



MERSEYSIDE GREEN BELT LOCAL PLAN

Written Statement



Merseyside
County Council

Contents

	Page No.
1. The Green Belt Local Plan	1
2. Context	3
3. Development Control Policies:-	
General policies to be applied to all development in the Green Belt.	5
Villages in the Green Belt	6
Residential development in the Green Belt	6
Industrial and Commercial development in the Green Belt	9
Recreational uses in the Green Belt	10

Appendix

Policies contained in the Merseyside Structure Plan	13
---	----

The Green Belt Local Plan

Component Parts

- 1.1 The Local Plan consists of a Written Statement and a Map.
- 1.2 The written Statement sets out in bold type the policies which will be used by the Planning Authorities in determining planning applications in and adjacent to the Green Belt. (Explanatory comments on individual policies are in light type.)
- 1.3 The Map defines the Green Belt on an Ordnance Survey Map at a scale of 1:10,000. There are 50 sheets covering the County. The Green Belt is also shown on a single Ordnance Survey Map at a scale of 1:50,000 which is intended to serve as an index to the larger scale sheets. Although this small scale map may be used as a general illustration of the overall extent of the Green Belt it should not be used to identify the precise location of the Green Belt.
- 1.4 The Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan supersedes the draft proposals of the former Cheshire and Lancashire County Councils.

Relation to Local Plans

- 1.5 The Green Belt Local Plan will be used by the Local Planning Authorities as a guide to preparing Local Plans.
- 1.6 The Green Belt boundary may be amended by these Local Plans provided that the County Council is satisfied that the reason for any amendment conforms with the general policies contained in the Approved Merseyside Structure Plan.

Context

Previous Green Belts in Merseyside

- 2.1 In 1955 the Government advised local planning authorities to prepare Green Belts for their areas and in 1960 and 1961 the former Lancashire and Cheshire County Councils submitted draft proposals for establishing Green Belts in Merseyside and the Wirral. Neither proposals were approved by the then Minister of Housing and Local Government because there was no regional plan although he accepted them as a basis for development control. None of the former County Boroughs submitted Green Belts although St. Helens had an informal policy which was consistent with that for the surrounding areas of Lancashire.

Boundaries of the Green Belt

- 2.5 The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt follow easily recognisable features such as rivers, streams, canals, railways, roads, walls and fences. Care has been taken to ensure that the line forms a logical conclusion to the urban area. In some instances the Green Belt boundary has been set back from a stream or woodland where it is felt that the interests of agriculture, nature conservation or amenity justify a buffer strip.

The Strategic Plan for the North West

- 2.2 In 1974 the Department of the Environment published the Strategic Plan for the North West to provide a framework for the several structure plans which were to be prepared in the region. This Plan advocated the establishment of a Green Belt in and around the Merseyside area as a necessary tool to guide urban development in the most desirable direction and to protect important tracts of open land. The Government concurred with this view but left the detailed definition of the Green Belt to the Structure and Local Plan authorities.

The Merseyside Structure Plan

- 2.3 The Merseyside Structure Plan states that there is a need to establish a Green Belt both in the Wirral Peninsula and east of the River Mersey around the principal settlements and including green wedges into the conurbation.

In particular, it considers that a Green Belt is necessary to:-

- (i) Check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns, and encourage their regeneration;
 - (ii) ensure that towns and villages keep their individual character; and
 - (iii) safeguard the surrounding countryside so that its potential for agriculture, nature conservation and recreation and its value as an amenity for townspeople is preserved.
- 2.4 The Structure Plan states that the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt shall be determined by a Subject Plan prepared by the County Council in collaboration with the District Councils.

