

8. RECREATION AND LEISURE

The increasing demand for leisure facilities

8.1 Recreation and leisure have become an increasingly important part of everyone's lives. Leisure patterns are being affected by changing lifestyles which are influenced by economic circumstances, increased car ownership, increased unemployment and the large number of retired people.

8.2 As a premier resort, Torbay is fortunate in having a wide range of recreation and leisure facilities, many of which are available all the year round. The Council plays a key role in providing facilities for both residents and tourists. However, there are deficiencies and attention needs to be given to meeting them. It is also important to ensure that there will be a wide range of cultural and social as well as sporting facilities to meet the increased demands which are likely to arise during the Plan period.

8.3 It is therefore important to address not only Torbay's need for homes and jobs, but also improvement of the quality of life through a wide range of community provision including leisure facilities. PPG17 'Sport and Recreation' (1991) advises that development plans should ensure that adequate land and water resources are allocated both for organised sport and informal recreation. It also emphasises the protection of open space, which is valuable not only as an amenity but also as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built heritage of an area (paragraphs 3 and 4).

8.4 PPG17 (paragraph 15) points to the following aspects of recreation provision which need to be addressed in local plans:-

- the specific needs of both mainstream and specialist sports facilities (both indoor and outdoor);
- the particular recreational needs of the elderly and disabled people;
- the protection of public and private open space which has recreational or amenity value;
- the availability of public rights of way; and
- playing fields.

8.5 Revised PPG17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' (July 2002) was published during the Local Plan Inquiry and informed the Inspector's Report and Modifications. Revised PPG17 reiterates the

importance of planning policies for open space, sport and recreation and require that local authorities carry out detailed assessments of existing and future needs. A companion document 'Assessing needs and opportunities' was published at the same time. A full assessment of local need in Torbay will take place as part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework. Further guidance is also available from Sport England. In particular, detailed guidance on recreation provision and planning policy is set out in the document entitled 'Planning Policies for Sport - A land use planning policy statement on behalf of sport'.

8.6 Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10 - September 2001) states that facilities for leisure, including sports and cultural activities, should be actively encouraged where this is compatible with conservation objectives. The Adopted Devon Structure Plan First Review (1999) emphasises the need for recreational facilities and opportunities to be developed in a sustainable way. Policies E10 (major recreational facilities) and E11 (major casual recreation) aim to ensure provision of as wide a range of facilities as possible, in locations fully accessible to the communities they serve. Such development should be consistent with the need to conserve the environmental quality of the area. The Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016 (expected to be adopted in Summer/Autumn 2004) contains Policy TO5 on major recreation facilities and TO6 on long distance recreational footpaths and cycle routes. Policy RS provides the strategic local plan framework in support of these principles.

8.7 The Council aims to improve the amount and quality of recreation and leisure provision and the Torbay Sports Strategy (2003) identifies needs and priorities. The Sports Strategy also seeks to safeguard and enhance provision and sets a framework for new initiatives to meet changing needs and methods of provision. This Strategy embraces more than land use planning issues and includes the management and effective provision of facilities and partnership with bodies such as the Torbay Sports Council. This work provides a useful information base, feeding into the formulation and modification of policies and proposals, although clearly the Local Plan can only directly involve itself with the land use implications of these activities. The Council has also prepared a Cultural Strategy for Torbay.

Indoor leisure facilities

8.8 Provision for indoor leisure covers a wide range of activities, including cultural facilities such as theatres, cinemas, museums and libraries as well as indoor

sports such as indoor bowling greens, badminton and squash courts. The Riviera Centre in Chestnut Avenue, Torquay, situated in a prime location overlooking Torre Abbey gardens, is the busiest leisure centre in Torbay. It is a multipurpose centre, including facilities ranging from swimming and other active sports, to eating, conference and entertainment. Currently some 228,000 visitors use the swimming and gym facilities each year.

8.9 The Torbay Leisure Centre at Clennon Valley, Paignton, is the main indoor recreation centre in Torbay, with approximately 475,000 paying visitors in 2003. There are two other purpose-built indoor sports centres - the Acorn Centre in Barton, Torquay and the Brixham Centre, which is part of the Brixham Community College. There are also two voluntarily run swimming pools - at Plainmoor, Torquay and Astley Park, Brixham which also have scope for improvement. These facilities serve important community needs and their improvement or replacement would be supported at appropriate sites within the communities concerned. Improvement to such leisure facilities will be considered in the context of **Policies RS** and **R1**.

