Draft - East Mitcham Open Space & Recreation Strategy (EMOSS)

FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

JUNE 2003
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

The aim of this report is to provide a detailed assessment of the findings of the Merton Open Space Study (MOSS) and the requirements of Government Policy in developing a strategy for open space and recreation for the East Mitcham area. This strategy will also provide guidance on which to base decisions about the future use of open space, including any release of land for development within East Mitcham.

The strategy identifies a number of opportunities to improve the open space and recreation facilities within East Mitcham. Not only would this contribute to reducing the deficiencies identified within MOSS but it would also have a positive influence on improving an area currently suffering from deprivation. The Strategy would also assist in promoting healthy lifestyles through the provision of environmental housing, additional community facilities in which a demand for additional medical facilities has already been expressed, and improved open space and recreational facilities within the local area.

The future use of the surplus school sites, Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Fields are key to such an improvement of the area. Providing sustainable developments and local parks on these sites will offer the most benefit to the community with the least harm. The Rowan and Brenley sites could then be promoted as ‘Beacon’ or ‘Flagship’ developments offering opportunities and benefits to the wider community of East Mitcham.

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 sets out the introduction, purpose and assumptions of this strategy;
- Sections 2 and 3 discuss the findings of MOSS and set out the Policy Framework;
- Sections 4 and 5 describe the area of East Mitcham in context with the Borough and discusses the Open Space and Recreational Needs of the residents;
- Sections 6 and 7 discuss Cross Boundary provision of open space and the strategic approach to open space provision;
- Sections 8 outlines the proposed future uses for Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field surplus school sites;
- Section 9 suggests nature conservation/green corridor improvements to the East Mitcham area;
- Section 10 sets out other site opportunities within East Mitcham for the provision of open space;
- Section 11 outlines the public consultation framework for EMOSS and the Rowan and Brenley Planning Briefs;
- Sections 11 and 12 recommend further actions and main conclusions of this strategy.

Key Objectives

1. To apply the findings of the MOSS study and provide a 5-10 year strategy for the provision of open space and recreation within the East Mitcham area.

2. To advise on the future development opportunities for other sites within the East Mitcham area. In particular to advise on the options for the future use of Rowan High School and the Brenley Playing Field sites.
3. To progress the opportunities for Cross Boundary links with the adjoining Boroughs to reduce the deficiency of open space within the East Mitcham area.

4. To provide a local strategy for open space provision as part of the Merton Open Space Strategy.
1.0 Introduction

For the purposes of this report East Mitcham has been defined as the wards to the East of the Borough incorporating Graveney, Longthornton, Pollards Hill and Figges Marsh (Appendix 1 “East Mitcham in context with the Council Wards of Merton”).

Following the Local Government Elections in April 2002 the ward boundaries and names of some wards have changed. This report and MOSS are based on the ward boundaries prior to the Local Government Elections. As a result of these changes there will be implications on the provision of open space on a ward by ward basis, such as Graveney which currently has a limited provision of open space. This will be reviewed and updated in the future.

1.1 Assumptions of the Strategy

It has been necessary to make the following assumptions when preparing the East Mitcham Open Space and Recreation Strategy (EMOSS).

These include:

• The shared use of the school facilities is made available to the community at Tamworth Manor and Mitcham Vale High Schools including both indoor and outdoor facilities and any incidental changing facilities on the site.

• The nature conservation area, provided at the National Westminster Bank Sports Ground site is not publicly accessible and therefore is excluded from meeting any deficiency within East Mitcham.

• The Artificial Turf Pitches (ATP’s) and grass pitches included in MOSS are full sized pitches only and do not include mini pitches.

• Brenley Playing Field site is not required for educational purposes and if any educational demand should exist these needs can be accommodated as part of the proposed local park.

• This study is based on the ward boundaries prior to the Local Government Elections of April 2002.
2.0 Background

2.0.1 This study provides a detailed local assessment of the findings of the Merton Open Space Study (MOSS), undertaken by consultants on behalf of the Council in 2002. The purpose of MOSS was to produce a qualitative and quantitative audit and analysis of the parks in the Borough and to provide recommendations that will inform the next stages of the Merton Open Space Strategy.

2.0.2 The need for MOSS has been highlighted through the Schools Reorganisation Programme within the Borough. As part of this reorganisation programme some schools and their playing fields within the Borough have been declared surplus to educational requirements. There are also pressures to develop private open space within the Borough. The assessment of open spaces was needed to establish whether these open spaces should be protected, partially developed or used for different outdoor sports, informal recreation or natural conservation use.

2.0.3 MOSS also identified that the lack of an overall assessment of type and quality of public and private open space use in the Borough has prevented an assessment of the Borough wide informal and formal recreational needs and landscape enhancement opportunities which would inform any decision on development options for the future use of surplus school sites and private open spaces.

2.0.4 The findings of MOSS have recognised that there are deficiencies in the provision of open spaces within the Eastern area of the Borough, including the following:

1. Areas which are not within the pedestrian catchments (1.2km & 3.2km) of district and metropolitan parks include significant parts of Colliers Wood, Longthornton, Figges Marsh, Graveney and Lavender.

2. The areas deficient in district parks are generally in the east of the Borough. District parks provide outdoor sports facilities and playing fields. There are fewer playing fields within this area but there are a number of school playing fields.

3. The areas deficient in any nature conservation interest include a significant part of the Longthornton, Graveney and Pollards Hill wards.

4. The ward of Graveney has areas outside the pedestrian catchments of any park. These wards also abut the Borough boundaries. MOSS therefore suggests that provision of open space within the adjoining Boroughs should be investigated to ascertain whether open space provision in adjoining Boroughs could help meet the deficiency in these wards.

5. Longthornton and Graveney are also identified as being deficient in local and district parks and natural green space. These local parks have an approximate size of 2ha with a pedestrian walking catchment of 0.4km.

6. The playing pitch assessment also identifies a need to secure the use of at least two full size ATP’s (at least 50mx100m) for public use. Existing ATP
provision is concentrated in the west of the Borough and which is relatively inaccessible to residents in Longthornton and surrounding wards.

7. The wider area of Mitcham and Colliers Wood including Longthornton contains proportionately a smaller number of football, cricket, rugby and hockey pitches and is underserved compared with other parts of the Borough. MOSS identified that the highest concentration of pitches are found in the west of the borough. Whilst the Central, Northern and Eastern parts of the Borough are less well served. It was found that some pitches are poorly located in relation to public accessibility, as such residents seeking to make trips across the Borough from East to West to play on pitches may find accessibility an issue.

The specific deficiencies for each sport include:

- **Football**

  The actual demand for adult football played on full sized pitches is relatively low. The key issue for football is to improve the quality of existing facilities.

- **Cricket**

  At peak times demand for cricket pitches is close to the existing supply available. To support the further development of cricket in the Borough and to accommodate cross boundary demand it is desirable to expand the number of pitch slots available. The quality of the pitches and supporting facilities is considered poor.

