

# 10 RECREATION, SPORT AND TOURISM

## 10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Recreation, sport and tourism opportunities can contribute to the quality of life of residents and visitors; support local economies and community regeneration, and help the diversification of work opportunities in both urban and rural areas. In providing such facilities it is important that the benefits are balanced with any adverse effects on local communities, amenity and the environment. The Plan provides a land use framework for the planning of recreation, sport and tourism facilities, embracing:

- the promotion of opportunities for new and improved recreation, sport and tourism facilities, including criteria for location, siting, layout, and design
- the sustainable use of physical resources
- the protection of existing facilities
- specialised provision for individual activities.

10.1.2 Recreation, sport and tourism issues touch on a range of other land uses. Policies in this chapter of the Plan should therefore be read with those dealing with the provision of open space in new housing developments (chapter 5, Housing); the protection and development of the rights of way network (chapter 8, Transport), landscape and biodiversity, the re-use of rural buildings and development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (chapter 9, Natural and Historic Heritage).

10.1.3 The UDP has an essential role in setting policies to govern the future provision of open space, recreation and leisure facilities and the treatment of existing assets. However, further work is needed to translate policy into action and the Council has embarked on the preparation of a "More Places" strategy, which will include an assessment of local needs and a series of options and priorities, developed through an analysis of key issues.

## 10.2 Aims and objectives

10.2.1 The policies in this chapter aim to:

- promote the sustainable development of facilities and attractions in locations appropriate to local character and needs
- seek equality of opportunities for access and participation
- realise positive benefits for residents and visitors alike
- contribute to urban and rural social and economic regeneration.

10.2.2 The policies have the following more specific objectives:

- to promote a planned approach to provision based on local assessment of existing provision and future needs
- to protect existing facilities and safeguard those resources with potential for the provision of future facilities
- to secure safe and convenient access by a choice of transport modes.

## 10.3 Strategy and general policy

10.3.1 Recreation, sport and tourism in Herefordshire embraces a wide variety of uses and activities:

- formal recreation and sports facilities, generally based in the County's urban areas but also found in open countryside, with dedicated pitches, buildings or associated infrastructure, provided by the Council itself, or by other sporting and educational bodies
- informal recreation, often equated with the countryside but also including urban open spaces and routes. Informal recreation tends to be casual and does not require significant use of built facilities, although exceptions may include visitor centres and parking areas
- tourist accommodation and attractions, based in both town and country and reflecting the County's historic built heritage and its landscape attractions.

10.3.2 The Plan's general policy specifically recognises the role that recreation and tourism developments can play in meeting wider economic development and regeneration objectives as well as the more immediate needs of visitors and local communities.

10.3.3 As well as providing for the protection of existing recreation and sports facilities and the resources on which they depend, the policy seeks to meet identified needs for new and improved facilities through a range of strategic, local and specialist provision. Recognising likely resource constraints and variations in the existing pattern and quality of provision, not all communities can expect the same level of facilities. However, provision should be related to population levels and strive towards a situation where appropriate facilities are available within reasonable access of all parts of the County. Wherever possible, the allocation of land for formal and informal open space in settlements will be made according to local assessments of population characteristics, participation rates in specific activities, deficiencies in provision and accessibility profiles. Reflecting guiding principles P2 and P3, provision should be close to the point of need, in balance with home and work opportunities, and be accessible by modes other than the private car.

10.3.4 Providing appropriate facilities for sport and recreation should also promote sustainability. Consequently, improving and enhancing existing facilities and, where appropriate, re-using existing buildings, should be considered and encouraged. Modernisation and refurbishment can improve an old, out-dated facility and often give premises a new lease of life, particularly if they either have sustained high use and wear and tear, or do not meet modern requirements. Where technical constraints rule this option out, then the feasibility of making new provision should be assessed.

10.3.5 In the case of tourism, the requirement to relate proposals directly to the pattern of settlement and new development is less pressing. Most tourism developments will be located where there are indigenous resources such as high quality scenery, public access land, recreational routes and water. Others will be relatively foot-loose and seek to locate where there are commercial opportunities. In both cases safeguards will be applied to ensure that developments respect local character and avoid or minimise unacceptable impacts. The development of a sustainable transport network is a precondition for the sustainable development of tourism if the use of private cars is not to have an unacceptable impact on the Herefordshire landscape and its communities, and will also help support the further growth of walking and cycling tourism.

10.3.6 Provision will be different within settlements, on the fringe of towns, in open countryside, in designated areas, and in relation to the nature of the local resources, such as common land, river corridors, and urban parks.

### ***Part I policy***

#### **S8 Recreation, sport and tourism**

**The provision of appropriate new or improved facilities for recreation, sport and tourism will be supported to meet the needs of local communities and visitors and to contribute to local economic development, employment and community regeneration.**

**Existing recreational and sports facilities will be protected, fully utilised wherever possible, or enhanced to provide better and improved facilities. The re-use of existing**

**buildings should also be considered, if appropriate, for the development of new facilities.**

**New facilities in both town and country should address recognised shortages of formal and informal provision, be close to the point of need, take into account environmental impacts, and be readily accessible by a choice of means of transport. Priority will be given to:**

- 1. addressing deficiencies in recreational provision in or close to main areas of population;**
- 2. meeting recreational and open space needs arising from new residential development;**
- 3. reducing land take and duplication of provision by ensuring shared use of facilities by different user groups;**
- 4. developing networks of open space and especially linking open spaces in settlements to the wider countryside; and**
- 5. the development of facilities in locations that can cater for a wide range of users.**

**In rural areas, new recreational provision will generally be sought in or close to existing settlements, particularly where it can accompany new development to promote balanced communities. Exceptions may be made in open countryside, where the recreational resource, such as common land, woodland, lakes, is unavoidably remote from settlement, where linear recreational routes are proposed, or where the activity is normally associated with open countryside, such as equestrian centres.**

**Tourism developments should respect the character of the County and the locality, provide for the sustainable use of indigenous features and resources, offer improvements to visitor management in pressure areas and sensitive environments, and avoid or minimise intrusion on local communities.**