8.10 There is also a wide range of indoor sports and leisure facilities available to the public in local schools, hotels, community centres, church halls and private sports clubs and fitness suites. There have been several recent developments in hotels and schools. There is ten pin bowling at AMF Bowling, Torquay and indoor bowls centres at Oldway, Paignton, Torquay United's Football Ground, and at the Victoria Hotel, Torquay. There is a squash club at Barton, Torquay. Multipurpose halls at Torquay, St. Marychurch and Brixham Town Halls are owned by the Council and available for organised public use. A rifle shooting club is located at Clennon Valley, Paignton.

8.11 There are also several privately run leisure and health facilities in the area, including swimming pools, many of which are associated with hotels. Torquay Tennis Club is a very successful organisation but is served only by outdoor courts. The quality and scope of the facilities provided would be greatly enhanced if some indoor courts and improved ancillary accommodation were provided on the existing site. Such proposals are likely within the Plan period. Major new sporting provision is likely to take the form of multi-purpose facilities within community centres and dual use / joint provision based on schools and other buildings (Community Facility **Policies CF1** and **CF10** refer). Proposals for major indoor recreation development will be considered on the basis of **Policy R1**.

Outdoor leisure recreation

8.12 Torbay enjoys a wide range of outdoor leisure and recreation opportunities, including the South West Coast Path and other coastal and countryside walks, 22 beaches, extensive country parks, town parks and gardens. The high quality of our species rich natural environment provides Torbay with a great potential for 'eco-tourism' / recreation, which puts an emphasis on a direct contact with the natural environment (i.e. nature based experiences, badger watching, conservation work etc). This also raises the profile of green / sustainable tourism, which gives visitors the opportunity to experience local crafts and produce that make Torbay distinctive. In turn, this provides an opportunity for local businesses to promote high quality produce made in the area. A sustainable approach to the recreation and leisure industry should also involve the use of alternative means of transport such as walking and cycling.

8.13 There is also extensive provision for active recreation, including soccer, rugby and hockey pitches, (including a floodlit full size all-weather facility), cricket grounds, tennis courts, bowling greens, two golf courses, Cayman golf and a dry ski run. The Bay itself also offers major potential for recreation. There are two marinas and four sailing clubs as well as other marine activities such as canoeing, windsurfing, water-skiing and fishing. There are a number of other private or specialist facilities, including go-karts, horse riding and archery. Allotments provide an opportunity for leisure in urban areas and are widely distributed throughout Torbay (**Policy R8**). The criteria for determining applications for outdoor recreation proposals are set out in **Policy R2**.

8.14 Torbay has a generous provision of public amenity open space in relation to its population. This is perhaps to be expected in a resort area where there is a large increase in the population during the summer. However, in terms of formal pitch requirements the situation is reversed. In 1994, the Council commissioned consultants to carry out a study of playing pitch demand and provision in Torbay in order to enable it to plan for the future by safeguarding and improving existing facilities and developing new playing pitches and ancillary facilities where required. The study (completed in January 1995) concluded that, even allowing for the generally older population profile of Torbay and the existence of the coast and other recreational resources, Torbay is severely under-provided for in terms of playing field area per thousand of the population. **Figure 27**, which is based on this study, shows the amount of shortfall. Demand from existing clubs (especially football) outstrips supply.

Figure 27: Analysis of playing field provision, Torbay

Town	Playing fields with secured community use (acres/ha)	Minimum desired 2 acres/0.81 ha/ 000 population	Shortfall (acres/ha)
Torquay	94.90/38.41	122.09/49.41	-27.19/11.00
Paignton	41.44/16.77	84.89/34.35	-43.15/17.46
Brixham	33.54/13.57	38.20/15.46	-4.66/1.89
Torbay	169.88/68.75	245.18/99.22	-75.30/30.47

Source: 'Pitching it right - Torbay Study of Playing Pitch Demand and Provision' (Bennetts Recreation Planning Research, 1995).

