

## SECTION 3

### LEISURE

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## SECTION 3 LEISURE

### 1. Introduction

The term 'leisure' used in this Plan encompasses a range of leisure activities and facilities including sport and recreation, the arts (including visual and performing arts and community based arts activities), and countryside recreation. Pressure for the use of land for leisure purposes exists not only from residents within the District but also people living beyond, especially in Norwich. Pressure is increasing on existing facilities and for the provision of new facilities both at a local level and also to serve a wider population. Opportunities exist within and adjacent to the Plan Area to develop facilities at both a local and sub-regional level. In certain cases this will require working in partnership with other Districts. The Council's 1998 Leisure Strategy is an important context for this section of the Plan.

The demand for recreation and leisure facilities is likely to continue to increase during the Plan period due to:

- The increase in the number of people living within the District.
- The anticipated increase in leisure time available.
- The promotion and development of the facilities available.
- Improved accessibility for people living outside South Norfolk.
- Availability of lottery funding.
- The increase in disposable income levels.

Proposals for the use of land for leisure purposes are also likely to increase due to the pressures for agricultural diversification.

Currently the Plan Area offers a range of leisure facilities such as sports halls, squash courts, golf courses and swimming pools, as well as village halls and community facilities at a more local level. There are also opportunities for quieter leisure pursuits on a limited number of small countryside sites - picnic areas, commons, footpath network etc.

The major centre for large-scale commercial leisure facilities, such as multiplex cinemas and the associated complexes of restaurants and bars, is Norwich. Smaller scale indoor leisure facilities such as theatres and galleries, as well as indoor sports facilities such as bowling alleys, may come forward within South Norfolk. A specific leisure allocation is made in Diss as part of policy DIS 6.

The District Council is a provider and enabler of leisure opportunities and is involved in a number of activities including:

- The promotion and development of sport and leisure.
- The South Norfolk Leisure Strategy, which addresses the issue of increasing pressure for facilities.
- Action to identify and rectify deficiencies in facilities while seeking to either directly provide them or do so in conjunction with other interests.
- Financial assistance to Parish Councils and the voluntary sector through grant aid, either directly or by assisting Parish Councils in securing alternative sources of funding.

## 2. Leisure and recreation: general

The District Council has sought to encourage the development of local leisure facilities through its leisure grant aid policies. Such grants, subject to limited resources, can be made available to clubs and organisations in the Plan Area. Town and Parish Councils also play an important role in providing and financing local facilities in association with leisure grant aid.

As the introduction states, there is increasing demand for leisure and recreation facilities for a variety of reasons. Demand may also arise as a result of large residential allocations and windfall sites, policy UTL 10 and the policies for individual housing allocations in Part Two of this Plan expect developers to contribute to the cost of identified new facilities.

### a) Extensive and noisy leisure uses

The extent to which the demand for new leisure and recreation facilities in the District can be met will be closely related to environmental concerns, ranging from broader landscape considerations to more local factors such as traffic generation.

#### **Policy LE1: Extensive and noisy leisure uses**

**Proposals for golf courses, country parks and other leisure uses which require extensive areas of land, and proposals for noisy leisure activities such as shooting, motor sports and motorised water sports will be permitted if:**

- a) There would be no harm to the value of the environmental characteristics and resources of the site and its surroundings;
- b) Harm would not be caused by the nature, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the leisure activities proposed, including:
  - i) Any noise likely to be generated by the proposed activities;
  - ii) The appearance of any building or structure required for the activity;
  - iii) Any lighting likely to be required which could have an impact beyond the site;
  - iv) The number of people likely to be at the site at any one time and their degree of concentration or dispersal within the site;
- c) Harm would not be caused by the landforming works proposed including the formation of playing surfaces, construction of car parking, terracing, mounding and the planting of trees;
- d) The proposal would be accessible by public transport, by bicycle or on foot;
- e) The local road network could handle safely the extra traffic the proposal would generate and the road access and exit at the site would be safe;
- f) In the case of major facilities the Council's leisure strategy or the developer's own research identifies a need for the facility within the District.

