Chapter 4 • A Safe, Green and Healthy Borough

LEISURE AND RECREATION

OPEN LAND

4.171 This Section considers the protection and use of open land. Many open areas can potentially be used for a variety of purposes including nature conservation, informal and formal recreation. The most appropriate use will vary with the circumstances of the site - or part of the site. This is particularly true of areas near the River Wandle, which should be seen as a community resource for preservation of the natural landscape and habitat, and as a potential vehicle for informal recreation through the provision of cycling routes and walkways.

POLICY L.1: INFORMAL RECREATION

THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE INFORMAL RECREATION ON AREAS OF OPEN LAND, PROVIDED THERE IS NO UNACCEPTABLE CONFLICT WITH NATURE CONSERVATION, IMPORTANT LANDSCAPES, THE OPEN NATURE OF THE LAND AND THE NECESSARY PROVISION OF FORMAL SPORTS FACILITIES. IF LAND IS EARMARKED FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, SUCH ACTIVITIES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED ON A TEMPORARY BASIS.

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE OPENING UP OF AREAS OF PRIVATE OPEN LAND FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND INFORMAL RECREATION. THIS WILL BE PURSUED THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND USE OF PLANNING OBLIGATIONS IN RELATION TO APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT ON ANY LAND WHERE IT IS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE TO DO SO.

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR WALKING AND CYCLING AS PART OF PROPOSALS RELATED TO OPEN LAND. THE COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK THE COMPLETION OF THE LEISURE WALKING ROUTES AND CROSS-BOROUGH CYCLING ROUTES, AS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.

Justification

4.172 Informal recreation has considerable health benefits in terms of physical and mental well-being. This includes cycling and walking, dog walking, jogging and picnicking. More people will be likely to participate in informal recreation than organised sports. For many people such as those on lower incomes, older persons and single parents for example, the provision of pleasant, easily accessible areas for informal recreation - particularly walking - is vital to improving the quality of life. This Policy contributes towards the achievement of sustainability objectives in relation to providing opportunities for leisure and recreation for all, as outlined in Part 1 of this Plan.

4.173 More opportunities for informal recreation need to be provided throughout the Borough in addition to the traditional formal sports provision. The Council wishes to encourage informal recreation through the promotion of walking and cycling routes as outlined in Policy L.2 below and Policy WC.1 of Chapter 6. The proposed routes are shown on the Proposals Map. The routes will be designed to avoid damage or disturbance to the natural habitat.
POLICY L.2: POLICY FOR WALKING ROUTES

ANY DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION OR IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEISURE WALKING ROUTES, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, UNLESS IT WOULD INVOLVE ‘GREENING’ OF WALKS THROUGH BUILT AREAS OR THE PROVISION OF SAFE AND CONVENIENT CROSSING FACILITIES.

THE LEISURE WALKING ROUTES PASS THROUGH AND LINK OPEN SPACES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

(i) ALONG THE WANDLE VALLEY (THE WANDLE TRAIL);
(ii) ALONG THE BEVERLEY BROOK (THE BEVERLEY BROOK WALK);
(iii) BETWEEN THE BEVERLEY BROOK AND THE RIVER WANDLE; AND
(iv) AROUND INNER LONDON (THE LONDON CAPITAL RING).

Justification

4.174 The walking routes link open spaces, and they are based on the “London Walks” concept promoted by the London Walking Forum. The routes will be developed and maintained to an acceptable standard defined by the Forum. They will be waymarked, and publicised by means of interpretive panels and leaflets. These walks are valuable as a leisure resource, but they also provide opportunities for walking to school, to work, to shops, or to public transport facilities. Crossing facilities will be provided at major roads in order to permit them to be used safely, and to avoid the need for lengthy detours. Where appropriate they may also be used by cyclists. Proposals will be subject to consideration of the impact on the environment.

