8 LEISURE AND RECREATION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.1 Leisure activities include recreation, sport, tourism, culture and entertainment. These activities vary greatly both in nature and scale and therefore the degree to which they require specific land use provision. Demand for leisure activities is expected to increase over the Plan period as people have more money to spend on leisure. In addition, the intensity and diversity of leisure activities is expected to increase due to the balances of time and money resources available to different groups within the population. This will in turn have land use implications if facilities are to be provided to cater for these demands.

8.1.2 The importance of providing Stevenage's residents with a wide range of facilities to meet their needs is recognised by the Borough Council and this Plan aims to promote and retain leisure facilities and opportunities within the Town. The Borough Council has produced a “Cultural Strategy” which will be reviewed annually. The Strategy sets out how leisure objectives within the Borough will be achieved e.g. increasing access to leisure activities and equality of opportunity and identifying specific leisure developments which will be supported to meet the overall objectives of the Strategy. This Plan has been co-ordinated with the strategic aims and implementation actions of the Cultural Strategy.

8.1.3 Stevenage is recognised as a sub-regional centre for leisure provision. For example, facilities such as the Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre, Stevenage Leisure Park and Fairlands Lakes sailing centre attract people from beyond Stevenage. The maintenance and enhancement of this sub-regional role provides additional benefits for Stevenage's residents. This Plan acknowledges that new facilities may be needed to extend the range of leisure facilities provided and to enhance the Town's sub-regional role.

8.1.4 There are certain groups of people to whom sport and recreation can be particularly important, such as the young, the disabled, the unemployed and the elderly. Despite the current levels of leisure provision in Stevenage, some of these groups do not participate in leisure activities. A need exists to help ensure that leisure provision is made more easily accessible for these groups.

8.1.5 As well as built or formal leisure facilities, open space, parks, allotments, play and amenity spaces are of equal importance as they provide for a range of more passive and informal activities. In addition footpaths, cycleways and bridleways provide a cheap and easily used leisure facility which are accessible to all. Tourism associated with people visiting local attractions and business tourism is becoming increasingly important in Stevenage and this Plan needs to make provision for development pressures which may arise.

8.1.6 Policy guidance on planning for leisure needs is provided in PPG17, whilst PPG6 and PPG21 are also of relevance. This Plan has also had regard to guidance provided by organisations with a leisure remit such as Sport England, the National Playing Fields Association and East of England Tourist Board.

8.1.7 In the context of the issues set out above, the Borough Council’s leisure policy objectives can be summarised as follows:

(a) to ensure adequate facilities and open space are provided in Stevenage, to meet the leisure and recreation needs of the Town’s residents;

(b) to maintain and enhance Stevenage's sub-regional role for leisure uses;
(c) to assist with making leisure and recreational facilities accessible for those who wish to participate in leisure activities;
(d) to enhance Stevenage’s tourism potential; and
(e) to ensure leisure facilities are provided in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

8.2 TOWN WIDE LEISURE AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

8.2.1 Stevenage has a wide range of built leisure and cultural facilities which have been enhanced and diversified in recent years by improvements to existing facilities (e.g. athletics track and football stadium) and new private sector facilities such as those provided on Stevenage Leisure Park. Policies L1 and L2 only apply to built leisure facilities because outdoor leisure facilities have different characteristics and locational requirements. Section 8.5 on formal open space provision provides guidance on new outdoor sports facilities.

8.2.2 Leisure is a dynamic sector and development pressures for new facilities are expected to increase and change in the future. Current and future national trends in leisure facility provision which may have implications for the District Plan include:
(a) National lottery funding – sports provision is expected to be enhanced by several proposals for new or improved sports facilities in Stevenage which may be part funded by the National Lottery Sports Fund (e.g. Barnwell School Sports Hall, and Marriott’s School Gymnastics Centre);
(b) dual use facilities – the use of school facilities and community buildings to assist with meeting leisure needs in the neighbourhoods is becoming increasingly important in Stevenage;
(c) leisure parks or family entertainment centres (FECs) – complexes with a range of facilities normally based around a multiplex cinema anchor (e.g. Stevenage Leisure Park); and
(d) 24 hour leisure – changing working trends are increasing demands for facilities that are open during the day and night e.g. cafes, pubs, fitness centres.

Major Leisure Facilities

8.2.3 The appropriate location for a leisure facility depends on its scale and intensity of use. Leisure developments which need a substantial building and where there is frequent activity involving large numbers of people need to be centrally located to be accessible by a range of transport modes. Such developments include sports centres, cinemas, theatres, swimming pools and large hotels.

8.2.4 Encouraging major leisure facilities to locate in town centres by adopting a sequential approach to considering development proposals is supported by PPG6 and accords with Structure Plan Policy 43. This Plan makes provision for major leisure facilities through the following approach:
(a) encouraging new leisure developments in the Town Centre Inset Area through redevelopment schemes or the conversion of existing buildings;
(b) identifying sites specifically for leisure uses in the Town Centre Inset Area;
(c) resisting proposals in edge of centre and out of centre locations unless it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the proposal and that there are no suitable sites in the Town Centre Inset Area;
(d) specifically identifying Stevenage Leisure Park for leisure uses; and
(e) resisting the loss of existing leisure facilities.

8.2.5 The Town Centre Inset Area is considered to be the most appropriate location in Stevenage for major leisure developments because their size, catchment area and intensity of use requires a central location which is accessible by a range of transport
modes. Town centre locations also help to minimise potential nuisance caused by traffic, parking and noise problems that may be associated with leisure developments. In addition, concentrating major leisure uses in town centres can make an important contribution to the viability and vitality of a town centre, particularly during the evening. Suitable sites are identified in Policy TR2 of the Town Centre and Retailing Chapter.

**POLICY L1: MAJOR LEISURE FACILITIES IN THE TOWN CENTRE INSET AREA**

**PROPOSALS FOR MAJOR LEISURE FACILITIES WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVOURABLY IN THE TOWN CENTRE INSET AREA AS SHOWN ON THE TOWN CENTRE INSET MAP UNLESS THE LAND IS DESIGNATED FOR OTHER USES.**

Policy TR2

8.2.6 A restrictive approach needs to be taken to proposals for major leisure development outside of the Town Centre Inset Area to complement this Plan’s policies for regenerating the Town Centre and achieving sustainable development. Major leisure developments outside the Town Centre Inset Area will therefore only be permitted where they meet the criteria in Policy L2.

8.2.7 Applications for planning permission on sites outside the Town Centre Inset Area will be required to demonstrate that there is a local or sub-regional need for a major leisure facility.

8.2.8 After demonstrating a need for a facility, development proposals need to demonstrate that a sequential approach to site selection has been taken. In demonstrating that no suitable sites exist within the Town Centre for major leisure developments, applicants will be required to consider sites identified for leisure development and vacant buildings or land previously used for leisure purposes in the Town Centre. In accordance with the sequential approach advocated in PPG6 applicants will be required to demonstrate that no suitable sites exist in edge of centre locations before out of centre locations are considered.

8.2.9 Matters that the Borough Council will consider when assessing the impact of a major leisure development proposal on the viability and vitality of the Town Centre include:

(a) the extent to which the proposal would threaten the objectives of the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy;
(b) any potential implications for future private sector investment needed to maintain the viability and vitality of the Town Centre; and
(c) changes to the range of leisure facilities that the Town Centre provides.

8.2.10 Proposals for major leisure facilities within the development at Stevenage West that are required to meet the needs of residents of the development will be considered in relation to Policy SW17.

**POLICY L2: MAJOR LEISURE FACILITIES OUTSIDE THE TOWN CENTRE INSET AREA**

OUTSIDE THE TOWN CENTRE INSET AREA PROPOSALS FOR MAJOR LEISURE FACILITIES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THEY MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:
(A) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT; AND
(B) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT A SEQUENTIAL APPROACH TO SITE SELECTION HAS BEEN TAKEN WHEREBY SITES IN THE TOWN CENTRE INSET AREA HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED FIRST, FOLLOWED BY EDGE OF CENTRE SITES. PROPOSALS IN OUT OF CENTRE LOCATIONS WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTABLE IF IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT NO SUITABLE SITES EXIST IN THE TOWN CENTRE INSET AREA OR IN EDGE OF CENTRE LOCATIONS; AND
(C) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE INDIVIDUAL OR CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF A PROPOSAL WILL NOT HARM THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF THE TOWN CENTRE; AND
(D) IT IS ACCESSIBLE BY A CHOICE OF MODES OF TRANSPORT; AND
(E) IT WILL NOT HAVE AN UNACCEPTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT; AND
(F) IT DOES NOT TAKE LAND DESIGNATED FOR OTHER USES.

