

## 9. SPORT AND RECREATION

### PART ONE POLICY

#### POLICY REC1 - PRINCIPLES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

**NEW FACILITIES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION WILL BE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE EXISTING URBAN AREA AND TO LOCATIONS WHERE THEY ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT. OUTSIDE THE URBAN AREAS PROVISION WILL BE RESTRICTED TO FACILITIES FOR OUTDOOR SPORT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION WHICH PRESERVE THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT AND TO FACILITIES WHICH CAN BE ACCOMMODATED WITHIN AN EXISTING BUILDING.**

**THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL IN PARTICULAR SEEK TO SAFEGUARD EXISTING FACILITIES OF WIRRAL WIDE IMPORTANCE FOR SPORT AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF FACILITIES CAPABLE OF PROVIDING FOR TOP LEVEL SPORTING COMPETITION.**

#### POLICY REC1 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 9.1 Opportunities for sport and recreation are important features in the quality of life for many people. The range and quality of sports provision not only contributes to the health and fitness of local people, but can also contribute to the wider image and attractiveness of an area. Sport also has an important local economic impact, not least in terms of the level of employment supported by consumer spending on sports-related goods and services, including education, travel and the media.
- 9.2 While it is national policy to promote the development of sport and recreation, it is the role of the local authority to assess local needs for recreational facilities, identify deficiencies and encourage the development of suitable sites for additional provision. Planning policies should, therefore, not only aim to make adequate provision for new development but also seek to guide that provision to areas where the greatest needs have been identified.
- 9.3 Policy REC1 provides the framework for the future development of sports facilities throughout the Borough. It particularly seeks to concentrate new development within the urban area where demand is greatest and facilities are most easily accessible to local people. This is not only consistent with the urban regeneration strategy for the Borough but also with national Green Belt restrictions. It also reflects the pattern of deficiency in sports provision throughout the Borough.
- 9.4. While there are few quantifiable or commonly agreed standards for the provision of sports facilities, indicators such as the target for outdoor playing space recommended by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) demonstrate a general shortfall of provision throughout most areas of the

Borough. For example, the NPFA target relates the number of people normally resident within an area to the overall amount of land available and in active use for outdoor recreation. This includes facilities such as playing fields, running tracks, bowling greens, tennis courts and other areas specifically intended for formal sport or play. In Wirral, the current level of provision for this type of space, including facilities managed by the public, private and voluntary sectors, is 1.85 hectares for every thousand people. This is well below the target level of 2.43 hectares for every thousand people recommended by the NPFA.

- 9.5 In contrast to this, the distribution and range of indoor facilities within Wirral is generally good. The Wirral Leisure Strategy prepared by the Council's Leisure Services and Tourism Department identifies the need for a number of additional facilities. Many have recently been provided through a major new construction programme, sponsored by the Wirral City Lands Initiative, which has included the Wirral Sports and Indoor Tennis Centre at Bidston, the Birkenhead Cricket Club Indoor Cricket Centre and the Europa Pools swimming complex. However, the following additional facilities are still required;
- a wider distribution of synthetic sports pitches
  - small, 20 metre, local or neighbourhood swimming pools at Beechwood, Bidston and to serve the Heswall/ Pensby and Eastham/ Bromborough areas
  - multi-purpose indoor sports centres to serve West Wirral and the Eastham/ Bromborough area
  - local neighbourhood sports halls adjacent to school sites catering for joint public and school use
  - play and community centres at identified locations
  - a specialist gymnastics training centre
  - provision for ice and roller skating
  - children's play equipment within existing urban open spaces at identified locations
- 9.6. The Leisure Strategy also identifies the need for additional library facilities. Such projects and other sports related developments of a predominantly urban nature are not appropriate outside the urban area.
- 9.7 Policy REC1 also provides for the protection of facilities which play a particularly important role in providing for recreational needs within the area. This includes major recreational facilities, such as the Oval Sports Centre in Bebington and the Leverhulme Sports Ground in Eastham, as well as smaller sports grounds which may not have the range of facilities of the larger sports complexes but which nevertheless provide for higher levels of competition which require facilities above normal standards. Such sites are rare and if lost, would be very difficult to adequately replace.

