

CHAPTER 9: RECREATION & TOURISM

Introduction

- 9.1 Because the Borough includes a mix of quite large settlements and attractive rural areas, the majority of residents enjoy access to a wide range of built, formal and informal recreational opportunities. The main built facilities, including a well used Leisure Centre, are focused on Loughborough, recognised worldwide as a centre of sporting excellence due to the presence of the University. The Charnwood Forest, the Rivers Soar and Wreake and developing attractions such as Watermead Country Park also provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation. The Charnwood Forest, and especially Bradgate Park continue to be a major recreational attraction for Leicestershire residents and people from further afield. The Great Central Steam Railway is also a major tourist attraction.
- 9.2 Whilst a first glance at recreational opportunities in the Borough would suggest few problems, a closer look reveals inadequate facilities in many of the smaller villages, a lack of indoor facilities in the larger settlements, low levels of amenity open space within existing housing areas, and over-use pressures on the more popular, informal countryside facilities, most notably in the Charnwood Forest.

National & Strategic Policy

- 9.3 PPG17 emphasises the Government's commitment to the promotion of opportunities for sport and recreation and the important role it sees for planning to ensure that adequate land and water resources are available to meet the needs for both organised sport and informal recreation. The guidance note recognises the important amenity as well as recreational value of many open spaces, particularly within urban areas.
- 9.4 The strategy of the County Council for recreation in Leicestershire is set out in the Structure Plan together with the Recreation Strategy for Leicestershire. This strategy establishes a series of aims and priorities for the safeguarding and enhancement of recreational facilities and opportunities in the County.

The Charnwood Perspective

- 9.5 Within Charnwood a careful balance needs to be struck between the promotion of further recreational opportunities to meet identified deficiencies and the management of recreational pressures in the more sensitive areas to safeguard their special character. In this context the Local Plan aims to:
- i) protect and improve urban open spaces for sport, recreation and amenity in accordance with defined standards, together with the establishment of new outdoor and indoor facilities for recreation and entertainment in current areas of deficiency and in association with new development;
 - ii) develop and support tourist facilities and attractions in the Borough for the purposes of diversifying the rural economy and bringing about environmental improvements for the benefit of both residents and visitors to the area.
- 9.6 These broad aims translate into more specific objectives relating to facility provision and the protection of existing facilities.

The key objectives of the Plan for recreation and tourism are to:

- i) encourage and, where resources allow, initiate schemes for the provision of additional recreational facilities to meet identified need;
- ii) encourage recreational developments in the countryside in keeping with the areas landscape character, particularly focusing on opportunities in the National Forest area;

- iii) ensure that all new housing developments make provision for well designed and located play spaces in keeping with the Borough Council's specified open space standards;
- iv) encourage the development of a network of linear routes within the Borough for informal recreation;
- v) support further small scale initiatives for informal recreation and tourism development in the river valleys in keeping with their special environmental character;
- vi) ensure that suitable sites within the Borough are identified to meet the demand for noise generating sports activities.

Formal Recreation Facilities

9.7 POLICY RT/1

Planning permission will be granted for the expansion of existing or the development of new formal recreation facilities within or adjoining built up areas provided that:

- i) **satisfactory car and cycle parking can be provided;**
- ii) **the site is accessible by a range of means of transport;**
- iii) **the form, scale and design of any proposed buildings is in keeping with the character of the area;**
- iv) **the proposal is well related to existing community and recreation facilities wherever possible;**
- v) **the proposal has no adverse impact by reason of noise, impact of floodlighting or other nuisance;**
- vi) **the site is adequately screened and landscaped and existing on-site features including trees and hedgerows, are retained as far as possible;**
- vii) **the proposal includes full details of any intended floodlighting, covering the height of columns, shielding, hours of use and method and intensity of illumination, so that the impact on surrounding residential amenities can be adequately assessed.**

9.8 The Charnwood Recreation Strategy published in 1984 noted the concentration of formal facilities for recreation on the Loughborough area and the presence of quite significant deficiencies in terms of both built facilities and playing fields in many of the larger villages. Many of these identified deficiencies remain, although the recreational facilities proposed as part of the Soar Valley Centre at Mountsorrel will help "plug the gap" in available facilities in this area. The Borough Council will continue to liaise with the Parish Councils on the opportunities for further provision to meet identified deficiencies.

