

Sport in the Urban Fringe

Introduction

This issue of the Planning Bulletin focuses on the urban fringe: the sporting uses to which it has been put in the past, the issues it raises for the planning system and for sports providers in the present, and the opportunities it offers for sport and recreation in the future.

By its very nature the urban fringe is a valuable recreational resource easily accessible by a significant proportion of the urban population. It can accommodate a wide range of formal and informal sporting and recreational activities, including many that cannot easily be located in urban areas. For example, 'land hungry' sports such as golf and motor sports, and activities that rely on the countryside resource including rambling, riding and sailing are often found around the major conurbations. However, sustainable development and potential conflict with residential amenities and farming practices can pose problems for sporting and recreational activities – these are the issues that will be addressed by this bulletin.

This issue includes a number of examples of development plan policies that demonstrate ways in

which local planning authorities deal with sport-related issues in the urban fringe. Finally, some relevant cases from the planning appeals database are considered in order to examine how the Planning Inspectorate addresses planning appeals relating to the urban fringe.

What is the urban fringe?

The urban fringe has been defined by the County Planning Officers' Society, the Metropolitan Planning Officers' Society and the District Planning Officers' Society as:

'The intermediary area of transition between the hard urban area on its inner edge and open countryside or the fringe of an adjoining urban area. The area includes green space which extends from the edge of the countryside into the urban area. It is constantly evolving both in terms of the area it covers and the processes occurring within it. In this area the attributes of modern urban society – sewage works, waste disposal, new development allocations, recreation, litter, vandalism etc – mingle and interact with agriculture, often in inappropriate and detrimental ways.'

This definition is used by the London and South East Regional Planning Conference in its document *A Sustainable Strategy for the South East* which commends the partnership approach to achieving environmental improvements in urban fringe areas utilising funds such as the Single Regeneration Budget and the landfill tax. This positive approach to planning for urban fringe areas provides a good model for other regional planning guidance.

Recreational uses in the urban fringe

The Department of the Environment research paper *The Effectiveness of Green Belts* was produced by Oxford Brookes University in 1993. This precursor to the revised *Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (Green Belts)* explored the recreational uses to which urban fringe and green belt areas could be put. The study identified a number of potential functions that the urban fringe can fulfil for sport and recreation:

- A supply area with high accessibility to main population centres; one in five informal recreation trips to the countryside have a round trip distance of ten miles or less.
- Because of its proximity to people, an area offering the potential to break away from the dominance of car-borne leisure towards greater access by foot, cycle and public transport.
- A safety valve area accommodating uses such as playing fields, golf courses or football stadia that are displaced from urban areas.
- An interceptor area where new provision may reduce pressures in more fragile countryside areas.

- An opportunity area where environmental improvement and the creation of new landscapes can lead to sport and recreation after-uses.'

These functions are in evidence on much of the land around urban areas that has been used for formal and informal recreational activities over many years. Such locations have provided affordable land to accommodate everything from golf courses and tennis courts to riding schools and motor sports facilities.

The urban fringe, however, is not static and pressures on it from the urban population can lead to conflicts. For example, due to the ever-increasing size of towns and cities, some sporting and recreational facilities formerly separated from most residential areas are now surrounded by housing. Inevitably, this problem will increase as more housing is developed to



accommodate the new households identified in the Government's household projections. It appears likely that some new housing provision could be in the form of extensions to existing urban areas, as the draft revision to *Planning Policy Guidance Note 11 (Regional Planning)* makes clear.

This juxtaposition of sports facilities and housing can cause major problems for sports clubs, particularly when they wish to increase their level of activity by introducing floodlights and/or artificial surfaces. The fact that a sports club has occupied a site for many years before any adjacent houses were built counts for very little and, in many cases, the only practical solution is to attempt to sell the existing site (probably for residential development) and relocate – probably to the present-day urban fringe. If the urban fringe happens to be identified as green belt the club may have significant problems in convincing the local planning authority that their proposed floodlit tennis courts or clubhouse are appropriate development.