POLICY L.3: WATER ENVIRONMENTS

ALONG RIVER CORRIDORS, DEVELOPMENTS OR PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE OF USE FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES, INCLUDING WATER-BASED RECREATION, WILL BE PERMITTED, PROVIDED THAT THE PROPOSAL ON ITS OWN, OR CUMULATIVELY OR AS A RESULT OF INCREASED PUBLIC ACCESS WOULD NOT HARM OR PREJUDICE:

(i) SENSITIVE AREAS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.
(ii) WALKING OR CYCLING ROUTES SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.
(iii) CORPORATE STRATEGIES FOR THE RIVER CORRIDOR AREA.
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Justification

4.175 The Borough’s river corridors are an important natural resource in terms of their effect on the local ecosystem and floodplain, providing examples of particular habitats and landscapes. In many cases they also have the potential to perform a function as a leisure facility. This Policy is aimed at achieving sustainability objective number 10 as outlined in Part 1 of this Plan, namely; ‘Balance the needs between the recreation and conservation uses of rivers and still waters’. Although many areas of these river corridors are covered by specific ecological designations, MOL, or Green Chain designations, this policy is intended to cover all areas of watercourses in the Borough irrespective of specific designations which are reflective of only one aspect of their function. The three main watercourses in the Borough are the River Wandle, the Beverley Brook and the Pyl Brook although this policy applies to all watercourses in Merton.

4.176 In addition to this Policy, the Council has specific policies aimed at achieving the establishment of identified leisure walking routes. There are also existing strategies in place along the London Wandle Valley Partnership area that should be taken account of. In implementing this Policy, the Council will take advice from the Environment Agency and other technical advisory bodies such as English Nature, the former London Ecology Unit and Sport England, where necessary, to consider the appropriateness of proposals.

POLICY L.4: RIVER WANDLE

APPLICATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF THE RIVER WANDLE WILL BE ASSESSED IN RELATION TO THE LONDON WANDLE VALLEY REGENERATION STRATEGY. WHERE APPROPRIATE IN RELATION TO THE SITE UNDER CONSIDERATION THE FOLLOWING MAY BE SOUGHT BY MEANS OF CONDITIONS AND/OR PLANNING OBLIGATIONS:

(i) IMPROVEMENT OF RIVERSIDE ACCESS FOR THE PUBLIC;

(ii) THE RETENTION, IMPROVEMENT AND/OR REINSTATEMENT OF NATURAL HABITATS, FORMER FLOOD PLAINS AND WATER COURSES;

(iii) LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS;

(iv) CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE COMPLETION OF THE WANDLE TRAIL.

Justification

4.177 The Wandle Valley is of strategic importance, not just for Merton, but for the whole of south/south-west London. It is an important structural element in the Borough and contributes to the physical character of the Borough. The area is also one where the Council and others are seeking to promote regeneration through the London Wandle Valley Partnership. A clean, well-used river corridor which provides a focus for the area and is promoted as a major walking and cycling route Borough will contribute to this regeneration.

4.178 The MOL designation recognises the strategic importance of the river corridor, particularly as a walking route in the London network. The river corridor is also designated as a Green Chain. However, there are parts of the river corridor area that are in need of environmental improvements. There are also areas where public access to this important resource is restricted. The Wandle passes through densely populated areas in Colliers Wood where there is a deficiency in public open space.
4.179 In view of the strategic importance of the Wandle Valley for regeneration and for walking and wildlife, the Council considers it important that public access to and along the river is increased and that the environment be upgraded. Walking and cycling routes should be completed along the Wandle. The opening up of the area to formal and informal recreation and for use as public open space will in general be encouraged. At the same time, the Council will be mindful of the balance to be maintained between recreation, wildlife and the other uses on and along the River. The Council will seek improvements to wildlife habitats and landscape improvements. The Council will take advice from bodies such as the Environment Agency, London Wandle Valley Partnership, English Nature, the former London Ecology Unit and Sport England, when seeking to strike such a balance.

**PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE**

**POLICY L.5: URBAN GREEN SPACE**

Development on Urban Green Spaces will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

(i) The land has no significant recreational, nature conservation, social, cultural or educational function or potential, no significant historical, structural or amenity value and is not located in area of public open space deficiency.

(ii) Equivalent open space provision can be made available in the same locality to meet the needs as the area of open space it will replace.