9.9 For part of the Borough there continue to be deficiencies in available playing fields. Improving the quality of existing facilities and supporting increased dual use at schools and other sites may help to resolve some of these problems. This policy seeks to encourage the provision of further recreational facilities to meet these identified deficiencies as opportunities arise.

Informal and Land Extensive Facilities

9.10 POLICY RT/2

Planning permission for informal recreation facilities and land extensive uses such as golf courses will be granted on the fringes of built up areas and elsewhere outside the defined Limits to Development provided:

- i) **the proposal does not include environmentally damaging or visually obtrusive built development;**

- ii) **any buildings proposed are necessary and ancillary to the recreational activity and are located and designed so that their impact on the surroundings is minimised;**
- iii) **adequate parking and access can be provided;**
- iv) **the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape would not be adversely affected;**
- v) **the site is suitably landscaped and screened and existing natural features within the site are retained wherever possible;**
- vi) **the proposal would not result in the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land;**
- vii) **sites of ecological, archaeological and geological significance would not be adversely affected;**
- viii) **any existing public rights of way are safeguarded.**

Proposals for large scale recreational development adding unacceptably to recreational pressure on the Charnwood Forest will be resisted.

- 9.11 Recreational needs and opportunities are not restricted to the main urban centres. Many of the smaller communities in the rural part of the Borough have limited access to formal recreation facilities. Sensitively designed and located, recreational uses can have a place in the countryside. PPG17 also emphasises the opportunities for the location of recreational facilities on the urban fringe where such uses can act as physical and visual buffers between agricultural and urban uses.

Play Spaces in New Development

9.12 POLICY RT/3

In granting planning permission for housing developments of more than 10 dwellings for primarily family occupation the Borough Council will require the provision of equipped play areas for children on the basis of the following standards:

- i) **75 sq. metre per 10 dwellings for children's equipped playgrounds; and**
- ii) **125 sq. metre per 10 dwellings for other children's play spaces.**

For developments of less than 10 dwellings, where the proposal would result in or add to a deficiency in play space in an area, the Borough Council may require the payment of a commuted sum in scale with the development as a contribution to improving local recreational deficiencies.

- 9.13 Without adequate open space provision, new developments proposed in the Plan could place unacceptable pressure on existing recreational facilities. It is difficult to "add back in" open space once a site has been developed. It is therefore important that the standards of open space provision are met in all new housing developments at the outset. In areas of existing or potential deficiency in open space provision, even small scale developments could put unacceptable additional pressure on existing available recreation facilities. In these instances a payment, in scale with the development, may be sought as a contribution to the improvement of nearby sport and recreation or open space facilities.
- 9.14 In the provision of children's play areas it has been common practice for developers to leave the equipping of facilities to the relevant Parish or to the Borough Council. Inevitably this has resulted in a delay in the installation of equipment until after the completion of the development and the subsequent adoption of the open space by the managing agency, by which time new homeowners have often developed a resistance to the provision of play areas close to their properties. The requirement upon the developer to equip any facility will ensure the delivery of appropriate play areas in the locations intended with the full knowledge of prospective home buyers. The range of equipment required will be subject to negotiation with the Borough Council.

Youth/Adult Play in New Development

9.15 POLICY RT/4

In granting planning permission for residential development, the Borough Council will require the provision of appropriate recreational facilities on the basis of 425 sq metres of recreational space per 10 dwellings. Where the necessary land is not immediately available within or adjacent to the site, the Borough Council will seek to negotiate the payment of a commuted sum in scale with the development as a contribution to the provision of recreational facilities.

- 9.16 The Borough Council is anxious to provide adequate recreational facilities for the population of the Borough, particularly where the recreation space provision falls well below the NPFA's recommended minimum standard. The minimum standard for facilities for youth/adult use is 1.6-1.8ha per 1,000 population, which equates to 425 sq metre per 10 dwellings. Where there is an identified need, new residential development will be required to provide the minimum standard of youth/adult play space.
- 9.17 Where the proposed development site is within the National Forest, the Borough Council will allow the developer to provide tree planting in line with National Forest guidelines in place of youth/adult play space where it is appropriate.

