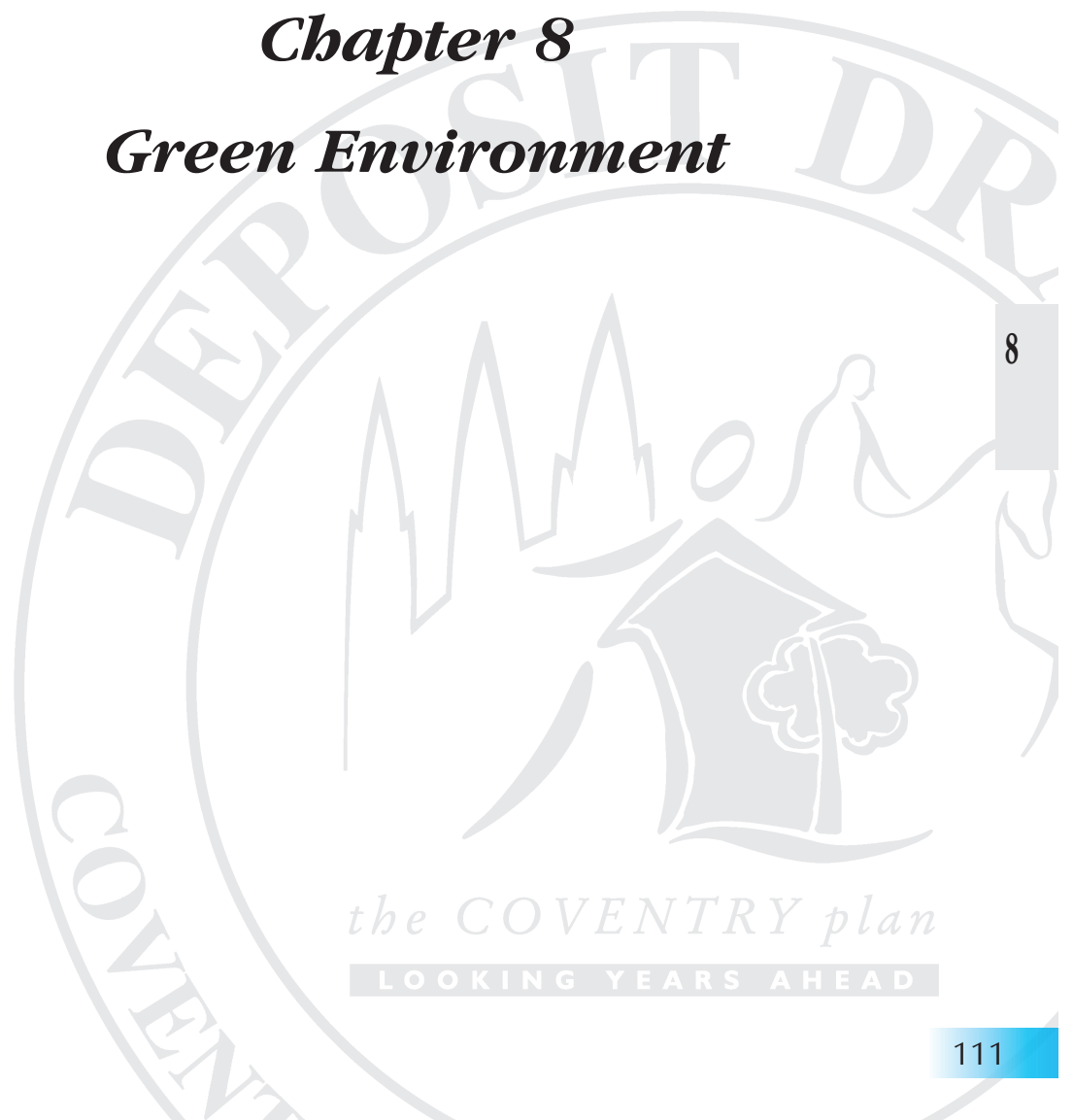




Chapter 8

Green Environment





8

the COVENTRY plan

LOOKING YEARS AHEAD

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INTRODUCTION AND POLICY AIM

8.1 Within Coventry there is a wide variety of Green Spaces which make a valuable contribution to the image and character of the City, its environmental quality and to people's quality of life. In particular, they help provide:

- opportunities for outdoor leisure and recreation, which is important for health and well-being, and in meeting sustainable (see paragraph 2.19) Green Space needs "locally";
- visual amenity, contributing to the appearance and scenic quality of the City;
- air quality, filtering urban pollution;
- a physical character and structure for the City, thereby enhancing its image for inward investment;
- a diversity of wildlife habitats, which also have an educational and intrinsic value;
- opportunities for social interaction, including the provision of areas for children to play; and
- a living landscape, reflecting the history and culture of the City, and through this "local distinctiveness".

8.2 The policy aim of the Chapter is to provide people with rich, accessible and diverse green spaces, linked to the surrounding countryside where possible, while ensuring effective conservation of wildlife, landscape and natural features, as important elements of a clean, healthy and sustainable green environment.

