

*Chapter Twelve*

# **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

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## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

### INTRODUCTION

**12.01** The provision of adequate open space and recreation facilities is important in meeting the demands of leisure time and the concerns for healthier lifestyles. It can improve quality of life and the general perception of the District as a place to live, work and visit. PPG17 requires the Plan to make sufficient provision for open space and other recreational needs. As part of this process, the Council approved a Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup>, which considers the District's recreation needs and opportunities over the Plan Period. The Strategy identifies a number of key development sites for sport and recreation. Those sites which are acceptable in planning terms and are likely to be implemented within the Plan Period have been incorporated into this Plan.

**12.02** This chapter seeks to protect important open space, and provide for formal and informal recreation opportunities in the District. Tourism (a major recreational activity in itself) is dealt with in Chapter 3, public rights of way and cycling in Chapter 4, and protection of the countryside in Chapter 5. Chapter 14 considers the open space and recreation needs of the proposed expansion of Aylesham.

### Existing Situation

**12.03** The District contains a wide range of open space, including major municipal parks, gardens, local nature reserves, promenades, sport pitches and various informal grassed areas. The Council has undertaken survey work<sup>2</sup> on open space and is generally concerned about the shortage of open space within some parts of the District. The loss of open space to built development is a concern, particularly as once lost, it is very difficult to replace.



*The Pines, St. Margaret's*

**12.04** Dover Leisure Centre is the main multipurpose sports centre in the District. Other indoor facilities are provided in Sandwich (dry sports only) and Deal. In Deal, Tides Leisure Centre caters for swimming, fitness training and indoor tennis. Throughout

the District, sports facilities are also provided by schools, private clubs and companies.

**12.05** The District also provides for a wide range of outdoor sports, including golf. While there are no public courses, the quality of private courses is high. They include Royal St. George's Golf Club, Sandwich, which has hosted the British Open Championship. Sea angling is also very popular. Deal has hosted the British Championships and the World Sea Angling Championships. The District has two marinas and 14 watersports clubs. Many opportunities also exist for informal watersport recreation, particularly at Dover harbour which provides a relatively sheltered and safe environment.

### Applying the Plan's Aims and Objectives

**12.06** In relation to Aim 1, Objectives 3 and 10 are concerned with providing sufficient open space in towns and directing future investment to urban areas, respectively. Objective 12 encourages the provision of services, including recreational facilities, in villages. Wherever recreational facilities are proposed, Objective 13 seeks to ensure that they are located in accordance with sustainable criteria. Objective 22 (Aim 3) seeks to ensure that open space and recreation are made accessible to all sections of the

community. Open spaces within development create a better environment in terms of design and amenity (Objective 23).

## **Open Space and Recreation Strategy**

**12.07** Based on the Aims and Objectives and the existing situation, the Plan's Open Space and Recreation Strategy seeks to:

- (a) identify and protect important existing open space;
- (b) develop standards of public open space provision;
- (c) identify and rectify deficiencies in the quantity and quality of public open space;
- (d) assess local demand for particular sports;
- (e) encourage the provision of sports facilities;
- (f) direct major facilities to Dover and Deal; and
- (g) ensure that open space and recreational facilities are accessible to all sections of the community.

**12.08** The strategy will be mainly implemented by the Plan and through the Council's recreation function. In particular, the Plan will identify and protect open space, and allow for new recreational facilities where they are appropriate in terms of location and scale. The Council also has a role in maintaining children's play facilities, as do many Parish Councils.

