

LEISURE, COMMUNITY AND TOURISM

The policies of this section of the Local Plan are aimed at securing accessibility to a wide range of leisure and community facilities for residents of the Borough and to encourage high quality tourist accommodation and attractions, without detracting from the appearance of the countryside.

Leisure Opportunities

Most settlements in the Borough are reasonably well served with leisure and community facilities. There are five leisure and sports centres, two swimming pools and three community colleges. Community centres or village halls are situated in most settlements.

Countryside recreation provision comprises two country parks: at Hardwick and Whitworth, and a proposed third at Wynyard. Newton Aycliffe is served by two golf courses; a course at Sedgefield has recently been developed and proposals have been made for its extension; another is under construction at Fishburn. The Shildon Leisure Park provides a community sports facility.

Sporting and leisure opportunities are promoted by a wide range of bodies: County, Borough, Town and Parish Councils and local voluntary groups and organisations.

Community Facilities

Primary health care, educational and cultural facilities serving the Borough provide vital services for the health and well-being of residents. Policies of the Plan aim to encourage their retention and improvement.

Tourism

The Borough's location close to the A1 (M) and central in the north-east region makes it a suitable basis for both business and holiday visitors to the region. Visitors can gain easy access to all the main cities and towns of the region as well as attractive areas of countryside in the Durham Dales, Northumberland, the Yorkshire Dales and Moors. There are several major attractions to visitors close to the Borough at Durham, Beamish and the Metro Centre. Within the Borough, Sedgefield Racecourse, Whitworth Hall and Hardwick Park are major attractions to visitors. The Borough also has important historic associations with the early development of railways such as the Timothy Hackworth Museum at Shildon.

Policy Approach

National advice and the Durham County Structure Plan provide the strategic content for the policies in this section. It is the Government's and the Sports Council's aim to promote the development of sport and leisure by encouraging opportunities to be made available for everyone including the elderly and those with disabilities. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 on Sport and Recreation advises local planning authorities to:-

- take full account of the community's need for recreational space;

- have regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies; and
- resist pressure for the development of open space which conflicts with the wider public interest.

The Durham County Structure Plan has a strategic aim to improve opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism in ways which improve the quality of life for residents, and which protect and enhance the character of the County's existing and potential attractions. Measures to achieve this comprise actions to maintain and improve existing recreational facilities; promote access to and use of the countryside; and encourage appropriate tourism developments and the provision of visitor accommodation.

This strategic approach is complemented by Durham County Council's strategies dealing with Countryside Recreation and Tourism, and the Borough Council's own Countryside Recreation Programme.

Planning Strategy

The Local Plan's policies and proposals put forward a strategy to assist the achievement of these broader objectives by:-

- Making provision for new leisure opportunities whilst safeguarding the amenities of local residents and the local environment.
- Seeking to achieve a balance between the need to make adequate provision for new development and the need to protect and retain open space areas of recreational uses, and wildlife interest value.
- Increasing public access to the countryside and the opportunities for leisure activities where it is compatible with existing uses or activities.
- Maintaining levels of provision of community based services concerning health care and education.
- Seeking to achieve a comprehensive approach in the change of use of the Winterton Hospital estate, as its present use contracts.
- Promoting opportunities for tourism and tourism related developments including attractions related to the Borough's railway heritage, historic buildings and the countryside.
- Encouraging a range of suitable visitor accommodation and facilities in order to increase the benefits of tourism to the Borough.

Provision of Open Space

POLICY L1 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO SECURE THE PROVISION OF SUFFICIENT OPEN SPACE IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE BOROUGH'S POPULATION BY:-

(A) NORMALLY GRANTING PERMISSION FOR OPEN SPACE USES IN PARTICULAR:-

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING SITES UNDER POLICIES H1 TO H8 INCLUSIVE; AND

IN THE RECLAMATION OF DERELICT LAND OR THE RE-USE OF VACANT AND UNDERUSED LAND; AND

(B) THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE AREAS.

UNTIL THE DEMAND FOR, AND THE USE OF, EXISTING SPORTS FACILITIES IS ASSESSED, THE COUNCIL WILL WORK TOWARDS A LEVEL OF 2.4 HA. OF OUTDOOR SPORTS AND PLAY SPACE AND 2.0 HA. OF PARKS AND AMENITY SPACE, PER 1,000 POPULATION.

Reasons for the policy

The quality of life of residents of the Borough can be enriched by access to a range of open space areas. They provide areas in which people can participate in sports, play and other leisure activities such as walking and sitting. Wildlife can also be encouraged if the areas are managed sensitively.

The National Playing Fields Association has established the standard of 2.4 ha. (6 acres) per 1,000 population as the minimum area required to meet the needs of residents for outdoor sports and play areas. This standard has recently been reviewed nationally.

The standard of 2.4 ha. per 1,000 population of outdoor sports and play space is divided up to provide:-

1.6	-	1.8 ha. for outdoor sports,
0.2	-	0.3 ha. for equipped children's playgrounds, and
0.4	-	0.5 ha. for informal play space within housing areas.

In addition, a standard of 2.0 ha. per 1,000 population will be sought for the provision of parks and amenity areas.

The Council plans to make an assessment in accordance with the Sports Council's Playing Pitch Strategy of the demand and use of existing facilities, when resources are available. In the meantime the Council will work to the NPFA standards which are widely accepted.

