

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

The following Corporate Objectives are relevant to the delivery of the planning objectives related to leisure and tourism explained in this chapter of the Local Plan:

- To provide quality cost effective services;
- To promote a green and sustainable environment;
- To encourage a thriving community;
- To improve the quality of life for people in the District; and
- To maintain and enhance local heritage and culture.

PLANNING OBJECTIVES

- L1 To provide for and encourage the provision of leisure and other community facilities and to make good, where possible, deficiencies that have arisen from past high rates of housing development.
- L2 To facilitate provision of leisure facilities in the countryside that can be met through dual use of school facilities, the use and provision of village halls, or appropriate conversions of farm buildings. Such facilities could serve several villages.
- L3 To ensure that new areas of open space enhance the surrounding countryside and the Green Belt and improve the environmental quality of the area whilst protecting good quality agricultural land and the viability of agricultural holdings.
- L4 To seek opportunities to improve and increase public access to the countryside, where appropriate, for recreational purposes, including the promotion of the use of more sustainable methods of transport such as walking, cycling and horse riding, so far as this is compatible with the need to safeguard natural resources, wildlife interests and rural conservation.
- L5 To promote tourism activities, thereby supporting the local economy whilst maintaining and enhancing the environment. Encourage provision of visitor attractions, accommodation and facilities to meet this end.

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 The aim of the Plan is to provide sport and recreation facilities in sufficient quantity and in the right locations, whilst at the same time protecting existing sport, open space and recreation facilities. Without this foundation accessibility is limited and would curtail the District Council's objective of improving and promoting excellence in chosen activities as well as providing ready access to informal open space.
- 6.2 A Playing Pitch Strategy for the provision of playing pitches has been adopted. In preparing this Strategy a survey of the Sub Areas was carried out and the information gathered has been used to identify local formal open space priorities.¹ This is included as LPSPG13.
- 6.3 Local Plan allocations and policies represent the first stage of implementation of the strategies, by safeguarding land for particular activities and providing the planning framework to enable specific recreation and leisure development to take place. Allocations of land for public open space are only made where there is a real prospect of implementation within the Plan period, since measures will be required to purchase land. The Council will expect new housing development to make suitable provision for public open space provision and/or to provide commuted sums for open space where appropriate.
- 6.4 Sustainable tourism will be encouraged by promoting recreational and leisure pursuits as well as market towns, nature conservation areas and increased access to the countryside. Tourist attractions and associated accommodation, including short-stay and self catering holiday developments, will be considered as long as they do not harm the local environment.
- 6.5 Demands for new land and buildings will need to be balanced against the need to identify sustainable locations, protection of the countryside and promotion of environmental quality in urban areas. This chapter sets out planning policies for the recreation and leisure requirements of the District's residents and tourist attractions and accommodation.

STRUCTURE PLAN REQUIREMENTS

- 6.6 The main objectives of The Replacement Essex and Southend-on-Sea Structure Plan (RSP), as adopted in April 2001, are: (a) to promote a wide range of opportunities to take part in sport and recreation through the provision of adequate and accessible facilities, land and water resources; (b) to maximise public access to the countryside; and (c) provide visitor attractions, accommodation and facilities, thereby supporting the local economy whilst maintaining and enhancing the environment.
- 6.7 The RSP recognized the need for a country park in the Rochford area and promoted the provision of such an area through Policy LRT4. Policy LT5 of the Local Plan addresses this.
- 6.8 Other RSP policies address improving coastal paths, re-using formal mineral workings, and provision of tourist accommodation and facilities including diversification and upgrading.

¹ An Assessment of Playing Pitches in the Rochford District (October 2002)

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

RURAL ISSUES

- 6.9 Much of the district outside the urban settlements is rural in character with significant areas covered by National and Structure Plan policy constraints, e.g. Metropolitan Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Landscape Areas (NR1) and Coastal Protection Belt (NR12). Such designations provide significant constraints on development through law or government policy. The following policy therefore embodies the local planning authority's position:

POLICY LT1 - RURAL ISSUES

Any leisure and tourism proposal that has an adverse material affect on the rural landscape or character of the area by reason of the size, scale and design of the operational development, or by the intensity/activity associated with the use will be refused.