- 9.8 In areas where land with potential for sporting use is already limited such sites can assume even greater importance. This is also the case for facilities which can support relatively intensive use for a wide range of different activities, especially where they are well located, able to serve a relatively wide catchment area and still have scope for future expansion. The distribution of such facilities also needs to be safeguarded so that the range of opportunities available throughout the Borough is consistent. This requirement is, therefore, also specifically reflected within Policy REC1.

### **Policy RE1 - Criteria for Urban Recreation Facilities**

**The Local Planning Authority will permit proposals for new facilities for sport and recreation within the urban area where:**

- (i) the siting, scale and visual impact of any related buildings or structures is appropriate within the surrounding area and well related to associated outdoor facilities;**
- (ii) the proposals would not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise or other disturbance, particularly to areas of residential property; and**
- (iii) adequate provision has been made for highway access and for on-site car parking and manoeuvring, including for buses and coaches where appropriate, in order to cater for the maximum number of players and spectators anticipated.**

**Facilities likely to draw users from outside the immediate local neighbourhood should be located so as to be easily accessible by public transport.**

**The Local Planning Authority will, where appropriate, apply planning conditions in order to minimise potential disturbance to adjacent residential property.**

### **POLICY RE1 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.9 Facilities for sport and recreation are of particular importance within urban areas where they are easily accessible to local people. They are not, however, suitable in every location and Policy RE1, therefore, sets out the criteria that will normally be used to assess their appropriateness.
- 9.10 The criteria are based upon whether the site is suitable to accommodate the nature and scale of the use proposed in terms of operational requirements and the impact on the surrounding area. In particular, it provides for the protection of residential amenity and allows for the Local Planning Authority to control aspects of the operation of the site in order to achieve this objective.

### Proposal RE2 - Land for New Recreation Facilities

Proposals for additional indoor and outdoor sports facilities will be permitted at the following locations subject to adequate servicing, highway access and parking arrangements and appropriate measures to minimise disturbance to adjacent residential property;

1. The Oval Sports Centre, Bebington
2. Leasowe Recreation Centre, Leasowe
3. Wirral Sports Centre, Bidston

### PROPOSAL RE2 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 9.11 The Oval Sports Centre is an established major sports facility providing for a wide range of sporting activities and for top level competition. Some of its facilities, such as the athletics arena, are of regional significance. In order to retain its importance, there is a continual need to replace, upgrade and enhance elements of the complex, in terms of the number of sports provided for and the quality of that provision.
- 9.12 Wirral Borough Council has identified a programme of enhancement which includes the modernisation of the grandstand and spectator facilities, the replacement of an all-weather pitch with a synthetic surface, improved car parking, upgrading the ski-slope, the refurbishment of outdoor tennis courts, other external environmental improvements and improvements to indoor sports facilities. This is not, however, an exhaustive list of the projects that may need to be undertaken during the UDP period. Proposal RE2, therefore, recognises the importance of the facilities provided by the Centre, the need to maintain and enhance the standard of provision for sport, and specifically provides for development and redevelopment to take place in this location.
- 9.13 The leisure centres at Leasowe and Woodchurch are also established locations for indoor and outdoor sporting activities, and play a vital role as district sports centres, serving a wide catchment throughout the urban area. Both have additional land available for further development and adequate servicing facilities. However, Woodchurch Leisure Centre falls outside the urban area and only Leasowe Recreation Centre is, therefore, specifically allocated for new sports-related development under Proposal RE2.
- 9.14 Wirral Sports Centre, which includes provision for indoor tennis and associated outdoor facilities, was completed during 1993. Although modern and extensive there may still be scope to realign, improve or extend the facilities during the UDP period, and this site is, therefore, also included under Proposal RE2.