Amenity Open Space In New Development

9.18 POLICY RT/5

In addition to the provision of areas of play space, the Borough Council in granting planning permission for all new housing developments of more than 10 dwellings, will require suitably landscaped areas of amenity open space to a standard of 38 sq. metre per 10 dwellings.

- 9.19 As well as space specifically designed for children's play, new housing developments should also include areas of amenity open space well related to the proposed footpath networks. Well designed amenity space planned as an integral part of the development can make a significant contribution to the character of new housing areas.
- 9.20 Where the proposed development site is within the National Forest the Borough Council will allow the developer to provide tree planting in line with National Forest Guidelines in place of amenity open space where it is appropriate.

Design of Play-Areas

9.21 POLICY RT/6

In the determination of planning applications for development giving rise to the need for related play spaces, the Borough Council will take into account the need for such areas to be designed so that they:

- i) can be accessed safely and conveniently by all sections of the community. All properties should be within 400m of an equipped play area and 200m of smaller incidental play areas;**
- ii) are well related to any existing or proposed local community facilities;**
- iii) form a focal part of the development, sited in prominent positions open to public view;**
- iv) are not detrimental to the amenities enjoyed by nearby residents;**
- v) can be easily maintained with convenient access for mowing machinery;**
- vi) successfully accommodate existing ecological interests and encourage the establishment of new wildlife habitats.**

- 9.22 It is not just the total amount of play space provided in new developments that is important. Attractive, well used and safe play areas need to be carefully designed as an integral part of new housing developments, fitting in to an overall network of neighbourhood and district open spaces and play areas. The detailed design of play spaces should also take account of the vital role these areas play as part of the network of wildlife habitats in urban areas. The NPFA '6 Acre Standard' of 1992 provides further information on the design of the play spaces.

Safeguarding Existing Recreational Land and Buildings

9.23 POLICY RT/7

Planning permission for the development of land or buildings currently or last in use for recreational purposes will not be granted unless:

- i) an equivalent range of replacement facilities are provided well located to serve the local community; or**
- ii) the recreation facilities can be retained or enhanced through redevelopment of a small part of the site; or**
- iii) the land or buildings have been the subject of a local authority appraisal and have been confirmed as unnecessary for recreational purposes having regard to the existing and predicted requirements of the community supplemented by an assessment of local circumstances. For recreational land the NPFA minimum standard of 2.4ha per 1,000 population will be applied on the following basis:**

- 0.6-0.8ha children's playing spaces;**
- 1.6-1.8ha for outdoor sport with at least 1.2ha being sports pitches.**

and provided significant trees, open spaces, or other features important in defining the amenities of the locality would not be lost.

- 9.24 It is important that existing recreational sites, including playing fields, children's play areas and built facilities such as leisure centres are retained wherever possible as once lost to other development they are often hard to replace. This is particularly the case with playing fields. In exceptional circumstances where replacement facilities will be provided or there is a surplus in recreational facilities in the locality, development may be acceptable provided that the site does not make an important contribution to the character of the settlement.

Replacement Derby Road Playing Fields, Hathern

9.25 POLICY RT/8

Planning permission will be granted for the development of playing fields on land adjacent to the proposed Dishley Grange employment site, as indicated on the Proposals Map, provided any associated development is:

- i) ancillary to the use of the land for outdoor sport and recreation;**
- ii) small in scale and located so as to retain the open and undeveloped character of the landscape; and**
- iii) suitably landscaped in order to screen built features, structures and areas of car parking from wider view.**

- 9.26 The development of the existing Derby Road playing fields for employment purposes will displace three cricket squares, four football pitches and four hockey pitches and remove from public use the landscape margins of the formal playing areas. Minimum disruption to sporting interests and casual recreation needs will be best served by the relocation of these facilities to a suitable site within the same general locality.

