the areas of open space within the Borough lie within the Metropolitan Green Belt and are subject to the restrictive Green Belt policies which are detailed in Chapter 3 of the Plan. There are, however, many open spaces within the Borough which do not perform a Green Belt function, but which nevertheless make an essential contribution to the amenities of the Borough and merit protection.
- 4.1.3 More and more people are stepping from the role of spectator to active participator in sport. Sport is no longer confined to the young; people of all ages and abilities are joining in and playing a wide variety of sports. Play can vary from serious training together with competitive club matches to casual friendly games. The Borough's existing pitch provision suffers from some qualitative deficiencies, and some facilities are not available at the levels recommended by the English Sports Council. To make good these deficiencies and to meet changing demands, there is a need for new and upgraded facilities for formal recreation.
- 4.1.4 The provision of recreational facilities can be viewed as a means to improve the quality of individual and community life and, in this context, the Borough Council plays an important role as provider of a whole range of facilities such as open spaces, playing fields including football pitches, children's playgrounds, a country park, a swimming pool and halls. The Borough also contains many private leisure facilities, including gyms, tennis courts and golf courses. The role of the private sector is expected to grow rapidly and an important function of the plan is to provide guidance for the private commercial sector on the use of land and buildings for recreational purposes.
- 4.1.5 Within the Borough there is also a fairly wide range of opportunities for cultural and entertainment activities with most concentrated within Epsom town centre. The Playhouse hosts national productions and offers a full range of entertainment. Bourne Hall and Ewell Court House have facilities available for local productions, meetings, dances, and exhibitions and Bourne Hall has the Borough's local museum; there is one cinema in the Borough. Pubs, hotels and restaurants are widely spread throughout the Borough.

## **4.2**            **POLICY CONTEXT**

### Government Policy

4.2.1            Government guidance attaches great importance to the retention of recreational and amenity open space in urban areas. Open space whether or not there is public access to it, is also important for its contribution to the quality of urban life.

4.2.2            Local plans should ensure that adequate land and water resources are allocated both for organised sport and for informal recreation and take into account the value of open space not only as an amenity but also as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built heritage of the area. Local plan policies should offer reasonable certainty to developers, landowners and residents about the weight to be given to sport, recreation and open space needs.

### County Structure Plan Policy

4.2.3            The Structure Plan states that open land in urban areas is to be protected. Development in areas of open land which contribute to the separate identity of communities and the structure of urban areas should not normally be permitted other than for the essential needs of suitable outdoor sport and recreation. Development in other areas of open space should not normally be permitted, other than for the essential needs of suitable outdoor sport and recreation, where the land:

1.            contributes to the character, environment and amenity of the surrounding area, or
2.            provides essential social, community or recreational use, or
3.            is of high ecological value.

Exceptionally, limited development of a small part of this land may be permitted where it ensures the retention and enhancement of public access on the remainder and does not materially undermine the contribution made as open space by the land.

4.2.4            Local authorities should encourage development for recreation use, particularly where it overcomes deficiencies in existing provision and resist the loss of land, water or buildings which are or have been used for recreation, or are proposed in a local plan for such use, except where suitable alternative provision is made.

## **4.3**            **OBJECTIVES**

4.3.1            The Council attaches great importance to the retention of recreational and amenity open space in urban areas. Demand is concentrated there, and it is important that people of all ages should have access to open space close to where they live.

4.3.2            Sport and recreation have a valuable social and economic role and the Council wishes to promote the development of sport and recreation in the widest sense: to enable people to participate in sport, whether as players or spectators, and to

encourage the provision of a wide range of opportunities for recreation, so that people can choose which suit them best. The Council also considers that enhanced provision of informal recreational facilities for young people could contribute towards a reduction in the number of instances of anti-social behaviour attributed to younger people.

4.3.3 The Council considers that it is important to achieve a reasonable balance between the need to make adequate provision for development in urban areas and the need to protect open space from development. The Council has accordingly identified the following objectives:-

1. To ensure that all open space in the Borough which makes a significant contribution to amenity is retained as open space;
2. To encourage the provision of facilities to meet deficiencies in the Borough's provision of recreation facilities;
3. To provide for changes in requirements of all local residents for recreation facilities.