Policy SW17

Stevenage Leisure Park

8.2.11 Stevenage Leisure Park on the edge of Stevenage Town Centre is the Town’s principal location for commercial leisure and entertainment facilities. The Borough Council considers it to be important for the facilities to be retained and enhanced for the following reasons:
(a) the Leisure Park provides sub-regional leisure facilities and is one of the Town’s main visitor attractions;
(b) the site has good access by passenger transport; and
(c) there is a lack of alternative sites in Stevenage for accommodating the facilities that it currently provides.

8.2.12 The Leisure Park is designated for leisure uses within the D2 and A3 Use Classes as these reflect the existing uses on the site. Proposals for A3 uses (restaurants, take-aways, bars) are acceptable as they complement the principal leisure uses. However, proposals for other uses such as retailing would not be acceptable as they could threaten the viability of the site as a leisure park and it may be difficult to replace the existing uses on a suitable alternative site.

8.2.13 In view of the large amount of car parking provision on the site, the close proximity of the site to public transport interchanges and the new car parking standards which will be developed for the Town Centre, scope may exist for intensifying leisure uses on the site. Development proposals that result in the loss of existing car parking provision will be considered in relation to Policy T15 of the Transport Chapter.

POLICY L3: STEVENAGE LEISURE PARK

STEVENAGE LEISURE PARK AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP IS DESIGNATED FOR LEISURE USES WITHIN THE USE CLASSES D2 AND A3. PROPOSALS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OR CONVERSION OF BUILDINGS TO OTHER USES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE BUILDINGS ARE NO LONGER VAILABLE FOR LEISURE USES.
PROPOSALS FOR INTENSIFYING LEISURE USES WITHIN THE STEVENAGE LEISURE PARK WILL BE ENCOURAGED WHERE THEY ACCORD WITH THIS PLAN'S TRANSPORT POLICIES.

Existing Leisure Facilities

8.2.14 Protection of existing leisure facilities is justified for the following reasons:
(a) losses of leisure facilities may result in deficiencies which may be difficult to address; and
(b) leisure facilities are often sited in the most appropriate location to meet the needs of their users and alternative locations for replacing facilities is unsuitable.

8.2.15 Developers will be required to replace leisure facilities if they are lost to alternative development because it is unlikely that it will be viable for facilities to be adequately replaced otherwise, particularly since many facilities such as swimming pools, theatres and outdoor sports facilities are provided by the public sector. Replacement facilities will need to be at least equivalent to the original facility in terms of the quality and quantity of provision and will need to be sited in a satisfactory location that is accessible to all potential users.

8.2.16 Some leisure facilities may no longer be viable for retention and there may not be sufficient demand to justify a replacement leisure facility. Where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council that this is the case, the loss of leisure facilities to other uses may be permitted.

POLICY L4: LOSS OR REDUCTION OF EXISTING LEISURE FACILITIES

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF OR REDUCTION IN LEISURE FACILITIES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:

(A) THE EXISTING FACILITY CAN BE SATISFACTORILY RELOCATED WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL; OR
(B) THE FACILITY IS REPLACED IN AN APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVE LOCATION; OR
(C) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE FACILITY IS NO LONGER NEEDED FOR EITHER THE PURPOSE PROVIDED OR AN APPROPRIATE AND VIABLE ALTERNATIVE LEISURE USE.

8.2.17 Several leisure facilities in Stevenage have the potential to be modernised, improved or redeveloped for new leisure facilities. The Borough Council will encourage proposals for the modernisation, improvement or redevelopment of leisure facilities in Stevenage in order to improve the range and quality of facilities.

POLICY L5 : MODERNISATION, ENHANCEMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT OF LEISURE FACILITIES

PROPOSALS FOR THE MODERNISATION, ENHANCEMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT OF LEISURE FACILITIES FOR INCREASED LEISURE ACTIVITIES WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVOURABLY. THE FOLLOWING SITES HAVE BEEN SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED:
1. RIDLINS END ATHLETICS TRACK AND PAVILION;
2. FUN CENTRE, DANESTRETE; AND
3. STEVENAGE SWIMMING POOL.

8.3 COMMUNITY LEISURE FACILITY PROVISION

8.3.1 A need exists for maintaining and enhancing community based leisure facilities for the following reasons:
(a) to ensure that sport and cultural facilities are accessible to all residents in Stevenage as access to the major town-wide facilities may be difficult for certain groups; and
(b) to encourage participation in leisure activities by groups who are less likely to participate i.e. elderly people, the disabled, the unemployed and young people.

8.3.2 The provision of local leisure facilities in the neighbourhood centres which are within walking distance of most residential areas is therefore vital. It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to meet all leisure, social and community provision needs in neighbourhood centres. The Borough Council has therefore identified other sites in the neighbourhoods where such facilities could be located. These are identified in Policy SC4.

POLICY L6: LEISURE FACILITIES IN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES, PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL LEISURE FACILITIES TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS OR THE USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS FOR LEISURE FACILITIES WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVOURABLY. PROPOSALS WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO THERE BEING NO ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES OF THE AREA AND THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT. THE LOSS OF EXISTING LEISURE FACILITIES IN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES WILL BE RESISTED.

Policy SC3

8.3.3 Small sports centres in the neighbourhoods known as ‘Satellite Sports Centres’ have the potential to address local deficiencies in provision and encourage greater levels of participation in sport without having an adverse effect on the viability of major sports facilities located in the Town Centre. The Borough Council encourages the provision of such facilities. Proposals currently exist for a number of satellite sports centres to be built on school grounds in Stevenage which will be available to the community outside of school hours.

POLICY L7: SATELLITE SPORTS CENTRES

PROPOSALS FOR SATELLITE SPORTS CENTRES WILL BE PERMITTED IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS WHICH ARE ACCESSIBLE BY A RANGE OF TRANSPORT MODES INCLUDING PASSENGER TRANSPORT, CYCLING AND WALKING. PROPOSALS WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO THERE BEING NO ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES OF THE AREA AND THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.

8.3.4 The dual use of school buildings and grounds, community buildings and private leisure facilities for community leisure use has potential to make an important
contribution to leisure facility provision in Stevenage at the local level. Dual use can help address leisure facility deficiencies, improve local access to facilities and allow better use to be made of existing resources. Development proposals for the joint provision of new leisure facilities for use by the local community is therefore encouraged by the Borough Council unless proposals would cause problems for residential amenity such as unacceptable levels of noise and traffic generation. Development proposals for the dual use of school and private social facilities for social and community uses are also encouraged for the same reasons.

POLICY L8: DUAL USE OF LEISURE, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE DUAL USE OF COMMUNITY, SCHOOL OR PRIVATE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR LEISURE, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVOURABLY WHERE THEY ARE SITED IN LOCATIONS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE BY A RANGE OF TRANSPORT MODES INCLUDING PASSENGER TRANSPORT, CYCLING AND WALKING. PROPOSALS WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO THERE BEING NO ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES OF THE AREA AND THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.

8.3.5 Significant demand exists for places at play groups at community centres in Stevenage. It is important to provide such facilities at a local level to ensure easy access for the local population. Proposals for play provision within existing neighbourhood centres will therefore be encouraged. Major new residential developments will be required to make provision for facilities that can be used as play centres in new local centres.

POLICY L9: PLAY CENTRES

IN MAJOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS, THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES WHICH CAN BE USED AS PLAY CENTRES WILL BE SOUGHT IN NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES.

PROPOSALS FOR PLAY CENTRE PROVISION WITHIN EXISTING AND PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES SHOULD BE INTEGRATED WITH OTHER LEISURE AND COMMUNITY USES WHEREVER PRACTICABLE. ANY PROPOSAL WHICH INCREASES PLAY CENTRE PROVISION WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDING THAT THERE ARE NO ADVERSE IMPACTS ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY OR THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.

8.4 PRINCIPAL OPEN SPACES

8.4.1 The importance of open space was recognised in the New Town Master Plans which proposed both the protection of attractive open space for environmental reasons and the provision of open space for leisure activities. Therefore existing natural landscape features such as Fairlands Valley can be identified as being integral to the original layout of the Town. These large areas of open space were located strategically within the neighbourhood structure.