- **Rugby**

  To support the further development of rugby additional pitch slots should be secured to enable increased participation in the sport. But there doesn’t appear to be a demand for this at present. Several of the private facilities where games are played are intensively used and do not have any significant additional capacity to accommodate further matches.

- **Hockey**

  In the long term, opportunities should be sought for developing additional hockey pitches within the Borough, as there are relatively few pitches per person in the Borough compared to the national average. These should be directed at ATP’s.

2.0.5 MOSS states that it would be desirable for new facilities to be constructed within the East of the Borough, not well served by existing facilities.

2.0.6 MOSS also suggests recommendations for further action and strategic objectives for open space, some of which are specific to the East Mitcham area.
These include:

**Strategic Objectives**

- To support improved access to a wider range of open space facilities for areas which are not within walking distance of an existing or proposed district park.

- To investigate the potential of Urban Green Space and educational playing fields within and beyond the Borough boundaries to meet open space deficiencies in Merton.

- To improve accessibility to Public Open Space within the wards of Graveney, Longthornton, Hillside, West Barnes, Village, Dundonald and Durnsford.

**Recommendations for Further Action**

- Undertake a feasibility study to determine favourable options for improving pitch capacity and accessible open space and nature conservation provision in East Mitcham.

- Undertake similar assessment of potential role of urban green space and school playing fields to meet formal and informal recreational needs and natural conservation in areas of open space and nature conservation deficiency.

- Co-ordinate with neighbouring Boroughs in relation to open space issues.

2.0.7 This strategy will progress these strategic objectives and take forward the recommendations for further action.

2.0.8 It is intended that EMOSS will be approved by Members as a local strategy, and form part of the Merton Open Space Strategy (and its supporting documents) due to be completed late 2003.
3.0 The Policy Framework

3.0.1 The National and Local planning policy framework provides guidance on land use issues which must be considered as part of this strategy.

3.1 Government Policy

3.1.1 The revised Planning Policy Guidance No17 “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” recommends that Authorities should:

- Carry out an assessment of needs and undertake an audit of open space and recreational facilities;
- Adopt a strategic approach and plan positively for provision, enhancement and maintenance of open space;
- Establish standards of provision so that local deficiencies can be addressed; and
- Improve local facilities where they are accessible

3.1.2 MOSS was commissioned to assess the needs of the Borough in line with this Government Guidance and the aim of this Strategy is to improve the facilities and provision of open space within a recognised deficiency area. The future uses of Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field are seen as opportunities to improve the provision of open spaces within the area providing a greater value to the community and needs of the local residents. Any changes from private to public ownership and the provision of improved facilities that meet the needs of the area is considered as a significant gain for the area. This would be consistent with Government guidance.

3.1.3 MOSS also recognises the Government’s Urban Green Space Task Force Report “Green Spaces, Better Places” which recommends long term strategies for managing supply and demand of open spaces to meet continuing social and demographic change. It also recognises the role of sports and recreation in reducing deprivation and that it contributes to education, improving health standards and reducing crime. Open space is therefore recognised as making a significant contribution to quality of life and assisting regeneration.

3.2 London wide Policy

3.2.1 In June 2002 the Greater London Authority (GLA) published The Draft London Plan. This sets out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future development of London for the next 15-20 years as a sustainable world city. This plan will provide the London wide context within which London Boroughs must set their local planning policies.

3.2.2 The Draft London Plan seeks to protect and promote open space and recognises that the value of these spaces will increase as London becomes more compact and intensive in its built form (Policies 3D.6-3D.12).

3.2.3 The plan resists the loss of open spaces (both private and publicly accessible) and states that development of local open spaces will not be acceptable where there is a demonstratable need for the open space, unless the need can be met elsewhere.
within the area, or a new or replacement open space can be created within the local area.

3.2.4 The Draft London Plan encourages Boroughs to create new open spaces where possible, targeting areas of deficiency and regeneration, and promotes the increased provision of a wide range of sports facilities, accessible to all sections of the Borough with the new provision focused on areas with existing deficiencies in facilities and encouraging the multiple use of these facilities is encouraged, including those of schools.

3.2.5 Open space includes small parks, play spaces, recreational grounds and burial grounds which meet or have the potential to meet both recreational and non-recreational needs of the community.

3.2.6 Policy 3A.16 also encourages Boroughs to include Policies in the UDP to resist the net loss, and enhance the provision of social infrastructure including cemeteries.

3.2.7 Whilst resisting the loss of open spaces, the Draft London Plan encourages increasing the housing stock (including the provision of affordable housing) within London. This would be achieved by encouraging the use of existing stocks and the appropriate development of brown field sites rather than development on green space.

3.2.8 Although not of relevance to open space, the Draft London Plan also includes policies to ensure the sustainability of a growing London, including the sustainable development of resources and encouraging future development to meeting the standards of sustainable design and construction (Policy 4B.6). This will ensure buildings are efficient in resource use and responsive to the environment. Policy 4B.3 encourages maximising the potential of sites ensuring residential density is compatible with the public transport capacity and states residential developments should conform with the density location and parking matrix.

3.2.9 The Mayor’s Energy Strategy promotes the sustainable development of resources and encourages future development to meet the standards of sustainable design and construction.

3.3 The Local Context

The Merton UDP

3.3.1 The policies contained within the Second Deposit Draft UDP (2000) are key considerations of this strategy.

3.3.2 The Council published the modifications to the Second Deposit Draft UDP in June 2003 following receipt of the Planning Inspector’s Report. Any future planning briefs for the Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field sites will reflect the UDP modifications.

3.3.3 The justification text to Policy L8 (Private Recreational Open Space) has been amended in the proposed modifications to reflect the new guidance in PPG17.
Merton Council’s Corporate Objectives

3.3.4 The Council’s Community Plan sets out the overall aims of the Council including protecting Merton’s parks and open space from built development.

3.3.5 The Council’s vision for the Borough is “to make Merton a great place to live, work and learn”. The Council’s strategic objectives of relevance to this strategy seek to achieve sustainable regeneration within the most deprived neighbourhoods and develop and implement the parks and MOSS embracing quality of life and sustainability issues.

3.3.6 The Council has produced a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy which seeks to reduce the gap between the most deprived wards and the rest of the Borough so as to improve the quality of life to all residents in Merton.

3.3.7 As discussed above, there is a recognition that the value of open spaces has an effect on quality of life. There are a number of benefits that improvements to open spaces within East Mitcham could provide to the community, including making a contribution to regeneration and renewal of the area, enhancing the image of the neighbourhood, promoting healthy lifestyles which can help with social inclusion and community development/cohesion and assisting to eliminate crime rates in the area.
4.0 East Mitcham in Context

4.0.1 Merton’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has identified that most of Merton’s deprived wards are located within the Eastern part of the Borough, almost all of which are located in the Mitcham area (see Figure 1 below).

4.1 An Area of Relative Deprivation

4.1.1 In comparison to the West of the Borough, Mitcham has been characterized as an area of significantly higher level of black and ethnic minority communities (25%), having a high percentage of lone parent household (6%) and young people aged under 16 (24%).

