

Recreation and Tourism

Introduction

- 8.1 In September 1991, the Government published its first Planning Policy Guidance Note on “Sport and Recreation” (PPG17). This document acknowledges that sport and recreation are activities with major land-use implications. These can range from specific land-use needs to the creation of pressure associated with large numbers of people visiting a particular location. It is essential that the Local Plan provides a sustainable policy framework to guide the public, developers and their agents and so provide effective management and control. PPG17 renamed “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” and republished in July 2002.
- 8.2 Tourism is a significant element of the leisure market. Its continuing growth generates local prosperity and job opportunities. This is recognised by PPG21:Tourism, which was published in November 1992. PPG21 was cancelled in September 2006 following publication of a Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism in May 2006. Since tourism largely depends on a high quality environment, it can act as a positive force for environmental protection. However, it can also place environmental pressures on the District’s tourist attractions. Tourism is made up of a wide range of businesses, including accommodation, catering, transport, visitor attractions and many amenities and facilities. There is a significant overlap with areas such as sport and recreation. The planning process can help to bring together these amenities and facilities for the benefit of the local community.
- 8.3 The provision and retention of recreation and leisure facilities has increasing importance as a result of attitudes to healthy living, more leisure time and active participation. There is, therefore, a need to safeguard existing facilities and make good recognised deficiencies.
- 8.4 Although many facilities are provided by voluntary and commercial organisations, some are the responsibility of the public sector.
- 8.5 Facilities that may be proposed for locations in the countryside need careful consideration because of landscape character, biodiversity, cultural heritage, agriculture, amenity and traffic implications.
- 8.6 The Babergh District is a popular destination for tourists, generating some £81million into the local economy. (Volume and Value Research 2000)

Objectives

1. To provide for the recreational needs of the community.
2. To introduce opportunities for informal recreation in rural areas, consistent with the need to conserve the District's high quality countryside.
3. To ensure through the strict control of development, that recreational activities do not conflict with biodiversity, landscape character, cultural heritage, residential amenity or road safety.
4. To work in partnership with other agencies in promoting tourism in the District, so as to realise wider economic and other objectives where this is consistent with the need to protect the environment.
5. To manage the activities of tourists in the more sensitive locations and to encourage tourism throughout the rest of the District.
6. To encourage the provision and retention of recreational facilities where this does not conflict with other policies in the Local Plan.

Policy Context

- 8.7 The relevant Government advice is in PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation and the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism. PPG17 advises that it is Government policy to *“ensure that the needs of local communities are known in order to effectively plan for open space, sport and recreation. Local authorities are expected to undertake robust assessments of existing and future needs. This will form the starting point for an effective strategy of facilities in their areas, and for developing appropriate policies in Local Plans.”*
- 8.8 The Good Practice Guide for Planning on Tourism highlights support for encouraging tourism in Great Britain, while at the same time conserving those qualities in the environment that are a major attraction for tourism itself. Tourism's significant contribution to the economy is also acknowledged.
- 8.9 The Regional Spatial Strategy: East of England Plan Anglia advises that development plans should include policies to:
- encourage investment in the maintenance, improvement and diversification of the region's tourist industry;
 - develop strategies for enhancing countryside amenity by encompassing policies towards tourism, recreation, countryside enhancement and regeneration; and
 - meet the needs for sport and recreation in locations which minimise the need for travel and are not detrimental to the environment.

8.10 The Suffolk Structure Plan 2001 contains objectives and policies that seek to maintain and enhance recreation facilities to meet local needs.

8.11 The Babergh District has a good range of formal sports provision. Existing and additional facilities will generally be supported. Using the document "Sport in the East - The Strategy" (Eastern Sports Council 1994) as a guide, there do not appear to be any significant deficiencies in provision at present. There is mention of the need for a "pay-as-you-play" golf course in the Ipswich area, but this does not specifically relate to the Babergh District.

Sports Facilities

RE01 Support and encouragement will be given to the provision of additional formal sports facilities where there are no overriding problems of traffic, and no adverse effects on landscape character, cultural heritage, biodiversity, residential amenity and the environment. This would include facilities within rural communities in accordance with recognised national standards.