FORMAL OPEN SPACE

PLAYING PITCHES

- 6.10 Playing pitches are areas of formal open space, available to the public, specifically for the playing of pitch sports including rugby, football, hockey and cricket.
- 6.11 *An Assessment of Playing Pitches in the Rochford District¹* shows that the supply of pitches is currently meeting expressed demand. Suggested new standards for each of the sub areas are shown in Table 6.3. It is intended that these standards will probably meet the long term structural changes in demand, as well as short term fluctuations.
- 6.12 A playing field survey was carried out across the district in 2002, and as a result a revised playing field standard has been adopted. One of the objectives of the playing field study was to research and recommend appropriate standards of provision for playing pitches to inform Council planning and investment decisions. Clearly it may be necessary to recommend not one, but several standards to reflect the characteristics of and needs arising from the different sub areas.
- 6.13 Sub areas are not exclusive and there is no doubt that people will travel reasonable distances to use the available pitches. The survey was carried out using the sub-areas identified in Table 6.1 but the booking evidence shows that these areas should not be considered as mutually exclusive for the purposes of pitch availability and provision.

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

Table 6.1	
PLAYING FIELD SURVEY SUB AREAS	
SUB AREA	WARDS COVERED
Rayleigh	Grange & Rawreth, Lodge, Rayleigh, Central, Trinity, Wheatley, Whitehouse
Hockley	Hockley East, Hockley West, Hawkwell West
Hullbridge	Hullbridge Riverside, Hullbridge South
Canewdon	Canewdon
Rochford	Ashingdon, Rochford Eastwood, Rochford Roche, Rochford St Andrews
Great Wakering	Barling & Sutton, Foulness & Great Wakering East, Great Wakering Central, Great Wakering West

- 6.14 In looking at these Sub Areas and testing against the previous Local Plan Standards and those recommended by the National Playing Field Association it became apparent that it was necessary to dis-aggregate the required standards of provision for sports pitches from those relating to other forms of open space. It was also concluded reasonable to adopt a set of standards, that best reflects existing potential demand within the individual sub areas.
- 6.15 Revised local standards must embrace provision of all pitches in community use. If they are to be effective, they must include a tolerance to cater for unpredictable upswings in demand and also the loss of access to pitches not in secured community use. However, they should not set too a high a target as this will risk wasteful over provision, a key consideration, given static population levels within a small district with teams able to travel short distances to other sub areas to access playing pitches. It is also unlikely further developable land will come forward in certain other sub areas.

Table 6.2			
PROVISION OF PITCHES PER HEAD OF POPULATION FOR THE SUB AREAS			
SUB AREA	POPULATION	PITCHES / 000 (A, B1, B2)	NATIONAL PLAYING FIELD STANDARD
Rayleigh	31,4100	0.99	1.20 hectares per thousand population
Hockley	17,164	0.7	
Hullbridge	7,425	1.34	
Canewdon	1,491	2.23	
Rochford	16,317	1.95	
Great Wakering	7,694	1.77	

- 6.16 As can be seen from in Table 6.2, there is a variation in the level of provision between the individual sub areas. Areas like Hockley are relatively poorly provided for, compared with Canewdon and Rochford. Notwithstanding the deficiencies in

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

some sub areas the study has identified that the supply of pitches is currently meeting demand across the district, and in two sub areas (Hockley and Canewdon) there is a little capacity to cater for any upturn in demand.

6.17 As stated above, it is unrealistic for the Council to test open space standards against population levels/intensity if an assessment is not also made of:-

- the age of the population within the sub areas;
- the level of likely demand;
- the suitability of the pitches;
- floodlighting;
- changing rooms and other support facilities; and
- travel distances to available facilities.

6.18 For the above reasons it has been concluded that the use of the National Playing Field Standard of 1.2Ha / 1000 people is discontinued, and instead the Council adopts the following standards for the sub areas which reflect the achievable aims for playing pitch provision within the plan period.

Table 6.3		
SUGGESTED LOCAL STANDARDS		
SUB AREA	SUGGESTED STANDARD Ha / 000 POPULATION	NATIONAL PLAYING FIELD STANDARD
Rayleigh	1.15	1.20 hectares per thousand population
Hockley	0.7	
Hullbridge	1.34	
Canewdon	1.68	
Rochford	1.36	
Great Wakering	1.77	

6.19 These standards are intended to meet the long term structural changes in demand, as well as short term fluctuations. All the formal areas of open space are protected by policy LT8. In the survey it is also evident that there is a need for an All Weather Playing Pitch within the District, this need is addressed in policy LT2.

