

Introduction

- 9.1** Recreation can help to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing, enhance social interaction and foster a sense of community. Accessible recreation facilities are an essential ingredient in improving the quality of life and achieving a sustainable living pattern for local residents. They also provide green spaces within the Borough's towns and villages.
- 9.2** Traditionally, local authorities have been responsible for the provision and maintenance of facilities for outdoor team sports and recreation. Outside Royal Tunbridge Wells, Town and Parish Councils are responsible for providing and managing recreation facilities. The private sector now plays an increasingly important role in providing specialist facilities such as health and fitness centres, squash, golf and leisure centres.
- 9.3** This Local Plan deals with those aspects of recreation which have land use implications for new development and from proposals affecting existing facilities, namely open space for youth and adult use, children's playspace, informal open space (including commons and parks), allotments, indoor sports facilities and recreation in the countryside.

Aims

1. To retain, and provide, an appropriate level and distribution of recreational open space.
2. To accommodate future demands for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities where this would not have an adverse effect on the amenities of adjoining occupiers or the attractiveness of the built up areas or the countryside.

Recreation Development

- 9.4** Government guidance, in the form of PPG17, recognises the role which open spaces, sport and recreation play in: supporting urban renaissance; supporting a rural renewal; promoting social inclusion and community cohesion; promoting health and wellbeing; and promoting more sustainable development. It emphasises the importance of carrying out local assessments and audits so that local authorities can identify and plan for specific needs and deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their area. It seeks to protect existing recreation open space unless it is clearly shown to be surplus to requirements.
- 9.5** The Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 encourage the provision of suitable locations to meet recreational demand to avoid it being located in inappropriate locations, for example, in conflict with countryside interests. The Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 therefore seek the retention and provision of open space in towns and smaller settlements together with the development of an appropriate range and standard of facilities for formal sport and indoor recreation close to centres of population.
- 9.6** With the emphasis placed on seeking to secure a significant proportion of all new dwellings on brownfield sites in this Plan, it is also essential to ensure that the formal and informal recreational needs of existing and future residents can be met. Given that it may not always be possible to accommodate sufficient recreation space within a development site, the protection and upgrading of existing facilities through developer agreements becomes important.

General Policies

RECREATION OPEN SPACE

- 9.7 PPG17 states that planning authorities should take account of the needs of local communities in planning for open space, sport and recreation. It seeks to protect existing recreation open space unless it is clearly shown to be surplus to requirement.

Existing Recreation Open Space

- 9.8 The standard most generally applied to open space provision is that recommended by the National Playing Fields Association, of a minimum of 2.4 hectares (6 acres) per 1,000 population (the Six Acre Standard, 2001 National Playing Fields Association). This comprises 1.6 hectares of land for youth and adult use (including both public and private pitches, courts and greens), and 0.8 hectares of children's playspace (including equipped play areas and casual playspaces within housing areas). The standard excludes educational playing fields (unless they are as a matter of practice available for public use – informal or unauthorised use by the public does not qualify), indoor facilities, ornamental gardens, parks and woodland.
- 9.9 Whilst this standard was devised principally for urban areas it can also be used to indicate the general level of provision within the Plan area. The provision of open space in line with a precise national standard is arguably less critical in villages and rural communities than in urban areas because of the availability of recreation grounds and reasonable access to the countryside.

Table 4: Existing Open Space Provision 2000

Town/Parish	Population (est.) 1997	Area (ha) Playspace (Gross)	Rate of provision (ha/1,000)	Area (ha) Youth and adult space	Rate of provision (ha/1,000)
RTW	47,100	26.8	0.57	35.7	0.7
Southborough	11,100	0.94	0.08	6.6	0.6
Paddock Wood	7,600	5.49	0.72	12.9	1.7
Cranbrook	6,300	1.43	0.23	7.5	1.2
Benenden	1,800	2.05	1.14	2.9	1.6
Bidborough	1,000	0.04	0.04	1.6	1.6
Brenchley	2,800	0.9	0.32	6.4	2.3
Capel	2,400	0.05	0.02	2.1	0.9
Frittenden	900	0.8	0.89	0.2	0.2
Goudhurst	2,700	0.05	0.02	2.5	0.9
Hawkhurst	4,400	1.3	0.3	8.7	2.0
Horsmonden	2,200	0.85	0.39	4.3	2.0
Lamberhurst	1,400	1.2	0.86	4.7	3.4
Pembury	6,100	0.2	0.03	6.2	1.0
Sandhurst	1,300	0.47	0.36	3.0	2.3
Speldhurst	4,800	1.66	0.35	7.5	1.6
Sissinghurst	900	0.7	0.7	1.6	1.7
BOROUGH	104,800	44.9	0.43	115	1.1

- 9.10 Table 4 reveals that there are currently some 160 hectares (395 acres) of recreation open space in the Plan area or approximately 1.53 hectares (3.77 acres) per 1,000 population. This breaks down into 1.1 hectares of youth and adult space per 1,000 population and 0.43 hectares of children's playspace per 1,000 population and shows an overall deficiency of recreation open space in the Plan area when measured against the National Playing Fields Association recommended standards.
- 9.11 However, Table 4 also reveals that the distribution of recreation space is uneven across the Plan area. The clear deficiencies within the Plan area are most notable around

Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough. There is a reasonable level of provision in many of the rural areas of the Borough, with each of the principal settlements having at least one recreation ground. There are identified shortfalls of playing pitches at Pembury and Goudhurst. Paddock Wood has adequate levels of provision.

