

9. Leisure, Recreation and Tourism

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Local Plan Aim

To provide for the leisure and recreational needs of the Borough's residents and to promote Dartford as a sporting, cultural, tourist and entertainment destination.

Key Objectives

1. To focus future provision of leisure, arts, cultural and tourism facilities at Dartford Town Centre and the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area.
2. To provide for a range of leisure and recreation provision at Bluewater, complementing other leisure uses within the Borough.
3. To provide a range of high quality sport and recreational facilities for the Borough's residents.
4. To develop Stone Lodge primarily for the local recreational needs of Kent Thameside.
5. To create a Green Grid network of inter-linking, high quality open space for recreational use by local residents.
6. To enhance the accessibility of the countryside, in a manner consistent with the preservation of its openness, landscape quality, tranquillity and wildlife resources.
7. To increase public access along the Rivers Darent and Thames in a manner consistent with the preservation of the amenity and wildlife resources of the river environment.
8. To ensure that a range of visitor attractions are provided within the Borough.

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Leisure and recreation are important aspects of civilised life and adequate provision for such activity is essential to the well being of the Borough's residents. There are also important economic and other benefits in promoting Dartford as a sporting, leisure and cultural destination serving a wider area.

9.1.2 For policy purposes a distinction has been made between 'leisure' and 'recreation'. Leisure is defined here as entertainment and other relatively passive pursuits such as dining, watching a sporting event, going to the theatre, museum, cinema or bingo hall. Such activity often requires large buildings, can attract large numbers of visitors and may involve late night opening. There is a danger that in some cases this can give rise to significant traffic generation and noise disturbance. For the most part, leisure uses are contained in use classes D2 and A3, whilst more cultural activities fall within use class D1.

9.1.3 Recreation on the other hand involves more active pursuits including outdoor activities such as going for a walk or playing football as well as indoor sporting activities such as going to the gym at a sports centre. Indoor sports facilities also fall within use class D2. Formal outdoor sports often require extensive areas of open land for playing pitches. More informal pursuits such as walking and cycling require attractive places or routes. Although less built development is associated with recreational activities, they can still cause noise nuisance and localised traffic problems during peak times. Notwithstanding the distinction between leisure and recreational activities, it should be recognised that there is a fine line between them. Many developments may contain a mixture of both.

9.1.4 In addition to leisure and recreation, there are a number of visitor attractions spread throughout the Borough. These are considered in the section on Tourism. There is

also considerable potential for recreational activity and leisure time on, and related to, the River Thames and in some areas of the countryside such as the Darent Valley footpath. These are discussed in the River Thames and the Countryside and the Villages chapters. Open spaces and public rights of way are important aspects in their own right which require specific protection and policy advice. They are considered in separate sections towards the end of this chapter.

9.2 Policy Context

9.2.1 PPG17, 'Sport and Recreation', recognises the importance of sport and recreation. The functions of Local Plans in this regard are to:

- assess local needs for facilities;
- identify deficiencies in open space provision;
- encourage development of facilities and open space provision; and
- co-ordinate with other types of development and protect valuable open space.

9.2.2 Revised PPG17 strengthens the guidance on sport, open space and recreation and advises planning authorities to:

- adopt a strategic approach and plan positively for the provision and enhancement of well designed recreational and sporting facilities and open spaces;
- provide the strongest protection for open spaces that have, or that have the potential to be, of value to the community;
- resist development pressures which could diminish recreational provision;
- ensure that sport and recreational facilities are easily accessible by a choice of modes of transport; and
- provide good quality open space and built recreational facilities as an integral part of new communities in order to make them attractive places to live.

9.2.3 PPG6 'Town Centres and Retail Development' advises that planning authorities should develop a clear strategy for uses that support the evening economy of their town centres. Additionally, the town centre should be prioritised as a location for major leisure uses, planned in conjunction with parking and complementary uses. Where leisure development cannot be accommodated within the town centre or at the edge-of-centre, they should be encouraged to locate on sites which are or will, as part of the development, be made highly accessible by public transport.

9.2.4 RPG9a links leisure to economic, social and physical well-being and identifies leisure provision as an important factor in making Thames Gateway an attractive place to live. RPG9a identifies the provision of opportunities for leisure and recreation as part of the key to securing the quality of life necessary for successful regeneration. For Thames Gateway to compete successfully as a place in which to live, it is important that opportunities are available to provide a wide range of leisure facilities. A network of linked open spaces – the Green Grid - will be a key component (see Development and Design chapter).

9.2.5 The Kent Structure Plan enables the provision of facilities of county or sub-regional significance, balanced against countryside conservation constraints. It also provides a strategic framework for local plan policies to address the local provision of open space and indoor facilities, for both formal and informal recreation, related to the populations they serve and having regard to urban form and transportation issues.

9.3 Leisure

Future Leisure Provision

9.3.1 Existing leisure provision is currently focussed at the following locations:

- Dartford Town Centre which includes the Orchard Theatre, the Central Library, the Museum, several nightclubs, Granada Bingo and a variety of pubs and restaurants; and
- Bluewater which includes leisure villages, integrated within the shopping complex.