A survey of open space (outdoor sports provision, equipped children's playgrounds and informal play space in housing areas) within the Plan area assessed against the NPFA standards, revealed that the amount of space available in most communities in the Borough is around the NPFA standard figures, although there is a deficiency in outdoor sports provision in Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe. In addition, a number of housing areas lack adequate provision for children's play.

In housing developments, sufficient open space will be required to be provided to meet the needs of residents and to enhance the setting of the estate. It is recognised that the need for open space differs with different types of development. The policy will, therefore, be applied in a flexible manner, for example, in relation to homes for the elderly. Amenity space should assist to enhance a development and its setting. Such areas though do not necessarily have to be publicly accessible. The requirements for open space provision in new housing developments are set out in Policy L2.

The Council wishes to enhance the environment of towns and villages and considers that an interim target of 2.0 ha. of parks and amenity areas, in addition to the 2.4 ha. of outdoor sport and play space per 1,000 population, will help to achieve this aim. Some parts of the Borough lack amenity space and parks, for example in areas of older terraced housing. The Council's programme of environmental enhancement gives priority to such areas. In new development structural landscaping that is required in accordance with Policy D7 should normally be integrated with areas of open space.

Elsewhere the restoration of derelict, vacant and underused land may offer a valuable opportunity to provide additional areas of open space both within and on the edge of the Borough's towns and villages.

Improvements to existing areas of open space to promote increased usage may be achieved by providing new facilities such as changing rooms, floodlit, multi-purpose hard surface areas, play equipment and improved drainage and landscaping.

In Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Shildon and Ferryhill an equitable distribution of open space will be sought to ensure there is easy access to children's playspace and amenity open space in all parts of each town.

Greater use of school playing fields and private sports grounds by the community, and the retention of surplus school playing fields for community use will assist in meeting deficiencies in Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor.

Further advice on the provision of open space of various types and its design and landscaping is set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes 7 and 8.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

The Borough Council seeking the restoration of areas of derelict, vacant and underused land where appropriate for open space uses.

The Borough Council in partnership with Town and Parish Councils encouraging improvements to the quality of open space and available facilities in local communities, as necessary.

POLICY L2 IN HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS OF 10 OR MORE DWELLINGS, OPEN SPACE WILL NORMALLY BE REQUIRED TO BE PROVIDED WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO THE DEVELOPMENT AT THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS (DERIVED FROM POLICY L1), FOR EVERY 10 DWELLINGS A MINIMUM OF:-

(A) 100 SQ.M. OF INFORMAL PLAY SPACE; AND

(B) 500 SQ.M. OF AMENITY SPACE.

IN ADDITION A CONTRIBUTION WILL BE SOUGHT TOWARDS THE PROVISION OF NEW OR IMPROVED EQUIPPED PLAY AREAS AND OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES TO SERVE THE DEVELOPMENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D8.

ALL OPEN SPACES SHOULD BE LAID OUT TO PROVIDE SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE AREAS.

Reasons for the policy

The quality of a housing development can be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of attractively landscaped open areas. When designing open spaces the differing needs of residents should be taken into account.

The Council will work towards the level of open space provision equivalent to a minimum of 2.4 ha. of outdoor sports and play space and 2.0 ha. of parks and amenity space per 1,000 population, as set out in Policy L1 for traditional housing developments. In respect to special needs housing such as sheltered housing developments, informal playspace will not be required and a reduced level of amenity open space may be acceptable. The policy will be applied in a flexible manner. For example, low density housing development, that is developed at less than 20 houses per hectare, would usually include larger than average private gardens. In these circumstances, the Council would take account of the amount of private open space in considering the level of the amenity open space required.

Sufficient land should be made available within new housing developments containing family housing (i.e. houses of two or more bedrooms) to provide safe and accessible areas for children to play and to create an attractive setting for housing.

Open space should be planned as an integral part of a new housing area. It should not be included as an afterthought or to make use of an awkward site incapable of being developed.

However, where circumstances prevent the provision of open space in the vicinity of the development or indicate that planning objectives would be better served by providing such space elsewhere, an appropriate contribution will be sought, in accordance with Policy D8.

Informal play areas within housing estates should be located so as to be easily accessible on foot, away from roads and overlooked by housing to permit surveillance. They should be designed to offer a variety of play opportunities to children and should be situated close to family housing and away from housing designed for the single and elderly. A buffer landscaped area around play areas should be provided to prevent nuisance to local residents. Traffic calming measures will help to ensure that residential areas are safer places for children to play.

Amenity open space is defined as landscaped areas available for public enjoyment, but not specifically designed for sports or children's play. It can be used to provide an attractive setting for new development and can help to provide a buffer between development and the open countryside or other land uses. It can help to create attractive routes through a town or village, which if managed sensitively can provide a habitat for wildlife.

Equipped play areas in the Borough are generally best located in parks and recreation grounds, although other suitable locations may be close to youth and community centres, where a degree of surveillance is possible. Those situated close to housing have often proved unpopular with local residents in view of the noise and disturbance created. Contributions will, therefore, be sought from developers of new housing towards the provision of equipment or other improvements to an equipped playground to meet the needs of future residents, in accordance with Policy D8.

Playing pitches and other leisure facilities are often best provided in conjunction with a leisure centre, community college or sports club. However, as additional demand for such facilities is generated by new housing development, contributions will be sought from developers towards the provision of new or enhanced facilities, in accordance with Policy D8.