Development Control Policies

General policies to be applied to all development in the Green Belt

1. **Within the Green Belt, Planning Authorities will not give planning permission for development except in very special circumstances, other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, tourist facilities, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to a rural area. Proposals for such development will be considered in the light of their siting and general position in the Green Belt and, in particular, the policies relating to open land and recreation.**

2. **Subject to the general criteria set out in Policy 1 above and to the policies for safeguarding open land set out in the Structure Plan, development in the Green Belt will normally be allowed only if it satisfies all of the following criteria:-**
 - (i) **It is apparent to the Planning Authority that it is essential that the development should take place on land which is in the Green Belt and that it cannot be accommodated within the urban area or on land outside the urban area not forming part of the Green Belt.**
 - (ii) **It will not have a detrimental effect on the appearance or quiet enjoyment of the surrounding area;**
 - (iii) **It will not generate sufficient traffic to cause nuisance or danger nor require any major improvement to the rural roads.**

Note Where a choice of sites is possible in accordance with the above criteria the Planning Authority may take account of the availability of public services.

In the Green Belt there will be very strict control of development. An applicant seeking planning permission will have to demonstrate that there is a special reason why his development should be allowed. This might include, for instance, cases where the nature of the development was such that it could only take place outside the built-up area.

This policy is intended to give further clarification of the general approach to applications for development in the Green Belt and in particular to the meaning of the phrase "very special circumstances" and to locational criteria in so far as they may affect the value of the Green Belt as an amenity. The policies for safeguarding open land are set out in Chapter 10 of the Approved Merseyside Structure Plan and included in the Appendix to this Statement. Their main purpose is to safeguard good quality agricultural land and farms of good structure; to counteract loss of and damage to farmland at the urban fringes; protect fine landscapes and repair degraded ones; safeguard habitats and restore damaged ones; promote countryside recreation and education; safeguard areas of valuable mineral deposits and ensure the restoration of mineral extraction sites; prevent further pollution of inland waters and help to maintain water quality in the Dee and Ribble.

Villages in the Green Belt

3. Inset Villages

As a general rule, Planning Authorities will not allow villages in the Green Belt to expand further, but limited growth may be allowed in settlements or villages in the Green Belt if they are suitable for accommodating additional small groups of houses or other forms of development which complement or are essential to the function of the settlement. In deciding whether such villages should be allowed to expand further, account will be taken of the existing character, the availability of public utilities, the capacity of the road system to cope with any additional traffic, the availability of community facilities and the impact which any expansion may have on the principles of the Green Belt and on open land and recreation policies.

The expansion of villages can conflict with Green Belt principles. However, a limited amount of development of gaps in the built-up area, and “rounding off” of the existing villages or settlements may be acceptable in certain cases. Where this is the case, such land may be excluded from the Green Belt and the boundaries Local Plan. In assessing whether a village or settlement should be “inset” into the Green Belt, that is, whether a limited amount of new development will be allowed around it, account will be taken of its existing character, the availability of public utilities, the capacity of the road systems to cope with any additional traffic, the availability of community facilities and the impact which any expansion may have on the principles of the Green Belt and on open land and recreation policies.

4. The following villages have been inset in the Green Belt

Knowsley	Cronton
St. Helens	Crank, Rainford
Sefton	Sefton Village

Residential development in the Green Belt.

5. Infilling

Outside “Inset” villages, infilling, in the sense of filling a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage (a small gap is one which would be filled by one or two houses) will not normally be permitted in the Green Belt. An exception may be made where the Planning Authority is satisfied.

- (i) That the land does not comprise an important part of an agricultural holding;
- (ii) The development would not detract from the appearance of the Green Belt (for example, by removing trees or obstructing important views); and
- (iii) The development is appropriate in size and form to the character of the locality.

It is necessary to prevent the proliferation of new dwellings in the Green Belt and as a general rule an applicant for a new dwelling must demonstrate that there is a real need for him to live in the Green Belt by virtue of the nature of his employment. Wherever possible new houses should be built adjacent to existing groups in order to prevent the proliferation of isolated buildings and to preserve the amenity of the Green Belt.

6. Key workers

Restrictions may be imposed on planning permissions granted for dwellings required by key workers associated with existing or acceptable enterprises in the Green Belt. In the case of an agricultural worker, the Planning Authority will seek the advice of the Assistant Director of Estates and Valuation or the Ministry of Agriculture where appropriate, and may for example impose the following condition:

“The occupation of the dwelling shall be limited to a person solely or mainly employed, or last employed, in the locality in agriculture, or to a dependant of such a person residing with him or her, or the widow or widower of such a person.”