6.20 The survey also identified that for the existing areas of formal open space and the support buildings and infrastructure to continue to provide an adequate long term range of facilities, there will be a need for investment into their long term maintenance and support. The survey has sought to identify priority areas for investment and this issue is covered by policy LT4.

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

Table 6.4 SUGGESTED PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PITCH FACILITIES				
Location	Sub area(s)	Sector	Suggested improvement	Suggested priority
Rawreth Recreation Ground	Rayleigh	Council/club	Improve pitch drainage	High
John Fisher Playing Field	Rayleigh	Council	Improve pitch drainage	High
Grove Playing Field	Rayleigh	Council	Improve pitch drainage	High
Clements Hall Playing Field	Hockley	Council	Improve pitch drainage and carry out levelling	Medium
Ashingdon Recreation Ground	Rochford	Council	Improve pitch drainage	Medium
Hullbridge Playing Field	Hullbridge	Council	Improve pitch drainage	High
Fairview Playing Field	Rayleigh	Council	Improve drainage to pitch 4	High

POLICY LT2 - SYNTHETIC SPORTS PITCH PROVISION

The council will promote the provision of at least one full size synthetic sports pitch in the district as well as providing formal open space to assist in meeting the sub area standards in Table 6.3. In assessing the location of any facility the council will take into consideration the local demand for pitch sports and the effect on the amenity of the surrounding area.

POLICY LT3 - PUBLIC PLAYING PITCH PROVISION

New proposals for public playing pitches will be required to meet all of the following criteria:

- i. The site should be level, free draining and of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed pitches;
- ii. It should be located where there is convenient access for the local communities;
- iii. The proposed pitches are for public use;

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- iv. **Vehicular access to the site from the highway can be accommodated without creating a highway hazard;**
- v. **It should not have an adverse impact on residential amenity or the character of the countryside;**
- vi. **The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that provision has been made for the area's long term retention and maintenance.**

POLICY LT4 - DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

The council will require through section 106 agreements resulting from development proposals, financial contributions to contribute to achieving the adopted standards for formal open space as identified in Table 6.3 and the suggested improvements to the district's sports pitches and facilities as identified in Table 6.4.

INFORMAL OPEN SPACE

- 6.21 Public Open Space provides easily accessible opportunities for sport, recreation or play, with a range of styles and facilities. Public open space also provides form, structure and relief from built development in the urban environment. In rural areas, public open space contributes to the character of settlements and provides a focal point for community activity.
- 6.22 In addition to the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park (LT5) the Council would expect all new areas of open space, whether for public or private use, to comply with LT7 in terms of accessibility and impact.
- 6.23 The Council has addressed the provision of public open space as identified in the 1995 Local Plan and now has adequate areas of informal open space for public use. The situation will be monitored for any changes and a new assessment will be carried out for the Local Development Framework in the next couple of years.
- 6.24 Allotment gardens are regarded as informal open space and are owned and run by the Parish Councils. There are eight sites in the district, as identified on the plan, for which there is a healthy demand. The Council will endeavour to assist in the establishment of new allotment sites where a need is identified. Existing allotment sites are protected under Policy LT8.

NEW COUNTRY PARK

- 6.25 The Council is committed to the provision of a new Country Park as set out in Policy LT5. The lack of a major area in the countryside open for unrestricted access in the area to the north of Southend is recognized in the Replacement Structure Plan, which also promotes the provision of such an area through Policy LRT4. The provision of a new Country Park will provide an accessible and strategically important informal recreational resource.
- 6.26 In September 2001 Essex County Council handed over ownership of Blatches Farm to Rochford District Council securing the future use of the site in public ownership. It

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

is the District's aim, in accordance with the Countryside Act 1968, to establish a Country Park of the 100 acre (41 ha) piece of land. The Park, which has been named *Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park*, is set within the Roach Valley and will not only be important as a recreational resource, but also for its wildlife habitats and valued landscape. The Council is provisionally looking to purchase additional land which will provide vehicular access to the park. The two areas are Earls Hall Park in the west and land adjacent to Cherry Orchard Way (B1013) in the east.

POLICY LT5 - CHERRY ORCHARD JUBILEE COUNTRY PARK

The council will establish and retain a country park on the area of land between Rayleigh and Rochford as identified on the proposals map.