9.3.2 Future leisure provision will be concentrated at:

- Dartford Town Centre and the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area, as the preferred location for leisure, artistic and cultural activity and an important location for activities contributing to the evening economy. The Mill Pond Road site (also known as GlaxoSmithKline West), within the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area, has potential to be developed as a new mixed use area based on a leisure and entertainment quarter. Within the town centre, the Lowfield Street regeneration scheme and the area surrounding the Orchard Theatre have the potential to encourage and diversify evening leisure activities and foster a 'café culture';
- Bluewater, as a centre for leisure which complements the retail element at Bluewater and other leisure uses within the Borough, including the Town Centre; and
- Ebbsfleet, which will include a leisure element, including an hotel, focused on the international/domestic railway station. There may be an opportunity to provide a heritage centre to house artefacts unearthed during construction of the Rail Link and other industrial heritage.

The Town Centre

9.3.3 The Council is currently producing a Sports Development Strategy and there are plans for an Arts Strategy to be in place by the end of 2002. Although both strategies are relevant for the whole Borough, they will have an important part to play in defining the roles that sports, recreation and 'the arts' have within the Town Centre and on edge-of-centre sites.

9.3.4 In line with PPG6, Dartford Town Centre is appropriate for future leisure uses (use class D1, D2 and theatre) such as art galleries, cinemas, night clubs and bingo halls. Dartford Borough is one of several locations specifically identified by the Home Office as being appropriate for casinos. The Town Centre is an important contributor to the evening economy and a focus for pubs, nightclubs and restaurants in the Borough (see also paragraph 14.8 of the Town Centre chapter). The retention and improvement of such leisure uses will be essential. Issues of particular concern with leisure uses are traffic generation and late-night disturbance to residents. Within these policy areas, therefore, the Council will need to be satisfied that the particular use proposed and site is acceptable. Proposals for leisure developments should be located within the Town Centre or, if no sites are available, in the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area. Other edge-of-centre sites and locations well served by public transport may be acceptable places to locate leisure developments if no other suitable sustainable alternative exists (see Policies TC1, TC2, and TC8 in the Dartford Town Centre chapter).

9.3.4a The proposed Lowfield Street regeneration scheme will include the provision of new ground floor café and cultural facilities facing onto Central Park as well as environmental improvements and the creation of a new town square in Market Street. If the right type of leisure is encouraged to locate here, it could have the potential to bring about an enhanced town centre evening economy. For instance, restaurants, wine bars and cafés can attract a wider variety of customers, including families into

the town centre and help the evening economy to diversify (see policy TC11 for further details). A prosperous evening economy can also help to reduce anti-social behavioural problems and create a safer, secure town centre environment as a result of the “policing” effect arising from greater visitor numbers.

- 9.3.5 The Mill Pond Road site, located within the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area, will become available for redevelopment in the future. Developing leisure facilities on this site could create a leisure quarter at the gateway of the Town Centre. It would greatly contribute towards improving the overall leisure facilities of the Town Centre. The policy approach to the future use of this site is set out in Policy TC2 and TC10 in the Town Centre chapter.
- 9.3.6 Dartford Town Centre is also a suitable location for new sport and recreation development where such a facility would attract large quantities of visitors. Locating sport and recreational facilities in the Town Centre will encourage multi-purpose trips, combining shopping, working and recreation in one visit. The availability of public transport in the Town Centre can ensure greater access for a larger proportion of people, (including the mobility impaired and those who do not own a car) and can reduce the amount of car parking space required by the sporting facility. Policy LRT5 provides further guidance on New Sports and Recreational Facilities.
- 9.3.7 Other locations within the Borough may be suitable for smaller scale leisure, artistic and cultural development, appropriate in scale to the local surroundings and tailored to cater for the local population. Such development will need to be in locations which are well served by public transport such as neighbourhood centres. Major Development Sites may also provide an opportunity to increase the leisure and cultural provisions of the Borough.

LRT1 Leisure Development in Dartford Town Centre

The preferred location for new leisure, artistic and cultural development will be Dartford Town Centre. If there are no suitable sites available in the Town Centre, the next most suitable location will be within the North-eastern “edge-of-centre” policy area as defined on the Proposals Map. In these locations, leisure development will be permitted if it:

- 1. does not give rise to unacceptable disturbance to nearby residents;**
- 2. is well served by public transport and will not generate unacceptable levels of traffic; and**
- 3. encourages a diversification of the evening economy by providing town centre amenities that will attract a variety of customers into the town centre, particularly during the early evening.**

In other locations, such as neighbourhood centres and Major Development Sites, proposals for new leisure, artistic and cultural development will only be permitted if they:

- 1. are appropriate in scale and size to the locality;**
- 2. provide facilities to serve the local population;**
- 3. do not give rise to unacceptable disturbance to nearby residents; and**
- 4. are well served by public transport and will not generate unacceptable levels of traffic.**

Bluewater

- 9.3.8 Bluewater is a premier leisure destination and a growing tourist attraction. Current leisure facilities at Bluewater include a cinema, restaurants, outdoor dining and an

indoor exhibition area. Recreational provision at Bluewater includes a network of cyclepaths and footpaths, mini golf, boating on the lakes, an off-road driving experience and children's play areas. Planning permission has also been granted for an hotel to cater for tourists visiting the shopping complex. Bluewater will be an important focus for enhanced leisure provision in the future which can complement the retail element of Bluewater and leisure facilities provided in Dartford Town Centre and elsewhere in the Borough. Because of the fundamental connectivity between the retail and leisure activities it is important that development proposals for the site are considered as a whole. Therefore the policy approach to future leisure development at Bluewater is set out in Policy R2 in the Retail chapter.

Ebbsfleet

9.3.9 Ebbsfleet straddles the Borough boundary with Gravesham. It affords a significant opportunity for a major mixed-use development focussing on the International Passenger Station when the second stage of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) is built. An outline application for such a development has been approved, subject to outstanding legal agreements.

9.3.10 Detailed development proposals at Ebbsfleet must include a strategy for leisure and recreation provision. This must include proposals to compensate for the loss of the Blue Circle Sports Ground. Hotel provision at Ebbsfleet would be acceptable. The recreational needs of the new community also need to be taken into account. A heritage centre and a visitor interpretation centre should be built to house artefacts unearthed during construction of the CTRL as well as portraying the wider history of the area including its industrial heritage. Further details on Ebbsfleet can be found in the Major Development Sites chapter.

9.4 Recreation

Future Recreation Provision

9.4.1 The Borough has a range of existing sporting or recreational facilities at the following locations:

- Central Park, located adjacent to the Town Centre, is an important asset for informal outdoor recreation as well as athletics and other events;
- in close proximity to Dartford Town Centre, including clubs and sporting facilities at Fairfield Pool, Princes Sports and Leisure Club, GlaxoSmithKline within the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area and the Old Drill Hall near Lowfield Street currently used by Judokwai;
- Hesketh Park and other smaller scale parks and public open spaces throughout the Borough;
- other centres valued for recreation including Swanscombe Leisure Centre and open recreation space and the lakes surrounding Bluewater;
- countryside sites for informal recreation at Dartford Heath, along the Darent Valley Footpath, Darent Common along Green Street Green Road, Beacon Wood and Darent Country Parks, Joyden's Wood and Darent Wood;
- countryside sites for active sports including clay pigeon shooting at Darent Wood, motor cycle scrambling at Canada Heights and golfing at Dartford and Birchwood Golf Courses; and
- river corridors which provide accessibility to the Rivers Darent and Thames and are used for informal water and land based recreational activities and leisure time. They are dealt with further in policy LRT16 and the River Thames chapter.

- 9.4.2 Future recreational facilities will be developed where existing facilities do not meet the demands of local residents and/or the communities planned for the future. Locations which are particularly suitable for recreational development include:
- Stone Lodge, which is allocated primarily for outdoor recreational, sporting and open space facilities to serve the local needs of Kent Thameside;
 - Dartford Town Centre, edge of centre, neighbourhood centres and other locations which are well served by public transport; and
 - Land at Princes Road/Darenth Road, lying adjacent to the Princes Sports and Leisure Club (with planning permission granted for the Next Generation facility).
- 9.4.2a Central Park will continue to be a popular location for formal outdoor sports and recreation, informal leisure, relaxing in open space/gardens and a place for open air community and cultural gatherings to take place, e.g. the Dartford Festival. The Lowfield Street regeneration scheme (see TC11) provides an opportunity to enhance the park so that it:
- becomes more accessible. Traffic running through Market Street will be re-routed in order to create a pedestrianised town square. This will provide better pedestrian connectivity between the park and the town centre;
 - retains its open space and its Green Grid functions, as outlined in policies LRT11 and DD5;
 - becomes a safer and more secure environment for recreational, leisure and cultural activities to take place due to the enhanced town centre activity occurring nearby, a more prosperous diversified evening economy and the natural surveillance effect that these create;
 - is expanded to include within it, in the south western corner, the existing, adjacent Sports Ground; and
 - includes a new carriage drive that will be designed in such a way to ensure continued cohesion between all parts of the park (see the Town Centre chapter for more details).

Stone Lodge

- 9.4.3 Stone Lodge provides the opportunity for a new urban park of the highest quality and environmental standard, which will help to further improve the environment of Kent Thameside, catering for the recreational needs in an area where major new communities are to be developed within an established urban structure. It is envisaged that the new urban park will focus upon a multi-purpose, mainly outdoor recreation and sports resource, supported by a backdrop of traditional parklands and open spaces, children's play spaces, pedestrian/cycle routes and wildlife areas. Development proposals will need to ensure these components are linked, creating connectivity between different parts of the site and beyond, as well as contributing to the Green Grid network. Development of this site will therefore be subject to Policy DD5 in recognition of its recreational value. Further details can be found in the Development and Design chapter.
- 9.4.4 Whilst the emphasis will be on open recreational uses, there will be some scope for built indoor sporting and recreation facilities, and indeed an element of more commercial leisure uses may be essential to secure overall a package of uses which is capable of implementation and which can thus secure the vision for the site as a whole. There is also the potential to develop a hotel at Stone Lodge (see policy LRT10 for further details). There may also be the opportunity to develop community facilities to cater for the local needs of surrounding communities. As the sloping nature of the land makes it a prominent site, development proposals will need to incorporate high quality landscaping. Built sporting facilities and ancillary built development must also be of a high design quality, using high quality materials to

create visually attractive amenity. Proposals for development will need to comply with a planning brief, to be prepared or agreed by the Council.

- 9.4.5 Transport and accessibility issues will be important in considering development proposals on this site. It will be essential to ensure that additional traffic generated from the development can be managed without adversely impacting on the existing road network, especially Junction 1a. The provision of safe, well-lit and attractive cycle and pedestrian routes from the surrounding areas and existing bus stops to the different parts of the site will also be needed. Consideration should be given to whether public transport will need to be improved along London Road, to ensure an attractive alternative mode of transport to the car. Enhancements to bus stops along London Road and additional pedestrian crossing facilities along Cotton Lane and London Road may also be needed to ensure that existing communities can access the site.
- 9.4.6 A large part of the site has previously been used for quarrying and landfill of domestic waste and is known to be producing landfill gas. Preventative measures will be needed on parts of the site. Overhead power cables, pylons and underground pipelines traversing the site may restrict the location of built development and may also require treatment. The surrounding area is known to be rich in archaeological remains. Although much of the ground has been disturbed due to previous activity, conditions relating to archaeology will be attached to any planning permission granted on this site, except for the landfill areas.

LRT2 Stone Lodge

Stone Lodge is identified as a site for a new urban park, encompassing primarily outdoor sporting, recreation and community facilities, and open spaces, contributing to the Green Grid network. Proposals will only be permitted if development:

- 1. conforms with a planning brief for the whole site, which has been prepared or agreed by the Council, and is accompanied by a master plan;**
- 2. does not result in an adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of Dartford Town Centre;**
- 3. caters for the local recreational needs of existing and new communities in Kent Thameside by providing for some built indoor sporting and recreational facilities;**
- 4. respects the topography of the site in terms of layout and functionality;**
- 5. is designed to the highest standard, addressing the conspicuous nature of the site;**
- 6. contributes to the urban parkland setting and provides comprehensive landscaping;**
- 7. does not give rise to unacceptable disturbance to nearby residents;**
- 8. provides a high degree of accessibility via attractive and well-lit pedestrian and cycle links to the surrounding urban park, existing residential and commercial areas, together with enhancements to public transport links along London Road and additional pedestrian crossings along Cotton Lane and London Road;**
- 9. does not adversely impact on the existing road network, especially Junction 1a; and**
- 10. takes account of overhead power cables, pylons, underground pipelines, landfill ground conditions, landfill gas production and archaeological remains and implements remediation measures where necessary, to ensure a better quality environment and a more visually attractive amenity.**

Land at Princes Road/Darenth Road

- 9.4.7 The Princes Sports and Leisure Club fulfils an important recreational function. There is an opportunity to complement this facility with indoor sports facilities on the adjacent site south east of the Princes Road/Darenth Road junction. A public footpath link through this site would improve the functioning of the Green Grid in this area. Because the site is exposed any structure is to be low rise and should be sited to minimise visual intrusion.

LRT3 Land at Princes Road/Darenth Road

Land at Princes Road/Darenth Road is allocated for indoor sports and recreational facilities. Development proposals will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:

- 1. a high quality design and layout which reflects the inter-relationship with the adjacent sports facilities;**
- 2. the creation of attractive pedestrian/cycle links with surrounding areas, especially the residential area north of Princes Road, which will contribute to the Green Grid network;**
- 3. the incorporation of the safeguarded Fastrack segregated bus route alignment within the scheme;**
- 4. the retention of the open nature of the site, and minimal visual intrusion;**
- 5. the retention of existing trees as far as possible;**
- 6. highway improvements to Darenth Road and its junction with Princes Road; and**
- 7. access to the site from Darenth Road only.**

Existing Sports and Recreational Facilities

- 9.4.8 The Borough has a wide variety of recreational, sporting and fitness facilities. These form an important recreational resource and proposals which result in the loss of such provision will normally be refused unless adequate replacement facilities can be provided. With regard to sports fields and playing fields, their amenity value as open spaces will also be taken into account. Proposals may also need to satisfy section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 which empowers the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to protect school playing fields from disposal or change of use.

LRT4 Existing Sports and Recreational Facilities

Development proposals that result in the loss of recreational, sporting and fitness facilities will not be permitted, unless:

- 1. it can be demonstrated there is no demand for the facility based on a thorough assessment; or**
- 2. an equivalent replacement facility in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility is provided elsewhere; and**
- 3. there is no adverse effect on the amenity and character of the area through loss of an open space.**

New Sports and Recreational Facilities

- 9.4.9 Proposals which improve the level of sports and fitness provision will generally be permitted. Facilities which are likely to attract large numbers of people must be located in areas well served by public transport. Conversely, however, extensive open uses such as playing fields and golf courses which attract relatively few people

are best sited in more peripheral areas. In permitting major new residential developments, the Council will normally require new recreational facilities, or a financial contribution towards existing facilities (see Community Facilities chapter).

LRT5 New Sports and Recreational Facilities

Proposals for new recreational, sporting and fitness facilities will only be permitted where:

- 1. they are located in areas well served by public transport, within or on the edge of Dartford Town Centre, on the allocated site at Princes Road/Darenth Road, within Major Development Sites, or a neighbourhood centre (except in the case of extensive open recreational uses); or**
- 2. they are located at Stone Lodge as an integral part of the planning brief for the area, ensuring that the sports facility complements the mainly outdoor recreation based vision for the site.**

Permission will only be granted at the above mentioned locations where:

- 1. they would not cause undue disturbance or otherwise detract from the amenity of the area; and**
- 2. they do not generate unacceptable levels of traffic.**

Playing Fields

9.4.10 Playing fields contribute both to sports provision and to the stock of open space in the urban area. The provision of new playing fields can make a contribution to the Green Grid network, and it may be possible to enhance their value through landscaping and the creation of public rights of way at their margins. Because the access to school premises (including their playing fields) is governed by individual governing bodies, their use by the public will be decided on a site by site basis.

9.4.11 In the rural area the levelling of land to form pitches can disrupt the visual continuity of the landscape. Planting around the field can soften the impact, and this will be expected in sensitive locations.

LRT6 New Playing Fields

New playing fields in the urban area will be permitted where they are designed and landscaped to contribute to the Green Grid network. Where appropriate the provision of Public Rights of Way related to the Green Grid will be required.

Playing fields in the rural area will be permitted if they do not adversely affect the landscape or features of wildlife or scientific interest and if they include landscaping. Adequate access and parking arrangements will be required in all cases.

Dual Use of School Sports Facilities

9.4.12 Sports facilities in schools can, if appropriately designed, serve the needs of the wider community outside school hours. The Council wishes to encourage the efficient dual use of school facilities and playing fields as this can reduce the need for further expensive, and often land-hungry construction. Whilst the Local Education Authority encourages dual use of school/school sports facilities, this may not be possible in every case.

9.4.13 Alterations and additional facilities to enhance the scope for dual-use can be a cost-effective means of improving provision, and developer contributions may be used to this end in appropriate circumstances. Such alterations might include additional changing rooms and an independent means of access.

LRT7 Dual Use of School Sports Facilities

Sports facilities in schools should, whenever possible, be designed to facilitate their use by the wider community. Additional facilities and alterations to enable and enhance such dual use will be permitted, provided they are compatible with the scale and functioning of the school.

Noisy Sports and Recreational Activity

9.4.14 There is a special policy for noisy sports and recreational activity (see Natural Resources chapter).

Golf Courses

9.4.15 Golf courses can have a significant effect on the rural landscape, and it is necessary to apply stringent environmental safeguards if the special qualities of the countryside are not to be eroded. It is also important that the land concerned can revert to agriculture should the need ever arise.

LRT8 Golf Courses

Proposals for golf courses must comply with the criteria in Appendix 15.

9.5 Tourism

9.5.1 Dartford is not a traditional tourist destination, but there is increasing scope for the promotion of a number of Dartford's features as visitor attractions:

- its cultural attractions - such as the theatre, library and museum;
- its historic heritage - such as historic churches, the Royal Manor Gatehouse and archaeological and industrial archaeological assets such as the Swanscombe Skull Site;
- its leisure facilities – existing and planned;
- Bluewater, as a destination visited from a wide catchment area with increased tourist potential in the future; and
- its prominent views across, and features of, the Thames estuary including the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge.

The amount of tourism promoted must be appropriate to the individual site. For instance, tourism at the Swanscombe Skull Site of Special Scientific Interest must be low key and must not prejudice its scientific value.

9.5.2 In addition to the local visitors attractions, Dartford is located in a central position, has high quality hotel accommodation and its increasing transport links are providing improved accessibility to the surrounding area. This offers the potential for Dartford to become an increasingly important base for tourists to explore and tour the wider area, from Central London to the Kentish countryside.

LRT9 Visitor Attractions

Proposals for new visitor attractions, or which serve to enhance and extend existing visitor attractions, will be permitted provided that:

- 1. any increase in visitor activity including trip generation by car would not harm the character or amenities of the local area;**
- 2. the facility is well served by a range of means of transport and that any transport provision made is operationally sustainable; and**
- 3. any building would not cause any adverse impact on the character of the area.**

9.5.3 Hotels can bring economic benefits – both direct and indirect – to the area. Dartford's hotel provision has increased significantly in recent years, with the completion of four hotels at Crossways Business Park and at the Dartford River Crossing and permission granted for a new hotel at Bluewater. Nevertheless the significant development opportunities in Kent Thameside will mean that there is likely to be scope for further provision. Other than within Dartford Town Centre and the North-eastern edge-of-centre policy area, the preferred locations for new hotel development will be restricted to Ebbsfleet (close to the proposed International Passenger Station), North Dartford and Stone Lodge. No further hotels should be built at Bluewater in addition to the hotel which already has planning permission. Proposals for hotel developments further away from these major attractors will need to prove that they are catering for a particular need (such as accommodating business customers) that cannot be met elsewhere in more sustainable locations. They will also need to minimise the impact of the hotel in the surrounding locality and ensure that levels of traffic generation can be managed sustainably.

LRT10 New Hotel Development

Hotel development will be permitted at the following locations identified on the Proposals Map, provided that they are well served by public transport and they are well related to the trunk road network and will not generate excessive traffic:

- 1. Ebbsfleet, close to the proposed International Station;**
- 2. Dartford Town Centre;**
- 3. North-eastern “edge-of-centre” policy area;**
- 4. Stone Lodge;**
- 5. Bluewater (one only); and**
- 6. North Dartford.**

In other locations hotel developments will be permitted where:

- 1. there are no alternative sites available at the preferred locations listed above;**
- 2. there is an identified need to cater for particular types of customers;**
- 3. they do not create excessive traffic volumes;**
- 4. they are well served by public transport and/or well related to the trunk road network; and**
- 5. they do not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity, environment and surrounding locality.**

9.6 Open Spaces

The Green Grid

9.6.1 The Green Grid concept is a vital component of the regeneration of Kent Thameside. The promotion of a network of public open spaces and public rights of way will

provide important recreational benefits for the Borough. Policies for the Green Grid and a conceptual plan are contained in the Development and Design chapter.

Protection for Open Spaces

- 9.6.2 It is important that existing areas of both public and private open space are safeguarded from development. Open space is defined as “land that is largely undeveloped and is of value in terms of its visual, recreational or ecological value, irrespective of ownership or public access”. Where proposals involve a loss of open space, a qualitative assessment of the open space will be sought.
- 9.6.3 There are currently some 1,357 ha of open space in the Borough, equivalent to some 16 ha per 1,000 persons. However, there is considerable variation in the geographical distribution, range and quality of space. The Borough has a number of large areas, such as Dartford Heath and Joydens Wood, but few small “local” open spaces. Many of the wards are relatively small and cannot be expected to be self sufficient in all types of open space. Nevertheless, it is primarily in the central areas of Dartford where there are deficiencies, particularly small areas of amenity open space. Not all open space is accessible to the public, such as school grounds and private playing fields; as a result, areas which physically have an adequate supply of open space may be deficient in publicly accessible space. Private open space can be important to the visual and environmental quality of an area. In addition, the wards of Brent and Greenhithe are only just above this standard and loss of any open space in these areas is unlikely to be permitted.
- 9.6.4 In respect of outdoor sports provision, such as playing fields, conversely Central Dartford is well served, while rural areas are poorly served. Central Dartford, New Barn, Darenth and parts of Joydens Wood are deficient in the provision of accessible natural green space.
- 9.6.5 Apart from the existing open spaces contributing to the Green Grid, open areas with recreational and/or amenity value, have not been specifically identified on the proposals map. Such spaces include parks, playing fields and outdoor sports facilities, children’s play spaces, urban squares and the larger amenity areas. Whilst these may have a more local significance, they are none the less important in their own right and in relation to the particular roles they perform. Revised PPG17 seeks the strongest protection for open spaces that are, or have the potential to be, of value to the community. Development proposals therefore must not result in any reduction of these assets or adversely affect the extent, or quality of open spaces. Development proposals should indeed enhance them wherever possible.

LRT11 Existing Open Spaces

Proposals which adversely affect the extent or quality of open spaces and reduce their value in terms of:

- 1. visual amenity;**
 - 2. nature conservation;**
 - 3. recreational function; or**
 - 4. their contribution to the functioning of the Green Grid network**
- will not be permitted.**

New Open Spaces

- 9.6.6 Open spaces in new housing and urban village development should provide pleasant and usable areas, which enhance the built environment, contribute to the Green Grid

and/or improve wildlife habitats where possible. New development will be expected to provide at least the minimum level of public open space. The major development sites will be required to accommodate a hierarchy of public open space, although smaller areas of space may be subsumed into larger ones.