- 9.12** Even where current provision is fairly well matched to demand, it is important to retain and make the best use of existing open space. PPG17 states that local planning authorities need to take account of the current levels of open space provision and deficiencies and to resist pressures for the development of open space where provision is deficient. PPG17, together with strategic planning policy, indicates support for protecting open spaces with recreational value. Recreation open space makes an important contribution to Neighbourhood Centres within Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough and to the range of community facilities within other towns and villages. The advice also recognises that such open spaces may also have value as an amenity and through the contribution made to the natural and built heritage of the area. For this reason the Plan identifies some of the Borough's recreation grounds as Important Open Space; POLICY EN21 within the Environment Chapter refers. Government guidance in PPG3 (Annex C) states that the definition of previously-developed land excludes parks and recreation grounds, and the Plan seeks to protect them. Proposals for the development of recreation open space within the built up area will be resisted unless this would not result in a local deficiency and no suitable alternative previously-developed land was available to accommodate the development.

POLICY R1

Proposals that would result in the loss of recreation open space, as defined on the Proposals Map, or open land with existing or potential recreation value which is not protected by other policies in the Plan, will only be permitted where:

- 1 No deficiency in accessible open space in the area exists or would result from the development, or alternative provision, of at least equivalent size, suitability and accessibility is made within the locality; and**
- 2 No suitable alternative previously-developed land is available to accommodate the development.**

PROVISION OF RECREATION OPEN SPACE IN NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 9.13** It is essential that adequate provision for recreation open space is incorporated into the early planning of new residential developments if future deficiencies are to be avoided. All residential development, with the exception of very sheltered housing where residents require a significant level of care, adds to the demand for recreation open space within the Plan area which is already deficient in many areas. For these reasons the Local Planning Authority will require developers to provide appropriate recreation open space facilities as an integral part of new developments, or contribute towards the installation or upgrading of other facilities in the locality.
- 9.14** The Local Planning Authority has adopted the standards published by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) in 2001 as a basis for calculating youth and adult recreation open space requirements of new development. However, for children's playspace, the Local Planning Authority has adopted a lower standard than that of the NPFA as developers are not required to provide casual playing space within development given the reasonable access to parks, recreation grounds, common land

and countryside in most settlements. Instead the emphasis is on providing useable and useful equipped children's playspace.

- 9.15** There are circumstances when it is not essential or practicable to accommodate the required facilities on-site. This will depend on the scale and type of housing proposed and the alternative provision in the locality.
- 9.16** The Local Planning Authority recognises that occasionally it may be impracticable to provide open space within sites due to their size, shape or topography, or the impact on the character of a conservation area or, in the case of larger-scale open areas for youth or adult use, because of the constraints of existing important landscape or nature conservation features.
- 9.17** The cumulative effect of a number of small developments on existing open space provision could be significant, particularly within the Borough where a large number of small-scale developments come forward. The Borough Council considers that a development of some 10 bedspaces, capable of accommodating some 10 people, is likely to have a sufficiently significant impact on the demand for recreation open space to merit provision, or a contribution towards the provision, of open space. A threshold of 10 bedspaces would capture some 75% of new dwellings (based on trends from the past five years), to a large extent overcoming the cumulative impact of small-scale developments. For these reasons, recreation open space will normally be required for developments providing a total of 10 bedspaces or more, although each development will be assessed on its own merits. Bedspaces are calculated in accordance with the table included in the notes to POLICY R2.

Youth and Adult Open Space

- 9.18** Development generating 10 or more bedspaces will normally be required to make youth and adult recreation open space provision on or abutting the site. On-site provision will be triggered where the development would generate a requirement for at least 0.2 hectares. This would be capable of accommodating a multi-use games area, for uses such as basketball or mini soccer, for example. Where the need generated by the development is less than 0.2 hectares, or where on-site provision is not appropriate for reasons set out above, the Local Planning Authority will seek financial contributions towards either the provision of alternative recreation open space or the upgrading of existing local facilities where this is allocated in the same town or parish. Sheltered housing schemes, where an appropriate level of communal amenity space is made within the development, will not be required to make provision for open space for youth and adult use. This exception does not apply to retirement homes designed for the 'early retired' since the occupiers of such housing are unlikely to make radically different demands on recreation open space than the occupiers of general purpose housing.

Children's Playspace

- 9.19** In recent years a number of playspaces have been installed or upgraded by Borough, Town and Parish Councils. In addition, the Local Planning Authority has negotiated a number of informal or equipped playspaces within housing development sites or sought contributions towards the upgrading of local facilities. One of the objectives of the Borough Council is to achieve a better coverage of play areas to ensure that all households living in towns and villages are within reasonable walking distance of an equipped playspace.
- 9.20** The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) provides standards for equipped children's playspaces based around Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). A combination of both LEAPs and NEAPs provide a range of equipped facilities for children of different ages. LEAPs provide facilities for younger children, typically around 4 to 8 years of age, and should be located within 5 minutes' walk of the home, equivalent to approximately 400 metres distance by pedestrian route. The space should offer at least five pieces of play

equipment over an area of 400 square metres. A NEAP provides at least eight pieces of play equipment for older children, 8 to 14 years of age, including wheeled play facilities for in-line skates, skateboards, etc., and should be located within a 15-minute walk of the home, equivalent to approximately 1,000 metres distance by pedestrian route. The space should comprise approximately 1,000 square metres. It has been found that children and parents alike are prepared to walk a reasonable distance to attractive, well-equipped playspaces. The NPFA walking distance standards are more readily applicable to urban areas and can be more flexibly applied in rural settlements where it is often more beneficial to concentrate children's play space on an existing recreation ground which serves the whole settlement. Robust and attractive landscaping and buffer zones can help to enhance proposals and, in many instances, allow them to be more easily integrated into their surroundings.