POLICY LT6 - PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Provision will be made for areas of public open space within the plan period :-

- a) The Council will pursue the acquisition and the subsequent layout and landscaping of the following sites which are already allocated in the local plan:
 - i. land off Malyons lane, Hullbridge**
 - ii. land north of Brays Lane, Rochford****
- b) The Council will allocate land at South Fambridge as an additional area of public open space.**
- c) The Council have identified a deficiency of allotment garden provision within the Parishes of Hockley and Hawkwell and will support the relevant Parish Councils with professional and technical advice in order to facilitate their aims to establish new allotment provision.**

POLICY LT7 - NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

New proposals for informal open space in addition to those allocated in LT5 will be required to meet all of the following criteria:

- i. The location should have easy pedestrian access from the defined settlement it serves;**
- ii. It should not have an adverse impact on residential amenity or the character of the countryside;**
- iii. The proposed area is for public use and should remain so in perpetuity;**
- iv. The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that provision has been made for the area's long term retention and maintenance;**
- v. The proposal should provide a local facility in scale with the community it serves; and**
- vi. Existing natural features should be retained and enhanced with the implementation of a landscaping scheme involving the planting of native species.**

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

- 6.27 There are a number of privately owned and maintained open spaces within the district. These contribute to the character of settlements and often form a green link. It is important that as far as possible these are retained for this use.

POLICY LT8 - PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

Development for other purposes of existing private playing pitches, children's play spaces, formal recreation areas, informal open spaces including allotments and amenity areas, whether in public or private ownership, will not normally be allowed. If there are exceptional circumstances where development is unavoidable an equivalent or better area of land for the same use must be provided to serve the community.

POLICY LT9 - SAFEGUARDING OPEN SPACE

Areas of public and private open space in towns and villages that play an important key role in the street scene, have a high townscape value or are intrinsic to the character of the area, will be safeguarded. Planning applications for the development of such sites that would be detrimental to these features will be refused.

INDOOR SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES

- 6.28 Assessed against the Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation's standards, the District Council satisfies the relevant requirements for the provision of indoor sports facilities apart from the provision of indoor bowls centres. There are 4 bowls clubs at the present time, all with long waiting lists, but there are no proposals to fill this gap between supply and demand.
- 6.29 The provision of private sports facilities has increased in recent years and the Local Planning Authority will continue to encourage these facilities in appropriate locations, particularly where deficiencies prevail.

POLICY LT10 - INDOOR SPORTS & LEISURE FACILITIES

Proposals for sports and recreation facilities will be permitted provided that the proposal meets the following criteria:

- i. Provides sufficient benefit to outweigh the loss of the existing land use;**
- ii. Will allow satisfactory access to the site, provide adequate off-street parking and the adjoining roads are capable of taking any increase in traffic;**
- iii. Will have nearby links to public transport;**
- iv. Will have no adverse impact regarding noise disturbance on the locality;**
- v. Will have no adverse impact on the visual amenities of the area;**

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- vi. Will have regard to the existence of similar facilities with the locality; and
- vii. Conforms to other policies of the Plan including the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a), Metropolitan Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Landscape Areas and the Coastal Protection Belt.

CHILDREN'S PLAY FACILITIES

- 6.30 Open space provided specifically for children can range from safe and attractively equipped playgrounds for use by children up to 14 years of age to skateparks, 5-a-side, BMX and 'kick about areas' for those of 11 and over.
- 6.31 The Plan area has adequate provision for the younger child, but there is under-provision for older children. Responsibility for providing these facilities in villages, where there is no significant development likely to generate the provision of further play spaces, lies with the Parish Councils. Where public open space exists in the rural areas the District Council will encourage Parish Councils to make best use of that open space to provide children's play space.

POLICY LT11 - CHILDREN'S PLAY FACILITIES

The council will seek opportunities to provide and improve children's play space having special regard to the needs of older children.

On new housing schemes developers will provide:

- a) A play space in accordance with the adopted standards of the District Council; or
- b) Enhancement of existing play space where all or part of the proposed development lies within 400m of the centre of existing play space; or
- c) A combination of (a) and (b); or
- d) Where the above cannot be fulfilled, a commuted sum is to be paid to the District Council for the provision or enhancement of children's play space.