**Justification**

4.180 The Government’s advice in PPG17 (2002) sets out that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown that open space or buildings and land to be ‘surplus to requirements’. To show that an open space is surplus to requirements all functions that an open space can perform should be considered. The Council has recently undertaken a survey of its open space (Merton Open Space Study April 2002). The Merton Open Space Study has not identified any surplus open spaces. However further work is required to assess the open space needs of the local community. Until the Council’s assessment of needs is completed applicants would have to show through an independent assessment that land or buildings are surplus to requirements. Applicants would also have to show that the local community have been consulted and demonstrate that their proposals are widely supported.

4.181 Urban Green Spaces range in size from small incidental areas to larger areas of Metropolitan Open Land and the Council is concerned that these be protected regardless of ownership. They are a valuable resource which can be used by the community for a variety of purposes. They can provide attractive breaks in the built environment, cater for both passive and active leisure pursuits and contribute to nature conservation and ecology.

4.182 For the purposes of policies within this Plan, ‘Urban Green Space’ has the definition given by the former LPAC and within RPG3, namely:

“Open space to which public access is restricted or not formally established but which meets or is capable of meeting recreational or non-recreational needs within the urban area.”
4.183 Schedule 2 contains a list of all Urban Green Spaces over 0.4 ha (1 acre) in the Borough. Urban Green Spaces of 4 ha (10 acres) and over are shown on the Proposals Map. This Policy also applies to those open spaces that meet the above definition of Urban Green Space but are not listed in Schedule 2.

POLICY L.6: PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The loss of public open space to other uses will not be permitted, except where a development proposal will be ancillary to the recreational, cultural or social use of the open space or equivalent open space provision can be made either in the same locality or in an area deficient in public open space.

A development ancillary to the main use of the public open space will be expected to:

(i) Not diminish the open character of the space, nor reduce public access to it or result in or add to a deficiency in public open space.

(ii) Respect the landscape, historic, ecological and nature conservation value of the open space.

(iii) Where possible, increase public access, subject to impact on open character and the recreational and nature conservation functions of the land.

Justification

4.184 Open space plays an important role in the physical and mental well-being of the community. It is valuable in terms of sustainability in terms of equity as well as health-seeking to have adequate provision of open space around the Borough accessible to all. Its loss could lead to a deterioration in social, environmental and physical conditions, particularly in areas of open space deficiency.

4.185 When assessing applications for development on public open space, the Council will consider the effect on the character of the land and its recreational function, such as the provision of playing fields. The Council will take advice from relevant bodies on these factors, such as English Nature, the former London Ecology Unit, the London Wildlife Trust and Sport England.

4.186 The development of private sports facilities on public open space could lead to public usage being eliminated. A list of public open space over 0.4 ha (1 acre) in the borough is contained in Schedule 2: Open Spaces, together with a Open Space Hierarchy. Open spaces of 4 ha (10 acres) and over are shown on the Proposals Map. This Policy applies to all public open spaces and not just those listed in Schedule 2.

4.187 For the purposes of policies within this Plan, 'public open space' has the definition given by the former LPAC and within RPG3, namely:

"Public parks, commons, heaths and woodland and other open spaces with established and unrestricted public access and capable of being classified according to an open space hierarchy, though not necessarily publicly owned."
The London Borough of Merton - Unitary Development Plan

FIGURE 4.2
AREAS DEFICIENT IN LOCAL PARK PROVISION

- Local Parks
- District Parks
- Metropolitan Parks

Areas of the Borough over 400 metres from Local, District and Metropolitan Parks
Areas over 1200m from District or Metropolitan Parks

District Parks

Metropolitan Parks

Proposed District Parks

Areas currently beyond range of District or Metropolitan Parks which would be served by new District Park

The London Borough of Merton - Unitary Development Plan

FIGURE 4.3
AREAS DEFICIENT IN DISTRICT PARK PROVISION
This Policy therefore applies to all the parks and incidental open spaces owned and managed by the Council. It also includes the following privately owned open spaces which the public have free access to the majority of: Wimbledon Common, Mitcham Common and Morden Hall Park (owned by the National Trust). Policy L.8 refers to the open space hierarchy used in Merton.