Within large housing developments such as Cobblers Hall, Newton Aycliffe, it may be appropriate to meet the open space requirements of the development in the form of a local park containing equipped play areas and areas suitable for sports and leisure, linked into a network of footpaths through woodland and amenity open space.

Advice on the layout and design of open space and landscaping is set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes 7 and 8.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L3 LAND AT THE FOLLOWING SITES WILL BE DEVELOPED FOR OPEN SPACE USES:-

- (A) COBBLERS HALL, NEWTON AYCLIFFE FOR PLAYING FIELDS, CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE AND AMENITY OPEN SPACE;**
- (B) WOODHAM COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL WESTERN PLAYING FIELDS AS PUBLIC PLAYING FIELDS;**
- (C) SOUTH VIEW, SPENNYMOOR FOR AMENITY OPEN SPACE; AND**
- (D) YORK HILL ROAD, SPENNYMOOR FOR AMENITY OPEN SPACE AND AN EXTENSION TO THE CEMETERY.**

Reasons for the policy

The proposals are made to increase the available open space in Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor where there are identified deficiencies.

The open space requirements arising from the new housing development at Cobblers Hall, Newton Aycliffe will be met by a new local park with playing fields, children's playgrounds and areas of woodland and amenity open space linked by footpaths and cycleways.

The playing fields to the west of Woodham Comprehensive School have become surplus to educational needs with the closure of the Avenue School. Their retention for community use will provide an opportunity to meet the deficiency of playing pitches in Newton Aycliffe. If

other school playing fields in the Borough become surplus to educational requirements, the Council will not normally grant planning permission for uses that could lead to the loss of their use for sport and recreation, in accordance with Policy L5.

The open areas to the west of the cemetery at South View, Spennymoor will be retained and landscaped to provide amenity open space to serve the local residential areas.

An extension to the York Hill Road cemetery at Spennymoor will be provided on land to the east of the existing cemetery.

New areas of open space will also be provided as part of the development of the Whitworth area of Spennymoor (Policy H4) and on the Avenue School site at Newton Aycliffe (Policy S4).

How it will be put into practice

By the Borough Council in consultation with the relevant Town Council and Durham County Council, or by the Town Council.

POLICY L4 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR THE EXTENSION OF A CEMETERY ONTO ADJOINING LAND PROVIDED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE HARMFUL TO THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE.

Reasons for the policy

Several cemeteries in the Borough are approaching capacity. Extensions onto adjoining land will usually be the most appropriate means of providing additional land, as this will enable the continued use of the existing access road and other facilities. Extensions will need to be landscaped to provide a suitable setting for the cemetery and to ensure that the proposal blends into the local landscape.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L5 PLANNING PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF AN AREA OF OPEN SPACE, WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED OTHER THAN IN THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES:-

- (A) FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES RELATED TO THE OPEN SPACE AREA;**
- (B) FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SMALL PART OF A LARGER AREA OF OPEN SPACE TO ENABLE THE REMAINDER TO BE ENHANCED;**
- (C) WHEN AN ALTERNATIVE AREA OF OPEN SPACE OF SIMILAR OR IMPROVED QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY WILL BE PROVIDED; OR**
- (D) FOR THE USE OF A SMALL PART OF A LARGER AREA TO PROVIDE OFF-STREET PARKING FOR ADJACENT DWELLINGS IN AREAS OF CAR PARKING SHORTAGE.**

DEVELOPMENT OF AREAS OF OPEN SPACE SHOULD NOT PREJUDICE:-

- (E) THE AVAILABILITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN SPACE WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY L1;**
- (F) THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF THE SITE; OR**
- (G) THE AMENITY OR WILDLIFE VALUE OF THE SITE.**

Reasons for the policy

Open space is a scarce resource and once built upon can rarely be returned to open uses. The Council wishes to ensure that it is safeguarded from the pressure to develop it.

Open space provides a vital function in a community in accommodating outdoor sports and leisure activities on sports grounds, school playing fields, public parks, children's play area, village greens, commons and allotments. It also enhances the setting of the town or village by way of areas of woodland, major landscaping and amenity areas. Cemeteries and churchyards also provide attractive open areas often within older parts of towns and on the edge of villages. They should be retained as open space areas after closure. The larger sites are shown on the Proposals Map.

There may be circumstances which may warrant the development of an area of open space. For example, the construction of changing rooms may improve the use of sports pitches; the development of a small part of a larger area of open space may enable new facilities to be provided; the loss of a small area of open space may be acceptable when a developer is able to provide an improved area of open space of similar or improved quality or accessibility nearby. The incorporation of a small area into the curtilage of a dwelling may be helpful in providing off-street parking provision where there are problems of highway congestion. The changing needs of schools may require rationalisation of facilities and playing fields which are protected by the Plan. Where it is established that surplus areas will not be required the development of such playing fields within built up areas may be justified. The need for an open space area in terms of whether it can be regarded as surplus or not will be judged against the standards set out in Policy L1 and the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 7 on Open Spaces.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Countryside Recreation**POLICY L6 PLANNING PERMISSION FOR LEISURE FACILITIES AND LEISURE USES OUTSIDE TOWNS AND VILLAGES WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED PROVIDED THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT:-**

- (A) BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE, OR A GREEN WEDGE;**
- (B) RESULT IN THE LOSS OF AN AREA OF NATURE CONSERVATION OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST, CONTRARY TO POLICIES E10, E11, E12 AND E17;**

- (C) **BE HARMFUL TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS;
OR**
- (D) **RESULT IN CONGESTION ON THE LOCAL ROAD NETWORK
CONTRARY TO POLICY T7.**

Reasons for the policy

This policy provides a framework to enable the Council to consider proposals for major leisure developments that require to be located in the urban fringe or the countryside e.g. golf courses, motor, air and water sports, riding schools and clay pigeon shooting.