4.3.4 Objectives relating to the protection, conservation and enhancement of open spaces on the grounds of their contribution to quality of the natural environment within the Borough are set out in Chapter 5 of the plan which deals with the natural environment.

#### **4.4 OPEN SPACE WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREA**

4.4.1 Open space is important for its contribution to the quality of urban life. This contribution takes many forms, including sports pitches, children's play areas, allotments, footpaths, pleasant views, buffer zones between built areas, tree cover and wildlife habitats, which can all contribute to public amenity and the environment. Use of land as open space is no less important than other uses. Once built on, open space is likely to be lost to the community for ever.

4.4.2 Areas of open space such as Epsom and Walton Downs (243 ha) and Epsom Common (176 ha) make an essential contribution to Metropolitan Green Belt policy objectives and are of major significance to Greater London as a whole as well as to the Borough. They are therefore included within the Metropolitan Green Belt and accordingly benefit from a considerable degree of protection.

4.4.3 There are, however, many areas of public and private open space including common land within the Borough which make an important contribution to the amenities of the Borough in terms of their contribution to informal or formal recreational provision, visual amenities or local character, but are not appropriately situated for incorporation into the Green Belt principally because they are embedded in the urban fabric and do not perform a Green Belt function. These include parks and recreation grounds, private sports grounds, school playing fields and allotment sites, in various forms of open, outdoor use. Some open spaces are identified as having important strategic roles where they have a widespread rather

than local significance, they separate distinct areas and they give structure to the built-up area of the Borough as a whole. These strategic open spaces are similar in status to Metropolitan Open Land which abuts them in adjoining London Boroughs.

- 4.4.4 Nonsuch Park, Cherry Orchard Farm, and woodland to the west, Nonsuch Palace Environs, the Banqueting House site, the linear woodland area to the south of Nonsuch Park and the undeveloped part of Warren Farm are important strategic open spaces. The value of Nonsuch Park itself, which lies at the heart of the area, is regarded as being exceptional for amenity and recreation. The historic parkland at Nonsuch formerly extended over a very wide area but it has been considerably reduced over time, predominantly by residential suburban development. The Council is particularly concerned that the remaining formal parkland area and adjoining open land, which includes the area known as Warren Farm, should be protected, and enhanced where appropriate. The Council recognises the historical, archaeological and natural history importance of the area, and that the ambience of countryside is valued particularly as a resource for residents of the north and east of the Borough and nearby Cheam who do not have immediate access to the Downs and Epsom Common. Chapter 5 sets out nature conservation considerations, which affect almost all of the Strategic Open Space centred on Nonsuch. Chapter 6 contains more detailed consideration of the historical significance of archaeological sites and ancient monuments in the area, and section 6.8 deals with parks and gardens of historic interest, including a designation based on Nonsuch Park and the Banqueting House site. The Council considers that Warren Farm has a special character which should be secured for the enjoyment of future generations and will seek to safeguard the site from any form of development, including the introduction of formal recreational uses, which could damage its existing and potential ecological value.
- 4.4.5 Similarly, the Hogsmill River and adjoining open land, to the north of the Borough, is also considered to fulfil a strategic open space role in much the same way as the wider Nonsuch Park area described above. This strategic area comprises a series of open spaces stretching from the Borough's north-western boundary along Worcester Park Road to the heart of Ewell Village. In the north-western parts of the Borough, the course of the Hogsmill and its tributary the Bonesgate abut Metropolitan Open Land in the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, contributing to the separation of the Cuddington and Ruxley areas from Tolworth and Chessington. Between Ruxley Lane and Ewell Village, the Hogsmill separates the areas of Ewell Court and West Ewell. The area includes the informal open spaces of the Hogsmill, Upper and Lower Mills, and the Bonesgate, the formal Ewell Court Park, sports facilities at Poole Road Recreation Ground and the Old Salesian Club, and allotments at Plough Road/ Northcroft Road. Large parts of the area are also designated as Grade 3 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and as areas of high archaeological importance.
- 4.4.6 The Council is of the opinion that such areas of open space within the built-up area should be retained in appropriate open forms of use for the benefit of local residents and visitors and that they should be protected from unnecessary or inappropriate forms of development. These areas of strategic open space within the built-up area are shown on the Proposals Map.