*Guiding principles P1, P2 and P3*

## **10.4 Control of recreation, sport and tourism development**

*Criteria for recreation, sport and tourism development*

- 10.4.1 National guidance in PPG17 encourages the provision of a wide range of opportunities for recreation, which should wherever possible be available and accessible to all. Sport, recreation and tourism have valuable social and economic roles to play but these must be balanced against any environmental impacts arising if sustainable forms of development are to be achieved. This is particularly the case with tourism, the very existence of which is linked to protecting the high quality environment on which it depends.
- 10.4.2 The diverse nature of proposals for recreation, sport and tourism require a similar set of considerations to be taken into account. Key factors include environmental suitability, access and amenity. For instance, both the amenities of those living nearby and the wider environment can be damaged through such factors as noise, increased traffic, the numbers of people attending the facility at any one point of time, the scale of buildings proposed, glare from floodlights associated with sports pitches, or use of the facility during unsocial hours. In some cases such as motorised or gun sports, the activity itself may lead to an unacceptable amenity and environmental impact. Recreation, sport and tourism uses will often attract substantial numbers of users and visitors and special attention is needed to their accessibility by a genuine choice of modes of transport. In addition, recreational or tourism development in the countryside can damage its character or appearance if care is not taken in respect of scale, siting or design.

- 10.4.3 The County includes a number of visitor pressure areas. Popular destinations such as the Malvern Hills or Symonds Yat form part of designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty where special considerations apply (see below). Other pressure areas include parts of the Black Mountains in the west of Herefordshire, bordering the Brecon Beacons National Park. During the Plan period, visitor management plans may be prepared or reviewed for such areas in order to take an integrated approach to land use and management, landscape and cultural heritage, biodiversity, recreation and tourism, transport and visitor information. As such they will provide a means of defining both the needs of local communities and environmental character, and proposals for recreational and tourism facilities will be expected to demonstrate their contribution to such plans in these terms.
- 10.4.4 In addition, special considerations associated with environmental character and recreational resources will arise with respect to designated features within the County, including conservation areas, listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological sites and features of interest, sites of international, national and local importance to nature conservation including Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, geological sites and features, historic landscapes and gardens, and rights of way.
- 10.4.5 Planning obligations will be used to secure facilities where these are provided as part of wider developments. Specific requirements for open spaces associated with housing proposals are set out in the Housing chapter of the Plan. Open space provision in large developments should be of a size that is both useful and easy to maintain, i.e. rather than including many small, incidental and less useful areas. Provision of open space should be an integral feature of the development, to ensure a safe, easily accessible area, not located on 'left over' land as an afterthought. In smaller development proposals, it may be more appropriate for a developer to make a contribution to the establishment or enhancement of a nearby sport or recreation facility. This may include improvements that help safeguard an existing facility (see policy RST4).
- 10.4.6. This policy complements policies in the Development Requirements chapter. Policies in that chapter dealing with design, land use and activity, movement, environment, noise and lighting will be particularly relevant. Attention is drawn in particular to issues associated with the capacity of the highway network, access and parking, and to the need to submit a travel plan with any planning application where required either as a consequence of the scale of the proposal or the transport issues raised.

#### **RST1 Criteria for recreation, sport and tourism development**

**Proposals for the development of new recreation, sport and tourist facilities including change of use or improvement or extension to existing facilities will be permitted where the proposal:**

- 1. is appropriate to the needs of the community which it serves, having particular regard to the nature of the use, mode of operation, scale and design;**
- 2. would not harm the amenity of nearby residents;**
- 3. respects environmental character and resources, including designated landscape, historic heritage, archaeology, biodiversity, and geological features and rights of way; and**
- 4. is wherever possible accessible by a choice of modes of transport, with priority given to public transport, walking and cycling, and is designed to ensure access for all.**

**Proposals in the open countryside will only be permitted where the countryside is the primary resource for the proposal and the rural landscape and environment is sustained. In such instances new buildings will only be permitted where there are no**

**suitable existing buildings capable of conversion, they are of a small scale and are ancillary to the primary proposal.**

*Recreation, sport and tourism development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*

- 10.4.7 Herefordshire includes approximately 46% of the Wye Valley AONB and 60% of the Malvern Hills AONB. The primary purpose of designation of these areas is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty through landscape protection and enhancement, embracing biodiversity and features of geological interest. Specific policies relating to these factors are included within the Natural and Historic Heritage chapter of the Plan. However, the pressures for recreation and tourism related developments within the County's AONBs merit a specific policy, to be applied in conjunction with RST1 above. While AONB designation allows recreation and tourism proposals to be accommodated where such developments do not compromise the landscape quality, it is important that precedence is given to the principal aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area.

**RST2 Recreation, sport and tourism development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

**Within the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), the conservation of the unique character and qualities of the landscape and of biodiversity and geological interests will have precedence over the development of facilities for recreation, sport and tourism. In particular such developments must:**

- 1. respect and be in keeping with the inherent distinctiveness of the local landscape;**
- 2. be small-scale and constructed from appropriate materials; and**
- 3. make a positive contribution to the understanding and quiet enjoyment of the natural beauty of the AONB.**

## **10.5 Recreation and sport**

*Standards for outdoor playing and public open space*

- 10.5.1 The role of the Plan is to assess opportunities and needs for sport and recreation provision, ensuring that adequate land and water resources for both organised sport and informal recreation are allocated and safeguarded. To provide a framework for this assessment it is necessary to adopt a standard for open space provision. The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standard sets a minimum requirement for outdoor playing space, defined as 'space which is available for sport, active recreation or children's play, which is of suitable size and nature for its intended purpose, and safely accessible and available to the general public'. The standard is based on an overall provision of 2.4 hectares per thousand population and is broken down as shown in table 10.1. The standard is adopted in order to provide an overall framework for considering both existing provision and future proposals.