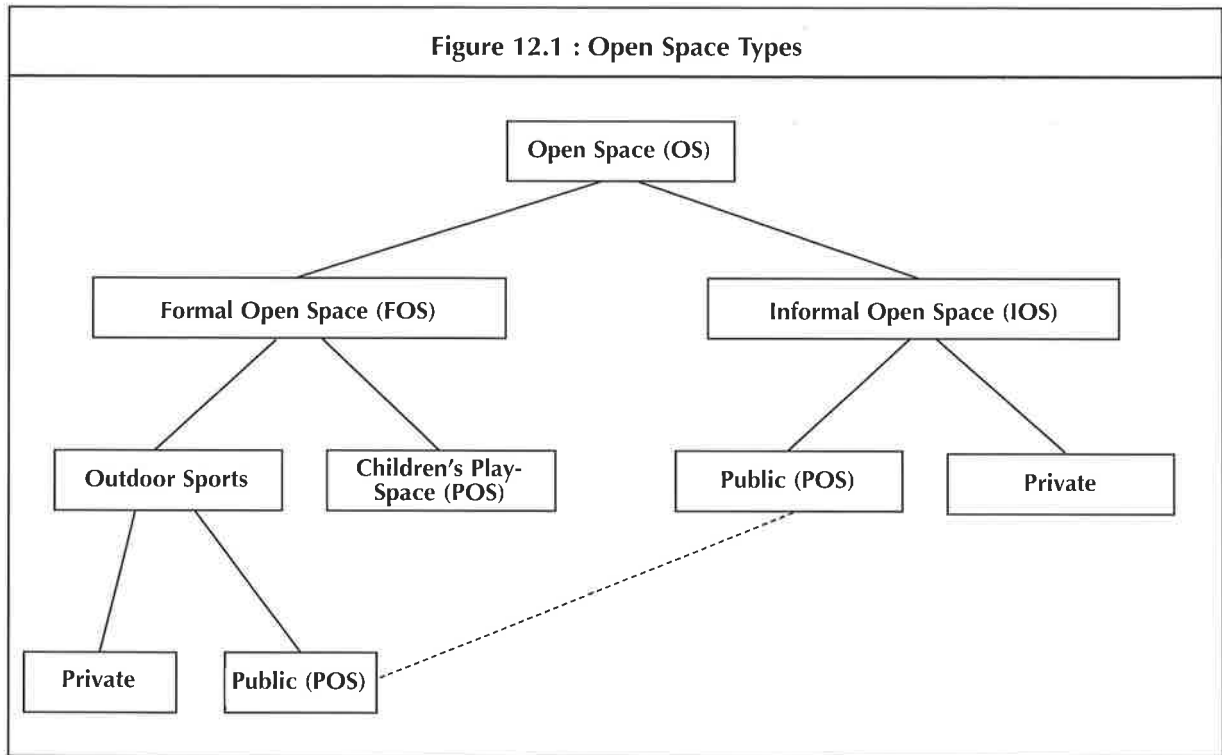
## **OPEN SPACE**

**12.09** Open space is a general term used to cover:-

- (a) formal playing pitches, football stadia and other sports facilities;
- (b) school playing fields and the grounds of other educational establishments;
- (c) children's play spaces;
- (d) municipal parks and gardens;
- (e) informal open space including sitting out areas and picnic sites;
- (f) cemeteries and allotments;
- (g) common land and village greens;
- (h) unused open land with a recreational or amenity potential; and
- (i) historic parks and gardens, private gardens and grounds of institutional premises.

**12.10** Open space can be publicly or privately owned. It includes areas to which the public has legally secured access (public open space - POS) as well as areas where access is restricted (private open space). It can also provide for formal (FOS) and informal (IOS) recreation. While open space will be public (POS) or private, it can perform both a formal and informal role. A playing field in a public park for instance, can allow for formal recreation, but when not in use, has an informal recreational function (see Figure 12.1). Apart from its recreational role, open space is important in visual amenity, nature conservation and cultural terms.

Figure 12.1 : Open Space Types



Note: The dotted line indicates that some FOS can also be used informally.

**12.11** Open space, particularly in urban areas, is important to quality of life and contributes to a more sustainable pattern of development. PPG17 advises that open space is no less important than other uses and requires local plans to designate open spaces in urban areas, show them on the Proposals Map and develop policies to protect their characteristics. In addition, Structure Plan Policy ENV16 seeks the best use of land in built-up areas, while protecting existing open spaces in towns and smaller settlements. This leads to the need for a careful balancing act between competing land uses. It may also require a more effective use of existing resources. Some secondary school sites for instance, could be more widely used by the community through dual use agreements. With the exception of Sandwich High School, Walmer Secondary School, and the Duke of York's and Archers Court Schools at Dover, dual use facilities have not been well developed in the District.

**12.12** The Government advises local authorities to assess whether deficiencies exist in public open space (POS). Where deficiencies are identified, then other open space may be protected and new space provided. New provision should be based on local standards, derived from a local assessment of need. These should consider such issues as the quantity and accessibility of open space, particularly by foot. PPG17 and Structure Plan Policy ENV16(a) require these standards to be included in the Plan. The Council has developed standards and undertaken a comprehensive survey<sup>2</sup> of public and private open space in the District in order to determine which sites justify protection. To take account of the differing functions of POS, three categories of sites have been identified, with standards being devised for each:

- (a) outdoor sports sites;
- (b) children's play space; and
- (c) informal open space.

**12.13** The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommends the provision of 2.4 Ha. (6 acres) per 1,000 population for outdoor sports and children's play space. This 'Six Acre Standard' is based on the average community, so does not take account of local variations in, for example, age structure. In the case of outdoor sports, it considers some private as well as POS. The NPFA recognises that its standard should only be taken as a starting point and recommends that some form of local assessment be undertaken. The standard has been used as the basis for the assessment of outdoor sports sites and children's play space, although amendments have been made to reflect local circumstances.

## Outdoor Sport Sites

**12.14** The Local Plan standard for outdoor sports is 1.6 Ha. (4 acres) per 1,000 population, adjusted to reflect the population profile of the District. Of this, 1.2 Ha. (3 acres) is for playing pitches, with the remainder 0.4 Ha. (1 acre) for other outdoor sports areas such as greens and courts. The survey identified every site in the District.