8.4.2 The concept of integrating the Town's landscape into the urban structure by retaining key features as open spaces was in many ways unique. The Borough Council aims to preserve these principal areas of open space, thus ensuring that one of the main
elements of the original design concept is retained. Policy L10 which identifies the ‘Principal Open Spaces’ to be protected should also be read in conjunction with Policy TW2 on Urban Structure and Policy EN10 on Green Links. Structure Plan Policy 46 advises local plan policies to be prepared in the context of open space strategies. Maintaining the network of Principal Open Spaces forms a major part of Stevenage’s open space strategy.

8.4.3 The ‘Principal Open Spaces’ identified in Policy L10 are important in terms of providing formal open space for outdoor sports activities. Table L1 identifies a shortage of this type of open space. Therefore the ‘Principal Open Spaces’ need to be retained to ensure that these formal open spaces are dedicated for community use and are not lost. These spaces also have informal recreational value to the public.

8.4.4 Development within Principal Open Spaces is generally unacceptable except for recreational facilities that would add to the quality of the facilities available. Indoor or outdoor leisure facilities that would not have a significant adverse affect on the openness of District Parks or Principal Open Spaces may be acceptable e.g. pavilions, changing rooms and artificial pitches.

8.4.5 To facilitate access to the strategic housing development at Stevenage West, four potential transport crossings have been identified in Policy SW7. If implemented one of these crossings would run through Meadway Park. As the construction of new transport links is essential for providing access to the proposed development, an overriding need may exist for justifying an exception to Policy L10 and permitting the loss of part of Meadway Park. If this is the case part or all of the existing open space at Meadway Park may no longer be available for formal recreation, in terms of size, shape and supporting facilities. Policy SW9 deals with this situation if it occurs.

POLICY L10: PRINCIPAL OPEN SPACES

THE LOSS OF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DISTRICT PARKS AND PRINCIPAL OPEN SPACES AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP WILL BE RESISTED.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT PARK/PRINCIPAL OPEN SPACE</th>
<th>AREA (HECTARES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. FAIRLANDS VALLEY DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SHEPHALBURY DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ST. NICHOLAS DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. HAMPSON DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. RIDLINS PARK</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PEARTREE DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. CHERRLS DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. KING GEORGE V DISTRICT PARK</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CANTERBURY PARK</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. TOWN CENTRE GARDENS</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. MEADWAY PARK</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. BANDLEY HILL</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. MOBBSBURY PARK</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. BURYMEAD</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. CAMPSHILL PARK</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. WHITESMEAD ROAD</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. BEDWELL PARK</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. THE NOKE</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROPOSALS FOR LEISURE AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENTS IN DISTRICT PARKS AND PRINCIPAL OPEN SPACES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THEY DO NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE AFFECT ON THE OPEN CHARACTER OF THE SITE.

Policy SW9

8.4.6 Fairlands Valley District Park is of town-wide significance and has a special character due to it being located in a valley with largely open or wooded boundaries. In order to maintain this character the Borough Council will consider carefully the impact of any development proposals within or adjoining Fairlands Valley.
POLICY L11: FAIRLANDS VALLEY PARK

WITHIN AND ADJACENT TO FAIRLANDS VALLEY DISTRICT PARK
PARTICULAR ATTENTION WILL BE PAID TO THE VISUAL IMPACT OF ANY
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL. ANY DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS DETERIMENTAL
TO THE OPEN CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE VALLEY WILL BE
REFUSED.

8.5 FORMAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION

8.5.1 Formal open space is provided in a number of ways which include parks, playing
fields, sports courts and greens and children’s play areas. The District Plan has an
important role to play in ensuring that an adequate supply of formal open space is
provided and maintained for the residents of Stevenage. To achieve this, the Plan
addresses the following issues:
(a) the identification of formal open space needs and deficiencies in Stevenage;
(b) the protection of existing formal open space;
(c) encouraging proposals which improve the quality of existing open space
provision; and
(d) ensuring that adequate open space provision is made in new residential
developments.

8.5.2 Assessments of the levels of formal open space provision in Stevenage have been
undertaken by the Borough Council. The assessments have been used to help
establish local standards of formal open space provision which can then be used for
identifying the level of deficiency or surplus for different types of open space. These
standards can be used as a basis for considering the acceptability of development
proposals which generate demand for, or result in the loss of, provision of formal
open space. Where appropriate, the assessments considered provision at the
neighbourhood level as well as for the town as a whole in order to identify local needs
and deficiencies which may be hidden if formal open space is simply assessed on a
town-wide basis.

8.5.3 Local standards for outdoor sports provision were established by assessing the
supply of and demand for facilities, using Sport England’s established guidance. The
assessment covered outdoor playing pitches, courts and greens. A separate
assessment of children’s play space, which includes equipped play areas and
informal areas of open space within residential areas, was undertaken using National
Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standards. These two types of formal open space
are therefore dealt with separately in this Plan.

Outdoor Sports Provision

8.5.4 The full results of the outdoor sports facility assessment are contained in the Borough
Council’s Outdoor Sport and Recreation Study. A summary of the results of the
assessment relating to outdoor sports provision is included in Table L1 below. The
assessment accounted for playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities that are
provided by the Borough Council, schools (where facilities are available to the
community on a regular basis outside of school hours) and private clubs. The local
standard for outdoor sports facilities is 1.5 hectares per 1,000 population of which
1.41 hectares is for pitch sports and 0.09 hectares is for other outdoor sports facilities.

Table L1: Outdoor Sports Provision in Stevenage
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category A (Ha)</th>
<th>Category B1 (Ha)</th>
<th>Category B2 (Ha)</th>
<th>Surplus / Deficiency (Ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>117.68</td>
<td>55.07</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>14.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
Category A: Facilities in ‘Secured Community Use’ which are available for use at most times. This will mainly cover facilities owned by the Borough Council which are located in District Parks and Principal Open Spaces。

Category B1: Facilities in ‘Secured Community Use’ which are available for use during times of peak demand. This will mainly cover schools which have facilities available to the public through formal community use agreements.

Category B2: Other facilities available for use by the community during times of peak demand. This will mainly cover schools and clubs which as a matter of policy or practice are available for use by large sections of the public.

8.5.5 Table L1 shows that outdoor sports provision in Stevenage as a whole is significantly below the local standard. Furthermore, in addition to the deficiency in the amount of playing space, there are qualitative deficiencies in the existing supply of playing fields, greens and courts. For example, some facilities are redundant or underused or have physical problems which may restrict their use such as poor drainage or a lack of changing facilities.

8.5.6 To address the overall deficiency of outdoor playing space for sport in Stevenage would require a considerable amount of additional open space to be made available for community use and is unlikely to be achieved in practice. However, to help address the deficiency in outdoor playing space for sport, to prevent the deficiency from increasing and to help make better use of existing facilities, this Plan adopts the following approach:

(a) the protection of existing playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities;
(b) the encouragement for the provision of new outdoor sports facilities, improvements to existing facilities to enable greater community use, or the dual use of existing facilities which are currently not available for community use; and
(c) the provision of new facilities or improvements to existing facilities associated with residential developments.

**Loss of Existing Outdoor Sports Facilities**

8.5.7 Protecting existing playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities from development is critical if an adequate supply of accessible formal open space is to be maintained to meet the recreational needs of Stevenage residents. In urban areas, pressure for other forms of development on both public and private playing fields is considerable due to their open and generally unconstrained nature.

8.5.8 Policy L12 applies to all playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities whether the facilities are in public, educational or private use, as they all make a contribution towards meeting the recreational needs of Stevenage residents. The policy also applies to redundant or underused outdoor sports facilities as these represent a scarce resource which offers potential to meet community needs. The policy applies
equally to ancillary facilities such as changing rooms because their loss is likely to prejudice the use of the main facility.

8.5.9 Whilst the Borough Council is reluctant to allow development that would result in the loss of playing fields or other outdoor sports facilities, it acknowledges that in exceptional circumstances, their release to meet needs for other types of development may be justified. Where the loss of a playing field would not result in a deficiency of outdoor sports provision, alternative uses may be acceptable. Even if the loss of a facility would not result in a quantitative deficiency in provision, the Borough Council will consider whether there are qualitative reasons for justifying the retention of a facility. For example, a facility may have a town-wide catchment or may provide facilities for a particular sport which has a deficiency in supply in the town.