National and Regional Policy Context

8.3 Local authorities were given a clear role in maintaining and increasing biodiversity, following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, primarily through the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans, ongoing in Coventry, but also through the activities of local planning authorities. In this regard, biodiversity is a key indicator of sustainability and should be considered as early as possible in scheme design, so it can be integrated into the proposal and avoid or minimise harm to wildlife.

8.4 Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 2 "Green Belts" 1995 and "Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands" 1998 (RPG 11) promote Green Belts as the most effective way of preventing urban sprawl by protecting the open countryside between towns and green wedges within urban areas.

8.5 PPG 17 "Sport and Recreation" 1991 gives great importance to retaining recreation and amenity open space so that people, particularly the young and elderly, have access to open space near their homes. Local planning authorities need to take into account the value of open space not only as an amenity, but also as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built heritage of the area.

8.6 PPG 9 "Nature Conservation" 1994 sets out the objective of ensuring that plan policies:

- contribute to the conservation and diversity of wildlife and its habitats;
- minimise the adverse effects on wildlife where a conflict of interest is unavoidable; and
- meet international responsibilities and obligations for nature conservation.

It advises that local plans should offer reasonable certainty to developers, landowners and residents alike about the weight that will be given to nature conservation interests in reaching planning decisions. It also refers to the need for plans to be concerned beyond existing designated areas, with other land of conservation value and the possible provision of new habitats.

8.7 RPG 11 also highlights the need for the sparing use of local designations to protect areas of landscape and nature conservation value. It suggests an emphasis on identifying the distinct character of the local landscape and other features which need to be respected or enhanced. Maintenance of open space within urban areas is seen as critical to a sustainable approach to urban regeneration. The guidance also highlights the great value of informal small areas of open space to local communities, making them worthy of protection.

Local Policy Context

- 8.8 An essential task for the City is to make adequate provision for sustainable development and economic growth, while ensuring the effective conservation and enhancement of Green Space, wildlife and natural features, as important elements of a clean and healthy natural environment. Sustainable development does not necessarily mean less economic development; with careful planning control, conservation and development can usually be compatible, helping to improve the overall image and quality of the City as an attractive place in which to live, work, play, invest and visit.
- 8.9 Local authorities have a clear role in maintaining and increasing biodiversity, and the Government’s strategy is not just about saving rare and endangered species, but also a range of the more familiar and common plants and animals. In pursuance of the Government’s commitment to biodiversity conservation, the City Council commissioned a detailed and comprehensive Habitat Survey covering the whole City to ensure that full account is taken of species and habitats in its long term commitment to biodiversity. In addition, research was undertaken into the level and provision of and vacancies in allotment gardens in Coventry in association with the Coventry Allotments and Gardens Council.
- 8.10 There are a number of documents which form Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the Plan. These contain more detailed guidelines for the protection, enhancement and management of the City’s Green Spaces and associated buildings and include:
- A Green Space Strategy for Coventry
 - Ancient Arden Design Guidelines
 - Coventry Canal Corridor Study.

These documents will be updated as appropriate.

GREEN ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

GE 1: GREEN ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

In conjunction with other agencies and the local community, the City Council will:

- **protect Green Space;**
- **enhance the provision and quality of Green Space;**
- **make Green Space accessible to all sections of the community;**
- **encourage the appropriate management of Green Space; and**
- **give protection to valuable wildlife habitats and landscape features.**

(Part 1 Policy)

- 8.11 Green Space comprises Green Belt designated by Policy GE 6 and Urban Green Space defined by Policy GE 9. Green Belt and Urban Green Space are mutually exclusive.
- 8.12 Historically, Green Space within and around the City has occurred in a variety of ways. Past building, for example, was often planned to avoid land adjoining rivers as this was sometimes subject to flooding and these “brookstrays” were viewed as positively helping to improve the residential environment. Similarly, development avoided commons or parks to leave more extensive tracts of Green Space. Some Green Spaces were donated to the City by benefactors while others were purchased by the City Council for the benefit of its citizens.
- 8.13 These Green Spaces provide attractive breaks that enhance the overall appearance of the City. They are valued for the pleasant outlook which they provide from the surrounding residential areas, or the way they enhance the setting of buildings. More recently these “green lungs” have increased in importance, offering opportunities for recreation and providing rich habitats for urban wildlife and further improving and enriching the quality of life.

- 8.14 The very nature of these important areas of Green Space makes them vulnerable to development. In addition to being attractive, they are often accessible, easily serviced and relatively inexpensive to develop. Their protection is, therefore, fundamental to the Strategic Outcome of the High Quality City.
- 8.15 Extensive tracts of Green Space in and around the City (open countryside and green wedges) have already been designated as Green Belt, and thereby have strong protection against inappropriate development in order to maintain their existing open character.
- 8.16 There are also many other valuable areas of Green Space within the City which, because of their location, are not afforded Green Belt protection. These areas vary widely in size and character. The network and quality of these Green Spaces also need protection and enhancement to prevent “town cramming”, and provide opportunities for sustainable and accessible outdoor sport, recreation, nature conservation and biodiversity. These areas are collectively referred to as Urban Green Space.