8.15 An equally serious concern, highlighted by the same survey, was a considerable dissatisfaction with the standard of facilities provided, both in terms of size and quality. This applies especially to changing facilities, but it also applied to social facilities, car parking, drainage and quality of surface of pitches. There is evidence of residents using facilities outside Torbay because they cannot obtain pitches of suitable quality within it.

8.16 The Local Plan therefore protects and makes provision for new playing field complexes, complete with parking and changing facilities. **Policy R3** allocates a site at Barton Valley South (**R3.1**) to serve the new Scotts Bridge/Barton development in addition to meeting existing needs - and a second complex at Bridge Road, Churston (**R3.3**) to meet requirements in the southern half of Torbay. At Centry Road, Brixham, a single playing pitch is proposed (**R3.4**). A new playing field is allocated at Collaton St Mary (**R3.2**) to provide new facilities for the recently completed primary school.

8.17 The fields surrounding the village of Churston Ferrers serve to provide an open break between the urban areas of Brixham and the southern approaches to Paignton. Although much of this area is farmed, scope exists for some new recreational development to also meet local needs. In addition to new playing fields at Bridge Road, Brixham, the Local Plan supports the relocation of cricket fields at Churston Court (**R4.2**) and on land adjoining North Boundary Road (**R4.3**). **Policy R4** allocates these sites and a site at Barton Valley, Torquay (**R4.3**) to serve the expanding residential community at Barton.

8.18 Recent survey work by the Sports Council suggests a shortage of golf courses in Torbay. To complement existing golf facilities at Torquay and to help offset recognised short comings within Torbay, improvements at Churston have recently been carried

out. **Policy R2** relates to golf and other outdoor recreational developments. The Sports Strategy for Torbay recognises the need for a synthetic athletics track to serve the region and an all-weather sports area is likely to be required within the Plan period.

8.19 PPG17 points out that once an open space is developed, it is unlikely that it will ever be recovered for its original purpose (paragraph 25 of the 1991 version). Moreover, in view of the limited opportunities to provide additional open space in Torbay, it is necessary to seek to protect existing areas of public open space and playing fields unless alternative provision can be found and/or an overall community gain is secured. The protection and provision of such spaces is referred to in **Policies R5** and **R7**.

8.20 The provision of new play parks is supported in **Policy R6** which also protects and supports enhancement of existing small urban play areas. Redevelopment of such areas will be only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Some existing housing estates have insufficient or poorly located play space, which can cause friction as children seek outlets for play in inappropriate areas. **Policy H11** sets out the requirements of the Local Plan for play space. Its explanation includes the standards required by the National Playing Fields Association in terms of quantity, quality and location, to be applied in relation to new housing development.

Opportunities for quiet recreation

8.21 Opportunities for quiet recreation in coastal and countryside areas are widespread but because of growing demand from the resident population, together with heavy tourist pressures, improvements are essential, particularly in terms of countryside management. The Local Plan, therefore, includes policies for the continued protection and management

of the Country Parks at Cockington and at Berry Head (**Policies R9.1** and **R9.2** respectively). A Country Park is proposed at Ocombe, in conjunction with the heritage farm and surrounding countryside (**Policy R10**). New areas of amenity open space are allocated in **Policy R7** at Scotts Bridge/Barton (**R7.1 - R7.5**) and Great Parks, Paignton (**R7.6**) whilst existing areas are to be protected and enhanced.

Water sports

8.22 An important and growing area for recreation is the sea. The coastline and beaches are the most popular focus for casual recreation. Traditional sea-based sports in Torbay include sailing, water-skiing, diving and boating. These activities in themselves may not require planning permission, but it is important to ensure that the land based implications of such development do not create unacceptable amenity and environmental impacts. The Torbay Coastal Initiative (2000) is a project aimed at creating a Coastal Zone Management Framework for Torbay. Incorporating the needs of nature conservation and users of our coastal environment, it also looks into the potential for the eco-tourism market. This framework forms a useful reference tool for the implementation of Local Plan policies and proposals, particularly the Coastal Protection Zone in the environmental Protection Chapter (**Policy EP12**).

