

## Topic Paper 11

### Open Space, Recreation, Leisure and Greenways

Crawley Borough Council adopted its Core Strategy back in November 2007, providing the spatial vision, objectives and development strategy for Crawley up to 2016. The Council has now begun preparing the successor to the Core Strategy – the Core Strategy Review – which will cover a much longer period up to 2026. Although there are aspects of the original Core Strategy that can be retained there are other areas where significant change has occurred in the intervening years and this will need to be reflected in the new document.

This consultation period is the first of the Review and further consultation stages are planned before the document is adopted in early 2012. This is your opportunity to shape the way the town develops over the next 20 years and the Council would appreciate and value any comments you have on this Topic Paper or any of the others that form part of this consultation.

#### Summary of Current Context

Current planning policy seeks the retention and active improvement of open spaces, sport and recreational facilities within the town. The Core Strategy Review may seek to strengthen the adopted Core Strategy's retention approach by incorporating standards of provision based upon the recommendations made within the recently completed Planning Policy Guidance 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) assessment. This review also provides the opportunity to investigate whether it is appropriate to re-use some of the poorer quality and/or under used sites for alternative forms of development.

These issues are of particular importance to the town, cross cutting the major visionary objectives identified within the Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2012), specifically: Community Cohesion; Community Safety; Children and Young People; Health and Wellbeing; Older People; The Environment; and Social Inclusion.

#### Indication of the Key Issues Relating to Open Spaces, Recreation, Leisure and Greenways

- In Crawley, the network of green spaces, corridors, and sport and recreational facilities often perform a fundamental structural, amenity and biodiversity role for the town, adding a degree of local distinctiveness and identity. These spaces mostly resulted from the master planning of the town, where the best elements of the countryside upon which the neighbourhoods were built, were retained. They also contribute to the quality of life provided in the local area through their contribution to a range of social issues. The open spaces, sport and recreational facilities broadly fall into the following typologies:
  - Indoor sport facilities



- Parks and gardens
  - Natural and Semi-Natural Open Spaces
  - Amenity Green Space
  - Provision for children
  - Provision for teenagers
  - Outdoor sport facilities
  - Allotments
  - Cemeteries and churchyards
  - Civic spaces
  - Green Corridors
- In recent years, the number and quality of these sites has come under increasing pressure from both new development and maintenance budgetary constraints. In addition, some of the sites are positioned poorly, for example too near to similar facilities, or in inaccessible locations which can lead to poor usage and in some cases, anti-social behaviour. With the South East Plan Proposed Modifications ambitious requirements for new housing, Crawley's growing role as a sub-regional hub within the Gatwick Diamond and a limited supply of development land, these sites potentially form a supply of developable land.
  - National planning policy in the form of PPG17, requires local authorities to undertake local assessments of their open spaces, sport and recreational facilities and to set local standards based upon local provision and need. The guidance is seeking the preservation of the open spaces by allowing local authorities to develop a set of provision and quality standards that represent local issues. Crawley's PPG17 assessment was completed in 2008 and broadly recommends the retention of all open spaces, sport and recreational provision. This recommendation is broadly in line with adopted Core Strategy policies, but this issue now needs consideration against the wider development objectives for the Borough, the needs of local residents and the requirements of the South East Plan Proposed Modifications.

### Indication of the Options for Addressing the Key Issues Outlined Above

Based upon the issues outlined above, three options are proposed:

- Continue with the Crawley Borough Council Core Strategy approach (policy ICS1 and EN3) where open spaces, sport and recreational facilities are protected unless proven to be surplus and so long as development would not have a detrimental impact on wildlife and the character and appearance of the area;
- As part of the Core Strategy review, undertake a strategic review of all open spaces, sport and recreational facilities with the view to releasing underused, low quality, or duplicated sites to help the Borough meet the requirement for developable land. Then incorporate within the Core Strategy strict Crawley specific standards for the retention of the remaining sites replacing saved Local Plan policies and adopted Core Strategy policy.
- Review PPG17 assessment to take account of any sites lost or re-designated during and since the report was finished.

### Indication of the Potential Direction at this Stage

- Assess and manage the competing conflicts between preservation of these sites against the need for development land to deliver other forms of community infrastructure and development;
- Seek to identify opportunities for the strategic release of some poorly used and/or poor quality sites in consultation with relevant Council departments (This would then result in the recommended PPG17 assessment provision standards being revised downwards); and,

- Given the importance of the remaining open spaces, consider addressing the policy issues primarily covered in Core Strategy policies ICS1 and EN3, and Saved Local Plan Policies within the same topic area, through a mixture of a core and development management policy.

### Current Context

#### Planning Policy Guidance 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation

PPG17 encourages all local authorities to undertake local assessments of need and audits of open space, sport and recreation provision. The main purpose of carrying out these local assessments is to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities to meet the needs of local communities and visitors.

#### South East Plan Proposed Modifications

There are a number of policies of relevance to this Topic Paper within the South East Plan Proposed Modifications. Set out below are the key policies, which are located in several different chapters:

- TSR3: Regionally Significant Sport Facilities
- S5: Cultural and Sporting Activities
- C6: Countryside Access and Rights of Way Management
- CC8: Green Infrastructure

#### Crawley Borough Core Strategy

There are also a number of policies of relevance to this Topic Paper within the Core Strategy. Set out below are the key policies, which again, are located across several chapters:

- EN1: Nature Conservation
- EN3: Green Spaces and Corridors
- ICS1: The location and provision of new community and leisure facilities
- ICS2: Infrastructure Provision

#### Crawley Borough Local Plan

Twenty eight policies in the Crawley



## Main Issues for Consultation

- Is the current policy approach of protecting sites unless proven to be surplus still relevant?
- Should the Council consider a limited release of some of the lower quality and poorly used sites to help meet our need for development land?
- Are there any particular areas/types of open space/recreation facilities that are of particular importance to you?

Please feel free to comment upon any issue relating to this topic area not listed above.

Borough Local Plan (2000) relating to this topic have been 'saved'. These include policies on historic gardens, urban open space, countryside access, recreation and leisure, specific sites, allotments, sites for community uses and linear open space.

### Evidence Base

- Crawley PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (2008);
- Crawley Borough Playing Pitch Strategy for Outdoor Sports (2005); and
- Crawley Borough Play Strategy and Development Plan (2007-2010).