GREEN SPACE

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- 8.17 There is a great variety of Green Spaces, both planned and unplanned, within the built-up area of the City and cumulatively they help to create a quality urban environment. Examples include parks, playing fields, school grounds, cemeteries, the grounds of large buildings, woodland, pockets of vacant and overgrown land and areas of water.
- 8.18 The protection and maintenance of these areas is also part of a sustainable approach to urban regeneration, helping to meet local needs “locally”. However, many areas are subject to particular land use conflicts. The City Council will, therefore, seek to adopt a positive and pragmatic approach to planning and management of Green Space, aimed at securing long term environmental improvements, and the sustainable use of land and water space. It will seek to recognise the contribution it makes to people’s quality of life, in ways which allow everyone to have reasonable, safe access to attractive areas of Green Space on their doorstep, especially children and people with special needs.

GE 2: GREEN SPACE ENHANCEMENT SITES

A network of Green Space enhancement sites will be established, in partnership with a range of organisations, to make the best use of neglected and unsightly land, improve environmental quality and provide or enhance Green Space. These will include Community Pocket Parks, Nature Reserves and Community Woodlands.

Projects will be selected and prioritised on the basis of:

- **the need and demand for local action;**
- **practical support from the local community;**
- **the ability to implement and maintain the proposal; and**
- **value for money.**

- 8.19 Green Spaces are especially important within parts of some of the Priority Areas (see Overall Strategy Chapter). They are accessible to large sections of the population, provide a welcome contrast within often densely developed areas and they attract wildlife into the heart of the urban area. The creation of Green Space enhancement sites will be a significant way of improving the quality, quantity and accessibility of these Areas, while promoting community wildlife schemes. In addition, further schemes to preserve and enhance areas of Green Belt like those in Coundon Wedge will be supported and promoted. Partners will include English Partnerships, Groundwork Coventry, the Countryside Commission, English Nature and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.
- 8.20 Their development will provide opportunities for local people to become involved in the initial design, planning and long term management of local sites, managed by the community to benefit local people. Community involvement and accessibility is of key importance as a way of providing for new or enhanced Green Space recreation, amenity and nature conservation in the urban environment. The involvement of schools on a long term basis will also be a high priority.

GE 3: GREEN SPACE CORRIDORS

A network of Green Space corridors will be protected, promoted and encouraged across the City for:

- amenity;
- access to open countryside;
- outdoor sport and recreation; environmental education; and
- landscape and nature conservation.

They include green wedges, brookstrays, linear open spaces and the Coventry Canal.

8.21 Green Space corridors have a particular value for people and for wildlife, but where the surrounding areas are industrialised and highly populated their value increases. The value of these corridors lies in:

- their continuity and open character;
- providing outdoor leisure, recreation and environmental education opportunities within easy reach of local residents and schools;
- preventing neighbourhoods from merging together; and
- providing corridors for wildlife.

8.22 Within the City the network of Green Space corridors, which are defined in the Green Space Strategy, comprise extensive tracts of open space which penetrate the built up area, linking trees, hedges, scrub, grassy areas, etc. and joining one wildlife habitat area with another. They are often remnants of countryside and still retain some of their former characteristics which can give a semi-rural feel to the landscape and contribute to the character and amenity of an area. The breaking of just one of these “links” can have a dramatic effect on the value of a corridor and the continued viability of some species.

8.23 Their protection and enhancement will, therefore, be regarded as fundamental to the success of improving Coventry’s Green Space network. Sensitive landscape treatment can help to enhance the visual quality of these corridors and views from the adjoining built-up area. Suitable planting can also screen or soften the effects of prominent urban development and provide a landscape with informal recreation, education and wildlife potential.

GE 4: PROTECTION OF OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION IN GREEN SPACE

Proposals that would result in the loss of, or a reduction in land used, or last used, for outdoor sport or recreation will not be permitted unless:

- minimum standards based on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and English Nature targets for such land will be met in the locality following the development;
- in the case of a sports facility, any requirement for the particular form and quality of facility concerned will continue to be met; and
- the land to be developed has no other significant Green Space value.

Where replacement provision is necessary in order to satisfy the first two criteria, it shall be of an equivalent or better quality, accessibility and value.

8.24 Undeveloped land which has an established value for outdoor sport or recreation, including all playing fields, will be protected from development where there is, or would be, a deficiency in the quality and quantity of Green Space provision in the area resulting from any built development. The City Council uses the NPFA’s minimum standards of 2.43 hectares (ha) per 1,000 population as a starting point in planning outdoor playing space provision (see also paragraphs 8.26 and 8.27.).