- 9.21** The Borough Council wishes to encourage the provision of equipped playspaces which are conveniently accessible to the greatest number of households. This is because many households within the Plan area already have reasonable access to informal open space such as parks and common land. Kent Design – a guide to sustainable development (2000) recommends that open space should have an identified end use within a development site, such as a children's play space. Small, poorly-located patches of grass within development sites frequently remain unused by residents and consequently represent an inefficient use of land.
- 9.22** Development proposals generating between 10 and 150 bedspaces are not likely to generate sufficient demand for an on-site equipped children's play space and will therefore be required to make contributions towards the provision, or upgrading, of a larger equipped play area within the locality. Payments will be calculated on the basis of 0.3 hectares of play space per 1,000 population. Commuted payments in lieu of on-site provision will be sought where:
- a suitable play space capable of being upgraded to meet the demands of the new development is already located within 400 metres of the housing site for a LEAP, or 1,000 metres in the case of a NEAP; or
 - a children's play space of either LEAP or NEAP standard is allocated within 400 metres or 1,000 metres respectively of the site.
- 9.23** Development of 150 bedspaces or more will be required to provide an equipped play area at the rate of 0.3 hectares per 1,000 population within the development. Equipped playspaces should be provided to at least a LEAP standard and accommodate at least five pieces of play equipment in an area of not less than 400 square metres provided with appropriate safety surfacing. A buffer zone and/or landscaped screening should be provided to help minimise disturbance to existing and future residents. Quality landscape planting can also contribute significantly to the appearance and attractiveness of play space facilities.
- 9.24** In exceptional circumstances, where the play space cannot be provided in a satisfactory manner on-site, due to its size, shape or topography, or an adverse impact on the urban form of an area or the character of a conservation area, commuted payments in lieu of on-site provision will be sought as outlined above.
- 9.25** The commuted payment will be used to install or upgrade a local or neighbourhood play space. Where appropriate the commuted payment may be used to improve access to a play space.
- 9.26** Development proposals for housing schemes for the elderly, or residential proposals comprising single-bedroom dwellings, will not be required to provide, or contribute towards, children's play facilities.
- 9.27** All proposals should take account of advice contained in the Local Planning Authority's supplementary planning document on recreation open space provision.

POLICY R2

This Policy applies to new residential developments in towns or parishes with an identified quantitative or qualitative deficiency in open space provision, or where the new development would lead to such a deficiency.

Youth and Adult Use:

New residential developments will be required to provide recreation open space for youth and adult use calculated at the rate of 1.6 ha per 1,000 population. Youth and adult recreation open space should be provided within or abutting the site as an integral part of the design unless any of the following circumstances defined below applies:

- (i) The development would generate a requirement for less than 0.2ha of recreation open space; or**
- (ii) The required open space cannot be provided in a satisfactory manner due to the shape, size, topography, important landscape or nature conservation features of the site, or would have an adverse impact on the urban form of an area or the character of a conservation area, or risk of conflict with existing neighbouring residential properties or the future occupiers of the site; or**
- ~~(iii) Alternative land is allocated for new or upgraded provision in the same town or parish in POLICY R3.~~**

In such cases the developer will be required to make a payment in lieu of on-site provision which would fairly and reasonably relate to the scale of the development. Payments will be used to ~~implement the appropriate Plan proposal in POLICY R3 or to improve an existing open space.~~

Children's Playspace:

On residential developments of 150 bedspaces or more, equipped children's playspace, calculated at the rate of 0.3 ha per 1,000 population, should be provided within or abutting the site, as an integral part of the design, unless the required open space cannot be provided in a satisfactory manner due to the shape, size or topography of the site, or would have an adverse impact on the urban form of an area or the character of a conservation area, or risk of conflict with existing neighbouring residential properties or the future occupiers of the site.

On residential developments of up to 150 bedspaces, and on those of 150 bedspaces or more where playspace cannot be provided on-site, if the circumstances defined below apply, the developer will be required to make a payment in lieu of on-site provision, calculated at the rate of 0.3 ha per 1,000 population, which would fairly and reasonably relate to the scale of the development.

The circumstances referred to above are:

- (i) If a playspace within 400 metres walking distance of the site is ~~proposed in POLICY R4,~~ or could be upgraded to a LEAP to meet demand generated by the proposed development; or**
- (ii) If a playspace within 1,000 metres walking distance of the site is ~~proposed in POLICY R4,~~ or could be upgraded to a NEAP to meet demand generated by the proposed development.**

Notes:

- a) **Bedspace**s will be calculated in the following way:

Bedrooms per Property	Bedspace s per Property
1	2*
2	3
3	4
4	5
5	6
6	7

*One bedroom properties are assumed not to generate the need for children's playspace and bedspace arising from 1 bed dwellings will only be applicable when calculating Youth & Adult provision

- b) ~~In applying the commuted sum, priority will be given to the nearest playspace to the housing site as defined in POLICY R4.~~
- c) For the purposes of this Policy a suitable playspace is defined as a LEAP having a minimum area of 400 square metres and containing five pieces of play equipment with safety surfaces and preferably buffer zones or landscape screening around the activity area. A NEAP is defined as having a minimum area of 1,000 square metres and containing eight pieces of play equipment with safety surfaces, a kickabout area and wheeled play area, with buffer zones or landscape screening around the activity area.
- d) Amenity areas, incidental spaces and highways land are excluded from these calculations and population figures will be calculated from the number of bedspace in the development.
- e) The walking distance should not involve the crossing of a Primary distributor road unless a convenient, safe crossing point for children exists or would be provided in connection with the development. Outside Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, the walking distance of 1,000 and 400 metres can be extended to the walking distance to an existing recreation ground.
- f) Housing schemes for the elderly will not be required to make provision for children's playspace, and sheltered housing schemes that make an appropriate level of provision for communal amenity space within the development will not be required to make provision for open space for youth and adult use. "Very sheltered housing" where residents require a significant level of care will not be required to make any provision under this Policy.

Recreation Provision Within the Defined Limits to Built Development

OPEN SPACE FOR YOUTH AND ADULT USE, INCLUDING SPORTS PITCHES

- 9.28** The principal requirement for youth and adult use comes from the four team sports of soccer, cricket, hockey and rugby. Whilst the overall level of provision is below the National Playing Fields Association standard, a reasonable level of provision is achieved in several Parishes with at least one 'recreation ground' located in each village. Moreover, consultations do indicate a degree of satisfaction with the overall level of pitch provision to serve the existing population.