8.23 The waste water treatment works at Brokenbury Quarry (**Policy W4**) will enable Torbay's coastal waters to realise their full recreational potential. There is a need to maintain and improve the range and quality of coastal facilities and these are considered in Chapter 5 Tourism (see **Policy TU4**).

Foothpaths, bridleways and cycleways

8.24 Although the countryside around Torbay has an extensive system of footpaths which are popular for casual recreation, opportunities exist for establishing new links and improved interpretation. **Policies R11** and **R12** seek to safeguard and enhance recreational footpath systems throughout Torbay.

8.25 The Local Plan safeguards and aims to improve, where appropriate, the existing footpath network and proposes a number of specific improvements. Plans are also underway for Torbay's Coastal Cycle Network, which will eventually form part of the National Cycle Network. The first stage of the cycle route will link Goodrington and Hollicombe. When completed, the coastal cycle route will provide a safe recreational cycle route from Brixham to St Marychurch, Torquay. Most of the route will be on existing highway;

however, sections will include shared use on existing footpaths and are not therefore shown in the Local Plan. Further details are set out in Chapter 14 Transport and Accessibility, particularly **Policy T3**.

Allotments

8.26 The retention of allotments as a leisure activity is recognised and **Policy R8** in the Local Plan also seeks to protect and selectively improve provision.

RECREATION AND LEISURE POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

RS Recreation and leisure strategy

The need for recreation, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities within the community will be met through the improvement of existing and the provision of new facilities provided that there are no significant adverse landscape, environmental or other planning impacts. Proposals for major indoor facilities should satisfy the sequential test set out in Policy R1. Urban open spaces which have landscape, nature conservation or amenity value will be protected.

Explanation:

8.27 The main objective of the recreation and leisure strategy is to improve the quality and extend the range of facilities available to the local community and visitors to the resorts. The Council has recently produced both a Cultural and a Sports Strategy, which form an important basis for the implementation of Local Plan proposals.

8.28 The Local Plan strategy aims to provide a sustainable planning framework for recreation and leisure provision, with good access to all sections of the community, both through the protection and improvement of existing facilities and through new provision in appropriate locations.

8.29 Where possible, sites in urban areas have been identified for new recreation, leisure, entertainment or cultural use, although, following the application of the sequential test, much of the new outdoor leisure provision has been allocated on greenfield sites.

8.30 This policy embraces the whole range of leisure and recreational facilities - indoor and outdoor, active and passive, land-based and water-based, social and cultural, sporting and non-sporting. Proposals for such facilities, whether privately or publicly sponsored, will be welcomed in principle, although it will clearly be

necessary for such proposals to be considered in the light of environmental, highway, safety and other planning factors.

R1 Major indoor leisure and recreation developments

Proposals for major indoor leisure developments will be permitted, provided that the following criteria can be met:-

- (1) developments should be located within town centres or if suitable sites are unavailable, on the edge of town centres - developments elsewhere will only be permitted where more central sites are unavailable and where they do not conflict with countryside, landscape and nature conservation policies;
- (2) the proposal will not cause significant harm to residential or other amenities or conflict with other nearby uses; and
- (3) the development must be acceptable in terms of access and highway safety.

Explanation:

8.31 It is unlikely that Council funds will be available to build any more purpose built, multi-use sports centres in Torbay during the Plan period. However, new provision could take the form of multi-purpose facilities within community centres and dual use/joint provision based on schools and other buildings. Any major new development likely to attract large numbers of users should be accessible, well related to its catchment, and should not conflict with local amenities or nearby land uses.

8.32 The refurbishment or replacement of Swim Torquay and Brixham Indoor Swimming Pools are likely to occur during the Plan period. These facilities will serve important community needs and their replacement would be supported at appropriate sites within the communities concerned. Torquay Tennis Club is also likely to submit proposals for indoor tennis Courts and ancillary accommodation. The enhancement of such facilities will also be supported in principle subject to the criteria set out in this Policy.

R2 Outdoor recreation developments

Proposals for outdoor recreation developments, including playing pitches, golf courses, motor sports, war games and other outdoor recreational and leisure facilities will be permitted, provided that the following criteria can be met:-

- (1) the proposal will not cause significant harm to residential or other amenities or conflict with other nearby uses;
- (2) the development must be acceptable in terms of transportation, access and highway safety; and
- (3) the development will not have a significantly harmful effect upon nature conservation, landscape protection or preservation of the best and most versatile agricultural land; in particular, schemes should not conflict with landscape and nature conservation policies.