**Table 10.1 National Playing Field Association's outdoor playing space standard.**

Per thousand population	
Outdoor sport	1.6-1.8 hectares
	Includes 1.2 hectares for pitch sports
Children's playing space	0.6-0.8 hectares
Outdoor playing space	2.4 hectares

- 10.5.2 Recognising that the NPFA standard is directed principally at outdoor playing space for sport, the Council also adopts a standard of 0.4 hectare per thousand population for the provision of casual or amenity public open space. This is in addition to the outdoor playing space standard, and is also a minimum requirement.
- 10.5.3 These overall standards are adopted on an interim basis, pending the completion of an assessment of need for open space, sports and recreational facilities which will allow local open space standards to be set. In addition, during the Plan period it is expected that more sophisticated models for facilities planning, based on individual sports or recreational activities, will become available through partnership arrangements with Sport England and will be applied to decision-making on proposed new and improved facilities. Nonetheless, the standards set out in table 10.1 provide a basis for the consideration of new provision (including the more detailed assessment of open space requirements arising from new residential developments, see Housing chapter) and for assessing proposals which could lead to the loss of existing open space. In meeting such standards, consideration will be given to opportunities for intensifying use of existing outdoor playing space (if it is capable) or, in the case of new outdoor playing space, to how often the facility can be practically used. This may reduce the need to provide additional space as set out in the standards, for example where artificial turf is used instead of grass.

### **RST3 Standards for outdoor playing and public open space**

**The following overall minimum standards of open space provision to meet the needs of all will be sought throughout the County until such a time as an assessment of need has been produced and local standards of provision established:**

**Outdoor playing space: 2.4 hectares per 1000 population, comprising 1.6 hectare for outdoor sport and 0.8 hectare for children's playing space**

**Public open space: 0.4 hectares per 1000 population**

**The standards will be applied in considering further provision, including open space to be provided as part of housing schemes, and in assessing proposals that could lead to the loss of existing facilities.**

#### *Safeguarding existing recreational open space*

- 10.5.4 Government guidance places considerable emphasis on the protection of recreational and amenity open space from development. Such open spaces include: public open space (including playing fields), parks and gardens; playing fields associated with schools and those owned by private or voluntary organisations; allotments; village greens, informal recreation areas, children's play areas and other land of amenity value. In particular, playing fields (whether attached to schools or owned by other public, private or voluntary organisations) are of special significance for their recreational and amenity value and their contribution to urban green space. If they are no longer required for their original purpose, consideration should be given to their use to meet other needs for recreational land in the wider community. Protection of open space is seen as a particular priority in urban areas, where demand is concentrated. Change of use from public to private open space may or may not lead to loss of community provision. There are instances where a Joint Use Agreement between the Council and developer (or other body) could lead to improved access to, and quality of, facilities for the community. Open space, whether or not there is public access to it, contributes to the quality of urban life - it enhances the character of listed buildings, conservation areas and historic landscapes; helps attract business and tourism, and is a part of the urban regeneration process. In both urban and more rural settings, open spaces of all kinds have valuable recreational and amenity roles to play.
- 10.5.5 In dealing with proposals involving the loss of open space, it is important that the long-term needs of the community are taken into account. Once developed, open spaces are likely to be lost to the community forever, since they can rarely be recovered. The Plan seeks to

protect open spaces by resisting proposals that would lead to their loss. However, there may be some exceptional circumstances where alternative provision serving the community could be provided on an appropriate alternative site. In instances where there is an excess of open space and associated facilities in an area, development involving its loss may also be acceptable. However, there are few, if any, existing areas in the County with an excess of open space, with particular shortfalls evident in the rural areas. Recreational and open space provision is concentrated within Hereford and the market towns but even here falls short of the standards adopted above, particularly when the role of these settlements as service centres for a wider rural and village population is taken into account.

- 10.5.6 Interest in allotments has been sustained over recent years, and is expected to continue with mounting concern over food standards and increased leisure time. Provision of allotments lags behind demand, whilst some existing sites are known to be under pressure from proposed development. The current stock will therefore be safeguarded. In considering proposals for new housing development the opportunity should be taken to include new allotment provision where this can be shown to be justified.
- 10.5.7 The proposals map shows those open spaces whose value is recognised at this stage. It is accepted that there may be other open spaces, the recreational value of which is only fully appreciated when development is proposed. The policy will be applied to these sites as and when such situations arise.

#### **RST4 Safeguarding existing recreational open space**

**Development proposals that would result in the loss of public or private open spaces with recreational value, or facilities that help meet the recreational needs of the community will not be permitted unless:**

- 1. there is a clear excess of outdoor playing space provision and/or open space in the area taking account of the wider recreational value of such provision; or**
- 2. alternative provision of at least equivalent community benefit is provided in a convenient and accessible location (without reducing the developer's obligation to provide new open space within the development).**

**The development of playing fields which have not been shown to be surplus to requirements will not be permitted unless the development is ancillary and without prejudice to their continued recreational use, only affects land incapable of forming a pitch, or can be justified in terms of overall benefit to sport or criterion 2 above.**

**Development within parks and public gardens should be limited to that which is complementary to the main uses of the open space. Change of use from public to private open space will be permitted only where it secures enhanced provision for the community.**

#### *New open space in/adjacent to settlements*

- 10.5.8 In addition to protecting open spaces, it is important for the Plan to take a positive stance towards the provision of new recreation and amenity open spaces in order that the Council's standards can be better met.
- 10.5.9 Accordingly, the UDP identifies a number of sites for new open space provision where recreational and amenity uses and facilities will be encouraged and other uses and developments that would conflict with such uses resisted. These sites, shown on the proposals map, are typically within urban fringe or village settings in line with the overall approach to locate provision close to main areas of need, link town and country, and encourage facilities within or adjacent to rural settlements in a balanced fashion.

10.5.10 Particular attention has been given to enhancing countryside access for urban populations through urban fringe proposals at Hereford, Leominster and Ledbury. This reflects the fact that Herefordshire's only public sector country park, at Queenswood on the A49 midway between Hereford and Leominster, essentially serves as a tourist attraction and stopping place and not as a doorstep facility for the main urban areas of the County. Neither Hereford nor Leominster, as the largest settlements, has nearby country parks. The proposals in the Plan are aimed at addressing this deficiency.