8.12 Where there is a particular need for playing fields in a settlement within the Babergh District, the District Council will encourage its provision (normally by local organisations or Town/Parish Councils) provided that this is compatible with other considerations.

Playing Fields

8.13 The District Council has a working programme for assessing the quality and quantity of existing open space and recreational facilities. This work will help inform new Supplementary Planning Guidance which has been prepared to help explain policies HS31 and HS32. However, using National Playing Fields Association standards, there are generally inadequate levels of provision in the larger settlements, including Hadleigh, Sudbury and Great Cornard.

RE02 Where there is an established need for playing fields planning permission will be granted providing there are no overriding detrimental effects on landscape characteristics biodiversity, cultural heritage, Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, road safety and residential amenity.

- 8.14 For some years there has been a national trend for school playing fields to be sold off, mainly for new housing development. This frequently excites strong local opposition, but often occurs because of the financial needs of the local education authority or school concerned. The District Council will encourage the County Council to allow increased public use of school playing fields. PPG17 strongly resists the loss of such facilities where they are in active use and paragraph 15 of the PPG sets out a series of tests that should be met in order to allow the development of playing fields. Furthermore, Sport England are a statutory consultee on proposals that affect playing fields, and the 1998 Playing Fields Direction requires local planning authorities to notify the Secretary of State in circumstances where they are minded to allow development affecting playing fields, but where Sport England has objected. Sport England's Planning for Sport and Active Recreation: Objectives and Opportunities (Interim Statement 2005) sets out the circumstances where there may not be a reason to object to such an application.

RE03 Development on playing fields will not be permitted unless it can be shown that:

- there is a surplus of other similar suitable facilities in the local catchment area; and
- the facility is under-used by the local community.

Note: the above policy should be read in conjunction with, and is in addition to, the criteria set out in paragraph 15 of PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002).

Quay Lane, Sudbury

- 8.15 Quay Lane is a major recreational area, being the location for a number of recreation activities including:
- cricket and hockey pitch;
 - indoor and outdoor bowling clubs;
 - Quay Theatre;
 - tennis courts;
 - the Granary, River Stour Trust (museum/teas/boat trips);
 - scout headquarters;
 - Sudbury Rowing Club; and
 - access to the Sudbury Riverside.
- 8.16 Although the land once occupied by the former Sudbury Town Football Club is now scheduled for residential development, part of the site is to be retained as open space. It is important to ensure that this facility is provided for, together with appropriate play equipment.

RE04 Land between the former football ground and Quay Basin, Sudbury is proposed for public open space.

8.17 There is an evident demand for additional recreational provision in Sudbury and Great Cornard. Provision for new recreational facilities is made as part of the mixed use development proposals involving a significant area of land in the Chilton and Woodhall area, to the north of Sudbury (see Policy CP01 - Chapter 12).

Sudbury & Great Cornard

8.18 Within the Chilton Mixed-Use Development, approximately 6.4 hectares of land are allocated for school and associated playing field use, some of which will be available for general public use. In addition, some 1.8 hectares are allocated for leisure facilities. Approximately 30.2 hectares are allocated for community woodland on the northern edge of the proposed development. This community woodland will form a valuable wildlife and informal recreational area.

8.19 Opportunities for playing field provision exist on land north-east of Shawlands Avenue, Great Cornard. This is part of Great Cornard Parish Council's aspirations for the use of the land as public open space and playing fields.

Shawlands Avenue, Great Cornard

RE05 Land at Shawlands Avenue, Great Cornard will be protected and preserved for public open space and playing fields, together with its possible extension by the strict control of development.

8.20 The District Council considers that provision of adequate public open space, including children's play areas, is essential where new residential development takes place. The required standard of provision is set out in Chapter 3 – Settlement Policy and Housing, which discusses the National Playing Fields Association's criteria. Open space provision is now a broader subject, and there are opportunities for a range of benefits to be considered. The creation of open space can also provide an opportunity to secure other improvements, such as new wildlife habitats and appropriate landscaping.