With the encouragement of agricultural diversification and trends in the development of leisure facilities, there is likely to be an increasing variety of proposals for leisure activities in the countryside. There is a need to ensure that such facilities are located so as to not to adversely affect the appearance of the landscape and countryside, where they will not affect the amenity of local residents and where the local road network is adequate to serve the development.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

This policy will be applied to the following activities:-

Golf

The popularity of golf is likely to continue with the projected increase in the 35-50 year age group. There is an identified shortage of a golf course in Spennymoor. Policy H4 sets out a proposal to meet this shortage and to provide an attractive setting for new housing in the Whitworth area.

An extension to Newton Aycliffe golf course has recently been completed by Great Aycliffe Town Council. Permission has been granted for the extension of the Knotty Hill Golf Course at Sedgefield.

Golf courses can be designed and managed so as to allow public access for walkers and support nature conservation objectives.

Motor Sports

Motor sports cover a wide range of motor car, motor cycle, go-kart and four-wheel drive vehicles racing either over tracks or rugged ground. These sports generate a lot of noise and some may attract a large volume of traffic from spectators.

The main concerns with such proposals are to protect the quality of the surrounding countryside, the amenity of residents and other land users in the area. Sites for motor sports should normally not be located close to housing, they should have a good means of access and be well screened. Planning controls may also be appropriate to control the frequency of use, hours of operation and noise levels generated. The further development of Shildon Community Leisure Park is covered by Policy L7.

Air Sports

Air sports include flying light aircraft and micro-lights, gliding, parachuting, hang gliding and paragliding. Most of these sports make use of civilian airfields, however, occasionally there are calls for new private landing strips. Permission was granted in 1991 for such an airstrip at Fishburn.

The main areas of concern with such proposals are to control the circuit flight paths to ensure minimum disturbance to residential areas. Controls over the type and volume of air traffic and the hours of operation may also be applied.

Riding Schools and Livery Stables

When considering proposals for riding schools or livery stables, the main concern is to ensure that sufficient land and/or buildings are available for horse riding. If it is intended to use bridleways in the locality, developers may be required to contribute to their maintenance costs.

Water Based Activities

The availability and opportunity for water based activities in the Borough is limited. There are angling and wildlife ponds at Newton Aycliffe, Ferryhill Station, Trimdon and near Tursdale. The lakes at Hardwick Park, near Sedgefield, and to the south of Bishop Middleham provide locally important wildlife habitats.

Other potential locations for water based activities are the Rivers Skerne and Wear, and Crookfoot Reservoir. However, should a suitable opportunity arise encouragement will be given to the creation of water bodies for such sports as sailing, canoeing and angling.

Adventure Sports

These include such activities as rock climbing, abseiling or pot-holing.

Because of the geography of the Borough, no opportunities exist for participation in these sports locally. Encouragement will be given to the development of facilities such as a climbing wall or the retention of a quarry face, for example, for rock climbing and abseiling.

The Council currently operates its "Meet the Challenge" programme to assist groups of people to participate in adventure and water sports at locations outside the Borough.

POLICY L7 PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SHILDON COMMUNITY LEISURE PARK AS A SPORT AND LEISURE AREA WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED PROVIDED THAT THE PROPOSALS:-

- (A) INVOLVE PARTICIPATIVE RATHER THAN SPECTATOR SPORTS;**
- (B) WOULD NOT BE HARMFUL TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS; AND**

(C) WOULD NOT RESULT IN CONGESTION ON THE LOCAL ROAD NETWORK.

ANY PROPOSALS SHOULD MAKE PROVISION FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LANDSCAPING AND MEANS OF NOISE ATTENUATION AT THE LEISURE PARK.

Reasons for the policy

The Shildon Leisure Park has planning permission as a community leisure park. Approval was granted for the development of a range of outdoor activities, but existing planning permissions have never been fully implemented.

The site is located on the north eastern edge of Shildon, within 100 metres of a housing area, with access obtained through a residential area.

In view of the proximity of the site to housing, the Council does not wish to see the site developed for activities that would generate high noise levels or high volumes of spectator traffic.

The Council wishes to encourage the development of the site for activities that would be compatible with those approved uses which involve participation by the public in community-orientated, non-commercial low-key pursuits which benefit community groups or individuals and not business orientated, large scale, noisy events attracting high volumes of spectator traffic. Any future development of the site should respect the 'community leisure' theme of the park ensuring that the low key, small scale activities are provided and not larger scale, spectator-orientated events.

Any new development on the site should have due regard to the migrating methane gas emissions emanating from the former tip area which effectively rules out the possibility of any permanent structures being erected on the site or the construction of temporary structures whose design would result in the collection, entrapment or ignition of this potentially dangerous gas (See Policy E24).