10.5.11 In all cases the criteria set out in policy RST1 should be met and where practicable provision will be made for multiple users, as well as the site-specific requirements indicated below. These proposals are in addition to open space to be provided through new residential development, which itself has a valuable role to play in ensuring a balanced provision.

(a) Aylestone Hill, Hereford

10.5.12 This area of open land on the slopes of the Aylestone Hill/Tupsley ridge extends to 16.1 hectares and was acquired by the Council in 1999 following compulsory purchase proceedings instituted by the former Hereford City Council. The land was acquired to provide public open space for both formal and informal recreation, and to secure environmental objectives relating to the protection of the open character of the ridge and of the rural nature of this approach to the City. Planning permission is in place for the proposed uses. Whilst formal recreational provision is proposed for the northern portion of the site, the land in the south is more elevated and here it is proposed to maintain an open aspect in accordance with the environmental objectives of acquisition.

(b) Haywood Country Park, Hereford

10.5.13 Proposals for additional countryside access and recreational facilities in this urban fringe location to the south west of Hereford have been developed through the preparation of a management plan covering recreation, open space and landscape issues. The plan, adopted in 2000 following extensive public consultation, recognises and addresses a deficiency in formal playing field provision and also embraces proposals for a new Country Park. The Park is conceived as a series of varied habitats and open spaces and includes several areas of land in public ownership, including Belmont Meadows Local Nature Reserve and Newton Coppice. The acquisition of additional land is required to allow these areas to be linked and to provide further public open space. The management plan proposed the allocation of one additional field between Haywood Lane and Kingfisher Road for public open space, to make a direct physical connection between Belmont Meadow and Newton Coppice. In the Housing chapter of the UDP (policy H2), a new housing site is now proposed in the north-eastern corner of this field. Consequently, an additional part field to the south is also proposed for inclusion in the Country Park. This extension would have the benefit of widening the pinch-point connection from the existing public open space to the east. Public acquisition of additional open space and development of the Country Park as an informal recreational facility will be requirements under a planning obligation that will be tied specifically to the new housing development. In the longer term, a Countryside Centre is proposed, accessed from Treago Grove, to be developed as a multi-purpose community and education facility utilising sustainable building techniques.

10.5.14 A further proposal contained in the management plan is for the provision of a new footbridge linking the south bank of the Wye at Golden Post/Vaga Street to the north bank and the Wye Valley Walk. This would enhance access to the wider countryside and formal recreational provision, and will be taken forward in implementing the management plan.

(c) Bradbury Estate

10.5.15 The former army base known as Bradbury Estate within the South Wye area of Hereford currently contains 5.5 hectares of open space in two areas, the largest of which includes a football pitch, rugby pitch, pavilion and squash courts. Due to the shortfall of recreation space within the Hereford area, this existing open space provision should be retained within any future development of the Estate for the benefit of the community as a whole. Any housing



scheme proposed on the site in accordance with policy H2 would also be required to provide a further 0.8 hectares of playing space as part of the development.

10.5.16 In addition to the above schemes a number of smaller proposals are made for other settlements within the County in order to move towards a better balance between population and recreational provision. These proposals are as follows:

(d) Whitecross High School, Hereford

10.5.17 The Plan proposed a replacement Whitecross High School on land at Three Elms (policy CF8) and this has now been completed. The former school land is proposed through the Plan for a mixed housing (60 dwellings), community and playing field use. While the current playing fields are private and are protected through Plan policy RST4 following relocation they should benefit the wider community as public use. This would help make good a deficiency within the locality and respond to public comment.

(e) Land at Grandison Rise/Prospect Walk, Wyese and Yazor Road, Hereford

10.5.18 These areas within the City are to be safeguarded for future public open space use. They are conveniently close to existing residential areas and were previously identified for this purpose within the Hereford Local Plan.

(f) Leominster landfill site

10.5.19 Tipping has now ceased at this 23.4 hectares site, which is owned by the Herefordshire Council. Further remediation works are necessary in order to complete restoration of the site. Once the works are completed, which is likely to be during the Plan period, the site will be capable of use for informal recreation and nature conservation. Part of the area also contains a household waste site and waste transfer station; these will remain for the Plan period.

(g) Ewyas Harold

10.5.20 Whereas the recreation ground near the church caters for many of the sporting needs of the community, it is desirable to provide for more informal leisure needs. There are few public open spaces within the built-up area of the village. Accordingly, it is desirable to encourage the retention and enhancement of a small area of land (0.5 hectares), between Dulas Brook and the Abbey Dore Road, to serve as public open space. It is envisaged that the implementation of this site will be through negotiation and agreement with the relevant landowner.

10.5.21 The Memorial Hall on the Pontrilas Road provides a range of opportunities for social, recreational and educational activities. The land between the Hall and the garage (2.7 hectares) could be developed into a recreation area for the benefit of the community as a whole. Regard should be had to possible flooding of the site and advice from the Environment Agency.

(h) Leintwardine

10.5.22 The Parish Council has identified a site adjacent to the primary school for development for a range of community / recreation facilities including a new village hall. In order to minimise the impact of development on the rural setting of the village, any buildings should be located in the north western quarter of the site abutting the primary school. The form and layout of recreational open space and formal pitches will be subject to discussions with the Parish Council and negotiations with relevant landowners.

(i) Moreton on Lugg

10.5.23 Moreton on Lugg already has a small playing field, north of St Peters Close, to serve the needs of the community in part. It is, however, insufficient in comparison with the size of the population of the village. Therefore, encouragement will be given to any future provision of

recreational facilities and a site has been identified to the north west of the settlement, adjacent to the present playing fields, as a possible recreation area (1.6 hectares).

(j) Peterchurch

10.5.24 The village has a requirement for a further 1.2 hectares of recreation/open space. A number of new developments and commitments exist in the village for which the associated open space has yet to be provided. A 1.9 hectare site has been identified between the primary school and new residential development. It is envisaged that this could be a joint venture between the Education Department and the Parish Council. Any proposal should include car parking for the school and the recreation ground to improve road safety in the area.

(k) Stretton Sugwas

10.5.25 This former landfill site is now owned by Herefordshire Council and extends to 15.8 hectares. Further remediation works are necessary, but in the long term the site has potential for combined use for nature conservation and country park. The gravel pit nearby will be restored to a mixture of lake, woodland, pasture and nature conservation sites during the Plan period. The site is capable of a mixture of recreation uses but a specific planning permission will be necessary to realise this. Some links could be possible between these two sites. A parking area could be provided on the former household waste site

(l) Whitchurch

10.5.26 A need has been identified for a recreation ground incorporating a children's playground and football and cricket pitches. The most suitable location for such facilities would be around the primary school. A scheme of this nature could only be implemented through negotiation and agreement with the landowner.

(m) Withington

10.5.27 A site of 2.1 hectares is proposed for playing field purposes adjacent to the recently constructed village hall. Withington has seen substantial recent residential development which has not to date been matched by complementary recreational and open space provision. The new site should utilise the existing village hall access.

10.5.28 The implementation of these proposals will still leave areas of the County with deficiencies in recreational provision. To address these shortfalls further open space proposals are likely to be made during the Plan period. For example, there are recognised shortfalls in open space provision in parts of Hereford, such as Whitecross, while in Leominster the residential area between Hereford Road and Barons Cross Road suffers from a shortage of children's play space. In rural areas Parish Councils have an important role to play in assessing local requirements and progressing proposals. Other proposals could be made by sporting interests. In all cases policy RST1 will be applied.

#### **RST5 New open space in/adjacent to settlements**

**Sites have been identified on the proposals map at the locations listed below to provide new public recreational, amenity and open space uses and facilities:**

##### **Urban Areas;**

**Aylestone Hill, Hereford  
Haywood Country Park, Hereford  
Bradbury Estate, Hereford  
Whitecross High School  
Grandison Rise / Prospect Walk, Hereford  
Wyeside, Hereford**

**Yazor Road, Hereford  
Leominster landfill site**

**Rural Areas:**

**Ewyas Harold  
Leintwardine  
Moreton on Lugg  
Peterchurch  
Stretton Sugwas  
Wellington  
Whitchurch  
Withington**

**Development proposals that would prevent or prejudice the future use of areas proposed or currently used for recreational, amenity and open space purposes will not be permitted.**

*Countryside access*

10.5.29 Recent decades have seen an increasing emphasis on providing new informal recreation facilities to meet the needs of local populations, day visitors and tourists alike. Countryside recreation facilities are generally of such a low-key nature that on-site environmental impacts are minimal and often beneficial, bringing unused, abused and unmanaged land into more sustainable management. However, unintentional impacts, such as increased traffic on rural roads, are a significant concern, whilst increased public access to attractive and sensitive landscapes can generate conflicts with environmental conservation interests (chapter 8 Transport; chapter 9 Natural and Historic Heritage). Only on urban fringe sites and specialist sites, where the pressures of visitor numbers are considerable, is there a requirement for concerted management and the provision of significant built facilities such as visitor centres. The Countryside Access Strategy (for the former County of Hereford and Worcester) provides the strategic planning and management framework for reconciling these multiple objectives, extending beyond the land use remit of the UDP. Its criteria for new or improved projects will be applied to planning decisions, where relevant.

10.5.30 With large tracts of attractive open countryside and many rural areas remote from settlement, Herefordshire has plenty of opportunity for new small access sites which can help local tourism, but this must be balanced with the environmental consequences. Policy RST1 and other policies of the Plan provide the overall framework for addressing issues such as increased traffic loadings on country roads. The choice of sites to develop will need overall sustainability appraisals to balance the potential social and economic gains against any adverse environmental impacts. The opportunistic nature of site finding for this purpose means that policy should be criteria-based, with specific attention directed to the protection of intrinsic countryside resources and to the need to maximise links to the rights of way network and recreational routes. Sites for new facilities should be located in association with existing settlements and make use of previously developed land and buildings wherever possible.

**RST6 Countryside access**

**Proposals for the development of new countryside access facilities will be permitted provided that:**

- 1. access to countryside resources such as common land, woodland, water, landscape, historic sites and nature conservation interests is provided in an environmentally sensitive manner; and**

**2. good connections are made to the local public rights of way network and any promoted recreational routes, and that access is promoted by other means than private car.**

**Wherever possible new countryside access facilities should be sited to readily and conveniently serve major concentrations of population and rural settlements, and make use of redundant, derelict, or otherwise unused or underused land and property in preference to greenfield locations.**

*Promoted recreational routes*

10.5.31 The legally-defined public rights of way network and other linear routes - whether legal highways, towpaths, or permissive links allowed by landowners - are a key resource for informal recreational access. These are found mostly in open countryside and around villages, although some still penetrate into towns through green corridors, open spaces and even urban development. In and around towns and villages, this network may perform a transport function, although nowadays it is mostly a recreational resource. The full recreational benefits can best be realised by keeping the network open and properly maintained, and by promoting its use. Policy is therefore directed at maintaining, promoting and enhancing this recreational role.

10.5.32 Many public rights of way are short end-to-end links, reflecting their historic connection of rural land uses. With the growth in informal recreation over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their role in wider networks and longer routes has come to the fore. Longer-distance promoted routes – now called National Trails and Regional Routes – have been established. Herefordshire shares the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail with the Welsh border counties, and has developed Regional Routes such as the Wye Valley Walk and Mortimer Trail. Herefordshire Council are currently implementing a Public Rights of Way Strategy, to be followed by production of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Plan, which the Council has a legal duty to produce, has already been linked with the Local Transport Plan. Further Routes may be started and/or completed during the Plan period, including:

- Monnow Valley Walk (Hay – Longtown – Pontrilas – Monmouth)
- Three Choirs Way (Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal towpath: Hereford – Ledbury - Gloucester)
- Herefordshire Trail (circular route linking all the market towns)
- Three Rivers Ride (through Herefordshire horse route linking with Powys and Worcestershire).

10.5.33 Route surveys will be needed before the best alignments can be determined, so these projects are not shown on the proposals map. In addition, the Wye Valley Cycleway between Hereford and Chepstow is proposed for development as a multi-user route, but is dealt with in chapter 8 Transport. Such cases may become recreational corridors, with ancillary facilities such as access sites, low-key accommodation, parking and toilets being developed. While based mainly on the public rights of way network, promoted routes create added value to the network, raising the tourism profile, integrating with local services, and promoting higher maintenance standards. At parish level and around major access sites, routes may be grouped into local networks, offering a resource for local people and day visitors and supporting the local economy with minimal intrusion or environmental impact.

10.5.34 As well as connecting rights of way, some strategic routes use other linear resources such as disused railways, canal towpaths and linear parks, to become in current parlance 'greenways'. Minor country lanes may also be included in the package of resources, with the promotion of the 'quiet roads' initiative. National policy now firmly supports the concept of a continuous, integrated, safe and attractive network of recreational routes that can take recreation away from traffic hazards and the other detractors of urban life. While much has been achieved, there remains plenty of opportunity for further development of such networks.

10.5.35 Walking is the most popular recreational activity, especially in the countryside. Walking routes are provided by local authorities, other statutory bodies such as the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency, and by private landowners – often in partnership. In many cases, such provision does not involve development works but, in others, ancillary access land, surfacing and other engineering operations, parking and other facilities may be developed in a supporting role. Plan policy reflects this and works within guidelines provided by Natural England as the Government’s main advisory body on informal recreation.

10.5.36 Cycling is increasingly popular for recreation and tourism, and Herefordshire has an excellent resource, especially in the form of the minor road network. This resource is readily available without being developed, managed or promoted by public agencies. However, such agencies are best placed to deal with issues such as the creation of continuous links in a County network, safety and traffic management works at major road intersections, development of off-road routes, and coherent marketing for cycle tourism. The public bridleway network is legally available for cycle use, although the surface of individual routes may be suitable mainly for all-terrain bicycles. Simple surfacing improvements of off-road routes may be carried out within existing legal provisions, without constituting ‘development’. However, more extensive route development is likely to require planning permission. Certain open access land may also be available to cyclists. All off-road cycling resources need to be managed to minimise environmental impacts, and conflict with other visitors and local residents. Popular cycle-routes also tend to generate road traffic to their access points, as well as increasing parking needs. Transport management associated with such cycle facilities needs to focus on selected access points where adverse impacts can be minimised. Links to railheads (and bus stops served by the increasing number of operators who carry bikes) are especially important tools in such management. The County Cycling Strategy is providing policy guidelines for the development of cycling facilities and the management of support services. Policies on recreational cycling reflect the priorities in this Strategy.

10.5.37 The County’s disjointed public bridleway network is not conducive to the assembly of continuous, safe off-road horse-riding routes. Only by using quiet minor roads, byways, open access land and permissive rides on private land, can routes of worthwhile length be created and promoted. Policy seeks to identify opportunities for development and promotion of routes for local recreational or wider tourism use. Dual use with cyclists should be an objective wherever the two uses are compatible and acceptable. Off-road greenway corridors will offer significant potential for this.

#### **RST7 Promoted recreational routes**

**In developing promoted recreational routes, emphasis will be placed on a network approach, linking open spaces and walking routes in settlements with those in the wider countryside. Wherever possible, the creation of greenway corridors will be sought, offering safe passage and ancillary opportunities for amenity and biodiversity enhancements. Provision should be made, where it can be safely accommodated, for multiple use of routes by walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and the less able.**

**The development and improvement of promoted recreational routes will continue to be based on the recognised categories of National Trails, Regional Routes and local routes. The Public Rights of Way Strategy sets out the process by which the Council intends to develop the existing routes and to identify and select new routes.**

**Priority for the development of recreational cycling routes should be given to routes that:**

- 1. also serve utility trips and accommodate walkers, horse-riders and the less able;**
- 2. access popular visitor areas and contribute to sustainable transport; and**
- 3. connect with public transport nodes.**

**Opportunities will be sought to align cycle routes with safe, attractive off-road greenways such as disused railways, canal and river towpaths, forest tracks and linear parks, combined with quiet roads, to create continuous links in a Herefordshire network. Development and extension of the National Cycle Network and associated Regional Cycle Routes through Herefordshire will be supported, where they meet appropriate environmental, transport and safety criteria.**

**The development of short and longer-distance horse-riding routes will be supported through a combination of bridleways, open access areas, quiet roads and, where necessary, permissive links on private land, in order to create continuous alignments of value to both local and touring riders. Selective longer-distance routes may be promoted for tourism, in association with riding groups and livery providers.**

**In all cases, proposals for promoted recreational routes will need to demonstrate that they are acceptable in terms of their environmental impact.**

#### *Waterway corridors and open water areas*

10.5.38 Waterways and open water areas are a particularly important recreational resource for a landlocked County like Herefordshire. The major rivers such as the Wye and Lugg have a long tradition of recreational use, both on the water and along the riparian corridor. Navigation rights on much of the Herefordshire lengths of the Wye and Lugg allow considerable recreational use, although this must always be reconciled with the environmental designations along the rivers. The Environment Agency is now established as the navigation authority for the River Wye. Other rivers such as the Teme also have a tradition of limited recreational use, e.g. for canoeing. Along its corridor through Hereford, the River Wye has a special role in the commercial and recreational life of the city that warrants separate consideration in policy terms. In the central area, restaurants, public houses, sports facilities and open spaces line much of the riverbank and its immediate hinterland. In contrast, on some stretches away from the central area, the riverbank margins have become neglected and subject to tipping and litter, and would benefit from environmental and access improvements. The river's historic transport role for trade and leisure has declined, but the potential exists for a renewed contribution to meet wider regeneration objectives and in the context of an integrated transport network, provided adequate infrastructure is available. While new and improved waterfront facilities will always need to be restricted in scale by the historic, landscape and biodiversity constraints applying to the river corridor, there remains significant scope for appropriate development. Policy RST8 therefore makes specific provision for the river corridor within the city environs.

10.5.39 Waterway recreation may involve the development of facilities such as basins, marinas, jetties, slipways, pontoons, moorings and access sites. Waterside recreation may require access land, recreational routes, car parking and transport facilities and ancillary facilities such as toilets. Proposals to establish low key access to water features, such as picnic sites or information points, will be permitted where they are in accordance with policy RST1 and other policies in the Plan. The development of new permanent moorings away from existing/historic sites or settlements will be resisted, to avoid potential difficulties associated with visual amenity, servicing and infrastructure, and road access. Development of riverside facilities may require the consent of the Environment Agency.

10.5.40 Herefordshire has no major open water areas of regional or sub-regional significance. The largest, at Bodenham, covers 16 hectares, much of which is restricted to nature conservation uses and the rest to low-intensity recreational activities. The smaller ones are not usually natural in origin, having been created as landscape features on estates and farms and/or as recreational facilities for angling, boating, or simply for amenity. Recreationally significant lakes are expected to become available during the Plan period as a result of existing planning permissions for mineral extraction, principally for gravel. The most notable are at the Wellington, Stretton Sugwas and Lugg Valley sites. As these relate to existing restoration conditions for recreational use, they are not identified as proposals in the Plan. Further

specific site proposals are not readily identifiable at this stage, but may come forward during the Plan period. Such sites often have a high or potentially high ecological value and this needs to be reconciled with the recreational opportunities that they offer. Zoning for multiple uses within and around individual water bodies can offer a compromise solution, but is only really effective on larger sites. Otherwise, sites may need to be dedicated and restricted to specific uses.

- 10.5.41 Herefordshire has two disused canal corridors partly within its boundaries – the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal and the Leominster Canal. Sections of both have been infilled, developed or become derelict. The former is the subject of a long-term restoration project with the aim of re-opening the canal link between Hereford and the Severn at Gloucester. Some sections have already been restored. Recognising the recreation, tourism and economic potential of the project, the canal corridor has enjoyed planning protection for several years.
- 10.5.42 Corridor protection continues in the UDP, following wherever possible the original route. Where the original alignment is already obstructed by development, attention has been given to possible diversionary routes. In Hereford itself an agreed diversionary route is already being protected through planning decisions and this route is shown as a corridor on the proposals map. The canal towpath has the potential to offer a significant recreational facility, including countryside access for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, and the opportunity in the longer term to establish a longer-distance/regional route as canal restoration proceeds.
- 10.5.43 Provision is made for a canal basin to be accommodated within the proposed mixed use development of land at Widemarsh Street, Hereford, close to the original terminus location (see chapter 7 Town Centres and Retail).
- 10.5.44 The Leominster Canal corridor has no waterway restoration plans, although there is scope for recreational use of remaining towpath sections that have survived as public rights of way. Recreational development of such routes should be linked to conservation and interpretation of the historic remains of the navigations.

#### **RST8 Waterway corridors and open water areas**

**Recreational development based on, or associated with, the River Wye and Lugg navigations will only be permitted if it complies with policies NC2 and NC3. Proposals for the development of low-key access to riverside and canalside areas will be permitted subject to detailed planning considerations. On navigable lengths of river and canal, development involving permanent moorings (other than overnight stays) will only be permitted in basins or marinas, in urban locations or sites used historically for this purpose.**

**Within the environs of Hereford, development directly associated with leisure and transport use of the River Wye and the riverbank corridor will be permitted, provided that an acceptable balance can be reached with the constraints arising from landscape character and quality, from natural and historic heritage.**

**Proposals for the recreational use of existing areas of open water, or new areas that become available as a result of mineral extraction, or for the creation of reservoirs or amenity lakes, will be permitted where:**

- 1. they serve a recognised sub-regional or local demand;**
- 2. they have regard to the needs of all potential users, avoid over-use, and are able to resolve potentially conflicting uses;**
- 3. there is no unacceptable conflict with water supply, water quality or commercial uses; and**
- 4. there are no over-riding safety issues.**

### **RST 9 Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal**

**The historic route of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal together with its associated infrastructure, buildings, towpath and features will be safeguarded. Where the original alignment cannot be re-established, a corridor allowing for deviations is safeguarded. New developments within the safeguarded corridor, or on adjacent sites, will be required to incorporate land for the Canal restoration. Development not connected with the Canal that would prevent or prejudice the restoration of a continuous route will not be permitted.**

#### *Major sports facilities*

- 10.5.45 During the Plan period, there may be requirements or demands for new sports facilities that take up large areas of land and/or attract large numbers of users. In order to reduce travelling distances, such facilities are best located within or close to the population centres that they serve.
- 10.5.46 There may be facilities, however, which need to be developed at a specific location, for example, watersports facilities needing large areas of open water, which cannot be located close to urban areas. In such instances, applicants should provide evidence to demonstrate that the legitimate requirements of the facility can only be met through its development in a specific location.
- 10.5.47 In addition to these considerations, it is important that such proposals are environmentally acceptable. Therefore, in all instances, proposals will need to comply with policy RST1 together with other relevant Plan policies. In particular, proposals for supplementary retail and leisure uses will need to comply with the Plan's policy requirements governing the location of town centre uses, including the test of need and the sequential approach, set out in chapter 7, Town Centres and Retail.

### **RST10 Major sports facilities**

**Proposals for new major sports facilities, meeting identified regional or sub-regional needs, will only be permitted on the edge of Hereford and the market towns where it can be demonstrated that no suitable site is available within the relevant urban area. Proposals for major facilities away from urban areas will not be permitted unless there is a demonstrable requirement for the use to be established in a specific location.**

**Proposals for all such facilities will need to demonstrate that they are acceptable in terms of their environmental impact and are located in order to maximise accessibility to the public by a choice of modes of transport.**

#### *Golf courses*

- 10.5.48 The 1980's and early 1990's witnessed development of many new golf courses, in response to increased participation in the sport and national recognition of unmet demand. Golf makes large demands upon rural land and can have a significant detrimental impact upon the countryside by virtue of the scale of earth-moving and contouring, the removal of trees, hedgerows and other natural features and the built developments that are associated with golf courses. They can also lead to increased car traffic in otherwise quiet areas. However, in addition to the recreational benefits derived from playing golf itself, golf courses can also provide some benefits in terms of increasing access to the countryside and may provide new opportunities for wildlife habitats.
- 10.5.49 In assessing golf course proposals, policy RST1 provides the overall framework, with special attention being required to landscape impact and to new building requirements. Given that



golf course development can have a significant impact on the countryside, care needs to be taken with location, siting, layout and design details to ensure that it is sympathetically integrated into the local landscape, taking into account historic character and quality, specific features, and the natural resources of the site.

- 10.5.50 It is recognised that golf courses generally require ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and clubhouses. Such facilities should utilise existing buildings rather than requiring the construction of new buildings and should be limited to that essential for the operation of the golf course. Proposals for new courses or the presence of an existing course does not justify the provision of other development, such as hotels or housing, in the open countryside. Specific policies dealing with such developments are contained elsewhere in this Plan.

#### **RST11 Golf courses**

**Proposals for new golf courses, driving ranges or extensions to existing courses will only be permitted where:**

- 1. the proposal would not damage the character and appearance of the landscape through in particular earth-moving and contouring works;**
- 2. existing landscape and biodiversity features and public rights of way are retained and safeguarded, and the safety of walkers fully considered; and**
- 3. the proposal would not result in the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land.**

**New buildings will only be permitted where there are no suitable existing buildings capable of conversion and they are essential and ancillary to the operation of the course. Any new buildings should be limited in scale and suitably located and designed.**

## **10.6 Tourism**

### *Visitor accommodation*

- 10.6.1 Within settlements identified in policies H1, H4 and H6, the provision of visitor accommodation such as new hotels, boarding houses or self-catering accommodation can bring benefits to an area in terms of boosting local spending and helping to support local facilities. In addition, proposals for accommodation associated with walking, cycling and horse-riding, such as bunk-barns and hostels, can contribute to the Plan's strategy of encouraging modes of transport other than the private car.
- 10.6.2 In considering such proposals against the criteria set out in policy RST1 care is required to ensure that developments are compatible with neighbouring uses. Particular considerations will include the siting, scale and design of the proposal and the likely level of traffic and noise that will be generated.
- 10.6.3 Within the countryside the adaptation of existing buildings for visitor accommodation may be acceptable. However, there is no special reason to apply less demanding policies for new build visitor accommodation than to other types of development in the countryside.

#### **RST12 Visitor accommodation**

**Proposals providing accommodation for visitors within identified settlements will be permitted where the proposal is in scale with its surroundings, of an appropriate design and does not harm the amenity of neighbouring properties.**

**Outside of identified settlements, the provision of permanent serviced or self-catering accommodation for visitors will only be permitted if it consists of the re-use and adaptation of a rural building and:**

- 1. it is of an appropriate scale and design for its surroundings;**
- 2. it does not harm the character or appearance of the countryside;**
- 3. it is wherever possible accessible by a choice of modes of transport and is designed to incorporate access for the disabled; and**
- 4. the proposal, including any proposed extensions, does not harm the character of the original building.**

*Rural and farm tourism development*

- 10.6.4 Development which aims to meet the needs of visitors who are attracted to the countryside can help to diversify the rural economy and provide a boost to farm incomes. However, proposals for such developments must be sensitive to the local environment in terms of design, scale and location, so that the environmental impact and associated visitor management problems are minimised, and meet the detailed requirements of policy RST1.

**RST13 Rural and farm tourism development**

**Tourism proposals in the rural area will be permitted where:**

- 1. the proposal would not harm the character of the countryside; and**
- 2. traffic generated can be accommodated safely upon the local road network without the need for widening of lanes or loss of hedgerows.**

**New buildings will only be permitted where there are no suitable existing buildings capable of conversion and they are of an appropriate design and scale for their surroundings, and essential to the successful operation of the enterprise.**

*Static caravans, chalets, camping and touring caravan sites*

- 10.6.5 Caravan and chalets can have a major impact upon the character of the countryside. Static caravans and chalets remain on-site all year round and can lead to the provision of other facilities such as swimming pools, club houses, car parks, on-site shops and areas for tennis and other sports. Such enterprises have the potential to make a significant impact upon the landscape. Touring caravan and camping sites tend to require a lower level of infrastructure and associated built development and their seasonal nature means that their impact may not be so significant.
- 10.6.6 The need for new facilities has to be reconciled with the protection and preservation of those environments that attract tourists in the first place.
- 10.6.7 Sites for holiday chalets or static holiday caravans are often located in areas where the provision of permanent residential development would be contrary to the provisions of this Plan. As such chalets and caravans are occupied for temporary periods they do not require the level of infrastructure associated with a permanent residential environment. Consequently different planning considerations apply and allowing the conversion of a tourist facility to a permanent residential one would lead to the abuse of a policy aimed at providing accommodation for visitors and supporting the rural economy.

#### **RST14 Static caravans, chalets, camping and touring caravan sites**

**Proposals for new holiday static caravan, chalet parks, camping and/or extensions or improvements to existing parks will not be permitted where they would cause harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. Elsewhere such proposals will be permitted where:**

- 1. the site is well screened or capable of being screened from roads, viewpoints and other public places in order to minimise its impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside;**
- 2. the proposal is of a scale which relates sensitively to its location;**
- 3. the site is well laid out, designed and landscaped;**
- 4. traffic generated could be safely accommodated on the local highway network;**
- 5. arrangements are made to ensure the resultant chalets or caravans remain in holiday use and are not used for residential purposes; and**
- 6. the site is located outside a functional flood plain (zone 3c, policy DR7)**

**Proposals to change the use of existing chalet and caravan sites to permanent residential sites will not be permitted unless they are located within an area where the principle of residential development is acceptable.**