Perhaps the most common perception of the urban fringe is an area characterised by 'horseculture' – generally small fields used to keep horses and ponies, with stables, storage buildings and a variety of jumps and equine bric-a-brac. Such fields can easily become unattractive, particularly if they are over-grazed or the associated equipment is allowed to proliferate. Advice on equestrian development is provided in Annex F of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development)*.

Fragmented land ownership in the urban fringe can also be problematic when seeking to improve the quality of the environment – it can be difficult to identify who owns or occupies small pockets of land.

The leisure rings

In 1987, the Southern Council for Sport and Recreation produced *The Leisure Rings – A Statement on the Requirements of Sport and Recreation in the Countryside Close to the Towns and Cities*. This looked at some of the issues facing sport and recreation in 'leisure rings' defined as 'any area of land close to the built envelope of a town or city in which urban uses are not predominant (though perhaps present in some strength), and that appears to be "countryside" and is within easy reach of the urban population.' The statement includes a study of development plan policies in Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire, some key areas for action and examples of good practice in the region. One of the key areas for action was the encouragement of local authorities to consider using the space close to towns as a remedy for the shortfalls in municipal and pay-as-you-play golf courses and for sites for noise-generating sports. The rapid increase in the provision of golf courses in the southern region and elsewhere in the late 1980s coincided with the publication of the report, but was not matched by a noticeable increase in sites for noise-generating sports.

Former mineral extraction sites are major contributors to derelict or under-used land in the urban fringe and many have a variety of potential recreational after-uses. The 1992 Department of the Environment report *Amenity Reclamation of Mineral Workings: Main Report* and its companion volume *The Use of Land for Amenity Purposes: A Summary of Requirements* include factsheets that provide advice and guidance on the needs of the following sporting and recreational activities:

- climbing
- orienteering
- motor sports: trials and rallies; formal circuits and tracks
- cyclo-cross and BMX
- clay pigeon shooting
- sailing and windsurfing
- canoeing
- water skiing
- jet skiing.

The reports also provide information on the more basic requirements of many other sporting facilities and activities, from the formal (playing pitches, artificial ski-slopes and golf courses), to the informal (horse riding, fishing, country parks and amenity woodlands). Also of use is a series of case studies of recreational facilities and activities that have been provided or have taken place in former mineral workings, many of which are in urban fringe locations. The publications are summarised in two datasheets *The Amenity Reclamation of Mineral Workings* and *The Amenity Reclamation of Mineral*



Workings: Case Studies both elements of the Sports Council's 1992 publication *Facilities Factfile 3: Countryside and Water Recreation*.

The Community Forests Initiative, which aims to improve the quality of the urban fringe through the creation of 12 new multi-purpose wooded landscapes, will clearly have a major recreational impact in those parts of the country in which they are developed. Advice on the sporting content of Community Forests is contained in two further datasheets in *Facilities Factfile 3: Good Practice Guidelines for Sport and Nature Conservation in the Community Forests* and *Good Practice in Provision for Sport and Recreation in Community Forests*.

Development plans are required to facilitate the establishment of the Community Forests although such designations do not have a direct statutory implication on the planning process. An example of an enabling policy for one of the Community Forests is shown opposite.

Vale Royal Borough Local Plan
 First Review – Deposit Draft
 Policy NE10

Any proposals for the establishment of areas of multi-purpose woodland on derelict and under-used land across the whole of Vale Royal requiring planning permission and meeting the objectives of the Mersey Community Forest will be allowed provided that:

- 1 The tree planting relates to the surrounding environment.
- 2 The planting of native species is encouraged where appropriate.
- 3 Account will also be taken of any existing nature conservation value of the site so as to avoid damage to that value.

And there is no conflict with other policies of the local plan.