7. New dwellings

Wherever possible a dwelling for a key worker should be located within the curtilage of the source of employment or adjacent to an existing group of buildings or in a nearby village.

8. Replacement dwellings

An application for the replacement of an existing dwelling by a new building will be treated as though the application is for the construction of a new building in the Green Belt but applications will be treated sympathetically where non-replacement of an unfit dwelling or group of dwellings in an established village would detract from the character and social vitality of the village.

9. Alterations or extensions to existing dwellings

Alterations or extensions to existing dwellings in the Green Belt may be permitted provided that they comply with the following criteria:-

- (i) The building is structurally sound or can be made so without partially rebuilding or losing the identity of the original building.
- (ii) The alteration or extension is such that its form and materials are appropriate to its place in the surrounding landscape.

Some existing dwellings in the Green Belt may no longer satisfy modern standards of accommodation and some may no longer be lived in but are yet capable of renovation. Certain non-residential buildings such as barns, may no longer be required for their original purpose but may be suitable for conversion to residential use. Policies are required therefore, to ensure that the value of the Green Belt as an amenity is given special emphasis in the consideration of planning applications for alterations and extensions to existing dwellings and the conversion of other buildings to residential use.

10. An application for the extension or conversion of an existing dwelling to provide an additional habitable unit will be treated in the same manner as an application for a new dwelling. Sympathetic consideration may be given to cases where the development is the only means of preserving a dwelling of architectural or historic interest or of intrinsic value to the locality.

11. Where, in the opinion of the Planning Authority the extension or alteration could result in the creation of a separate habitable unit, the applicant shall be informed that any such future division would require a further planning permission.

12. Conversion of other buildings to residential use

Conversions of existing buildings in the Green Belt to residential use may be permitted if they comply with all of the following criteria:-

- (i) The building is of architectural or historic merit or is of intrinsic value to the locality and is considered by the Planning Authority to be worthy of preservation, and the conversion retains its original character and is appropriate to its place in the surrounding landscape;
- (ii) The building is structurally sound or can be made so without partial rebuilding or substantial building works which would result in the loss of the identity of the original building;
- (iii) The building is large enough to be used for residential purposes without substantial extension which would result in the loss of the identity of the original building;
- (iv) If the building to be converted was used for agricultural purposes or any other purpose which is appropriate to a Green Belt it must, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, no longer be required for that purpose.

Industrial and commercial development in the Green Belt

13. General

In considering all applications for non-residential purposes in the Green Belt the Planning Authority will have particular regard to the visual impact of the proposal including the amount and nature of open storage, the parking of vehicles and equipment, the extent and nature of proposals for their screening, and the effect of any additional traffic on the locality. Consideration will also be given as to whether the enterprise could more appropriately be accommodated within the urban area or on land outside the urban area not forming part of the Green Belt.

The urban regeneration strategy aims at concentrating new development in the existing built up area and hence there is a general presumption against new industrial development in the Green Belt. However some industrial or commercial enterprises have special operational requirements which cannot be provided in the urban area while other enterprises may be attracted to sites in the Green Belt which possess good access to the regional motorway system or offer pleasant surroundings. Others may wish to make use of existing buildings to provide services for people living in neighbouring towns. Nevertheless the introduction of new enterprises or the expansion of existing ones may significantly alter the character of the Green Belt and policies are necessary to ensure that the impact of any development which may be permitted in the Green Belt is kept to a minimum.

14. New industrial and commercial developments and extensions

There will be a general presumption against new development for industry or commercial development in the Green Belt. An exception may be made where:

- (i) The enterprise is required for the development of local agriculture or mineral extraction in the Green Belt and cannot operate in the urban area.
- (ii) The enterprise is essential to the economic development of the area or is essential to the continuation of an existing enterprise and there are special circumstances which prevent its establishment in the urban area.
- (iii) An extension or expansion of an established enterprise is involved and the extension is essential to the continuation of the operations which are already on site and the enterprise cannot be relocated in the urban area.