- 9.6.7 The open spaces standards set out in Policy LRT12 have been derived from a number of sources, including the Thameside Community Infrastructure Study and the Milton Keynes Planning Manual, and reflect experience on residential schemes that have been developed in the Borough in recent years. In considering whether any existing equipped public open space in the local area may be able to provide for some of the needs arising from a housing development, the following factors will be taken into account:
- local deficiencies of public open space available for public use derived from the existing population and the standards of provision set out in Policy LRT12;
 - the proximity of existing open space and the presence of any physical barriers such as railway lines or busy roads; and
 - the type of open space that exists, the range and condition of facilities it offers and their current levels of use.
- 9.6.8 The specific form of provision that the public open space set out in Policy LRT12 should take will be a matter for negotiation on individual sites. However, the Council will wish to see the following elements included:
- 9.6.9 Major Urban Park - a major urban park should serve a catchment of around 10-15,000 people. A park of this size should provide a green setting for other facilities as well as allowing for a wide variety of active and passive uses. It should provide a range of attractive landscaped settings for sitting out and informal recreation, with opportunities for creating new wildlife habitats and the retention of existing landscape features. The park should include both neighbourhood and local play areas, gardens, playing fields and pavilions. The Council will seek to secure children's play equipment to the value of at least £175,000 (at 2001 prices).
- 9.6.10 Local Park - a local park should be both a visual and functional focus for the local community, catering for both passive and active uses. It should be highly accessible to the immediate catchment area and include both neighbourhood and local play areas for children. A local park should be designed for its specific location and complement other facilities available nearby. The Council will seek to secure children's play equipment to the value of at least £135,000 (at 2001 prices).
- 9.6.11 Neighbourhood play - a neighbourhood play area should primarily cater for children between 8 and 14 years of age but should incorporate local play area for younger children. It should provide for quasi-adventurous activities and more active pastimes associated with informal ball games and cycle play. The playground should be within a maximum walking distance of 400 metres from any dwelling. It should be located either adjacent to the local play area (see below) or located in such a position that it is overlooked from a distance. The minimum distance from the edge of the playground to any dwelling should be 30 metres. The Council will seek to secure children's play equipment to the value of at least £110,000 (at 2001 prices).
- 9.6.12 Local play - designed and located mainly with the needs of children between 3 and 8 years old in mind, providing an opportunity to play close to home. The playground should be central to the development or any phase of the development with a walking distance of not more than 200 metres from any dwelling and without the necessity to cross busy roads. They should be located in a position where they do not raise problems of overlooking to dwellings but are sufficiently overlooked from

properties, with low boundary fencing, for informal policing of the playground. The minimum distance from the edge of the playground to any dwelling shall be 20 metres. The Council will seek to secure children’s play equipment to the value of at least £70,000 (at 2001 prices).

9.6.13 Public playing fields - these should usually be provided in the form of two football pitches one of which should be an all weather pitch and the other convertible to a cricket pitch in summer. A pavilion should also be provided with changing facilities.

9.6.14 Allotments – these should normally be provided on the edges of local parks, open space or playing fields to provide informal public surveillance and flexibility in case demand should change in the future.

LRT12 New Open Spaces

New residential developments will only be permitted if they incorporate high quality public open space, in accordance with the standards set out below, which meets the following criteria:

- 1. it should be an integral component of the built development and of a usable form;**
- 2. in general it should be overlooked by residential properties, although not so close as to give rise to nuisance;**
- 3. there shall in all cases (except school playing fields) be unrestricted public pedestrian access;**
- 4. it should be appropriately landscaped; and**
- 5. it should contribute to the achievement of the Green Grid objectives where possible (as set out in the Development and Design chapter).**

The following general standards are considered to constitute a minimum level of provision and will be applied pro rata to all residential developments. Where a proposed development crosses a threshold, provision should be made on site for the facility, which includes site, buildings and where appropriate fitting out costs. Where a development does not reach a threshold, a pro rata cash contribution (or equivalent in some other form) will be required. Provision should also be phased alongside the overall built development of the site so that the needs of new local residents can be met as and when they arise.

In all cases, arrangements must be made for the ongoing future management and maintenance of the new open space.

In applying these standards, account will be taken of the scale of the proposed development, the size and type of dwellings involved, and the location, accessibility and suitability of any existing equipped public open space in the local area.

| Type | Catchment to support facility (dwellings) | Threshold (dwellings) | Size (ha) | Provision per dwelling (sq m) | Maximum walking distance from dwellings catchment (metres) | Minimum specific requirements |
|--|---|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Major Urban Park (incorporating neighbourhood and local play spaces) | 5,000 | 1,670 | 12 | 24 | 1,200 | 16 pieces of play equipment for under 8 year olds and 8-14 year olds |
| Local Park (incorporating neighbourhood and local play space) | 1,000 | 330 | 2 | 20 | 600 | 16 pieces of play equipment for under 8 year olds and 8-14 year olds |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|--------------------|----|-----|--|
| Neighbourhood play (incorporating local play space) | 500 | 100 | 0.8 | 16 | 400 | 16 pieces of play equipment for under 8 year olds and 8-14 year olds |
| Local play | 200 | 40 | 0.2 | 10 | 200 | 8 pieces of play equipment for under 8 year olds |
| Playing fields | 420 | 140 | 1 | 24 | | |
| Allotments | 800 | 400 | 16 plots (0.25 ha) | 3 | | |

9.6.15 An additional location for a new open space is identified at Devon Road, Sutton-at-Hone.

LRT13 New Open Spaces (Specific Proposal)

Land is allocated for new public open space at Devon Road, Sutton at Hone, as shown on the Proposals Map.