4.1.2 Employment deprivation in the Eastern wards is two to three times that of the Western wards in the Borough and the percentage of households with child poverty in the three wards is ten times that of in Hillside and Village wards in Wimbledon.

4.1.3 The Eastern wards, in 2000/01, also had a higher level of crime (120 all type offences per 1000 households) when compared to the Borough average of 89.8.

4.1.4 The Eastern wards have a high percentage of child poverty level, with Lavender, Pollards Hill and Phipps Bridge being amongst the 15% most deprived wards in England in terms of child poverty.

4.1.5 The Mitcham or Eastern wards have also been recognised as deprived on a national level. Based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Mitcham or Eastern wards have been identified as:

• amongst the top 15% most employment deprived wards in England.
• amongst the 15% most income deprived wards in England;
• amongst the 20% most education and training deprived wards in England;
• amongst the 33% most health deprived wards in England, and
• amongst the 5% most housing deprived wards in England
4.1.6 This Open Space and Recreation Strategy will enable improved provision of open space and recreational facilities within East Mitcham, meeting the needs of the local residents. The recommendations and outcomes of this Strategy will assist in achieving various objectives of Merton’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and reducing some of the differences between poverty and relative affluence across the borough.

4.2 Demography (Population Profile)

4.2.1 MOSS suggests that age and gender explains a significant portion of the variation in sports participation amongst adults, the life stage of individuals is also significant with the highest participation amongst those who are employed but not married within the ages of 15-34 years.

4.2.2 The population figures for the East Mitcham wards, based on the Merton Ward Profiles, 1991 Census and projected population forecasts for 1999 indicate that there was an increase in the number of residents aged between 10 - 44 years. At the time of writing the Census figures for 2001 were not available.

4.2.3 Although the GLA’s population forecast do not provide demographic information on a ward by ward basis the population trends for East Mitcham are in line with the Borough wide GLA population forecasts which estimate the population of Merton is likely to grow at a slower rate with the Borough expanding by some 6,200 persons between 2001-2016. Over this period the number of people aged 10-44 years is expected to increase up to 2006 and then stabilise.

4.2.4 Based on this demographic evidence, the participation levels the subsequent need for open space and sporting facilities within East Mitcham will continue to increase.
5.0  The Open Space and Recreational Needs of East Mitcham Residents

5.0.1 An important part of MOSS was to undertake initial consultation with the representatives of stakeholder groups who use or have an interest in open spaces. This was in the form of four stakeholder workshops with the purpose of eliciting what the key issues and opportunities associated with open space in Merton are.

5.0.2 The level of attendance at the Mitcham meeting was low (5 attendees). MOSS recognises that the significance of the outcomes of the focus group discussions was limited by the low attendance, particularly in the east of the Borough. A conclusion from MOSS suggests that the lack of strong response especially from the east of the Borough could demonstrate a lack of interest in the issue or a perception that MOSS will not succeed in improving open spaces in the area.

5.0.3 There was also considerable discussion at these meetings that youth were not catered for in open spaces, particularly in regard to informal uses such as kicking a ball about or ‘hanging out’.

5.0.4 The findings from MOSS have identified that user surveys of the parks will be required across the Borough to fully assess needs and that there would also need to be an effective method of obtaining the views to find out why people didn’t go to parks. Local user surveys would also be required to establish informal recreational needs.

5.0.6 An Open Space Needs Survey was undertaken in May 2003 by consultants on behalf of the Council. The key aim was to establish the open space needs of the community, including patterns of use, ratings of parks, attitudes to provision and expectations, constraints on use and to establish what the community wants within open spaces.

5.0.7 The Open Space Needs Survey was undertaken using telephone surveys over the borough’s main postcode areas, including Mitcham (CR4). The Open Space Needs Survey found that 58% of people within the CR4 post code area used parks. This was higher in other parts of the borough.

5.0.8 The findings suggest that the main park types used are Metropolitan Parks, District Parks, and local parks with 8% of people using Mitcham Common.

5.0.9 The detailed findings will be incorporated into the Merton Open Space Strategy and its supporting documents.
6.0 Cross Boundary Provision of Open Space

6.0.1 MOSS identifies that one of the key issues is the “need to address cross local authority boundary issues”. There is a requirement for a more consistent London wide approach to preserving and enhancing the overall green structure of the city and the provision of open space to meet the varied needs of Londoners. This will assist in addressing cross boundary issues. The provision of open space including the creation of green chains must be considered on a London wide basis.

6.0.2 The Draft London Plan identifies that there is a need to address cross boundary issues including the creation of green chains in the preparation of an open space strategy. It states that consideration should be given to the creation of a more formal associations between Boroughs. Neighbouring Boroughs provide opportunities for partnerships and there are a number of existing organisations that bring adjoining London Boroughs together to improve open space provision.

6.0.3 This document states that the availability and accessibility of facilities in neighbouring Boroughs will be an important consideration and the assessment of open space provision should not stop at the Borough boundary. It recognises that people use open space which is most accessible to them or which has a suitable range of facilities regardless of Borough boundaries. Audits should therefore take account of open space provision within a wider area. In assessing local open space provisions a number of Boroughs have included open space up to ½ to 1 mile outside the Borough.

6.0.4 The London Boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth and Wandsworth all adjoin Merton's boundaries surrounding East Mitcham.

6.0.5 To date none of these Borough’s have prepared Open Space Strategies. The London Borough of Lambeth is currently undertaking a Sports Facility Survey to identify future sporting opportunities and facilities in the Borough.

6.0.6 The location of open spaces and the assessment of deficiency areas in the adjoining Boroughs is only based on the information contained within their UDP’s. If, or when an Open Space Strategy is prepared by each of these Boroughs the areas of deficiency will become evident and detailed mechanisms can be implemented to meet these deficiency areas by the individual Boroughs. However, as there is no statutory requirement for Open Space Strategies to be prepared within a defined timeframe, this needs to be considered as a long term goal of this strategy.

6.0.7 MOSS only considered the provision of open space within Merton. However, it suggested that assessments are made of open spaces in the neighbouring Borough of Lambeth where it adjoins the Longthornton area of open space deficiency as this might identify open space and facilities with a potential of reducing the deficiency in Longthornton.

6.0.8 It also states that a similar open space and playing pitch assessment in the adjoining Borough of Lambeth would identify deficiencies within Merton and it may
highlight an opportunity for both Boroughs to jointly provide facilities in deficiency areas which cross the boundaries.

6.0.9 The following assessments have been made of each of these adjoining Boroughs, to determine whether there are any possibilities for Merton to look across the Borough boundary as a source of meeting some of the open space deficiencies.

6.1 **London Borough of Lambeth**

6.1.1 The London Borough of Lambeth has been recognised as being one of the Boroughs with the highest open space deficiency in the country with a shortage of at least 80 playing pitches. Lambeth is in the early stages of undertaking their Open Space strategy work and intend to involve Merton in the preparation of the strategy.