15. Change of use or conversion of existing buildings for industrial or commercial purposes

The change of use or the conversion of an existing building in the Green Belt to industrial, commercial or any other purposes may be permitted if the building is of architectural or historic interest or of intrinsic value to the locality and is structurally sound or can be made so without significant rebuilding, and is capable of accommodating the proposed use without major alterations or

extensions. In the case of an agricultural building, the Planning Authority should be satisfied that the building is no longer required for agricultural purposes. Consideration will also be given as to whether the enterprise could more appropriately be accommodated within the urban area or on land outside the urban area not forming part of the Green Belt.

16. Public services and statutory undertakers

Without prejudice to other planning considerations, within the Green Belt proposals for development to be carried out by a public service authority or a statutory undertaker will be allowed where it can be shown that they are essential to:-

- (i) the maintenance or improvement of an existing service or undertaking; or
- (ii) an existing source of employment; or
- (iii) the provision of a new service or undertaking.

Recreational uses in the Green Belt

17 General

Applications for new or extensions to existing recreational developments in the Green Belt will be assessed on their merits, in relation to the general criteria for development in the Green Belt. In particular, regard will be paid to the degree to which the proposal would affect open breaks between settlements, reduce conflict between urban and rural uses along the urban fringe, and affect agriculture and the quality of the landscape in the Green Belt.

It is not always possible to accommodate all recreational activities within the urban area, some activities, such as golf, require large tracts of land while others, such as riding schools, require pasturage. In the past, private sports clubs have sought to relocate their playing fields in the Green Belt either because they were unable to expand on their original site or they wished to capitalise on the value of their urban site.

Recreational facilities can perform an important role in establishing open breaks between settlements by creating attractive, well maintained landscapes particularly where agriculture is difficult to sustain. However, the introduction of additional traffic along rural roads can alter the character of an area especially where the development would require road widening or the removal or cutting of hedges to provide adequate sight lines.

18. Residential caravans

Applications for the siting of residential caravans in the Green Belt will be considered in the same way as proposals for residential development.

Some people prefer to live permanently in caravans. However, residential caravans require the same services — water, sewerage and electricity — as ordinary houses and they should also be within easy reach of schools, shops and community services. Applications for the siting of residential caravans should be considered in the same way as proposals for residential development.

19. Holiday caravans

Planning permission will not normally be granted for new sites for static holiday caravans or touring caravans in the Green Belt unless the Planning Authority is satisfied that there is a real need to provide a new site in the locality and that the proposal can be accommodated without detriment to visual amenities, agriculture, traffic movement, nature conservation or the quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

An increasing number of people spend their holidays touring with caravans or staying on static caravan sites. The provision of well designed and conveniently located caravan sites can be an important element in developing Merseyside's tourist industry. The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 provides exemption from planning permission for sites for touring caravans on agricultural holdings of more than 5 acres where not more than 3 caravans are stationed at any one time and provided that no caravan remains on the site for more than 28 days. Certain organisations, such as the Caravan Club and the Camping and Caravan Club of Great Britain and Ireland, may acquire and manage sites for use by touring caravans without requiring planning permission provided that the site is used only by members of the particular organisation. They may also hold rallies for Club Members lasting up to 5 nights and issue Certificates of exemption from planning permission for small sites for up to 5 touring caravans for use by their own members. All other sites require planning permission.

20. Proposals for extensions to existing caravan sites will be assessed on their merits having regard to the impact which the proposal may have on visual amenities, agriculture, traffic movement, nature conservation and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

Static caravan sites require the same services as residential caravan sites but the demand for sites is concentrated in popular holiday areas or on tourist routes. There is also a growing demand for accommodation close to major towns for short visits.

21. In addition to conditions relating to the need to provide adequate screening and means of access, any permission of a site for static holiday or touring caravans may include a condition limiting the use of the site to certain times of the year, usually from 1st March to 31st October, and, where in the opinion of the Planning Authority circumstances warrant, a condition may also be imposed on sites for static holiday caravans requiring caravans to be removed from the site or from particular parts of it at the end of the holiday season. Where appropriate, there may also be a requirement for a number of pitches to be reserved on sites for static holiday caravans for touring caravans.