Existing Allotments

9.6.16 The usage of allotments varies considerably from site to site. The Borough Council will seek to safeguard allotments wherever they serve a local need. Alternative uses will be considered if there is no longer any need, or if a suitable replacement site of appropriate quality, size and accessibility, can be made available.

LRT14 Existing Allotments

Proposals for development resulting in the loss of allotments will not be permitted, unless:

- 1. an absence of need is established; or**
- 2. a suitable replacement site for the allotment is provided.**

9.7 Public Rights of Way

9.7.1 Walking, cycling and horse riding are the main forms of rural recreation and it is therefore important to maintain and improve the public rights of way network. Much of this work is carried out by the North West Kent Countryside Project whose major achievement has been the establishment of the Darent Valley footpath. However there are gaps and further work is still necessary to extend the riverside footpath from the Town Centre north to the River Thames. The establishment of a continuous footpath/cycle route, as part of Route 1 of the National Cycle Network alongside the River Thames is also a high priority. Additionally, the cycle route through Dartford is part of a long distance route between Dover and London and will benefit from considerable cycle-tourism, from both Britain and Europe. See Policy T4 for further guidance on cycle routes.

9.7.2 The Country Lanes West Kent Project has been established to make rural lanes more pleasant and safe for walking, cycling and horse riding. The project will introduce traffic management measures where appropriate and encourage alternatives to car travel in country lanes. The Countryside and Villages chapter contains a policy safeguarding rural lanes (Policy C17).

LRT15 Public Rights of Way

Planning permission will not be granted for development affecting any public right of way unless the proposals include either the maintenance or the diversion of the public right of way that, as a route, is no less attractive, safe and convenient for public use. On Major Development Sites, development proposals should include a network of public footpaths and cyclepaths.

LRT16 Improvements to Footpaths, Cycleways and Bridleways

Proposals to improve and extend the footpath, cycleway and bridleway network in the Darent Valley and beside the River Thames will be permitted if they:

- 1. are integrated with existing routes;**
- 2. do not harm residential amenities;**
- 3. do not harm nature conservation interests;**
- 4. take into account the needs of agriculture;**
- 5. are located and designed to reduce opportunities for criminal behaviour;**
- 6. have regard to the needs of people with impaired mobility; and**
- 7. have regard to the needs of other users of the route and vehicular traffic.**

Appendix 15

Criteria for Golf Course Provision (Policy LRT8)

1. Agriculture
 - a) Proposals on the best and most versatile agricultural land – Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the DEFRA (formerly Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) Agricultural Land Classification system – must not involve any development, groundworks or fragmentation which would prevent a reversion to best quality agricultural use and the return of the land to agriculture at or near the original grade.
 - b) Proposals which involve the moving of substantial quantities of topsoil to or from the site will not be permitted.
2. Landscape
 - a) The design and layout of golf courses must reflect the landscape.
 - b) Woodlands, hedgerows and other landscape features are to be retained as far as possible.
 - c) The topography of the site is to remain substantially unaltered.
 - d) Buildings and parking areas must be sited and designed to minimise visual intrusion.
 - e) Proposals must incorporate a comprehensive landscaping scheme.
3. Nature Conservation
 - a) Nature conservation interests will be safeguarded and enhanced.
 - b) Proposals which would damage sites of special scientific interest or sites of nature conservation interest will not be permitted.
 - c) Proposals should seek to enhance and where appropriate create new wildlife habitats and make provision for their management.
4. Public Access
 - a) Proposals must seek to maximise opportunities for public access and enjoyment of the countryside, including the creation of new footpaths, cycleways and bridleways.
 - b) Features such as picnic areas will be particularly welcome.
 - c) The re-routing of public footpaths and bridleways will not be permitted unless public amenity is thereby maintained or improved.
5. Accessibility
 - a) Proposals must be well related to the highway network and to public transport services.
6. Historic Interest
 - a) Listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeological sites and features must not be adversely affected by golf course proposals.
7. Golf Clubhouses
 - a) Golf clubhouses should be of an attractive design and should be sited as unobtrusively as possible.

- b) Clubhouses must be of a scale and design appropriate to those functions immediately associated with the golf course, and must not be expanded to accommodate ancillary leisure activities.

8. Water Resources

- a) Proposals should demonstrate that there will not be an adverse impact on water resources and should incorporate measures for the efficient use of water, including site storage for irrigation during dry spells.
- b) The design of golf courses should maximise the use of surface water run-off and incorporate the use of native drought-resistant grass.

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