

Recreation and Tourism

Background

- 6.1** 'Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life'. This is the opening statement of the national planning guidance note 17 (PPG 17) and marks the importance of these topics to the Government and for the delivery of the national planning strategy. The provision of opportunities for recreation, as well as the protection and enhancement of existing natural and cultural assets, is of major importance in determining the quality of life in a community.
- 6.2** Recreation covers a variety of activities and pursuits from active participation in sports and the arts to spectating, eating out and visiting theatres and cinemas, and from specialised facilities to walking in town and countryside.
- 6.3** The term "tourism" refers to the activities of all those visiting an area for leisure, business or family reasons. This definition covers day visitors. Tourist facilities broadly comprise:-
- tourist attractions e.g. Clumber Park, Nottingham Castle;
 - tourist services, including car/coach parks, information facilities and toilets; and
 - tourist accommodation.
- 6.4** Many aspects of recreation and tourism overlap which is why these activities are considered together in this chapter. Tourism also has close links with the economy, transport, town centres, and with the environment. For example, the quality of the historic environment generates tourism. The placing of tourism in this chapter should not be interpreted as implying that these wider links have not been considered by the two Councils. This view also reflects national guidance on tourism set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 'Tourism' (PPG21).
- 6.5** The County, City and District Council's published a Cultural Strategy for the Plan Area in 2001. The Strategy covers a ten year period and sets out a comprehensive set of policies and programmes covering sport, recreation, the arts, tourism and other factors. A Tourism Strategy for the Plan Area was also published in 2002.

Issues Affecting Recreation and Tourism

6.6 The following factors need to be taken into account when setting out the strategic land use strategy for these topics: -

- the number of visits to the countryside is likely to increase significantly over the Plan period and will reflect the greater share of new house building taken within urban areas as part of the sequential approach to development and the desire to minimise the need to release green field land for housing;
- there will continue to be pressure for countryside recreation on the fringe of urban areas which will need to be well managed if there are not to be problems of trespass, damage, litter and vandalism to rural uses such as agriculture, recreation facilities, nature conservation sites and woodland;
- parts of the urban areas of the Plan Area are deficient in the provision of open space and playing fields. The exact extent of any deficiencies is being reassessed as part of the local application of standards following the revision of PPG 17 advice. Given that more housing is being directed to urban areas, the requirement to make good deficiencies in open space/playing field provision and the need to safeguard existing provision is made more imperative;
- given the boundaries of Districts in the South Nottinghamshire Sub-Area relative to the main built-up area of Nottingham, the making good of deficiencies in the bullet point above will require an appreciation over an area wider than an individual District. At present, a significant part of the playing field requirement of City residents is met in adjoining Districts;
- visitor numbers in parts of the Sherwood Forest area at peak periods in the summer have created pressures on the transport network, on local communities and upon the environment. The area will still attract visitor pressure and there is a continuing need for appropriate management arrangements for the attractions themselves and for traffic, and the creation/promotion of alternative attractions which respect the environment, require a rural or non-urban location and do not give rise to transport problems;
- there is a continuing requirement for more bed spaces - e.g. hotels, bed and breakfast and self-catering establishments - and other tourist facilities particularly in the rural east of the County;
- there is potential to establish more arts facilities and activities in the Plan Area for the benefit of local residents as well as visitors;
- in the market towns and the rural areas of the County, the development of tourist/visitor facilities and services will assist in protecting existing services and may promote new services that otherwise would not have been located in these areas. These facilities will also provide local employment opportunities;

- whilst public transport services to visitor attractions and areas are relatively good, there are problems to service users at off-peak times including Sundays, and in the area of 'through ticketing' where visitors arrive by one transport mode and wish to continue their visit by another mode;
 - there is a need for better public transport links between visitor attractions and to important recreational routes.
- 6.7** The Plan Area has considerable potential to develop further its established recreation and tourism provision.
- 6.8** There are a variety of tourism themes in the Plan Area that can be further developed - Robin Hood, Sherwood Forest, Byron, Pilgrim Fathers, D.H. Lawrence, the Civil War, and industrial and religious heritage. The principal visitor attractions are in Nottingham City, Newark, Sherwood Forest and the Trent Valley and these areas are likely to remain the main attractions in the Plan period.
- 6.9** Nottingham has great potential to attract visitors with its first class range of retail, eating, recreation and cultural facilities, its architectural and historical heritage, its conference facilities and range of accommodation. There is potential to enhance these attractions. Newark also attracts visitors to its shops, market, and by its historic charm and environment, and location by the Trent. Again there is potential to enhance these attractions.
- 6.10** The Plan Area has a number of important sports and water recreation features such as the National Ice Centre, the National Water Sports Centre at Holme Pierrepont and the presence of international standard football and cricket grounds. All prove attractive to local people and to visitors and provide benefits to the local economy and the quality of life.
- 6.11** The wider Sherwood Forest area, the Greenwood Community Forest and the Trent Valley, with its complex of flooded former gravel workings and associated navigable waterways present further opportunities for developing leisure and tourism uses which will be attractive to specialist users such as water sports participants, to local residents and to visitors. In the Sherwood Forest area any proposals for a further significant visitor attraction should require a forest/heathland setting, be located where there are good transport links, and be designed in harmony with the rural environment.
- 6.12** Generally, the Plan Area has good accessibility by a variety of transport modes to attract visitors from beyond the geographic County. Lying astride major north/south and some east/west transport routes and in close proximity to the Nottingham East Midlands Airport and the Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield, the Plan Area is within easy reach of other parts of Britain, Europe and the rest of the world.
- 6.13** River valleys, canals and disused railway lines have been used as recreational routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders both within urban and rural areas. Part of the Sustrans national cycle route runs through the County.