Caravans can be particularly conspicuous in open countryside and they should be adequately screened. Care must also be taken to ensure that an area does not become saturated by caravans to the extent that they impair its attractiveness. This may result as much from the development of a number of small scattered sites as from a single large site.

22. Planning permission will not normally be granted for converting a site for touring caravans to a site for static caravans.

23. Storage of caravans

Favourable consideration may be given to proposals to store caravans within existing buildings in the Green Belt provided that the Planning Authority is satisfied that the building is not required for agricultural purposes, or is used for another purpose appropriate to the Green Belt. Applications for the storage of caravans in the open country will be considered having regard to the general criteria for development in the Green Belt but particular attention will be paid to their effect on visual amenities, productive agricultural land and areas of ecological interest.

The appearance of a residential area may be spoiled by the presence of caravans in front gardens. However, planning permission is not required by a person wishing to store a touring caravan within the curtilage of a dwelling house although on certain housing estates covenants may restrict that right. There is a need, therefore, for the provision of sites where caravans may be kept when not in use. While it would be more appropriate for caravans to be stored in the urban area, they are frequently stored in the countryside in old buildings or in corners of fields, often without planning permission. However, unlike many other forms of storage there is little associated activity with caravan storage and provided they are not visually obtrusive they may have little impact on the amenities of the Green Belt.

Appendix

Policies contained in the Merseyside Structure Plan

- A.1 The Merseyside Green Belt is an integral part of the Merseyside Structure Plan and both the Green Belt Map and the policies contained in this Written Statement are intended to assist in promoting the strategy on which the Structure Plan is based.
- A.2 Paragraph 2.3 of this Written Statement quotes the purpose of the Green Belt as described in the Structure Plan as being in part to “check the outward spread of the built up area, direct development into existing towns and encourage their regeneration.”
- A.3 The Structure Plan advocates a strategy of urban regeneration which is summarised as:—
- “The proposed strategy would concentrate investment and development within the urban County and particularly in those areas with the most acute problems, enhancing the environment and encouraging housing and economic expansion on derelict and disused sites. It would restrict development on the edge of the built-up area to minimum.
- There would be a reciprocal effort to enhance and conserve the natural features of the County’s open land and its agriculture while ensuring that its capacity to meet the County’s needs for leisure, recreation and informal recreation is exploited.”
- A.4 Policy 1 in this Written Statement sets out the general criteria for considering planning applications for development in the Green Belt and it relates the consideration of those uses which are appropriate to a Green Belt to the policies for open land and recreation in the Structure Plan. A summary of these policies is given in the comments accompanying policy No. 2. The more relevant of the Structure Plan policies are set out below:— (The reference numbers are those given in the Structure Plan).
- 9.64 The disposal of untreated waste will only be permitted at sites sufficiently distant from or capable of being screened from, existing development, on land which is environmentally capable of receiving or being improved by such waste, which will be deposited to a Land form appropriate to a defined after-use.
- 9.66 The greatest use will be made of existing investment in waste treatment plant. Further landfill sites will be opened up to receive treated waste. The sites will be sufficiently distant from or capable of being screened from, existing development, and will be on land which is environmentally capable of receiving or being improved by such waste, which will be deposited to a land form appropriate to a defined after-use.
- 9.72 The private sector has a major role to play in the disposal of waste materials, and, in particular, difficult industrial wastes and will be encouraged to provide environmentally and operationally suitable facilities, in full consultation with the District Councils.
- 10.13 There will be presumption against development proposals which, in the opinion of the local planning authorities after consultation with the North West Water Authority and the Welsh National Water Authority, would prejudice water quality in the Ribble or Dee estuaries, so that it might fall below the standard which allows the passage of migratory fish at all stages of the tide.
- 10.16 Planning permission will normally be refused for development which would, in the view of the local planning authorities, after consultation with the Water Authorities, contribute to a further deterioration in the condition of inland waters, either directly or indirectly by overloading sewage treatment systems which are above or close to capacity.
- 10.21 Planning authorities will not normally give planning permission for development which, after consultation with the British Waterways Board and the North West Water Authority, they consider would prejudice the quality of water in the St. Helens and Leeds/Liverpool canals.
- 10.24 Planning authorities will:—
- (i) normally refuse planning permission for development which would sterilise mineral deposits which are needed, or likely to be needed, to meet future requirements;
 - (ii) in preparing local plans, give consideration to the reservation of land for mineral extraction;
 - (iii) when appropriate, attach conditions to planning permissions, to ensure that suitable measures are taken to minimise damage to the environment while working is taking place;