Explanation:

8.33 Whilst recreation development is welcomed in principle, such development should not harm of the landscape or nature conservation value of rural areas or result in the loss of the best agricultural land. In addition, proposals will need to ensure that any ancillary amenity problems which could result (such as noise, and traffic impacts) have been considered and ameliorated. If demand arises for sports such as war games, clay pigeon shooting or motor sports (cycling, scrambling, trail riding and stock car racing), such activities can cause significant environmental damage as well as noise and safety problems. Permitted development rights set out in the General Permitted Order 1995 (as amended) for the temporary use of land for such sports do not apply in SSSIs, where a planning application would be required (**Policy NC2** relates). An initial survey has not yielded any sites which are obviously suitable for any of the above. This is perhaps is not surprising in view of the wildlife and landscape importance of much of Torbay's countryside. In the event of a suitable site being found, the Council would require that it is operated in a safe and environmentally acceptable way, as a condition of granting planning permission.

8.34 There is no synthetic athletics track (8 x 400 metres) to enable all-weather athletics activities to take place in South East Devon, the nearest being at Exeter. The Sports Strategy for Torbay has identified a need for such a facility which would provide regional facilities to complement the wide range of indoor recreational opportunities available at Torbay Leisure Centre. Dedicated spectator and associated facilities (changing rooms etc) will also be required in the longer term. The site previously proposed at Clennon Valley has, however, proved to have unsuitable ground conditions. It is envisaged that such a facility will nevertheless be provided within the Plan period.

8.35 Recreational facilities such as horse riding establishments should consider the proximity of facilities to brideways. There is a need to provide

segregated route systems for horse riders in order to increase safety, to protect footpaths from erosion by horses and in the interests of road safety. It is also important, however, to ensure that horse riding is not encouraged along roads, particularly on busy routes.

R3 New playing fields

New playing fields and related facilities are proposed in the following locations:-

- (1) Barton Valley South, Torquay
- (2) Collaton St Mary, Paignton
- (3) Bridge Road, Churston
- (4) Centry Road, Brixham

Explanation:

8.36 A survey of playing pitch provision in 1995 (see paragraph 8.14) highlighted the shortage of playing pitches in Torbay, both in relation to established criteria and based on the experience and comments of local sporting organisations. In addition to an overall shortage of playing pitches, existing provision is sometimes sub-standard, due to drainage problems, poor levels and inadequate changing facilities.

8.37 The proposals for new playing fields at Barton Valley South will serve the new community at Scotts Bridge/Barton in addition to alleviating the shortage in northern Torquay. It is envisaged that the complex, situated on the former tipped area, will support four pitches, changing facilities and a car park (see also **Proposal R4.1**).

8.38 The new playing fields proposed at Collaton St Mary are situated alongside the site of the replacement primary school for the village and will provide new facilities for the school.

8.39 The proposal for playing fields at Bridge Road, Churston, will include changing facilities and a car park. It is envisaged that they will serve Brixham, Churston, Galmpton and Paignton and overflow games from Torquay. Implementation is not expected in the early part of the Plan period, unless private funding or grant aid is forthcoming. Careful consideration of Cirl Bunting habitat will be required at this location (**Policy NC5** refers). The proposal at Centry Road, Brixham comprises a new playing field and related changing facilities for Brixham College. Where practicable, the pitch and facilities may also be available to serve the local community on a dual use basis.

8.40 In view of the physical characteristics of some pitches (including high fencing, floodlighting and associated development such as changing and parking facilities) careful consideration of siting and hours of operation will be required.