**12.15** Results from the survey reveal a District-wide shortage of outdoor sports provision of 33 Ha. (82 acres). This varies between playing pitches and other outdoor sports sites. Adequacy of provision is considered by Ward in the rural areas, while Dover and Deal are considered as self-contained areas. The deficit is concentrated in the two urban areas, which is of particular concern because:



*Tennis Courts, Russell Gardens, Dover*

- (a) outdoor sports needs are not being met;
- (b) while urban residents have the greatest possibility of travelling to sites by modes other than car, this opportunity is currently being missed; and
- (c) the urban wards have low levels of access to cars and, therefore, are less able to exercise a choice on using alternative outdoor sports facilities.

**12.16** The Council commissioned a desk-based study<sup>3</sup> into football pitch provision in Dover, Deal, Sandwich and Aylesham. This concluded that a shortfall in provision may exist in these areas. In particular, there is an existing need for one or two more grass pitches at Aylesham and possibly two at Sandwich. Pursuant to this, the Council's Recreation Section has identified a current need for a variety of outdoor sports facilities, including two artificial pitches for hockey/football and an athletics track. Through the improvement in the quality and range of outdoor sports provision and the use of more effective marketing, the implementation of the Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> should increase participation or interest in outdoor sports and may lead to an additional demand for facilities.

**12.17** PPG17 notes that publicly and privately owned playing fields are being sold off without considering the recreational needs of the community. Where school rolls are falling, and with the option of grant maintained status being available, the future of some school playing fields may be less certain. Given the large number of playing fields within school grounds, and the open space survey<sup>2</sup> showing a particular shortfall of playing pitches, many of these sites may be able to meet the long-term recreational needs of the District. PPG17 recognises that once developed, such sites are unlikely to be recovered. All school playing fields are therefore shown on the Proposals Map and are protected by Policy OS1. The Sports Council will be consulted on all proposals for the partial or total development of any playing field.

**12.18** Dual use arrangements allow the general public access to private outdoor sports areas, such as school playing fields. The District Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> urges that more dual use arrangements should be encouraged in the District. These arrangements can work well provided problems such as security and over use can be overcome. The Council, in line with PPG17, wishes to encourage such arrangements and, whenever practicable, will seek such agreements.

## Children's Play Sites

**12.19** Children's play space should be safe, secure and accessible by foot. The Local Plan standard is based on 0.8 Ha. (2 acres) per 1,000 population, adjusted to reflect the population profile of the District. To take account of accessibility, the NPFA recommends that a minimum walking distance be established to a range of play area types. The survey identified every site in the District, on a Ward basis, falling within the definition of children's play space. Catchment areas were applied to equipped play sites to consider accessibility.

**12.20** The survey reveals an overall shortage of play space (30 Ha./74 acres) with a major deficit at the urban areas. When assessed against the catchment areas, large parts of these are without access to equipped play areas. There is also a shortfall of equipped play space in rural areas, although the play space that does exist is fairly evenly distributed, with at least one site at most of the rural settlements. Areas not falling within a catchment or located in a Ward (urban or rural) which has a deficit in play space, are considered to be deficient in children's play space.

### **Informal Open Space**

**12.21** The District contains a wide variety of public open space (POS) for informal recreation, including municipal parks, the sea front and cliff top areas, village greens and small sitting out areas. It is important that people have access to some informal POS within walking distance of their homes and places of work, and that they provide an attractive environment for users.

**12.22** There are no national guidelines which could act as a starting point for developing local standards for informal POS. The Council considers that accessibility is the best means of determining adequacy of provision. Catchment areas will be applied to informal POS based on a maximum walking distance. Where unrestricted public access exists to outdoor sports sites, such as playing fields, the capacity of such areas to allow for walking, casual play and relaxation will be taken into account. Areas not falling within a catchment area will be considered deficient in informal POS provision.

**12.23** Private informal open space, to which there is restricted or no public access, can provide contrast within an urban area and so contribute to the quality of life. Where there are deficiencies in POS, it may be able to contribute to the long-term POS needs of an area. The Plan does not include standards on the provision of such space in view of the complexities involved in measuring this provision, although proposals will be considered against Policy OS1. An exception is allotments where the Council already holds information. In Deal, overall demand for allotments exceeds supply, whereas in Dover there is generally no deficiency. Proposals for development on allotments and other private informal open space will be considered against Policy OS1.

### **Open Space Protection**

**12.24** Open spaces to be protected are shown on the Proposals Map. Only sites of more than 0.05 Ha. (0.1 acre) are shown. Smaller sites and other sites not identified, will be considered against Policy OS1. Development which would cause the loss of open space will only be permitted where there is no identified deficit of POS, or a space of at least equal community value and accessibility can be provided in exchange for development. Exceptions to this include educational development on existing school sites. Small scale development may also be acceptable where this relates to the function of the open space, such as new changing facilities or a small cafe. Exceptionally, Policy OS5 allows for a new indoor sports centre on open space at land adjoining Tides Leisure Pool or Castle Community School.