Should the site be developed further, improvements should be made to the appearance of the site and its surroundings and steps taken to reduce the level of noise emanating from the site.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L8 THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMAL OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES COMPATIBLE WITH THE USE AS A COUNTRY PARK AT HARDWICK COUNTRY PARK, WHITWORTH HALL AND WYNYARD AND FOR NATURE CONSERVATION AT FERRYHILL CARRS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY E12.

Reasons for the policy

The central aims of the Council's Countryside Recreation Strategy are to safeguard and improve the countryside and encourage its enjoyment through greater accessibility. The development of informal outdoor recreation facilities such as country parks, Local Nature

Reserves and picnic areas as well as footpaths and other recreation routes will be encouraged to enable people to enjoy the countryside. Some sites may attract large numbers of visitors and will need careful planning to ensure that they enhance the appearance of the countryside and that satisfactory access and parking arrangements can be provided.

Hardwick Country Park is a major attraction in the Borough with over 100,000 visitors per annum. There is a continued need to maintain and improve its facilities in order to ensure its continued attractiveness.

The country parks at Whitworth and Wynyard are being developed by the private sector. The Council will encourage their development to provide facilities of sub-regional importance.

Ferryhill Carrs will be promoted as a Local Nature Reserve and to link with countryside walks around the eastern fringe of Ferryhill. Particular attention will be given to protecting and enhancing the nature conservation interests of the area, in accordance with Policy E12.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Consulting with Durham County Council on the management of Hardwick Country Park and with the private owners of Whitworth and Wynyard Parks.

Through the Ferryhill Carrs Urban Fringe Project in conjunction with Durham County Council, British Rail, Countryside Commission, English Nature and local landowners.

POLICY L9 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PROMOTE THE PROVISION OF A SAFE, ATTRACTIVE AND CONVENIENT NETWORK OF FOOTPATH, CYCLEWAY AND BRIDLEWAY ROUTES BY:-

- (A) MAINTAINING AND PROTECTING THE EXISTING RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK AND TAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO EXTEND IT; AND**
- (B) CREATING A SERIES OF LOCAL NETWORKS THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH THAT UTILISE DISUSED RAILWAY LINES, EXISTING RIGHTS OF WAY AND NEW PATHS.**

WHERE POSSIBLE, ROUTES SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF USE BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THOSE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D2.

Reasons for the policy

Durham County Council has responsibility for maintaining and protecting rights of way. The Borough Council, with the co-operation of the County Council and landowners, will seek to ensure that the rights of way network is maintained and that paths are accessible, signposted and waymarked.

The Council will continue to develop a network of local routes throughout the Borough for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders as recreation routes to provide opportunities for access to the countryside. The routes will be developed using disused railway lines, existing rights of way and by creating new routes where necessary. Wherever possible the countryside routes will link up with footpaths and cycleways in towns and villages to provide easy access from home to the countryside, as proposed in Policy T1.

Wherever possible footpath routes will be made accessible for those with disabilities or with young children, in order to ensure that those sectors of the community have suitable access to the countryside in accordance with Policy D2.

Proposals for the protection and designation of major recreation routes are set out in Policy L10.

How it will be put into practice

Consulting with Durham County Council, Town and Parish Councils, and other user/ interest groups as appropriate.

POLICY L10 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PROTECT AND MAINTAIN EXISTING MAJOR RECREATION ROUTES, AND TO PROVIDE NEW ROUTES, AS INDICATED BELOW:-

(A) EXISTING ROUTES

**COXHOE TO CORNFORTH WALKWAY;
AUCKLAND WALKWAY;
BLACK BOY RAIL TRAIL, SHILDON;
BRUSSELTON RAIL TRAIL, SHILDON;
SURTEES RAIL TRAIL, SHILDON;
CLARENCE WALKWAY, NEWTON AYCLIFFE;
CASTLE EDEN WALKWAY BETWEEN THE BOUNDARY WITH
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL, TILERY WOOD AND
HURWORTH BURN; AND
CIRCULAR WALKS FROM SEDGEFIELD VILLAGE AND FERRYHILL.**

(B) NEW ROUTES

**SPENNYMOOR TO CORNFORTH LINE;
BETWEEN CARR LANE, SPENNYMOOR AND THE RIVER WEAR;
FISHBURN TO BISHOP MIDDLEHAM WALKWAY; AND
CIRCULAR WALKS FROM BISHOP MIDDLEHAM, NEWTON AYCLIFFE,
SPENNYMOOR, SHILDON, TRIMDON AND FERRYHILL CARRS.**

Reasons for the policy

Disused railway lines constitute a major resource which can be utilised as recreation routes to improve accessibility to the countryside.

The Council wishes to ensure that the existing walkways along former railways are retained and that new routes are developed using other disused railways in order to provide accessible routes into the countryside for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, as appropriate.

The protection of these recreation routes can also be important to wildlife by creating and maintaining links between the countryside and urban open space, allowing plants and animals to colonise new habitats (see Policy E13).

How it will be put into practice

New routes will be created in consultation with the Countryside Commission, Durham County Council, and other user/interest groups as appropriate.

Through the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme.