Public Open Space in New Residential Land Allocations

8.21 The recreational needs of local people can usually be met without detriment to the character of the countryside, but there is increasing pressure for the countryside to serve the demands of people travelling from further afield.

Recreation in the Countryside

Small and Medium-scale Recreation

- 8.22 PPG17 makes it clear that the aim should be to reconcile protection of the countryside with providing for recreation through suitable planning and management measures. Sport and recreation activities in the countryside should be appropriate and in harmony with their surroundings.
- 8.23 Small-scale facilities such as picnic sites, parking areas, nature trails, interpretative material, etc. are generally supported, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the environment, residential amenity or road safety. Such facilities will be particularly encouraged where they replace facilities in unsatisfactory locations, meet an obvious shortfall in provision or significantly lessen existing conflicts.
- 8.24 Medium-scale recreation facilities will include a diverse range of recreational provision and will generally involve greater land take and traffic generation and result in more operational development than small-scale recreation. Impact on landscape characteristics is potentially greater but may not necessarily be restricted to locations adjacent to towns.

RE06 Proposals for recreation facilities and change of use to recreation in the countryside which are small or medium-scale may be acceptable, subject to no adverse impact on:

- the character of the locality;
- road safety;
- Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land;
- forestry;
- landscape character, particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Areas;
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments, archaeological sites in the County Monument Record, historic parklands and listed buildings;
- biodiversity or sites of geological/geomorphological interest;
- residential amenity.

Recreational uses and facilities will not be permitted if they introduce or are likely to lead to the introduction of:

- new buildings, structures or landscape features which would detract from the character of that particular tract of countryside;

- noise, light emissions or other intrusive characteristics which would detract from residential amenity and the quiet enjoyment of other users of the countryside.

Any buildings and structures should be directly related to the proposed recreational use of the land.

Large-scale Recreation

- 8.25 Large-scale recreation facilities normally have a considerable impact on landscape characteristics, biodiversity, cultural heritage, agriculture, traffic and, potentially, on residential amenity. Such facilities can cover a wide range of recreation provision, either because of the larger amount of land-take (such as with country parks and golf courses), or because of the formal nature of the recreational use (as with motor sport facilities), which in themselves are likely to have a significant impact on residential amenity and involve considerable numbers of spectators. Large-scale recreational provision can also be intensive, such as cinemas, sports centres and attract large numbers of people. In many cases, an Environmental Impact Assessment may need to be submitted with an application for planning permission.
- 8.26 Large-scale recreation facilities have the potential to cause considerable environmental damage and are generally inappropriate in isolated rural locations, or areas of high environmental quality. Such facilities should, in general, only be permitted within or adjacent to the built-up areas of Sudbury, Hadleigh and Ipswich. Land between the old and new A137 road, north of the A14 at Wherstead, and the former sugar beet factory at Sproughton are considered suitable for such provision. The sequential test, set out in PPS6, applies to all town centre uses, including those recreation and leisure uses that can be located in town centres. Proposals for such uses out of town centres will have to show that there are no more sequentially acceptable sites available.

RE07 Large-scale recreational facilities will not be permitted except within or adjacent to the built-up areas of Sudbury, Hadleigh and Ipswich and where there is a good access to main roads and public transport. Proposals for uses that are appropriate for town centre locations will have to be sequentially acceptable. There should be no adverse impact on landscape characteristics, biodiversity, cultural heritage, Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, road safety and residential amenity.

Shotley Peninsula and The Suffolk Coast and Heaths

- 8.27 The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Management Strategy (2002) covers the Shotley Peninsula. This locality is within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Project area, which includes parts of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The policies contained in that document are in line with the aims and objectives of this Local Plan. The Strategy has been adopted by the District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

RE08 With the exception of touring caravan and camping facilities in the countryside to the south of Ipswich, in accordance with Policy RE12, and of water-based activity in accordance with Policies RE15, RE16, and RE17, all recreational provision in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Project area will be expected to be low key in nature and aimed primarily at improved and sustainable public access. Landscape character, biodiversity and agricultural considerations will predominate. Large-scale recreational development and other major visitor developments will not be permitted.