POLICY LT12 - NEW PLAY SPACE PROVISION

New play space provision in the district, whether provided in association with development or by other means, should meet all of the following criteria:

- a) It will be easily accessible by local residents, secure and easily visible;
- b) It will be equipped according to the standards of the District Council;
- c) A commuted sum is provided for the long-term maintenance of the open space;

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- d) It will not have an adverse impact on residential amenity of character of the countryside;
- e) The play space is for public use in perpetuity;
- f) Pedestrian access exists or will be provided via a footpath giving safe access to the site.

LEISURE USE OF TOWN CENTRES AND UPPER FLOORS

- 6.32 The District Council will encourage the provision of additional indoor leisure and tourism facilities in the District's town and village centres, where they can be accommodated without harm to the character of the settlements. These locations are considered to be sustainable in that they are more likely to utilise previously developed land, have established accessible transport links and access to a large local population. Proposals will be assessed using the sequential approach as covered by Policy SAT1.
- 6.33 Town centre locations are usually favoured, but it is important that proposals do not utilise prime shopping frontage. Redundant first floor storage areas in town centres are ideal locations for the establishment of recreational clubs, e.g. snooker halls, health clubs, crèche, judo, etc. subject to the following policy:

POLICY LT13 - LEISURE USES IN SHOPPING AREAS

The local planning authority will encourage leisure and tourism uses, above ground floor level, within the defined primary and secondary shopping areas identified on the proposals map.

POLICY LT14 - LEISURE DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING SHOPPING AREAS

Any leisure and tourism use that would utilise or affect prime shopping frontage as defined in policy SAT3 will be refused.

GOLF COURSES

- 6.34 Golf courses can open up the countryside for recreation; however, they can also have a substantial impact on the landscape as acknowledged in PPG17. Applications for new facilities should be located and designed to ensure harmony with the surrounding countryside and natural environment.
- 6.35 Essex County Council has identified a need for a public "pay and play" golf course in the region although no demand has been expressed locally. Proposals for new golf courses and associated facilities should comply with the guidance as set out in the *Essex Golf Report*.²
- 6.36 Proposals for golf course development and essential ancillary uses should make use of existing buildings on site. Whilst the local planning authority does not wish to encourage any new building within the Metropolitan Green Belt, it is accepted that

² *Essex Golf Report* - Essex Planning Officers Association (1992)

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

some buildings will be required for the successful operation of the course.

- 6.37 Golf course facilities should be designed in such a way that existing public rights of way can be incorporated safely into the layout. Proposals for development must include details of existing native landscape features such as trees, hedgerows and ponds, and also proposed landscaping including details of how existing features will be incorporated into the scheme.

POLICY LT15 - GOLF COURSES

Applications for golf course and driving range facilities will be required to satisfy the following criteria:

- i. the proposal will not adversely affect Sites of Scientific Interest, Ancient Landscapes or Ancient Woodlands as shown on the Proposals Map;**
- ii. the proposal will not adversely affect natural features and habitats of nature conservation importance and will include measures which allow for local habitat creation**
- iii. the proposal will be in harmony with the landscape and will avoid prominent locations, the dominant features of the existing site will be retained and incorporated into the scheme;**
- iv. where built development is proposed, preference will be for the use of existing buildings and will be restricted to those facilities that are essentially required to serve the use of land for golf. New buildings not essentially related, including for residential, social and holiday accommodation, will not be permitted;**
- v. The layout of the course, the siting and size of its buildings, car parking and a landscape scheme should be submitted as part of the planning application and not left for later approval;**
- vi. The proposal will satisfactorily incorporate existing public rights of way; and**
- vii. That safe and convenient access can be made to the principal road network and that the traffic generated would not be detrimental to the rural roads and the small settlements that might be affected from the passing of vehicles.**

HORSE RIDING FACILITIES

- 6.38 Horse riding is a popular recreational activity and there is continuing pressure for equestrian development throughout all parts of the district. It is also a popular form of farm diversification. PPG7 acknowledges the need to ensure that equestrian activities do not have an adverse impact on the countryside, including the visual impact of new buildings, jumps and equipment and that horses are well housed and cared for.