In relation to environmental characteristics, the evaluation of any proposal will take account of the existence of designations such as Conservation Areas, Nature Reserves and environmental assets as covered by policies in the 'Protection of Environmental Assets' and the 'Controlling the Impact of Development' chapters of this Plan. The Council would expect developments such as golf courses to be successfully integrated into the landscape, respecting the existing landscape character and enhancing the biodiversity of the area. In the case of developments such as shooting and motorsports these should be located with special regard for their separation from dwellings, livestock holdings and areas of quiet countryside. These uses would often be suited to former gravel workings or other similar areas of degraded landscape rather than greenfield sites in open countryside.

**b) Village halls and small scale leisure facilities in villages**

**Policy LEI 2: Village halls and small scale leisure facilities**

**Proposals for new village halls, extensions to existing village halls and similar small-scale leisure facilities intended to serve the local community will be permitted if:**

- a) There would be no harm to the value of the environmental characteristics and resources of the site and its surroundings;**
- b) Harm would not be caused by the nature, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the leisure activities proposed, including;**
  - i) Any noise likely to be generated by the proposed activities;**
  - ii) The appearance of any building or structure required for the activity;**
  - iii) Any lighting likely to be required which could have an impact beyond the site;**
  - iv) The number of people likely to be at the site at any one time and their degree of concentration or dispersal within the site;**
- c) The proposal would be accessible by public transport, by bicycle or on foot;**
- d) The local road network could handle safely the extra traffic the proposal would generate and the road access and exit at the site would be safe;**
- e) The building is within or adjacent to the existing built up area such that development does not extend out into open countryside**
- f) The development is located so as not to cause nuisance to residents of neighbouring properties.**

The Council wishes to encourage new leisure and community facilities in villages to meet the needs of the local population. However it is important that these facilities do not damage the character or landscape setting of the villages and that they do not create noise or similar problems for nearby residents. Proposals should therefore clearly indicate the range of uses proposed, the provision of sound attenuation measures and the intended hours of use of the building.

With regard to the environmental characteristics and resources referred to in part a) of policies LEI 1 and LEI 2, further information is given in the last paragraph of section d) below. Reference should also be made to policy IMP 25 which deals with light pollution in the countryside as there are minimum floodlight requirements for various sports, set by the Sports Council

**c) Monitoring of demand**

It is important to ensure that there is adequate leisure and recreational land available to meet the needs and demands of the local population and the District Council will therefore monitor the demand for such land.

**Policy LEI 3: Shortfalls of leisure and recreational land**

~~The District Council will, in conjunction with local users, monitor the demand for additional leisure and recreational land. If further shortages become evident appropriate remedial action will be investigated and if necessary suitable sites will be identified to rectify any shortfalls.~~

**Attention:** Please note that Local Plan policy **LEI 3** has been **discontinued** since 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to national planning policy guidance PPG17 (Sport and Recreation).

**d) Major indoor leisure facilities**

Regional sports bodies and the District Council Leisure Strategy have identified deficiencies in indoor leisure facilities in South Norfolk, including sports halls, swimming pools and arts centres. These can be provided by the private sector or through public sector assistance via grant aid, lottery funding or as a result of direct provision. The District Council would wish to see major new indoor facilities provided within or adjacent to town centres, in order to improve the vitality and viability of town centres in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 6 "Town Centres and Retail Development" (June 1996) and in order to reduce unnecessary travelling in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 13 "Transport" (March 2001). In accordance with the Government's sequential approach, it is anticipated that facilities of regional or sub-regional significance will be located in Norwich or Great Yarmouth.