Community

POLICY L11 THE COUNCIL WILL NORMALLY GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR NEW LEISURE AND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS AND ENCOURAGE IMPROVEMENTS TO VILLAGE HALLS, LEISURE AND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS THAT IMPROVE THE RANGE AND QUALITY OF FACILITIES AVAILABLE, PROVIDED THAT THE PROPOSAL:-

- (A) LIES WITHIN THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES NAMED IN POLICIES H1, H8 AND H10;**
- (B) DOES NOT SIGNIFICANTLY HARM THE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR NEARBY RESIDENTS;**
- (C) IS APPROPRIATE IN LOCATION TO THE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA; AND**
- (D) MAKES PROVISION FOR CAR PARKING AND ACCESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES T9 AND D3.**

Reasons for the policy

The five leisure centres in the Borough, and the many village halls, community centres, sporting and non-sporting clubs provide venues for indoor sporting and leisure activities. Improvements to these buildings will be encouraged to increase the range and quality of the facilities available. Refurbishment of community buildings should be designed to enable people with disabilities to participate in activities.

Some events can attract large numbers of people and it is therefore important that new buildings or extensions are carefully located with access to public transport and car parking to meet the Council's standards set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 6. The larger attractions are most suitably located within town or village centres where they will help to improve the vitality and viability of the centres and not cause disturbance to residents.

The Borough lacks a cinema, theatre, ice-rink and bowling alley. Proposals to develop such facilities will be welcomed.

How it will be put into practice

Making improvements to the Council's own buildings, as the need and opportunities arise.

Advising and assisting the voluntary sector in improving their buildings and developing sporting and leisure activities.

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L12 PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OR REDEVELOPMENT OF BUILDINGS FROM LEISURE AND COMMUNITY USES WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED ONLY WHERE ALTERNATIVE EXISTING OR REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY OR LEISURE USE BUILDINGS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE LOCAL AREA.

Reasons for the policy

Leisure and community centres, schools and village halls are often the focus of community life in the towns and villages in the Borough. They are places where community groups can be based and can be centres for entertainment, sporting and cultural activities. In villages, particularly, there are normally few buildings physically suitable for conversion to a community or leisure use. It is important that the availability of such buildings is maintained and protected in a similar manner to areas of public open space. The loss of such buildings can be detrimental to community life, particularly in rural communities, and can lead to demands for greenfield site developments. Such community use and leisure buildings are normally in some form of public ownership. As such it is considered appropriate that prior to the granting of planning permission for a change of use or redevelopment of community buildings, account is taken of the existing available supply of these buildings. In this way the important, but often limited supply of community and social facilities can be maintained.

Buildings with leisure and community uses include village and public halls, community centres, education establishments, museums, libraries and religious meeting places.

How it will be put into practice

The Council co-operating with Durham County Council, and Town and Parish Councils to seek appropriate alternative uses for community buildings that become vacant.

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L13 LAND REQUIRED FOR A NURSERY SCHOOL AT AGNEW, NEWTON AYCLIFFE WILL BE PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT.

Reasons for the policy

Durham County Council, as the local education authority, propose to develop the site at Agnew, Newton Aycliffe, for a nursery school. The Borough Council supports the proposal to provide more nursery school places in Newton Aycliffe where the population is expected to increase over the next 10 to 15 years. The site will therefore be reserved for this purpose.

How it will be put into practice

In consultation with the County Council.

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L14 PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR THE NON-EDUCATIONAL USE OF LAND AT THE FOLLOWING SCHOOL SITES WILL NORMALLY BE REFUSED:

SPENNYMOOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL;

TUDHOE GRANGE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL.

Reasons for the policy

Durham County Council has a policy to eliminate split site comprehensive schools in order to facilitate the efficient operation of the schools. The Borough Council supports this policy in respect of the two remaining split site schools at Spennymoor. It is appropriate that these sites are developed in a comprehensive way once the future education needs of Spennymoor are known.

How it will be put into practice

In consultation with the County Council.

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L15 THE COUNCIL IN CONSIDERING THE FUTURE USES OF THE WINTERTON HOSPITAL AND SEDGEFIELD COMMUNITY HOSPITAL SITES WILL REQUIRE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS TO FORM PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SCHEME THAT:-

- (A) **CONSERVES THE LANDSCAPE SETTING OF THE WINTERTON HOSPITAL SITE;**
- (B) **RETAINS ANY BUILDINGS AND OTHER SITE FEATURES OF IMPORTANCE;**
- (C) **INCLUDES BUSINESS USES AS A SIGNIFICANT PART OF ANY MIXED DEVELOPMENT SCHEME;**
- (D) **SECURES THE RECLAMATION OF ANY RESIDUAL LAND AREAS TO OPEN LAND USES; AND**
- (E) **MAINTAINS THE OPEN LAND BETWEEN THE WINTERTON HOSPITAL SITE AND THE SEDGEFIELD COMMUNITY HOSPITAL SITE.**

ACCEPTABLE USES WITHIN A MIXED DEVELOPMENT SCHEME ON THE WINTERTON SITE INCLUDE:-

**BUSINESS
HOUSING
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
HOTELS AND HOSTELS
RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS
PUBLIC HOUSE OR RESTAURANT**

**ACCEPTABLE USES ON THE SEDGEFIELD COMMUNITY HOSPITAL SITE
INCLUDE:-**

**COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS
OPEN LAND USES**

ACCEPTABLE USES ON THE SOUTH VIEW ANNEX SITE INCLUDES:-

**COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
HOUSING**

Reasons for the policy

The NHS Executive Northern and Yorkshire Region has an eight year programme commencing in April 1992 for the phased reduction of patients at Winterton Hospital.