4.4.7

The Structure Plan presumes against the loss of recreational space except where suitable alternative facilities are being provided. In accordance with the Structure Plan therefore, land of an equivalent recreational or amenity benefit will be sought within the Borough where a site proposed for development is important to the recreational or public amenity needs of an area. Proposals within the areas of open space for the operational requirements of existing schools will normally be acceptable provided that any adverse effect on the function and character of the open space is minimised.

**OSR1 DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WITHIN A STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE (SOS) UNLESS IT SATISFIES THE ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION AND IT WOULD NOT HARM THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE SOS.**

**OSR2 WITHIN AREAS OF OPEN SPACE, OTHER THAN SOS, DEVELOPMENT MAY EXCEPTIONALLY BE PERMITTED WHERE:**

**EITHER (A) DEVELOPMENT IS FOR ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:**

- (I) FACILITIES TO MEET THE ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION;**
- (II) DEVELOPMENT OF A SMALL PART OF A SITE WHICH AIDS THE RETENTION OF SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES ON THE REMAINDER;**

**OR (B) ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE SATISFIED:**

- (I) IT WILL NOT HARM THE CHARACTER, ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITY OF THE SURROUNDINGS;**
- (II) ANY ESSENTIAL SOCIAL, COMMUNITY OR RECREATIONAL USE TO WHICH THE LAND IS CURRENTLY PUT WOULD NOT BE PREJUDICED; AND**
- (III) THE ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE LAND WOULD NOT BE HARMED.**

4.4.8

The Council will seek to ensure that a full range of open space is available throughout the Borough. This should include facilities such as formal pitches, informal kickabout areas, and children's play equipment, which provide for active games. It should also include spaces such as formal gardens, woodlands and nature reserves which can be used for less active recreation such as walking or even simply viewing. Often, open spaces can combine these different roles.

- 4.4.9 In the broad sense, there is a generous supply of open land in the Borough. However, the spaces are not evenly spread around the Borough, and not all areas have access to the various different types of space. There are a number of local quantitative or qualitative open space deficiencies. The following sections deal with the availability of specific types of leisure facilities in the Borough.
- 4.4.10 The Council will have regard to any local deficiency in the open spaces available when assessing proposals in terms of Policy OSR2, and will seek to make good deficiencies when opportunities arise. The Council will expect housing development to meet its occupants' open space needs, either by being sited where adequate open space is already available, by enhancing existing open space so that it is adequate, or by providing new open space. Small developments may not justify provision of new open space, but may create additional pressure on existing space which justifies a contribution to its enhancement. This may be achieved through legal agreements whereby the developer makes improvements to open space in an accessible location off-site.
- 4.4.11 The layout of larger developments (those of 50 or more dwellings) will be expected to make provision for much of the open space needs to be located on-site. Proposals will be assessed against the Council's Standard for Open Space which is supplementary planning guidance and is to be found in the companion volume to the Plan. Facilities for children's play space will also be expected in appropriate cases, in accordance with Policy OSR3 below.

~~OSR3 WHERE A PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IS IN AN AREA WHERE A QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE DEFICIENCY IN OPEN SPACE PROVISION EXISTS, OR SUCH A DEFICIENCY WOULD RESULT IF THE DEVELOPMENT WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED UNLESS THE OPEN SPACE NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPMENT ARE MET BY, OR BY A COMBINATION OF:~~

~~(A) ON AND OFF SITE PROVISION~~

~~(B) THE ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING OFF-SITE PROVISION,~~