6.1.2 MOSS identifies that of the surrounding Boroughs, pitch deficiencies are most severe within Lambeth, an area which also experiences high levels of multiple deprivation. MOSS recommends that the Council initiates discussions as to the potential role that sites within Merton could fulfil in meeting the sports needs of both communities.

6.1.3 Streatham Vale Park provides some open space which is likely to be used by Merton residents living within the northern part of the Longthornton ward, although access is restricted for those residents in Figges Marsh due to the railway line.

6.1.4 The Lambeth UDP identifies the south eastern area of the borough adjoining Merton as an area deficient in open space, with similar deficiencies recognised by MOSS in Merton. Although an assumption of this study is that the Nature Conservation area at the National Westminster Sports Ground is excluded from consideration, as its access is restricted from within the sports ground only, the Borough is informally providing for the adjoining Boroughs on this site with such facilities as a Children’s Play area and playing pitches.

6.1.5 This is mainly due to the location of the site adjoining the Borough boundaries of Merton, Croydon and Lambeth. This site could contribute to reducing the deficiencies within all three boroughs. By residents of adjoining boroughs using the facilities provided in Merton they are likely to place additional pressure on the supply and provision of adequate facilities.

6.2 **London Borough of Croydon**

6.2.1 The Croydon UDP recognises an area deficient in local parks adjoining the Borough boundary. However, the MOSS and Merton’s UDP has not highlighted a deficiency within the adjoining Merton wards.

6.2.2 Pollards Hill Recreation Ground (Merton) and Pollards Hill (Croydon) are adjoining pieces of open space divided by a fence. Improvements could be made to open these spaces up improving public access, providing additional facilities and contributing to cross boundary provision.
6.3 **London Borough of Wandsworth**

6.3.1 The Wandsworth UDP identifies an area deficient in open space which adjoins the Graveney ward. Almost the entire ward has been recognised by MOSS as being deficient in open space.

6.3.2 The Wandsworth UDP acknowledges that there is a deficiency in its Borough of football, rugby, hockey and cricket pitches and acknowledges that there is considerable interdependence between Boroughs in the use and availability of resources.

6.3.3 It states that Lambeth has a deficiency in various facilities while Merton caters for demands from Wandsworth and other Boroughs such as Lambeth. It recognises that Merton’s pitches will continue to provide a strategic role in providing opportunities to play football for teams both within the Borough and to those in adjoining Boroughs.

6.3.4 MOSS recognises that Lambeth and Wandsworth have significant pitch deficiencies per head of population. It states that the Borough is unlikely to play a role in accommodating rugby and hockey demand from outside the Borough, although the level of cross boundary demand for cricket may also have an effect on increasing the participation rates for cricket within Merton.

6.4 **Methods to Improve Cross Boundary Provision**

6.4.1 From the assessments above it is unlikely that existing provision in adjoining boroughs could contribute to meeting deficiency areas in Merton. Any pitch deficiencies in the adjoining boroughs are more likely to attract additional demand from outside the Borough, placing additional pressure on Merton’s facilities.

6.4.2 MOSS identifies further work is required to liaise with the GLA and Sport England to develop a better understanding of the playing pitch needs of other local authorities including the surrounding boroughs in order to identify the extent to which pitch usage patterns are determined by out of Borough pressures.

6.4.3 Council officers have had discussions with the GLA on ways to improve cross boundary provision of open space and further discussions are likely in the future. The GLA will also be meeting with Sport England in the near future to explore whether working at the London-wide level would facilitate the boroughs in understanding open space deficiencies and how they can be met at a local level.

6.4.4 The London Parks and Green Spaces Forum is likely to be used in the future to progress cross boundary open space issues at the local level.

6.4.5 Council officers have also recently written to the adjoining boroughs of Wandsworth, Lambeth and Croydon to initiate discussions on cross boundary provision of open spaces in the near future. This will include information sharing and dissemination, assisting in establishing frameworks and providing technical assistance for the preparation of open space strategies, securing funding through various agencies to improve the provision of existing areas of open space or recreational facilities and
establishing effective delivery measures for improved open space and recreational facilities.

6.4.6 The Council together with assistance from the adjoining boroughs could enhance existing open spaces or increase the provision through the redevelopment of sites by:

- Seeking contributions from developers through Section 106 agreements towards the upgrading of existing areas of open space or recreational facilities, associated landscaping improvements, management and maintenance arrangements.

- Investigating opportunities to seek compulsory purchase orders to acquire additional land for open space provision that would have a cross borough benefit.

- Seeking joint funding from various funding sources with the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Croydon and Lambeth to improve pitch quality, provision and associated facilities within East Mitcham.

- Co-ordinating with adjoining Boroughs in identifying where public open spaces between Boroughs adjoin each other and establish a dialogue and partnership with the relevant Borough to develop a holistic approach to the management and maintenance of these spaces. This should include making improvements to public access within and between the open spaces and the range of facilities provided.

6.4.7 The Council may also consider establishing trusts and/or Joint Boards to purchase or manage the open spaces with agreed management and maintenance contracts between the adjoining Boroughs, establishing cross boundary partnerships. Restrictive covenants would need to be placed on the land titles stating that the sites cannot be sold and must remain as open space.

6.4.8 Alternatively, playing fields could be sold to the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) which provides protection for the sites by becoming the owner of the land itself, or should the Council wish to retain ownership the NPFA can provide protection in perpetuity by establishing Deeds of Dedication on various sites.
7.0 The Strategic Approach to Open Space Provision

7.1.1 A strategic approach has been developed to improve the open space and recreational facilities within East Mitcham and reduce the deficiencies identified within MOSS. This approach incorporates five key sites to rationalise the provision of open spaces and intends to provide improved facilities for the residents within East Mitcham. This approach is considered to be the most efficient and effective way of reducing the deficiencies identified within MOSS. Appendix 2 shows the location of these sites in context of existing open spaces.

7.1.2 The implementation of this approach is likely to extend over a longer timeframe of up to 2-3 years. A staged approach may be necessary.

7.1.3 The key components are the future uses of the Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field sites.

Brenley Playing Field - A Local Park (approx 2.0ha)

7.1.4 Brenley Playing Field (approx 2.9ha) comprises a large flat area of open space used as a satellite site to provide sports facilities for the nearby Mitcham Vale School. The site has not been used for curriculum requirements for a number of years and it is not maintained for formal recreational or sports uses.

7.1.5 A planning brief for the site was approved on 7th March 2001. The brief proposed the following uses:
- Residential 0.6ha
- Local Park 1.2ha
- Playing Fields 1.1ha

7.1.6 The future use of this site would be a modified version of the approved brief. The Council intends to revise the brief to reflect its current aspirations for the site, and will carry out re-consultation. The future use of the site is based on the assumption that the playing field is not required for education purposes and any recreational needs of the school can be provided within the local park.