R4 New cricket grounds

New cricket grounds are proposed at the following locations subject to considerations of amenity and traffic:-

- (1) Barton Valley, Torquay
- (2) Churston Court, Churston
- (3) North Boundary Road, Brixham

Explanation:

8.41 To serve the increased demand, a new cricket square will be provided as part of the new community and recreation facilities at Barton Valley, Torquay (see also **Proposal R3.1**). The existing cricket grounds at Greenway Road, Churston and at Northfields Lane, Brixham, are occupied by clubs wishing to relocate. In the case of Brixham Cricket Club, the existing facilities are no longer suitable by virtue of their small size and close proximity to residential development. At Galmpton Cricket Club, the football club shares the use of their ground. The proposed new sites are larger, are within easy reach of the existing grounds, and are conducive to the playing of good standard cricket. The proposal at North Boundary Road is covered by several landscape designations. In view of the sensitivity of the site, careful consideration should be given to the size and location of any associated development, for example, clubhouse and parking facilities.

R5 Protection of public open spaces and playing fields

Changes of use or development involving the loss of public open space, playing fields and sports pitches will only be permitted if:-

- (1) **an alternative provision in the vicinity of the public open space, playing fields or sports pitches is made available to serve the existing demand and, where possible, alternative provision should be available for use before the existing facility is removed from use;**
- (2) **it can be demonstrated that the existing provision is redundant and no longer required for school or community use and has no visual amenity, landscape importance or informal amenity value; or**

- (3) **it is ancillary development which is necessary to enhance the existing sports and recreation facilities or meet other community needs.**

Explanation:

8.42 An independent playing pitch study in 1995 (see paragraphs 8.14 and 8.15) highlighted a shortfall of sports pitches in Torbay. Such facilities therefore need to be safeguarded. Open spaces can also have importance for wildlife and contribute to visual amenity, an asset which is not easily replaced and likely to be a permanent loss (see also **Policies NC3** and **NC4** relating to nature conservation and **Policy L6** which refers to urban green spaces). The long term impact of the loss of such space in a locality and whether it will be replaced will therefore be a material consideration in the determination of development proposals. It should be noted that PPG3 'Housing' (2000) defines playing fields as greenfield sites.

8.43 School and college playing fields also form an integral part of Torbay's playing field provision and these sites are therefore also subject to this policy.

R6 Urban play parks

The change of use, development or replacement of urban play parks will only be permitted where:-

- (1) **they are inappropriately located in relation to their relationship with residential areas, impact on residential amenities, safety or demand for the facilities; or**
- (2) **development would on balance achieve a more effective provision of recreation or leisure facilities elsewhere within the locality.**

New play parks are proposed at the following locations:-

- (1) **Scotts Bridge/Barton Phase 2, Torquay**
- (2) **Great Parks, Paignton**
- (3) **Land off Whitebeam Close, Paignton**

Explanation:

8.44 It is important that the existing provision of play parks is of a high quality. Most of Torbay's playgrounds have been improved since 1991, in some cases with money from outside agencies. However, it is envisaged that most future upgrading of the play areas and environmental enhancement will be funded by the Council, except where new provision is associated with new housing developments. Development proposals for existing play parks which are not related

to their present or proposed use will be resisted unless appropriate provision can be made elsewhere.

8.45 Opportunities exist to increase the provision of play parks in Torbay. The creation of large residential areas in Torquay and Paignton has brought about an associated need for additional play facilities. The proposed new sites will be provided by developer contributions.

R7 Areas of amenity open space

Proposals for the maintenance and improvement of existing areas of amenity open space will be permitted where they result in an improved level and standard of provision.

New areas of amenity open space are proposed at the following locations:-

- (1) **Land north of Beechfield Link, Scotts Bridge/Barton Phase 2, Torquay**
- (2) **Barton Valley North, Torquay**
- (3) **Barton Valley South, Torquay**
- (4) **Wetlands between roundabouts 2 and 3, Browns Bridge Road, Scotts Bridge/Barton, Torquay**
- (5) **Land adjacent to Ellacombe Plantation, Scotts Bridge/Barton, Torquay**
- (6) **Great Parks, Paignton**

Explanation:

8.46 The proposed amenity open space around Scotts Bridge/Barton and in the Barton Valley are to meet the needs of the future residents of the proposed residential development in this location (**Policies H1.1** to **H1.4** relate). The detailed aspects of open space provision will be determined through Section 106 Agreements. Similarly, the proposal for Great Parks is designed to meet the needs of the new community (**Policies H1.11** to **H1.13**) and is closely related to the proposed health centre and primary school (**Policies CF14** and **CF8.6**).