- (iv) in all cases, subject planning permissions for mineral working to conditions requiring the preparation and implementation of land restoration schemes which will return the worked areas to an appropriate beneficial use as soon as practicable either while working is proceeding or immediately it has been completed;
 - (v) not normally permit mineral working where it would involve unjustified interference with agriculture, nature conservation or the needs of other surface users, or where it would lead to unacceptable injury to the comfort or living conditions of nearby residents or to amenities generally.
- 10.31 The local planning authorities will ensure:
- (i) the safeguarding of areas of active and future coal working;
 - (ii) that arrangements are made for colliery waste disposal and landscaping schemes are agreed for active and closed tips associated with Sutton Manor, Bold and Cronton collieries;
- 5 (iii) that disused colliery shale tips are restored to beneficial use.
- 10.41 Planning authorities will normally refuse permission for the winning of aggregates from beneath good quality farmland, sand dunes and foreshores.
- 10.44 Without prejudice to the general conditions for mineral working, set out in policy 10.24, the extraction of sand for special industrial uses may be permitted on the foreshore except where extraction is shown to be actually or potentially deleterious to coastal defences, foreshore quality, nature conservation or the shellfish industry.
- 10.46 Without prejudice to the general conditions for mineral working set out in policy 10.24, the extraction of sand for special industrial uses will normally be permitted within defined consultation areas.
- 10.48 Without prejudices to the general conditions for mineral working, set out in policy 10.24, local planning authorities will give special consideration to the future needs of the brick clay industry in the Moreton area of Wirral and the Lea Green area of St. Helens.
- 10.52 Planning authorities will not normally permit development on better quality farmland, that is grades 1-3b inclusive, as classified by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and even where they make exceptions to the policy, will not allow high-quality land to be taken for development where land of lower agricultural quality is available.
- 10.54 Local planning authorities will not normally permit development which erodes farms with a good farm structure, or leaves the remainder of the farm incapable of giving a worthwhile return on past investments in buildings and equipment.
- 10.56 (i) Derelict and neglected land will be reclaimed for agricultural use where appropriate;
- (ii) Local planning authorities, when considering development proposals, will take full account of the agricultural and horticultural potential of lower grade farmland, such as land reclaimed from the estuaries or the sea, and unimproved mossland.
- 10.58 Local planning authorities will seek to minimise potential conflict between urban and rural land uses by careful consideration of the location and design of development.
- 10.60 (i) The County Council proposes to establish an educational farm at Croxteth Park and farm trails will be set up on distinctive areas of farmland elsewhere in the County;
- (ii) Local authorities will take special measures to reduce conflict between public access to the countryside and farming by provision of wardening services, protective planting and the improvement, maintenance and re-routeing of footpaths and bridleways.
- 10.66 (i) In considering applications for development within or adjacent to open countryside, the local planning authorities will have special regard to the effect on the appearance of the surrounding area and the amenities of people living nearby;
- (ii) In appropriate cases, they will require, as a condition of planning permission, that suitable schemes of planting be carried out in connection with development.