8.5.10 Development proposals for sports facilities that would result in the loss of playing fields, but would improve the range and quality of sports facilities available in Stevenage may be considered as an exception to Policy L12. For example, if one sports pitch is replaced with an all weather artificial pitch which allows more intensive use and a wider range of sports to take place, this may be acceptable.

8.5.11 The loss of outdoor sports facilities may be acceptable if alternative provision is made elsewhere. However, facilities will need to represent an adequate substitute for, or preferably an improvement on, the existing facility in terms of size and quality. Furthermore, it would be essential that the replacement facility is sited in an appropriate location which can be easily accessed by the users of the existing facility. The Borough Council would require replacement facilities to be available for use prior to the start of the redevelopment of the existing facility.

8.5.12 Exceptionally, the Borough Council may accept a financial contribution towards new or improved outdoor sports facilities on existing open space provision if it is not possible to make alternative provision elsewhere in view of the limited opportunities in Stevenage for providing replacement sports facilities on new sites. The Borough Council has prepared an outdoor sport and recreation study which identifies priorities for new facilities or improving existing facilities. In determining whether such an exception would be justified, the Borough Council will have regard to considerations such as the long term viability of maintaining the facility for community use, the quality of the facilities provided and the wider benefits to the community of implementing priority schemes identified in the outdoor sport and recreation facility study. Financial contributions towards off-site facilities would be sought through planning obligations. Supplementary planning guidance will be prepared to provide detailed guidance on planning obligations related to outdoor sport and recreation provision.

8.5.13 It is acknowledged that difficulties may sometimes arise in maintaining some outdoor sports facilities to a standard where they can be regularly used, and occasionally facilities become redundant as it is no longer viable to keep them in use. To secure the long term viability of a facility it may be acceptable to allow a small part of a site to be developed in order to provide the necessary funding to ensure that the outdoor sports facility can be retained and enhanced.

8.5.14 To ensure that open space is not unnecessarily lost to development, it would need to be demonstrated (to the satisfaction of the Borough Council) that it is not viable for a facility to be maintained or reinstated for formal open space use, and, that enabling development would ensure that the quality of facilities available could be enhanced to a level which would allow significantly greater use by the community. Development proposals would only be acceptable on a small part of the site and would need to be commensurate in scale to the recreational benefits that the development facilitates. The remaining area would need to be viable for playing fields or other outdoor sports.
facilities. The Borough Council would seek a planning obligation to ensure that the remaining open space is retained and enhanced and that adequate provision is made for the maintenance of the facility. It is considered that this approach accords with the advice contained in Circular 1/97 ‘Planning Obligations’ with respect to seeking benefits from a development.

POLICY L12: LOSS OF PLAYING FIELDS AND OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THE LOSS OF, OR PREJUDICE THE USE OF, PLAYING FIELDS OR OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES (INCLUDING ANCILLARY FACILITIES WHICH SUPPORT THE MAIN FACILITY), WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA CAN BE MET:

(A) THE LOSS OF A FACILITY DOES NOT CREATE OR ADD TO A QUANTITATIVE OR QUALITATIVE DEFICIENCY OF OUTDOOR SPORTS PROVISION; OR

(B) THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE FOR A SPORTS FACILITY WHICH WOULD IMPROVE THE RANGE AND QUALITY OF SPORTS FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN STEVENAGE AND WOULD OUTWEIGH THE DETRIMENT CAUSED BY THE LOSS OF THE PLAYING FIELD OR OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITY; OR

(C) THE PLAYING FIELD OR OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITY IS REPLACED WITH A NEW FACILITY OF EQUIVALENT OR GREATER SIZE AND QUALITY IN AN APPROPRIATE LOCATION OR IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS CONSIDERED THAT A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS NEW OR IMPROVED FACILITIES WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE; OR

(D) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE LOSS OF EXISTING FACILITIES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SMALL PART OF THE SITE WOULD BE FULLY MITIGATED BY ENHANCEMENTS TO THE REMAINING FACILITIES WHICH WOULD SECURE THEIR LONG TERM VIABILITY FOR COMMUNITY USE.

8.5.15 Table L1 shows that the school playing fields that are available for community use (Categories B1 and B2 in Table L1) make a major contribution towards outdoor sports facility provision in Stevenage. In the event of any existing school playing fields not being needed for school use, the Borough Council will seek to ensure that the school playing fields remain as formal open space unless an exception can be justified in accordance with the criteria in Policy L12. This approach will help prevent existing deficiencies from increasing where school playing fields are already in community use and may allow deficiencies to be reduced if school playing fields which are currently not available for community use are retained for the provision of public open space.

8.5.16 When schools become redundant, ancillary facilities which supported the playing fields such as changing rooms and equipment stores are often removed. Without these supporting facilities the viability of using the playing fields for community use can be threatened. As it may be difficult for the Borough Council to fund new facilities, it is important that the education authority retains these facilities in the event of schools becoming redundant.

POLICY L13: REDUNDANT SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS
WHERE SCHOOL SITES BECOME REDUNDANT SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS WILL BE REQUIRED TO BE RETAINED FOR OPEN SPACE USE UNLESS THE CRITERIA SET OUT IN POLICY L12 CAN BE MET.

WHERE SCHOOL SITES BECOME REDUNDANT ANCILLARY FACILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE RETAINED TO ENSURE THE VIABILITY OF THE PLAYING FIELDS FOR COMMUNITY USE.

Policy SC9

New Outdoor Sports Facilities

8.5.17 There are no sites available in Stevenage which are considered to be suitable for allocations for additional formal open space provision. However, any proposals that come forward for new outdoor sports facilities in addition to those required as part of residential developments will be considered favourably in appropriate locations. Proposals for new sports pitches and other outdoor sports facilities will be considered in relation to the criteria in Policy SW16. Policy SC4 identifies small sites that may be suitable for neighbourhood based social, community or leisure uses. Increases in outdoor sports facility provision in Stevenage are most likely to be achieved through the following approaches:

(a) additional existing school playing fields being made available for community use (Policy L8);
(b) redundant school playing fields being converted to formal open space for community use (Policy L13); and
(c) new outdoor sports facilities being provided as part of new housing developments (Policies L15 and SW16).

8.5.18 In addition to increasing the overall quantity of outdoor sports facilities, the Borough Council would favour proposals which would improve the quality of existing facilities through increasing the range of activities available, intensification of the use of facilities and making facilities more attractive to use. In particular, proposals will be encouraged which accord with the priorities identified for new facilities or the improvement of existing facilities in the Borough Council’s outdoor sport and recreation study. Policies L8 and L10 provide guidance on matters that will be considered when assessing proposals for ancillary or complementary facilities associated with formal open space.

Children’s Play Space

8.5.19 The concept of neighbourhood provision of children’s play space influenced the original design of the New Town. Outdoor children’s play space includes equipped playgrounds and informal playing space within housing areas. The 2001 Open Space Survey identified that there was a significant deficit of play space provision when the NPFA standard of 0.8 hectares per thousand population was compared with actual provision in Stevenage. The results of the 2001 Open Space Survey are set out in Table L2 below.

Table L2: Children’s Play Space Provision in Stevenage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>NPFA Standard</th>
<th>Existing Provision –</th>
<th>Surplus / Deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(hectares required)</th>
<th>Total (Ha)</th>
<th>(Ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedwell</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadwater</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chells</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>12.75</td>
<td>+5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Stevenage</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pin Green</td>
<td>11.70</td>
<td>9.55</td>
<td>-2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shephall</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>-3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Nicholas</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symonds Green</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevenage</td>
<td>63.05</td>
<td>56.29</td>
<td>-6.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.5.20 In addition to the quantitative deficiencies in the amount of children’s play space there are deficiencies in the quality of children’s play space. The NPFA have introduced a Children’s Playing Space standard based on the walking time between a play area and a child’s home. The standard introduces three types of play area, Local Areas for Play (LAP’s), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP’s) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP’s) which have different facilities and walking distance standards. The Borough Council has undertaken additional research to identify the extent of the deficiency for each type of play area in Stevenage and the results are set out in the 2001 Open Space Survey.

8.5.21 To address these deficiencies in outdoor children’s play space provision, and to help prevent them from getting worse, this Plan adopts the following approach:
(a) encourages the provision of new children’s play facilities to meet NPFA standards in areas which are deficient and the improvement of existing children’s play facilities to meet NPFA standards;
(b) protection of existing children’s play space facilities; and
(c) securing appropriate provision of new children’s play space facilities and improvements to existing facilities through new residential developments.