- 9.27 The line of the distributor road proposed in association with the employment allocation marks a logical and obvious limit to the northern expansion of Loughborough. The land between Hathern and the employment site is variously designated as Green Wedge or countryside and throughout falls within the Soar Valley Area of Local Landscape Value. Recreation use is entirely in keeping with these policies provided any accommodation for changing, clubrooms and maintenance can be designed and located so as to be unobtrusive in order to preserve the open and undeveloped character of the landscape. Landscape planting may mitigate the impact of development and add to the amenity of the countryside within an area of modest tree and hedgerow cover.

Recreation Land, Lanes Close, Sileby

9.28 POLICY RT/9

A site of about 5.2ha (12.8a) off Lanes Close, Sileby as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for recreational purposes provided:

- i) vehicular access is taken from Lanes Close;**
 - ii) significant block planting and landscaping is provided along the northern and eastern boundaries;**
 - iii) an area of open space is created along the eastern edge extending the existing open space network along the Sileby Brook corridor;**
 - iv) an area is landscaped and laid out to provide a car parking area;**
 - v) pedestrian access is from Lanes Close and the Sileby Brook corridor;**
 - vi) a safe pedestrian route is provided to the Highgate County Primary School.**
- 9.29 An assessment of recreation provision in Sileby against the NPFA standards indicates a significant deficiency of space for outdoor sports and children's playing space. The Parish Council has for some years sought improvements in recreational facilities and is concerned about the number of teams playing outside the parish.
- 9.30 A previous proposal of the adopted 'Soar Valley Local Plan' to use land off Cemetery Road has proved impracticable to implement. Land to the east of the village off Mountsorrel Lane is within the washland of the river Soar and forms part of the defined Soar Valley Area of Local Landscape Value. The site now proposed to the north of the Heathcote Drive estate is close to the local school. It provides the opportunity for new sports pitches and general recreational space to serve the village's needs.
- 9.31 The new recreational area must be of a design and layout which reflect a location at the edge of the village, close to a school and housing areas. The opportunity should be taken to create strong links into the wider footpath and open space networks. Vehicular access must be from Lanes Close. There shall be no pedestrian access from Parsons Drive and Barnards Drive. A safe, direct footway link to the local school must be provided.

New Recreation Land, South of Hazel Road and Manor Drive, Loughborough

9.32 POLICY RT/10

Land shown on the Proposals Map adjacent to the eastern edge of the proposed housing site to the south of Hazel Drive and Manor Road is allocated for recreation purposes. Proposals for such development will be permitted provided that:

- i) any built development is ancillary to the enjoyment of the open space;**
- ii) vehicular access is taken from the proposed distributor road;**
- iii) landscaping is provided on the site's northern and eastern boundaries;**

- iv) **pedestrian and cycle routes are created linking into housing areas and the proposed linear park; and**
- v) **a landscaped car park is provided.**

(See also in particularly CT/1, CT/2 & CT/6)

- 9.33 There is a need to secure new public open space on the south side of Loughborough to cater for both formal and informal recreation, and this provision will become even more necessary as the population expands. A site of 3.3ha, has therefore, been allocated for this purpose at the eastern edge of the proposed new housing development where it can be readily accessed by both existing and new residents through a network of footpaths and cycle routes linking into the nearby proposed linear park.
- 9.34 The allocated site forms part of the designated area of local separation that covers the gap between the proposed southern edge of Loughborough urban area and Woodthorpe village. The new recreation area must therefore be designed and laid out in such a way as to maintain the degree of separation between the existing and planned built-up areas of these settlements. Any new built development must be ancillary to the enjoyment of the open space and well located in terms of its impact on the character of the area. Policies CT/1, CT/2 and CT/6 will also apply.
- 9.35 In order to avoid recreation trips through residential streets the sole vehicular access to the site must be from the proposed distributor road serving the new housing development. Car parking will also need to be provided and should be well landscaped in order to respect the site's countryside setting.
- 9.36 The developer will also be required to make arrangements for the long term maintenance of the open space. The Council will, however, be prepared to accept responsibility for maintenance provided that the design and construction are to a satisfactory standard and an adequate commuted payment is offered by the developer. This will be secured through planning conditions or if necessary a legal agreement under Section 106.

Natural Green Space

9.37 POLICY RT/11

Planning permission for development which would have a detrimental impact upon natural green space within or adjoining the defined Limits to Development of settlements will be refused.