~~OR~~

~~(C) MEETING THE COST OF OFF-SITE PROVISION OR ENHANCEMENT.~~

~~PROVISION ASSOCIATED WITH DEVELOPMENTS COMPRISING 50 OR MORE DWELLINGS SHALL BE SUBSTANTIALLY ON-SITE.~~

## **4.5 PLAYING FIELDS**

- 4.5.1 There is approximately 100 ha (247 acres) of land set out as playing fields and recreational grounds in the Borough, approximately half of which is owned by the Borough Council. Of the remaining area, which is owned or leased by the private sector, 17.8 ha are accounted for by the Priest Hill Playing Fields. Many of the private sports grounds are for the sole use of clubs or businesses which are based outside the Borough. The figure of 100 ha does not include school playing fields or the playing fields within the Hospitals Cluster area.
- 4.5.2 The National Playing Fields Association recommends a standard of 1.6 - 1.8 ha (4 - 4.5 acres) of playing fields per thousand population. This includes school playing fields provided that they are available as a matter of policy and practice for public use. The current level of provision in the Borough is within this range, however there are local quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in some areas. The national standards can only provide general guidance and do not correspond precisely with the requirements of this particular Borough. The Council intends to identify local needs more fully in conjunction with contributing to the Register of Recreational Land being updated by the Sports Council.
- 4.5.3 Many of the existing sports grounds are within the built-up area and are increasingly subject to development pressures. In view of the recognised need for more facilities, and the growing demand for recreational facilities of all kinds, it is important that all existing playing fields within the Borough be retained unless it can be demonstrated that the requirements of Policy OSR2 are satisfied. The Council will therefore normally require playing fields, including school playing fields and recreation grounds, to be retained.
- 4.5.4 It will also support proposals for the provision of playing fields where and when they can be appropriately located to satisfy local deficiencies and will itself seek the provision of additional areas of playing fields wherever appropriate, subject to financial resources being available. A number of opportunities have been identified for the provision within the Hospitals Cluster area of playing fields for the use of local residents and visitors. These are identified in Chapter 8 of the Plan which sets out a number of policies and proposals which deal specifically with the hospitals sites within the Hospitals Cluster area.
- 4.5.5 Whilst there will be limited scope for the provision of new playing fields and recreation grounds within the Borough, there would appear to be scope for increased use of the existing provision. The Borough Council is aware that many school playing fields and private grounds are now regularly hired to local groups, helping to reduce the need to travel and the pressure on public pitches. The Borough Council together with the County Council will therefore continue to encourage the dual use of such facilities where appropriate.
- 4.5.6 Where the County Council proposes to declare a school playing field surplus to its requirements, the Borough Council will expect to be consulted on the scope for retaining the land as open space having regard to its recreational potential and amenity value, for the benefit of local residents and clubs. The Borough Council will investigate the feasibility of promoting alternative recreational or community

uses and management of the land in conjunction with residents, clubs, the County Council and the private sector. The long term educational requirements and potential for re-use should also be assessed. The Council will resist the release of surplus school playing fields unless it is satisfied that the requirements of Policy OSR2 have been satisfied.

4.5.7 The Borough Council, with the support of the County Council, will seek to promote the dual use of school playing fields to enhance the provision for local residents where appropriate. In the event of school playing fields becoming surplus to the requirements of the County Council, the Borough Council will seek, in consultation with interested parties, to ensure that, where appropriate, they are retained for use by residents and clubs.

4.5.8 The Borough's first artificial floodlit all-weather surface for the general public, at Court recreation ground, is now in regular use. A much larger all-weather surface has also been provided at Blenheim High School and, when floodlighting has been installed, it is expected to be available for use by other schools and the wider community at appropriate times by arrangement with the school. All-weather surfaces have many advantages, timetables for intensive use are possible, poor weather or subsoil conditions do not restrict usage and surfaces are true and predictable. With these benefits in mind, the Borough Council will seek the provision of another all-weather floodlit facility at a suitable location. The provision of such a facility would complement existing playing field provision and allow local schools, sports clubs and the public to continue their sports over a more extended period. However, in considering any proposals which emerge, the Council will have regard to controlling light pollution as required by Policy DC4 in Chapter 14 - Control of Development. The Council will examine the implications of possible joint provision and funding of this facility with the private sector on suitable sites and with the County Education Authority where provision would be possible in suitable school playing fields.