**12.25** The development of a small part of an open space in an area of deficiency might be acceptable when it would allow for the remainder to be substantially improved through new facilities (perhaps for formal and/or informal recreation) and landscaping and planting. Public access and maintenance arrangements would need to be agreed. Partial development however, should not prejudice the long-term public open space needs of the area. For instance, it would be unacceptable if the area only has a small supply of sites currently available or likely to be available for sports use. The long-term supply of such space would take into account playing fields not included in the outdoor sports survey such as secondary school playing fields not yet in dual-use.

**12.26** In addition to the needs of the District for outdoor sport, children's play space and informal open space, open spaces can also display other qualities which will justify their protection, namely:-

- (a) *Visual Amenity Interest:* the space contributes to the appearance of the surrounding area in terms of landscape and urban design, and/or has a landscape value itself;
- (b) *Environmental Role:* the space serves as a green lung or area of openness in an otherwise built up area, a wind shelter or noise buffer;
- (c) *Cultural Importance:* the space carries significant local historic associations, social importance, period style or historic or archaeological remains; and

- (d) *Nature Conservation Value*: the space is an important local haven for plants and animals.

### Policy OS1

**Proposals for development which would result in the loss of open space, whether or not shown on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted unless:-**

- (i) **there is no identified qualitative or quantitative deficiency in public open space in terms of outdoor sports sites, children's play space or informal open space; or**
- (ii) **where there is such a deficiency, the site is incapable of contributing to making it good; or**
- (iii) **where there is such a deficiency and the site is capable of contributing to making it good, a replacement area with at least the same qualities and equivalent community benefit, including ease of access, can be made available; or**
- (iv) **in the case of a school site, the development is for educational purposes; or**
- (v) **in the case of small scale development, it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the open space; and**
- (vi) **in the case of (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), the site has no overriding visual amenity interest, environmental role, cultural importance or nature conservation value.**

### ***Environmental Appraisal***

*The policy works towards the Objectives of managing and enhancing habitats, species and landscapes, protecting open space and protecting the historic environment. No Objectives are adversely affected.*

### **NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE PROVISION**

**12.27** PPG17 suggests that local authorities may wish to require developers of land in built-up areas to create on or off site POS, or to make financial contributions to nearby existing POS. Structure Plan Policy ENV16(c) echoes this means of providing new POS.

**12.28** New housing development generates its own demand for POS, particularly children's play space. If insufficient provision is made for play space on or near a new housing site, this can put an additional strain on existing provision within the area. As the survey of children's play space reveals, (see para 12.20) however, this is more likely to mean that children will be without access to a suitable play area, be it equipped or for casual play. Developers will therefore be required to provide children's play space as part of new housing developments.



*Children's play space provided as part of new development*

**12.29** The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommend the provision of a range of play space types offering play experiences for children of different age groups. Each should be within a prescribed walking distance of the home. The Council will use these recommendations as a basis for seeking play space provision within family housing (defined as any dwelling with two or more bedrooms) as summarised below, and as detailed in Appendix 2:-

- (a) developments comprising 15 family dwellings or more will provide a local area for play (LAP) within a 100m. (328 ft.) walking distance of every family dwelling; and

- (b) developments comprising 50 family dwellings or more will in addition provide a local equipped area for play (LEAP) within a 400m. (1,310 ft.) walking distance of every family dwelling.

**12.30** The play space should be designed and laid out to ensure it can be enjoyed by children, whilst respecting the amenities of nearby residents. The space should be an integral part of the layout and not be provided in spaces left over once dwellings and roads have been planned. Its position should allow informal supervision from nearby properties, be accessible from public footpaths and away from vehicular traffic.

**12.31** The developer will be required to make arrangements for the long-term maintenance of any new play space. The Council will, however, be prepared to accept responsibility for maintenance provided that the design and construction are to a satisfactory standard and an adequate commuted payment is offered by the developer. This will be secured through planning conditions or if necessary by a legal agreement under Section 106. As an alternative to on-site provision the Council may accept a commuted payment towards improvements to an existing children's play space where it could also meet the needs of the new development. This payment would be equal to the cost of constructing the play space which would otherwise have been provided. For this alternative to be acceptable, the play space would have to be well related to the new housing.