8.5.22 The Borough Council’s Parks and Amenities Group maintain the quality of play areas in Stevenage to meet the NPFA’s standards as well as British and European standards for children’s play areas. The Borough Council’s children’s play space strategy, which is continually reviewed, identifies priorities for new and improved equipped play areas. In particular, additional resources are focused on upgrading play areas to meet the standards of a NEAP which provides a wide range of play equipment. However, the ability of the Borough Council to significantly reduce deficiencies in the quantity and quality of play areas (equipped or informal) is constrained by the financial implications of providing high quality equipment to meet changing standards and addressing maintenance problems associated with vandalism and ageing equipment.

8.5.23 Due to their open nature, informal playing space within housing areas is particularly threatened by alternative uses, especially from infill housing developments and the extension of private gardens. To maintain an adequate supply of children’s play space it is vital that existing equipped and informal children’s play space facilities are retained.

8.5.24 The equipped play areas and informal play spaces to which Policy L14 applies are identified in the 2001 Open Space Survey. Due to the number of play areas and their...
small size it is not practical to identify them on the Proposals Map. The policy also applies to any new play spaces that may be provided over the period of this Plan. When assessing whether the loss of a play space would result in a local deficiency, the Borough Council will take into account both the amount of play space provided in the neighbourhood and any deficiencies in the provision of LAP's, LEAP's and NEAP's within the neighbourhood.

8.5.25 The loss of a children’s play space may be considered acceptable where replacement provision of at least the same quality is made elsewhere. However, the replacement location will need to be appropriate in terms of accessibility to the local population it originally served and should not create any new deficiencies in children’s play space provision. The Borough Council may accept a financial contribution towards new or improved off-site children’s play space where a contribution would be more appropriate for securing improvements to the quality of facilities elsewhere in the locality. Replacement facilities or financial contributions towards off-site facilities will be required to accord with the children’s play space strategy and would be sought through planning obligations. Supplementary planning guidance will be prepared to provide detailed guidance on planning obligations related to children’s play space.

POLICY L14: CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF EQUIPPED PLAY AREAS OR INFORMAL PLAY SPACE WITHIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA CAN BE MET:

(A) THE LOSS OF THE PLAY SPACE WOULD NOT CREATE OR ADD TO A LOCAL DEFICIENCY OF CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE; OR
(B) THE PLAY SPACE IS REPLACED WITH A NEW FACILITY OF EQUIVALENT OR GREATER QUALITY IN AN APPROPRIATE LOCATION OR IT IS CONSIDERED THAT A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS NEW OR IMPROVED FACILITIES WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

IN AREAS WHERE THERE IS A LOCAL DEFICIENCY OF CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE, PROPOSALS TO INCREASE PROVISION WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVOURABLY IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS.

OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

8.6.1 Within new housing developments the Borough Council expects the existing pattern of open space provision within the town to be continued and developers will normally be required to incorporate the requisite amount of formal (outdoor sports facilities and children’s play space) and informal open space (open space suitable for informal recreation) into their proposals. It is proposed that the local standards identified in Table L1 be treated as a minimum for outdoor sports facility provision. These standards have been established following research by the Borough Council into the supply of, and demand for outdoor sports facilities in Stevenage using Sport England’s established guidance. The Borough Council uses NPFA minimum standards for children’s play space provision as this is nationally recognised and is considered appropriate to Stevenage which has traditionally provided a high standard of children's play space provision through the planning of the New Town. Development proposals will be required to make suitable provision for open space as part of the development at a ratio of at least 2.7 hectares per 1000 population, of which 1.5 hectares will be outdoor sport facilities, 0.8 hectares will be children’s play space and 0.4 hectares will be informal open space.
8.6.2 Due to the different standards and criteria for the provision of outdoor sports facilities, children’s play space and informal open space, separate policies on their provision in new residential developments are required. Policy L15 applies to all new residential developments, with the exception of the Stevenage West strategic housing development, for which a separate policy (SW16) on outdoor sports facility provision is included in the Stevenage West Chapter. Policies L16 - L18 apply to all new residential developments in Stevenage including the strategic housing development at Stevenage West.

8.6.3 Policies L15 - L17 require either on-site provision of open space or commuted sums toward the provision or improvement of off-site open space. The Borough Council considers that the use of planning conditions or planning obligations to secure open space provision is justified in the context of Circular 1/97 ‘Planning Obligations’. The Circular outlines that it is reasonable to expect developers to pay for, or contribute towards, infrastructure which would not have been necessary but for their development. This Plan only requires provision where this is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared which will provide detailed guidance on how planning obligations will be used to secure formal open space provision for all sizes and types of residential development.

8.6.4 Policy L15 relates to all formal open space provision that is defined by the NPFA as outdoor playing space for sport. This includes playing fields, sports pitches, artificial sports surfaces, athletics tracks, tennis courts and bowling greens.

8.6.5 The Stevenage West strategic housing development is considered to be the only development in the Borough where the provision of outdoor sports facilities could be justified as part of the development as a development of 1,000 or more dwellings is needed to provide facilities to a standard that permits efficient use and management. Policy SW16 provides guidance on the provision of outdoor sports facilities within this development. The other housing developments that will come forward over the period of the District Plan will involve less than 1,000 dwellings, but will cumulatively result in a significant increase in demand for outdoor sports facilities. Justification therefore exists for most development proposals to make a contribution through a commuted sum towards the provision of new facilities or the improvement of existing facilities in the area where the development site is located.

8.6.6 As no sites have been identified in Stevenage which would be suitable for new playing fields or sports pitches, it is expected that funds raised by commuted sums would contribute towards providing new facilities or improving existing facilities on existing open space with the objectives of increasing capacity, widening the range of sports activities available, enabling the dual use of facilities and making facilities more attractive to use. Whilst improvements to existing facilities may not reduce quantitative deficiencies in formal open space, they would improve the quality of facilities. The Borough Council has undertaken an Outdoor Sport and Recreation Facility Study which identifies priorities for new facilities or improving existing facilities on existing open space. Funds raised by commuted sums would contribute towards appropriate priority schemes.

8.6.7 With respect to outdoor sports facilities other than sports pitches such as tennis courts and bowling greens, the Borough Council would encourage developments to incorporate facilities on site in accordance with local standards where facilities are of a size and standard that allows efficient use and management. This would reduce the contribution that would be sought for improving local facilities.
POLICY L15: OUTDOOR SPORTS PROVISION IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS WHERE IT IS NOT VIABLE FOR USABLE PLAYING FIELDS OR OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED ON SITE, COMMUTED PAYMENTS WILL BE SOUGHT TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE PROVISION OR IMPROVEMENT OF NEARBY OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES.

Policy SW16

8.6.8 The Borough Council expects the National Playing Field Association guidelines for children’s play space to be met in new residential developments. Using the NPFA standard the Borough Council has calculated on the basis of an average dwelling density (37.5 dwellings per hectare) and occupancy rate (2.46 persons per dwelling) that to meet this standard, 7% of the total area of a development site should be allocated for play space. In addition to the standard concerning the amount of play space to be provided, the NPFA’s children’s play space standard has three categories of play provision (LAP’s, LEAP’s and NEAP’s) which are recommended to be included as part of new residential developments. Each category of play space is designed for different user groups and has different characteristics. The provision of LAP’s, LEAP’s and NEAP’s is based on the walking distance from a child’s home. To ensure residential developments provide play space that is accessible and of beneficial use to the children that use it, development proposals will be required to meet NPFA guidance for LAP’s, LEAP’s and NEAP’s. Detailed guidance on these matters is included in the Environmental Safeguards.

8.6.9 NPFA guidance indicates that the minimum size of a LAP, the smallest and most common type of play space is 400 square metres. To support the provision of a LAP, NPFA guidance suggests that a development of at least 15 dwellings is needed. For developments of less than 15 dwellings therefore, it may not be viable for a children’s play space to be provided on the site although provision is encouraged. It may also prove impractical or be inappropriate for some high density residential schemes to provide play space on site e.g. Town Centre developments and residential conversions of buildings in other uses. In these circumstances, a contribution through a commuted sum towards the provision or improvement of local play space will be required. The Borough Council manages most of the existing children’s play space in Stevenage (equipped and informal), a large proportion of which has potential to be improved to meet NPFA standards. Commuted sums will therefore be used to provide new facilities or improve existing facilities in areas which have deficiencies in provision.

