

# **9. RECREATION AND TOURISM**

## **INTRODUCTION**

9.1 In September 1991, the government published its first ever national Planning Policy Guidance Note on "Sport and Recreation" (Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 17) which acknowledges that sport and recreation are activities with major land use implications. It is therefore important that the Local Plan provides policies and guidance to the public, developers and their agents regarding sport and recreation land use in the district.

9.2 Such policies need to reflect the changing demands for tourism, recreation and leisure which, in turn, are placing newer and greater pressures on the environment. The District Council regards sports and recreation in general as being integral to preserving and enhancing the quality of life for local people, and in attracting visitors to South Cambridgeshire. Cambridge will remain the focus for many of the visitors to the Cambridge area although as part of a wider strategy, the District Council will encourage tourists into the rural area both to alleviate pressure within the City and to bring economic and other benefits to this District from the tourist industry.

9.3 South Cambridgeshire's sports and recreation facilities are generally concentrated at the Village Colleges which provide most of the secondary education in the District. These are targeted by the District Council in the provision of grants for dual-use which secure school and community use of these facilities for South Cambridgeshire residents. This College-based provision is supplemented by Parish Council provision of small scale facilities and private facilities as diverse as angling, golf, bowls and go-karting.

9.4 In 1995, consultants were instructed by the District Council to prepare a District-Wide Sport and Recreation Strategy, the land use implications of which are discussed later in this chapter. In general, the Strategy concludes that there were few major deficiencies in facilities in South Cambridgeshire and that each of the Villages Colleges serving South  
and the need for new facilities.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To meet the needs for countryside recreation and leisure of those living within the Cambridge Area.
- To meet the formal and informal recreational and leisure needs of those living within South Cambridgeshire.
- To ensure the proper provision and maintenance of open space consistent with levels of planned residential development.
- To ensure that tourist facilities are based on the physical and cultural heritage of South Cambridgeshire.
- All of the above should have regard to the environmental implications of new development.

## RECREATION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

**POLICY RT1:** In considering applications for the development of recreation and tourist facilities, the District Council will have regard to the need for such facilities and the benefits which might accrue. The District Council will resist any proposals which would:

- (1) result in the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a);**
- (2) not be in close proximity to and not be well related with an established settlement and its built-up area;**
- (3) result in buildings and other structures not directly related to the proposed use;**
- (4) by reason of its scale, form, design and materials of the proposal, together with any associated development such as clubhouses, pavilions, and other buildings and structures would create an intrusive feature in the landscape or surrounding area;**
- (5) result in the loss of ecological, wildlife and archaeological interests;**
- (6) generate significant motorised traffic movements;**
- (7) have inadequate provision for parking and manoeuvring of cars and service vehicles to the District Council's standards;**
- (8) not provide appropriate provision for screening and to minimise the visual intrusion into neighbouring development and the countryside;**
- (9) not undertake adequate measures for the screened storage and safe disposal of refuse.**

9.5 Policy RT1 reflects the close relationship between leisure, recreation and tourism and the need to have a policy which will address development proposals affecting an expanding population with changing trends of demand. It indicates a real concern that a balance must be struck between the pressures for such development against the protection of the environment: not only to protect the latter for its own sake, but to ensure that development does not damage the very amenity that attracts people to this area.

9.6 The criteria-based Policy RT1 enables the authority to consider a wide range of tourism and recreation proposals. In the past these have ranged from children's play areas to golf courses. Policy SP13/6 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 provides policy guidance to assess proposals for new golf courses or extensions to them. The Council will

apply Policy SP13/6 and Local Plan Policy RT1 to any such proposals. It will be important when considering golf course applications to resist those schemes which propose additional enabling development, such as housing or hotels, which are often sought to make the proposal viable and which are not appropriate in the countryside. Appropriate conditions or legal agreements will be used to ensure that the facilities provided at the golf club are directly related to the use of the site for that form of leisure.

9.7 One of the largest recreational proposals submitted to the District Council has been the plan to develop a 2,000 metre rowing course between Milton and Waterbeach alongside the River Cam. The District Council resolved in 1995 to grant planning permission for a course with ancillary facilities subject to the granting of a Section 106 agreement. To date this has not been signed.

