

Chapter 6

Leisure, Recreation and Tourism

6.1 Introduction

Overview

- 6.1.1 A wide range of leisure and recreational facilities is provided in Barnet to meet the needs of the community. This includes areas of open space for walking and other informal leisure and recreation, sports grounds and playing fields, indoor sports and recreation facilities such as sports centres and swimming pools, and arts centres.
- 6.1.2 Maintaining open space in urban areas can help to preserve and enhance the environmental quality of the borough and offer recreation opportunities for the community. Other types of facilities referred to above, and the opportunities for leisure and recreation that they provide, help to create positive community identity. They can also aid social and economic regeneration, help to promote a healthy lifestyle, and improve the quality of people's lives. Art in public places or incorporated into development schemes can also be beneficial to the local community, by creating a sense of place and cultural identity, and helping to aid social and economic regeneration of areas.
- 6.1.3 Facilities to cater for tourism are also provided within the borough. Tourism can be beneficial for the economy by creating jobs locally, generating consumer spending in the area and attracting inward investment into the borough.
- 6.1.4 Participation in leisure and recreation activities increased during the 1990s and it is expected that this trend will continue into the future. In particular, it is anticipated that there will be a significant growth in demand for indoor sports and recreational facilities. Recent years have also seen a change in the leisure industry with the emergence of large, purpose built leisure developments. These developments are characterised by a number of different facilities (such as cinemas, bowling, bingo halls and restaurants) provided on one site.
- 6.1.5 In order to maintain the environmental quality of the borough and ensure that Barnet remains a place where people wish to live, any leisure or tourist developments will need to take account of the environment and be of a high quality design. This chapter sets out detailed policies on leisure and tourism which aim:
- To protect open space and improve access to it; and
 - Provide good quality facilities for the borough's residents and visitors to Barnet, whilst preserving the character and appearance of the borough.

National Planning Policy Context

- 6.1.6 Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering the broader government objective of promoting more sustainable development. PPG17 – *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (2002) identifies the need for effective planning for open space, sport and recreation. Local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreation facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at borough level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels. Development plans should identify the scope for major sports and recreational initiatives, assess the local need for facilities and identify suitable sites or types of sites for such development. The guidance emphasises that opportunities for sport and recreation should be available to all regardless of their sex, age or ability and therefore access is an important issue to consider. It places importance on the amenity value of open space and its contribution towards conservation of the built and natural environment.
- 6.1.7 PPG17 states that in identifying where to locate new areas of open space, sports and recreational facilities, local authorities should consider the recreational needs of visitors and tourists.
- 6.1.8 PPG21 – *Tourism* (1992) outlines the economic significance of tourism and states the need to consider ways in which new development can help the industry grow, as well as protecting environmental features. Development plans should consider the existing and future need for tourist facilities and indicate broad areas that would be suitable for development.

- 6.1.9 Planning Policy Statement 6 – *Planning for Town Centres* (2005), which replaces PPG6, recognises that a diversity of complementary uses in town centres makes an important contribution to their vitality, viability and attractiveness. Tourism, leisure and cultural activities should be dispersed throughout town centres, and provision made, where appropriate, for a range of such uses as contributors toward the evening economy. The guidance states that local authorities should give consideration to the scale of leisure developments and their likely impact. The sequential approach to site selection is set out in PPS6. As a consequence of the Gambling Act 2005 the government published Circular 02/06 on Changes to Planning Regulations for Casinos. The Circular provides more control over the development of new casinos.
- 6.1.10 PPG12 – *Development Plans* (1999) attaches weight to the need for social considerations in planning policies and to address social exclusion. This can be addressed through the provision of sport and recreation facilities.

Regional Planning Policy Context

- 6.1.11 The *London Plan* has set out policies to ensure diverse opportunities exist to enhance London's standing as a centre of culture, relaxation and innovation. London's distinctive network of open spaces, ranging from the Green Belt to local play spaces, should be strongly protected, made more accessible and enhanced. Government guidance and the *London Plan* set out a sequential approach to identifying the preferred location for cultural, leisure, retail and sports facilities. In considering proposals for these activities, sites should have good access by public transport or be where improvements are planned. The *London Plan* recognises open spaces as an integral part of the spatial character of the city. Development on local open spaces will not be acceptable:
- Where they have been designated for protection in a UDP;
 - Where there is a demonstrable need for such open spaces, unless that need can be met elsewhere within the local catchment area; or
 - Unless a new replacement open space can be created within the local catchment area.
- 6.1.12 The *London Plan* also seeks to ensure that the capital expands as a destination for global tourism and develops a broader visitor base. To accommodate potential growth, a further 36,000 hotel bedrooms should be provided in the period up to 2016 in a range of suitable locations throughout London.

Borough Context

- 6.1.13 The council recognises the role that leisure and arts facilities can play in community regeneration. Among the council's key aims as set out in its Corporate Plan is to build strong communities and to invest in the arts. In doing so, the council has completed construction of an arts centre at North Finchley. The 'arts depot' is now open and offers the community a wide range of arts and cultural activities and improved access to leisure facilities and services. Another key aim of the council is to create a sustainable, healthy environment, which recognises parks as important community and environmental assets that contribute to the local quality of life.
- 6.1.14 The council's Local Agenda 21 strategy sets out a commitment to improve the quality of people's lives through ensuring access to leisure facilities for all. The council's *Premier Parks Strategy* aims to conserve and enhance the borough's green space and to develop its informal recreational opportunities. The council is preparing a cultural strategy which aims to protect and encourage the provision for arts and culture to meet the needs of the borough's residents.