### **Proposal RE3 - New Neighbourhood Indoor Sports Facilities**

**Neighbourhood swimming pools and multi-purpose indoor sports facilities are required to serve the Heswall/ Pensby and Bromborough/ Eastham areas of the Borough. They should be provided subject to Policy RE1, when resources become available.**

#### **PROPOSAL RE3 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.15 The Heswall/ Pensby and Bromborough/ Eastham areas of the Borough have been identified within the Wirral Leisure Strategy as requiring the provision of indoor sports facilities, including swimming pools. Public consultation has confirmed this assessment.
- 9.16 While sites have not yet been identified, nor resources made available, it is important that the need for these facilities is identified within the UDP, in order to enable them to be provided within the Plan period.

### **Proposal RE4 - New Neighbourhood Swimming Pool, Beechwood**

**Land at Fender Way, Beechwood, adjacent to the Beechwood Sports Centre, is allocated for a new neighbourhood swimming pool.**

#### **PROPOSAL RE4 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.17 A neighbourhood swimming pool has been planned for a number of years as the second phase of the Beechwood Sports Centre. The proposal is within the Council's approved capital programme but awaits resources to be formally allocated. A suitable site, already owned by the Council, has been identified and is, therefore, allocated for this purpose under Proposal RE4.

### **Policy RE5 - Criteria for the Protection of Playing Fields**

**The Local Planning Authority will protect sports grounds and playing fields from development unless:**

- (i) sport and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site; or**
- (ii) alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available; or**
- (iii) the provision of land for sports pitches, including public, private and school facilities with secured community use, exceeds a standard of 1.21 hectares for every thousand people.**

## POLICY RE5 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 9.18 National planning policy states that playing fields should be protected from development unless a surplus of playing pitches exists, or an adequate replacement can be provided, or where limited development may be necessary in order to improve or secure the retention of recreational facilities. Policy RE5, therefore, re-states this general policy. The objective of Policy RE5 is to ensure that appropriate long-term provision is retained for the playing of pitch sports, at varying levels of competence, throughout each area of the Borough.
- 9.19 National planning policy guidance also states that the UDP should include a statement of the community's requirement for playing pitches and encourages local planning authorities to draw up their own standards of provision for formal sport. The Sports Council's Playing Pitch Strategy recommends a national minimum standard for playing pitch provision of 1.21 hectares for every thousand people. This standard includes public, private and school facilities with secured community use, but excludes school facilities used exclusively for educational purposes. The Local Planning Authority considers this standard to be a realistic measure to assess levels of provision throughout the Borough and has, therefore, adopted it as a framework for development control. The standard will normally be applied to areas with a distinct and separate community identity.
- 9.20 In Wirral the overall provision of playing pitches for team sports in active use in the season 1993/94, including school facilities with secured community use, was 0.88 hectares for every thousand people. While the local supply of pitches varies markedly throughout the Borough, the most serious shortfalls were concentrated within the densely developed older urban areas, in Wards such as New Brighton, Liscard, Seacombe, Birkenhead, Bidston, Tranmere and Egerton, where there is a shortage of suitable open land and car ownership is low. Other localised shortfalls occur in Heswall, Clatterbridge, Upton, Oxton, Moreton and Royden. The level of use and wear and tear suffered by sites in these areas during a normal playing season witnesses that levels of demand are high. In these circumstances, and where the scope for alternative provision is limited, it is essential that land for pitch sports is retained and protected from other forms of development.
- 9.21 This applies equally to both publicly and privately managed sites. The private sector maintains approximately 30% of the total stock of playing fields, which represents a very significant contribution to the amount of land available for formal sport. Indeed, private sector provision is often at a standard greater than many public facilities, and in general provides for the higher levels of sporting competition. Such sites are of special significance, and will normally merit additional protection in accordance with Policy REC1.