The Council will encourage the establishment of natural green spaces as part of the open space provision in all new housing developments.

- 9.38 As well as the more formal areas of open space within urban areas, natural green spaces, those areas of land and water which have been naturally colonised by plants and animals, are much valued both for their ecological interest and as informal recreational areas. Often, through careful and sympathetic design, areas of open space in new housing development can be established as more informal natural green space. The Council will encourage developers to include areas of natural green space as part of their open space provision and will safeguard existing areas from damaging development.

Structural Open Space Provision In New Development

9.39 POLICY RT/12

In granting planning permission for the development of sites allocated in this Plan the Borough Council will require the associated provision of areas of open space for recreation, amenity, structural landscaping and natural green space in the general locations shown on the Proposals Map.

- 9.40 All new development will be expected to provide open space for recreation and amenity in accordance with the standards set out in policies RT/3 to RT/5 of this plan. Structural landscaping will also be required to ensure that all new development remains compatible within the wider landscape and is supported by a proper balance of land uses. Specific requirements are set out in respect of each site allocated for development and are shown on the Proposals Map for the avoidance of doubt. The importance of these areas of structural open space is such that without their provision development would not be considered appropriate and planning permission could not be granted.

Allsopps Lane, Loughborough – Recreation and Amenity Area

9.41 POLICY RT/13

Planning permission will be granted for landscaping, recreation and amenity purposes on approximately 18ha (44 acres) of reclaimed land off Allsopps Lane, Loughborough.

(See also in particular policy H/8)

- 9.42 The former domestic refuse tip off Allsopps Lane extends to approximately 19ha (47 acres). Tipping activities have ceased and the site has been capped with imported material in readiness for its restoration. Settlement and land fill gas emissions preclude the possibility of permanent built development.
- 9.43 The site is particularly well located to provide for the informal recreation needs of neighbouring communities where the dense pattern of Victorian housing has resulted in little public open space provision and access to the surrounding countryside is limited. Continuing settlement will render impractical the use of the site for formal playing fields. However restoration to informal parkland, community woodland and wildlife habitats is both beneficial and achievable with the assistance of grant aid and the voluntary agencies. The site may also be suitable for the development of an Ecology Park with visitor facilities. Any scheme will need to include fencing to prevent trespass onto operational railway land.

Linear Recreation Routes

9.44 POLICY RT/14

Planning permission will be granted for development enabling informal recreation and tourism use of the following linear routes:

- i) River Soar/Canal Corridor;**
- ii) River Wreake;**
- iii) Great Central Railway;**
- iv) footpath/cycleway link between Charnwood Forest and Watermead Country Park;**
- v) a link between Shepshed and Loughborough.**

Provided that any related built development remains in conformity with the other policies of this Plan.

- 9.45 There are a number of linear routes in the Borough that provide opportunities for recreational and low key tourism development, including the river corridors. Some of the routes form part of long-distance routes passing through the Borough such as the Dover to Inverness cycle route. The Great Central Steam Railway is already a very successful tourist attraction. Initiatives to consolidate the steam railway operation will normally be encouraged. Many of these linear routes provide attractive links to the main urban centres and could help to divert pressure away from destinations in the Charnwood Forest. Where it does not create conflict, linear routes should be suitable for a variety of users.

Allotments

9.46 POLICY RT/15

Planning permission for development occasioning the loss of allotment land within the defined Limits to Development will not be granted unless:

- i) **adequate replacement provision is made to meet demand in a location accessible to potential users; or**
- ii) **the site is not required to meet an identified deficiency in open space or recreational facilities in the area;**

and provided the site does not function as a valuable amenity open space or include areas of ecological interest.

- 9.47 Gardening continues to be a popular activity and allotments provide a valuable opportunity for people to pursue their hobby, particularly where they do not have access to a garden. Allotment land is therefore an important recreational resource and can also be an attractive amenity as open space. PPG3 makes it clear that planning policies should recognise the need to retain valuable amenity open space within urban areas including allotment land. It is important that allotments are protected from alternative uses where there is a proven demand or where they function as an important open space in the local landscape (see Policy EV/18). Where sites include areas of ecological interest proposals will be judged against policies EV/22-EV/26.

Dual Use

- 9.48 The Borough Council will encourage educational and other suitable establishments to allow the dual use of recreational facilities wherever practicable. As well as the provision of new facilities, encouraging the opening to wider community use of existing school and other recreational facilities can make a significant contribution to meeting some of the existing deficiencies in recreational provision in the Borough. This is recognised by the County Council in their Recreation Strategy, where it is noted that the Borough's identified shortfall in indoor facility provision could be overcome by full shared use arrangements at Shephed Hind Leys, Syston Wreake Valley and Quorn Rawlins Colleges.

Water Recreation

9.49 POLICY RT/16

Planning permission for informal recreation and tourism development in association with the River Soar and Wreake, the Grand Union Canal and areas of open water will be granted where:

- i) **the proposal is compatible with the countryside and nature conservation policies of the plan;**
- ii) **satisfactory access to the site can be provided;**
- iii) **the design, scale and location of any development conserves and where possible enhances the visual qualities of the locality.**

- 9.50 The river valleys of the Soar and Wreake are a major landscape feature of the Borough. Although development pressures have and will continue to be focused on these areas, they still retain much of their special character and are a valuable resource both in terms of their wildlife and conservation interest and their recreational and tourism potential. Similar potential exists along the Grand Union Canal and to a more limited extent on the major areas of open water including Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs. The Borough Plan seeks to ensure that the recreational potential of these water areas is realised whilst at the same time safeguarding their special environmental character.

Watermead Country Park

9.51 POLICY RT/17

Within Watermead Country Park planning permission will be granted for the development of:

- i) a caravan and camping site with ancillary buildings on approximately 5ha of land immediately accessible from and adjacent to the Wanlip Road entrances;
- ii) a Country Park Information Centre with warden's accommodation centrally located and easily accessible from the principal car park;
- iii) footpaths, cycleways and bridleways with bridges and accommodation works as necessary; and
- iv) buildings and structures of a minor scale designed for the purposes of supporting leisure and recreation uses within the Country Park.

Provided:

- a) the development through sensitive siting, design and construction makes a positive contribution to visual amenities without appearing as intrusive within the wider landscape;
- b) suitable landscaping measures are undertaken to screen from wider view areas used for camping and caravans and service areas; and
- c) measures are undertaken to avoid adverse impact, either directly or indirectly, upon habitats of greater value locally to the conservation and enhancement of wildlife.

9.52 Watermead Country Park is the product of the restoration of an area of worked out sand and gravel pits in the Soar Valley. Under the management of the County Council, with the support of the Borough Council, a major leisure and recreation facility has been developed to rival the attractions of Charnwood Forest and other heavily visited sites, relieving pressure in those areas. The further development of the site is guided by an adopted management plan which defines the aims of the Country Park as being:

- to provide a close and accessible facility for people from urban areas who may otherwise not visit the countryside at all or not so often;
- to provide a facility capable of absorbing a large number of countryside visitors, thus relieving pressure on more sensitive or over-used countryside elsewhere; and
- to protect and where possible enhance the wildlife.

9.53 The Country Park has recently achieved the level of maturity necessary to attract enhanced visitor numbers and to withstand the resultant pressures. However the park lacks a focal point for visitor facilities and information and for on site management and administration. Accordingly a visitor centre, which could also serve as a countryside centre for Leicestershire is proposed for a central location. The County Council is currently exploring sources of funding for such a facility.

9.54 Market research has identified a need for a caravan and camping site in the area to the north of Leicester. Derelict land adjacent to the Wanlip Lane entrance to the park with convenient connections to the A46 would appear to be well placed to satisfy this requirement. In combination with an area of paddock land to the east of the access road an attractive and viable facility may be developed. In the layout and landscaping of the development particular measures will be required to protect from harmful disturbance an adjacent Heronry and nesting bank for Sand Martins.

- 9.55 To the south of the Borough boundary the Country Park continues under the administration of the City Council providing a seamless wedge of countryside penetrating the urban area, consistent with the purpose of Green Wedge policy. The unified character of the Country Park is however hindered by the presence of a substantial tract of private land situated between the “County” and “City” components. Efforts are continuing to negotiate public access over this land with river crossings as necessary.