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- 6.39 The local planning authority will not allow large-scale development of stables (also see Policies R1 & LT1) that would materially affect the landscape character and or the integrity of the countryside. Any proposed stable facility will have regard to the British Horse Society Standards in terms of stable size and grazing area.
- 6.40 Proposal utilising existing redundant farm/agricultural buildings within the countryside are most likely to be favoured. New equestrian development must be closely located and related to existing development and should not be in remote/isolated rural locations

POLICY LT16 - HORSE RIDING FACILITIES

Proposals for horse related development will be granted planning permission provided that the following criteria are met:

- i. Proposals for equestrian establishments whether for private use or as a commercial livery will need to demonstrate that there is adequate land within the curtilage of the site to allow for the proper care of horses, including stabling, grazing and exercise, in accordance with the British Horse Society Standards;**
- ii. Proposals for buildings to serve private use or commercial livery in locations outside of the urban settlement areas must be the result of re-use of existing former farm/agricultural buildings.**

OR

be located close to and relate to existing development that is controlled and under the ownership of the applicant, (for example a range of existing farm buildings or an area of paddock land immediately adjacent to the applicant's dwelling house).
- iii. the proposal is well related to existing or proposed bridleways and will not cause conflicts between equestrians, and have no adverse effect on the road or highway safety of the area.**
- iv. the proposal will not be visually intrusive or detrimental the character of the area;**
- v. there will not be a detrimental affect on the amenity of the local area by virtue of noise, smell or disturbance.**
- vi. New dwellings associated with equestrian facilities will not be permitted.**
- vii. Any proposal for stables or equestrian development in remote, isolated locations unrelated to existing development that may affect the character or compartmentalize the countryside will be refused.**

WATER RECREATION

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- 6.41 The estuaries and creeks of the Rivers Crouch and Roach are very popular for water recreation. Yachting is recognised as the major recreational use of the Crouch estuary. Essex Marina at Wallasea is one of the main sources of access onto the river. Other water recreation facilities include yacht and sailing clubs, Riverside Caravan Park and its boat park and a public launching point in Hullbridge.
- 6.42 The Rivers Crouch and Roach and the areas through which they flow are an important part of the character of the District. The Council, whilst recognising the importance of the rivers for water recreation, will have regard to nature conservation and the protection of the largely undeveloped nature of the coast. The Structure Plan recognises that due to the largely undeveloped coastline virtually all coastal recreational development will have to be located in existing built up areas. However, proposals for further recreational development will also be assessed against policy EB14 and its supporting text.
- 6.43 The Local Planning Authority, when considering applications relating to water based recreation, will consult with the Crouch Harbour Authority (and their Harbour Management Plan), who have represented all interests on the rivers since 1975.

POLICY LT17 - WATER RECREATION FACILITIES

Proposals for new facilities or expansion of existing facilities will not be permitted within the Coastal Protection Belt. Within the already developed areas of the coast proposals for water recreation facilities will be considered against the following criteria:

- i. Evidence is provided that there will be no adverse affects on the Essex Estuaries European Marine site, to wildlife or their habitats or on other sites of nature conservation importance**
- ii. The proposal is of a scale, design and nature that safeguards the amenities and character of the surrounding locality**
- iii. There is sufficient capacity on the water to accommodate for the proposal, having regard to the existing use of the river and the proposed level of use in that area**
- iv. The proposal does not lead to problems of safety for other river users**
- v. The proposal will not create detrimental traffic generation affects and that access, parking, facilities for non-car users and existing rights of way are satisfactorily provided for.**

- 6.44 In order to keep the volume of water recreation on the Rivers Crouch and Roach to a minimum the Council will look inland for additional facilities. Sport England identifies the main opportunity for further areas of water for recreational purposes in Essex, to be through the restoration of mineral workings to 'wet pits'. These wet pits can have potential for specialised sports such as wind surfing, sub aqua, rowing and canoe racing, as well as fishing. At the current time there are no appropriate wet pits within the district.

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

DRY PITS

- 6.45 Dry Pits have potential for specialised sports such as BMX, motorcross, grass boarding and abseiling. Noisy sports must, however, comply with Policy LT21. Dry Pits would also be ideal for the establishment of nature reserves.