### Proposal RE6 - Sports Grounds for Protection from Development

The following sports grounds and playing fields fall within the urban area and will be protected from development subject to Policy RE5:

1. New Brighton RUFC, Leasowe
2. New Brighton CC, Rake Lane, Wallasey
3. The Delph Recreation Ground, Liscard
4. Wallasey CC, Rosclare Drive, Wallasey
5. Poulton Victoria AFC, Limekiln Lane, Seacombe
6. Moreton Sports Ground, Moreton
7. Premier Brands, Pasture Road, Moreton
8. Upton CC, Upton
9. Millcroft Sports Ground, Greasby
10. Birkenhead Park RUFC, Birkenhead
11. McAllester Memorial Playing Fields, Oxton
12. Oxton Cricket Club, Oxton
13. Old Parkonians Association, Oxton
14. Birkenhead School Playing Fields, Noctorum
15. Glenavon Road playing fields, Prenton
16. Tranmere Rovers FC, Prenton Park, Egerton
17. Borough Road playing fields, Egerton
18. Shaftsbury Boys Club, Egerton
19. Tranmere Rovers FC, Ingleborough Road, Egerton
20. St Peter's Sports Ground, Tranmere
21. Princes Sports Ground, Bromborough Pool
22. Bromborough Pool CC, Bromborough Pool
23. Octel Sports Club, Bridle Road, Eastham

### PROPOSAL RE6 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 9.22 National planning policy guidance indicates that open spaces with recreational value should be protected from development, especially within the urban area where demand is concentrated, having regard to current levels of provision and local deficiencies. Policy RE5 sets out general criteria for the protection of playing fields but Proposal RE6 identifies sites within the urban area that should be protected from development in order to ensure that adequate land is reserved for organised sport. The aim of Proposal RE6 is to prevent the continued loss of playing fields from within the urban area in particular.
- 9.23 In Wirral, 38% of the total supply of playing pitches is located within the Green Belt. This largely reflects the location and availability of suitable open land. While not diminishing their importance for sport, such sites are often not easily accessible to a large part of the urban population. Indeed, the most serious deficiencies in playing space are concentrated within built-up areas remote from open land at the urban edge. In many such areas there is little scope for additional provision and all those sites which are suitable to accommodate pitch sports are usually already in active use.
- 9.24 Some urban open spaces containing playing fields are specifically protected under policies for Urban Greenspace. However, none of the sites included

under Proposal RE6 are identified as Urban Greenspaces under Proposal GR2. While some are comparatively large spaces, they have restricted access, are exclusively used for sport and often have limited visual or amenity value. The principal value of these sites is, therefore, considered to be for formal recreation, and it is this value that is specifically protected under Proposal RE6.

- 9.25 The list of Proposal RE6 sites includes a number of sports grounds which are able to satisfy the standards required for higher level competition. Such facilities have a far wider significance than sports pitches in general. They are fewer in number, often serve teams from both within and outside the Borough, and once lost are not easily replaced. Proposal RE6, therefore, also reflects the priority, expressed within Policy REC1, to protect sports grounds and facilities of this nature throughout the Borough.

#### **Policy RE7 - Criteria for the Protection of School Playing Fields.**

**Proposals for the development of school playing fields which have been declared surplus to educational requirements will be assessed subject to the following criteria:**

- (i) the ability of the site to alleviate a shortfall in the network of accessible public open space;**
- (ii) the visual value of the site and the need to retain or enhance existing landscape features;**
- (iii) the past level of use of the site for non-educational purposes for both sport and/ or informal recreation; and**
- (iv) the ability of the site to alleviate a shortfall in the provision of sports pitches for use by the wider community.**

**The Local Planning Authority will protect land from development where these considerations indicate all or part of the site should be retained for open air recreation.**

#### **POLICY RE7 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.26 Department of Education Regulations require the provision of playing fields for schools. They are not always available for non-educational purposes and such sites are, therefore, excluded from consideration under the standard of provision outlined under Policy RE5. However, they nevertheless remain of great value to the overall stock of recreational open space and especially to the stock of land suitable to accommodate pitch sports. Throughout Wirral they account for an additional 170 hectares of open land specifically intended and laid out for formal sport and play.
- 9.27 Government policy encourages the dual use of school facilities for use by the wider community. 23 hectares are already used in this way and account for