## **THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN NEW DEVELOPMENT**

9.8 It is important that larger new residential developments (taken as 21 dwellings or more) make proper provision for the open space needs of their residents where existing local facilities are inadequate. Since there are not yet any locally-based assessments of open space needs the Council will judge new proposals against the NPFA standards of 2.4ha per 1,000 people. This translates into about 60sq.m per dwelling. New residential developments (other than sheltered dwellings and residential homes) will be required to contribute to these needs at that rate. Incidental open spaces within developments, such as landscaping areas, will not be considered as making a contribution to the 60sq.m standard.

9.9 Where developments of 20 or fewer dwellings form part of a larger development they will be expected to make a proportionate contribution towards overall provision. In such cases it will be important for the extent and location of open space to be established at the outset, probably through a legal agreement or planning obligation.

**POLICY RT2: In areas where adequate nearby provision does not already exist, new residential developments of 21 dwellings or more shall make a contribution towards local achievement of the minimum NPFA standard of 2.4ha per 1,000 people. For these purposes an appropriate contribution shall be considered as 60sq.m per dwelling. Sheltered dwellings and residential homes do not need to contribute to this requirement. Where an individual phase of development comprises fewer than 21 dwellings but will form part of a larger scheme exceeding that total, a proportional contribution to future provision will be required.**

**As an integral part of any provision required above, space shall be provided for formal and informal children's play space at a ratio of roughly 50:50 and at standard of 15sq.m for every dwelling with 2 or more bedrooms. Formal play areas shall be equipped with hard 'safety' playing surfaces and fixed play equipment. All such play spaces (both formal and informal) shall be located in such a way as to minimise potential for nuisance to neighbours.**

9.10 About 15sq.m of the total of 60sq.m should be provided in the form of formal and informal children's play space, again based on the NPFA standards. Only family dwellings of

2 or more bedrooms will be expected to contribute towards this element of open space provision. Play spaces are normally managed by the Parish Council and (in such cases) the Council will be consulted on the type of provision that is to be made. A properly constituted residents' management company would also be considered a suitable method of management. In appropriate cases the District Council may seek commuted maintenance sums towards the future care of small areas of open space that mainly benefit the development itself.

9.11 The Council will support the provision of appropriate works of public art within new development-related public open spaces.

### **DUAL USE FACILITIES**

9.12 In November 1994, the District Council employed consultants to prepare a sports and recreation strategy. It concluded that the policy of the Council as an enabler was sound, encouraging and helping the community to manage its own leisure through grants to organisations. Such a policy focuses attention on Village Colleges which provide the opportunity to concentrate major facilities in locations serving the local communities.

**POLICY RT3: The District Council will grant planning permission for dual use recreation facilities, both indoor and outdoor, well related to Village Colleges, having regard to the policy criteria set out in Policy RT1.**

9.13 The formulation of a dual use policy started in 1987 following the Sports Council review that concluded there was inadequate provision of sports halls and swimming pools in the District. Responding to a survey, the Council has continued to enable the provision of community facilities based on Village Colleges - the geographical spread of the District, the small rural populations, the lack of any major towns or strategic locations and the community roles already part of the Village College ethos, all pointed to an enabling strategy. Between 1990-95 the Council provided grants and contributions for recreation and leisure projects totalling £643,000: nearly half of this figure was budgeted for in 1994/95. Where dual use proposals are submitted, the District Council will encourage National Lottery funding. The implications of the strategy are to further concentrate the Council's policy towards supporting sport and recreation proposals of a dual use nature at Village Colleges.

9.14 In addition to these proposals, the District Council commissioned a further consultant's report in September 1996 on the feasibility of new indoor swimming provision in South Cambridgeshire. No decisions have yet been taken on the findings of the report.

### **COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION**

9.15 PPG17 "Sport and Recreation" acknowledges that dual use facilities are sometimes the best way of providing recreation provision in the rural area. Whilst such 'formal' provision is welcomed in appropriate areas, informal forms of recreation, including walking, horse-riding and cycling are the most popular activities. The aim is to balance and reconcile these recreation interests and environmental interests through appropriate management measures. Such measures will need to take account of the nature of the particular sporting or recreational activity and the ability of the land to cope with that activity in the long term. As well as public rights of way, local authorities can also seek better access to the countryside through permissive path agreements with landowners.

## Public Rights of Way

**POLICY RT4: Where appropriate, the District Council will negotiate with the relevant landowners and organisations to extend, or where necessary amend, the network of public rights of way including circular routes, the National Cycle Network, and the National Bridleroute Network.**

9.16 The network of paths may be capable of improvement and rationalisation. With changes in field boundaries, land-use and farming practices, there may be opportunities to make changes which would be more appropriate, convenient and safer than existing routes for both recreational walkers and farmers or landowners. Such improvements may be achieved through the Parish Paths Partnership.