POLICY LT18 - DRY PITS

Proposals for the after-use of mineral workings for quiet recreational purposes will be permitted if all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- a) The site is not in or adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest or other designated nature conservation site;**
- b) No built structures, other than those directly related to providing for those using the facility i.e. toilets, changing rooms etc. will be permitted;**
- c) Satisfactory access and parking provision must be achieved for the proposed use;**
- d) Opportunities will be sought to create or enhance habitats for species listed in the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan.**

TOURISM

- 6.46 There is a large overlap between recreation and tourism. Rochford District has national and internationally recognised areas of protection, e.g. Essex Estuaries European Maritime Site, Metropolitan Green Belt, SSSI, and Coastal Protection Belt. The coastal and estuary areas provide many opportunities for yachting and boating enthusiasts. There is good recreational fishing offshore and in the Crouch and Roach estuaries and also plenty of opportunities for coarse fishing at sites within the district. Lion Creek and Paglesham Creek are SSSIs supporting large internationally important numbers of overwintering migratory birds.
- 6.47 As well as the coastal and estuary areas, the District can offer historic market towns and villages and open spaces ranging from formal public gardens to the 200 acres of ancient woodlands at Hockley Woods (the remains of a Royal Forest). The protection of the countryside from unwarranted development and its importance for nature conservation makes it an important attraction for "green" tourism.
- 6.48 The close proximity of Southend and its tourist related activities are an attraction in themselves and Rochford can benefit from such spin-off effects by promoting recreational and leisure pursuits within the district for visitors from Southend. Scope also exists for the promotion of short-stay and self catering holiday developments which are independent of the traditional resorts.

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- 6.49 The Council is involved in a joint initiative with the neighbouring authorities in South-East Essex to develop and promote leisure and tourism in the area. The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership have identified the district as capable of developing its role in leisure and tourism. The work suggests that tourism development within the Rochford District is likely to be centred on the promotion of open spaces and water based recreation. The Council supports the development of tourism, provided that it is carried out in a sustainable manner, to contribute to the economy of the local area.
- 6.50 Rochford has been suffering as a trading location and needs to maintain the economic viability and vitality of the town centre. One solution might be to focus on niche/specialist areas of trading. Momentum from the Thames Gateway Partnership could be used to rebrand the town as an "Arts and Crafts" Centre.
- 6.51 New intensively used tourism attractions will be directed to the main settlements. In the Green Belt development is limited to essential small-scale facilities for outdoor recreation (Policy R1). Outdoor recreation can also include features that are of interest for tourism (Policy R13 i.e. small scale recreational facilities, is also applicable).

POLICY LT19 - TOURISM

The council will encourage the provision of tourist attractions for visitors to the district through the granting of planning permission where:

- i. Access is available by a choice of means of transport;**
- ii. The vehicular access to and from the highway is safe;**
- iii. The character and appearance of the existing street scene, the existing historic fabric of the development, and/or the existing landscape/countryside character of the area will not be adversely affected; and**
- iv. There will be no significant impact on local amenities**

- 6.52 Hotel accommodation exists at Rayleigh, Rochford, Rawreth and adjacent to Southend Airport. There is also some limited guest house and bed and breakfast accommodation within the District. Conversions of appropriate buildings in suitable locations could open up the countryside to people wishing to enjoy the unspoiled scenery and leisure activities that it offers. It may also help to foster farm diversification if redundant farm buildings, of a sound nature, are converted to holiday accommodation. The policy relating to farm diversification is LT20, which needs to be also considered in conjunction with policy R11, from the Rural Issues chapter.

POLICY LT20 - RURAL TOURISM

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

- 1. The change of use and/or conversion of existing buildings in the countryside to small-scale accommodation for leisure or tourism related facilities will be permitted, provided:**
 - i. The proposal re-uses a building constructed of permanent materials with a reasonable expectation of life;**
 - ii. the proposal maintains or enhances the rural environment and the landscape character of the area.**
 - iii. Provision can be made for the parking of guests' vehicles within the farm complex, or on the plot, without causing visual harm and safe access to the site can be obtained without any detrimental visual changes to the junction with the highway.**
- 2. Planning permission for the re-use of rural buildings for tourist accommodation may include, amongst others, a condition restricting the construction of additional buildings on a farm holding or plot.**

POLICY LT21 - NEW HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

Proposals for new hotel accommodation will be considered favourably within the defined settlement boundaries of Rayleigh, Rochford and Rawreth.

STATIC HOLIDAY CARAVAN PARKS

- 6.53 Holiday accommodation also exists in the form of holiday caravans and chalets. Static caravans represent one of the cheapest forms of holiday accommodation. At present there are five holiday caravan sites within the district providing a total of approximately 400 holiday caravan units. In addition, a number of caravans are sited within the grounds of Brandy Hole Yacht Club, Hullbridge.
- 6.54 The Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Policy LR10 permits only extensions to existing caravan sites subject to there being significant improvements made to the appearance, layout and amenity of such sites except within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Coastal Protection Belt or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6.55 The majority of the existing caravan sites in the Rochford District are situated in the Green Belt and extensions to these sites would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the area. The local planning authority has considered this issue and its policy is contained in the housing chapter (policy HP23). Many sites also lie within the floodplain. The Council in determining applications for new mobile or static caravans will have regard to PPG25 (Development and Flood Risk), together with local plan policy H23 and its supporting text.