- 10.69 (i) Within the following areas of heritage landscape, local planning authorities will pay special attention to securing the minimum damage to the landscape from development and, in particular, from recreation, mineral working and the public utilities network, especially electricity distribution:—
- Croxteth Park, Liverpool
 Knowsley Park, Knowsley
 Billinge Hill, St. Helens
 Bold Hall, St. Helens
 Rainford Hall, St. Helens
 Dune Coastline, Sefton
 Ince Blundell, Sefton
 Little Crosby, Sefton
 Dee Coastline, Wirral
 Thornton Hough, Wirral
- (ii) Local planning authorities will keep the condition of heritage landscapes under review and if their intrinsic value is threatened, take action, including their designation as conservation areas.
- 10.71 The following areas of degraded landscape will be given priority for landscape renewal:—
- North Wirral Plain
 M53 Corridor and Bidston Moss, Wirral
 M57 Corridor, North of Croxteth and South of Prescott
 Rimrose Valley, Sefton
 Sankey Valley, St. Helens
 Lea Green, St. Helens
- 10.74 (i) Local planning authorities will resist the further loss of woodland.
- (ii) The County Council will encourage the planting and better management of small woods and small-scale amenity planting.
- 10.76 Local planning authorities will not normally permit development which would detract measurably from the objectives of nature conservation within the Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 10.79 Local nature reserves are proposed at the following localities where access will be maintained and interpretative facilities provided for the general public:—
- Hilbre Island, Wirral
 Thurstaston Common, Wirral
 Ainsdale and Birkdale sandhills, Sefton
 Mull Wood, Croxteth Park, Liverpool
- 10.81 (i) Areas included in the Register of Sites of Local Biological or Geological Interest will be notified to the District Councils, who will consult the County Council on applications for development which may affect the intrinsic value of these sites;
- (ii) The County Council will support and encourage the establishment of nature reserves on suitable sites by recognised voluntary conservation bodies, such as the County Naturalist's Trusts.
- 10.85 (i) Areas of damaged or degraded sand dune and heathland will be restored and management schemes introduced to ensure that the problems do not recur. Priority will be given to:—
- Ainsdale-on-sea, Sefton
 Formby Point, Sefton
 Hightown sand dunes, Sefton
 Bidston Hill, Wirral
 Thurstaston Common, Wirral
 West Kirby and Hoylake dunes, Wirral
 Wallasey dunes, Wirral.
- (ii) Development proposals on the dune coastline between Hightown and Southport should conform with the Sefton Coast Management Scheme.
- 11.10 The local planning authorities will give special consideration to applications for planning permission for development outside the boundaries of the Green Belt and appropriate conditions will be imposed where relevant, to ensure that the development does not adversely affect the amenity of the Green Belt and does not lead to future incursions into the Green Belt.

11.12 Until a detailed scheme has been prepared for environmental improvement within the corridor occupied by the M53 between Bidston and Woodchurch planning permission will not be given except in very special circumstances, for development other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

The area identified as the North Wirral Coastal Park;

- (iii) establish and maintain a recreation footpath and bridleway system, giving priority to routes which provide links between popular coastal and countryside recreation areas and the urban areas.

11.14 Until a detailed study into the most appropriate uses for those parts of Crossens Marsh which have been enclosed by the New Coastal Road has been completed, planning permission will not be given except in very special circumstances, for development other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

13.8 The Local authorities will seek to develop additional public open spaces and sports pitches on land identified as having recreational potential, as follows:—

St. Helens up to 90 ha.
Knowsley up to 120 ha.
Liverpool up to 125 ha.
Sefton up to 100 ha.
Wirral up to 95 ha.

13.26 The local authorities, with the assistance of the Countryside Commission will conserve the existing recreational resources of the countryside and increase opportunities for countryside recreation, particularly in areas close to, or easily accessible from, urban areas. In particular they will:—

- (i) develop Croxteth Country Park and further improve the Wirral and Eastham Woods Country Parks, and manage them so that their quality is enhanced and, where possible, their capacity increased;
- (ii) develop opportunities for outdoor recreation on the edges of the built-up areas in the following places:

Leeds-Liverpool Canal and Rimrose Valley
Sankey Valley
The area identified in the Tushingham Quarry Local Plan
The Liverpool Riverfront