Dedham Vale and Stour Valley

- 8.28 The Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Management Plan (1992) was adopted by the District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It was superseded by the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Strategy which was completed in 2004.

RE09 All recreation provision in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Stour Valley Project area, including on the River Stour itself, will be expected to be low- key in nature and aimed primarily at improved and sustainable public access. Landscape character, biodiversity and agricultural considerations will predominate. Large-scale recreational development and other major visitor developments will not be permitted.

The Ipswich Urban Fringe

- 8.29 Part of the former Gipping Valley Countryside Project falls within the Babergh District, and the area within the Ipswich Bypass has been incorporated into the Greenways Countryside Project. This latter locality includes the Belstead Brook Park, an important area of countryside close to and easily accessible from Ipswich. The Gipping Valley Strategy (1999) has been adopted by the District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and includes guidance on recreation provision within the Gipping Valley Project Area. The Greenways Strategy (2001) has also been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, with both documents recognising the need for a sustainable approach towards recreational provision in particular.

RE10 All recreation provision in the former Gipping Valley and Greenways Countryside Project areas will be expected to be low key and aimed mainly at improved and sustainable public access. Landscape character, biodiversity and agricultural considerations will predominate.

8.30 An area of land just outside the defined Greenways Project area, and just within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Project area, has been proposed for recreational purposes since the previous Babergh Local Plan of 1995. This designation has been realised in part with the development of a dry ski slope and associated facilities on land between the A137 and Bourne Hill, Wherstead. Within this area a proposal for a country park has come forward from landowners and this is now proposed for inclusion within the Plan. Key considerations on reasons for this include the following:

- it is in line with this recreational land-use designation;
- the area has the potential for support from the two projects mentioned above;
- the location has potential for support from the Haven Gateway joint initiatives, through which bids for provision of 'green infrastructure' are planned; and
- the location is well placed to serve nearby residents of Babergh, as well as those of southern Ipswich.

8.31 In addition, an area of previously developed and unsightly land off The Strand has been identified as suitable for a hotel development. The site lies in a partly natural bowl in the landscape. This would have the advantages of easy access off the A14 and is well located in relation to Ipswich town centre for high levels of demand for business tourism in the local area. This location would also benefit from the above-mentioned country park, which could largely surround the hotel. The provision of conference facilities at this location appears beneficial and the location is very well placed for views across the River Orwell and for tourism and recreation in its riverside areas, as well as the wider Shotley peninsula. Any hotel proposals for this location will need to satisfy the requirements and tests of PPS6: Planning for Town Centres.

RE11 Land between A137, A14 and The Strand, Wherstead

(A) A site off The Strand (B1456), Wherstead, is allocated for the provision of an hotel. Access for this development is to be served from The Strand (B1456). An indicative site area has been identified but the exact location and extent of the site will be determined by agreement with the landowners and/or applicant(s). As a general requirement, development proposals will be expected to make the best use of previously developed land.

(B) Approximately 30 hectares of land between the A137, Bourne Hill, The Strand (B1456) and the A14, Wherstead, are allocated for the provision of a country park. It is anticipated that various different parcels of land will be used for this purpose, as identified by the landowners. The delivery of these various parcels for this purpose is likely to be phased over time according to the availability of suitable funding opportunities. New non-road links between these land parcels will be required for continuity of access.

**Camping/Caravanning –
Touring Sites**

8.32 There are currently touring caravan sites at Little Cornard, Polstead and East Bergholt, but few camping facilities.

8.33 There may be a need for additional facilities. These facilities should normally be located outside important landscape areas (such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) but close to areas to which tourists would be attracted.

RE12 Touring caravan and camping sites will only be permitted where there is good access to main roads. Proposals must demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact on the character of the locality, road safety, landscape characteristics, biodiversity, cultural heritage or residential amenity.

**Great Cornard Country
Park**

8.34 Great Cornard Parish Council propose to extend the existing Great Cornard Country Park and to provide additional public open space north of Blackhouse Lane. The latter proposal will link with public open space to the west which will be provided as a consequence of housing development.