10% of the sports pitches available for public use. School playing fields also contribute to the greenspace of the urban environment and have particular visual value when located along open frontages. In addition, many school sites are subject to informal use as public open space. They are, therefore, important community assets in addition to their primarily educational role. The Local Planning Authority, in considering the future use of surplus educational land will, therefore, wish to safeguard their wider value to the community for public recreation and local amenity.

- 9.28 The protection of open land will, however, only be justified where deficiencies occur in the local network of accessible public open space, where sites have particular visual value, have been subject to a level of public use which cannot be adequately replaced or where the site is suitable to alleviate a shortfall in playing pitch provision. These considerations are of special significance within an otherwise densely built-up area where open land is already scarce. Policy RE7, therefore, indicates that development on part or all of a site will normally be refused, where these circumstances combine to indicate the overriding importance of the site for public recreation and amenity.

#### **Policy RE8 - Criteria for Artificial Playing Pitches**

**The Local Planning Authority will support the increased provision of artificial playing pitches, subject to Policy RE1, but before granting consent for artificial sports pitches at sites already used for sport, will need to be satisfied that:**

- (i) operational requirements arising from the increased use of the facilities, such as provision for parking, access and servicing, can still be adequately provided for within the curtilage of the site; and**
- (ii) the impact of increased use of the pitch and facilities on neighbouring uses, in terms of noise or other disturbance, can still be contained within acceptable limits.**

**Where the proposal involves the loss of existing grass pitches, the potential benefits arising from the artificial pitch will be balanced against the need to retain an adequate supply of grass pitches for competitive play.**

#### **POLICY RE8 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.29 Artificial turf playing pitches are becoming an increasing feature of modern provision for sport and recreation. While they are already an essential requirement for some sports, such as top level hockey, they are capable of providing for a wide range of activities.
- 9.30 Wirral has a number of all-weather pitches, but there are only two artificial turf pitches - one at Wirral Sports Centre in Bidston and another at the McAllester

Memorial Playing Field in Oxton, used jointly by Birkenhead School and Oxton Hockey Club. Opportunities to exploit the advantages of such facilities are, therefore, severely limited and the Council is keen to promote additional provision in appropriate locations.

- 9.31 Synthetic surfaces allow for significantly increased levels of use. While this is an important benefit, especially where there is already a deficiency of pitches in an area, intensified use also has implications for planning requirements and on neighbouring uses. Hourly bookings typically lead to a far higher turnover of teams and players than conventional pitches normally generate, with a corresponding increase in traffic to and from the site and in the number of car parking spaces required. Policy RE8, therefore, provides for these considerations to be taken into account and specifically provides for the protection of residential amenity, which is particularly sensitive to the impact of increased levels of use outside normal playing hours.
- 9.32 The need for grass pitches for competitive play will remain for most sports, even where modern artificial pitches are provided. Policy RE8, therefore, seeks to balance the benefits of providing a synthetic pitch with the need to retain conventional playing surfaces. This balance will normally hinge upon the distribution and quality of playing pitches within an area. The loss of a good quality, well-used grass pitch will rarely be justified, but the replacement of a poor surface, or the provision of an artificial turf pitch where other grass pitches continue to be available locally, will be far more preferable.

#### **Policy RE9 - Criteria for Floodlighting at Sports Facilities**

**The Local Planning Authority, in assessing proposals for the provision of floodlighting at sports facilities, will have regard to:**

- (i) the visual impact of lights, fences and pylons on the character of the neighbourhood;
- (ii) the impact of increased use of the site, especially outside normal daylight hours;
- (iii) the impact of night-time illumination on neighbouring uses, including wildlife, from light levels outside the main playing areas; and
- (iv) the impact on residential amenity.