7.1.7 A local park on the northern portion of the site would eliminate the areas deficient in public open space and reduce the areas currently outside the pedestrian catchment of 0.4km surrounding the site (Appendix 5). A range of facilities would be provided within the park.

7.1.8 Although the UDP resists the loss of playing fields and private open space (Policies L6, L8 and L10), the local park would provide additional public open space in a recognised area of deficiency and provide improved public facilities within the park.

7.1.9 The indicative site layout (Appendix 3) from the approved planning brief indicates that 1.0ha would be used as playing fields and 1.3ha would be a local park. MOSS recognises that the most efficient sites to manage are those with clusters of pitches where facilities and resources can be managed efficiently. This could not be the case if a single pitch is provided on this site.
7.1.9 If, however the strategic approach to open space was supported, the provision of playing fields would be concentrated on the Westminster City Sports Ground site, Mitcham Vale and Tamworth Manor high school sites, and a single pitch on this site would no longer be required. Thus resulting in more efficient management and maintenance of both this site and the existing pitches at Westminster City Sport Ground. The indicative site layout plan in the draft revised planning brief would be amended to reflect the use of the site for housing and a local park.

**Rowan High School – A Local Park (approx 3.15ha)**

7.1.10 It is proposed to create a local park at the Rowan High School site (Appendix 4) with a range of facilities such as a nature conservation area, and children's play area. This park would serve the local community and reduce the existing public open space deficiency and contribute to reducing the areas currently outside the pedestrian catchment of 0.4km from the site of a local park (Appendix 5). The GLA supports the provision of public open space on this site and its contribution towards addressing local open space deficiencies.

7.1.11 This option proposes reversing part of the open space and area for development at Rowan High School to secure improved open space provision for the community. By locating the park partly along the Rowan Road frontage it would address the street frontage and have good natural surveillance from the surrounding area.

7.1.12 Although the loss of private playing pitches at Rowan High School would result in a quantitative loss of private sports pitches within the area, concentrating the sports pitches on Westminster City Sports Ground, Mitcham Vale and Tamworth Manor high schools would allow improvements to provide improved pitch quality and facilities, including the provision of floodlighting and a multiple sports area, with greater public accessibility. This approach is promoted by PPG17, the draft London Plan, and supported by MOSS and is the preferred option of this strategy.

**Westminster City Sports Ground – Playing Pitches**

7.1.13 MOSS suggested widening access to existing facilities and improving public access to the Westminster City Sports Ground (private playing fields), for use as public playing fields, taking advantage of the existing pavilion and quality playing fields.

7.1.14 As suggested by MOSS the strategic approach proposes that the provision of playing pitches are concentrated on the Westminster City Sports Ground site with improved public access to these private facilities. United Westminster Schools has confirmed in writing their interest in pursuing a shared use arrangement with the Council. If the concentrated provision of playing pitches cannot be secured on the Westminster City Sports Ground site playing pitches could still be retained as part of the new public open space on the Rowan High School site.

7.1.15 However this would not contribute to meeting the identified deficiency of local open space within a 0.4km pedestrian catchment, nor would it result in the most effective and efficient provision of sports facilities. New changing facilities would also have to be provided on the Rowan site as part of the provision of new playing pitches.
7.1.16 The Westminster City Sports Ground currently has three full sized pitches with a possibility of a fourth. More efficient use of these pitches could be created through the provision of floodlighting and an artificial turf pitch on this site. Some improvements to the existing pitch quality and changing facilities may be required but this would be more effective and efficient for the Council than providing new facilities on the Rowan High School site. Improvements to the Westminster City Sports Ground would maximise the potential of the site to accommodate match slots and would eliminate the need for smaller inefficient sites in the area.

7.1.17 The gain of public sports facilities is considered to represent a qualitative improvement in local sports provision overall, although it is recognised that the existing private playing fields at Rowan High School, Brenley Playing Field and Westminster City Sports Ground are more extensive.

7.1.18 Improvements to the pitch quality and changing facilities are likely and funding would be sought by the Council for enhanced sporting facilities on this site.

**Mitcham Vale and Tamworth Manor PFI High Schools – ATP’s**

7.1.19 MOSS identifies that the possible options for securing additional pitch slots within the East Mitcham area will depend on the provisions of additional sports facilities associated with the Schools Reorganisation Programme.

7.1.20 It suggests the most appropriate options for the provision of further pitch slots for football, cricket, rugby and hockey are:

- Improving access to existing football facilities at Mitcham Vale School and/or Tamworth Manor School through negotiation of community access agreements and improvement of pitch drainage and associated facilities at these sites.

- Improving access to the existing cricket pitch at Mitcham Vale School through the negotiation of a community access agreement. For this to be a viable option investment will be required to improve the quality of the playing surface and associated facilities.

- Improving access to the existing rugby pitch at Tamworth Manor High School. The viability of this option is contingent on improvements to the gradient and eveness of the pitch, pitch drainage, the development of associated facilities and the negotiation of a community access agreement.

7.1.21 Planning approval was granted for extensions and modifications to Tamworth Manor and Mitcham Vale High Schools early in 2002, and the installation of artificial grass hockey pitches and floodlighting as part of the Schools Reorganisation Programme. Both of these schools are located within the Longthornton ward.

7.1.22 The MOSS playing pitch assessment identifies a need to secure the use of at least two full size artificial turf pitches (ATP’s). It states that at least one of these facilities will need to be newly constructed, as there is only one pitch which could potentially be made available for public use. It also states that existing ATP provision is concentrated in the west of the Borough.
7.1.23 The provision of these two ATP’s will meet the existing deficiency within the Borough and improve accessibility and provision to the East Mitcham area. These ATP’s will be used for hockey, tennis and other sports such as football.

7.1.24 The provision of additional recreational facilities on these two school sites will provide additional pitch slots and improve community access to the school facilities. They offer an additional benefit of providing additional hockey pitches within the borough as match hockey is rarely played on grass pitches.

7.1.25 The conditions of approval for the above school sites required the use of the school facilities to be available by the community and other organisations. These conditions have been discharged.

7.1.26 A Leisure development officer is to be appointed to encourage participation in sport and recreation and co-ordinate the shared use of the community facilities at Tamworth Manor and Mitcham Vale High School. The initial appointment and start up costs of this position will be financed by New Opportunities Funding. It is anticipated that the officer will be responsible for arranging match slots between the two PFI high school sites and Westminster City Sports Ground if the strategic approach is supported. If this is not the case the sports development officer will concentrate on the PFI High school sites.

7.1.27 Some of the recreational facilities currently provided at Tamworth Manor and Mitcham Vale will be lost, such as athletics, as this will be taken over by the area required for the ATP. Although there is a loss of some facilities there will be an overall wider benefit to the community, due to the improved quality of facilities provided and greater accessibility by the public. The ATP’s will be floodlit and available for community use between the hours of 3.30pm – 10pm, weekdays and between 8.00am – 10pm weekends.