**OSR4 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL ALL-WEATHER SPORTS SURFACES WHICH MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

- (I) RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES ARE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED;**
- (II) THE DEVELOPMENT HAS NO OVERALL ADVERSE IMPACT IN TERMS OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES, ECOLOGICAL INTERESTS AND WATER RUN-OFF; AND**
- (III) THE DEVELOPMENT IS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FROM THE EXISTING ROAD NETWORK.**

## **4.6 INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND OTHER SPORTS-RELATED BUILDINGS**

- 4.6.1 In the 1980s, the Council developed the Rainbow Centre in Epsom town centre to meet a deficiency in the provision of indoor sports facilities which had been identified by the Sports Council in 1981. However, there is a large number of increasingly popular sports which require some form of indoor space and studies undertaken by the Sports Council suggest that there remains extensive latent demand for such facilities.
- 4.6.2 The Borough Council would like to see an increase in the provision of indoor sports facilities for the use of local residents and clubs. The Council recognises that financial constraints may limit the Council's direct role in new provision and that the private sector and schools are likely to play an increasingly important role. The Council will nevertheless continue to seek to provide facilities where appropriate, through joint funding opportunities, the provision of sites or by management agreements with the private sector. Funding for refurbishment of the Rainbow Centre is being sought through redevelopment of underused land (see Section 15.4 below), whilst the Epsom Lifestyle Centre proposed for the rear of High Street/Waterloo Road is expected to provide a cardio-vascular gym and health club. Where other new indoor sports facilities are proposed within the Borough, the Council will have particular regard to the need to protect the residential amenities of the occupants of neighbouring properties.
- 4.6.3 Epsom and Ewell Football Club's former site in Ewell was considered to be unsatisfactory and was redeveloped for housing from 1993 to 1995. Since leaving the site, the Club has been sharing facilities with a team in Tadworth, but has been seeking to establish a new ground within the Borough. The Council supports the Club's relocation to an appropriate site in the Borough, and has authorised the granting of planning permission for a ground at the former Central Boiler House within the Epsom Hospitals Cluster. More details of the Central Boiler House appear in the Local Plan's Chapter 8 paragraphs 8.10.25 and 8.10.26. Should the Boiler House not become available to the Football Club, the Borough Council will consider positively alternative proposals to establish a ground with club and spectator facilities provided that they are in accordance with all the plan policies relevant to sports-related buildings. Within the Hospitals Cluster area, there are also existing recreation halls which could be converted for re-use for indoor recreation and leisure uses in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Plan. It is intended however that these facilities should meet local needs arising from the hospital redevelopment rather than any wider catchment.
- 4.6.4 The County Council has stated that it intends to allow County Council owned indoor sports facilities in schools to be more widely used and the Borough Council intends to seek to promote the dual use of such facilities on an educational and community basis. The dual use of such facilities can give rise to parking problems and the Council will seek to ensure that, where a dual use is introduced, adequate car parking provision is available and the residential amenity of the surrounding area is safeguarded.

**OSR5 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND OTHER SPORTS-RELATED BUILDINGS PROVIDED THAT RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES ARE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED AND THE DEVELOPMENT IS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FROM THE EXISTING ROAD NETWORK.**