## **Policy OS2**

**Proposals for new family housing comprising 15 or more dwellings will not be permitted unless children's play space is provided in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix 2 and its long-term maintenance is secured. Where appropriate, as an alternative to on-site provision, developers may make a commuted payment to the Council for the improvement of a nearby children's play space equal to the cost of constructing the play space which would otherwise have been provided.**

### ***Environmental Appraisal***

*The policy supports the Objective of making good deficiencies in open space. No Objectives are adversely affected.*

**12.32** The Council is committed to making good deficiencies in the wider open space needs of the District through the establishment of an Open Space Improvement Programme (OSIP). This would include the identification of new sites for formal and informal POS or a programme of works for the improvement of existing ones. Any open space protected by Policy OS1, be it in public or private ownership, would be included within an OSIP as and when arrangements are made with landowners to secure public access. This could entail, for example, the use of a disused allotment site for the provision of POS or public access to a playing field in educational use, where no dual use arrangements currently exist. However, care would be needed to ensure that the recreational use of POS would not prejudice its other qualities (see 12.26). An OSIP could be contained within a strategy document, which is anticipated to be reviewed annually.

**12.33** The funding for an OSIP is likely to come from developer contributions as part of new housing development, Parish and Town Councils and from the Council. Through partnerships, the Council will encourage maintenance of open space to be managed by Parish and Town Councils, residents' companies and housing associations.

**12.34** As all new housing puts pressure on open space, the Council considers that developers should be required to contribute to meeting open space needs arising from their proposals unless there are overriding reasons, which are justified by the developer and accepted by the Council. Such arrangements may take the form of providing equipped facilities or a commuted sum towards provision offsite but the Council will only grant permission when the long term future of provision has been secured. The period will normally not be less than 15 years and the amount a developer contributes to open space will be subject to negotiation through the development control process. It will be based on considerations including the nature and scale of the development, the development's location, other anticipated housing development in the catchment of the project site, whether the developer is providing affordable housing or whether the developer is making contributions to other community facilities or infrastructure. The Council will prepare supplementary planning guidance on open space to assist in implementing Policy OS3.



## Policy OS3

**Planning permission for housing will only be granted where developers have made long term arrangements to meet open space needs arising from their proposals.**

### *Environmental Appraisal*

*The policy supports the Objective of making good deficiencies in open space. No Objectives are adversely affected.*

### **Council Owned Land**

**12.35** PPG17 encourages local authorities to lead by example in the use they make of sites which they own. Many sites protected by Policy OS1 are Council-owned. The Council is committed to retaining and improving those important open spaces, including outdoor sports sites, for public use and for their contribution to environmental quality. The Council intends to carry out work as resources permit which are outlined in the OSIP.



*Improved play facilities at Victoria Park, Deal*

### **Green Wedges**

**12.36** Green wedges are shown on the Proposals Map and protected by Policy OS4. Their main purpose is to ensure that undeveloped land, which performs one of the following functions, remains free from development:-

- (a) shaping the character and form of a built-up area;
- (b) providing a degree of separation between parts of the built-up area; and
- (c) enhancing the appearance of a built-up area by fulfilling a landscape setting function.

**12.37** As many of the green wedges comprise agricultural land, the Council will take a strict view when considering agriculturally-related development and where planning permission is required, will not permit development which would prejudice the objectives of Policy OS4. Whenever possible, the Council will negotiate with farmers over permitted development which it considers could be better located or designed.

## Policy OS4

**Within green wedges, shown on the Proposal Map, development will not be permitted which would harm their function of:**

- (i) shaping the character and form of built-up areas; or**
- (ii) providing a degree of separation between parts of a built-up area; or**
- (iii) enhancing the appearance of a built-up area through its landscape setting.**

### *Environmental Appraisal*

*The policy works towards the Objectives of protecting the countryside, managing habitats, species and landscapes. No Objectives are adversely affected.*

## NEW INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

### Indoor Sports Centre, Deal

**12.38** The District Sport and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> concluded that there was sufficient demand for a dry-sports centre in Deal. PPG17 considers such uses should ideally be located in town centres. A survey of possible sites reveals that no town centre site exists. PPG6 states that in seeking to locate leisure uses which attract a large number of people the 'sequential approach' adopted for retail development should apply (see Chapter 11). This approach suggests that the best alternatives would be land adjacent to Tides Leisure Pool in Victoria Park (south of Park Road) or at Castle Community School, where dual-use would be possible. A feasibility study has been carried out to identify detailed requirements and subsequently a planning application was submitted and granted for a site at Tides Leisure Pool. The site, which is the subject of the planning permission, is shown allocated on the Proposals Map.

**12.39** The site is close to large areas of open space providing a degree of openness within an otherwise built-up area. New built development of the size necessary for an indoor sports centre will need to be sited and designed, so as to minimise the impact on this character. Satisfactory access will need to be achieved by car, cycle and foot, including the provision of disabled access to the sports centre itself, via the existing access to Tides from Park Avenue, although some improvements may be needed. The residential amenity of nearby residents should also be protected.