National policy guidance

In this section we look at advice contained in the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) and at Sport England’s emerging policies for sport in the urban fringe and recommendations for policies to be included in forthcoming development plans, as outlined in its draft Land Use Planning Policy Statement. Additional advice is available in the Countryside Commission’s publication *Linking Town and Country: Policies for the Countryside In and Around Towns*.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes

The urban fringe is referred to in several PPGs. Paragraph 3.24 of PPG 7 (*The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development*) refers to the urban fringe in the following terms:

‘Despite strict control of urban sprawl, land use conflicts and environmental problems are evident in areas of “urban fringe” around some conurbations. The urban fringe often accommodates essential but unneighbourly functions such as waste disposal and sewage treatment, and contains areas of derelict, vacant and under-used land as well as agricultural land and woodland suffering from a range of urban pressures.’

Taking a more positive approach, the same paragraph of the guidance goes on to say:

‘Tackling these problems requires a positive approach to planning and management aimed at securing environmental improvement and beneficial use of land, reducing conflicts between neighbouring land uses, improving public access, and catering for appropriate leisure and recreation facilities so as to reduce pressure on the wider countryside and reduce the need to travel.’

Some urban fringe land will fall within the green belt so PPG 2 (*Green Belts*) is also of relevance. Such land can fulfil two of the six objectives set down in the guidance:

- Provision of opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population.
- Provision of opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas.

It is clear, therefore, that outdoor sport and recreation is an appropriate activity or form of development in green belt urban fringes. However, paragraph 3.5 of the guidance indicates that associated buildings are inappropriate unless they are:

'essential facilities ... genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the green belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Possible examples of such facilities include small changing rooms or unobtrusive spectator accommodation for outdoor sport, or small stables for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation.'

The extent and size of ancillary buildings is a frequent point of discussion and disagreement between developers, sports clubs, local planning authorities and Planning Inspectors. Much of the debate centres around whether elements such as social accommodation (including bars and players' lounges/eating areas), fitness facilities and golf driving range buildings should be considered 'essential'. Since 1995 when the revised version of PPG 2 was published, decisions recorded in Sport England's planning appeals database involving new or extended buildings in the green belt are fairly evenly split: 36 cases allowed against 40 dismissed. Clearly the particular circumstances of each proposal will be considered but to demonstrate how this issue

has been handled by Inspectors two cases from the database, one allowed and one dismissed, are included in the final section of this bulletin.

PPG 17 (Sport and Recreation) develops advice contained in the green belt and countryside guidance notes. Paragraph 32 states that planning authorities 'should consider the scope for encouraging recreational facilities and increased public access to open land on the urban fringe, where this is compatible with existing uses.' It also points out that sites for recreational use can act as a buffer between agricultural and urban uses to protect crops from damage. PPG 17 will be revised in the near future.

Recreational uses may arise in connection with new business and industrial parks in the urban fringe. Local authorities are asked to give sympathetic consideration to afforestation projects and to possible changes of use of land for suitable recreational pursuits. The subject of the recreational use of existing and new forests is revisited opposite.



PPG 13 (Transport) will assume increasing importance as the drive towards sustainable development becomes more central to all Government policy. As a way of reducing the use of the private car, paragraph 3.12 of the guidance urges local planning authorities to make provision in their local plans for 'attractive and accessible local play areas, public open space and other recreational facilities'.

The provision of playing fields and other sports facilities in 'accessible' locations obviously raises issues of sustainable development, particularly as playing fields are increasingly being relocated to urban fringe locations. This in turn allows owners of urban recreational sites, including local authorities, to exploit the value of their inner city land holdings. However, if such relocation continues unchecked it could lead to the 'doughnut effect' resulting in few recreational facilities in the centre of an urban area and a heavy concentration in the urban fringe areas. In larger urban areas this can mean that basic sporting facilities such as pitches are no longer locally available to inner city residents.

It is therefore important to balance the potential sporting, economic and management benefits of providing formal sports facilities in urban fringe locations against the need to provide accessible local sporting and recreational facilities for urban populations. On the other hand, using urban fringe land for some resource-dependent recreational activities (such as walking and riding) may reduce the use of the 'open countryside' in more distant locations and thus reduce the need for travel by urban populations.



Planning Policy Guidance Notes are generally supportive of sporting and recreational uses in urban fringe areas, although with strong controls on buildings particularly in green belts. Caution is also expressed about increased journey times to urban fringe facilities and the loss of recreational facilities in inner urban areas, particularly those used by young people.