The Council will produce plans and proposals to develop and enhance parks and work towards implementing them, and will work with owners to enter into management agreements for parks. The Council is working with neighbouring Boroughs of Sutton and Croydon, the Mitcham Common Conservators and Thames Water utilities to implement the masterplan for Wandle Valley Country Park in the Beddington/Mitcham area. The Natural Environment section in Chapter 4 provides more details of this and Policy NE.4 should be referred to. Merton's Open Space Strategy, when completed, will set out aims, objectives and actions to achieve enhancement to parks and open spaces within the Borough.

Schedule 2 shows the Open Space Hierarchy classification. This is the former LPAC classification, endorsed by Government guidance in RPG3. This hierarchy is used in the calculation of areas of deficiency shown on figures 4.2 - 4.3.

POLICY L.7: RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE

Development which will result in the loss of recreational open space, or of land once used as recreational open space will not be permitted except where sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site, and alternative provision of equivalent community value is made available.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that:

(i) The proposed development would not materially compromise the Borough’s position in providing strategically important outdoor sports facilities in south-west London;

(ii) The development would lead to an improved recreational provision or increased public access to the site and its facilities.

Justification

Public and private open space in Merton makes a very significant contribution to the open character and visual amenity of the Borough, providing valuable breaks in the built environment and areas of ecological importance. It is important to recognise the opportunities that open spaces, sports grounds and educational playing fields provide for the creation of wildlife conservation areas, and the Council will pay particular attention to the protection and enhancement of these areas. In doing so, the Council will seek advice from the appropriate agencies such as the London Wildlife Trust, English Nature and the GLA Biodiversity Unit.

The Government’s advice in PPG17 (2002) sets out that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown that open space or buildings and land to be ‘surplus
to requirements’. To show that an open space is surplus to requirements all functions that an open space can perform should be considered. Recent information is set out in a survey of Merton’s open space (Merton Open Spaces Study April 2002). The Merton Open Spaces Study has not identified any surplus open spaces. However further work is required to assess the open space needs of the local community. After this work is completed, an Open Space Strategy will be drafted and subject to public consultation. It is therefore considered important to maintain existing facilities where possible and to seek to up-grade them and increase their accessibility to a wider public. It is particularly important to recognise Merton’s key strategic role, as identified by Sport England, in providing outdoor sports facilities for Inner London areas which are deficient in pitch provision. Where development proposals for private open space are brought forward, careful consideration of the public sports, recreation and other community benefits that will arise will be necessary in order to retain some of the amenity value of the land and to reduce the additional pressures that are often placed upon public open space and other public facilities as a result of a reduction in private facilities. Reference should also be made to Policy WC1 Increasing Walking. When assessing proposals, the Council will require developers to demonstrate the need for that development in terms of improvement of recreational provision and a financial justification. A list of private open space over 0.4 ha (1 acre) in the Borough is contained in Schedule 2: Open Spaces. Open spaces of, or in excess of 4 hectares (10 acres) are shown on the Proposals Map. This Policy applies to all recreational open spaces or land once used as recreational open space where public access is restricted (eg. Private playing fields, school playing fields etc.) and not just those listed in Schedule 2. Refer also to Policy.L.5: Urban Green Space.

4.193 Until the Council’s assessment of open space needs is completed applicants would have to show through an independent assessment that land or buildings are surplus to requirements. Applicants would also have to show that the local community have been consulted and demonstrate that their proposals are widely supported.

POLICY L.8: OPEN SPACE DEFICIENCIES

WHERE A DEVELOPMENT IN AN AREA DEFICIENT IN OPEN SPACE (INDICATED ON MAPS 4.2 AND 4.3) WOULD LEAD TO PRESSURE FOR ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE OR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WILL BE SOUGHT. WHERE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE PROVISION ON SITE, INVESTMENT OR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE OR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WILL BE SOUGHT IN THE DEFICIENCY AREA.