**Policy LEI 4: Indoor leisure facilities - sequential test**

**Planning permission for new indoor leisure facilities, and for the extension of existing facilities, will be granted within the Central Business Areas of the District's main towns and villages, as defined on the Proposals Map, subject to the provisions of policy LEI 5.**

**If suitable sites cannot be found within the defined Central Business Areas, consideration will be given to edge-of-centre locations where pedestrian access to and from the centre is easy and attractive.**

**Only where no suitable Central Business Area site or edge-of-centre site is available, will consideration be given to out-of-centre locations.**

(Continued...)

**(Policy LEI 4 continued)**

**In out-of-centre locations, the following criteria must also be satisfied:**

- i) The site is not designated for an alternative use; and**
- ii) The site is easily accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and public transport from the surrounding catchment area; and**
- iii) The site is close enough to other tourism, leisure, employment or retail facilities to encourage linked trips; and**
- iv) The proposals would result in a net reduction in total private motor vehicle trip length.**

**Policy LEI 5: Indoor leisure facilities - impact test**

**Indoor leisure facilities on sites within the Central Business Areas, as identified on the Proposals Map, of the District's main towns and villages, or on edge-of-centre sites, or on out-of-centre sites will only be permitted if the nature and scale of the proposed development would be in keeping with the size and function of the settlement concerned, and there would be no demonstrable harm (either individually or cumulatively with other proposed development) to:**

- i) The vitality and viability of the identified Central Business Areas; and**
- ii) Proposals to enhance these Central Business Areas or their fringes; and**
- iii) The quality of the local environment; and**
- iv) The highway and transportation network.**

In the preceding two policies the term 'Indoor leisure facilities' means leisure facilities provided within a building with the primary purpose of meeting the leisure needs of the resident population of the area.

Whilst the Council wishes to encourage additional leisure provision in the area, this will not be at the expense of the quality and attractiveness of the local landscape. The Plan contains policies (ENV 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6), which seek to protect the character and distinctiveness of the South Norfolk landscape. In the Norwich Policy Area these policies would prevent "inappropriate development" (see glossary) in the defined river valleys, historic parklands, gaps between settlements and in the landscape setting of the Norwich Southern Bypass. This would restrict the creation of some new leisure facilities in these areas. Proposals for leisure development will also need to ensure there is no conflict with other policies in the 'Protection of Environmental Assets' and the 'Controlling the Impact of Development' chapters, which seek to achieve protection of the District's environmental assets.

**e) Other leisure facilities**

**Policy LEI 6: Smaller scale leisure facilities**

**Smaller scale facilities will be encouraged to locate within District or local centres where they are well related to and readily accessible to the population they are intended to serve.**

Opportunities may arise for the conversion of redundant industrial, commercial, educational or agricultural buildings for leisure purposes. Such schemes are considered to be commercial

uses which fall within the scope of policy EMP 3 and will be permitted if the criteria contained in that policy are met.

### 3. Outdoor recreation

#### a) Recreational open space

The Council's current open space standards are based on extrapolation of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) '6 acre standard' which indicates a general requirement of 2.4 ha. of open space per 1,000 people. The Council intend to identify deficiencies in public open space and recreation provision, and justify the amount and location of new provision, in the next review of the Plan.

The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Recreational Open Space Requirements for Residential Areas' (December 1994), copies of which may be obtained from the Council's Planning Services, sets out the standards which will be required for open space in new developments and acceptable arrangements for its maintenance. The location of open space areas will require careful siting so that they are accessible to users whilst avoiding the creation of nuisance and disturbance to residents.

#### **Policy LEI 7: Open space provision in new development**

**New housing development will be required to incorporate private and public open space areas based on the District Council's adopted standards.**

The Council's Recreational Open Space Guidelines set out the provisions regarding responsibility for maintenance in some detail. Contribution will be sought from the developer towards future maintenance as appropriate.

Larger housing and employment allocations in this Plan will not only require the provision of public open space (in the case of housing areas) and landscaping within the site, but also require sizeable landscaped areas between these allocations and open countryside; see policy IMP 2 and Part Two policies.