Strategy

- 6.1.15 The council's overall objectives for leisure, recreation and tourism are as follows:
- To ensure that there are sufficient sports and recreational facilities and arts, culture and entertainment facilities to meet the needs of residents in the borough;
 - To encourage the development of recreation, arts and tourism within Barnet; and
 - To maintain an adequate level of public open space in the borough suitable for formal and informal outdoor recreation, and improve access to it.

6.2 Strategic Policies

- 6.2.1 The key strategic policies that will promote and cater for leisure, recreation and tourism are as follows.

Policy GL1 – Sport and Recreation

The council will seek to ensure that an adequate supply of land and buildings is available for sports and recreation, arts, culture and entertainment to meet the needs of residents in the borough.

Policy GL2 – Tourist Facilities

The council will promote the development of new or improved tourist facilities in the borough.

Policy GL3 – Outdoor Recreation

~~The council will seek to protect and promote the creation of public open spaces for formal and informal outdoor leisure and recreation in the borough.~~

6.3 Detailed Policies

6.3.1 Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities and Public Art

Protecting Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities

- 6.3.1.1 Arts, culture and entertainment facilities are an important community asset providing leisure opportunities for the local population. They include cinemas, theatres, bingo halls, libraries, museums and arts centres. These facilities can make a positive contribution to the local economy, help to improve the quality of people's lives and encourage a sense of unity and identity within the local community. The cultural strategy aims to protect and encourage the provision for arts and culture to meet the needs of the borough's residents. The policies in this UDP will assist in meeting the aims and objectives of the strategy.
- 6.3.1.2 The council recognises the importance of safeguarding existing facilities of this kind in the borough, and will resist development proposals that will result in the loss of facilities to other uses. Exceptions may be considered where new arts, culture and entertainment facilities of at least equivalent quality and quantity are provided on part of the site, or at alternative sites more accessible to users, or where improvements are secured for other such facilities. An exception to this policy will also apply where it can be demonstrated that the needs of the community for arts, culture and entertainment facilities are met at similar sites nearby, or where the facilities are not required to meet the long-term leisure and cultural needs of the community, or where there is an overriding community need for an alternative use. Such uses could include new health, education provision, community and religious facilities. Any new facilities should meet the locational criteria set out in policies L2 and L3.

Policy L1 – Arts, Culture and Entertainment (ACE) – Loss of Facilities

The council will refuse development proposals resulting in the loss of arts, culture and entertainment facilities to other uses. Exceptions may be considered where:

- i. New arts, culture and entertainment facilities of at least equivalent quality and quantity are provided on part of the site; or
- ii. Replacement arts, culture and entertainment facilities of at least an equivalent quality and quantity are provided at a suitable alternative site; or
- iii. Improvements are made to arts, culture and entertainment facilities at other sites; or
- iv. There is an overriding community need for another use.

Provision of Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities

- 6.3.1.3 Arts, culture and entertainment facilities provide a wide range of activities to meet the leisure needs of residents, and continue to attract an increasing number of participants. The council recognises the growing demand for such facilities, and will encourage proposals to develop new, or expand existing, facilities in the borough to meet the leisure and cultural needs of the community.
- 6.3.1.4 Arts, culture and entertainment facilities attract visitors, and are capable of generating significant amounts of traffic. Siting these facilities in town centres which are readily accessible to public transport can help to reduce reliance on the car and can contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres, in particular by supporting the evening economy. The preferred location, therefore, for arts, culture and entertainment facilities in Barnet will be in the borough's town centres. Where there are no suitable sites in these locations, the council will be prepared to consider edge-of-centre sites, and only then out-of-centre locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. If a development cannot be accommodated onto a single site within one of the preferred locations, then, where appropriate, it should be located on a number of sites within town centres, and should be in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding environment. Development proposals for arts, culture and entertainment facilities which would be located on edge and out-of-centre sites, other than those identified in this Plan, should be supported by evidence of need for development and evidence that the sequential approach, as outlined in PPS6, has been applied in selecting the site.
- 6.3.1.5 The council will encourage a wide range of facilities in town centres, consistent with the scale and function of the centre. Further information on diversity of uses and maintaining town centre vitality and viability is contained in the "Town Centres and Retailing" chapter.

Policy L2 – Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities – Preferred Locations

~~The preferred location for arts, culture and entertainment facilities is in the borough's town centres. Where there are no suitable sites in these locations, the council may consider development proposals in edge-of-centre locations, and only then in out-of-centre locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. Development proposals which would be located on edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites that have not been identified in this Plan will be required to provide evidence of need for development, and evidence that the sequential approach has been applied, as outlined in PPS6.~~

Policy L3 – Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities – Development Criteria

The council will permit development proposals for arts, culture and entertainment facilities provided that:

- i. There is no demonstrably harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;
- ii. They will not cause unacceptable nuisance in terms of noise or traffic generation;
- iii. The development is in keeping with the scale and function of the centre and the character of the area;
- iv. The site is located close to potential users;
- v. The site is highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- vi. The development is designed to be accessible for people with disabilities.

Use of Planning Obligations to Secure Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities and Public Art

- 6.3.1.6 Arts, culture and entertainment facilities help to meet the community's leisure needs and improve the quality of people's lives, as well as contributing to the economic and social regeneration of an area. The council recognises that such facilities may therefore be appropriately provided in large, mixed use commercial development schemes, and where appropriate, will seek to enter into planning obligations with developers to secure their provision.
- 6.3.1.7 Art provided in public places can also play an important role in enhancing the local environment, creating a local identity and aiding regeneration. Public art can be in the form of paintings, murals

and sculptures, or in the design of street furniture, tiling, paving and window glass. It can be provided in public open spaces, on the street, in public buildings and in other locations accessible to the public. The council will seek to secure the provision of public art in the borough through planning obligations with developers of large scale development schemes. The active involvement of the local community will be sought in deciding on the location, form and design of any such art.