**4.7 CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE**

- 4.7.1 The Borough Council attaches considerable importance to the provision of children's play areas and amenity areas for young people. The Council, in association with developers where appropriate, provides and maintains 16 playgrounds, all of which have some playground equipment. Negotiations are under way to increase this number.
- 4.7.2 Many of the housing estates which were built by the Council have playgrounds, but such provision is often lacking in areas of housing built by the private sector. Given that there is also a marked trend towards the redevelopment of areas of older housing with large gardens and the erection of new housing with relatively small gardens, there is a need to ensure that adequate provision is made in respect of both existing and proposed residential development.
- 4.7.3 The National Playing Fields Association guidelines for open space provision include the recommendation for children's playspace of 0.6 - 0.8 ha (1.5 - 2 acres) per thousand population, including both equipped playgrounds and informal spaces. Playgrounds should be at 800 metre (half mile) intervals and should be sited so that children do not have to cross busy roads to reach them. Playspace for younger children should be closely related to the pedestrian system and special provision is required for people living in flats. It is important to consider informal as well as formal play provision and for children of all ages. Further details are included in "The Play Policy" adopted by the Council's Recreation Committee.
- 4.7.4 The Council intends to compile a survey of play spaces and their catchments so that areas of deficiency can be precisely identified. One area of known shortfall is the Nonsuch Park area. Other areas where play provision is poor include: Stoneleigh; East Ewell; Woodcote; Burgh Heath Road/Treadwell Road area; East Street/ Kiln Lane (The Farriers); and Gatley Avenue/ Watersedge. In addition the playgrounds at The Wells and The Warren, Langley Vale are small and have a limited range of equipment.
- 4.7.5 The Council will seek to make good the deficiencies in play facilities for children of all ages where opportunities arise. The Council will expect housing development to meet its young occupants' needs for play facilities, either by being sited where adequate facilities are already available, by enhancing existing facilities so that they are adequate, or by providing new facilities. Examples of enhancement include addition of play equipment, laying out of pitches, or setting up of goal posts or nets. New facilities need to be large enough to be of practical use, and also need careful siting to protect residential amenity (see paragraph 4.7.6 below).

- 4.7.6 It is therefore unlikely that the design of new housing sites will incorporate new facilities except in the case of larger developments (those of 50 or more dwellings), and even these are unlikely to be able to accommodate a range of spaces and equipment suitable for all ages. Existing provision of play facilities is generally well-used, and it is likely that enhancement of these or new provision in other existing open spaces will offer the best opportunity for meeting the needs of most new development. This may be achieved through legal agreements whereby the developer makes direct provision in an accessible location off-site, or pays commuted sums to the Council towards provision on such a site. In considering applications for planning permission the Council will have regard to the Standards for Children's Play Space which are supplementary planning guidance and are contained in the companion volume to the Plan. The Council also seeks the provision of open space for general purposes under Policy OSR3 above.
- 4.7.7 The siting of playgrounds within housing areas must be carefully handled in order to avoid unacceptable disturbance to adjoining residential properties whilst providing facilities readily accessible to the children. Conflict between the needs of children and the amenities of the occupants of adjoining properties must be avoided as far as possible. There have been instances of vandalism associated with such areas in the past, so playgrounds should be designed specifically to deter crime - further guidance is provided by Policy DC11 in Chapter 14 - Control of Development. It is also essential that play equipment, fencing and surfaces within children's playgrounds are built and maintained with full regard to the need to ensure the safety of the users.
- 4.7.8 The Council will carry out regular reviews of children's formal and informal play facilities. Any play equipment, fencing and surfaces in children's play areas shall be expected to comply with the relevant British Safety Standards.

~~OSR6 (1) WHERE A PROPOSED FAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IS IN AN AREA WHERE A QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE DEFICIENCY IN CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE PROVISION EXISTS, OR SUCH A DEFICIENCY WOULD RESULT IF THE DEVELOPMENT WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED UNLESS THE PLAY SPACE NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPMENT ARE MET BY, OR BY A COMBINATION OF:~~

~~(A) ON AND OFF-SITE PROVISION~~

~~(B) THE ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING OFF-SITE PROVISION,~~

~~OR~~

~~(C) MEETING THE COST OF OFF-SITE ENHANCEMENT OR PROVISION.~~

~~(II) WHERE PRACTICABLE, PROVISION ASSOCIATED WITH DEVELOPMENTS COMPRISING 50 OR MORE DEWELLINGS SHALL BE MADE SUBSTANTIALLY ON-SITE.~~

~~(III) CHILDREN'S PLAY FACILITIES SHALL BE LOCATED TO AVOID HARM BEING CAUSED TO THE AMENITIES OF EXISTING OR FUTURE RESIDENTS.~~