**Planning permission will be subject to conditions related to hours of operation and the control of levels of illumination, including the output and intensity of lighting proposed and their horizontal and vertical setting.**

**POLICY RE9 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.33 Floodlighting enables the use of sports facilities outside normal daylight hours, and, in the case of artificial pitches, often enables a level of use capable of justifying the initial level of capital investment. Floodlighting can, however, have a negative impact on adjacent uses and residential areas are particularly sensitive.
- 9.34 Lighting pylons can be visually intrusive and increased use outside normal daylight hours can introduce unacceptable disturbance to local residents at what would normally be quiet evening hours. The lights themselves can also cause glare and nuisance where they are too bright or poorly focused on the main playing area.
- 9.35 Policy RE9, therefore, ensures that proposals to introduce floodlighting at sports venues will be subject to careful control, especially where they are located near residential property and recognised sites of importance for nocturnal and other wildlife.

**Policy RE10 - Criteria for Community Centres and Facilities**

**Small scale, non-residential facilities providing for meeting rooms, sports halls, youth centres, play groups and other similar use by the local community, including libraries and places of worship, will be permitted within the Primarily Residential Area where:**

- (i) the proposal, together with any associated outdoor facilities, would not cause unacceptable disturbance to neighbouring uses;**
- (ii) the siting, scale and visual impact of the proposal is appropriate within the surrounding area; and**
- (iii) adequate provision is made for parking, highway access and servicing requirements.**

**Proposals for uses of a similar nature which are likely to generate significant levels of traffic, which are intended to serve a wider than local catchment area, or which would give rise to a level of disturbance incompatible with a Primarily Residential Area will be directed towards urban commercial locations.**

**POLICY RE10 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.36 Wirral Borough Council has been actively establishing a network of local play and community centres throughout the Borough which are operated by the Leisure Services and Tourism Department but managed by the local community for use by local groups and clubs. The Wirral Leisure Strategy identifies areas where additional provision is planned. This includes centres to serve Overchurch in Upton, Rock Ferry, New Brighton, Claughton, Egerton,

Heswall, Hoylake, Poulton, Tranmere and Wallasey. A requirement has also been identified for new branch libraries for Oxton/ Claughton and for Central Birkenhead and a need to relocate the Wallasey Central Library - requirements that have arisen from a review of current provision and from guidance issued by the Department for Education.

- 9.37 While sites for these projects have not yet been identified, there is a need for planning criteria to guide their location. Policy RE10, therefore, seeks to accommodate the need for additional local community facilities and provides general criteria to govern their location. It specifically allows for small scale, multi-purpose facilities which would only have a limited impact on neighbouring uses to be located within the Primarily Residential Area.
- 9.38 Policy RE10 will also apply to proposals of a similar scale and nature which are expected to arise from the voluntary sector, such as proposals for new places of worship. Policy RE10 does, however, require that community uses of a larger scale, which would give rise to levels of disturbance unacceptable within a quiet residential setting, are located within commercial areas, such as those identified as being subject to Policy SH1, Policy SH2 or Policy SH6, in Section 16 of the UDP.

### **Policy RE11 - Criteria for Children's Play Facilities**

**The Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that areas specifically intended to cater for children's play are appropriate in terms of their siting, scale and design. Proposals should in particular minimise the potential for disturbance to adjacent property, enable informal supervision from the surrounding area and provide for safe pedestrian access.**

**Development proposals which involve the loss of an existing facility for children's play will be required to make appropriate replacement provision elsewhere within the locality, unless the facility was not previously available for use by the general public.**

### **POLICY RE11 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.39 Good provision for children's play is an important part of the Wirral Leisure Strategy. National planning policy also requires developers to provide suitable areas for children's play within the layout of proposals for new housing development. While Policy GR6 reinforces this general requirement for all new housing schemes above thirty-five units, it does not specify the precise form that this provision should take. Policy RE11, therefore, sets out the criteria that the Local Planning Authority will use in order to assess the acceptability of areas intended to provide for children's play.
- 9.40 Provision for children's play can comprise a mix of informal play space and more formal areas including play equipment. In both cases, the principal concern of the Local Planning Authority will be to secure a design and layout

which will minimise the opportunity for nuisance or disturbance to neighbouring property while retaining adequate supervision from the surrounding area. This requirement comes from past experience which indicates that the poor design of play areas in relation to the layout of adjacent property can often cause problems for residents arising from the subsequent abuse of the site, mainly by older children. These difficulties are heightened when play areas are located out of sight from main frontages and thoroughfares.

