

11. Open space and sports and recreational facilities that are of high quality, or of particular value to a local community, should be recognised and given protection by local authorities through appropriate policies in plans. Areas of particular quality may include:

- i. small areas of open space in urban areas that provide an important local amenity and offer recreational and play opportunities;
- ii. areas of open space that provide a community resource and can be used for informal or formal events such as religious and cultural festivals, agricultural shows and travelling fairs. Travelling fairs may also require suitable winter quarters (DoE Circular 22/91 refers); and
- iii. areas of open space that particularly benefit wildlife and biodiversity.

12. Development of open space, sports or recreational facilities may provide an opportunity for local authorities to remedy deficiencies in provision. For example, where a local authority has identified a surplus in one type of open space or sports and recreational facility but a deficit in another type, planning conditions or obligations may be used to secure part of the development site for the type of open space or sports and recreational facility that is in deficit.

13. Equally, development may provide the opportunity to exchange the use of one site for another to substitute for any loss of open space, or sports or recreational facility. The new land and facility should be at least as accessible to current and potential new users, and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality. Wherever possible, the aim should be to achieve qualitative improvements to open spaces, sports and recreational facilities. Local authorities should use planning obligations or conditions to secure the exchange land, ensure any necessary works are undertaken and that the new facilities are capable of being maintained adequately through management and maintenance agreements.

14. Parks, recreation grounds, playing fields and allotments must not be regarded as 'previously-developed land', as defined in annex C of PPG3. Even where land does fall within the definition of 'previously-developed', its existing and potential value for recreation and other purposes should be properly assessed before development is considered.

Playing Fields

15. In advance of an assessment of need, local authorities should give very careful consideration to any planning applications involving development on playing fields (see endnote 3). **Where a robust assessment of need in accordance with this guidance has not**

been undertaken, planning permission for such developments should not be allowed unless:

- i. the proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field (eg new changing rooms) and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use;
- ii. the proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one);
- iii. the playing fields that would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity and quality and in a suitable location - see paragraph 13 above; or
- iv. the proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field

Developments within Open Spaces

16. The recreational quality of open spaces can be eroded by insensitive development or incremental loss of the site. In considering planning applications - either within or adjoining open space - local authorities should weigh any benefits being offered to the community against the loss of open space that will occur. Planning authorities may wish to allow small-scale structures where these would support the existing recreational uses (for example, interpretation centres, toilets, and refreshment facilities), or would provide facilities for new recreational uses. They should seek to ensure that all proposed development takes account of, and is sensitive to, the local context.

17. Local authorities should:

- i. avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain or enhance the character of open spaces;
- ii. ensure that open spaces do not suffer from increased overlooking, traffic flows or other encroachment;
- iii. protect and enhance those parts of the rights of way network that might benefit open space; and
- iv. consider the impact of any development on biodiversity and nature conservation.

Enhancing Existing Open Space and Sport and Recreational Facilities