7.1.28 The Council considers that this would be in accord with the Policy 3D.6 of The Draft London Plan.
8.0 Proposed Uses for Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field

8.0.1 The Council is promoting highly sustainable forms of development with public open space on these sites. As part of this development the Council would seek associated environmental benefits including minimised waste and water use, minimal parking, decreased car usage, maximising recycling and on site sewerage treatment. The Council’s aspiration is for Zero Emission Developments built to high environmental standards. This is supported by the GLA.

8.0.2 Recommendation 1 of this strategy seeks Member endorsement of the future uses of Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field as the basis for preparation of planning briefs and public consultation documents. The Council will consult local residents and stakeholder groups on the content of the proposed briefs and seek views on the provision of new local parks at Rowan and Brenley, including the type of facilities which should be provided within the new parks.

8.0.3 The public consultation on the revised planning briefs is scheduled to commence on 11th August 2003.

8.0.4 Following the public consultation the briefs will be subject to Council approval and provide detailed planning guidance for development of the sites.

8.1 Brenley Playing Field

8.1.1 Up to 30% (approx 1.0ha) of the site could be developed as sustainable housing. The remainder of the site would be a public local park providing a range of facilities such as a children’s play and amenity areas (approx 2.0ha) (Appendix 3). This is contingent on the endorsement of the strategic approach to open space within East Mitcham (Refer to Section 7).

8.1.2 At present the site is poorly served by public transport, it has a low Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) and this development promoted by the Council is dependant on improved public transport accessibility.

8.2 Rowan High School

MOSS identifies opportunities to develop new facilities at this site for Cricket, Rugby and an Artificial Turf Pitch. The provision of an ATP at this site would not be necessary as this site would compete with those provided at Tamworth Manor and Mitcham Vale High Schools. Provision of playing pitches is not the preferred use of the open space at Rowan High School as these facilities are proposed to be concentrated on the Westminster City Sports Ground site.

Policy Context

8.2.1 Following the Public Local Inquiry into objections to the UDP, the Planning Inspector raised concern regarding the extent of the Rowan High School Site Proposal and suggested that the site proposal should be confined to the footprint of the school buildings (approximately 1.65ha) and car parking area and the proposed use be
restricted to development for residential and community purposes. This recommendation supported the objection from the Government Office for London (GOL) that the loss of playing fields be resisted.

8.2.2 The Inspector recognised this but considered that if this was the case there was no reason why the site boundary should extend over the playing fields when this part of the site is protected by the Council’s open space policies.

8.2.3 Against this the Council argued that the comprehensive planning of the surplus site requires the entire site to be identified as a site proposal when preparing the responses to the Inspector’s Report.

8.2.4 In a Meeting with the Government Office for London (GOL) in early 2003, they were satisfied that Merton could depart from the Inspector’s Report provided Government policy was not compromised. GOL also welcomed the Council’s approach to preparing a co-ordinated open space study (MOSS) and specific strategy for East Mitcham (EMOSS).

Future Use of the Site

8.2.5 It is proposed to reverse part of the open space and area for development. This will allow for the retention of the locally listed building, secure improved open space provision for the community as well as other environmental benefits. This is contingent on the success of the strategic approach to open space within East Mitcham (Appendix 4).

8.2.6 The following uses are proposed by this option:

Public Local park 3.15ha (51% site area)
Residential and Community up to 3.0ha (49% site area)

8.2.7 The extent of residential development is greater than suggested in the Inspector’s Report. The justification for this approach is that it takes account of the findings of MOSS undertaken since the Inspector’s report but recommended by the inspector. It therefore provides a more up to date assessment of local need and it promotes development to fund quality improvements for new public open space.

8.2.8 This proposal suggests that if a highly sustainable form of building and a new public local park are promoted on this site then a greater quantum of development could be supported because of the wider environmental benefits secured.

8.2.9 Although the community use for this site has not been defined, strong interest has been expressed from the National Health Authority to relocate an existing primary health care facility from its current location on Rowan Road onto a new site, including any opportunities on the Rowan High School site. This would improve the accessibility of health care provision in East Mitcham, assist in improving the overall deprivation of the East Mitcham area and promote healthy lifestyles in line with Merton Council’s Corporate Objectives. It is anticipated that the provision of medical facilities on the site would be incorporated into the planning brief as part of the community use component of the site.
8.2.10 The local park is proposed to provide a range of facilities such as a nature conservation area (Refer to Section 9), children’s play, and amenity areas. This park would serve the local community and reduce the existing local open space deficiency.

8.2.11 Although it is recognised that this option would result in the loss of playing pitches at Rowan High School and a quantitative loss of private sports pitches within the area, securing public access to the Westminster City Sports Ground and concentrating the provision of pitches on this site would provide improved pitch quality and facilities in public use and allow the sustainable development option to be pursued at the Rowan High School site.

8.2.12 This site has good bus accessibility. If an exemplary sustainable development was progressed for this site the Council would need to secure improved public transport accessibility to enable reduced parking provision.

8.2.13 Part of the main school building, fronting onto Rowan Road is included in the Borough’s Local List of Buildings of Historic and Architectural Interest. The Council’s policy with regard to buildings on the local list (Policy BE16) is to encourage their rehabilitation, maintenance and repair and to resist their demolition.
9.0 Nature Conservation and Green Corridor Improvements

MOSS suggests using this site to extend the green corridor between Mitcham Common, Lonesome School and Mitcham Vale Schools.

9.1 Rowan High School

9.1.1 The provision of a nature conservation area within the Rowan High School site adjacent to the existing cemetery could provide a link in the future to adjoining sites, if green corridor links are to be improved in accordance with the MOSS recommendation.

9.1.2 EMOSS specifically examines the future uses of the Rowan and Brenley sites, thus the possible extension of the green corridor as recommended by MOSS is outside the bounds of this study. However, it does not eliminate the possibility of this being explored in the future. A comprehensive analysis of all open spaces within East Mitcham would be required as part of any green corridor extensions.

9.1.3 The GLA has identified that the Rowan High School site is in an area that is lacking nature conservation interest (excluding Mitcham Common) and has commented that the redevelopment of the site is an opportunity to make improvements to the provision of nature conservation within the area.

9.1.4 MOSS suggests Rowan has the potential to play the role of a local park. The site has significant amenity value and would be easily accessible due to its prominent location fronting a main road.

9.1.5 The area is deficient in local parks and the small local parks in the area provide few formal and informal recreational facilities and limited nature conservation interest mainly due to their size.

9.1.6 The Council proposes to provide a nature conservation area within the proposed local park on the Rowan High School site. The provision of a nature conservation area would offer some improvements to this deficiency however it could not support a significant nature conservation area.

9.1.7 MOSS also suggests using the Rowan High School site to extend the green corridor between Mitcham Common, Lonesome School and Mitcham Vale Schools. It suggests that future management could look at the possibility of improving public access through or around these green spaces in order to develop a green chain.