8.6.10 Most areas of Stevenage have qualitative deficiencies in terms of LAP, LEAP and NEAP coverage. If an area is adequately provided for in terms of play space provision and a new development would not result in a deficiency being created in relation to the provision of LAP’s, LEAP’s or NEAP’s, on site provision or commuted sums will not be sought. Opportunities may arise where play space facilities could be provided more efficiently by improving existing play facilities in the locality rather than making on site provision in a new development. Where this could be achieved without creating a deficiency in children’s play space, the Borough Council will discuss the positioning and provision of facilities with developers. Contributions in the form of commuted sums may be sought to facilitate this.
POLICY L16 : CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE PROVISION IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH NPFA (NATIONAL PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION) STANDARDS AT A MINIMUM RATIO OF 0.8 HECTARES PER 1,000 POPULATION. PROPOSALS FOR CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE WILL BE REQUIRED TO MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

(A) PROVIDE COHERENT, USABLE UNITS OF AT LEAST 400 SQUARE METRES IN SIZE WITH PLAY SPACE PROVISION DESIGNED TO INCORPORATE LANDSCAPING, PLAY EQUIPMENT AND OTHER FEATURES IN ACCORDANCE WITH NPFA STANDARDS; AND

(B) BE ACCESSIBLE AND WELL LOCATED WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT THEY SERVE.

IN DEVELOPMENTS OF LESS THAN 15 DWELLINGS, OR IN ACCEPTABLE HIGH DENSITY SCHEMES, WHERE IT IS NOT VIALBE FOR ADEQUATE CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE TO BE PROVIDED, COMMUTED PAYMENTS WILL BE SOUGHT TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE PROVISION OR IMPROVEMENT OF NEARBY CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE.

IF A DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL WOULD NOT ADD TO OR CREATE A QUANTITATIVE OR QUALITATIVE DEFICIENCY OF CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE PROVISION IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD, AN EXCEPTION TO THE REQUIREMENT FOR DEVELOPMENTS TO MAKE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN’S PLAY SPACE WILL BE PERMITTED.

8.6.11 The layout and design of the New Town incorporated large amounts of informal open space through District Parks and Principal Open Spaces. The Borough Council expects residential developments to continue to make adequate provision for informal open space to ensure residents have adequate access to informal recreation opportunities. There are no nationally recognised standards for informal open space provision. However, a standard which has been widely used nationally and is used by other Hertfordshire Districts is the provision of 0.4 hectares of informal open space per 1,000 population. This standard has already been met in most of the existing residential areas of the New Town and will be the minimum standard for new residential developments in Stevenage.

8.6.12 To provide an informal area of open space which can be flexibly used for a range of recreational activities, it is considered that an area of at least 0.2 hectares is needed. This would provide opportunities for informal team sports, passive recreation, seating, landscaping, footpaths and children’s play areas. Based on the informal open space standard of 0.4 hectares per 1,000 population and average household densities (2.46 persons per dwelling) it is calculated that a development of more than 200 dwellings would be needed to support the provision of an open space area of 0.2 hectares. In major developments of more than 200 dwellings, informal open space areas should be planned so that they are within walking distance of the community they serve. Walking distance is defined as 400 metres from home which is equivalent to 5 minutes walking time. This walking distance standard is also used for planning Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP’s) which also need to be located within reasonable walking distance from home. Informal open spaces need to be planned so that they are accessible to all local residents who may wish to use them.
8.6.13 With respect to the strategic development at Stevenage West, District Parks of at least 2 hectares in size will be required as well as smaller areas of informal open space in order to provide for 0.4 hectares per 1,000 population. District Parks should be located within 1,000 metres of the homes of the local population they serve which is equivalent to 15 minutes walking time. In addition to providing for a wide range of informal recreation activities, District Parks should also provide natural areas such as woodlands and ponds which are accessible to the public and have capacity for incorporating some of the outdoor sports facilities required by Policy SW16 and children’s play space in the LEAP and NEAP categories as required by Policy L16. However, it should be emphasised that the land take needed for any formal open space provided in District Parks will not contribute towards meeting the informal open space standard.

8.6.14 Developments of 200 dwellings or less will be encouraged to provide informal open space areas of at least 0.2 hectares. However, it is acknowledged that it may not be viable to provide informal open space to a standard expected for major developments. As a minimum, developments of 200 dwellings or less will be expected to include smaller areas of informal open space as part of the layout and design of the development in addition to the open space provision needed for children’s play areas. Developments of less than 15 dwellings will not be required to provide informal open space due to the difficulties in justifying the provision of usable areas of informal open space in developments of this scale. The threshold of 15 dwellings is considered appropriate as the NPFA consider that this is the minimum number of dwellings needed to support the smallest category of play space (LAP’s).

8.6.15 Many areas of informal open space form part of the system of Green Links within Stevenage. In accordance with Policy EN11, new areas of informal open space within developments should be planned to extend existing Green Links or form new Green Links wherever appropriate. In addition, informal open space will be encouraged to incorporate both wildlife habitats and landscape features. In accordance with Policy EN22, the Borough Council will encourage developments to incorporate measures to create and manage natural habitats as part of the structure of informal open space. This will provide opportunities for creative play, nature conservation and environmental education.

POLICY L17: INFORMAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE INFORMAL OPEN SPACE AT A MINIMUM RATIO OF 0.4 HECTARES PER 1,000 POPULATION.

ON DEVELOPMENT SITES OF MORE THAN 200 DWELLINGS, PROPOSALS FOR INFORMAL OPEN SPACE WILL NEED TO MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

(A) PROVIDE USABLE, COHERENT AREA(S) OF OPEN SPACE OF AT LEAST 0.2 HECTARES IN SIZE; AND

(B) BE WELL LOCATED AND SO DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPMENT, AND TO BE ACCESSIBLE BY A RANGE OF TRANSPORT MODES, INCLUDING PASSENGER TRANSPORT, CYCLING AND WALKING;

ON DEVELOPMENT SITES OF BETWEEN 15 AND 200 DWELLINGS, THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE USABLE AREAS OF INFORMAL OPEN SPACE TO BE INCORPORATED WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT.
WHERE APPROPRIATE, INFORMAL OPEN SPACE WITHIN DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE EXPECTED TO EXTEND EXISTING GREEN LINKS OR FORM NEW GREEN LINKS. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO INCORPORATE MEASURES TO CREATE AND MANAGE NATURAL HABITATS AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES WITHIN INFORMAL OPEN SPACES.

Policies EN11 and EN22

8.6.16 After formal and informal open space is provided as part of new developments it is normally offered for adoption by the Borough Council. However, there are other ways of managing open space which may be appropriate in the future, particularly community management through arrangements such as residents associations or trusts. It is essential that adequate maintenance arrangements are made for open space otherwise it is possible that open space will become neglected, resulting in under use or redundancy. Circular 1/97 ‘Planning Obligations’ outlines that the costs of subsequent maintenance should normally be borne by the authority in which the asset is to be vested i.e. the Borough Council. However, the Circular states that exceptions can be made for open space and recreational facilities which are principally for the benefit of the development itself.

8.6.17 The Borough Council will seek, or, where appropriate, require developers to enter into obligations which ensure that commuted sums are provided to cover the maintenance costs of open space adopted by the Borough Council for a fixed period of time. It is therefore in the interests of developers, and those responsible for the management of open space, that the design and layout of formal and informal open space allows long term cost effective management to take place. Where commuted sums are offered towards the provision of new open space or the improvement of existing open space, instead of on site provision, the commuted sum will be calculated to incorporate a contribution towards maintenance costs. Detailed guidance on planning obligations relating to the provision of open space will be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance. Open space provided within developments, which is not adopted by the Borough Council, will be subject to controls to ensure that the land is retained for open space use.

POLICY L18 : OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE

NEW FORMAL AND INFORMAL OPEN SPACES PROVIDED WITHIN DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO BE OFFERED FOR ADOPTION BY THE BOROUGH COUNCIL. A COMMUTED SUM TO COVER MAINTENANCE WILL BE SOUGHT OR, WHERE APPROPRIATE, REQUIRED, BY THE BOROUGH COUNCIL. ALTERNATIVELY, OPEN SPACE PROVIDED WITHIN DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE SUBJECT TO COVENANTED, LONG TERM, COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS. THE DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF OPEN SPACE PROVIDED WITHIN DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO FACILITATE LONG TERM COST EFFECTIVE MAINTENANCE OF THE OPEN SPACE.