6.14 The objectives for recreation and tourism are: -

- to provide and, as appropriate, protect recreation facilities and services that meet the needs of local residents and those working in or visiting the Plan Area;
- to promote the tourism potential of the Plan Area to assist the local economy and the quality of life of local people;
- to meet the specialist requirements for sport and recreation in suitable locations;
- to assist in making the Plan Area an attractive and safe environment for those living in, working in and visiting the area;
- to protect and enhance opportunities for informal quiet recreation in tranquil parts of the Plan Area.

POLICY 6/1 LOCATION OF RECREATION AND TOURISM FACILITIES

Facilities for recreation and tourism will be located within, or on the edge of, town centres (as defined in Policy 7/1), or at other accessible locations within or on the edge of urban areas. Such facilities will only be permitted in other locations where they cannot be sited either within, or on the edge of, urban areas or are to meet purely local needs. Facilities will only be permitted in the countryside where they require a rural location or are required under the provisions of Policy 4/5.

All such development will:

- a) be acceptable in terms of its impact upon the environment or local amenity; and
- b) incorporate a high standard of design.

Major development, meeting more than local needs, should be accessible by a choice of means of transport.

6.15 This policy accords with Policy 1/1 as regards the sequential approach to development. Such locations minimise the need to travel by car and to travel long distances and make facilities/services more accessible to all sections of the community.

6.16 Some leisure uses such as golf courses or large public playing field complexes require considerable areas of open land and are very unlikely to be accommodated within urban areas. So far as is practicable, these uses will be directed to suitable locations on the edge of urban areas/settlements rather than be located in the heart of the countryside. Again, this makes the locations more accessible to a greater proportion of the population. The provision of leisure facilities in the urban fringe may also with proper management reduce the incidence of trespass, damage and vandalism in other parts of the urban fringe. Suitable locations should avoid areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and areas of high landscape quality or wildlife value.

- 6.17** Some leisure/tourist activities have specific site requirements and consequently may not be able to be located close to urban areas or rural settlements. Activities such as air and motor sports are likely for noise and safety reasons, apart from site requirements, to be located away from urban areas. Water sports and water-based activities will clearly need to be located alongside suitable water features. In general, activities that have to be located in the countryside and which generate significant visitor/participant flows should be sited in the more readily accessible locations and the more specialised activities in more remote locations. These developments need to be acceptable in terms of environmental, local amenity and transport impacts.
- 6.18** Former mineral workings and spoil tips, which can be reclaimed in a manner to minimise environmental and other impacts, can provide opportunities to cater for water and motor sports/activities. Former flooded gravel workings provide opportunities for water-based motorised sports whilst former colliery tips provide opportunities for motor cycle, go-kart and auto sports. Land and water based motor sports should not materially affect recreational routes used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and others enjoying the countryside (see Policy 6/3).
- 6.19** At present, the Plan Area has strong tourist/visitor attractions, as set out in paragraph 6.8. Over the Plan period, the four principal areas will continue to receive the largest number of visitors and the provision of further tourist services, accommodation and facilities should be encouraged in or near these areas. All four areas have the potential to increase visitor numbers but such increases, notably in the core part of Sherwood Forest, will require careful planning, design and management.
- 6.20** The environment of some areas such as parts of Sherwood Forest can be easily damaged by recreational/visitor pressures and it is desirable to divert these pressures to more acceptable locations. There is a need to integrate land use plans and management plans for particularly sensitive areas. Examples of management plans include the Sherwood Study - A vision for Sherwood Forest, the Nottinghamshire Heathland Strategy and the proposed Nottinghamshire County Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 6.21** It should not be implied that there is no tourism potential in parts of the Plan Area outside the four principal areas or that improvements of existing tourism facilities will be precluded.
- 6.22** Caravanning and camping should be treated in planning terms differently from built accommodation facilities such as hotels and guest houses. The location of camp/caravan sites in the countryside should avoid areas where they would be visually intrusive, avoid areas of high landscape and wildlife value, and be located so as to cause no detrimental impacts upon local communities and transport.
- 6.23** In general, hotels should be located within or on the edges of built-up areas but there may be exceptions where the reuse and/or extension of rural buildings would be appropriate or where the facility is for transit use e.g. associated with the major national through routes such as the M1 or the A1(T).