8.47 Survey work shows that there are significant deficiencies in all three towns in the amount of playing areas, in the quality of provision and in the extent of residential area lying outside a 1,000 metre radius from public playing fields and pitches. The recommended thresholds in terms of size of play areas, population served, site characteristics and walking time from home are set out in **Policy H11 Open space requirements for new housing**.

8.48 In addition to identifying specific sites for the development of playing fields and other forms of open space, the Local Plan has been prepared on the basis that local authorities are primarily enablers and do not have the resources to be major providers. To ensure that sufficient land comes on stream to meet future needs, new development may be required to provide such infrastructure. It is therefore important to secure an equitable system which links the provision of new public open space to new housing completions and conversions. This may be based on a system which allows for the provision of facilities either directly through making land available, or indirectly through commuted payments. **Policy H11** deals specifically with this issue, whilst **Policy CF6** deals with developer contributions.

R8 Allotments

The change of use or redevelopment of allotment sites will not be permitted unless appropriate alternative provision is made or it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for the facility. Where a need is identified, new allotments will be permitted in appropriate locations.

Explanation:

8.49 Allotments provide a leisure activity, especially in tightly knit urban areas where many households have no opportunity to grow produce at home. They also provide green spaces and can be valuable for wildlife, both as habitats in themselves and by acting as wildlife corridors (**Policy NC4**). The loss of allotment sites tends to be permanent and would not therefore allow for a resurgence of demand through changing attitudes towards the benefits of home grown foods. Provision of new areas may be gained through residential development and the use of Section 106 Agreements (**Policy CF6** refers). A Good Practice Guide to Allotments is appended to PPG17 'Sport and Recreation' (2001).

8.50 It is important, however, in an area where land with development potential is scarce, to ensure that land is not sterilised through under-use and dereliction, and some selective improvements may be necessary to enable limited areas to be released for other uses, subject to the integrity of the allotment being preserved. The Council has undertaken a review of land held in its ownership for allotment purposes.

R9 Country Parks

The following Country Parks will be protected and managed to safeguard and enhance their assets.

Proposals for the sympathetic improvement of their recreational, cultural and leisure resources will be permitted, where this does not detract from the role and character of these areas:-

- (1) Cockington Country Park
- (2) Berry Head Country Park

Explanation:

8.51 Cockington has been managed as a Country Park since 1991. The management responsibility has now been passed on to the Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust which will continue to operate within the framework of the following strategic aims:-

- i) to conserve and enhance the environment, both built and natural, of Cockington, and its environs;
- ii) to meet the needs of visitors, provide a location for information on countryside recreation and maintain Cockington as one of the premier tourist attractions in Torbay and South Devon;
- iii) to maintain a strong sense of community in Cockington and thereby to preserve the valley as a thriving, working entity in its own right;
- iv) to manage the historic landscape of Cockington, in an environmentally sound and sensitive manner; and
- v) to encourage Cockington's development as a centre of education, training and excellence in rural skills and countryside management.

8.52 The Cockington Conservation and Environment Guide has been produced to provide a framework for the sympathetic development and improvement of the area. Details are reproduced in **Appendix 3** of the **Environmental Guide**.

8.53 Berry Head Country Park is a major recreational asset to Torbay, and receives some 200,000 visitors each year. In addition to providing opportunities for informal recreation amidst superb scenery, Berry Head is also an area of wide ranging ecological and geological interest and historic significance. In May 2000 it became a National Nature Reserve. It is also an internationally important Candidate Special Area of Conservation, as well as having several other nationally important nature conservation and landscape designations. The 18th century and Napoleonic fortifications are Scheduled Monuments. Policies in the Landscape and the Green Environment, Nature Conservation and Built Environment chapters give further details.

8.54 In view of the considerable, and in some cases, conflicting, pressures made on the Country Park by visitors, it is essential to ensure the protection of the important natural and historic features, whilst at the same time to continue to increase the realisation of its potential. These aims are not mutually exclusive and the following measures are seen as vital in enabling the Country Park to optimise its potential as a recreational asset:-

- to take care to provide access only to the less environmentally sensitive areas of the headland and the careful conservation of the natural features of the Country Park;
- to provide an adequate service of conservation and management through the ranger service to reduce potential abuses of the site and to protect and enhance aspects of its conservation;
- to maintain and develop the interpretation centre to reflect the important features of the Country Park;
- to interpret the Country Park's features by signs, information plaques and limited access to some of the Scheduled Monuments;
- to provide appropriately sited facilities for specialist pursuits, e.g. fishing, bird watching, etc; and
- to provide visitor facilities.