**4.8 ALLOTMENT SITES**

4.8.1 The Borough Council owns 10 allotment sites of which two are in the Green Belt and are protected from development by policies in Chapter 3 of the Plan. The Borough also contains at least 1 privately owned site. Allotments make an important contribution to the amenities of the Borough, and those outside the Green Belt are included in the definition of open space set out in paragraph 4.4.3 above. The Council recognises that some allotments are currently uncultivated, but has successfully promoted the self-management of sites and a revival in demand. Where the Council is unable to promote a sufficient level of allotment use to secure proper management of a particular site, alternative uses may be considered under the criteria of Policies OSR1 and OSR2, but the Council will seek alternative recreational uses which can be reversed in the case of a future upturn in demand. Should it be considered necessary to relocate some of the plots, the Council will attempt to ensure that the minimum amount of disturbance is caused to plot holders. Should an alternative use of allotments release resources, priority will be given to using part of the proceeds for improving the remaining sites.

**4.9 HORSE RIDING**

4.9.1 The Borough provides one of the most attractive opportunities for horse-riding south of London. A major equestrian centre has been provided in the Horton Country Park. Epsom Common has 4 miles of horse rides, linking to Ashted Common and Epsom Downs and beyond. Unfortunately, horse-riding is often damaging to the environment and can often create problems for other users, for example by disrupting footpaths; bridleways will need to be improved and additional ones provided. Gaining the co-operation of horse-riders has proved to be the most effective means of overcoming such problems, to the benefit of all users of the common. Horse-riding activities will need to be accommodated in such a way that the landscape and the environment in general are not unduly affected.

4.9.2 The Council will continue to maintain the existing designated horse-rides, to provide all weather rides and to improve existing rides where appropriate coupled with appropriate signing and barriers, where necessary. Further proposals relating to horse-riders and bridleways are set out at Policy MV23.

- 4.9.3 During the course of the last thirty years, as residential land values rose, many of the complexes of stables, which were situated within the built-up areas, were redeveloped for residential purposes. This has led to increased pressures for the creation of new stabling facilities on open land within the Green Belt. Given the anticipated growth in the popularity of horse-riding as a recreational pursuit and the Council's objective of conserving the equestrian heritage of the Borough whilst protecting and enhancing the natural beauty of open land within the Green Belt, the Council considers it appropriate to seek to resist the loss of existing facilities for the stabling of horses which are suitably located.

**OSR7 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ESTABLISHED COMPLEXES FOR THE STABLING OF HORSES.**

**4.10 GOLF DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.10.1 The Borough currently has 18-hole golf courses at Epsom Downs, the RAC Club, and Horton Park Country Club. Part of Cuddington Golf Course also falls within the Borough. In addition, the principle of golf development has been established at part of Priest Hill playing field (a 9-hole course), at Howell Hill, Banstead Road (a 9-hole course, a putting green and a driving range) and at Downs Farm (9 holes north of College Road and an additional 9 holes to the south) although none now have a valid planning permission in force. Proposals for further golf facilities may emerge in other large open spaces, especially the Green Belt. The development of land for playing golf may sometimes be consistent with the maintenance of the character of these areas. However, opportunities for further courses are extremely limited except where the principle of development has already been established, given that golf courses require extensive stretches of land and may have a negative impact on the environment. Surrey County Council has prepared "Guidelines for the Development of New Golf Facilities in Surrey" which have been adopted by the Borough Council as supplementary planning guidance, and are included in the companion volume to the Plan in summary form.
- 4.10.2 Proposals should incorporate an assessment of the impact upon wildlife habitats and the environment. The Council will consider whether a formal Environmental Impact Assessment is needed. In the case of Green Belt sites, proposals should be justified by a clear demonstration either that existing public access and nature conservation value can be maintained, or that the need for additional golf facilities outweighs the need to maintain these features.
- 4.10.3 Golf developments will be expected to maximise use of natural landform and tree cover, and to enhance the landscape as a whole. In order to avoid disruption to landscape features, the Council generally views 40 ha (100 acres) as the minimum area which can accommodate an 18 hole golf course. Developments on this scale could substantially reduce the Borough's agricultural land resource. Golf courses will not be permitted where they involve a loss of the borough's best and most versatile agricultural land, unless the proposal is designed in such a way as to be reversible and to allow the future re-establishment of agriculture. Furthermore, golf

courses can also involve intensive watering regimes, and proposals should take account of the effect of such regimes upon the water table.