Justification

4.194 The former LPAC’s Open Space Hierarchy (1994) recommends that people should have access to a variety of types of open spaces at certain distances from their homes. This Hierarchy has been used to calculate the areas of deficiency shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. The northern and north-eastern area of the Borough is deficient in terms of access to a District Park of more than 20 hectares (49 acres). This area of the Borough encompasses the largely 19th Century housing areas of Colliers Wood and South Wimbledon, where population densities are high and leisure provision is poor. The area also has higher than average proportions of young children and lone parents. The health benefits of accessible recreation facilities are well known.
4.195 Although there is no realistic possibility of providing a public open space area which would be the required size for a District Park in the Colliers Wood area, the Council will work towards the provision of additional open space in order to amalgamate existing parks in that area, to create a park that would be of equivalent value. In pursuit of this, the disused Wandle Valley Sewage Works now provides a public open space of high landscape and nature conservation value, and it is proposed that additional space can be provided at the Thames Water site on Byegrove Road to unite open spaces at Wandle Park, Wandle Meadow Nature Reserve and Garfield Road in order to create the equivalent of a District Park. The implications of creating a District Park in the area in terms of existing areas of deficiency are shown on Figure 4.3.

4.196 The Council will seek additional provision of public open space within the areas of deficiency as part of planning agreements in relation to appropriate development proposals in the vicinity, particularly where it is considered that the proposal will place an additional strain on leisure facilities in the area.

POLICY L.9: CHILDREN’S PLAY FACILITIES

The Council will seek the provision of an adequate level of children’s outdoor play facilities throughout the Borough and will require provision for children’s play, or contribution towards providing children’s play facilities in association with new housing developments, as appropriate, particularly in areas deficient in public play facilities. In all schemes with a significant family housing component, the whole environment should be designed so as to permit children to play in safety.

Justification

4.197 Play is an important part of a child’s development. Research has shown that a child will travel up to 200m when alone and up to 1,200m when accompanied by an adult. The Council is aiming to provide a children’s playground within 800m of every home and particularly in areas of high child density, such as the north-east of the Borough. Additionally, the Council wishes to ensure that new housing developments do not create unacceptable pressures on existing play facilities or become new ‘areas of deficiency’. Accordingly, specific play areas will be sought from housing developments that provide for family housing. The Council will seek planning agreements in relation to such developments in order to secure these facilities. Supplementary Planning Guidance - New Residential Development - provides more detail on the use of planning agreements in relation to housing developments.

POLICY L.10: ALLOTMENTS

The Council will grant permission for development which will result in the loss of allotments where it can be shown that:

(i) the site is ‘surplus to requirements’ for allotment use, and development would lead to significant community benefits and

(ii) the site is ‘surplus to requirements’ for other open space functions.
4.198 Allotments are an important component of sustainable development, being a potential source of food production and leisure activity for many persons without adequate private gardens. They serve as a break in the built environment and contribute to the character of the Borough. They may also provide nature conservation benefits. There has been some loss of allotments to development in the past, with the result that the Council now has barely sufficient allotment space. The occupancy rate is generally high (84% in 1999) and there is a long waiting list for allotments.

4.199 For the reasons outlined, it is considered important to preserve and enhance the current stock of allotments in the Borough wherever possible. PPG17 seeks to maintain an adequate supply of open space, including allotments. The existing and potential value of open space (including allotments) for recreational and other open space purposes should be assessed and unless surplus to requirements they should not be built on. Where they are surplus to requirements they may be developed for other purposes. Schedule 2: Open Spaces, contains details of allotments, with those of 4.0 hectares (10 acres) or more shown on the proposals maps as open space. This Policy applies to all allotments, not just those in Schedule 2.

SPORT AND RECREATION

POLICY L.11: THE PROTECTION OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND LAND

THE LOSS OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND LAND OTHER THAN THOSE THAT FALL WITHIN THE SCOPE OF POLICIES L.5, L.6, L.7 AND L.10, TO OTHER USES WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT:

(i) THERE IS NO CURRENT OR FUTURE DEMAND FOR THAT FACILITY; AND

(ii) THE SITE IS NOT SUITABLE FOR ALTERNATIVE RECREATIONAL OR OTHER COMMUNITY USE;