Wanlip Country Club

9.56 POLICY RT/18

Planning permission will be granted for the development of land within and adjacent to the site of the former Wanlip Country Club for the following uses:

- i) **Public house, cafe, restaurant;**
- ii) **Hotel;**
- iii) **Club house;**
- iv) **Conference facilities;**
- v) **Self catering holiday accommodation;**
- vi) **Indoor and outdoor sports facilities; and/or**
- vii) **Marina.**

Provided:

- a) **the development through sensitive siting, design and construction makes a positive contribution to visual amenities without appearing as intrusive within the wider landscape;**
- b) **the site is comprehensively landscaped so as to screen partially the built components of development and to break up the mass of any large buildings;**
- c) **vehicular access is taken from Wanlip Road.**

In addition the Borough Council will seek to negotiate with the developer contributions towards:

- **the Watermead County Park Visitor Centre;**
- **improvements to access to all areas of Watermead Country Park; and**
- **the enhancement of the canal corridor.**

- 9.57 The land lying between Skiing Lake and Pavilion Lake is largely derelict having been damaged by previous mineral extraction activities. The former Wanlip Country Club similarly stands derelict and neglected. Immediately alongside mineral processing continues together with the recycling of builders’ rubble. Planning permission for these operations expired in 2001.
- 9.58 The site is further degraded by the need for access for vehicles carrying infill materials for the restoration of mineral workings at Birstall and Wanlip.
- 9.59 With the blighting influence of these operations likely to be removed soon, the potential is created for a redevelopment of the site with related benefits to the Country Park.
- 9.60 The previous use as a country club provides a basis for future development within the hotel/leisure sector. The site derives considerable advantage from its association with water areas, both as an amenity and as a resource for recreation. Visitors might also be expected to enjoy the attractions and benefits offered within the Country Park.

- 9.61 Any development must necessarily respect the essentially countryside character of the site. Accordingly any built components should be designed so as to minimise their intrusion into the landscape; fragmented development with lodge type chalets separated by landscaping and open air recreation uses is more likely to be successfully integrated in such a setting than large scale buildings more urban in character. Where buildings of a non domestic scale are necessary for central facilities, indoor sporting or leisure purposes the impact of their height and mass may be broken up by design with complementary landscape planting to complete the effect. Particular advantage may be derived from the opportunities to exploit views over Pavilion Lake, Skiing Lake and the Grand Union Canal although care should be exercised to protect the rural amenities of the adjacent Country Park.
- 9.62 The commercial viability of the Country Club site is likely to be influenced significantly by the accessibility of Watermead Country Park with its opportunities for quiet recreation, nature study, sailing and fishing, providing a foil for the potentially more intensive sporting and leisure pursuits anticipated in association with the development proposed. In view of these factors it is considered appropriate to negotiate with the developer to assist in the funding of remaining development proposals within the Country Park, the benefits of which would enhance the prospects for a successful business while aiding the completion of the Country Park itself.

Noise and Sport

9.63 POLICY RT/19

Planning permission will not be granted for development related to noise generating sports activity unless all of the following criteria are met:

- i) **the proposal does not generate unacceptable levels of noise, dust, fumes, smell or other nuisance to the detriment of neighbouring uses;**
- ii) **adequate visual and acoustic landscaping and screening is provided;**
- iii) **the proposal, including any ancillary buildings or structures, does not appear as intrusive in the landscape; and**
- iv) **the proposal does not adversely affect sites of ecological or geological interest.**

(see also in particular policy TR/18)

- 9.64 PPG17 emphasises the need to accommodate noise generating sports where a clear demand is identified. The County Council will assist in the identification of appropriate sites. Whilst the provision of sites for these activities would ease the unauthorised and damaging use of sensitive areas, they need to be carefully located to ensure problems of visual intrusion, noise and other nuisances are minimised.
- 9.65 In principle, countryside areas on the urban fringe are ideal locations for noisy sports, being close to large areas of population, the potential source of participants. Often, locating noisy sports near to existing noise generators such as roads and industrial areas will lessen any unacceptable impacts. The proposals for woodland planting on the Leicester fringe and in association with the National Forest may provide opportunities to accommodate noisy sports so that any noise and visual intrusion is minimised.