9.1.8 By progressing the option for Rowan which promotes partial reversal of the open space and built areas the proposed local park would be located adjacent the adjoining South London Crematorium. A detailed design of any layout of the local park has yet to be undertaken but locating a nature conservation area adjoining the site boundary there is potential to extend the green corridor in the future. However, the proposed improvements to the areas of nature conservation value within the proposed local park may be limited if the site was required for playing pitches.
9.1.9 It is also likely that any nature conservation surveys undertaken for the East Mitcham area would look over the borough boundaries and thus contribute to cross boundary networking.

9.2 Mitcham Vale High School

9.2.1 The majority of this site, except the building footprint and hard surface areas forms part of the green corridor through the Borough. Improvements to the green corridor have been secured as part of the recent PFI high school planning application in December 2001.

9.2.2 A belt of more intensive planting in a landscaped corridor around the periphery of the site was required to create more valuable habitat areas. This landscaped belt will offer more value to the green corridor than existing grassed areas on the site which are to be replaced with new facilities.

9.3 Westminster City Sports Ground

9.2.4 The MOSS survey of this site states that there is scope to increase the fringes of the site for improvements to its ecological value. This could be examined as part of the shared use/management arrangements between United Westminster Schools and the Council.
10.0 Other Site Opportunities within East Mitcham for Open Space/Recreation

10.1 Restructuring of Existing Open Spaces

10.1.1 With the improved facilities proposed at Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field, including the provision of local parks (Section 8), it may result in some of the existing areas of open space and recreational facilities becoming surplus, especially those with poor facilities at present or back land sites. These smaller parks could then be developed for alternative uses.

10.1.2 It is acknowledged that many of these small local parks with East Mitcham currently serve a need for surrounding residential areas particularly those high density areas, and are likely to play a different role and meet different needs than local parks. The UDP seeks access to a range of different types of open space.

10.1.3 However, Rowan Road Recreational Ground is located opposite the Rowan High School site and with the improved facilities at the Rowan High School site as a local park, the future of Rowan Road Recreational Ground, its facilities provided and the needs that it meets could be reassessed.

10.1.4 Improved pedestrian access to the Rowan High School site may be required to ensure pedestrian safety accessing the new facilities.

10.1.5 It is recommended that the feasibility of this be investigated at an early stage and the functions of these smaller open spaces is examined to determine if there is any duplication of specific types of open space. The views of local residents will be sought in this respect.

10.2 National Westminster Bank Sports Ground

10.2.1 A recent development at the National Westminster Sports Ground (Ref 97/P1206) was approved for 18 affordable housing units, 41x3 bedroom homes and 34x2 bedroom homes. Development of part of the site for recreational facilities including the provision of 15 floodlit all weather hard court areas secured by fencing and provision of a satellite pavilion and cricket nets, the provision of a children’s play area, provision of a nature conservation area, revised boundary treatment to part of the site and refurbishment of the existing pavilion and formation of car parks to serve the recreational facilities.

10.2.2 This development was included within the MOSS assessment.

10.2.3 The proposal requires the community use of sports facilities as a source of additional match slots.

10.2.4 The Section 106 agreement required the following parts of the development to be transferred to Council ownership:
• Play Area
• Nature Conservation Area
• Educational Amenity Area
• Recreational Playing Fields

10.2.5 The playing fields will be developed in the future by Leisure Services (seasonal cricket and football) with a pavilion and changing facilities. The site will require improved access. Financial contributions from adjoining boroughs, due to their close proximity to the site and Merton’s position as providing pitches for these boroughs, and future developers within the area could contribute to funding these improvements.

10.2.6 Although it appears that these areas have been transferred to Council ownership the nature conservation area does not appear to be easily accessible by the general public. Therefore the contribution the nature conservation area will have on the area has not been included within this study and the assumption made that it is excluded from meeting any deficiency in natural conservation areas within East Mitcham. If the nature conservation area becomes publicly accessible then it would be considered extra. However, allowing public access into the natural conservation area is likely to reduce its ecological value.

10.2.7 Due the location and pedestrian accessibility of this site some of the facilities are more likely to be used by residents of the adjoining Boroughs of Lambeth and Croydon.

10.3 Edenvale Park

10.3.1 It should be noted that there is a small ‘pocket’ park and children’s play area associated with the North East Mitcham Community Centre located off Woodland Way within the Graveney Ward that was omitted from MOSS.

10.3.2 The MOSS survey of open spaces included those sites identified within Schedule 2 of the Second Deposit Draft UDP 2000, except allotments, cemeteries and health open space.

10.3.3 It also excluded green amenity areas which form part of housing areas or which represent ‘incidental’ amenity space as they do not fall within the open space hierarchy. This park was considered too small to be included within the open space survey.

10.3.4 Despite its size, Leisure Services have advised that it is a well used piece of open space within a ward which has no other provision. Opportunities could exist however for improvements to this park funded by financial contributions from future developments in the area.
11.0 Public Consultation

11.1 EMOSS

11.1.1 MOSS and this strategy recognise public consultation is required to gauge what the community desires in terms of facilities provided in the newly created open spaces. Initial work on this has already been completed through the Merton Open Space Needs Survey 2003.

11.1.2 Public consultation on this strategy is scheduled to take place from 17 June – 17 July 2003. The main consultees will be local stakeholder groups, including residents associations, sports clubs, friends groups, amenity societies and community organisations within East Mitcham.

11.1.3 Each of these organisations will be sent a copy of EMOSS together with a covering letter.

11.1.4 The consultation will invite views on the strategy and feedback will be sought on the following:
   - The strategic approach to open space
   - Other elements/issues that EMOSS could include
   - Whether any organisations would be interested in the shared management of public open spaces with the Council
   - Factual or technical inaccuracies
   - Further suggestions or comments on EMOSS

11.1.5 All the responses received will assist the Council in preparing the East Mitcham Open Space Strategy for approval in July/August 2003.

11.1.6 The outcome of the public consultation will ensure that the strategy is consistent with regional and national guidance and the ensure that the local stakeholders have a chance to comment on the Council’s open space priorities for East Mitcham.

11.2 Public Participation in the design and shared management of open spaces

11.2.1 As new open spaces are created or existing facilities improved within East Mitcham it is proposed to involve the community in all levels of decision making, creation and management of open spaces and devolve some decision making procedures and power to the community. This is likely to engender a greater sense of ownership and responsibility of the open spaces. Encouraging Youth involvement in all phases of the new created open spaces, is proposed as part of this strategy, through the schools and other youth organisations within the area. It is anticipated that this will assist in reducing the level of graffiti and vandalism, whilst promoting the community benefits of open space/recreation on quality of life, healthy lifestyles, social inclusion and community development.
11.2.2 Part of the consultation on this Strategy will seek to gauge an interest on this from the local stakeholder groups. Initial feedback from the focus group meeting of MOSS indicate that there was scope for residents to take on a greater role in managing open spaces, although some considered that it was better that the Council employed a park keeper rather than rely solely on local residents. A more consultative approach to the management of parks and open spaces in response to residents concerns, reflects the Government’s encouragement to involve citizens in local decisions.
12.0 Further Actions Arising from this Report

In order to develop the findings of this Strategy and progress the options for the future uses of the Rowan and Brenley sites the following actions are required to be implemented. These have been categorised into the various organisations involved or responsible for implementing the actions.

**Government/Other Bodies**

- Merton Council to investigate and secure regeneration/renewal funding from a variety of Government Bodies to contribute towards improvements to the open space and recreational facilities within East Mitcham.

- Merton Council to secure funding through Sport England’s New Opportunities Fund for enhanced recreational facilities on the Rowan High School site and/or Westminster City Sports Ground.

**Adjoining Boroughs**

- Merton Council together with the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Wandsworth and Croydon to seek joint funding from agencies such as Cabe Space to improve pitch quality, provision and associated facilities within East Mitcham.

- Merton Council to co-ordinate with adjoining Boroughs in identifying where public open spaces between boroughs adjoin each other and establish a dialogue and partnerships with the relevant Borough to develop a holistic approach to the management and maintenance of these spaces. This should include making improvements to public access within and between the open spaces and the range of facilities provided.

- Merton Council to co-ordinate with adjoining Boroughs to assess the open space and recreational needs to determine whether sporting groups from outside the Borough use Merton’s facilities and why.

- Merton Council to co-ordinate with adjoining Boroughs to determine what facilities provided by Merton, are used by residents living within a 1km radius outside the Borough of Merton. This may confirm already be meeting adjoining Borough resident’s demands/deficiencies for open space.

**Merton Council**

- Environmental Services and Leisure Services to progress ways of improving public access to the Westminster City Sports Ground, including establishing trusts and/or joint boards.

- Environmental Services and Leisure Services to undertake an assessment of the viability of restructuring the existing open spaces within East Mitcham based on the endorsement of the options for the Rowan and Brenley sites, with particular emphasis on the future of Rowan Road Recreation Ground.
• Environmental Services to progress the planning briefs for the Rowan and Brenley sites on the basis of the endorsed future uses described in Section 8 of this report.

• Environmental Services and adjoining boroughs to investigate opportunities to seek compulsory purchase orders to acquire additional land for open space and recreational provision that would have a cross boundary benefit or contribute to meeting the deficiencies of open space within Merton.

• Environmental Services to seek contributions from the developers of Rowan and Brenley, and other sites in East Mitcham, through Section 106 agreements towards the upgrading of existing areas of open space, provision of new open space and recreational facilities, associated landscaping, management and maintenance.

• Leisure Services to market its open space and recreational facilities to a wide target market, including sports groups within Merton and adjoining Boroughs and enhance and update the Leisure Services website to include the existing and proposed open space and recreational facilities within the Borough and provide all information on the Councils website.

• Leisure Services to undertake public consultation on the design and layout of the proposed local parks at the Rowan and Brenley sites and encourage public participation and community involvement in all stages of the maintenance and management of the open space such as Friends of Parks groups.

• Leisure Services and Environmental Services to survey the East Mitcham area schools’ use of parks and playing fields to determine the educational role that open spaces play.

• Leisure Services and Environmental Services to undertake a comprehensive analysis of all open spaces within East Mitcham to explore the possibility of extending the Green Corridor between Mitcham Common, Lonesome School and Mitcham Vale School.

• Leisure Services, Environmental Services and Chief Executive’s Office incorporate the provision and management of open spaces in East Mitcham with a Neighbourhood Plan for the East Mitcham Area. The neighbourhood plans will create a shared vision for the community and will help to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of the community. This may require changes to the UDP ie bringing in elements from the new framework eg an Open Space Action Plan for East Mitcham/the Borough.

• Leisure Services, Environmental Services and the Chief Executive’s Department to liaise and cross reference the Merton Open Space Strategy and EMOSS into the Merton Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy as a tool for improving the image of East Mitcham, the quality of life for East Mitcham residents and services provided in the area.
• Leisure Services, Environmental Services and the Chief Executive’s Department to secure funding from agencies such as Cabe Space for open space improvements and associated facilities within East Mitcham.

• Leisure Services and Environmental Services commission an assessment into the viability of restructuring the existing open spaces within East Mitcham based on the endorsement of the options for the Rowan and Brenley sites, including a new local park on the Rowan High School site, with particular emphasis on the future of Rowan Road Recreation Ground.

• Leisure Services and Environmental Services to encourage public participation and community involvement in all stages of the design, creation, maintenance, management of the new local parks and recreational facilities.

• Environmental Services and Leisure Services to use the Rowan and Brenley planning brief public consultation to determine what the residents and East Mitcham community desire for the facilities provided on both the local parks at Brenley Playing Field and Rowan High School.

• Include these further actions as key tasks within Departmental Service and Business Plans with timeframes to achieve the tasks by.

• Merton Council to secure funding and resources for these further actions to be implemented.

• Undertake six monthly reviews of these further actions to ensure their implementation.
**Recommendations:**

1. That Members endorse the future uses for Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Field as the basis for draft planning briefs and public consultation documents to be prepared.

2. That Members endorse the strategic approach to the provision of open space within East Mitcham.

3. That Members endorse the further actions to improve open space and recreation in East Mitcham as set out in section 12 of this report.

4. That Members endorse EMOSS as a local strategy forming part of the Merton Open Space Strategy.
13.0 Conclusions

13.1 This report has identified a number of opportunities to improve the open space and recreation facilities within East Mitcham. Not only will this contribute to reducing the deficiencies identified within the MOSS but it will also have a positive influence on improving an area currently suffering from deprivation. The Strategy would also assist in promoting healthy lifestyles through the provision of environmental housing, additional community facilities in which a demand for additional medical facilities has already been expressed, and improved open space and recreational facilities within the local area.

13.2 The future use of Rowan High School and Brenley Playing Fields are key to improvements in the area. This offers the most benefit to the community with the least harm on the environment. By progressing these proposals it is also likely that public transport accessibility will be improved in the area with support from the GLA. This may also enhance the image of the area and people’s perceptions of the area. The Rowan and Brenley sites could then be promoted as ‘Beacon’ or ‘Flagship’ developments offering opportunities and benefits to the wider community of East Mitcham.

13.3 Through the implementation of this strategy and the future development of the Rowan and Brenley sites it offers opportunities for the local residents and stakeholder groups to become involved in the decision making process on the formation, design and provision of facilities for these open spaces. It is hoped that this will encourage a greater sense of ownership by the community. This would assist in developing a shared vision for the area with financial reality.

13.4 The Strategy suggests a number of ways in which the existing open space deficiencies identified within MOSS can be reduced. It encourages increased shared use of the schools facilities, improved public use of private open space and developing stronger inter borough connections in assessing open space deficiencies and addressing needs.

13.5 The further actions suggested in Section 12 range from ground level tasks to complex mechanisms requiring the support of other organisations. A key to progressing the strategy forward is to undertake six monthly reviews of these further actions to ensure their implementation. This could be achieved by incorporating the further actions into Departmental service and business plans as well as integrating the findings and further actions into Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.