RE13 The Great Cornard Country Park, the proposed extension (8.4 hectares to the south-east of Blackhouse Lane) and 5.2 hectares north of Blackhouse Lane proposed as public open space will be protected and preserved by the strict control of development.

8.35 The Babergh District's main resources for water-based recreation are:

Water-Based Recreation

the Stour and Orwell Estuaries;
Alton Water Reservoir;
the River Stour, particularly at Sudbury; and
a small stretch of the River Gipping at Sproughton.

8.36 The Stour and Orwell Estuaries are regional resources for water-based activities, located within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They are both designated as Special Protection Areas, Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. They are recognised as being of international importance, because of the over-wintering wildfowl they support.

Stour and Orwell Estuaries

8.37 Access to the Shotley Peninsula is generally reasonable, although landward access to the rivers themselves is relatively poor. The River Orwell is the commercial channel to the Port of Ipswich.

8.38 Alongside others who have particular interests in the Stour and Orwell Estuaries, the District Council has developed a sustainable management strategy for these internationally important areas. The Stour and Orwell Estuaries Management Plan (2004) will be used to help assess proposals for development within the Stour and Orwell Estuary areas. The District Council will also refer to the Management Scheme for the Stour and Orwell Estuaries European Marine Site (see paragraph 2.18) when dealing with recreational proposals that may affect the favourable condition of the estuaries.

8.39 Policy EN08 (see Chapter 2 of the Plan) refers to the need to protect the landscape and ecological characteristics of these important estuaries. Further guidance is given here in relation to recreational provision.

RE14 Water-based and associated land-based facilities of an appropriate scale will only be permitted on the Stour and Orwell estuaries where these are compatible with landscape characteristics, biodiversity, agriculture, access and river safety constraints. A sustainable development approach will be of the utmost importance on both estuaries.

Moorings and Marinas

- 8.40 The number of moorings and marina berths has reached a level on the River Orwell where they not only detract from the visual amenities of the estuary, but are hazardous to river safety. This is particularly critical bearing in mind the expansion of the Port of Ipswich.
- 8.41 Within the Babergh District, there are marinas at Bourne Bridge, Woolverstone and Shotley. Outside the District, the Ipswich Wet Dock marina has been completed, and another proposal exists for a marina at Bathside Bay, Harwich. The Stour estuary is generally less developed than the Orwell, which is to some extent a reflection of the latter's importance for boating of most descriptions.
- 8.42 Increases in the number of moorings and marina berths result in additional pressure for associated land-base facilities, often where access is poor. Facilities proposed can include housing, other recreational provision, hotels, chandlers, boat repairs, clubhouses etc. and often these will be out of scale in the locality. There is a need to protect the special landscape and ecological characteristics of these internationally important areas.

RE15 Only very limited increases in the number of moorings and marina berths on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries will be permitted, and only in the following areas at:

- Brantham west of Imagedata; and
- Between Bourne Bridge and the Orwell Bridge;

subject to there being no adverse impact on landscape characteristics, biodiversity, cultural heritage, road safety and residential amenity.

No increase in moorings and marina berths will be permitted elsewhere on the estuaries.

RE16 No introduction or major extension of existing or associated land-based sailing facilities will be permitted on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries.

Alton Water

- 8.43 Alton Water is an important facility for water-based recreation, although it has also become established as a significant wildlife and landscape feature. Access to the area is restricted to the main entrance near Stutton village, and a number of small picnic sites are located around the reservoir. Some development of the facilities may be appropriate to ease pressure on the nearby estuaries, particularly for windsurfing and sailing. The use of Alton Water for formal water-based sports (but no motorised craft), particularly for learners, and informal recreation where proposals are compatible with landscape characteristics, biodiversity, cultural heritage, water conservation and highway safety is supported. The reservoir is operated by Anglian Water Services Ltd primarily as a water supply facility.

RE17 At Alton Water, proposals for land-based recreational facilities will only be permitted where these form part of an approved overall strategy for the reservoir and adjacent operational land.