POLICY LT22 - HOLIDAY CARAVAN PARKS

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

Applications for new holiday caravan parks or chalet parks outside of defined settlement boundaries will be refused.

Applications for new holiday caravan parks within the defined settlement boundaries will be considered on their individual merits having regard to accessibility and relevant impacts upon the amenities of the area and highway safety and sustainability.

Applications for extensions to existing holiday caravan parks outside the defined settlement boundaries will be refused.

TOURING CARAVANS AND TENTS

- 6.56 Facilities for touring caravan and camping sites will be limited to within the current extent of development on existing sites as shown on the Proposals Map.
- 6.57 It is important to retain the existing sites in their current use and not allow them to be developed for other purposes including housing as the tourist industry is an important source of income and employment. To this end the Council wishes to encourage environmental improvements to the sites. The development of new sites for touring caravans outside development boundaries would be contrary to the efforts of the District Council to promote the area's remote landscape characteristics.

POLICY LT23 - TOURING CARAVANS & TENTS

Facilities for touring and transit caravans and tents will be limited to within the current extent of development that exists on the sites shown on the proposals map.

SPORTS AND RECREATION CAUSING NOISE OR DISTURBANCE

- 6.58 A number of sporting and recreational activities can give rise to noise and. These activities can include clay pigeon shooting, motor sports, air sports, war games, model aircraft flying and activities using motor boats.
- 6.59 It is important that such noise generating sports are situated in appropriate locations so as not to cause harm, including noise and disturbance, to local residents and land uses because of the nature, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the activities. No harm should be caused to public safety or to traffic flow.
- 6.60 Degraded land, former minerals sites and set-aside farmland offer considerable scope for establishing many noise generating and/or disturbance causing land based activities and environmental impact could be minimised (e.g. long-term damage to woodland).

POLICY LT24 - SPORTS CAUSING NOISE OR DISTURBANCE

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

Proposals for sport or leisure facilities and activities likely to cause noise or disturbance either to the occupiers of nearby residential properties/plots or to existing fauna (for example overwintering birds) or leading to an increase in the traffic on minor roads will be refused.

FLOODLIGHTING OF SPORTS FACILITIES

- 6.61 Floodlighting of sports facilities can provide for additional usage and can be an integral part of some of these facilities. It can also be a nuisance to adjacent land users, have a detrimental impact on the countryside and can cause unnecessary glow in the night sky. Any proposal for floodlighting must demonstrate how essential it is for the associated land use and must be of a design to minimise the impact on the environment and its surroundings. Details to be submitted must be adequate to enable the assessment of the effect of the lighting and the appearance of the fittings.

POLICY LT25 - FLOODLIGHTING

Applications for development involving external lighting will only be acceptable if the following can be demonstrated:

- i. The lighting is designed to be as directional as possible using the minimum number of lights required with the aim of reducing light pollution;**
- ii. A curfew time of 10.00 p.m.**
- iii. Consideration is given to the effect of light upon local residents, vehicle users, pedestrians, local wildlife and the night sky**

DOCUMENTS

PPG17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation)

ODPM - *Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17*

JSPA - *Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan* (2001)

RDC - *An Assessment of Playing Pitches in the Rochford District* (2002)

WEBSITES

British Horse Society - <http://www.bhs.org.uk/index.htm>

Department of Media, Culture and Sport - <http://www.dcms.gov.uk>

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) - <http://www.defra.gov.uk>

East of England Tourist Board - <http://www.eastofenglandtouristboard.com>

English Tourist Board - <http://www.travelengland.org.uk>

Essex Estuaries - <http://www.essexestuaries.org.uk>

National Playing Fields Association - <http://www.npfa.co.uk>

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - <http://www.odpm.gov.uk>

Chapter 6

Leisure & Tourism

Open Spaces Society - <http://www.oss.org.uk>

Ramsar - <http://www.ramsar.org>

Royal Town Planning Institute - <http://rtpi.org.uk>

Sport England - <http://www.sportengland.org>