- 9.41 Policy RE11 also provides for the replacement of play areas and facilities which are lost as a result of a development proposal. In line with the intentions of the Wirral Leisure Strategy, it is important to retain a good and comprehensive network of sites for children's play, which is well co-ordinated with needs arising from the pattern of family housing development within the locality. The only exception is where play equipment was provided as an essentially private facility, such as on land associated with a public house or restaurant.

#### **Proposal RE12 - Sites for New Children's Play Equipment**

Provision of children's play equipment is required within the following public parks and open spaces:

1. Kings Parade Recreation Ground, New Brighton
2. Elleray Park, Wallasey
3. Holm Lane Recreation Ground, Oxton
4. Walker Park, Prenton
5. Brackenwood Park, Bebington
6. Land at Noctorum Way, Noctorum

Equipment will be provided at these sites subject to Policy RE11 and the availability of resources.

#### **PROPOSAL RE12 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 9.42 The Wirral Leisure Strategy identifies the sites listed above as priorities for the provision of new children's playgrounds in order to fill gaps in the network of provision for formal children's play. While the precise location for play equipment has not yet been identified, all the sites are major public parks and comply with the general requirements of Policy RE11. Play equipment will be provided within the UDP period, as resources become available.

#### **Policy RE13 - Criteria for Sports Facilities in the Green Belt**

Proposals for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation will be permitted in the Green Belt where:

- (i) adequate provision has been made for highway access, and on-site car parking and servicing requirements;

- (ii) the level of traffic generated can be accommodated without requiring major alterations to rural roads;
- (iii) the visual impact of the proposals would not be intrusive within the local landscape and the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved; and
- (iv) the proposals would not cause unacceptable noise or other disturbance to neighbouring land-uses, including wildlife.

With the exception of proposals involving the re-use of an existing building, associated buildings and structures will only be permitted where they are essential to the use proposed and where their siting, scale, design and external appearance are appropriate to the setting of the area.

When granting planning consent the Local Planning Authority will, where necessary, apply conditions on the time and duration of use of the playing area and associated club facilities and other measures required to minimise the impact of the proposals on the rural environment.

#### POLICY RE13 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 9.43 Policy RE13 is based upon the principle stated within Policy REC1 that provision for sport requiring major development is inappropriate outside the urban area. It also reflects national Green Belt controls which restrict the use of land which it is necessary to keep permanently open. The use of land for outdoor sport is an appropriate use within the Green Belt. The objective of Policy RE13 is, therefore, to ensure that such uses are designed and located in order to preserve the predominantly rural character of Wirral's Green Belt areas.
- 9.44 Policy RE13 indicates that new buildings and associated structures will only be allowed where they provide essential facilities directly related to the outdoor sport in question. This is often a matter which must be determined on a case by case basis, but excludes proposals for over-extensive facilities which are beyond the scale required for normal club activities. Proposals are also required to be designed and located so as to respect the character of the surrounding area. Other controls contained within Policy RE13, therefore, relate to normal considerations of servicing and highway access, visual impact, and the protection of local amenity.
- 9.45 Policy RE13 in particular reserves the right of the Local Planning Authority to control the time and duration of use of the playing area as well as associated club facilities. Such controls will only be applied where appropriate but are often required in order to limit the potential for disturbance to local residents. This not only extends to the noise and traffic generated by periods of active competition but also to times when the use of club facilities may extend outside normal hours.