Land Use Planning Policy Statement

Sport England's Land Use Planning Policy Statement was published for consultation in January 1999 and distributed widely within the town planning profession. The policy statement has been prepared as a means of influencing future development plans, the

local planning authorities that produce them and other agencies working in the land use planning system. Policy P13 of the draft document states:

'Sport England considers that the urban fringe has an important role to play in providing opportunities for sport and will support proposals for improved access for sport and recreation uses, for the development of extensive facilities such as golf courses and pitches and for built facilities which can be developed in a sustainable way.'

Sport England is seeking the inclusion of policies within development plans that:

- Support measures to increase access to the urban fringe for sport and recreation including changes of use from agriculture to sport and recreation uses.
- Recognise the role the urban fringe can play in providing sites for sport that require extensive areas of land.
- Support the provision or relocation of built facilities for sport within the urban fringe where there is clear demand for the facility and where no suitable site within the urban area can be found.
- Encourage the restoration and imaginative use of redundant or degraded land for sport and recreation uses.

On a more practical level, the Sport England Lottery Fund has supported a number of projects in the urban fringe that provide recreational opportunities for

urban populations. For example, a grant of £61,000 was made towards the provision of an 11km cycleway between Rickmansworth and Uxbridge in Colne Valley Park. Initiatives from other agencies such as the Millennium Greens programme of the Countryside Agency and new funding sources such as the New Opportunities Fund will provide additional means of adding to the stock of urban fringe resources.

Local planning policies

Some development plans include specific policies on development in the urban fringe although these are now in the minority. More commonly, plans have policies that deal with the individual issues raised by urban fringes such as landscape degradation and conflicts between land uses and recreational uses. The following examples highlight both types of policy.

Chorley Borough Local Plan

Adopted January 1997

Policy G6 – Priority Urban Fringe Areas

Priority Urban Fringe Areas, as shown on the Proposals Map, have been identified in locations in particular need of environmental or countryside recreational improvement. They are also locations where the siting of playing fields and other predominantly open uses may be acceptable providing there is no conflict with Green Belt, Area of Other Open Countryside, or Area of Safeguarded Land Policies.

Sefton Unitary Development Plan

Adopted May 1995

Policy ENV 51 – Development on the Urban Fringe

Potential conflict between urban development and farmland should be minimised by locating compatible uses adjacent to farmland, by landscaping or by careful consideration of the layout and design of proposed developments.

Devon Structure Plan – First Review

Adopted March 1999

Policy E11

To provide for major casual recreation, including country parks or similar informal recreation areas, in locations close to the centres of population where they would be accessible by public transport and be in keeping with their surroundings.



City of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan

Adopted 1998

Policy L10 – Countryside Recreation

Countryside recreational activities and access to them will be improved and promoted where compatible with existing land uses, Green Belt policy and the need to safeguard important landscapes and areas of nature conservation value.

This will be achieved by:

- 1 improving and extending the network of footpaths, bridleways and cycleways
- 2 signposting and interpretation
- 3 improving facilities for people with disabilities
- 4 encouraging the provision of facilities for improved public transport
- 5 providing car parking facilities at appropriate locations
- 6 implementing proposals for the Great North Forest
- 7 only granting planning permission for noisy sports where there will be no demonstrable harm to local amenities, designated nature conservation sites or those routes the subject of policy T10 or other public rights of way
- 8 normally permitting facilities for equestrian activities where they have access to bridlepaths and where they would not have an adverse impact on the landscape or character of the surrounding area
- 9 increasing access to wildlife sites where this does not jeopardise the wildlife interest.

If Sport England's advice in the Land Use Planning Policy Statement is adopted by local planning authorities, future development plans should contain more proactive policies in relation to urban fringe areas. Minerals and waste local plans also have a role to play in encouraging appropriate sporting and recreational activities within former mineral extraction sites.

Planning appeal decisions

Sport England's database contains 260 decisions involving sites with urban fringe characteristics, around 13% of the total. Of these, 41% were allowed or partially allowed and 59% were dismissed, a slightly higher proportion of allowed cases than the average when such data was last published by the Planning Inspectorate.

The following cases illustrate the issues that come before Planning Inspectors in urban fringe cases, including both allowed and dismissed cases. The first two examples demonstrate how Inspectors can treat the issue of ancillary sports buildings in green belt/urban fringe areas, while the remaining three cases pick up broader urban fringe issues.



Erection of changing rooms and club room Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, May 1996

Appeal Ref:T/APP/C4235/A/96/262732/P5

Decision: Appeal dismissed

The appellants, a local sports association, sought planning permission for a two-storey building comprising changing rooms and showers on the ground floor with a kitchen and clubroom on the first floor, on an existing playing field site in the Greater Manchester green belt – the site was immediately adjacent to a housing estate. Although the application was in outline, indicative details of the building were included with the proposal.

The Stockport UDP policies echo the advice contained in PPG 2 and strongly resist inappropriate development in the green belt. The Inspector considered that the ground floor changing rooms, showers, toilets and equipment store would comply with advice in the PPG. However, the first floor which would provide a similar amount of floor space for a clubroom, kitchen and additional toilets would not, in the Inspector's view, come within the scope of the PPG's advice for essential facilities. It would therefore represent inappropriate development in the green belt. The Inspector went on to state: 'The proposed clubroom would be convenient for club members and playing field users but it is essential to preserve the openness of the green belt as required by advice in PPG 2.'

There were, the Inspector felt, no special circumstances to justify an exemption to the strong presumption against inappropriate development in the green belt and, despite support for the scheme from the Sports Council, he dismissed the appeal.

The case demonstrates the following points:

- an acceptance of changing rooms and showers as 'essential' facilities
- refreshment and club administration areas on the first floor were convenient but not essential
- the non-essential facilities therefore represented inappropriate development harmful to the openness of the green belt.



Sports pitches and a pavilion building
South Staffordshire District Council, May 1996

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/A/95/257612/P6

Decision: Appeal allowed

The site, on the western edge of Wolverhampton, was in agricultural use and was to be developed as sports pitches with a pavilion building to accommodate changing rooms, showers, toilets, a refreshments area and a groundsman's store. The green belt site abutted urban development to the north with isolated dwellings on other sides. The Inspector considered the sporting use of the site to be acceptable in principle: 'It would not significantly compromise the openness of the land, and the changing room building need represent no more than small-scale development to be put to uses ancillary to the recreational use of the land.'



He did go on, however, to look at the uses to which the pavilion could be put, such as: 'club or social functions more tenuously linked to outdoor sport in a way that would not respect the aims of green belt designation. That, however, is an aspect which could be safeguarded by condition, if appropriate. It would also be a matter to be taken into account in considering the detailed design of the building.'

The Inspector did not feel it necessary to identify separately the individual components of the pavilion building and to come to any conclusions as to how essential they were. He was also satisfied that associated highway works would not have an unduly urbanising effect on the rural character of the area.

He went so far as to state that: 'It is to be acknowledged that countryside such as that containing the site is not immutable, and that its overall character may well be sufficiently robust to assimilate, without undue harm, changes to roadside, or other, field boundaries.'

In allowing the appeal the Inspector attached a number of conditions including the following:

'The refreshment facilities of the pavilion building shall be used only at times reasonably related to games or matches being played at the site by participants and their guests, and the building shall not be used generally for social functions and, in particular, for dances, parties or the provision of entertainment.'



The following points are of interest:

- The Inspector's judgement that the pavilion, being ancillary to an appropriate green belt use, was therefore acceptable in principle.
- The use of a condition to control the type of activity carried on in the pavilion, rather than a dismissal on green belt policy grounds.
- The Inspector's comments on the ability of the countryside to assimilate change.

**Construction of golf course
Woking Borough Council, June 1997**

Appeal Ref: T/APP/A3655/A/96/272396/P2

Decision: Appeal allowed

The proposed golf course would be a 'pay and play' facility located on farmland immediately to the north of two other golf courses. The local planning authority had granted planning permission for the residential conversion of all farm buildings on the site, with the exception of the farmhouse which was to be converted to a clubhouse.