- 6.24** The provisions of Policy 1/2 apply to recreation/tourism development in the Green Belt.
- 6.25** Sport England provides assistance and advice regarding sports provision and should be contacted by prospective developers to ensure a high quality of development in the most appropriate locations. The development of new golf courses can with good design and good planning increase biodiversity on the site but this requires careful pre-planning and consultations with relevant bodies.
- 6.26** There are areas of dereliction and degraded land within and on the edges of urban areas that may be appropriate for reuse by leisure and tourism uses rather than for housing or other uses.

POLICY 6/2 OPEN SPACES AND PLAYING FIELDS

Local plans/development plan documents will propose and safeguard land for open spaces and playing fields following a local assessment of need. Applications involving the loss or partial loss of playing fields will not be permitted unless:

- a) alternative provision of at least equivalent community benefit and accessibility is made available; or**
- b) it can be demonstrated that there is an excess of sports pitch provision and public open space in the area.**

Development on public and private open space will only be permitted where it would not involve a loss in meeting recreation needs or loss of a valuable amenity area and the long term implications have been taken into account.

The provision of new areas of open space and playing fields to meet the needs of the current population or of new development will be in locations locally accessible to the communities to be served by the new facility, or accessible by a choice of means of transport.

- 6.27** Open spaces and playing fields particularly in urban areas are key to creating a good quality of life for local residents and in making truly sustainable communities given the strong commitment to locating as much new housing on previously developed land and buildings. Some open spaces can also have a high biodiversity value and be important for amenity reasons.
- 6.28** The protection of such areas is therefore vital to the achievement of the Structure Plan strategy and Local Plans should undertake a local assessment of needs and requirements for their areas and protect open space and playing fields from loss to other forms of development. In the Nottingham area, the built-up area spreads over several Districts and there is a need to ensure that local assessments have a wider area of consideration so that the standards are met for the Sub-Area as a whole.

- 6.29** The policy criteria regarding the potential loss of playing fields are in line with Sport England policy. Emphasis is made that a quantitative assessment of need must also take into account the quality of the provision. Again, Sport England should be contacted for guidance regarding the siting and design of playing fields and sports pitches. The potential loss of open space and playing fields requires an assessment to be made of needs that may arise over a long time period and should not be based on a very narrow time scale. Once developed, it will be virtually impossible to find replacement sites of similar accessibility and location in the medium to long terms.
- 6.30** Where major new housing developments are proposed on the edge of urban areas, proper provision for open space and playing fields should form part of the Local Plan or planning brief. Policy 1/3 sets out a framework for planning contributions. Appropriate contributions will be required from developers for new open space and playing field provision.

POLICY 6/3 RECREATIONAL ROUTES

Public rights of way and other recreational routes will be provided, maintained and wherever possible improved. Where such facilities are provided as a result of development the developers will be required to make provision for their ongoing maintenance. Where development results in the loss of a public right of way, an alternative route of an appropriate character will be required. Priority will be given to developing routes linking urban areas to the countryside and the reuse of former railway lines and other transport features such as canals.

- 6.31** Disused railway lines, canals and other linear features may need to be retained for transport links as set out in Policy 5/5, but otherwise priority will be given to their recreational potential.
- 6.32** Rights of way and other recreational routes provide a valuable leisure facility for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Where proposed development affects a right of way, that right of way should be maintained on the site, or, failing that, an alternative route of an appropriate character should be required. In improving the system of recreational routes, the interests of landowners, farmers and wildlife will be taken into consideration. The aim is to achieve a better network for the user whilst minimising problems for landowners and occupiers.
- 6.33** Where possible routes should link urban areas with the countryside using, for example, former railway routes, canals and river valleys. Such 'greenways' or 'quiet lanes' will cater for various users such as walkers, disabled people, cyclists and horse riders as appropriate. Careful consideration of materials and signage is also needed when working within the natural environment.
- 6.34** Circular routes are attractive to both local residents and to visitors. These routes should link to 'gateway' sites such as country parks and community woodland and into longer distance routes such as the Sustrans national cycle route and the Trent Valley Way.

6.35 Rights of Way Improvement Plans are being prepared by the County and City Councils in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. These plans will provide detailed strategy for the provision and enhancement of rights of way and other recreational routes.