Tourism

9.66 POLICY RT/20

Planning permission for the development of tourist accommodation and visitor facilities will be granted provided the following criteria are met:

- i) **the development would not harm the amenities enjoyed by neighbouring uses;**
- ii) **any new buildings or alterations to existing buildings are of a scale, design and appearance sympathetic to the site and its surrounding area;**

- iii) **existing features on site including trees, hedges, walls are retained wherever possible.**

(See also in particular Policies ST/1 and TR/18)

- 9.67 Much of Charnwood's attractiveness as a tourist destination stems from its natural features, including the Charnwood Forest and the river valleys. It is also attractive as a tourist location because of its proximity to nearby tourist attractions such as Snibston Discovery Park and Leicester. This policy seeks to ensure that new tourism facilities are provided without having an unacceptable impact on the special character of Charnwood. The Charnwood Tourism Strategy works in partnership with other agencies to implement projects that will develop Charnwood's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

Grand Union Canal Opportunity Site

9.68 POLICY RT/21

Land around the Grand Union Canal, Loughborough is identified on the Proposals Map as a major opportunity site for redevelopment. In determining applications for development of the site the Borough Council will permit a range of compatible uses such as shops, offices, business, residential, leisure, entertainment and tourism facilities which would maximise the recreational and tourism potential of the canal and be appropriate to a town centre location.

- 9.69 The spur of the Grand Union Canal terminating at Bridge Street is an area with great potential for redevelopment to secure significant environmental improvements to one of the key "gateways" to the town centre. The southern portion of the site may be marginally affected by the line of the inner relief road. This presents the opportunity to consider the options for comprehensive development in this area.
- 9.70 The Tourism Action Programme prepared for the Borough Council by the East Midlands Tourist Board identified the canal as a key but highly under utilised tourism resource in the town. The County Council is currently pursuing the designation of the length the Grand Union Canal in Leicestershire as a conservation area in recognition of its historic interest. Redevelopment of the land around the canal provides an opportunity to strengthen the physical and visual presence of the canal in relation to the town centre through improved public access and the possible extension or enlargement of the water area to make it a key feature in the town centre. Compatible uses in any mixed scheme might reasonably include shops, offices, business, residential, leisure, entertainment and tourism facilities suitable to a canalside location.

Tourist Caravan and Camping Sites

9.71 POLICY RT/22

Planning permission for the development of tourist caravan and camping sites will be granted provided:

- i) **the site would not represent an unacceptable visual intrusion into an area of countryside;**
- ii) **the site is well related to the specified road network and adequate access to cater for the type and volume of traffic likely to be generated can be provided;**
- iii) **there would be no adverse effect on local amenities through noise, smell, dust or other nuisance;**
- iv) **there would be no detrimental impact on areas of nature conservation and landscape value.**

- 9.72 The Leicestershire Structure Plan and the County Council's Recreation Strategy both recognise the opportunities for further tourist camping and caravan site provision within the County, particularly in the longer term. With the Charnwood Forest, the Borough is a popular tourist destination in its own right and is also well located for other attractions in the region. The resulting pressures for further tourist provision must be balanced against the need to safeguard what is for the most part a sensitive landscape of particular character.

Soar Valley Centre, Mountsorrel

9.73 POLICY RT/23

Planning permission will be granted for the development of a recreation and community centre on land to the rear of Mountsorrel Memorial Hall, provided:

- i) the building through attention to its scale, mass, layout and design, makes a positive contribution to local visual and residential amenities;**
- ii) any lighting associated with the illumination of outdoor sports areas is positioned and orientated to avoid the effects of light pollution upon adjacent areas of housing land;**
- iii) the site is comprehensively landscaped to screen service areas and to enhance the amenity of the development overall.**

- 9.74 The site has been a long-term commitment through a proposal of the adopted Soar Valley Local Plan. The original proposal included a retail development as well as recreation and community facilities. The lack of retail interest in the site has led to a review of the situation and the proposal now focuses on the recreation and community facilities for the Soar Valley Centre. A financial contribution towards a recreation and community facility has been secured from the developer of the adjacent housing development. It is also the intention that money for a scheme will come forward through a National Lottery Fund Bid.