The Inspector acknowledged that golf courses are normally regarded as appropriate development within green belts but recognised that it was legitimate to examine whether an additional course was needed in a borough which already had 10 courses. Expert

evidence presented to the Inquiry suggested that only one of the existing courses was genuinely available to the public and that demand for non-private courses remained to be fulfilled. The Inspector accepted this evidence and went on to consider the impact of an additional course on this part of the green belt. He did this by examining how the proposed course would affect the major green belt objectives listed in paragraph 1.6 of PPG 2, concluding that the additional course would not conflict with any of the objectives. Indeed, he felt that the course would enhance the local landscape which had been degraded to such an extent by five years of 'set-aside' that the land was now effectively derelict.

The appellant's extensive proposals for landscape improvements and the protection of nature conservation interests convinced the Inspector that the proposals would not conflict with the objectives of *PPG 9 (Nature Conservation)* or the development plan. The Inspector was very clear about what he was allowing in this appeal:

'For the avoidance of doubt I would emphasise that approval is to be given for the proposals simply because they would provide a pay and play course – a form of golf course that is basically open to members of the general public who do not need to belong to any particular club or organisation in order to qualify to play.'

The following points are of interest:

- The golf course would improve a degraded agricultural landscape in the urban fringe.



- The demand for pay and play facilities was the most significant factor in persuading the Inspector to allow the appeal.
- The Inspector was not overly concerned that this golf course would be immediately adjacent to two existing courses.

Use of lake and land as water ski and nature conservation centre, including buildings
North Warwickshire Borough Council,
December 1998

Appeal Ref: WMR/P/5395/223/3

Decision: Planning permission granted

This recent case involved a 'called in' application for a water ski and conservation centre on a lake in the

Tame Valley between Tamworth and Birmingham near the M42. The area is characterised by ongoing mineral extraction, major roads and urban development and is within the West Midlands Green Belt. In addition to the use of the lake and surrounding land for water skiing and nature conservation the proposal involved the erection of a building to provide clubhouse facilities, a manager's flat, boathouse and storage facilities, and car parking.

The Inspector felt that the water skiing and nature conservation uses would be entirely appropriate in terms of government policy as they would enhance public access to the site which was close to major centres of population, would restore land damaged by mineral workings and would provide sporting and recreational opportunities in a sub-region which had a dearth of suitable comparable facilities. He considered in depth how the sporting use of the site would affect the nature conservation interests and decided that coexistence was quite possible and, indeed, that conservation interests would be enhanced by the proposals.

The Secretary of State disagreed with his Inspector about whether the proposal was in accordance with the development plan, specifically in relation to the proposed building. The Inspector had concluded that the scale of the building 'would not be intrusive and the character of the site as one of an open river valley within a broad landscape would be substantially retained.' However, the Secretary of State disagreed, finding that the visual and other amenities of the valley would be affected. Although the intrusive



effect would be reduced by a number of factors, including the design of the building and the topography of the area, the proposed building would still be inappropriate development and very special circumstances would be required to justify it.

The Secretary of State attached significant weight to the nature conservation value of the site and the fact that the proposals could lead to the development of a larger-scale country park, which had been in the early planning stages with a number of local planning authorities for some time. He also attached 'substantial weight' to proposed youth participation in the scheme and the involvement of local schools in the project. He concluded that these matters did

outweigh the harm to the green belt and constituted the very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the green belt.

Planning permission was granted subject to a number of conditions and a Section 106 Agreement. The conditions restricted water skiing to the period between April and mid-October and required the water ski boats to operate in accordance with the Code of Practice on Noise operated by the British Water Ski Federation. This case raised the following noteworthy points:

- The range and balance of issues considered in determining the acceptability of proposals in green belt terms.
- The balance between sport and conservation in the development of the site.
- The inclusion of a condition referring to a national governing body of sport code of practice.