Justification

4.200 There can be pressures to redevelop sites with recreation facilities for other uses. However, there is a growing demand for recreation in the population as a whole and the Council is seeking a wider provision of recreational facilities across the Borough. Provision of suitable accessible facilities is beneficial for the promotion of health and sustainable development objectives. It contributes to enhancing the quality of life of the population. For these reasons, the Council will seek to protect existing recreational facilities wherever possible. However, it is recognised that some facilities may be in unsuitable locations. In these situations, the Council may permit a change of use to another activity, with the provision of an alternative recreational use or community facility generally being the first priority. Within this general rule, the merits of any redevelopment proposals will be considered in the light of the suitability of the site for various uses and any site designations or other relevant proposals or policies within this Plan. The Council will take advice from Sport England and other relevant bodies regarding current and future demands for the facility.
POLICY L.12: PROVISION OF NEW FACILITIES

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF SPORTING AND OTHER RECREATION AND LEISURE FACILITIES IN LOCATIONS WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBLE TO LARGE NUMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. WHEN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR FACILITIES THE COUNCIL WILL HAVE REGARD TO THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

(i) THE EXTENT OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE;
(ii) THE EXTENT OF ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC LIABLE TO BE GENERATED;
(iii) THE ADEQUACY OF ACCESS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT, WALKING AND CYCLING;
(iv) THE ADEQUACY OF PROPOSED PARKING AND TRAFFIC ACCESS IN RELATION TO THE SCALE AND NATURE OF THE PROPOSED USE;
(v) THE SIZE AND CHARACTER OF THE PROPOSAL AND THE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA;
(vi) THE EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL ON LOCAL AMENITIES.
(vii) THE EXTENT TO WHICH MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN LEISURE ACTIVITIES ARE INCLUDED.

WHERE LAND IS EARMARKED FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, RECREATION AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES WILL BE FAVOURABLY CONSIDERED ON A TEMPORARY BASIS ONLY. (SEE ALSO POLICY L.1).

Justification

4.201 The provision of a wide range of recreation and leisure facilities is to be encouraged. There is a growing demand for an ever increasing variety of sport, recreation, leisure and entertainment facilities which needs to be provided for. The Council will encourage the provision of facilities that will be accessible to large numbers of the population in terms of location, modes of access and availability for general public use. It is important to ensure that new facilities open up new opportunities for recreation and do not exclude sections of the population. The provision of recreational facilities would work towards the sustainability objectives of achieving equity and access for all persons to cultural, leisure and recreation activities as outlined in Part 1 of the UDP.

4.202 Facilities which attract a large number of visitors should be located so as to minimise traffic generation, in accordance with sustainability objectives to minimise the need to travel. Facilities should be accessible by a choice of modes of travel and ideally located within town centres, local centres or other areas of high accessibility. Town centres are the most suitable locations for some types of development, such as cinemas. The extent of car parking provision required will vary depending on the location, and the Council will seek to apply maximum standards appropriate to the level of accessibility to the site. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Highways and Parking provides guidance on this subject. The appropriateness of the location will depend on the scale and nature of the facility and use proposed. If the site is designated for future development, developments will only be permitted on a temporary basis. Other factors that will be
taken into account are the visual impact of the facility proposed and the potential effect on local amenities, such as generation of traffic pollution or unacceptable levels of disturbance to nearby residents.

4.203 Some types of facilities and uses have a degree of interaction with other leisure, entertainment, retailing and eating uses. These are primarily indoor activities such as social clubs, snooker halls, ten-pin bowling, laser quest and public houses. These types of uses are considered in more detail in Policy L.13. Chapter 5 of the Plan also contains policies relating to these types of uses and intensive and large-scale leisure/entertainment uses (see policies TC.1, TC.2 TC.3 and TC.7).

4.204 Despite rising numbers of people participating in leisure and recreation activities, the London Council for Sport and Recreation have identified that participation rates are below average for women, elderly people, people in unskilled manual jobs, unemployed people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. PPG17 states that opportunities for recreation should be available for everyone, including the elderly and those with disabilities. Sport England supports the concept of sport for all and in its 1999 Land Use Planning Policy Statement, states that development plans should contain policies which take account of the recreational needs of all members of the population, particularly the young and elderly, disabled people and people from ethnic minority groups. They state that plans should seek to enhance the accessibility of sports facilities for these groups in the interests of providing equality of access. The Council supports this view which accords with the sustainability objective of achieving equity.