8.25 It is recognised that the NPFA standards do not include general open land and passive or informal recreational land as their role is not necessarily a recreational one. It is important, therefore, that such space is protected by Policies GE 4 and 9 whatever the current level of formal recreational space. The NPFA standards also only include school and educational playing fields where they have some public use. However, where there is a shortage of such spaces and they become redundant from educational use, there may be an opportunity for adoption by the local authority to help meet any shortfall that is identified in the local area in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

8.26 The provision of accessible outdoor playing space will be based on the NPFA's minimum standard of 2.43 ha per 1,000 population, as subdivided by the NPFA, to include:

- 1.6-1.8 ha for youth and adult use per 1,000 population;
- 0.6-0.8 ha for children's play per 1,000 population.

8.27 The provision of informal Green Space will be based on English Nature standards, but adapted to reflect local circumstances and the City's needs:

- an accessible informal Green Space such as a nature reserve, community pocket park, millennium green, community woodland, or similar, at a minimum of 1 ha per 1,000 population;
- at least one accessible informal Green Space site of at least 20 ha within 2 kilometres of home;
- one accessible 100 ha site within 5 kilometres of home; and
- one accessible 500 ha site within 10 kilometres of home.

The above sites may include areas of parkland, green wedges and other Green Space corridors, woodlands and country parks. Where areas are accessible to the public only by means of the public footpath network, that accessibility will be protected by Policy AM 10 (and in the Green Belt by the promotion of the land use objectives).

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8.28 Although the total quantity of Green Space is a vital requirement for the City, it is not the only consideration. To be used effectively, proper distribution and location, ease and safety of access, and good quality are all essential. If the facilities are too far from the homes of would-be users, or are too inaccessible, there could be a shortage of provision. This is especially true for people with impaired mobility, such as elderly, disabled people and parents with young children.

8.29 Even if there is not a deficiency in the current levels of local Green Space provision, development may still not be permitted if, in the view of the City Council, the area has other Green Space value to the local community which clearly outweighs any benefits to be gained from its development.

8.30 Where it is considered appropriate to provide alternative outdoor sport or recreation provision in accordance with the above Policy, it must be replaced by a facility of an equivalent or better quality in a suitable location continuing to meet any needs of the former users of the provision replaced, and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.

GE 5: REDEVELOPMENT OF ALLOTMENT GARDENS IN GREEN SPACE

Proposals to redevelop Allotment Gardens will not be permitted unless the applicant demonstrates that:

- **their loss will not result in unmet demand for allotments within a reasonable walking distance; and**
- **local Green Space will be enhanced overall by the development or by compensatory measures.**

8.31 Allotment Gardens are a unique part of Britain's heritage and the City Council has a statutory duty to provide for those who wish to use them. In more recent years there has been a prolonged decline in usage of which the Plan must take account.

8.32 Allotment Gardens are an important part of Green Space within the City. In addition to their benefits to plot holders for food production and healthy outdoor activity they provide an important open space function. Many old established Allotment Gardens, with their mature hedgerows, also provide an important wildlife and nature conservation resource, especially where they have been out of cultivation for a number of years. Policies concerned with 'Nature Conservation and the Green Environment' may be particularly relevant in this regard. For these reasons, their redevelopment will not be permitted unless it can be proven that there would not be an unmet need in the locality within a reasonable walking distance.

8.33 If there would be no unmet demand resulting from the proposal, all aspects of the Green Space value of the site will be assessed including its nature conservation value and visual amenity. Any redevelopment proposal must ensure, by improvement of an undeveloped portion of the site or compensatory provision nearby, that there will be a net enhancement of Green Space in the locality.

GREEN BELT

GE 6: CONTROL OVER DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT

The areas and detailed boundaries of the Green Belt are shown on the Proposals Map.

Inappropriate development will not be allowed in the Green Belt unless justified by very special circumstances.

Development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt should not harm the local landscape character or the visual amenities of the Green Belt.

(Part 1 Policy)

8.34 There are six purposes of including land in Coventry's Green Belt:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of the large built up areas of the City;
- to prevent Coventry from merging with the neighbouring towns of Birmingham; Kenilworth, Bedworth and Rugby;
- to assist in safeguarding the "Arden" countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the openness of the City's countryside and green wedges;
- to maintain and improve the setting and special character of Coventry; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (brownfield sites).

8.35 In addition, the use of land in the Green Belt has a positive role to play in fulfilling the following objectives:

- retaining land in agriculture, forestry and related open uses;
- providing access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- providing opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- retaining attractive landscapes, and enhancing landscapes near to where people live;
- securing nature conservation interests; and
- improving damaged and derelict land.

8.36 PPG 2 states that the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is for one of a number of specified purposes. The purposes relevant to Coventry are:

- agriculture and forestry;
- essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation;
- cemeteries; and
- limited extension, alteration or replacement of an existing dwelling.

Proposals to replace an existing dwelling will be regarded as appropriate only if the replacement is not materially larger and its design and landscaping will preserve the openness and character of the locality. The re-use of existing buildings may also be appropriate, subject to strict criteria to protect the openness, purposes and character of the Green Belt. Changes in the use of land may also be appropriate if they preserve its openness, purposes and character.

8.37 In the local context, development of existing industrial or commercial sites as described in Policy GE 7 may prove appropriate, and also certain enhancements to indoor facilities ancillary to outdoor sports as described in Policy GE 8.

8.38 Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Where very special circumstances do justify inappropriate development, that will nevertheless, be regarded as a departure from the Plan.

8.39 The essential characteristic of the Green Belt is its “permanence”. Its most important attribute is its “openness”. Its protection will, therefore, be maintained as far as can be seen ahead.

8.40 The visual amenities of the Green Belt must also be protected. In this regard, the countryside surrounding the built up area of Coventry forms part of the “Ancient Arden” landscape of scenic quality and distinctive local character. It is a mature and varied undulating landscape, characterised by a wide range of historic features, including small irregular fields defined by thick, ancient hedgerows and hedgerow oaks; unimproved pastures and field ponds; ancient woodlands; vernacular style buildings; and a network of narrow, winding and often sunken lanes. These features are woven within a working agricultural landscape, which still retains a locally distinctive and rural character.

8.41 The City Council’s Ancient Arden Design Guidelines, will be applied in order to protect the openness, visual amenities, local distinctiveness or rural character of the Green Belt. Certain types of development, including small stables associated with outdoor recreation, although they may not individually prejudice the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, might cumulatively have a detrimental impact on the openness, character and visual amenities of the Green Belt by reason of their siting, materials or design.

8 8.42 Where development is considered appropriate within the Green Belt, a high standard of design and siting will be required, reflecting the traditional character of buildings in the area and the landscape, and using materials sympathetic to the locality. The conservation and maintenance of features important to the local landscape will also be required. Particular care will need to be given to large agricultural buildings to ensure they blend into the landscape.

8.43 Aside from the open countryside there are also green wedge areas of Green Belt, which are extensive tracts of open land which penetrate the built up area from the countryside beyond and include remnants of the Arden landscape. They have a particular value in maintaining the openness of urban areas and providing people with access to the open countryside. Special attention will be given to the protection, conservation and enhancement of these green wedges and any development which would adversely affect their open character, visual

amenities or local distinctiveness will be strongly resisted.

8.44 In identifying the detailed boundary of the Green Belt in the Plan, the City Council has continued to have regard to development needs within and beyond the Plan period. The City’s housing and employment needs have been achieved since the 1993 Plan with the assistance of clear Green Belt boundaries which have also helped to contain the dispersal of development, so reducing the need to travel and improving access to jobs, leisure and services. The Plan proposes selective Green Belt changes to meet emerging circumstances to provide for people’s needs for jobs and sport and outdoor recreation.

GE 7: INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

The redevelopment, extension, infilling or other alteration of industrial or commercial buildings in the Green Belt for industrial or commercial uses, may be appropriate development if the overall impact of the development on the openness, appearance and character of the Green Belt is improved. A proposal will not be regarded as appropriate if:

- the area occupied by built development is enlarged;
- the height of existing buildings is exceeded;
- the use and associated activities are materially intensified;
- the total gross floorspace is significantly increased; or
- a high quality of design, materials and landscaping is not achieved.

8.45 Historically, the development of Coventry has occasionally led to industrial and commercial buildings being located in the Green Belt. Although it may be preferable, it is normally unrealistic to expect such sites to be redeveloped for more appropriate Green Belt uses. Rather than seeing them become neglected, and to protect the employment land portfolio, the opportunity should be taken to improve their impact on the Green Belt.

8.46 Development or redevelopment of industrial or commercial buildings in the Green Belt should not result in unacceptable intensification. Proposals will be considered on the basis of the relationship between all built development on a site (including building accesses, driveways and parking areas), the size and nature of the site and its setting. In order to maintain the character of the Green Belt, redevelopment should not be at greater physical scale or prominence than the existing buildings. However, it may be appropriate to re-arrange the layout of the site so as to reduce the visual intrusion in the Green Belt.

GE 8: INDOOR FACILITIES ANCILLARY TO OUTDOOR SPORTS IN THE GREEN BELT

The extension of an existing building which is ancillary to sports pitches in green wedges in order to provide or improve training, social or administrative facilities for users of the pitches may be regarded as appropriate provided that the scale and design:

- **have no more than a modest impact on the openness of the Green Belt;**
- **respect the character and appearance of the green wedge; and**
- **are not likely to lead to demand for the facilities to be made available to a wider range of users.**

8.47 This policy applies to those green wedges which are Green Belt. A green wedge is an open corridor bordered on both sides by the built urban area of Coventry. Such wedges are a distinctive feature of the Green Belt in Coventry and accommodate an important part of the outdoor sports provision of the City in locations close to where people live. In some instances this provision is accompanied by long established indoor facilities, typically in the form of clubhouse facilities some of which are outdated. The clubs occupying these premises sometimes face pressure to improve their indoor facilities in order to survive and thrive in their current location, a pressure exacerbated by the increased availability of grants and changing expectations of users in recent years. Given the increased mobility and independence of users, and the restricted availability of suitable alternative land within the urban area, clubs which are unable to compete successfully may move, or see their members move, to other more distant and perhaps less accessible premises. The result would be a

diminution of choice, an increased need to travel and more demand for development in greenfield and countryside locations elsewhere.

8.48 Since the purpose of this policy is both to preserve an appropriate use and protect the Green Belt, the predominance of the outdoor element must be maintained and impact on the openness, character and appearance of the Green Belt must be strictly controlled. In addition to the size and appearance of extended facilities, attention will be paid to the effect of associated works and uses such as parking and landscaping. Enhanced indoor facilities should be, and remain, subordinate to the use for outdoor sport and should not intensify activities not directly associated with that use. This will be achieved through careful consideration of their scale and design and the imposition of appropriate conditions.

8.49 Existing buildings are those existing at the time this Plan was placed on deposit. Proposals for new outdoor sports, or for the construction of indoor facilities at existing sites with no indoor training, social or administrative facilities, will be considered against the normal principles in national guidance. Where new indoor facilities are allowed on such sites, Policy GE 12 will not be available to support subsequent proposals for their extension.

URBAN GREEN SPACE

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GE 9: CONTROL OVER DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN GREEN SPACE

Urban Green Space is any area of open land or water, not designated as Green Belt, with value for amenity, outdoor sport or recreation, or for its contribution to the character of an area or as a link between such areas.

Proposals which would reduce Urban Green Space or diminish its value will not be permitted except:

- **in accordance with Policies GE 4, 5, 11 and 12;**
- **where, in an exceptional case, the wider public interest clearly outweighs such harm; or**
- **where local Green Space is enhanced overall by the development or compensatory measures.**

8.50 Urban Green Space, whether publicly or privately owned and even if not accessible to the general public, is an essential feature of the urban environment. It is an important amenity for people and contributes to the conservation of the built heritage and image of the City. Its role in improving the urban environment, including filtering urban pollution and improving air quality, is being increasingly recognised in urban planning terms. Even the smallest areas of Urban Green Space within the City, such as a row of street trees, can contribute to the character and amenity of an area. Urban Green Space frequently accommodates features of nature conservation interest or acts as a wildlife corridor. This not only adds to its amenity value, but is a characteristic worth protection in its own right. Such protection is given, in addition to protection as Urban Green Space, by the Nature Conservation Policies GE 13 to 16.

8.51 Where development is considered to be justified, then on-site and/or off-site compensatory measures will normally be required as part of the proposal. In the case of small developments, such agreements might include a contribution to provide or improve nearby Green Space. Wherever possible, the City Council will seek to ensure that any development will incorporate, conserve and enhance as much as possible of the important landscape and wildlife features of a site. Such wild remnants should be promoted as attractive features of development, to ensure that where people work or live retains a green and natural feel as far as possible. This should also include making provision for new landscape and ecological features in the detailed design of a development where possible.

8.52 When assessing whether a proposal is an “exceptional case”, the City Council will consider the NPFA and adapted English Nature standards as appropriate to estimate the degree of harm resulting from the proposed loss of land. (See paragraphs 8.26 to 8.27)

8.53 The extent and variety of all Urban Green Space within the City makes it impractical to identify on the Proposals Map. To show only some areas, however, might incorrectly imply that these are more important than areas which are not indicated. The Green Space Strategy shows the strategic corridors but cannot be a comprehensive record.

GE 10: URBAN GREEN SPACE PROVISION IN NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

New housing developments must include formal and informal Urban Green Space, meeting or exceeding minimum standards based on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and English Nature targets. Where the locality of the proposed development is not already served by Green Space meeting these minimum standards then a higher standard of open space provision is likely to be required.

Where Urban Green Space is provided within the development, the developer will also be required to ensure its maintenance through appropriate legal arrangements.

Where provision within the development is not practicable or would be of no significant value, the developer will be required to provide a sum of money sufficient to enable the provision (by creation or improvement) and maintenance of alternative local facilities of equivalent value.

8.54 To ensure that adequate provision is made for accessible, quality Urban Green Space within new residential areas, the City Council will seek to apply guidelines based on the NPFA and English Nature standards adapted to reflect local circumstances and the needs of Coventry (see paragraphs 8.26 to 8.27). This provision does not include any open space adjacent to a highway used to house services or to allow for adequate sightlines. When considering the details of a proposal, the City Council will have regard to the Urban Green Space requirements in SPG.

8.55 It is important that Urban Green Spaces provided within new developments are appropriately located to ensure that they are accessible and that, wherever possible, they are linked to other areas of Green Space, particularly green wedges, corridors and the open countryside. They should be designed to provide usable and attractive amenity and recreational space while retaining as many of the existing natural features as possible. To maximise the benefits to wildlife, the City Council will encourage schemes for landscaping of Urban Green Space which also seek to enhance the wildlife potential of the area through its use of native species, the creation of wetland features or other approaches.

- 8.56 Play areas for children under primary school age should be designed to be safe, secure and supervised where possible, incorporate appropriate play equipment, prevent entry by dogs, and be accessible by foot and bicycle via traffic free or traffic calmed routes. They should be far enough away from houses to reduce the likelihood of general disturbance and noise.
- 8.57 To ensure that these new areas are appropriately maintained, the City Council will expect developers providing Urban Green Space to make adequate provision for its future maintenance.
- 8.58 In some instances it may not be possible or appropriate for a developer to incorporate the required level of Urban Green Space provision. This might be the case in a very small development or where the area already has adequate Green Space provision. In this case, the City Council will require the developer to enter into a planning obligation to provide a commuted sum of money to enable the City Council either to make new Urban Green Space provision in the locality, or to improve and enhance the quality of existing Green Space provision and facilities in the vicinity of the site.
- 8.59 The specific areas shown on the Proposals Map within green wedges have been formally withdrawn from Green Belt to accommodate proposed major facilities for outdoor sport together with indoor facilities. These developments are of a scale which could not be accommodated within the terms of Policies GE 6 and GE 8.
- 8.60 At Westwood Heath, Coventry University's playing fields are proposed to be reshaped for the University's own use as well as incorporating the relocation and expansion of the Midland Sports Centre for the Disabled. At Allard Way, the existing Municipal Sports Association ground is proposed to be reshaped to help the development of sports facilities incorporating community use in that part of the City. Parts of the existing playing fields at Caludon Castle, President Kennedy and Ernesford Grange Schools are likely to accommodate proposed or existing outdoor sports facilities, together with a substantial indoor element that would have been incompatible with Policies GE 6 and GE 8.

GE 11: SITES FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN GREEN SPACE

Sites for sports development in Urban Green Space are shown on the Proposals Map at:

- 1 Allard Way;
- 2 Westwood Heath;
- 3 Caludon Castle School;
- 4 President Kennedy School;
- 5 Ernesford Grange School.

The nature and extent of any built development will be considered on the basis of:

- maintenance of the predominant open character of the area;
- impact on the visual amenities and local distinctiveness of the area;
- a reasonable balance between the needs of the activity, nature conservation and landscape enhancement; and
- compatibility with other Plan policies.

These sites are not available for any other form of development and each site will be subject to a detailed design brief.

GE 12: PROPOSALS FOR NEW OR EXPANDED OUTDOOR SPORT OR RECREATION FACILITIES IN URBAN GREEN SPACE

Proposals for new or expanded outdoor sport or recreation facilities in areas of Urban Green Space will be considered on the basis of:

- the capability of the site and its location to accommodate a viable outdoor sports or recreational use;
- the compatibility of the activity with nearby uses;
- any built development or structure being carefully contained and ancillary to outdoor sport;
- maintenance of the predominant open character of the area;
- impact on visual amenities and local distinctiveness of the area;
- a reasonable balance between the needs of the activity, nature conservation and landscape enhancement being achieved;
- accessibility by a choice of means of transport; and
- compatibility with other Plan Policies.

- 8.61 Many, but not all, outdoor activities are compatible with achieving and maintaining a high quality physical environment. However, there may be some instances where the size or location of the site makes it impossible to accommodate a viable use. The compatibility of the proposal with nearby uses will also be important. For example, there have been cases where noise and intrusive lighting have caused problems. Planning conditions, therefore, will be used to control elements which could have a detrimental effect on the amenities of local residents.
- 8.62 There have been instances where proposals have been brought forward where, although there is an outdoor element, an unacceptably large indoor element is also involved. This would be contrary to the objectives for Urban Green Space. In the same way, the design of buildings or other structures must be compatible with visual amenity and landscape character.
- 8.65 The natural heritage of the City goes far beyond these statutory sites. There are many other places which support uncommon plants or animals or display important natural features such as rock outcrops which help to safeguard biodiversity. Although not of sufficient importance to merit statutory protection, these places include sites identified as being of substantive nature conservation importance, and offering opportunities for education, active involvement and public enjoyment. Many of these sites are locally designated as Coventry Nature Conservation Sites (CNCS) and, in addition to being shown on the Proposals Map, are listed in the Appendix to this Plan.
- 8.66 The 49 sites have been selected after consideration whether:

- the Habitat Survey 1998 (or previous surveys of particular sites) revealed them to be of substantive nature conservation importance;
- ordinary planning controls would provide sufficient protection; and
- their nature conservation importance is outweighed by the benefits of allocation for development .

As a result of this three stage assessment, certain sites of substantive nature conservation importance have not been designated as CNCSs. These are:

- Foleshill Gasworks (Policy OS 2-1);
- Three Spires Sidings (Policy OS 2-1);
- part of Houldsworth Crescent site (Policy H 7-17);
- Coventry Colliery railway sidings (Policy OS 2-2);
- part of Alderman's Green Industrial Estate (Policy E 7-14);
- part of Jaguar Whitley site (Policy E 7-17);
- line of the North-South Road phase 3 (Policy AM 16-1);
- Public Waste Disposal site, Whitley (Policy BE 29); and
- Baginton Fields housing site (Policy H 7-21).