The Council is anxious that existing open spaces which meet a local need are retained. The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (1996) requires consultation with Sport England on any proposal affecting land used as a playing field. Circular 9/98, The Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998 provides specific advice to notify the relevant Government Office where the Council is minded to approve an application on which Sport England have objected; this relates specifically to local authority sites or those used in conjunction with an educational establishment within the five years prior to the application.

**Policy LEI 8: Loss of recreational or amenity land**

**The change of use or redevelopment of existing recreation or amenity land will only be permitted where:**

- i) The proposed development is ancillary to the principal recreational use of the site;**
- ii) It affects only a small part of the site and does not prejudice sporting or other recreational facilities on the site;**
- iii) It involves the replacement of the recreational facilities with another of equivalent or improved quality;**
- iv) An assessment of needs shows there is an excess of provision of the facility and it cannot be adapted to meet other recreational needs;**
- v) It is part of the relocation of a sports (or similar) club which will provide an overall improvement in recreational facilities;**
- vi) It will result in recreational provisions better suited to future needs and there is no current shortage of playing fields or recreational/amenity land in the locality.**

School playing fields offer potential for public recreational use, especially in areas where there are deficiencies in open space provision. Consequently the Council encourages dual use of such facilities.

**Policy LEI 9: Joint provision and dual use of recreation facilities**

**The District Council will encourage joint provision recreation schemes on school sites and the dual use of recreation facilities on school sites.**

As well as applying to the public use of outdoor facilities the above policy can also apply to the public use of school buildings. Joint provision schemes between the education authority, schools and the District Council can help to provide local outdoor and indoor facilities.

Appropriate Town or Parish Councils will be asked to assume ownership of and accept responsibility for the maintenance (arising after the period covered by any lump sum arrangements) of playing fields, children's play areas and equipment provided. Where these are not accepted, the District Council will reach agreement with the developer over future ownership and maintenance responsibility.

**b) Informal countryside recreation**

As previously stated, a limited number of sites exist for quieter informal countryside recreation. Of the more significant schemes are the Angles Way footpath, which runs along much of the Waveney Valley, the Tas Valley Walk, Boudicas Way and the Marriotts Way at Costessey. At a more local level are Commons (Mulbarton Common, Swardeston Common, Hales Green, Roydon Fen; and Dunston Common (which although not a registered common is amenity land for public use), and heathland (for example Broome Heath), as well as many other areas with public access.

The District Council has entered into partnership with other local authorities to form countryside management projects (see policy ENV 22). The Upper Waveney Valley Countryside Project covers parishes along the Waveney Valley on the southern boundary of the Plan Area. The Wensum Valley Project stretches from beyond Fakenham in North Norfolk to Norwich, and includes Costessey and part of Easton. The Norwich Urban Fringe Project includes most of the Yare Valley lying within the Plan Area and part of the Tas Valley. One of the main aims of all these projects is to improve public access to the countryside for active and passive recreational pursuits (including walking and cycling), yet at the same time safeguarding areas of nature conservation value.

**Policy LEI 10: Public access through countryside projects**

**The District Council supports the aims of the Upper Waveney Valley countryside management project, the Wensum Valley project, and the Norwich Fringe project to increase/improve opportunities for public access/recreation in the Plan Area.**

The Plan Area offers an attractive environment for cycling and with the increasing interest in this as a recreational pursuit the District Council wishes to improve conditions for cyclists by the introduction of cycle routes (see policy TRA 2) and cycle facilities (see policy TRA 3). The District Council has published a series of cycle route leaflets and with the Upper Waveney Valley Countryside Project has identified suitable cycle routes within the Waveney Valley. It is important that increasing public access is consistent with nature conservation and landscape objectives and policies.

The Council has also considered its potential for achieving the aims of the National Cycling Strategy (which include doubling the number of cycle trips 1996-2002 and again by 2012) and produced a draft cycling strategy in 2003. The South Norfolk Cycling Forum, which is an independent body, aims among other things to encourage the County Council to spend some of its budget on cycling (including leisure use) routes in the District and also advises the District Council on the production its own leisure cycle route leaflets.

**c) Water based recreation**

The Council wishes to encourage recreational use of areas of water in the Plan Area, both to increase the range and accessibility of recreational facilities and to help ease the pressure on some of the more popular and sensitive Broads locations. However, it must be recognised that most water bodies within the Plan Area are themselves environmentally sensitive and/or lie within areas of sensitive landscape and/or areas of nature conservation value. Policy LEI 11 therefore contains a number of criteria designed to ensure that proposals do not harm the environment. In assessing the impact of a proposal, account will be taken of the sensitivity of the landscape as indicated in the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment as well as of Conservation Areas and the other environmental assets for which this Plan provides protective policies.

In terms of nature conservation value, account will be taken of the existing value of the site as indicated by any local, national or international designations and by surveys, as well as any contribution the development may make to increasing biodiversity. Proposals will also need to demonstrate no adverse impact on water quality and recognise that water levels can change naturally and that any input of water to maintain levels for the recreational use will have to be licensed.

Water activities could include motorised water sports, which inevitably produce noise. Proposals will need to demonstrate that such noisy activities will not have an adverse impact on other users of the water, nearby residents, livestock holdings, areas of quiet countryside, or wildlife. Minimising this adverse impact might involve physical attenuation measures, or management measures to limit noisy or conflicting activities to certain parts of the water and/or to certain specified times.

In terms of access it is acknowledged that the geographical distribution of water areas does not relate well to major transportation routes or centres of population, however any development will be expected to include measures to facilitate access by non car-users.

**Policy LEI 11: Water based recreational facilities**

**Proposals for new water based recreational facilities will be permitted where:**

- a) There would be no harm to the value of the environmental characteristics and resources of the site and its surroundings, including its landscape value, nature conservation value and water quality;**
- b) Harm would not be caused by the nature, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the leisure activities proposed, including:
  - i) Any noise likely to be generated by the proposed activities;**
  - ii) The siting and appearance of any building or structure required for the activity;**
  - iii) Any problems of congestion and incompatibility between various types of water use;**
  - iv) The number of people likely to be at the site at any one time and their degree of concentration or dispersal within the site;****
- c) Harm would not be caused by the physical works proposed including the construction of car parking, access roads, jetties, slipways, quay heading and the planting of trees;**
- d) The proposal would be accessible by public transport, by bicycle or on foot;**
- e) The local road network could handle safely the extra traffic the proposal would generate and the road access and exit at the site would be safe;**
- f) In the case of major facilities the Council's leisure strategy or the developer's own research identifies a need for the facility within the District.**

**d) Costessey pits**

This is an area consisting of three lakes from which water is abstracted to supply the Heigham water treatment works in Norwich and which have been developed by Anglian Water for water recreation. Two lakes are currently used for fishing. The third and largest lake is used for water-skiing. Within the site a picnic area and nature trails have been developed; paths have been created and interpretative material is displayed on information boards.

The restricted size of the site together with poor access means only further small scale improvements such as waymarking of paths can be undertaken. It is doubtful whether sufficient additional parking can be created, or whether the present level of use can be extended without detriment to the present character and wildlife interests of the pits.

**Policy LEI 12: Costessey Pits**

**The District Council will continue to encourage the small scale improvements to facilities at Costessey Pits where it is satisfied that such proposals can be accommodated without detriment to the water supply and wildlife interests or the character of the area.**

**e) Bawburgh/Colney gravel pits**

These lie immediately north of Colney and the Watton Road (B1108), in the Yare Valley. Gravel extraction in this area is nearing completion.