- 6.3.1.8 The Arts Council supports the practice of securing public art and contributions towards the establishment of arts/cultural-based facilities, such as arts centres, through planning obligations. It recommends that a sum equivalent to 1% of the total development costs should be sought from developers for this purpose. The “Implementation” chapter sets out in more detail the council’s priorities for planning obligations.

Policy L5 – Arts, Culture and Entertainment Facilities – Planning Obligations

The council will seek to enter into planning obligations, where appropriate, to secure the provision of arts, culture and entertainment facilities and public art required as part of new developments.

Incorporating Art in New Development Proposals

- 6.3.1.9 Art can be provided in new development schemes through existing development costs for materials and design, and does not always have to involve the use of planning obligations. The council will encourage developers to incorporate art into the design of new buildings and the layout of open space as a matter of good practice. The integration of art in this manner into the fabric of the development should be beneficial to the developer as well as to the wider community.

Policy L6 – Designing in Art

The council will encourage developers to incorporate art into the design and layout of new buildings and open spaces.

6.3.2 Tourism and Hotels

Tourist Attractions and Facilities

- 6.3.2.1 A tourist can be defined as anyone who does not normally live or work in the borough, but visits it for business, professional or domestic purposes, holidays or recreation. The length of the visit is not important to the definition, but affects the services required by the visitor. Barnet is well placed to develop tourism both in terms of its location, its heritage and the number of visitor attractions already within its boundary. The borough forms the northern gateway to London. Major roads and rail routes pass through the borough. Golders Green Coach Station is the main stopping-off point for North London.
- 6.3.2.2 The borough has a variety of attractions such as the RAF Museum at Hendon, College Farm and Avenue House in Finchley, Church Farm House Museum in Hendon and the Museum of Jewish Life in Finchley. In addition to these, visitors are also attracted by facilities not developed specifically for tourists, for example, shopping facilities, sports centres, arts and cultural facilities and areas of open countryside in the borough. Brent Cross Shopping Centre, in particular, attracts visitors from overseas as well as other parts of London and Britain. Conversely, many of the facilities that attract people to visit the borough are themselves used by the local community.
- 6.3.2.3 Tourism is important as a source of employment and an aid to economic regeneration. Where appropriate, the council will seek to maximise local gain, including helping facilities catering for the tourist industry to recruit locally. The council wishes to promote the development of tourism in the borough and will encourage proposals to provide new or improved tourist attractions and facilities, including conference facilities, to accommodate tourists in the borough. It will co-ordinate approaches with other appropriate organisations and borough councils. Proposals that help raise awareness of the borough as an attractive destination will be encouraged.

- 6.3.2.4 New tourist attractions and facilities are potentially major generators of travel demand and are appropriate forms of use for town centres. They should preferably be located in the borough's town centres in the first instance, and then edge-of-centre locations. If there are no sites available in these locations, out-of-centre locations may be considered provided they are accessible by a choice of means of transport. Development proposals for edge-of-centre or out-of-centre sites which are not identified in this Plan, should be supported by evidence of need for the development and evidence that the sequential approach has been applied in selecting the site. It may be appropriate for new developments that cannot be accommodated on to a single site within a town centre to be divided up and developed on various suitable sites within town centres. Advice contained here should be read in conjunction with the policies in the "Town Centres and Retailing" chapter.
- 6.3.2.5 Increased numbers of visitors can have an adverse effect on matters such as local amenity, environment and safety. Therefore, when assessing development proposals the council will have regard to their effects on the surrounding environment and neighbourhood amenity. Proposals likely to generate significant levels of noise and increased traffic must have regard, in particular, to the policies contained in the "Environmental Resources" and "Movement" chapters of this UDP. Such considerations should ensure that Barnet remains an attractive place in which to live, work and visit.

Policy L7 – Tourist Facilities – Preferred Locations

The council will permit development proposals for new tourist attractions and facilities in the borough provided that they do not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the surrounding area. They should preferably be located in the borough's town centres. Development proposals which would be located on edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites should be supported by the evidence of need for the development and evidence that the sequential approach has been applied, as outlined in PPS6. They should be highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, and be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Policy L8 – Tourist Facilities – Retention

The council will seek to retain tourist facilities and will support their improvement provided that these would not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the surrounding area.

Hotels

- 6.3.2.6 The *London Plan* seeks to ensure that London expands as a global tourism destination and develops a broader visitor base. To accommodate potential growth, a further 36,000 hotel bedrooms should be provided by 2016 in a range of suitable locations throughout London, such as town centres, Opportunity Areas with good public transport access to Central London and national and international transport termini. Proposals for hotel development in Barnet will be assessed against the impact on amenity, the environment and traffic generation. They should preferably be located in town centres, contributing to the diversity of uses in such areas. Where there are no suitable sites in town centres, edge-of-centre locations and other locations highly accessible by a choice of means of transport may be considered. Due to Barnet's geographic location, hotels have traditionally located along the main transport routes running through the borough into Central London. In light of these special circumstances, locations along the main transport routes might be appropriate for additional hotel development. However, all proposals for edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations, except those identified in this Plan, will be required to submit evidence of need for development and evidence that the sequential approach has been applied, as outlined in PPS6. Town centre proposals should be consistent with the scale and function of the centre involved, and all development should be in keeping with the character of the area.
- 6.3.2.7 For the purposes of this Plan, 'hotels' include guesthouses and bed and breakfast accommodation open to the public on a short-term commercial basis. The term excludes hostel accommodation for homeless people, which is covered in the "Housing" chapter.