8.7 ALLOTMENTS

8.7.1 Allotments still have an important recreational function. They are often located in areas where garden sizes are limited and provide additional open areas which can be used for informal recreation. Allotment gardening offers potential educational and
community benefits and allotment sites may have nature conservation value. However, the demand for allotments fluctuates depending on both national and local trends, and their take up depends on a wide range of factors including the convenience of location, quality of facilities and awareness and perception of allotment gardening. Allotments are currently managed in Stevenage through a town wide association of allotment users (SAGA).

8.7.2 A study of allotments was commissioned by the Borough Council in 2000 to provide guidance on the supply of and demand for allotments in Stevenage. The results of the study showed that a surplus of allotment land in relation to current demand exists and that there is an uneven distribution of allotments within Stevenage. In addition, allotment sites in the Town varied significantly in relation to take-up rates and maintenance levels. However, there is evidence that a revival in the popularity of allotment gardening could take place due to its health, leisure and social benefits and increased interest in people growing their own food. The Allotments Study identified a minimum standard of allotment provision in Stevenage of 0.09 hectares per 1000 population. This is based upon existing demand for allotments, plus an allowance for an additional increase in participation of 25% during the Plan period. Furthermore, the Study concluded that all residential areas should be no more than 1200 metres away from an allotment site to allow easy access for the catchment population.

8.7.3 On the basis of existing demand, and an allowance for projected increases in the population and an increase in the popularity of allotment gardening during the Plan period, the study concluded that there would still be a surplus of 2.73 hectares of allotment plots in the town which could be used for other purposes. In particular, the study concluded that if any disposal takes place, consideration should initially focus on surplus plots at the Walkern Road and Fairview Road sites in Old Stevenage where there is a high concentration of allotment sites and a large surplus of allotment plots. Both these sites are already low in occupation and areas within the sites are particularly underused and unpopular. Policy H3 has identified parts of both of these sites for housing development as they are considered to meet the criteria in Policy L19 relating to the loss of allotment land. However, development of parts of these sites will only be acceptable if satisfactory arrangements are made for relocating existing plotholders and the legislative requirements set out in paragraph 8.7.6 are met.

8.7.4 Even if parts of both the Walkern Road and Fairview Road sites are developed during the Plan period, a surplus of allotment plots may still exist in some neighbourhoods. It is therefore important that the Plan provides a policy framework for considering alternative uses for other surplus allotments. Surplus allotments have potential to address formal open space deficiencies identified in Borough Council strategies for outdoor sports facilities and children’s play space. However, where allotments are not identified in a strategy as being required for additional open space, other uses, such as residential, may be considered appropriate.

8.7.5 Development proposals involving the complete or partial loss of allotments will only be acceptable if the following criteria are met:
(a) there is not a quantitative deficiency of allotment plots in the catchment area. The results of the Allotments Study will be used for determining whether the loss of an allotment would result in a neighbourhood not meeting the local standard of allotment provision or residential areas no longer being within walking distance of an allotment site;
(b) the allotment site is suitable for disposal in qualitative terms. The Allotments Study identified reasons why some allotment sites are more popular than others such as access and the characteristics of the local population. Qualitative factors such as the level of current vacancy rates and specific characteristics of...
individual allotment sites identified in the Allotments Study will be used for assessing whether an allotment site is suitable for disposal; and

(c) satisfactory arrangements are made for relocating existing plotholders. Planning obligations will be sought from developers to ensure that allotment plotholders are offered convenient alternative plots and that where appropriate satisfactory provision is made for improving the facilities on the site that plotholders are relocated to.

8.7.6 The Borough Council intends to produce an allotments strategy during the Plan period to provide guidance on the future of allotment gardening in Stevenage. This strategy is expected to provide more detailed guidance on the disposal of surplus plots. Development proposals involving the loss of allotment sites will be expected to accord with any such guidance contained in a future allotment strategy. In addition, as the majority of allotments in Stevenage are ‘statutory’ allotments, to accord with the 1925 Allotments Act, the approval of the First Secretary of State will be needed before disposal can take place. In addition, in response to the 1998 House of Commons Select Committee Report on the "Future of Allotments" the Government offered a commitment that before approving disposal, the Secretary of State will ensure that local authorities demonstrate that the lack of demand for the use of allotment plots is not a result of lack of publicity and awareness, or due to the condition of the sites, their maintenance or lack of adequate facilities.

8.7.7 Surplus allotments will need to be retained for open space where Borough Council strategies for outdoor sports facilities and children’s play space identify them as being suitable for meeting deficiencies. The development of part of a site may be considered acceptable if this would facilitate the provision and long term maintenance of high quality formal open space facilities. This approach is justified given the potential financial implications for the Borough Council of providing and managing new formal open space facilities and accords with Circular 1/97. Development proposals would only be acceptable on a small part of the site and would need to be commensurate in scale to the recreational benefits that the development facilitates. The remaining area would need to remain viable for formal open space uses. The Borough Council would seek a planning obligation to ensure that the remaining open space is retained and enhanced and that adequate provision is made for the maintenance of the open space.

POLICY L19: LOSS OF ALLOTMENTS

THE LOSS OF ALLOTMENT LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA CAN BE MET:

(A) THERE IS NOT A QUANTITATIVE DEFICIENCY OF ALLOTMENT LAND IN THE CATCHMENT AREA; AND
(B) THE ALLOTMENT LAND IS SUITABLE FOR DISPOSAL IN QUALITATIVE TERMS; AND
(C) SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE FOR RELOCATING EXISTING PLOTHOLDERS; AND
(D) THE LAND IS NOT REQUIRED TO MEET FORMAL OPEN SPACE DEFICIENCIES.

WHERE ALLOTMENT LAND NEEDS TO BE RETAINED TO MEET FORMAL OPEN SPACE NEEDS, CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD FACILITATE THE PROVISION AND LONG TERM MAINTENANCE OF FORMAL OPEN SPACE FACILITIES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
Most neighbourhoods in Stevenage meet the local standard of allotment provision identified in the Allotments Study and most residential areas are accessible to an existing allotment. However, where residential development would add to or create a deficiency in provision, or would not be accessible to an existing allotment site, developments will be required to make provision for new allotments to enable ease of access for potential users. Accessibility to allotments is particularly important in areas of high density housing where private gardens are small or not provided. The Borough Council considers that the use of planning obligations to secure allotments provision is justified in the context of Circular 1/97 ‘Planning Obligations’. The Circular outlines that it is reasonable to expect developers to pay for or contribute towards infrastructure which would not have been necessary but for their development. Policy L20 only requires allotments provision where this is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

On the basis of the local standard of allotment provision of 0.09 hectares per 1,000 and the minimum size for a viable allotment of 0.5 hectares, the strategic housing development at Stevenage West is the only residential development that could justify on-site provision of new allotment space as a minimum of about 2,300 dwellings would be needed to support a viable allotment site. Policy SW18 in the Stevenage West Chapter of the Plan provides guidance on allotment provision in the Stevenage West development. In other residential developments where provision is required to be made for allotments because the development would add to or create a deficiency in provision, or would not be accessible to an existing allotment site, contributions to new or improved off-site provision through a commuted sum will be sought. Supplementary planning guidance will be prepared which will provide detailed guidance on planning obligations relating to allotment provision for all sizes and types of residential development.

The Allotments Study identified four areas of the Borough which did not meet the local standard of allotment provision or were not accessible to an existing allotment site. These areas were Poplars, Symonds Green, Corey’s Mill and St. Nicholas. A site was allocated in the Stevenage District Plan 1990 Review for allotments at Edmonds Drive to meet the allotment needs of the recently developed Poplars residential area. This is the only site in the Poplars area which is considered to be suitable for allotments in terms of size, site characteristics and physical access. As the Allotments Study has confirmed a need for allotment provision in the Poplars area, this site will be reserved for allotments until sufficient funding is available to enable the site to be brought into allotment use. With respect to the other areas, the allotments strategy will seek to identify suitable sites for making provision in these areas and if appropriate an Alteration will be considered to the Plan to allocate any sites identified for allotment use.

POLICY L20 : NEW ALLOTMENT PROVISION

IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WOULD ADD TO OR CREATE A DEFICIENCY IN ALLOTMENT PROVISION WITHIN A NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND/OR WOULD NOT BE ACCESSIBLE TO AN EXISTING ALLOTMENT SITE, COMMUTED PAYMENTS WILL BE SOUGHT TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS NEW PROVISION OR UPGRADING OF EXISTING ALLOTMENT SPACE WITHIN THE LOCALITY.
A SITE FOR NEW ALLOTMENT PROVISION IS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AT EDMONDS DRIVE, POPLARS.

