

Introduction

- 9.1 This Chapter sets out policies for protecting important open areas, and providing for recreation and tourism. Further guidance is available in the City Council's strategy for tourism, and emerging strategy for sport and recreation.
- 9.2 The main objectives of these policies are to:
- Encourage the provision of most recreation and visitor facilities in the settlements;
 - Protect important open areas for their amenity and recreation value;
 - Encourage improvements in recreational space to meet the Local Plan's standard, and provide good quality, accessible facilities;
 - Ensure that new housing development makes appropriate provision for new and improved facilities;
 - Encourage leisure buildings and visitor facilities in the settlements where they respect their size and character, with facilities attracting large numbers of people being located in accordance with the sequential approach;
 - Allow recreation and tourist facilities to be accommodated in the countryside where they can be accommodated without harm to the local environment.

Protecting Important Open Areas

- 9.3 The Plan aims to concentrate development for recreation and tourism within existing towns and villages, while retaining their green spaces where they have a local amenity or recreational value.
- 9.4 Policy RT.1 protects areas important for their amenity value, and Policy RT.2 protects areas that are of significant local recreational value. Policy RT.1 and Policy RT.2 apply to settlements with defined policy boundaries (subject to Policy H.3).

9.5 Where important open areas of amenity value are on the edge of settlements subject to Policy H.3, they are excluded from policy boundaries and will be subject to countryside policies.

9.6 Sites currently used for recreation are evaluated in accordance with the Local Plan's recreational standard (see paragraph 9.15 and Table 5). All such sites, including those subject to countryside policies, are identified in the Winchester District Open Space Strategy, which is a background document to this Plan. Most recreation areas in the countryside represent the main recreational resource for the nearby communities.

Important amenity areas

9.7 Open areas with a significant amenity value help define the character of towns and villages and Policy RT.1 protects them from development that would compromise this value.

Policy RT.1

The development of buildings and hard surfaced areas will not be permitted within the open areas with an important amenity value, defined on the Proposals and Inset Maps.

Where there are substantial existing buildings or hard surfaced areas adjoining and within the same curtilage as an important open area, additional buildings or extensions to the main building will only be permitted where:

- the use is related and ancillary to the function of the main building;*
- their location is well-related to the main building;*
- the contribution of the open area to the character of the wider area is maintained or enhanced.*

9.8 Policy RT.1 does not apply to churchyards which contain listed buildings and are within Conservation Areas, since their character and appearance is adequately controlled by designated Conservation Area and listed building controls.

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9.9 Some important open areas adjoin, and are within the curtilages of, substantial buildings. In these instances, Policy RT.1 excludes the area covered by the main buildings, car parking and circulation areas. Occasionally users of such properties, such as schools or other institutions, need additional buildings or extensions. This may be acceptable where the development can be accommodated without harm to the appearance of the open area, and its contribution to the character of the wider area.

Important recreational space

9.10 Existing recreational space must be retained to maintain adequate provision for the settlements and its loss will be resisted.

Policy RT.2

Development proposals or changes of use will not be permitted where they would result in the loss or reduction of the recreational value of the important recreational areas within settlements which are subject to Policy H.3 of this Plan, as identified on the Proposals and Inset Maps.

Within these areas, the development of additional, ancillary buildings or hard-surfaced areas will only be permitted where the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the recreational value of the site would be maintained or enhanced. Any retained or replacement provision would need to be of at least equal community benefit, in terms of the facilities provided, potential use, location, suitability and availability.

9.11 Where the Planning Authority is satisfied that limited development could be accommodated without harm to the recreational value of the area, and within the terms of the Plan's other policies (in particular Policy RT.1) or, exceptionally, where a facility could acceptably be replaced completely, permission may be granted. However, any alternative provision needs to be secured and be able to provide at least the community recreational benefit of the area to be lost.

This will be measured in terms of the facilities and amount of land available, the uses it can accommodate, its availability, and its location in relation to the community it serves. In the case of educational establishments that are also subject to the provisions of Policy RT.1, Policy RT.2 will apply only to playing fields, all-weather pitches and hard surfaced open games courts.

Smaller important open spaces

9.12 In addition to identified open areas, there are often other smaller areas of open space which are an intrinsic part of the surrounding housing. Areas of open space of less than 0.4 hectares are too small to be separately identified on the Proposals and Inset Maps, but they have generally been provided in conjunction with the surrounding development, contributing to its appearance, and providing opportunities for informal recreation. Where they have been well-used for this purpose over a long period of time, they should be retained. They should only be developed if the buildings to which they relate are redeveloped. Where this takes place, new open areas should be created in accordance with other Policies (particularly DP.3, DP.4, DP.5 and RT.4).

Policy RT.3

Built development will not be permitted on important small areas of informal open space within housing developments, where they are in active use, well maintained and contribute substantially to the appearance of the surrounding area.

Improving Recreational Space in the Settlements

9.13 Every community in the District should have access to appropriate amounts of recreational space to meet their present and future needs, conveniently located.

The recreational space standard

9.14 The Local Planning Authority has adopted a minimum standard of provision for the

settlements of 2.8 hectares (7 acres) of recreational space for every 1000 residents.

- 9.15 This standard includes land for children’s play and sports grounds, based on the National Playing Fields Association’s recommended minimum standard for outdoor playing space (2.4 hectares per 1000 population). The provision of space for informal recreation is also important, and the Local Plan standard requires provision at a standard of 0.4 ha per 1000 population (see Table 5).
- 9.16 The Winchester District Open Space Strategy identifies the existing provision of children’s play areas and sports grounds. It also identifies deficiencies in quantitative and qualitative terms on a parish basis and is updated annually. This reflects local requirements, although the quantitative assessment of deficiencies is based on the NPFA standard as described in paragraphs 9.14 and 9.15. The Council is currently undertaking a District-wide audit of a wider range of open space and recreation facilities and a needs assessment of the requirements of residents and visitors, in accordance with the advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, published in 2002.

Table 5: Minimum requirements for recreational space

Category	Space required per 1000 population (hectares)
Children’s play	0.8 (to include equipped playgrounds, other opportunities for outdoor play and casual play space)
Sports grounds	1.6 (of which at least 1.2ha should be for pitch sports)
General use	0.4
TOTAL	2.8

- 9.17 The use and design of recreational space and its location in relation to where people live is as important as the amount of land available.

Facilities for children should cater for children of all ages, and be provided within easy walking distance of housing areas, without the need to cross barriers such as major roads. The Local Planning Authority will follow the guidance of the National Playing Fields Association in this respect, as set out in its “Six Acre Standard” document.

Recreational space for new housing development

- 9.18 New housing development should incorporate or provide for sufficient recreational space and facilities to meet the needs of its residents. Wherever possible, provision should be an integral part of the development. It should be appropriate to the needs of the residents and conveniently located. If some of the provision has to be made off-site, a financial contribution may be required, to allow facilities to be provided or improved in a suitable location nearby (see also Chapter 14).

Policy RT.4

Where public recreational space and facilities are deficient, residential development that accords with other relevant policies of this Plan will only be permitted where appropriate amounts of space and facilities are provided for children’s play, sports grounds and general use, in accordance with the Local Plan’s standard of 2.8 hectares per 1,000 population. The provision should be well-related to the housing development it serves, but the exact form and type should take into account the nature and size of the development.

- 9.19 The detailed requirements for the provision or improvement of recreational space and facilities will be based on the Local Plan’s minimum requirement, as set out in Table 5. Any financial contribution required will be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development, as required by Government advice.
- 9.20 The City Council has assessed the adequacy of recreational space and facilities throughout the District in detail. This

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assessment takes account of the existing recreational land available, its accessibility from the main housing areas, and the quality and standard of existing children's play facilities, sports grounds and areas for general recreational use.

- 9.21 In areas where the type and/or amount of provision is deficient when assessed against the criteria above, new housing will generate additional demands. In these cases the Local Planning Authority will require open space provision on-site, or, where this is not possible, an appropriate financial contribution from developers to provide or improve facilities in an appropriate location nearby.
- 9.22 The City Council's Open Space Strategy identifies deficiencies in the area, standard, quality or accessibility of children's play and sports facilities. It also suggests how additional recreational demands created by new housing development could be met within each Parish and within Winchester City. These suggestions take account of the anticipated scale and location of new housing development over the period of this Local Plan. The Strategy is revised annually, and supplements this Local Plan. New areas of open space provided as a result of Policy RT.4, or through alternative means, will be included when they are in recreational use. The Strategy will be used to assess the additional need for open space generated by each housing development.
- 9.23 A considerable amount of housing development in the District takes place on small sites. On sites accommodating less than 15 dwellings, it may not be feasible or appropriate to provide recreational space on-site. If, however, provision is to keep pace with housing development, these small housing sites should make a contribution, where the provision for children's play or sports ground facilities in that locality is lacking or deficient in size, location or quality, in the same way as larger housing sites. The City Council will be guided in its assessment by the District Open Space Strategy.

- 9.24 Developments of less than 15 dwellings will not be expected to provide space for general use off the proposed housing site. However, a contribution for children's play facilities and/or sports grounds will be sought where it is inappropriate to provide them on the site, there are already deficiencies in the facilities that exist in the locality, and where these facilities are fairly and reasonably related to the proposed development. Contributions will then be used to provide or improve the appropriate recreational facilities within a reasonable timescale.

Improvements in recreational provision

- 9.25 Policy RT.5 promotes improvements in recreational provision generally in all the settlements. It applies where there are shortages of recreational land when measured against the minimum standard, but also where the quality, standard, and distribution of facilities needs to be improved.
- 9.26 It also applies to particular areas of land adjacent to the larger settlements with the most serious shortfalls. Land is allocated in the Plan to meet these shortfalls, to improve ease of access to facilities, and to meet the needs of development taking place during this Plan period:
- at Bushfield Camp, Winchester;
 - north and west of Courtenay Road, Winchester;
 - north of Stockbridge Road/west of Littleton Road, Winchester;
 - at Pondsides Lane, Bishop's Waltham;
 - east of Thompson's Lane, Denmead;
 - east of Forest Road, Denmead;
 - south-east of Hookpit Farm Lane, Kings Worthy;
 - west of Arlebury Park, New Alresford;
 - north of Solomon's Lane, Waltham Chase; and
 - east of Mill Lane, Wickham.

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The City Council will work with the relevant Parish Councils and community representatives within the Winchester town area to secure the appropriate recreational use of these sites. All these areas, identified on the Proposals and Inset Maps, are located in the countryside in policy terms and their development for recreation will therefore be subject to the countryside policies of the Local Plan.

Policy RT.5

Planning permission will be granted for improvements in recreational land and facilities and land is reserved for the provision of new facilities within the areas listed in paragraph 9.26 and defined on the Proposals and Inset Maps. Schemes should be designed to accommodate shortfalls of children's play and sports facilities identified in the area, and have regard to any relevant proposals in the District Open Space Strategy.

- 9.27 Where recreational land deficiencies are less significant, proposals are contained in the Winchester District Open Space Strategy only. The Strategy provides annually updated details of the facilities in each parish and in Winchester. It identifies where the provision is inadequate and suggests improvements to meet present and future needs. The City Council will work with the Parish Councils to secure these smaller scale improvements.
- 9.28 All children's play facilities should be within easy reach of the housing areas they serve, and make provision for children of all ages. They should be located so that there is no need to cross an obstacle, such as a major road. There are areas that would benefit from additional equipped play areas, should suitable opportunities arise, and such provision will be encouraged.

Policy RT.6

The development of children's play facilities, particularly equipped play areas, will be permitted on suitable sites within the settlements, especially in areas where there is a shortfall in provision or where there is no reasonable access to an existing facility.

- 9.29 There is under-provision of playing pitches throughout the District, and special encouragement will be given to increasing provision in settlements where this is most significant.
- 9.30 Playing fields owned by the Local Education Authority or private organisations can make an important contribution to the availability of pitches, particularly at times of peak demand (generally at weekends). The City Council will encourage the public use of playing field facilities owned by the Education Authority or private organisations, outside the hours of use by the main establishment. The location of school playing fields means they are often particularly well placed to meet this need.

Policy RT.7

The development of recreational facilities that widen the public use of playing fields provided for educational establishments and private organisations will be permitted.

Recreational Land in the Countryside

- 9.31 The countryside is an important recreational resource, and a location outside a settlement may sometimes provide the only opportunity to improve the public recreation facilities available to nearby residents, or to provide facilities for activities requiring substantial areas of land.

Formal recreation

- 9.32 Areas of land specifically designed for organised sports, or for a number of recreation purposes, are known as formal recreation facilities. If located in the countryside, they should be well related to the settlements they serve, and carefully designed to maintain or enhance the character of the landscape.
- 9.33 The Local Planning Authority will generally only permit small-scale buildings in association with such facilities, although, where a particular need can be demonstrated in order for a facility to continue, it may be possible to permit larger facilities or

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structures, where they can be accommodated satisfactorily in the countryside. Larger facilities will not, however, be permitted in the Strategic and Local Gaps.

Policy RT.8

The development of formal recreation facilities will be permitted in suitable areas in the countryside, particularly in edge of settlement locations and within defined Strategic and Local Gaps, provided they:

- (i) *maintain or enhance the landscape character of the area;*
- (ii) *require only small-scale buildings and hard-surfaced areas ancillary to the primary open recreational use of the land, especially in the Strategic and Local Gaps.*

A larger scale building will only exceptionally be permitted where a local need can be demonstrated, and it can be accommodated without harm to the local environment.

Recreational routes

9.34 There are a number of different kinds of routes that are important for their recreational use, providing for activities that are not organised, and allowing public access to the wider countryside. These include public footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, and "byways open to all traffic" (BOATS). "Roads used as public paths" (RUPPs) also exist, although they are currently being re-classified as restricted byways. Informal recreation activities will be encouraged where they are compatible with the character of the countryside and further public access can be accommodated without harm to the area.

9.35 Improvements to these networks will be encouraged, particularly long distance routes and links with the settlements, which provide opportunities for appreciation of the countryside. Route reservations are made in appropriate locations (see Chapters 11-13 and Policy RT.10). Any accommodation proposed in association with a route should re-use an existing building, with new buildings permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

9.36 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) introduced new requirements for Local Highway Authorities to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Any development that would affect the rights of way network should refer to the relevant Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Policy RT.9

In order to extend and improve the rights of way network, development proposals associated with the improvement of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways will be permitted where they are appropriate to the character of the route and its setting, including the provision of:

- (i) *more durable surfaces and improved access for users;*
- (ii) *car and cycle parking/unboxing areas;*
- (iii) *opportunities for environmental appreciation and education;*
- (iv) *small-scale facilities for overnight accommodation adjacent to the route.*

Where a building is required, it should re-use a small-scale suitable existing building.

9.37 Parts of the former Meon Valley railway route are already well used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It provides the ideal opportunity for a long-distance bridleway linking the settlements in the Meon Valley, from West Meon to Wickham and Knowle.

Policy RT.10

A long-distance bridleway is proposed along that part of the former Meon Valley railway line within the District. Proposals to develop the proposed route will need to meet the requirements of Policy RT.9.

Equestrian development

9.38 Equestrian enterprises generally require a countryside location, and frequently include built facilities such as stables, riding schools or studs. There may be circumstances where they would be allowed within the countryside, but they

are not considered to be so vital to its economy or well-being as the primary industries of farming and forestry.

- 9.39 Where equestrian enterprises are permitted, the Plan seeks to minimise their impact by encouraging the re-use of existing buildings. Development proposals should accord with the City Council's advice in "Equestrian Development" (Winchester City Council, 1999), which supplements this Local Plan. Where new buildings are essential, they should be carefully designed and located to fit in with the landscape and/or adjoining buildings. The effect of the proposed development on neighbouring property and land uses must be taken into account, as well as the pressures that will be placed on existing footpaths, bridleways and roads. The Local Planning Authority will also need to be satisfied that adequate arrangements will be made for manure disposal, generally by frequent removal, so as to avoid disturbance to adjoining properties.
- 9.40 The presumption against residential development in the countryside applies to proposals related to equestrian uses (see Policy CE.22).

Policy RT.11

The development of stables, equestrian training areas, horse riding schools and/or riding centres or studs will be permitted, provided they:

- (i) where possible, make use of existing buildings which do not constitute eyesores, and do not involve the erection of new buildings which may harm the landscape appearance of the area;*
- (ii) do not harm the appearance or function of a Strategic or Local Gap;*
- (iii) are well related to existing or proposed bridleways and are not likely to cause or exacerbate conflicts between equestrians, vehicles or pedestrians;*
- (iv) do not have a detrimental affect on nearby properties or land uses (for*

example, because of inadequate manure disposal arrangements):

- (v) do not have an adverse effect on the appearance of the landscape by the use of inappropriate construction materials, boundary treatments, floodlighting and other infrastructure and, in the case of equestrian training areas, by the use of inappropriate surfacing materials.*

The development of residential accommodation in connection with equestrian development will be considered only where an essential need can be demonstrated, using the criteria for agricultural workers' mobile homes and dwellings set out in Policies CE.19 and CE.20 (see Policy CE.22). Therefore, in considering applications for equestrian development, the Local Planning Authority will have regard to the need for on-site accommodation and the adequacy of existing residential development.

Golf-related development

- 9.41 Facilities for golf may be accommodated in the countryside, where they do not cause unacceptable harm to the landscape quality and wildlife habitats, or to the surface water regime or water resources of the area. They are unlikely to be appropriate within the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty unless the proposal generally maintains or enhances the natural landscape quality. In view of the modifications to the landscape generally required, these circumstances will be rare. Preferred locations are those that are within easy reach of the larger settlements of the District.
- 9.42 Policy RT.12 provides for the development of golf facilities in appropriate circumstances, and generally accords with advice in the document jointly prepared by the County and District Councils of Hampshire: "Golf Course Development in Hampshire - Policy and Practice".

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Policy RT.12

Proposals for new golf courses or golf-related development will only be permitted where they:

- (i) are generally contained by landform and are carefully designed to reduce the impact on the environment, taking into account the landscape character, nature conservation interests, the surface water regime and water resources existing in the area;*
- (ii) incorporate safety features in the design, for users of the facility, surrounding land uses, public footpaths and bridleways in the area;*
- (iii) ensure that ancillary buildings or other structures are small-scale, well screened and relate satisfactorily to the character of the surrounding area. Wherever possible, a suitable existing building should be used;*
- (iv) would avoid detrimental effects on the farm structure in the locality.*

- 9.43 Proposals for golf-related development will require the submission of a detailed planning application so that the impact on the landscape, (including trees and hedgerows) and the wider environment (including nature conservation, surface water regime and the use of water resources), can be fully assessed. Proposals affecting an historic park or garden (see Policy HE.3) should be particularly carefully considered and should avoid the loss of key features, retain the essential character of the site and assist its protection, management and restoration.
- 9.44 The City Council wishes to encourage more “pay as you play” courses, since this is where there is the greatest need for new facilities. These are generally more likely to be acceptable in the countryside as they tend to require shorter holes and less ancillary facilities than other types of courses. In assessing the impact of proposed development, account will be taken of the need for floodlighting and its effect on the character of the area.

- 9.45 New dwellings proposed in association with golf course development will only be permitted where accommodation is essential for golf course staff, and where it is possible to convert a suitable existing building or to use an existing “tied” dwelling in the countryside.

Noisy sports

- 9.46 These sports include a wide variety of activities including motor, air, water and gun sports, and war games. They all generally require a location in the countryside. Many rely on the temporary use of land, operating within “permitted development” rights. Where a permanent site is required, planning permission will be needed.
- 9.47 Appropriate sites should generally be well contained by natural features and remote from housing. Derelict or degraded land, set-aside farming land, or land already subject to high ambient noise levels, is most likely to be suitable for such uses. Land within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is likely to be less acceptable, as such uses would generally be incompatible with the natural peaceful qualities of the countryside in this area.
- 9.48 Applicants are advised to discuss their requirements with the Local Planning Authority at an early stage, before submitting a planning application. The Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that the activity can be accommodated without harm to the character of the surrounding countryside or the amenities of adjacent occupiers.

Policy RT.13

Proposals for sites for noisy sports will only be permitted where they:

- (i) are well contained by landform or vegetation, and remote from existing housing;*
- (ii) incorporate safety features in the design of the proposal, particularly for spectators;*

- (iii) *ensure that ancillary buildings or other structures are small-scale, well screened and relate satisfactorily to the character of the surrounding area. Wherever possible, a suitable existing building should be used;*
- (iv) *include full supporting information with applications to show how the above criteria have been taken into account, including information on the site requirements of the activity; anticipated noise levels from all sources, including machines and public address systems; anticipated traffic levels, including the nature and frequency of spectator events, if applicable; and the need for permanent buildings, structures or hard surfaced areas.*

In certain circumstances, temporary permission may be granted for a limited period, to allow the effect of the development on the surrounding area to be assessed. The development of sites within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation will not be permitted.

- 9.49 Within Sites of Special Scientific Interest, no permitted development rights exist for war games, motorsports or clay pigeon shooting. Applications to undertake these activities within, or on sites adjacent to, such areas will only be acceptable where the nature conservation importance of the area can be satisfactorily protected.

Indoor Leisure Uses

Provision of leisure and entertainment buildings

- 9.50 The City Council encourages the provision of additional indoor leisure facilities in the District's towns and villages, where they can be accommodated without harm to the character of the settlements, and preferably can be used by both residents and visitors. These may include sporting, leisure, arts and entertainment buildings, and visitor attractions.

- 9.51 Facilities should be accommodated with regard to the sequential approach set out in PPS 6: Planning for Town Centres. Those facilities serving a wide area should be located within the main town and village centres identified in Policy SF.1 of this Plan. If no suitable central site is available, an edge of centre location or a site elsewhere in the built-up areas of these centres may be appropriate, if it is well related to the public transport network. Exceptionally, where it can be demonstrated that there is no suitable site within these built-up areas, facilities serving a wider area may be permitted on a site adjacent to a built-up area, provided that it is well related to public transport and the strategic road network.
- 9.52 Developments should be of a scale appropriate to the size of the centre and, particularly in Winchester and the other historic centres, should have regard to the character of the locality. Smaller facilities, such as pubs and restaurants, may be suitably located in local centres or in the smaller village centres, to broaden the range of existing facilities there.
- 9.53 The southern part of the District has poor accessibility to indoor sports facilities, and therefore additional provision has been made within the area by expanding the facilities at Swanmore School. Indoor provision has also been improved in Denmead, to serve the eastern part of the District. An increase in the joint use of indoor facilities currently in other uses, particularly educational uses, would also help to improve provision and will be encouraged.

Policy RT.14

Development proposals that improve the range of indoor sporting, leisure, arts and entertainment facilities, will be permitted on suitable sites within the town and village centres listed in Policy SF.1. Where it can be demonstrated that no central sites exist, development of an edge of centre site, or a site elsewhere in the built-up areas of these centres, may be permitted, provided it is appropriate in scale and nature to its surroundings and is accessible by a variety of modes of transport.

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Where proposals would serve a purely local function, development will be permitted in other settlements subject to Policy H.3 or, exceptionally, on suitable sites adjacent to their built-up areas, where they would also be subject to the countryside and natural environment policies of this Plan. Proposals should:

- (i) be of significant benefit to the local community;*
- (ii) be well related to public transport and the strategic road network;*
- (iii) respect the amenities of residents and other uses adjacent to the proposed site;*
- (iv) be appropriate to the size and character of the settlement.*

9.54 Elsewhere in the countryside, opportunities for indoor leisure provision will be limited to the change of use of existing buildings, and Policy CE.25 relates to the change of use of larger buildings. Policy RT.16 relates to the change of use of smaller buildings for visitor-related and leisure uses. Where an ancillary building is required in association with outdoor leisure uses, and no suitable building exists in the locality, a new building may exceptionally be permitted, provided that it is small-scale, essential to the efficient operation of the leisure use, and located in an unobtrusive, well screened position (see also Policies RT.8 and RT.9).

Tourism

9.55 Winchester is one of the premier tourist attractions in the country and attracts many tourists and day visitors. Elsewhere in the District, tourism is generally small-scale and related to the heritage qualities of the towns, villages and countryside. The City Council's policy is to encourage facilities for tourists, day visitors and the growing number of business visitors, where they can be accommodated without harm to the environment.

Facilities for visitors in the settlements

9.56 In Winchester and the rural settlements, the improvement of facilities and accommodation for visitors is encouraged where this can be achieved without detriment to the character of the towns and villages. The maintenance and improvement of historic attractions is particularly encouraged, since they benefit both visitors and the well being of the District. Proposals that seek to extend the range of accommodation, to suit all types of visitors, will also be welcomed. The scale of development proposed should take account of the size of the settlement in which it is proposed and the affect on the local environment.

Policy RT.15

The improvement or development of facilities and accommodation for visitors (which may be either serviced or self-catering), and hotel/conference facilities, will be permitted within the settlements provided:

- (i) the development is appropriate to the settlement in terms of size, layout and appearance, the character of surrounding development and the type of facility or accommodation to be provided;*
- (ii) the development is well related to public transport, and does not generate traffic inappropriate for local roads, nearby properties or settlements.*

Tourist and leisure facilities in the countryside

9.57 Proposals for new tourist attractions or leisure facilities in the countryside should generally be small-scale and re-use existing buildings, to ensure that activities are maintained at a level that can be accommodated without harm to the local environment.

Policy RT.16

The change of use and/or conversion of existing buildings in the countryside to small-scale leisure or tourism related facilities will be permitted, provided:

- (i) *the proposal re-uses a building constructed of permanent materials with a reasonable expectation of life;*
- (ii) *the proposal maintains or enhances the rural environment and the building is preferably of some architectural, historic or local importance;*
- (iii) *the proposal retains the interesting character of the building and its site and preferably leads to positive environmental improvements.*

Where proposals involve the change of use of buildings to self-catering holiday accommodation, it will be necessary to limit such use by means of conditions or a planning obligation, to prevent a permanent residential use being established.

- 9.58 Camping and caravanning are popular holiday/leisure activities, but touring camping and caravan sites are often visually intrusive in the landscape. They will, therefore, not be acceptable in Gaps, the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or in other particularly important areas of countryside. Nevertheless, elsewhere within the Plan area, there may be opportunities for small sites to be developed, which are well screened and otherwise generally acceptable in the local environment.

Policy RT.17

Small-scale touring, camping and caravanning facilities will be permitted, except on sites which are of particular ecological, landscape, agricultural or historic value, provided the site is well screened from vantage points, public highways and residential development and would not intrude into the rural landscape.

- 9.59 The development of sites for more permanent holiday accommodation, such as chalets or mobile homes, is less acceptable in the countryside than touring sites. The accommodation tends to be present all year round and the intrusion into the countryside is, therefore, greater. Such development will

only be permitted where a site is so well screened from public viewpoints that it is not visible at any time of the year. Only woodland sites are likely to be suitable, subject to the conservation of their forestry, historical and ecological importance.

Policy RT.18

The development of sites for permanent, short-stay tourist accommodation in the countryside will not be permitted unless such sites are totally screened from public viewpoints, and comply with the provisions of Policy RT.17. It will be necessary to limit the period during which the buildings can be used by means of conditions or a planning obligation, to prevent a permanent residential use being established.

- 9.60 The development of any new tourist and leisure facilities should be viable in their own right, and should not require other development, such as housing or business uses, to ensure viability. The need for tourist and recreational facilities in the countryside is not so great so as to justify “enabling” development that would override the presumption against inappropriate development in the countryside.

Policy RT.19

Residential or commercial uses, proposed in association with tourism, recreational and leisure developments in the countryside, but not directly essential to their operation, will not be permitted.