Policy L9 – Hotels – Preferred Locations

~~The preferred location for hotels is in the borough's town centres. Where there are no suitable sites in these locations, the council may consider development proposals in edge of centre locations or in other areas provided that they are highly accessible by a choice of means of transport. All development proposals on edge and out of centre locations, other than those identified in this Plan, will be required to submit evidence of need for development and evidence that the sequential approach has been applied in selecting the site, as outlined in PPS6.~~

Policy L10 – Hotels – Development Criteria

The council will permit proposals for hotel development provided that:

- There is no demonstrably harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;
- The development is in keeping with the scale and function of the town centre, and/or the character of the surrounding area;
- The development is highly accessible by a choice of means of transport; and
- The development is designed to be accessible for people with disabilities.

6.3.3 Parks and Open Spaces

Protecting Public Open Space

- 6.3.3.1 For the purpose of this Plan, public open space is defined as public parks, commons, heaths and woodland and other open spaces with recognised, well established and unrestricted public access and capable of being classified according to the open space hierarchy (see Table 6.1), though not necessarily publicly owned. Public open spaces are important features in the borough because of their attractive quality, the rich diversity of the fauna and flora they support and for the essential role they play in leisure and recreation. They are used for active pursuits such as participating in organised team games, play, festivals and cultural events, as well as passive activities such as sitting and appreciating nature. As well as leisure and recreation, public open spaces may have ecological and education values. These are explored in other chapters, notably on the “Open Environment”.
- 6.3.3.2 Areas of designated public open space in Barnet are shown on Map 6.1. The council will produce an open space strategy in accordance with PPG17, and this will help provide the evidence base for the Local Development Framework which will eventually replace the UDP. The protection of public open spaces as a resource is particularly important because, once they are lost to built development, they cannot be replaced. The council will therefore seek to protect public open space in the borough from harmful development. The only forms of development that may be acceptable on it are those that are ancillary to the open space, complement its functions and are not harmful to the open character of the area.

Policy L11 – Public Open Space

Development in areas of public open space will not be permitted except where it is ancillary to the use of land as open space, complements its functions, is not harmful to the open character of the area and is in the interests of the community.

Table 6.1: Open Space Hierarchy

Type and Main Functions	Approximate Size and Distance from Home	Characteristics
Regional Parks and Open Space Linked Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt corridors. Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 hectares • 3.2 – 8km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large areas or corridors of heathland, downlands, woodlands, commons and parkland, including areas not publicly accessible but which contribute to overall environmental amenity. • Primarily providing for informal recreation with some non-intensive active recreation uses. Car parking at key locations.
Metropolitan Parks Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 hectares • 3.2km or more where the park is appreciably larger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either (i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodlands or (ii) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. • May contain playing fields, but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits. Adequate car parking.
District Parks Weekend and occasional visits by foot, cycle, car and short bus trips.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 hectares • 1.2km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups, and informal recreation pursuits. • Should provide some car parking.
Local Parks Pedestrian visits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hectares • 0.4km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing for court games, children's play, sitting out areas and nature conservation areas.
Small Local Parks and Open Spaces Pedestrian visits, especially by older people and children; notably valuable in high density areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 2 hectares • Less than 0.4km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardens, sitting out areas, children's play spaces or other areas of a specialised nature, including nature conservation areas.
Linear Open Spaces Pedestrian visit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable • Wherever feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Thames, canals or other waterways and associated open spaces and towpaths, paths, disused railways, nature conservation areas and other routes which provide opportunities for informal recreation. • Often characterised by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.

Source: London Planning Advisory Committee (1994) *Strategic Planning Guidance for London*, LPAC, London

Provision of New Public Open Space

- 6.3.3.3 The council recognises the role that public open space plays in enhancing the environment and offering opportunities for leisure and recreation, and will seek to encourage the provision of new public open space in the borough. It recognises the benefits of open space improvements to the quality of commercial development and the importance of open space and trees, in particular in combating and reducing air pollution. The council has identified areas of public open space deficiency in the borough based on the open space hierarchy, and areas of deficiency at local park level are shown on Map 6.1. A priority for the council will be addressing the lack of public open space in some parts of the borough (indicated as the areas of deficiency at local park level). This indicator is not in itself sufficient because some areas shown as deficient have low residential density and good availability of private open space. In considering provision of new public open space, both measures will be taken into account.
- 6.3.3.4 Further detail on the provision of public open space in conjunction with new housing development is given in the “Housing” chapter. Where new public open space is provided as part of a new development, it will be required to meet the council’s minimum standards and be subject to agreements regarding arrangements for maintenance. New open space must have genuine amenity value and be beneficial to the local community. The fragmentation of open space across a development will not normally be considered acceptable unless there is a demonstrated environmental or ecological justification.

Policy L12 – Public Open Space – Areas of Deficiency

The council will encourage new developments to secure improvements in the amount, quality and distribution of public open spaces in areas of deficiency identified by the council.