Policy SW17

8.8 FOOTPATHS, CYCLEWAYS AND BRIDLEWAYS

8.8.1 Stevenage is planned to enable residents to have safe and easy movement within the Town, as well as access to the surrounding countryside using a network of segregated cycleways, footpaths and bridleways. These networks also provide the opportunity for informal leisure and recreational pursuits within the Town. The Borough Council considers that it is important to retain the existing networks, and to extend them into new developments and to the countryside beyond the Town. The value of footpaths and bridleways is their attractive character and it is important that where development proposals affect, or are adjacent to, footpaths and bridleways that this quality is safeguarded. Footpaths and bridleways will therefore need to be sensitively incorporated into developments or diverted where acceptable alternative routes can be identified and made available.

POLICY L21: FOOTPATH, CYCLEWAY AND BRIDLEWAY NETWORK

THE FOOTPATH, CYCLEWAY AND BRIDLEWAY NETWORK WILL BE RETAINED AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE TRANSPORT AND LEISURE NETWORK. WHERE NEW DEVELOPMENT IS PROPOSED, PROVISION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF, AND THE EXTENSION TO, THE NETWORK WILL BE SOUGHT.

Policies T13 and T14

8.8.2 The use of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways to enable residents to gain access to the countryside has been promoted by the Borough Council and the Countryside Management Service. The Borough Council will encourage schemes which improve or extend such access into the countryside. While it is recognised that the use of the urban fringe can cause problems for agricultural businesses, such as trespass and vandalism, this can be minimised by the use of well defined routes with good quality signage and stiles.

8.8.3 New developments on the periphery of the Town including the strategic development at Stevenage West, will be required to make provision for the improvement of, and extension to, the network where the development has an impact on it. Where viable, this may include measures for reducing conflicts between walkers, cyclists and equestrians giving them priority over motorised transport. Where appropriate, financial contributions through planning obligations will be sought to facilitate the improvement and extension of existing networks into development sites.

POLICY L22 : ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING AND EXTENDING FOOTPATH, CYCLEWAY AND BRIDLEWAY ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL BE ENCOURAGED WHERE
CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN TO MINIMISING THE POTENTIAL FOR TRESPASS AND VANDALISM ON AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE TOWN WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAKE PROVISION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT TO AND EXTENSION OF THE FOOTPATH, CYCLEWAY AND BRIDLEWAY NETWORK BOTH THROUGH THE SITE AND INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE.

Policy EN24

8.8.4 The Borough Council designated a Horse and Pony Riding Route in 1983 around the edge of Stevenage linking surrounding bridleways and incorporating a route diagonally across the Town through Fairlands Valley. The linking up of the existing Horse and Pony Route and its extension to the countryside is considered important as it is seen as an essential leisure facility and enables access to the countryside. It is therefore considered vital that the existing and proposed routes are protected. The retention, maintenance and extension of this route will therefore be promoted by the Borough Council. Developments which incorporate an existing Horse and Pony Route such as the development at Stevenage West will be expected to make provision to allow the routes to be extended into the surrounding countryside. The Borough Council will, where appropriate, seek planning obligations to secure the provision of an extension to the horse and pony route as a bridleway.

POLICY L23: HORSE AND PONY ROUTE

ANY REDUCTION TO THE EXISTING AND PROPOSED HORSE AND PONY ROUTE AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. WHERE APPROPRIATE, IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS PLANNING OBLIGATIONS WILL BE SOUGHT FOR THE PROVISION OF HORSE AND PONY ROUTES AS BRIDLEWAYS. ANY DEVELOPMENT WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECTS THE ROUTE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS A SATISFACTORY ALTERNATIVE ROUTE IS PROVIDED.

8.9 TOURISM

8.9.1 Although Stevenage is not generally viewed as a tourist destination, tourism makes an important contribution to the local economy. This is mainly associated with business trips and people visiting attractions in the area such as Knebworth House, Stevenage Leisure Park and Stevenage Museum. Research undertaken by the East of England Tourist Board showed that the overall value of tourism in Stevenage in 1996 was estimated to be £32.7 million, and this expenditure supported 810 full time jobs (Source: The Economic Impact of Tourism in Stevenage Borough, East of England Tourist Board, 1996).

8.9.2 The Borough Council recognises the benefits to the local community from tourist developments and will therefore favourably consider proposals in appropriate locations which do not have an adverse impact on the local environment or residential amenity.

POLICY L24: TOURIST FACILITIES
THE DEVELOPMENT OF FACILITIES FOR TOURISTS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT THEIR FORM AND LOCATION ARE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR SURROUNDINGS, THEY DO NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES, AND ARE ACCESSIBLE BY A RANGE OF MODES OF TRANSPORT.

8.9.3 The East of England Tourist Board have identified that the Borough has potential to increase its capacity to grow as a business tourism destination in view of Stevenage’s good accessibility by road and rail and the Town’s role as a sub-regional employment centre. This may result in further demand for accommodation to service the business market. In particular, recent national trends have created pressures for budget hotels in accessible locations, whilst a local need has been identified for further high quality hotel provision in Stevenage. Stevenage is well provided for in terms of budget hotels, but the Tourist Board have indicated that pressures may arise for expanding existing hotels. Proposals for extending existing hotels will be assessed against the criteria in Policy L25. As hotels can be a high intensity use, proposals for major new hotels will be favoured in Stevenage Town Centre where they are easily accessible to the railway station, Gunnels Wood Employment Area and other facilities that tourists may require access to. Policy TR2 identifies a site in the Town Centre Inset area that may be suitable for hotel development. Proposals for major hotels in out of centre locations will only be acceptable if they meet the criteria set out in Policy L2. Major hotels are defined as large scale developments which have a high intensity of use i.e needing a substantial building, and where there is frequent activity involving large numbers of people.

POLICY L25: HOTEL PROVISION

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE PROVISION OR EXPANSION OF HOTELS WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVOURABLY WHERE THEY DO NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR MAJOR NEW HOTELS WILL BE CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO POLICIES L1 AND L2.

Policy TR2

8.9.4 It is acknowledged that for guest houses and small hotels, other locations in the Borough may be acceptable where development proposals are compatible with their surroundings and meet the criteria set out in Policy L26. In particular, there is a concentration of small hotels and guest houses on Hitchin Road and London Road where large residential properties have been converted. Further proposals in these areas may be acceptable. This type of development may also be acceptable in the Old Town High Street South.

POLICY L26: GUEST HOUSES

THE CONVERSION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES TO GUEST HOUSES OR SMALL HOTELS WILL BE CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:
(A) LOCATION; AND
(B) TRAFFIC GENERATION AND ACCESS; AND
(C) RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING PROPERTIES; AND
(D) ABILITY TO MEET THE STANDARDS SET OUT IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL
SAFEGUARDS.

IN PARTICULAR THE FOLLOWING AREAS ARE CONSIDERED SUITABLE AS
SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

1. HITCHIN ROAD
2. LONDON ROAD

Policy OT17

8.10 ART AND DEVELOPMENT

8.10.1 There are an increasing number of initiatives to encourage the use and provision of art
and craft works as an integral part of development schemes. The Borough Council
believes that the quality of the visual and physical environment is of particular
importance and can be considerably enhanced by the use of art and craft techniques
and the provision of works in new developments. In addition it can bring economic
benefits to artists and craft workers.

8.10.2 The Borough Council would therefore seek to encourage the provision of art and craft
works as part of important development proposals which will have a considerable
impact on the visual amenity of the Town. The Borough Council will therefore
encourage developers to consider at the earliest stages in the design process the
inclusion of art and craft works in development. Such works can take many forms and
may either be outside or inside the building or integral to it. It is not intended that the
Borough Council will be prescriptive in this matter. However, it should be noted that
such works should be complementary to good design and be a collaborative effort
between artist and architect.

POLICY L27: ART AND DEVELOPMENT

THE PROVISION OF NEW ART AND CRAFT WORKS AS PART OF
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE ENCOURAGED. IN DETERMINING
PLANNING APPLICATIONS REGARD WILL BE GIVEN TO THE CONTRIBUTION
MADE BY ART AND CRAFT WORKS TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE SCHEME
AND THE AMENITIES OF THE SURROUNDING AREA.