- 8.44 The District Council will consider proposals for recreational activity on the River Stour against the provisions of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Strategy. This will be relevant to the Sudbury Riverside area, where there is likely to be pressure for such provision due to the ease of access and attractiveness of this locality. There is a right of river navigation up to Brundon, and the Environment Agency is responsible for this. With regard to the River Gipping, the District Council will refer to the advice in the Greenways and Gipping Valley Strategies.

Rivers Stour and Gipping

RE18 Water-based and associated land-based facilities of an appropriate scale will only be permitted on the fresh water sections of the Rivers Stour and Gipping where these are compatible with landscape characteristics, biodiversity, cultural heritage, agriculture, road and river safety constraints.

- 8.45 Many tourists come to the Babergh District, usually for its high environmental quality, important heritage and places of interest. Although the area is well promoted, such promotion tends to concentrate on popular locations like Sudbury, Hadleigh, Lavenham and Long Melford. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the economic development and wellbeing of the District as it creates jobs, helps retain services and facilities and introduces money into local economies. It can also help maintain and enhance the natural and built environment. There are, however, costs due to congestion and disturbance to local people.

Tourism

The District Council's Strategy

8.46 As resources permit, the District Council will provide for tourism by implementing its adopted Cultural Strategy 2001 (as may be amended). The Strategy has some implications for land use planning, such as identifying opportunities where improvements can be made. In partnership with other interested parties, tourist areas will be managed, particularly where facilities are limited and conflicts occur, by controlling car and coach parking and introducing signs.

Lavenham

8.47 Lavenham is well known and attracts a large number of visitors throughout the year. Car and coach parking continue to be problems for local people, although provision has been made for the latter at the rear of the Cock public house. There have been problems as driveways get blocked and cars often park in narrow streets; with noise and congestion frequently resulting. In past years, a working party looked into the situation on behalf of the District Council and other interested parties such as the parish council. As a result, improved signing and other related measures have been implemented. In conjunction with Suffolk County Council, further investigation into the demand for additional off-street car parking in Lavenham and the introduction of associated on-street parking restrictions will be made.

Kersey

8.48 Kersey is another well-known picturesque village in the Babergh District. Many visitors converge on this small settlement in the tourist season, giving rise to a range of problems due to the influx of coaches and cars. These can cause similar problems to those in Lavenham, but the village has only one main street and there is nowhere for vehicles to park. Consultations will be undertaken with local residents and interested parties, into the scope for the restriction of visitor parking and the provision of a car park on the edge of the village.

East Bergholt

8.49 Located in the centre of Dedham Vale and close to Flatford, East Bergholt is popular with tourists, not least for its connections with the artist John Constable. Despite a recently completed environmental enhancement scheme (which controlled on-street parking to some extent), there is a need to make better use of the existing Red Lion car park and get more vehicles off the main street. This has been picked up by the Constable Country Visitor Management Group, which is made up of local authorities in Dedham Vale, tourism interest groups, and the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Countryside Project. The Group is looking at opportunities for sustainable tourism in the locality, and also wishes to encourage better use of the Red Lion car park by visitors to Flatford who could walk there, thus reducing the congestion that occurs in that locality during the traditional tourism season.

Long Melford

- 8.50 Long Melford hosts a number of large-scale events on The Greens, to the north of the main village centre. Parked vehicles have caused damage to the grassed areas. The problem at the southern end led to the provision of a car park next to the community centre, which greatly helped to reduce erosion in this locality. The situation persists at the northern end, and appropriate measures are required. This will require a partnership approach with local interests, the Transport Authority, and the landowner in order to arrive at a solution.

Tourist Accommodation and Attractions

- 8.51 Proposals for tourist accommodation, particularly for those using redundant buildings in the Countryside, are addressed in Chapter 6: Countryside and the Rural Economy. There may be occasions where a proposal is put forward for a tourism facility in the Babergh District. It is not possible to describe all types of likely schemes, but proposals will need to be dealt with based on the wider context relating to the environment. Examples of this type of provision can include agricultural showgrounds, heritage centres and farm based attractions.