#### **Policy OS5**

**Land at Tides Leisure Pool, Victoria Park, Deal, is shown on Sheet 4 of the Proposals Map as a site for a new indoor sports centre. Proposals for such development will be permitted provided that:-**

- (i) access arrangements, including those for pedestrians, and cyclists, are satisfactory to and within the site;**
- (ii) particular care is taken to ensure the building does not detract from long open views and the setting of Victoria Park;**
- (iii) the design incorporates features which reduce its bulk and massing;**
- (iv) provision is made for disabled access to the building; and**
- (v) the amenities of nearby residents are not harmed.**

#### ***Environmental Appraisal***

*The policy supports the Objectives of protecting the countryside from development, reducing pollution, encouraging investment in urban areas, minimising the need to travel and making provision for alternatives to the car. No Objectives are adversely affected.*

**12.40** The relationship between where people live and work, and the location of sports facilities will strongly affect the amount of travelling that people will need to undertake as well as the mode of transport used. As the Plan seeks to move towards a more sustainable pattern of development and with two thirds of the District's population living in the urban areas, it is considered that major new facilities, such as multi-screen cinemas, or bowling alleys, should be located in Dover and Deal, as near as possible to their centres and close to public transport routes. This is in line with the 'sequential approach' adopted for retail development (see Chapter 11) and which PPG6 recommends should apply to leisure uses. It also accords with Structure Plan Policy SR2. The District Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> identified a need for a 20/25 metre swimming pool at Deal or Sandwich. Proposals for such facilities will be subject to Policy OS6, which also reflects the need to place such facilities in accessible locations. New indoor facilities on existing recreation grounds will also be subject to Policy OS1.

**12.41** PPG17 recognises that people living in the countryside have no less a need for recreation as those living in towns. Providing for local sporting/recreational needs close to demand helps to meet sustainable travel objectives. Local facilities in the rural area will be permitted if they are easily accessible to users and well-related to a rural settlement. A local facility may serve a group of parishes.

**12.42** Any such proposal would need to satisfy countryside and other relevant policies of the Plan. The use of community facilities, such as village halls, and the re-use of rural buildings may provide an opportunity for indoor sport. Chapter 14 considers the provision of new facilities in Aylesham.

### **Policy OS6**

**Proposals for indoor sports and recreational facilities will be permitted provided:-**

- (i) any major new facility is located in Dover or Deal at a site within the town centre or, if no such site is available, located on the edge-of-centre with good pedestrian and cycle links to the centre, or if no such site is available, is located elsewhere in the urban area on a site which is or can be made accessible by a range of transport modes, including public transport; or**
- (ii) if located at a rural settlement, they only satisfy an identified local need.**

### ***Environmental Appraisal***

*The policy works towards the Objectives of reducing pollution, concentrating investment in urban areas, limiting development in rural settlements to proven needs and locating major development so as to minimise the need to travel. No Objectives are adversely affected*

## **NEW OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES**

**12.43** The urban areas of Dover and Deal provide a wide range of publicly and privately owned outdoor sports facilities. The Council will seek to direct new facilities to these areas where they are most easily accessible. To make the best use of sites, it is desirable that new facilities are multi-use. Where floodlighting is used, this should not harm residential amenity or result in light pollution. Flood-lighting will be subject to a restriction regarding hours of use. The Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> identified a need for a full-sized artificial pitch at Deal. Any proposal will be judged against Policy OS7.

**12.44** Combined with land use pressures on urban sites, the space requirements of certain sports can lead to pressure for some sports to locate outside, but close to, the urban area. PPG17 urges local planning authorities to consider the scope for encouraging recreational facilities and increased public access to open land at the urban fringe, provided that this is compatible with existing land uses. The need to protect the countryside from certain sport and recreation facilities is emphasised by Structure Plan Policy SR3.

**12.45** Around Dover, the urban fringe includes an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast, a Special Landscape Area and green wedge designations. The area around Deal is less constrained. Outdoor facilities will only be permitted on the urban fringe if it can be demonstrated that no site exists within the urban area. In cases of irreconcilable conflict, countryside and other protection policies must prevail. Local facilities in the rural area will be permitted if they are easily accessible to users and well-related to a rural settlement. A local facility may serve a group of parishes.

**12.46** Outdoor facilities often require car parking, floodlighting, high fencing, and buildings for changing, storage and club activities. These features can be intrusive and where there is irreconcilable conflict with countryside, residential amenity, traffic safety, travel and other relevant policies of the Plan proposals will be refused.

## Golf

**12.47** There are four golf courses and one golf driving range in the District, and planning permission exists for a further two courses. If implemented, this level of provision is more than adequate to meet the guidelines laid down by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrew's<sup>4</sup>. However, there are no public or 'pay as you play' or 'pitch and putt' courses. The Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup>, has recognised this need. While no specific sites have been identified in this Plan, Policy AS2 allows for a 'pay as you play' course to be provided as part of the restoration of the Betteshanger Colliery spoil tip. Should proposals come forward they will otherwise be considered against Policy OS7.