The Winterton Hospital site is attractively landscaped and contains several buildings of character. Others, however, are large institutional buildings with modern extensions of no particular merit. The hospital is located on the northern fringe of Sedgefield Village and is a major source of employment in the rural eastern part of the Borough.

The Council recognises the importance of the site in providing employment opportunities in the eastern part of the Borough which adjoins the East Durham Rural Development Area. The hospital is the largest single employer in the eastern part of the Borough. The redevelopment of the site should therefore aim as part of a mixed scheme to provide jobs in this rural location although these will not necessarily replace those lost. The development scheme will be expected to include a significant element of business uses. The proposed business uses on this site accord with the approved Borough Council's Economic Development Strategy and the County Durham Economic Development Strategy. These strategy documents recognise the importance of the site in maintaining economic activity in a rural area and assisting to broaden the economic base of the Borough. It is also seen as important that progress in the development of the site is monitored so that expectations remain realistic in order to avoid enduring the blight of unnecessary decay and dereliction of the hospital buildings.

Re-development of the Winterton Hospital site will be expected to be undertaken in the context of a comprehensive planning scheme. This is intended to ensure that the different range of uses proposed for the site are located so as to conserve the landscape and site features of importance and maintain the separation between the various parts of the hospital estate and Sedgefield village. It is contended that the northern part of the Winterton site (approx. 12.2 ha.) should be developed for business uses; the existing area of open space (4.8 ha.) should be retained so as to separate the northern area from the rest of the site; and the southern area (6.7 ha.) could accommodate further business uses or alternatively be developed for housing. The area to the north of Salters Lane leading to the southern development area should be retained as an open land area. (See illustrative plan).

The South View Annex site to the south of Salters Lane (3.2 ha.) is suitable for housing or alternatively could accommodate the development of a new community hospital.

The site could provide an attractive location for housing development that could be well integrated into the landscape setting of the hospital site. Some housing provision on the site will widen the range and choice for housing development in the Borough.

Sedgefield Community Hospital was constructed during the 1940s. There is a possibility that the District Health Authority will require to replace the community hospital on the Winterton/Sedgefield site and therefore provision is made for this development. If the site of the existing community hospital is not required for a replacement hospital or another form of residential institution, the buildings will need to be cleared and the site reclaimed to open land, or used for tree planting.

The comprehensive planning scheme for the two Hospital areas should promote the introduction of new uses and the redevelopment of any existing buildings within the existing boundaries of the two sites. The intervening open land between the two areas is regarded as open countryside and should be maintained as such to provide an attractive countryside setting, particularly for the Winterton Hospital area.

How it will be put into practice

The Borough Council will continue its consultations with the NHS Executive Northern and Yorkshire Region concerning the future redevelopment of the site.

Jointly preparing a planning brief for the site with the NHS Executive Northern and Yorkshire Region.

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L16 HEALTH CENTRES, DOCTORS', DENTISTS' AND OTHER SURGERIES SHOULD NORMALLY BE LOCATED WITHIN OR ON THE EDGE OF TOWN, LOCAL OR VILLAGE CENTRES. THEY SHOULD BE LOCATED CLOSE TO BUS STOPS AND HAVE LEVEL ACCESS; CAR PARKING SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D3.

Reasons for the Policy

Health centres and surgeries need to be in locations that are accessible to the whole community. They should be located close to main bus routes and have parking provisions for visitors nearby. Access from bus stops and car parks should preferably be level to facilitate access by those with disabilities and parents with young children. The Council's car parking standards are set out in the Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 6.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L17 PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CULTURAL VENUES, STUDIOS AND WORKSHOPS WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED PLANNING PERMISSION PROVIDED THAT THE DEVELOPMENT EITHER:-

- (A) LIES WITHIN THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES NAMED IN POLICIES H1 AND H8; OR**
- (B) MAKES USE OF AN EXISTING BUILDING PROVIDED THAT:-**
 - 1. MAJOR EXTENSIONS OR RE-BUILDING ARE NOT REQUIRED;**
 - 2. THERE IS NO HARMFUL EFFECT TO THE CHARACTER OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE;**
 - 3. WHERE THE BUILDING IS OF VISUAL, ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC IMPORTANCE THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE THE BUILDING WORTHY OF PRESERVATION ARE NORMALLY RETAINED;**

AND PROVIDED THE DEVELOPMENT:-

- (C) DOES NOT SIGNIFICANTLY HARM THE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR NEARBY RESIDENTS;**
- (D) IS APPROPRIATE IN LOCATION TO THE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA; AND**
- (E) MAKES PROVISION FOR CAR PARKING AND ACCESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D3.**

Reasons for the policy

The Council will encourage proposals for the development of facilities suitable for use as studios, workshops and exhibitions and for performances for art, drama, dance, music and other cultural activities in appropriate locations in accordance with other policies of the Plan. Development affecting a listed building or within a conservation area should conform with Policies E18 and E19.

The involvement of the community in the arts will be encouraged through the Council's Arts Development Programme. Support will be given to local arts initiatives and a programme of events in schools, leisure and community centres.

The incorporation of artistic elements in new developments will be encouraged by Policy D9.

How it will be put into practice

Providing appropriate advice to developers.

Deciding planning applications.