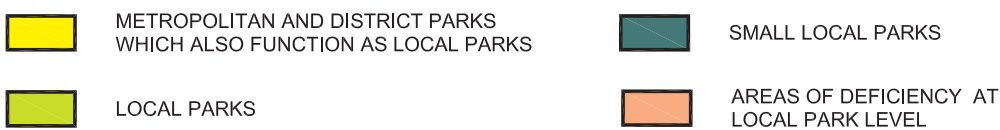
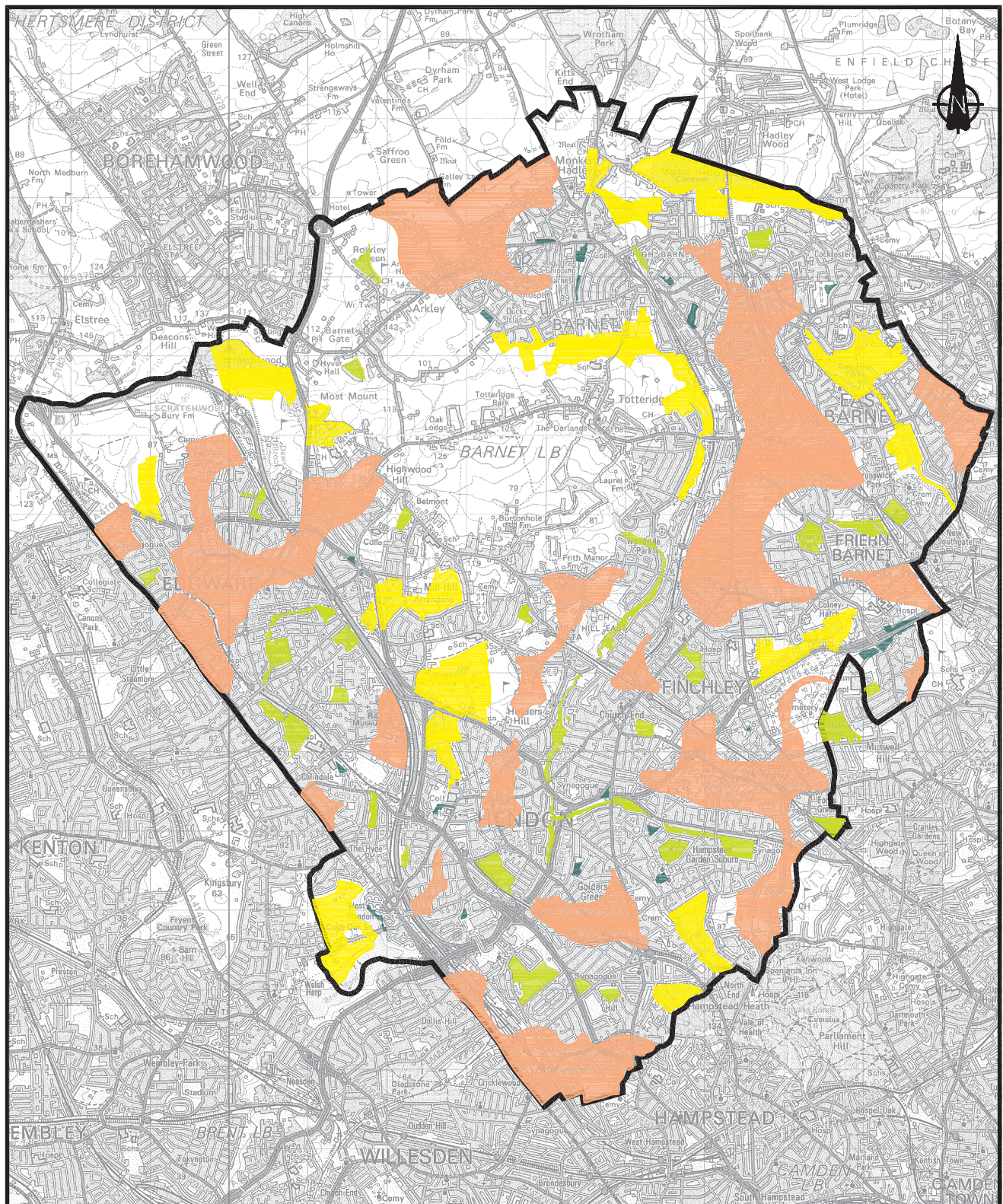
Access to Open Space

- 6.3.3.5 Informal activities such as walking and cycling are increasingly popular as the public becomes more aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. To cater for this increasing demand, continuing improvements will be needed to the network of footpaths, bridleways and cycleways in the borough. Improvements have been made in recent years in terms of accessibility and promotion of countryside routes. Self-guided, waymarked routes are provided, although it is recognised that their popularity results in greater wear. The use of footpaths and bridleways has to be managed so that people can fully enjoy Barnet’s many open spaces and variety of habitats.
- 6.3.3.6 In order to provide a comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways in the borough, consideration must be given to agreements between land owners and the council for public access. Good management of footpaths can result in a reduction in unintentional damage and trespass. Appropriate boundary definition and waymarking must be fully identified at the time of investigating new footpath and bridleway opportunities. However, it may not always be appropriate for footpaths, bridleways and cycleways to be in shared use. Where shared use would demonstrably compromise the safety of users, alternative separate routes should be sought. The particular needs of people with disabilities will be taken into account to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their access to open space.

Policy L13 – New Public Routes

Proposals for new footpaths, bridleways and cycleways will be sought where they complement existing routes and contribute to a comprehensive network of public access opportunities. The particular needs of people with disabilities for access to open space will be taken into account.

- 6.3.3.7 The council is aware that in order to enable open spaces to be appreciated by as many residents as possible, it must pay close attention to the quality, variety, safety and security of the facilities. If an area is perceived as being either unattractive or dangerous it will not be utilised fully. The council will aim to maintain or improve the aesthetic quality, landscaping and safety of its public open spaces.



Map 6.1 Metropolitan, District and Local Parks and Areas of Deficiency at Local Park Level

Policy L14 – Public Open Space – Improved Provision

The council will encourage the full use of public open spaces by all sections of the community, through improvements to the quality and variety of such spaces and by making the best possible use of facilities to meet the varying needs of existing and potential users.