**12.48** Golf generally requires large areas of land. Proposals may therefore conflict with countryside designations and public right of ways. In the particular case of a golf driving range, this can also entail large areas of netting and floodlighting. The appearance of golf courses and associated development can often be at odds with the character of the landscape. In addition, the development should not result in the irreversible loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Therefore, countryside considerations will take precedence.



*Royal St. George's, Sandwich*

**12.49** Golf course proposals can involve large-scale land modelling. Not only can this be incompatible with local landscape character, it can also damage archaeological features. Applications for golf courses should be accompanied by an archaeological assessment. Conditions will be imposed safeguarding archaeological considerations.

**12.50** Golf courses should be located and planned in a way that takes account of the need to meet the sustainable objectives of the Plan. The Council will only permit a new course if it is well related to an urban area, in terms of proximity to the urban boundary and to main roads well served by public transport.

**12.51** If properly managed, golf courses can provide opportunities to enhance wildlife habitats and introduce new ones. They can also be used to encourage wider public access to the countryside for informal leisure. Where the principle of development is established, the Council will seek to ensure that existing features of landscape and nature conservation value are maintained and enhanced, in keeping with the intrinsic character of the area. Where practicable, opportunities should be made for wider public access for informal recreation.

**12.52** Non-essential associated development will be considered on its own merits against other policies in the Plan. Only essential development, if appropriate in scale to the character of the locality and located so as to minimise visual impact, will be permitted.

### **Policy OS7**

**Proposals for outdoor sports and recreational facilities or for the expansion/enhancement of existing facilities will be permitted provided:-**

- (i) major facilities are located in Dover or Deal, or if no such suitable sites are available they are well-related to the urban edge of Dover or Deal and sited so as to enable a significant proportion of users the opportunity to access the facility by public transport, cycle and on foot; or**
- (ii) if located at a rural settlement, they only satisfy an identified local need and associated built development is small in scale, ancillary to the outdoor sports or recreation use and unobtrusively sited.**

**In all locations development will not be permitted if it would cause harm to residential amenity through noise or illumination and where floodlighting is permitted conditions will be imposed to regulate operation, including hours of use.**

## ***Environmental Appraisal***

*The Policy works towards the Objectives of concentrating investment at the urban areas, providing development at rural settlements appropriate to their scale and needs, and locating major development so as to minimise the need to travel*

### **Specialist Sports and Leisure Activities**

**12.53** There has been a steady increase in demand for the use of countryside for specialist sports and leisure activities. Many of these sports are carried out under permitted development rights. These give a general grant of planning permission for a certain number of days in any one calendar year. When planning permission is required for the use of land for specialist sports, the Council will seek to ensure that the amenity of local residents is not harmed through excessive noise and disturbance, and that the enjoyment of the countryside for others is not prejudiced. Where the location of these sports conflicts with countryside interests or protecting public rights of way, these latter interests will prevail. In the event of such activities not requiring permission, the Council will consider removing permitted development rights, subject to the Secretary of State's approval, where the use represents a threat to sites of nature conservation interest. The issues raised by such sports are covered by other policies in the Plan.

**12.54** Proposals relating to Lydden Circuit are considered in Chapter 15. Policy AS14 allows for motorised sports at the former Autocar storage depot provided there would be no adverse noise impacts on residential amenity nor the adjacent nature conservation sites. Policy AS17 allows for mountain and power biking on the Snowdown Spoil Tip.

### **INFORMAL COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION**

**12.55** PPG17 and the Structure Plan recognise that informal countryside recreation is now the most popular outdoor activity in Britain. The District has a very extensive footpath, byway and unsurfaced unclassified road network, together with parts of the North Downs and Saxon Shore Ways, bridleways, two local nature reserves, National Trust lands and English Heritage attractions. The proposed cycle routes (see Policy TR9) will also offer the opportunity for recreational cycling in the countryside. The Council funds, in conjunction with others, the White Cliffs Countryside Project (WCCP) which promotes informal recreation. The South East Council for Sport and Recreation has produced a Rural Recreation Strategy<sup>5</sup> and the County Council, a Rights of Way Strategy<sup>6</sup>.

**12.56** Structure Plan Policy SR3 is positive about proposals for informal recreation in the countryside and at the coast, where there would be no harm to the environment or transport network. The Council wishes to encourage the development and enhancement of informal recreation facilities in the countryside for visitors and local people, provided there is no conflict with policies for countryside protection, rural rights of way, travel demand or traffic management. Wherever possible, new facilities should provide for the needs of disabled people. This should include the treatment of surfaces and points of access. Proposals requiring planning permission for informal countryside recreation will be considered by policies in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **WATER-BASED RECREATION**

**12.57** The District has an attractive and varied coastline, offering opportunities for a wide range of water-based sporting activities. Sports clubs cater for yachting, dinghy sailing, windsurfing, rowing, water skiing, power boating, parascending, sea angling and diving.