- 9.29** The greatest deficiency is in the provision of soccer pitches in the western part of the Borough, particularly Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Pembury. In addition, there is no capacity for growth in the provision of hockey in Royal Tunbridge Wells. The condition of some of the facilities, including pavilions and changing rooms, is also an area for concern.
- 9.30** A variety of other outdoor sports are provided for within the Borough including athletics, bowls, netball and tennis. There is planning permission for an athletics track at Mascall's School in Paddock Wood which, when developed, will be available for use by the public. Netball is in most instances possible through dual use of school facilities.

Royal Tunbridge Wells

- 9.31** It is within the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough where the most significant deficiencies occur. This is demonstrated by the fact that a number of pitches maintained by the Borough Council are suffering from over-use. Unfortunately the opportunities for providing additional sports pitches are limited through topography and the lack of suitable sites in Borough or Town Council ownership. To help overcome the problem the Borough Council is investigating a number of management measures to increase the opportunities for outdoor sports and recreation. The installation of an Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) and floodlighting at Hawkenbury Recreation Ground has allowed a greater intensity of use and the facility is well used.
- 9.32** ~~Following a re-appraisal of the previous sports pitch allocation at Dunorlan Park, the provision of facilities at this location will not now be pursued. This is because the area is to be restored as an historic park and garden and, in part, is established as a temporary events location, catering for events such as circuses and horticultural shows.~~
- 9.33** ~~Sites at Hawkenbury and Rusthall are identified as suitable locations for the provision of six additional sports pitches which, with an additional ATP, should meet the demand for new soccer pitches. These sites are reasonably level and adjoin existing pitch facilities. Any remodelling of the land should be minimised and new and existing boundaries and margins should be enhanced. Provision of the two sites is distributed to the west and east of Royal Tunbridge Wells allowing the opportunity to more closely serve the local catchment populations. Whilst the land identified is situated outside the defined Limits to Built Development and is within the Green Belt, its use for outdoor recreation would be consistent with countryside and Green Belt policies. Any proposed floodlighting would be required to comply with POLICY EN8.~~
- 9.34** ~~The Tunbridge Wells Borough Sports Facilities Study (2000) suggests that there should be sufficient local demand within the Plan period for an ATP to be provided in Royal Tunbridge Wells. This could serve a variety of local needs including those of Tunbridge Wells Hockey Club. Positioning a new ATP adjacent to the existing facility at Hawkenbury would enable, for example, hockey matches to be played concurrently, making maximum practical usage of the facility. Unlike the site at Rusthall, the Hawkenbury site is located outside of the Metropolitan Green Belt and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.~~
- 9.35** In addition to new recreation grounds, the following sites require upgrading during the Plan period:
- Hilbert Recreation Ground (land drainage and car parking);
 - Cadogan Playing Field (land drainage);
 - Bayham Road Playing Field (car parking);
 - Colebrook Recreation Ground (car parking);
 - Nevill Grounds (land drainage);
 - Hawkenbury Recreation Ground (land drainage); and
 - Bayham Road Playing Fields (land drainage).

- 9.36** The upgrading of existing sites is as important as developing new sites in improving the recreation provision for the town. For this reason, payments collected in connection with new residential development in lieu of on-site youth and adult recreation provision will be put towards upgrading existing sites as well as developing new ones.
- 9.37** The re-allocation of space within some of the Borough Council's recreation grounds in Royal Tunbridge Wells may result in the loss of some tennis courts and bowls rinks during the Plan period correcting the identified surplus of supply.

Southborough

- 9.38** Southborough has the lowest provision of open space in the Plan area with only 0.7 hectares (1.7 acres) per 1,000 population. The closure of the Ridgeway Secondary School has meant that alternative uses have been considered for the former school playing fields. The site represents a rare opportunity of flat land which adjoins existing pitches and is close to the community it serves. Land is allocated for outdoor recreation use which has the capacity for one, or potentially two, additional full-size soccer pitches by utilising land currently occupied by allotments. The allotments are not fully utilised, but those which are currently used are proposed to be relocated to either the under-used adjoining site or the proposed new site allocated in this Local Plan (POLICY R7). The environmental value of the site as Important Open Space is recognised by POLICY EN21.

Paddock Wood

- 9.39** The Tunbridge Wells Borough Sports Facilities Study (2000) has indicated that Paddock Wood has sufficient provision of sports pitches to meet demand through the Plan period. New facilities have been secured as part of the Hunter's Chase development to the south of the town. An athletics track has also been granted planning permission at Mascall's School. It is not necessary to allocate further land for youth or adult recreation space within the Plan period, and existing facilities will be protected under POLICY R1.

Cranbrook

- 9.40** The Tunbridge Wells Borough Sports Facilities Study (2000) has indicated that there is adequate provision of outdoor pitches within the Cranbrook area. Changing facilities are in demand, particularly at Ball Field recreation ground, and, in connection with any new residential development, any payments collected in lieu of on-site youth and adult recreation provision will be put towards upgrading this facility. It is not necessary to allocate further land for youth or adult recreation space within the Plan period, and existing facilities will be protected under POLICY R1.

Villages

- 9.41** The Tunbridge Wells Borough Sports Facilities Study (2000) and consultations that have been carried out with Town and Parish Councils and local sports associations indicate a degree of satisfaction with the overall level of open space within existing sports grounds. In most cases, there is no requirement to allocate further land for recreation, although in order to retain the current provision it is necessary to protect existing facilities through POLICY R1.

Goudhurst

- 9.42** Following development of the existing soccer pitch off Cranbrook Road for a housing development, a new pitch is allocated on adjoining land to the east. The site is of sufficient size to accommodate a full-size pitch with changing and storage facilities. Dual use could be made of the primary school car park with some additional dedicated spaces provided as part of the development. The site is reasonably level and, with

minimal re-modelling and sufficient native planting to the south, should integrate satisfactorily within the landscape.