- 4.10.4 Taking account of local demand, the Council will encourage proposals for pay-and-play facilities to complement private clubs. The Council will not encourage proposals for 9 hole golf courses, as these generally involve an intensity of use and proliferation of ancillary facilities which would be damaging to the environment. New buildings for all courses should be kept to the minimum and existing rural buildings re-used where possible. Where new built development is unavoidable, the design should be consistent with the scale and architectural character of nearby rural buildings.
- 4.10.5 Some built developments associated with golf courses may be inappropriate in the countryside, particularly in the case of facilities like driving ranges. These are often better suited to nearby urban locations. The Council will resist supporting development which is not directly related to golf.
- 4.10.6 Golf courses can generate substantial traffic, and the Council will require satisfactory highway and car-parking arrangements as set out in Chapter 13 - Movement. Proposals should incorporate continued public access for pedestrians wherever it already exists. In addition, the Council will seek to maximise public access for pedestrians around the periphery of the site.

**OSR8 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED THAT:**

- (I) IT WOULD NOT CAUSE SERIOUS HARM TO WILDLIFE HABITATS, THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, THE LANDSCAPE, OR THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA;**
- (II) IT WOULD NOT REDUCE THE EXISTING LEVEL OF PUBLIC ACCESS WITHIN THE SITE;**
- (III) IT WOULD NOT INVOLVE IRREVERSIBLE LOSS OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND;**
- (IV) IT WOULD NOT CAUSE SERIOUS HARM TO THE LEVEL OF THE WATER TABLE;**
- (V) IT WOULD NOT LEAD TO A PROLIFERATION OF ANCILLARY FACILITIES WHICH WOULD BE OUT OF CHARACTER WITH THE AREA;**
- (VI) IN ADDITION, IN THE CASE OF A GREEN BELT SITE, ANY ALTERATIONS TO PUBLIC ACCESS OR FEATURES OF NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE CAN BE JUSTIFIED BY THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL GOLF FACILITIES IN THE AREA, AND THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT LEAD TO ACTIVITY WHICH IS OVER-INTENSIVE FOR A GREEN BELT LOCATION.**

## 4.11 CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES

4.11.1 The Council provides facilities at Bourne Hall, Ewell Court House and Epsom Playhouse while a range of large and small scale entertainment and leisure facilities are provided by the private sector, in the form of a cinema, restaurants, public houses, etc. Although there is not considered to be a shortage of such facilities in the Borough, and whilst facilities in nearby large towns such as Kingston and Sutton are also available for use by residents of the Borough, the Council would like its residents to have a wider choice locally of places to see films, put on local productions, hold exhibitions, eat, drink or dance. Any such proposal will therefore be examined on its merits. It will be important that local organisations are consulted where appropriate, that other policies of the plan are not jeopardised, and that local amenity is not disturbed to any unacceptable extent by litter, noise, parking and traffic movement.

4.11.2 The Borough Museum is housed in Bourne Hall, but because of the increasing demand on space for display and storage and the need to develop the collections and to provide an improved public service and greater accessibility, alternative or additional accommodation may be needed in the future. If necessary, over the next five to ten years, the Council will investigate the provision of a suitable alternative permanent home for the Borough Museum, subject to financial feasibility.

~~OSR9 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BROADEN THE RANGE OF CULTURAL, MUSEUM AND ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES IN THE BOROUGH, PROVIDING THAT LOCAL AMENITIES ARE SAFEGUARDED AND THAT THE DEVELOPMENT IS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FROM THE EXISTING ROAD NETWORK.~~