### Signposting and waymarking of footpaths and bridleways

**POLICY RT5: The District Council will work with the County Council, the Countryside Commission, Parish Councils and where appropriate local interest groups to achieve improved signposting and way-marking of footpaths and bridleways through the Parish Paths Partnership.**

9.17 The Council recognises that the presence of footpaths, bridleways and other routes in the countryside provide important opportunities for recreation in the rural area including the Cambridge Green Belt (see Green Belt Chapter). These routes provide important linkages and circular routes between the countryside and the city and between settlements themselves. Whilst many of the routes have been established over time, the Council will encourage new routes where appropriate. The Parish Paths Partnership provides such an opportunity to improve existing public rights of way networks, and initiate new routes through an agreed programme in association with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Countryside Commission and Parish Councils. In 1995 the District Council supported the creation of the Fen Rivers Way, the continuous footpath between Cambridge and Ely alongside the River Cam. Footpaths are also planned in conjunction with ongoing developments which will provide important recreational resources in the future.

### Re-use of disused railway tracks

**POLICY RT6: The District Council will encourage the re-use of disused railway tracks for recreation and leisure purposes, without reducing their potential as possible public transport corridors.**

9.18 A number of disused railway tracks exist in the District including the Cambridge to Mildenhall, Cambridge to Colchester, the Cambridge to Bedford and the Cambridge to St Ives lines. All of the lines are an important potential recreational resource in addition to their retention as possible public transport corridors. The Council will give consideration to the nature conservation biodiversity interest of disused railtracks in determining proposals for their development. The Cambridge to St Ives line is the subject of a County Council

feasibility study for a heavy rail option. It is this Council's view that the study should explore its future use for guided bus.

## **PROTECTION OF EXISTING RECREATION AREAS**

9.19 In 1994 the Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation, supported by the Sports Council published "Sport in the East: Partnership in Action". This document seeks to bring forward a framework for partnership between all agencies involved in sport in the region and at the same time highlight the importance of land use planning to the future of sport in the country. The protection of playing fields (a 'playing field' means the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch) is an important element of the strategy and was further enhanced in July 1995 when the Department of Heritage published "Sport Raising the Game". This profile reflects guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 1991 "Sport and Recreation" (paras 41-43) which states that playing fields and other areas with recreational use, should be protected. Such an approach is contained within Structure Plan 1995 policy SP3/7 which states:

*"Green spaces serving important visual, amenity, wildlife habitat and/or recreation functions or which have value as pollution-free walking and/or cycling routes within towns and villages will be protected from further development harmful to these functions".*

9.20 PPG17 acknowledges that all playing fields, whether school playing fields, or those owned by other public, private or voluntary organisations, are of special significance for their recreational and amenity value. In South Cambridgeshire such provision is an important community resource and in many cases, provides an important breathing space in an otherwise built-up environment. Such sites are therefore accorded particular protection. In August 1995, amendments to the General Development Order now require Local Planning Authorities to notify the English Sports Council of certain planning applications affecting playing fields.

**POLICY RT7: Planning permission will not be granted for proposals resulting in the loss of land and buildings providing for recreational use except where:**

- (1) sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site;**
- (2) alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is available; or**
- (3) There is a demonstrable surplus of all forms of open space in the area.**

9.21 This policy applies to all playing fields, including those controlled by the Local Education Authority.

## CAMBOURNE

**POLICY RT8: The District Council will require the following recreation provision to be provided and laid out on site within Cambourne:**

- (1) 18 hectares of playing fields and spectator areas of appropriate NPFA specification namely 4 football pitches, 3 hockey pitches, 2 cricket pitches, 2 rugby pitches and outdoor bowling green;**
- (2) a multi-purpose floodlit area comprising two tennis courts with hard surface finish and the remaining balance a synthetic grassed area; and**
- (3) a multi-purpose sports centre with a gross internal floor area of 1,425 square metres comprising a sports playing hall, ancillary hall, 2 squash courts, fitness room, health suite, changing rooms, bar and circulation area.**

9.22 The granting of planning permission for a new settlement of 3,300 dwellings on the southern side the A428 west of Cambridge (Cambourne), will create a need for substantial recreational provision of both indoor and outdoor facilities to serve the new settlement and nearby villages (Policy SE7). Accordingly, within the Section 106 Agreement for the new settlement, there is a list of sport and leisure facilities that are required as part of the development. These include 18 hectares of playing fields, outdoor bowling green, children's play areas, tennis courts, and a multi-purpose sports centre.

## TOURISM

9.23 In Planning Policy Guidance Note No.21 "Tourism", the government outlines its view that the tourism industry should flourish in response to the market, while respecting the environment which attracts visitors but which also has a far wider and enduring value. This is particularly relevant to South Cambridgeshire which has a number of important tourist attractions set within attractive countryside where the application of the policies of restraint aim to protect the rural area from the often adverse effects of new development. Cambridge will remain the focus for tourist activity and the main centre for tourist accommodation. However as South Cambridgeshire completely encircles Cambridge City, it is likely to come under increasing pressure for development.

9.24 Whilst it is acknowledged that tourism is a significant contributor to the national economy generating new activity and job growth, it is important to respect the environment in which the needs of tourists can be managed. Policies therefore must be fully consistent with the overall policy of restraint of development and the ideas of sustainability having regard to the needs and characteristics of the District, particularly the policy constraints which apply such as the Landscape Character Areas and Green Belt, and a significant number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

9.25 The historic city of Cambridge will continue to be the main focus for the visitor in terms of attractions and accommodation. The Council does, however, acknowledge that the administrative boundaries between the two authorities rarely exists in the eyes of the visitor and it is therefore appropriate to consider tourism policies within the context of the Cambridge Area (Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire) ensuring that the quality of the environment is maintained and, where possible, enhanced. The Cambridge Tourism Strategy

adopted by Cambridge City Council in April 1996 (note: a revised version was adopted in 2001) acknowledges that there is a need to reconcile the sometimes competing needs of residents, visitors and the environment, particularly in the historic core of the city. At the same time there is an awareness on behalf of this Council that tourism can bring benefits to the rural area including greater spending on goods and services and the creation and support of jobs. The District Council in partnership with other Cambridgeshire Authorities seeks to promote Cambridgeshire through brochures and exhibitions to relieve some of the tourism pressure on the historic core of Cambridge.

9.26 The District contains a number of important tourist attractions such as Wimpole Hall and Home Farm, the Imperial War Museum, the American War Cemetery at Madingley and Linton Zoo. Other attractions include Chilford Hall Barns, Milton Country Park and Grantchester Meadows.

#### **Duxford Imperial War Museum**

**POLICY RT9: The Imperial War Museum site at Duxford Airfield will be treated as a special case as a major tourist/recreation facility. Proposals will be considered with regard to the particular needs and opportunities of the site, the criteria in Policy RT1, and the following specific criteria:**

- (1) any proposal must be associated with the continued use of the site as a museum of aviation and twentieth century conflict;**
- (2) the District Council will require additional details concerning the scale, form and design to accompany any outline application;**
- (3) details of projected increases in aircraft noise will be required with all proposals which would lead to increased flying activity.**
- (4) The area to which this policy applies is shown on Inset Proposals Map No. 91A.**

9.27 The Imperial War Museum is a major tourist attraction based upon a long-established airfield. Construction of the American Air Museum on the site began in September 1995 following the granting of planning permission in February 1992. It was opened in August 1997 by HM The Queen.

9.28 Given the national significance of the Imperial War Museum, the District Council will give it special consideration within the context of protecting the quality of the surrounding landscape in this sensitive site on the edge of the Cambridge Green Belt.

9.29 Much of the open land on the northern edge of the policy area defined in the Inset Map 91A is important to the setting of the former air force base. Any development proposals in this area will be required to conserve the essential nature of this setting.

9.30 As a major tourist attraction, the Museum is a significant generator of traffic and therefore where major developments are proposed, early consultation with the Highways Authority is advisable given the importance of ensuring the safety and free flow of traffic on the M11 and A505. Proposals which are not directly related to the special nature of the site and its use as a museum will be tested solely against Policy RT1 and other Local Plan policies.

9.31 The Museum has a long-term vision of realigning the A505 to the north of Heathfield so as to improve the environment of the Museum by removing severance and allowing the

two parts of the site to be better integrated as well as bringing other wider benefits to the village.

#### **Development for Holiday Accommodation**

**POLICY RT10: The District Council will support the conversion of buildings to holiday accommodation, which conform to the criteria in Policy RT1 and where:**

- (1) The building is in sound condition and is capable of being re-used without significant extensive rebuilding, extension or alteration.**
- (2) The building itself and the proposal are of an appropriate scale, environmentally acceptable and in keeping with the character of the area and any surrounding buildings.**
- (3) Together with the cumulative effect of neighbouring proposals, development would have an acceptable impact on character and amenity of the locality.**

**Where applicable, the proposal should not conflict with the architectural, ecological or historical interest of the building and the surrounding area.**

**Planning permission for the re-use of the building will be dependent on a Section 106 Agreement to limit the use of the accommodation to short term holiday lets.**

**Where planning permission is granted, permitted development rights may be removed in the interests of amenity.**

9.32 The District Council acknowledges that tourism proposals can assist in diversifying the rural economy whilst ensuring that such development in the countryside must respond sensitively to the rural environment, be appropriate in scale and location and demonstrate high standards of design.

9.33 Accommodation for tourists through the conversion of existing buildings is an important element of rural diversification since it is using existing resources in the countryside. However development will not be permitted which causes unacceptable damage to the countryside.

9.34 The policy will allow farmers and others to diversify their business while safeguarding the countryside and remaining consistent with the housing policies of this Plan.

### **Tourist-related development outside frameworks**

**POLICY RT11: Development to provide overnight visitor accommodation, public houses and restaurants will not be permitted outside the framework of settlements except (where the site is outside the Green Belt) in the cases of modest extensions to existing facilities or the change of use/conversion of existing buildings not requiring large extensions.**

9.35 With South Cambridgeshire totally surrounding the City, this District continues to face a range of intense development pressures for tourism-related developments, including hotels within its area.

9.36 Much of the landscape in South Cambridgeshire has particular policy constraints applying such as Landscape Character Areas, Green Belt and Natural Areas. Such constraints together with the strategic aims of concentrating development rather than ones of dispersal mean that development such as hotels in the countryside will be resisted. This is consistent with Structure Plan 1995 Policy SP12/1 which only permits appropriate countryside uses in the rural area. More favourable consideration will be given to the conversion of existing buildings for hotel uses, especially where it secures the continued maintenance of a building of character.

### **Holiday accommodation within frameworks**

**POLICY RT12: The District Council will support proposals for the construction, extension or conversion to hotels, motels and guest houses within the defined frameworks of the village having regard to the criteria in Policy RT1 and RT10 of this Plan.**

9.37 This policy is consistent with Structure Plan 1995 Policy SP18/12 encouraging the provision of tourist accommodation in the Cambridge area. It may be more relevant to the larger villages where there is some scope for new small-scale development and support the local leisure economy provided that the proposal is in keeping with the settlement in terms of size, scale and form. New hotel development in the countryside other than extensions or conversions will be resisted. Restrictive policies which apply in the Green Belt are referred to the Green Belt Chapter of the Local Plan.

### **The River Cam**

9.38 The River Cam is a major recreation resource and has a variety of users. There is a very real danger of overuse and management is therefore important. The River Cam is navigable from its junction with the Ely Ouse at the "Fish and Duck" to Jesus Lock at Jesus Green in Cambridge. Boats may progress further upstream towards the Mill Pond at Silver Street with permission, but restricted to winter months. Extensive use of the river is made by rowers from both the university colleges and a number of rowing clubs in the City. The District Council has approved plans for a new purpose built 2,000m rowing lake between Milton and Waterbeach. The legal agreement concerning this development has not yet been signed. If the development proceeds, pressure from rowing on the River Cam may be eased.

9.39 Policy SP13/5 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 refers to the need to strictly limit and control additional marinas or permanent moorings on the River Cam having regard to the restrictive countryside and environmental policies and Green Belt policies, where applicable.

In South Cambridgeshire this generally relates to the stretch of the River Cam from Fen Ditton downstream to the confluence with the River Great Ouse. Aware of the pressures to provide additional moorings between Bait's Bite and Bottisham Lock, the Sports Council (Eastern Region) has encouraged research to assess this demand in its publication "Zone 1 - Water Recreation Strategy - April 1996".

9.40 Pressures exist to provide additional moorings along this stretch of river. However the presence of the Green Belt covering much of this area and the restrictive planning policies that accompany this designation mean that any proposals for development will be carefully scrutinised in terms of visual impact particularly having regard to the setting of the River Cam. The importance of the setting of the River Cam is also referred to in paragraphs 10.15 to 10.17 of the Environment and Conservation and chapter of the Local Plan.

**POLICY RT13: The District Council will not permit extensions to the curtilage of existing marinas or boatyards on the River Cam between Cambridge and the Great Ouse on the Great Ouse itself, except by allowing additional moorings through the provision of cuts.**