Use of land for kart racing

London Borough of Sutton, September 1996

Appeal Ref: T/APP/P5870/AA/96/265895/P7

Decision: Appeal allowed

The proposal involved the use of some 4.03ha of vacant land on a former allotment site in south London adjacent to a sewage treatment works, an industrial estate, a rifle range, a railway and a golf course. The site fell within a large tract of metropolitan open

land which the unitary development plan treated in a similar way to green belt land. The Inspector felt that the recreational use of the site, together with small ancillary buildings, would not be inappropriate and would not detract from the open character of the area.

Of major importance to the Inspector was the noise impact of the proposed karting on housing some 300m away, on the adjacent golf course, and on Mitcham Common. However, due to the distances involved and the attenuating effect of intervening industrial buildings, he decided that a refusal of planning permission was not justified. He was also influenced by the appellant's willingness to accept a temporary permission for a five-year period during which time the noise impact could be assessed.

The adjacent sewage farm supported the largest known colony of tree sparrows in England and the Inspector was mindful of the disturbance that the karting could cause to the birds. However, he noted

existing local noise sources such as industrial premises, a rifle range and the railway, and the appellant's intention to provide two ponds within the kart track to provide a new habitat. Balancing the conservation concerns was an identified deficiency of karting facilities in Greater London, the support of the Sports Council and a petition in favour of the proposal. The lack of any conservation designation for the site and the fact that sparrows were not a protected species led the Inspector to conclude that 'the balance of advantage lies in permitting the proposed development.'

The following points are of interest in this case:

- The site is a typical urban fringe site.
- The balancing exercise the Inspector went through to consider the recreational and conservation merits of the proposal.
- The initial temporary permission that was granted to allow the council to monitor the noise impacts.



Further reading

COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION (1999)

Linking Town and Country: Policies for the

Countryside In and Around Towns

CCP 546, ISBN 00 86170 505X

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1992)

The Effectiveness of Green Belts

HMSO, ISBN 011 752 752799 8

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1992)

Amenity Reclamation of Mineral Workings: Main Report

HMSO, ISBN 0 11 752535 9

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1992)

The Use of Land for Amenity Purposes: A Summary of Requirements

HMSO, ISBN 0 11 752535 9

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1995)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (Green Belts)

HMSO

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1997)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development)

HMSO

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1994)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 (Nature Conservation)

HMSO

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1994)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (Transport)

HMSO

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1991)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Sport and Recreation)

HMSO

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE REGIONS (1999)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 11 (Regional Planning), Consultation draft

HMSO

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST REGIONAL PLANNING CONFERENCE (1999)

Sustainable Strategy for the South East

SERPLAN

SOUTHERN COUNCIL FOR SPORT AND RECREATION (1987)

The Leisure Rings – A Statement on the Requirements of Sport and Recreation in the Countryside Close to the Towns and Cities

SPORTS COUNCIL (1995)

Good Practice Guidelines for Sport and Nature Conservation in the Community Forests (Facilities Factfile 3: Countryside and Water Recreation)

SPORTS COUNCIL (1995)

Good Practice in Provision for Sport and Recreation in Community Forests (Facilities Factfile 3: Countryside and Water Recreation)

June 1999

SPORTS COUNCIL (1992)

*The Amenity Reclamation of Mineral Workings
(Facilities Factfile 3: Countryside and Water
Recreation)*

SPORTS COUNCIL (1992)

*The Amenity Reclamation of Mineral Workings:
Case Studies (Facilities Factfile 3: Countryside
and Water Recreation)*

SPORT ENGLAND (1999)

Land Use Planning Policy Statement –
Consultation Draft

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The appeal decision letters referred to cannot be made available by Sport England or Steven Abbott Associates. Readers wishing to obtain copies are advised to contact the Planning Inspectorate.

Sport England mission statement

Sport England aims to lead the development of sport in England by influencing and serving the public, private and voluntary sectors. Our aim is:

- **more people** involved in sport
- **more places** to play sport
- **more medals** through higher standards of performance in sport



Sport England is the brand name of the English Sports Council which is the distributor of Lottery funds to sport.

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