The District Council adopted planning guidelines in May 1986 to guide the creation of water based recreation and informal land based facilities. The guidelines propose a range of uses based on two lakes, including sailing, rowing, board sailing, and angling. The larger eastern lake will be used for recreation, the smaller western one for wildlife conservation. Throughout the area there is potential to provide facilities for informal recreation such as footpaths and picnic areas. The main access will be from the Bowthorpe perimeter road, with a subsidiary access from the east using New Road. The guidelines will need some amendment as they left open the option to provide a major competition size rowing course, now transferred to Whitlingham. The guidelines will also need to make reference to the fact that much of the area has been identified as a County Wildlife Site, protected under policy ENV 13 and to reflect the value that the whole site has for nature conservation. The District Council envisages the area being developed in conjunction with private interests perhaps in the form of a Trust.

Detailed policies (BAW 1 and BAW 2) and proposals are to be found in the Bawburgh chapter of this Plan.

**f) Royal Norfolk Showground**

The Norfolk Showground is a large site which is used annually for the Royal Norfolk Show, but which has a range of other uses including equestrian events and trade fairs. The Council would like to see the potential of the showground further exploited to include other uses such as the arts, provided that the new uses can be accommodated without detriment to the amenity of the area. The current range of uses is controlled under a permission granted in 1975; consequently any wider range of uses will need a further specific grant of permission.

The showground lies within the Costessey/Easton gap defined under policy ENV 2 where "inappropriate development" will not be allowed. "Inappropriate development" means the construction of new buildings for any purpose except for, in this case, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation (see the glossary for a full definition). Whilst small ancillary buildings such as toilet blocks are likely to be acceptable, in principle other buildings will be resisted.

The showground is close to the residential area of Easton on its west side, close to livestock holdings and in an area of quiet countryside. Consequently motorised or flying sports will not be allowed and any noise generating activities, such as music concerts, will be required to adhere to agreed finishing times.

**Policy LEI 13: Royal Norfolk Showground**

**Use of the Norfolk Showground for outdoor arts, exhibitions, leisure and recreation uses will be permitted provided that:**

- a) There would be no harm to the value of the environmental characteristics and resources of the site and its surroundings; and**
- b) Harm would not be caused by the nature, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the leisure activities proposed, including:
  - i) Any noise likely to be generated by the proposed activities;**
  - ii) Any lighting likely to be required which could have an impact beyond the site;**
  - iii) The number of people likely to be at the site at any one time and their degree of concentration or dispersal within the site; and****
- c) Harm would not be caused by any physical works proposed, including the formation of playing surfaces, construction of car parking, access roads, terracing, mounding and the planting of trees; and**
- d) The local road network could handle safely the extra traffic the proposal would generate and the road access and exit at the site would be safe; and**
- e) The proposal does not involve motorised sport or flying (with the exception of hot air balloons); and**
- f) No event continues for more than ten days; and**
- g) No use would involve or require the erection of permanent buildings on the site, other than small ancillary buildings.**

**g) Horses kept for recreational use**

The keeping and riding of horses for recreational purposes is increasing in popularity. This has led to a trend in providing livery/grazing on farms as a form of diversification, including the subdivision of fields into small parcels of land upon which stables/tack room/shelters are erected for or by individual owners.

The quality of pasture, buildings and style of fencing is sometimes low and therefore can have a detrimental impact on the landscape. Additionally, equipment and facilities associated with the keeping of horses such as jumps and menage can also become prominent in the landscape if not managed carefully.

The minimum standard for the keeping of horses in association with residential accommodation is considered to be a minimum distance of 20 metres between the stable and the nearest residence.

**Policy LEI 14: Keeping of horses for recreational purposes**

The use of land and erection of associated buildings and equipment for the keeping of horses for recreational purposes where it requires planning permission will only be permitted where the District Council is satisfied that there are no adverse effects on the following:

- i) The character of the landscape
- ii) Important wildlife habitats
- iii) Highway safety
- iv) Residential amenity.

Where such proposals are permitted careful attention will be paid to the design, siting and materials used in the construction of animal shelters, field boundaries and other ancillary structures in order to protect the amenity of the locality. The reuse of redundant rural buildings for such purposes will be encouraged.

Where appropriate the District Council may impose planning conditions for the removal/storage of jumps and other equipment when not in frequent use.