4.205 Many existing facilities are in need of refurbishment and modernisation to attract new customers. When planning permission is required for redevelopment, the Council will use this as an opportunity to achieve improvement to the facility as a whole. Many groups in society, such as the elderly, single parents and women are discouraged from attending facilities because of the lack of facilities or the security fears. Measures which improve the quality of ancillary facilities on offer and security on and around the site will be encouraged.

4.206 Measures which could help encourage increased participation in leisure and recreation activities include full access to new and existing facilities for people with disabilities, child care facilities, play supervision facilities, improved safety and security through lighting, landscaping, signage etc., and improvements to ancillary facilities such as changing rooms.

4.207 Some facilities fall into disrepair or are underused for various reasons. In these cases, the Council will encourage the dual use of these facilities for additional complementary activities to increase the viability of the facility. Examples of these are uses as community meeting halls and after-school play groups.
Arts, culture and entertainment facilities

4.208 Some types of recreation and leisure uses share common characteristics with some forms of arts, culture and entertainment uses. Community halls for example are often used for a variety of purposes ranging from indoor sports, to social clubs and as meeting rooms for various clubs and religious groups. Nevertheless, it is considered that there are some important differences in their character, location and use, which justify particular policies. Some examples of the types of uses and facilities that this Section is concerned with are as follows: facilities for arts, culture and entertainment; community halls and religious meeting places; libraries, museums; cinemas, ten-pin bowling, ‘family entertainment centres’; live entertainment venues, nightclubs; laser quest; bingo halls; public houses and social clubs. This list is indicative and should not be considered as exclusive.

POLICY L.13: IMPROVING PROVISION

WHERE POSSIBLE THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK ADDITIONAL PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR COMMUNITY ARTS, CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT USES BY:

(i) ENCOURAGING PROVISION OF SUCH FACILITIES IN MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS;

(ii) SEEKING THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR COMMUNITY AND ARTS, CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT USES WITHIN MAJOR REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES;

(iii) SEEKING TO SECURE APPROPRIATE PROVISION BY MEANS OF PLANNING OBLIGATIONS IN RELATION TO RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.

WHEN DEALING WITH APPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY OR ARTS, CULTURE OR ENTERTAINMENT USES IN GENERAL, THE COUNCIL WILL HAVE REGARD TO THE FACTORS OUTLINED IN POLICY L.12. IN ADDITION, THESE USES WILL BE PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGED IN TOWN CENTRE LOCATIONS WHERE THERE IS NO CONFLICT WITH OTHER POLICIES AND PROPOSALS IN THE PLAN.

DUE TO THE SPECIALIST NATURE OF SOME OF THESE USES, THE COUNCIL MAY SEEK TO RESTRICT THE PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS OF THESE USES WITHIN THE D2 USE CLASS, WHERE IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO PROTECT THE AMENITIES OF THE AREA AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OTHER POLICIES AND PROPOSALS WITHIN THIS PLAN.

Justification

4.209 Community, arts, culture and entertainment uses perform important roles in the life of the community and the Council wishes to support their development wherever possible. Community halls serve a variety of functions as meeting places for various groups and can act as a focal point for the community. Libraries also serve a similar purpose. The Government’s lifelong learning programme stresses the role of libraries as a community resource providing a variety of services including books and information, computer access and support for the unemployed and older people and education services.
4.210 A vibrant arts, culture and entertainment scene is an important factor in the quality of life of the population and creates employment opportunities. RPG3, Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities encourages the promotion of these uses and recognises the important contribution they make to London's economy. The 1999 Town Centre Capacity Study indicated that there is demand for more entertainment facilities in the Borough's town centres. It is considered that most of these uses would be most appropriate for town centres for the following reasons:

(i) These activities can contribute greatly to the vitality and viability of town centres. Many of these activities are linked to other entertainment, leisure and shopping activities and tourism activities and would benefit from being grouped together. Government guidance PPG6 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' supports this view;

(ii) These activities often require the large numbers of visitors found in town centre locations to ensure their viability.

(iii) There is a need to reduce the amount of unnecessary journeys and the number of journeys per-se. The location of activities in groups that allow for multi-purpose trips and in areas that can be easily accessed by public transport would help to achieve this. PPG6 and PPG13 'Transport' support this aim.

(iv) Many of these facilities generate a large number of visitors at certain times and may operate late at night. For these reasons and the potential for traffic generation, they are generally considered unsuitable for location in residential areas.

4.211 Arts, cultural and entertainment facilities are often very specific in terms of their size, types of operation, hours of use and impact on the amenities of the surrounding area. Therefore it may be appropriate to restrict the use of the site to the particular nature of the activities permitted. The Council may also consider it appropriate to restrict the permitted development rights of such facilities where a change of use to another D2 use would have a detrimental impact on UDP proposals for the area or for the general operation of policies within the Plan.

4.212 Chapter 5 of this Plan provides more information on the Council's planning policies in town centres. The role of large-scale leisure activities is also considered in that Chapter.

**POLICY L.14: COMMUNITY AND RELIGIOUS MEETING PLACES**

The Council will consider applications for the development of community and religious meeting places favourably having regard to the following criteria:

(i) The size and design of the development proposed;

(ii) Its effect on the amenities of adjoining properties;

(iii) The effect on the character of the area;

(iv) The adequacy of access and parking facilities;

(v) The accessibility of the site by public transport and walking and cycling;

(vi) The need to protect the existing use of the site.
4.213 The Borough is culturally diverse and there is a need for those different cultures to have meeting places to practice their cultural and religious traditions. Meeting places need to be conveniently located in relation to their catchment populations. There may be a lack of suitable sites for particular needs and the Council will view any applications sympathetically in relation to this. However, the scale of any proposals should be appropriate to the area in which they will be located. This would be particularly important to limit the effect on the amenities of nearby occupiers. The Council will also consider the need to protect the existing use of the site and any buildings on it. In particular, changes of use from residential will not normally be permitted.

**POLICY L.15: PROTECTION OF FACILITIES**

The Council will not grant permission for development which will result in the loss of arts, cultural, entertainment and religious facilities in use by the community, except where the present use is an inappropriate use of that land, or suitable replacement facilities are provided in a location close to the original site or to the community served.

**Justification**

4.214 There are often pressures for the redevelopment and change of use of cinemas, public houses, meeting halls and other social facilities for non-leisure or community purposes. In a situation of growing demand for art, culture and entertainment facilities, any net loss of these facilities is regrettable. There may, however, be circumstances where redevelopment may bring about other environmental benefits in the area, particularly where the facility is currently inappropriately located. In these circumstances, the Council will seek to ensure that replacement facilities are included as part of the scheme either on the site or close by. The Council will liaise with the London Arts Board and other national and local bodies as appropriate when considering proposals involving a loss of facilities. Loss of public houses, especially those that have other community uses (meeting rooms etc.), in residential areas will be resisted, except where it is no longer economically viable and there is equal alternative provision in a nearby, accessible location.

**POLICY L.16: PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HOUSES**

The Council will not permit the redevelopment or change of use of established public houses to other uses except where:

(i) The applicant can show that the public house is no longer economically viable

(ii) The applicant can show that reasonable attempts have been made to market the site as a public house

(iii) There is alternative provision within the local area
4.215 Government guidance such as PPG1 promotes sustainable patterns of development and in particular recognises the importance of a mix of uses in creating diversity and vitality in urban areas, and helping to minimise the need to travel. It is therefore important to retain a range of facilities in residential areas for this reason.

4.216 Public houses in residential areas can provide a valuable community facility and some public houses have community/function rooms that can be used for a variety of uses. In recognition of the fact that public houses can play a valuable role as a local and community facility established public houses should be protected from redevelopment or change of use. This policy would not apply to public houses within designated town centres (as shown on the proposals map).

4.217 In order to satisfy the tests set out in this policy applicants need to provide evidence clearly showing that the public house is no longer economically viable and that the property has been marketed as a public house for a reasonable period usually no less than a period of 2 years. This is likely to mean showing evidence of the appointment of property consultant/estate agent to handle the marketing of the property and records of how and where the property has been marketed. Applicants may also carry out an assessment of the needs of the local community for community facilities to show that the public house is no longer needed and that alternative provision is available in the area.