Development proposals for these sites may afford some scope for the preservation of nature conservation interest and developers will be encouraged to explore such opportunities or offer compensatory provision.

NATURE CONSERVATION AND THE GREEN ENVIRONMENT

GE 13: PROTECTION OF SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST, LOCAL NATURE RESERVES AND COVENTRY NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Coventry Nature Conservation Sites are shown on the Proposals Map.

Proposals which would have an adverse impact on any of these sites will not be permitted.

- 8.63 There are a very limited number of statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) identified by English Nature primarily in recognition of their flora, fauna or geological features. They are designated to safeguard a representative series of the nation's most valuable natural history resource.
- 8.64 There are also a number of statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNR). They may not necessarily have a particularly high scientific value, but they have special nature conservation and educational qualities which make them attractive and accessible to the public. The City Council is pursuing a programme of statutory LNR designation in order to give certain sites stronger protection and recognition.

8.67 Sites designated under this policy include those which have acquired an increasingly important nature conservation value in recent years, such as Ancient Woodlands which are semi-natural, have had a continuous cover of native trees and plants since 1600 AD or earlier and have not been cleared since then. These woods are regarded as being the most important for nature conservation, landscape and amenity. They are the essential habitat of some of the City's rarest and most important plant and animal species and, once destroyed, such woodlands cannot be recreated.

GE 14: PROTECTION OF OTHER SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE

Proposals for development on other sites having a significant nature conservation value, and not allocated or retained for development, will be permitted only if the benefits of the development on that site clearly outweigh the extent of ecological harm likely to be caused.

In such cases developers will be required to reduce, offset or compensate for such harm to the fullest practicable extent compatible with the character of the development proposed.

8.68 In addition to the sites protected by Policy GE 13 and those listed in paragraph 8.66, there are other sites which have a lesser nature conservation interest, in whole or in part. The City Council's objectives for nature conservation are to ensure that its policies contribute to the conservation and diversity of wildlife and its habitats, and restrict the adverse effects on wildlife where a conflict of interest is unavoidable.

8.69 The City Council is also committed to maintaining biodiversity and local distinctiveness, and this can only be achieved if development is carried out in such a way as to recognise the value of the wider environment and those natural features and habitats which impart distinctiveness. An Environmental Assessment may be required if this is felt to be important on a given site and will need to:

- identify the potential environmental effects of the proposed development, taking account of its characteristics, the sensitivity of the local environment and the concerns of interested parties;

- predict and evaluate the significance of these potential effects; and
- identify any measures which could be taken to mitigate them.

8.70 In assessing whether the benefits of development outweigh ecological harm, careful attention will be given to the question whether the particular form of development proposed, makes an important contribution to an acknowledged planning objective which cannot more satisfactorily be achieved elsewhere. Where development or land use change is permitted which would damage the nature conservation value of the land, all reasonable efforts should be made to contain such damage. Where appropriate, the City Council will consider the use of conditions and/or planning obligations to provide compensatory measures within the locality.

GE 15: SPECIES PROTECTION

Proposals which would have an adverse effect on protected species will not be permitted except where:

- the survival of the species can be ensured on the site; or
- adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of populations are provided.

8.71 This policy will apply to sites which are used for breeding, during migration or other passage movements, or for well established periods of residence.

8.72 If development is permitted, the developer will be required to secure the protection of such animal and plant species as are protected by law. Due regard must also be given to other species included within Government lists, and species classified by the local biological records centre as being regionally scarce. This will help facilitate the survival of individual members of a species; reduce disturbance to a minimum; or provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of populations where development or land use change is permitted.

- 8.73 The City Council will base its planning decisions on reliable, sufficiently detailed and up-to-date habitat survey information and for this reason applicants may be required to provide such information.

GE 16: PROTECTION OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Important landscape features of value to the amenity or history of a locality, including mature woodlands, trees or hedgerows, will be protected against unnecessary loss or damage.

- 8.74 In addition to the range of sites with nature conservation value, there is a rich mosaic of associated landscape features in the City which have a conservation value in their own right, including some geological features. They often contribute to the distinctive local character of an area, as well as being part of the historic fabric of the landscape and valued by the local community.
- 8.75 Trees and woodlands which make a significant visual contribution to their local environment, can be protected through the use of Tree Preservation Orders and controls in Conservation Areas. Very old “veteran” trees aged 200 years or more will be subject to special scrutiny to ensure that their particular historic and nature conservation value is not unnecessarily damaged by surgery or felling. Subject to certain exemptions, the felling of trees in Great Britain is also controlled by the Forestry Commission and may require a “Felling Licence”.
- 8.76 Under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997, it is against the law to remove some native hedgerows without the approval of the local planning authority.
- 8.77 Where valuable trees and hedgerows are retained within a development site, the City Council will use conditions to ensure that they are protected during and after development, and are given sufficient space to grow.