Metropolitan Walks

- 6.3.3.8 Central to the concept of Metropolitan Walks is the establishment of a London-wide network of long distance, waymarked scenic walks, including Green Chains, riverside, civic and countryside walks. They may pass through a variety of environments, though in Barnet they are predominantly linked to Green Chains (as identified in the “Open Environment” chapter). They are of particular importance in providing recreational opportunities for long and short distance walking in pleasant and interesting surroundings. The council will resist development proposals which adversely affect the quality of Metropolitan Walks.
- 6.3.3.9 Four Metropolitan Walks have been established in Barnet, all of which have been endorsed by the London Walking Forum. These include the Dollis Valley Greenwalk (north and south sections), Section 16 of the London Loop, Sections 11 and 10 of the Capital Ring and the Pymme’s Brook Trail. Metropolitan Walks are shown on the Proposals Map.

Policy L15 – Metropolitan Walks

The council will resist any development proposals that will conflict with the function of Metropolitan Walks.

Allotments

- 6.3.3.10 Allotment gardening is a popular recreational activity combining exercise and relaxation and enjoyed by many borough residents. The produce of allotments can make a positive contribution to a healthier lifestyle and the concept of sustainable development. The allotments in Barnet are an important amenity, and also make a significant contribution to the borough’s network of open spaces and to its biodiversity.
- 6.3.3.11 The council will seek to protect and promote existing allotment land, and will resist development proposals which would result in the loss of these facilities. However, the council will consider alternative uses of under-occupied and under-used allotment land, if it is satisfied that displaced plot holders will be provided with suitable land elsewhere. This land would need to be within a reasonable distance of plot holders’ homes, be able to provide an equivalent standard of ground condition, and have a water supply and similar terms of tenure. The council will also consider alternative uses for allotment land which is surplus to demand but will need to be satisfied that there is little likelihood of any future increase in demand for such facilities. The criteria require that at least 50% of plots on an allotment site would need to remain continually vacant despite a three-year marketing campaign to attract occupiers, before alternative uses could be considered. Where this is the case, the vacant allotments should be consolidated to one part of the site and this area only discontinued from allotment use.
- 6.3.3.12 In areas of open space deficiency, it is especially important to ensure that the open character and appearance of the allotment sites is retained. Surplus allotment land could contribute to reducing these deficiencies. Therefore, when considering proposals on land used as allotments and located in areas of open space deficiency, the council will consider the scope for providing public open space, recreational or other community uses on part or the whole of the site. The criteria listed in the preceding paragraph will also apply.

Policy L16 – Allotments

The council will protect and promote existing land used for allotments. Development proposals resulting in the loss of allotments may only be considered where:

- i. There is clear evidence of insufficient demand for the continued use of the land as allotments; and
- ii. Suitable alternative land is made available for any displaced allotment holders.

In areas which are deficient in public open space, the council will consider the scope for providing public open space, recreational or other community uses on part or the whole of the site.

6.3.4 Sports and Recreation Facilities**Protection of Sports Grounds and Playing Fields**

- 6.3.4.1 There are a number of sports grounds and playing fields in the borough providing opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation. Sports pitches and other facilities (such as changing rooms and storage) provided in parks and areas of public open space, are complemented by opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation at private sports grounds and school playing fields. As well as helping to meet the sporting and recreational needs of borough residents, these facilities for outdoor sport and recreation are part of the regional provision in London serving the needs of other boroughs where facilities are scarce.
- 6.3.4.2 Government guidance on the release of playing fields for development has been strengthened in favour of retaining them. This is particularly true in the case of school playing fields. Local authorities now need to ensure that there will be satisfactory provision of playing fields to meet the needs of local schools before any can be released for development. Under the provisions of Circular 09/98, local authorities are also required to notify the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government of cases where Sport England objects to the proposed development of a playing field owned by the local authority, or used by an educational establishment. In relation to all types of playing fields, any proposals for development must be referred to Sport England. It has an adopted policy of opposing any planning application for development which would lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of all or part of, a playing field. Exceptions may be made if one of certain specified circumstances (covering availability of alternative facilities or the provision of new or improved sports facilities) would result.
- 6.3.4.3 Development proposals involving the loss of sports grounds and playing fields may be acceptable where the development of a small part of the site would enable enhanced sports pitches and associated facilities (such as changing rooms and storage) to be provided on the larger part of the site. Alternatively, replacement facilities, of at least an equivalent quality and quantity provided at an alternative site at least as accessible to users, may be acceptable. A proposal involving the loss of sports grounds and playing fields may also be considered where there is an excess of playing field provision and public open space in the area, and where it can be demonstrated that an overriding community need/benefit in terms of sport and recreation would be met.
- 6.3.4.4 School playing fields may also be used for development where they are in excess of the minimum area requirements set by the Department for Education and Skills, or if they are at redundant school sites. Playing fields that are at redundant school sites are considered by the council to be surplus to educational requirements. However, any assessment of development proposals should also take account of the recreational and amenity value of a particular site.

~~Policy L17 – Sports Grounds and Playing Fields – Protection~~

~~The council will resist the loss of sports grounds or playing fields (including school playing fields) to other uses other than in the circumstances set out in Policy L18.~~

Policy L18 – Sports Grounds and Playing Fields – Surplus to Requirements

~~The council will consider proposals for the development of playing fields identified as surplus, taking in to account considerations set out in government guidance, and where an overriding community benefit in terms of sport and recreation can be shown.~~

- 6.3.4.5 The National Playing Field Association (NPFA) recommends minimum standards for outdoor playing space. The recommended minimum provision for outdoor sport is between 1.6 and 1.8 hectares (4 to 4.5 acres) per 1,000 population. Of this provision, 1.2 hectares (3 acres) should be specifically allocated for pitch sports and the balance is required for non-pitch sports (e.g. tennis, bowls, athletics and croquet). Any application involving playing fields will be assessed against these standards until the council has completed both a local needs assessment and an audit of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities (which will lead to the setting of Barnet's own, local standards).