**12.58** Related facilities, such as jetties, slipways and clubhouses, may conflict with conservation interests. This is a particularly sensitive issue in areas designated Heritage Coast or Undeveloped Coast. Pegwell Bay/Sandwich Bay and parts of the River Stour provide for water sports but are also internationally important for nature conservation. Structure Plan Policy SR4 encourages water sports, provided there is no material harm to areas of established wildlife or general environmental importance. Where irreconcilable conflicts do occur, both PPG17 and PPG20 state that the protection of natural beauty and nature conservation interests must take precedence. Noise pollution can also be a problem with some forms of water-based recreation. Such uses will not be permitted where they would have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenity, historic environment, nature conservation interests or spoil the quiet enjoyment of the countryside for others. The need to control the visual impact of pontoons and moorings is addressed in Chapter 6.

**12.59** A study<sup>7</sup> considered that the full potential of Dover harbour as a watersports arena has yet to be fully realised, particularly for dinghy sailing and related training. Existing shore facilities are inadequate to support any increase in demand and the study puts forward options, ranging from upgrading existing facilities to providing a new watersports centre on the Promenade. Any development in this area would have to be acceptable in design terms, given the proximity of Waterloo Crescent Conservation Area and promenade in particular. The Council supports the findings of the Water Sports Study and, in particular, supports the principle of a new watersports centre at Dover Promenade.

**12.60** Opportunities also exist to encourage participation in water sports in the harbour area with proposed redevelopment of the Western Docks and the potential for the marina to be made non-tidal.



*Marina at Wellington Dock, Dover*

**12.61** The Sports and Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> identified further opportunities for water-based recreation in the District. The provision of full-tide slipways at St Margaret's Bay, as recommended in the Strategy, is only considered acceptable if there would be no damage to nature conservation or historic environment interests. The recreational potential of Stonar Lake, which lies close to Sandwich Industrial Estate, has also been identified. The construction of a new access road along the southern and eastern edge of the lake to serve the proposed golf complex at New Downs Farm, could offer an opportunity to access the lake. However, the southern end of the lake would be constrained by this road and car parking could only be located to the south of the road. Additionally, at the southern end of the lake, some land and buildings are in a semi-derelict state, and the opportunity exists for improvement to be made to the general appearance of the area. Any building works should make provision for bats and barn owls. Further, part of the southern end of the lake is the site of the remains of the Medieval Port of Stonar, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

**12.62** Although the opportunity exists for new water-based recreation, the lake is an important nature conservation resource. This deep water lake attracts diving waterfowl including, during the winter months, rare Slavonian Grebes, which are protected under EU Directive 79/409. Common sandpipers are evident in spring and early summer. It is also close to the River Stour, which is designated a SPA and Ramsar site, notified as a SSSI for its nature conservation value and a candidate SAC.

**12.63** The Council considers only low key recreational pursuits, such as fishing, walking and non-powered water sports, which are unlikely to damage the lake's nature conservation value, would be acceptable. For example, non-powered water sports could include sailing, windsurfing, rowing and canoeing. Water sports which involve powered craft, such as waterskiing and jet skis, would not be acceptable. Most of the nature conservation interest is concentrated to the north and north west and the south of the lake. These should be safeguarded by the zoning of uses and restricting activities on the lake to the months April until September inclusive. Opportunities exist to improve the nature conservation habitat by providing floating rafters for nesting on those parts of the lake not used for water sports. Such provision could be considered in any proposal coming forward for the wider recreational use of the lake.

## **Policy OS8**

**New development involving the use of the Stonar Lake area, shown on Sheet 2 and the Sandwich Inset of the Proposals Map, for low key recreation including fishing, walking and non-powered water sports will be permitted provided:**

- (i) that it is acceptable in nature conservation, archaeological and highway terms;**
- (ii) uses are zoned to ensure there is no damage to nature conservation interests; and**
- (iii) any new buildings or conversions of existing buildings make provision for bats and barn owls.**

**A condition will be imposed restricting fishing and non-powered water sports on the lake to the months of April to September inclusive.**

### ***Environmental Appraisal***

*The policy contributes to the Objectives of managing and enhancing habitats, species and landscapes, and protecting the historic environment. No Objectives are adversely affected.*

## **REFERENCES**

- <sup>1</sup>*A Sport and Recreation Strategy for the People of Dover District, Roger Quinton Associates, 1995*
- <sup>2</sup>*Open Space Survey, Dover District Council, 1996*
- <sup>3</sup>*Dover District Council Recreation Strategy: Phase 1; McAlpine, Thorpe and Warriar; 1993*
- <sup>4</sup>*The Demand for Golf, Royal and Ancient Golf Club, 1989*
- <sup>5</sup>*Rural Recreation Strategy - South East Council for Sport and Recreation*
- <sup>6</sup>*Rights of Way Strategy - Kent County Council*
- <sup>7</sup>*Water Sports Study - Dover Seafront and Harbour, The Sports Council and Sports Partner, 1994*