Pembury

- 9.43 Information supplied by Pembury Parish Council and local sports associations indicates a high level of local demand for both adult and junior football as well as tennis. The opportunity exists to extend the existing Woodside playing fields, off Henwoods Mount by a total of 3.4 hectares (8.4 acres), to provide two new football pitches. Whilst the land identified is situated outside the defined Limits to Built Development and within the Green Belt, its use for sports pitches would be consistent with countryside and Green Belt policies. The land identified is reasonably flat and has the advantage of being close to existing recreation facilities. In view of the shortcomings of the existing access to the site, and the intensification of use likely to be associated with the additional pitches, a new access suitable for cars should be created directly from Woodside Road.

POLICY R3

~~Land is allocated for sports pitches and other outdoor recreation facilities at the following locations, as defined on the Proposals Map:~~

- ~~1— Land adjacent to Hawkenbury recreation ground, Royal Tunbridge Wells;~~
- ~~2— Land adjacent to Rusthall recreation ground, Royal Tunbridge Wells;~~
- ~~3— Land west of the Ridgewaye, Southborough;~~
- ~~4— Land at Cranbrook Road, Goudhurst; and~~
- ~~5— Land adjacent to Woodside playing fields, Pembury.~~

~~New boundaries should be sympathetic to the character of the adjoining countryside. New habitats for flora and fauna should be created along the boundaries and margins of the sites.~~

CHILDREN'S PLAYSPACE

- 9.44 This category covers recreation grounds, children's playspace within housing estates and larger equipped playspaces. Playspace includes areas for informal play as well as a range of conveniently located equipped sites for varying age groups which can incorporate areas suitable for more robust play such as kickabout areas and wheeled play facilities for skateboards and in-line skates.
- 9.45 The distribution of playspace is more critical than sports pitches in view of the need for convenient access by children. This is particularly so in higher density urban areas where there may also be poor access to parks, playing fields and other land.
- 9.46 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommends that 0.8 hectares of playspace per 1,000 population should be met at all times, with 0.2-0.3 hectares of equipped playspace provided as part of that total. The Borough Council wishes to encourage the provision of challenging, attractive equipped playspaces within the Plan area which are accessible to the largest number of households. The NPFA has recommended the provision of a combination of Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) in order to allow for playspaces which appeal to a broad range of children up to the age of fourteen.

- 9.47** There are a total of 38 playspaces within the Plan area which are equipped to LEAP standard. The quality and range of equipment available at the moment is variable, and vandalism and limited resources for maintenance means that provision is not consistent across the Plan area. It is recognised that additional equipment is required, including some that is more robust, catering for different forms of play such as skateboarding.

Royal Tunbridge Wells

- 9.48** There are considerable variations in the provision of children's playspace within Royal Tunbridge Wells and the following residential areas do not enjoy reasonable access to equipped children's playspaces:

- Showfields Road-Broadmead
- Camden Road-Goods Station Road
- Culverden Down-Molyneux Park Road
- St Peter's
- Stephens Road/Newlands Road area
- Upper Grosvenor Road area
- Grosvenor Road/Dudley Road
- Ravenswood Avenue area
- Albion Road area
- Sandhurst Park area
- Oak Road
- Grange Road area, Rusthall
- Green Way area, Sherwood
- Mereworth Road area
- Bayhall Road/Prospect Road area
- Broadmead, Broadwater Down area
- Moat Farm area
- Southview Road-Holmewood Road area
- Farmcombe Road area

- 9.49** A number of residential areas which are deficient in playspace comprise relatively low density development with predominantly large gardens, and the problem is less acute. Sometimes the worst deficiencies occur in predominantly built up areas where there is less prospect of suitable sites becoming available. In some localities, such as Ravenswood Avenue, and Albion Road/Prospect Road in Royal Tunbridge Wells the lack of children's playspace is partly compensated for by the close proximity of either a public park, garden or sports pitches.

- 9.50** Opportunities have been identified to rectify the situation in the Showfields Road-Broadmead, Camden Road-Goods Station Road, St Peter's, Culverden Down, Oak Road, Southview Road-Holmewood Road and Farmcombe Road areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells. This will be achieved through either the allocation of new sites for equipped playspace or the upgrading of existing space to either LEAP or NEAP standard.

- 9.51** The Showfields Road-Broadmead area of higher density housing has poor access to larger areas suitable for more robust play and ball games. Land is allocated adjacent to Broadwater Down County Primary School for playspace. The site is suitable for the provision of a NEAP.

- 9.52** ~~Proposals in POLICY H6 to redevelop land off Goods Station Road for housing provide the opportunity to require a playspace to be incorporated into the site serving not only future residents but also the adjoining, older residential areas around Camden Road. The site would be suitable for the provision of a LEAP. Any contaminated land within the site would have to be removed from the site or capped in accordance with POLICY EN10.~~

- ~~9.53~~ Proposals in POLICY H7 to redevelop the Kent and Sussex Hospital provide the opportunity to redress the imbalance in the Molyneux Park area through a requirement to provide children's playspace as part of any future development.
- ~~9.54~~ An opportunity exists to provide a children's playspace on land at Oak Road. The site would be suitable for the provision of a NEAP. The proposed use, accompanied by a high standard of landscaping, will enhance the general appearance and amenity of the locality. The site is also well positioned in relation to the Colebrook playing fields which would also benefit from any environmental enhancement.
- ~~9.55~~ Two further NEAPs are also proposed to supplement existing facilities in Hawkenbury and Rusthall.
- ~~9.56~~ A LEAP is proposed on land at the Julian Hewitt grounds, off Farmcombe Road.
- ~~9.57~~ Land at Goods Station Road is suitable for the provision of a NEAP. This will be provided in conjunction with the development of the housing sites at Goods Station Road (POLICY H6(a)) and Medway Road (POLICY H6(e)).
- ~~9.58~~ The upgrading of existing playspace facilities at St John's recreation ground, off Beltring Road, provides an opportunity for a NEAP to serve the Culverden Down area.
- ~~9.59~~ If the land allocated for children's playspace in POLICY R4 were developed and the upgrading of existing facilities carried out, there would still be a limited number of areas without reasonable access to children's playspace in Royal Tunbridge Wells. In these locations the high density of development and the lack of opportunities to provide open space may preclude further improvement during the Plan period although POLICY R1 would apply in such areas.

Southborough

- ~~9.60~~ Southborough has the poorest provision of open space per 1,000 head of population in the Plan area. Southborough Town Council owns land at Powder Mill Lane and this would be suitable for the provision of a NEAP within the Plan period. The High Brooms Road area is deficient in the standard of children's playspace provided. An opportunity exists on land available at Southview Road in the St John's High Brooms area of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough. The site is within Borough Council ownership and would be suitable for the provision of a LEAP. An equipped children's playspace is also proposed at The Ridgeway site in POLICY CR6. The playspace is proposed to be equipped to a NEAP standard and should be available within the Plan period.

Paddock Wood

- ~~9.61~~ Most of the Paddock Wood area, including the area around Tutsham Way/Mount Pleasant/Allington Road is so densely built up that there is no capacity for additional provision of children's playspace. However, most properties in the area have reasonable access to the Memorial Recreation Ground. Within the Warrington Road area, most properties enjoy reasonable access to the St Andrew's Recreation Ground. New children's playspace facilities have been secured as part of the Hunter's Chase development to the south of the town.

Cranbrook

- ~~9.62~~ With the exception of the Turner Avenue/Dorothy Avenue area, Cranbrook benefits from a reasonable provision and distribution of equipped children's playspace, including a skate ramp at Crane Valley. Opportunities also exist, however, to upgrade the quantity and range of play equipment at both the Crane Valley and Ball Field playspaces to a NEAP standard.

Villages

- 9.63 In addition to the distances to facilities, the analysis of the distribution of children's playspace has included factors such as the provision of recreation grounds and village greens, the density of residential development, the constraints of the existing built up area and opportunities for access to the countryside.

POLICY R4

~~Land is allocated for an equipped children's playspace at the following locations, as defined on the Proposals Map:~~

- ~~1 Land at Rusthall recreation ground, Royal Tunbridge Wells (NEAP);~~
- ~~2 Land at Oak Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells (NEAP);~~
- ~~3 Land at Powder Mill Lane, Southborough (NEAP);~~
- ~~4 Land east of London Road, Southborough (NEAP);~~
- ~~5 Land to the south of Broadwater Lane, Royal Tunbridge Wells (LEAP);~~
- ~~6 Land at Southview Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells (LEAP);~~
- ~~7 Land at Julian Hewitt grounds, Farmcombe Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells (LEAP); and~~
- ~~8 Land at Goods Station Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells (NEAP); and~~
- ~~9 Land at Kent and Sussex Hospital, Mount Ephraim, Royal Tunbridge Wells (LEAP).~~

~~The extension and upgrading of an existing equipped children's playspace is proposed at the following locations, as defined on the Proposals Map:~~

- ~~1 Land at Hawkenbury recreation ground, Royal Tunbridge Wells (NEAP);~~
- ~~2 Land at St John's recreation ground, Royal Tunbridge Wells (NEAP);~~
- ~~3 Land at Crane Valley, Cranbrook (NEAP); and~~
- ~~4 Ball Field, Cranbrook (NEAP).~~

INFORMAL OPEN SPACE

- 9.64 The Plan area contains a wealth of informal open space and woodlands ranging in size from places such as Tunbridge Wells Common, Bedgebury Pinetum and Lamberhurst Down to landscaped areas within housing estates. In Royal Tunbridge Wells some areas are linked by footpaths or landscaped walkways providing the basis of an integrated open space system allowing walks in and around the town. There are many opportunities for informal recreation, particularly the large number of public footpaths allowing people to walk in and around the towns and villages.
- 9.65 These resources are valuable in terms of both their recreational and amenity potential. However, whilst it is desirable that everyone should have convenient access to informal

open space this does not fall within National Playing Field Association guidelines nor are there any other generally accepted standards which can be applied. Wherever possible the Borough Council will seek opportunities to exploit the amenity potential of existing features or provide additional space or linkages, for example in connection with the redevelopment of existing sites, development of new sites or management of Council-owned land. The Borough Council will also use its influence to ensure that public parks and gardens, common land and woodland (such as High Woods, Royal Tunbridge Wells), are protected and improved through good management, and that, where appropriate, features such as picnic areas, trails and signposting are introduced to encourage better use. The Kent High Weald Project will provide expertise and resources in fulfilling some of these objectives.

Southborough

~~9.66~~ As part of the redevelopment proposals at the Ridgeway site, open space is to be retained for public amenity and informal recreation purposes. It is anticipated that the allocated area may be partly landscaped with an open space also retained.

Paddock Wood

~~9.67~~ The juxtaposition of existing residential and the proposed economic development site on land west of Maidstone Road requires a well landscaped and open space. The open space would serve as an informal recreation area for residential properties situated to the north of the railway line and also for the surrounding employment area. It is expected that the site would also be laid out and developed in conjunction with the economic development site and would be maintained as an integral part of that development.

POLICY R5

~~Land is allocated for informal open space at the following locations, as defined on the Proposals Map:~~

~~1 Land east of the Ridgeway, Southborough; and~~

~~2 Land off Nursery Road, Paddock Wood.~~

ALLOTMENTS

9.68 The Borough Council in Royal Tunbridge Wells and most of the Town and Parish Councils maintain allotments. These comprise both statutory allotments which cannot be used for any other purpose without Ministerial approval, and non-statutory allotments which occupy land initially held for other purposes such as road widening. At Speldhurst, allotments are owned by the Church and at Langton Green there are some privately owned allotments.

9.69 Under existing legislation, the Borough Council and Parish Councils are required to provide a sufficient number of allotment gardens to supply demand. A total of over 27 hectares are available within the Plan area, the distribution of which is given in the following table. Although some allotments are less accessible than others, overall supply exceeds demand with 35% of plots vacant in Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough and evidence of vacant plots in the Parishes. The last official guidance on allotment provision was provided in the findings of the 'Thorpe Committee of Inquiry into Allotments' which was published in 1969. The report recommended a minimum level of provision of 0.2 hectares per 1,000 population, which implies a requirement of approximately 19 hectares within the Plan area.

- 9.70** PPG3 (Annex C) states that allotments are excluded from the definition of previously-developed land and this Local Plan seeks to protect them. When individual proposals come forward to develop allotment land these will only be acceptable if it can be demonstrated that no suitable alternative previously-developed land is available to accommodate the development. In addition, it will have to be shown that there is no unsatisfied demand for allotments within the locality or that alternative, convenient provision will be made elsewhere. New procedures governing the potential disposal of any redundant allotment land require that the use of vacant allotment sites must have been actively promoted and advertised prior to disposal. Applications for the sale of statutory allotment sites which attract objections should be referred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister prior to determination.
- 9.71** As well as representing a finite resource, allotments also have a functional role in providing open breaks between development. Such areas have been identified as Important Open Space within the Environment Chapter and are covered by POLICY EN21.

Table 5: Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan Allotment Provision 2000

Parish	Area (ha)	Total Plots	Vacant Plots
RTW	10.5	488	161
Southborough	3.0	167	66
Cranbrook	2.3	35	0
Paddock Wood	2.75	107	18
Benenden	◆	◆	◆
Bidborough	0.4	11	0
Brenchley	0.8	20	10
Capel	1.3	50	10
Frittenden	◆	◆	◆
Goudhurst	0.2	7	1
Hawkhurst	2.7	93	19
Horsmonden	■	■	■
Lamberhurst	0.6	40	24
Pembury	2	68	8
Sandhurst	◆	◆	◆
Speldhurst	0.5	40	0
TOTAL	27.05	1126	317

◆ No allotment provision

■ Site not within Parish ownership and currently unused

POLICY R6

Proposals for the development of allotment land which is located within the defined Limits to Built Development will only be permitted if all the following criteria are satisfied:

- 1 It can be demonstrated that demand within the locality for allotments on the land under construction no longer exists or that suitable alternative provision can be made elsewhere;**
- 2 The Borough Council is satisfied that the land is not required to make good a shortage of public recreational open space; and**
- 3 No suitable alternative previously-developed land is available to accommodate the development.**

~~9.72 This Local Plan allocates allotment land in Southborough as a result of displacement of existing allotments by a new sports pitch (POLICY R3). Although there is some under-use of the allotments, additional land is allocated for replacement allotments in the vicinity.~~

POLICY R7

~~Land at The Ridgeway, Southborough, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated as allotment land.~~

INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- 9.73** The provision of indoor sports facilities is currently met within the Borough by Tunbridge Wells Sports and Indoor Tennis Centre, the Tunbridge Wells High School Sports Centre, Putlands Sports and Leisure Centre at Paddock Wood and the Weald Sports Centre in Cranbrook, together with a number of village and school halls (which provide for a limited range of indoor sports) and private clubs (catering for sports such as squash and indoor bowls). The Borough Council recognises that dual use of educational buildings provides an important indoor facility and dual use will be encouraged where possible. For example, improved facilities at the Tunbridge Wells High School Sports Centre will serve eastern Royal Tunbridge Wells and Pembury. Swimming pools are provided within the Plan area at the Tunbridge Wells Sports and Indoor Tennis Centre and Weald Sports Centre, and just outside the Plan area at Crowborough, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Tenterden.
- 9.74** Analysis of, and demand for, swimming facilities in the Plan period indicates that the swimming pools at Tunbridge Wells Sports and Indoor Tennis Centre and Weald Sports Centre are meeting current demand efficiently and will be likely to do so for the remainder of the Plan period. A recent study has shown that demand is presently insufficient to justify the construction of a further swimming pool in Paddock Wood. However, the Putlands Sports and Leisure Centre has been designed so that a 25 x 12 metre community pool could be added on its north side should demand increase to a viable level. As a pool could be located on the existing site no additional land has been allocated for this purpose in the Plan.
- 9.75** The analysis of demand within the Borough for multi-use sports hall facilities, capable of accommodating five-a-side football, netball, basketball and other uses, is currently

being met by Tunbridge Wells Sports and Indoor Tennis Centre, Tunbridge Wells High School Sports Centre, Putlands Sports and Leisure Centre and Weald Sports Centre. Demand is not expected to increase significantly over the Plan period sufficient to require the allocation of a further site for a sports hall.

- 9.76** There is currently one main gymnastics club within the Borough, the Tunbridge Wells School of Gymnastics, which operates out of Showfields Community Hall in Royal Tunbridge Wells. The club is well attended although facilities are inadequate to meet the basic training space requirements of 28 metres by 21 metres. The Regional Governing Body for Gymnastics have recognised that there is a need for a dedicated facility within the area given that the nearest alternative facilities are located in Maidstone, or Maresfield in East Sussex. The provision of a Borough facility would also accord with the facilities strategy adopted by the British Amateur Gymnastics Association. A suitable facility could be supported on a school site, taking advantage of an existing building of a suitable size, or a new building. Alternatively, facilities could be incorporated into a comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of an existing town centre site that may come forward within the Plan period. In either case, proposals would be assessed against POLICY EN1 and other policies relevant to the particular site.

Recreation Provision Outside the Defined Limits to Built Development

GOLF COURSES

- ~~9.77~~ The high quality landscape and varied topography of the Borough has undoubtedly been an attraction to golf course operators, with a contraction in the amount of land required for agricultural purposes encouraging diversification from farming to leisure and recreation.
- ~~9.78~~ The Borough currently contains three 18 hole courses, at Cranbrook, Bronchloy and Lamborhurst, and two 9 hole courses at Hawkhurst and Royal Tunbridge Wells, all of which are operated on a private membership basis. In addition, the Novill Course is located on the border between Royal Tunbridge Wells and East Sussex.
- ~~9.79~~ The level of provision of existing courses within the Borough approximates to one course per 19,800 people. This compares with a national average level of provision of one course per 36,355 people, rising to one course per 34,350 in the south (Sports Council, 1992). In terms of overall provision the Borough is clearly well provided for in line with current standards. Although there is no municipal or pay as you play course within the Plan area there are courses at Poul Wood in Tonbridge & Malling Borough and at Bears Head in Wealdon District, both being close to the Borough boundary. These courses serve the needs of the widest possible spectrum of the local population, particularly new and young players.
- ~~9.80~~ Golf courses are acknowledged by the Government as being an acceptable use of the countryside, even within the Green Belt where alternative uses are severely restricted, particularly where they are developed without ancillary built structures and other uses. If designed sensitively, they can assist the retention and enhancement of important natural and built features and help protect wildlife and nature conservation features. In addition, the sites can give opportunities for increased access by the public to the countryside. Finally, new golf courses may also benefit the local economy by generating jobs and stimulating tourism as well as providing leisure facilities for local residents.
- ~~9.81~~ The protection of the character of the countryside and important landscape features, particularly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will be important considerations when assessing proposals for golf course and other facilities such as pitch and putt courses and driving ranges. POLICIES EN25, EN26 and EN27 will apply to all such proposals within countryside locations. The landscape of the Plan area can be adversely affected through the impact on the traditional pattern of woods, copses, trees and hedgerows; the pattern of fairways, mown greens, tees and bunkers being very different to the agricultural pattern of fields and hedgerows. The undulating

~~topography of much of the Plan area means that the visual impact of new golf courses located on slopes or on ridgelines exposed to longer views is given added significance. Re-modelling of the local topography, through cut and fill, will be carefully controlled as will the construction and location of any ancillary buildings or structures. Lighting schemes will be assessed against POLICY EN8.~~

~~9.82 As well as controlling buildings directly related to the proposal, the Local Planning Authority will guard against possible future development for replacement agricultural dwellings, buildings or structures resulting from the fragmentation of a farm holding which would have adverse landscape or highway implications.~~

~~9.83 It is important to protect the amenities of local residents against the impact of increased levels of activity. POLICY EN1 will apply to all proposals. Furthermore, the need for an adequate water supply will also be an important consideration and proposals will be assessed against POLICIES EN16 and EN17 within the Environment Chapter.~~

~~9.84 The Plan aims to reduce the need for travel by car and proposed golf courses and other golf facilities will only be permitted where they are well related to existing centres of population.~~

~~POLICY R8~~

~~Proposals for new golf courses, pitch and putt courses and driving ranges will only be permitted where they would be well located to serve existing centres of population.~~

~~EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT~~

~~9.85 The growing popularity of horseriding for recreational purposes, or as part of a commercially based equestrian activity, has resulted in a number of stables being erected in the countryside. Applications for stables generally fall into one of the following categories:~~

~~Private:~~

- ~~a) Isolated in a field (unless a building to house horse used for farming purposes);~~
- ~~b) On land adjacent to the owner's home but outside the residential curtilage, e.g. paddock adjoining house.~~

~~Commercial:~~

- ~~a) Riding school;~~
- ~~b) Livery stables;~~
- ~~c) Stud farm;~~
- ~~d) Specialist training and competition, e.g. racing, polo, hunting, show jumping, showing, eventing stable.~~

~~9.86 In order to control the number of new buildings in the countryside to house horses for non-domestic or agricultural purposes, the use of existing buildings will be preferred. Where this is not possible, the scale, siting, design, materials and landscaping of the proposed buildings and boundary treatment will be required to be in keeping with the countryside setting. Whilst boundaries will be required to be stock proof, the Local Planning Authority would not wish to see the introduction of visually inappropriate fencing and would expect appropriate hedge and tree boundary treatment (if necessary in addition to appropriate stock proofing).~~

~~9.87 The volume and speed of traffic and the narrowness and alignment of some rural roads can make horseriding on roads impracticable and dangerous for horse, horserider and motorist alike. In the case of proposals for commercial riding schools, livery stables and other commercial establishments it is important that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety due to an increase in horse riding on unsuitable roads.~~

~~POLICY R9~~

~~Outside the Limits to Built Development, proposals for the erection of domestic stables, commercial stables, maneges or sandschools or other equestrian activities, will only be permitted if all of the following criteria are satisfied:~~

- ~~1 In the case of proposals for commercial riding schools, livery stables and other commercial stables, they would not lead to an increase in horse riding on roads that, because of the nature or level of use of the roads affected, would be likely to have an unacceptable impact on highway safety;~~
- ~~2 The proposal would contain an appropriately sited and designed area for the reception of soiled bedding materials and provision for foul and surface water drainage; and~~
- ~~3 The proposed means of enclosure would be sympathetic to the character of the adjoining countryside.~~

Implementation

9.88

Policy	Implementing Agency
R2	Private Sector, Housing Association
R3	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town and Parish Councils, Private Sector
R4	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town and Parish Councils, Private Sector
R5	Private Sector, Parish Councils
R7	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Southborough Town Council

9.89 Other policies and paragraphs in this Chapter will be applied by the Local Planning Authority to retain and encourage appropriate development consistent with the sustainable objectives of this Plan.