Provision of Sports Grounds and Playing Fields

- 6.3.4.6 Sports grounds and playing fields in the borough are intensively used, and the trend towards healthier lifestyles is predicted to lead to a greater demand for such facilities. The council will therefore seek to encourage new sports grounds and playing fields in the borough to meet identified needs, and will approve development proposals for such facilities. Development proposals to improve existing sports grounds and playing fields (for example, by adding new facilities such as changing rooms) may also be acceptable, providing that the proposal is ancillary to its use as a playing field. Development proposals for new or improved sports grounds and playing fields will be acceptable provided that they do not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses, or the character of the surrounding area. Consideration should also be given to the provision of access to sports grounds and playing fields for people with disabilities.

Policy L19 – Sports Grounds and Playing Fields – New Provision

Development proposals to provide new or improved sports grounds and playing fields will be acceptable provided that they:

- Do not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses;
- Do not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;
- Are designed to be accessible by people with disabilities; and
- The site is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

Floodlighting

- 6.3.4.7 The hours during which sports pitches and courts can be used can be greatly increased by the use of floodlighting. This is an efficient use of existing resources, and can help to meet the increasing demand for such facilities in the borough. The use of floodlights, however, can cause significant light and noise pollution at night and be visually intrusive by day. Floodlights have a detrimental effect on wildlife, such as the breeding habitats of certain species of birds. Therefore, the council will only permit proposals for the floodlighting of sports facilities where the use of floodlights will not cause unacceptable night-time nuisance in residential areas, will not adversely affect wildlife habitats or be visually intrusive by day. The type of lighting used and the design of the lighting can help to reduce the impact of floodlighting on the surrounding area, and the council will have regard to this when considering such proposals. The council may also seek to control the hours during which floodlighting is used through the use of planning conditions. Further information on light pollution is contained in the "Environmental Resources" chapter.

Policy L20 – Floodlighting of Sports Facilities

Proposals for the floodlighting of sports facilities will be permitted where this would not cause significant nuisance to nearby residents and to users of other properties, and where wildlife interests would not be significantly affected. The council may restrict hours of use.

Synthetic Sports Pitches

- 6.3.4.8 Synthetically surfaced sports pitches are capable of being intensively used all year round. This is in contrast to grass playing surfaces which are liable to damage from overuse, and which can be temporarily unusable when extreme weather conditions affect the quality of the pitch. Synthetic pitches are therefore an effective use of limited urban space, and have a role to play in helping to meet the demand for sports and recreational facilities in the borough. Multiple synthetic sports pitches have been provided at Trott Road and Pursley Road, and the council will encourage proposals for further synthetic pitches in the borough. However, it is recognised that synthetic pitches should complement and not replace all existing grass pitches, as some sports are not suited to a synthetic surface. In addition, synthetic pitches may be unsuitable in certain locations in the borough where they will have an adverse impact on the visual character and appearance of an area.

Policy L21 – Synthetic Sports Pitches

The council will permit development proposals for synthetically surfaced sports pitches, provided that there is no demonstrably harmful impact on the visual appearance and character and other amenities of the surrounding area.

Golf Courses

- 6.3.4.9 Golf courses are, in principle, an acceptable use of land both within the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. However, poorly designed golf courses and the proliferation of associated buildings (such as hotels and clubhouses) will change the landscape and have a significant impact on the character, appearance and nature conservation value of the countryside. New golf courses should therefore be located and designed to harmonise with the surrounding countryside and conserve the natural environment.
- 6.3.4.10 Any ancillary buildings should not, by reason of scale, siting, design or any other reason, impair the character and open nature of the land and surrounding area. In addition, on land proposed for golf course development, footpaths and bridleways should be protected and, where appropriate, extended to ensure that public access to open space and the countryside is not compromised.

Policy L22 – Golf Courses

The council will only permit proposals for the development of golf courses and ancillary facilities where:

- There is no demonstrably harmful impact on the visual appearance and established character of the locality;
- There is no demonstrably harmful impact on the nature conservation, landscape or archaeological value of the site and the surrounding area; and
- There will not be a reduction in public access to the countryside and open space.

Protecting Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities

- 6.3.4.11 Indoor sports and recreation facilities are an important community asset providing leisure opportunities for the local population, and are part of the regional provision in London serving the needs of other boroughs where facilities are scarce. Indoor sports and recreation facilities in the borough include large sports centres at Copthall and Marble Drive (Brent Cross) and swimming pools at Copthall, Finchley and Church Farm provided by the council. Commercially operated facilities in the borough include health clubs, tennis centres, snooker halls and tenpin bowling centres. The council's *Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity* aims to ensure that the provision for sport and physical activity within Barnet is developed in a planned and co-ordinated manner.
- 6.3.4.12 The council recognises the importance of safeguarding existing indoor sports and recreation facilities in the borough, and will resist development proposals which will result in the loss of facilities to other uses. Exceptions may be considered where new indoor sports and recreation facilities of at least an equivalent quality and quantity are provided on part of the site, or at an alternative site. The alternative site should be accessible by a choice of means of transport and should be selected in accordance with Policy L25. Improvements secured for other indoor sports and recreational facilities, which are at least as accessible to users, may also be considered as an acceptable alternative for allowing development which may result in the loss of existing facilities. Development proposals involving the loss of indoor sports and recreation facilities may also be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that there is an excess of such facilities in the area, and that this would remain the case after the development of a particular site. Demonstrating an excess of indoor sports and recreation provision will involve carrying out a comprehensive assessment of supply and demand, taking account of current and future sporting needs in the area. Any development proposal should meet the criteria set out in Policies L23 and L24.