8.55 The detailed objectives for Cockington, and Berry Head, based on the strategic aims, are set out in the Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust Management Plan, which was approved by the Council in March 1999. The Trust will continue to manage the Country Parks in full co-operation with English Nature and the Countryside Commission, having full regard to their conservation status and important historic interest.

R10 Heritage Farm Country Park, Ocombe

A Heritage Farm Country Park is proposed at Ocombe, Paignton.

Explanation:

8.56 The Ocombe complex of fields, wetlands, woods and farm buildings, combines three distinct features:-

- a nationally important habitat in the Site of Special Scientific Interest;

- a traditional farmed landscape which has retained its small fields, thick hedgerows, woodlands and copses; and
- a location on the edge of the urban area of Torbay, within easy reach of residents and tourists.

8.57 The designation of the Ocombe Heritage Farm to Country Park status is proposed as a means of securing its long-term protection to raise public awareness of the area. The Council aims to protect its natural and historic features whilst enabling local people and visitors to enjoy and understand the area through a programme of management, access and zoning arrangements and the provision of interpretation and educational facilities, including the designation of a visitor centre at Ocombe Barn and the use of the Windmill as an interpretation facility. The Country Park extends beyond Torbay's boundaries up to the edge of the Torbay Ring Road at Marldon.

R11 Footpaths

Proposals for the maintenance and improvement of the following strategic recreational footpath systems in Torbay will be permitted where these are consistent with their role and location:-

- (1) **the South West Coast Path National Trail;**
- (2) **the Brunel and Maidencombe Walks at Watcombe;**
- (3) **the Cockington, Ocombe, Preston and Hollicombe Footpath System, Torquay/Paignton;**
- (4) **the Clennon Valley and Grange Farm Footpath System, Paignton; and**
- (5) **the Churston Footpath System.**

Explanation:

8.58 Existing amenity open space provision in Torbay is a precious asset and the Council is committed to preventing its loss. The potential of some areas of amenity open space can be enhanced by management measures and sensitive landscaping, including maintaining appropriate access. Torbay's footpaths cater both for local access and the leisure needs of residents and visitors to the area.

8.59 The South West Coast Path National Trail runs from Minehead to Poole. The rural nature of the footpath is broken in the urban parts of Torbay. Close attention to surfacing and signing will be maintained over its length. The network of footpaths in the Watcombe area require some additional links and

improvements to open up the area of Brunel's historic landscape. Maintenance of the footpath systems at Cockington, Ocombe and Berry Head will help to combat erosion problems in parts of the Country Parks. The short link from Paignton Road to Hollicombe will link the Cockington system to the sea through an attractive valley.

8.60 Clennon Valley is not only an important link between significant tourist attractions, such as the Zoo, the Torbay Leisure Centre and Goodrington Beach, but following landscape restoration, it is an attraction in its own right. The valley also links residential areas and direct routes, as well as circular footpaths, are also appropriate. The footpath system in Churston gives good access to the countryside and increases the leisure potential of these areas.

8.61 RPG10 invites Local Planning Authorities to prepare management policies for footpaths. Torbay Council is currently involved in this process.

R12 New recreational footpaths

New footpaths are proposed in the following areas, in co-operation with and subject to contributions from land owners, in association with land management schemes:-

- (1) **Scotts Bridge/Barton, Torquay**
- (2) **Ocombe, Paignton**
- (3) **Westerland and Great Parks Valleys, Paignton**
- (4) **Great Parks, Paignton**

Explanation:

8.62 The Scotts Bridge/Barton and Great Parks areas are surrounded by attractive walking country. The need for recreational footpaths will increase once new housing is developed in these areas.

8.63 The new system at Ocombe falls within the proposed Country Park and forms part of the management and access proposals for the ecologically sensitive areas identified as SSSI and wetland.