Tourism

POLICY L18 THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE AND SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TIMOTHY HACKWORTH MUSEUM SITE, SHILDON.

Reasons for the policy

The Museum houses a collection of exhibits about the life and times of Timothy Hackworth, one of the pioneers of steam railways. The town of Shildon has an important place in the early development of railways particularly the Stockton and Darlington railway. The area around the Timothy Hackworth Museum is a conservation area in recognition of the historic importance of the location (Policy E18).

The Council will investigate ways of promoting the development of the Museum to provide a focus for events associated with the era of steam railways and to provide an educational resource centre.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Implementation of the Council's Timothy Hackworth Museum Development Plan.

POLICY L19 THE COUNCIL WILL NORMALLY GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR PROPOSALS THAT IMPROVE FACILITIES AT SEDGEFIELD RACECOURSE. PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OR REDEVELOPMENT OF LAND OR BUILDINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RACECOURSE TO NON-RECREATIONAL USES.

Reasons for the policy

Sedgefield Racecourse is a major attraction within the Borough drawing visitors from a wide area. The Council wishes to ensure that it is retained in its present use and will encourage improvements to its facilities. Proposals for development that would result in the loss of its recreational use will be resisted.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L20 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR HOTELS AND OTHER VISITOR ACCOMMODATION WITHIN OR ON THE EDGE OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES EXCEPT WHERE IT WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT HARMFUL EFFECT ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS.

EXCEPTIONALLY NEW HOTELS AND VISITOR ACCOMMODATION MAY BE PERMITTED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE IF THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD:-

(A) SERVE A MAJOR RECREATIONAL FACILITY; OR

- (B) BE PART OF A RANGE OF SERVICES (INCLUDING A PETROL FILLING STATION) FOR THE MOTORIST PROVIDED THAT THE SITE IS ADJACENT TO A PRIMARY ROUTE; OR**
- (C) MAKE USE OF AN EXISTING BUILDING PROVIDED THAT:**
 - 1. ANY MAJOR EXTENSIONS OR RE-BUILDING ARE SYMPATHETICALLY DESIGNED;**
 - 2. THERE IS NO HARMFUL EFFECT TO THE CHARACTER OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE;**
 - 3. NO SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL DEMAND UPON THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES WOULD RESULT; AND**
 - 4. WHERE THE BUILDING IS OF VISUAL, ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC IMPORTANCE THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE THE BUILDING WORTHY OF PRESERVATION ARE NORMALLY RETAINED; AND**
- (D) THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT:-**
 - 1. GENERATE TRAFFIC OR VEHICLE MOVEMENTS TO THE DETRIMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY, CONTRARY TO POLICY T7; NOR**
 - 2. BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE, NOR RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ANY AREA OF NATURE CONSERVATION OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST, OR A GREEN WEDGE CONTRARY TO POLICIES E4, E10, E11 AND E17.**

HOTELS WILL BE RESTRICTED TO NON-RESIDENTIAL USE ON SITES OUTSIDE OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES BY THE USE OF PLANNING AGREEMENTS.

Reasons for the policy

It is recognised that tourism can contribute to the growth of an area's economy. The income derived from it helps to support other businesses and services in the locality. In rural areas, it can play a particularly important role in creating new jobs.

The Council wishes to encourage the provision of a range of hotel and visitor accommodation in the Borough to meet the needs of both the business and leisure traveller. In order to protect the countryside from development, new facilities should be built within or on the edge of towns in locations where the development would not affect the amenity of local residents. Only in the exceptional circumstances stated will permission be granted for development in the countryside. The criteria for the development of roadside facilities are set out in Policy T12.

Visitor accommodation refers to any permanent building or structure designed to provide accommodation for visitors e.g. guest houses, bed and breakfast accommodation, youth hostels.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L21 CARAVAN AND CAMP SITES WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED FOR SEASONAL USE PROVIDED THAT:-

- (A) **THE SITE IS ADEQUATELY SCREENED AND PITCHES LAID OUT IN A MANNER THAT IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE LANDSCAPE OF THE AREA;**
- (B) **THERE IS A SATISFACTORY MEANS OF ACCESS AND THE SITE IS WELL RELATED TO THE STRATEGIC ROUTE NETWORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY T7; AND**
- (C) **THE SCALE OF THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE OR THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS.**

SITES FOR STATIC HOLIDAY CARAVANS AND CHALETS WILL, IN ADDITION, BE REQUIRED TO BE ADEQUATELY SCREENED ALL YEAR ROUND.

THE DESIGN, MATERIALS AND COLOUR OF STATIC CARAVANS AND CHALETS SHOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE.

Reasons for the policy

Unless carefully sited and landscaped, caravan and chalet sites can have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the landscape. Sites for static holiday caravans and chalets need to have screening that is effective throughout the year.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY L22 SITES FOR THE STORAGE OF CARAVANS WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED PROVIDED THEY:-

- (A) **ARE ADEQUATELY SCREENED ALL YEAR ROUND;**
- (B) **ARE WELL RELATED TO A SETTLEMENT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANTLY HARMING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS; AND**
- (C) **HAVE A SATISFACTORY MEANS OF ACCESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY T7.**

Reasons for the policy

Caravan storage sites are useful facilities that help to remove caravans from residential areas where they are often unsightly. Sites need to be secure and well screened throughout the year; they should preferably be located close to settlements.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.