Policy L23 – Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – Protection

The council will refuse development proposals resulting in the loss of indoor sports and recreation facilities to other uses. Exceptions may be considered where:

- i Replacement indoor sports and recreation facilities of at least an equivalent quality and quantity are provided on site or at a suitable alternative site (and where the alternative site should be selected in accordance with the requirements of Policy L25); or
- ii. Improvements are made to indoor sports and recreation facilities at other sites; or
- iii. There is an excess of indoor sports and recreation facilities in the area, and a particular development will not create a shortage of such facilities; or
- iv. An alternative benefit to the community would result.

Provision of Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities

- 6.3.4.13 Indoor sports and recreation facilities also provide a wide range of activities to meet the leisure needs of residents and continue to attract an increasing number of participants. The council recognises the growing demand for indoor sports and recreation facilities and will encourage proposals to develop new facilities in the borough. The council will permit the development of new, or the expansion of existing, indoor sports and recreational facilities where they will not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character and amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses. Proposals should not cause unacceptable nuisance in terms of noise and traffic generation, or result in the loss of land-uses protected by other policies in this plan.
- 6.3.4.14 When considering development proposals for indoor sports and recreational facilities, the council will also have regard to the scale and nature of the proposal, and the convenience of access to the site from main sources of demand. Indoor sports and recreational facilities are capable of generating significant amounts of traffic. Siting these facilities in town centres which are readily accessible to public transport can help to reduce reliance on the car and can contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres, with some such facilities supporting the evening economy. The preferred location, therefore, for indoor sports and recreation facilities in Barnet will be in the borough's district and local town centres. Developments that will have an extensive user-catchment area and have the potential to generate significant amounts of traffic may be more appropriately located in a district

rather than a local town centre. Conversely, facilities serving local needs may be best situated in local centres, in proximity to the communities they serve. Facilities may also be acceptable as part of a dual use facility at educational sites (see the “Community Services” chapter).

- 6.3.4.15 Where there are no suitable town centre sites in the preferred locations, the council will be prepared to consider edge-of-centre sites and, only then, other sites which are highly accessible by a choice of means of transport. For proposals on edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations, developers will be expected to provide evidence that there is a need for development and evidence that the sequential approach, as outlined in PPS6, has been applied in selecting the sites. Proposals should be consistent with the scale and function of the town centre and should not be detrimental to the character of the area.

Policy L24 – Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – New Provision

The council will permit development proposals for indoor sports and recreation facilities provided that:

- i. There is an identified need for the facility;
- ii. There is no demonstrably harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;
- iii. The development is consistent with the scale and function of the town centre and respects the character of the area;
- iv. Unacceptable nuisance will not be caused in terms of noise or traffic generation;
- v. The site is located close to potential users and is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport; and
- vi. The development is designed to be accessible for people with disabilities.

Policy L25 – Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – Preferred Locations

The preferred location for indoor sports and recreation facilities is in the borough’s town centres, or as part of a dual use facility at educational sites. Where there are no suitable sites in these locations the council may consider development proposals in edge-of-centre locations, or in other areas which are highly accessible by a choice of means of transport. All development proposals in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations, other than those identified in this Plan, will be required to submit evidence of need for development and evidence that the sequential approach has been applied in selecting the site, as outlined in PPS6.

Use of Planning Obligations to Secure Sports and Recreation Facilities

- 6.3.4.16 Where new housing or major commercial or retail development creates a need for sports and recreation facilities, the council will, where appropriate, seek to enter into planning obligations with developers to secure the provision of outdoor and indoor sports and recreation facilities for the community, or contributions towards their provision. In particular, provision will be sought for facilities that cater for the needs of those sectors of the community identified as target groups in the council’s *Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity in Barnet*. These agreements will be subject to arrangements for public access and long-term funding for the maintenance of facilities.

Policy L26 – Indoor/Outdoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – Planning Obligations

Where a development creates a need for new or improved sports and recreation facilities, the council will seek to enter into planning obligations with the developer to secure their provision.

- 6.3.4.17 The “Implementation” chapter sets out in more detail the council’s priorities for planning obligations. The council will prepare a *Supplementary Planning Document on Contributions to Culture, Recreation and Open Spaces From Development*.

Multiple/Shared Use of Sports and Recreation Facilities

- 6.3.4.18 Maximising the use of outdoor and indoor sports facilities in Barnet can also help to meet some of the demand for new and upgraded sports and recreational facilities in the borough. To facilitate this, the council will encourage the multiple/shared use of outdoor facilities (such as sports grounds/playing fields) and indoor sports facilities by different groups and by the wider community, and will seek to ensure that facilities are designed and sited to allow potential for multiple or shared use. When considering proposals for multiple/shared use the council will have regard to the effect on the character of the surrounding area and the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses. As part of this commitment, the council will also seek to promote the wider use of private facilities by the public wherever possible, and seek to bring back vacant private sites into sporting or recreational use (including, if appropriate, through purchase or lease).
- 6.3.4.19 The use of educational playing fields by the wider community is covered in the “Community Services” chapter.

Policy L27 – Indoor/Outdoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – Multiple/Shared Use

The council will encourage development proposals involving the multiple/shared use of outdoor and indoor sports and recreational facilities in the borough, provided that the proposed use would not cause demonstrable harm to the character of the surrounding area or the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses.