

## CHAPTER 6: RECREATION LEISURE AND TOURISM

### 6.1 Context

- 6.1.1 The recreation, leisure and tourism sectors are increasingly important in the local and national economy. More leisure time, improved mobility and higher incomes have led to demands for all kinds of recreation and tourist facilities in both urban and rural locations. Activities range from informal pursuits such as walking, sightseeing or visiting craft shops, museums and places of historical interest to more traditional sporting activities such as horse riding, football, golf and indoor sports. It is anticipated that the leisure sector will continue to grow during the plan period and will generate a range of new demands on the urban and rural landscape as well as creating new economic activity and job opportunities.
- 6.1.2 Visitor attractions and recreational facilities are located throughout the Borough and contribute to meeting the recreational needs of local residents and attract visitors and tourists to the Borough. The tourist potential of a locality is often dependent upon the quality and character of the landscape and townscape. The landscape of the Borough has evolved over many years and its quality is a function of a variety of factors including; the topography, land uses, vegetation cover, wildlife habitats and the scale, type, character and location of existing development.
- 6.1.3 In rural areas it is important to ensure that future development does not adversely affect the qualities of the landscape which attract visitors, particularly in areas of development restraint such as the Green Belt and Special Landscape Area.
- 6.1.4 In Stafford and Stone, the 'townscape' makes an important contribution to the quality of urban life. The location, size and character of existing buildings in relation to surrounding open spaces partly determines the attractiveness of the town. The character and quality of the urban centres of Stafford and Stone will play an important part in attracting visitors and new investment to the Borough.
- 6.1.5 Urban and rural landscapes are not static features but are constantly changing due to human activity. Land use planning is a key element in protecting and guiding future change in the landscape. The provision of leisure, recreation and tourism facilities for local residents and visitors to the Borough will be encouraged and their use promoted. However, there is also a need to protect the environmental qualities of the landscape from excessive use and inappropriate development. Increased visitor use, if not properly managed, can be detrimental to conservation of the landscape.

6.1.6 Government policy advice for achieving sustainable development includes the objective of reducing the need to travel and particularly by private car. Government research has shown that growth in Travel demand has been somewhat greater for leisure than other purposes. New leisure, recreation and tourism development will inevitably increase travel demand. Development which is well related to where people live and is capable of access by public transport, walking or cycling is to be encouraged subject to other policies in the plan.

6.2 **Aims and Objectives**

6.2.1 The Borough council recognises the important role it has to play in meeting recreational, leisure and tourist requirements and this is reflected in the provision of a wide range of indoor and outdoor facilities. The Council's Tourism Strategy 'Into the 90's' makes a number of recommendations aimed at the promotion of tourism, dealing with the long and short term needs within the Borough, and outlining a number of areas in which ventures could be encouraged.

6.2.2 The Local Plan performs an important function in determining the future land use pattern within the Borough. The Local Plan's overall aim in terms of leisure, recreation and tourism is to achieve a balance between encouraging development in appropriate locations and protecting the environment. Within this overall aim the following objectives are identified:-

- to improve provision of recreation, leisure and tourist facilities for the benefit of local residents and visitors to the Borough.
- to support new proposals for viable and diverse recreation, leisure and tourist facilities.
- to encourage the location of recreation, leisure and tourism facilities where they can be adequately served by modes of transport other than the private car.
- to encourage the expansion of tourist accommodation.
- to promote local assets such as the canal network as a focus for tourism.
- to achieve a minimum standard of 2.43 ha (6 acres) of formal outdoor playing space per thousand population settlements.
- to protect opens spaces within settlements which are considered to be of significant recreational value.
- to protect areas of high landscape quality and nature conservation importance from inappropriate recreation, leisure or tourist development.

- to assist in the improved accessibility to public and private facilities within the Borough for all members of the local community and including people with disabilities.

### 6.3 **Indoor Facilities**

6.3.1 It is important to meet the need for Recreation, Leisure and Tourism development as far as possible, in ways which reduce the need to travel particularly by the private car. Proposals for Recreation, Leisure and Tourism development in areas accessible by public transport or other non-vehicular modes of transport will be encouraged wherever appropriate.

6.3.2 Stafford and Stone town centres, and town centre fringe areas are the most appropriate locations for major indoor facilities which cater for Borough-wide and local needs, both in terms of their accessibility by public transport, and the contribution that such uses can make to the life of the towns. It is recognised that Stafford town centre acts as a focus for cultural, entertainment and other recreation facilities.

6.3.3 Outside Stafford and Stone, proposals for recreation or leisure uses which serve a wider area than a single settlement will, subject to other policy considerations, be encouraged to locate on sites with good accessibility. At present village halls are the principle indoor facility available in rural areas.

6.3.4 Recreation and leisure facilities are provided by the public and private sectors, through individual clubs, commercial enterprises and community associations.

The Borough Council will encourage the provision of:

- (i) Centres which are capable of providing a wide range of leisure and social facilities for families as well as competition and specialist activities;
- (ii) Smaller indoor centres at local neighbourhood level;
- (iii) Sports facilities in particular sub-regional and regional specialists sports facilities which meet the recognised standards of national and regional sporting bodies or agencies;
- (iv) Centres that meet the access requirements of people with disabilities and which are accessible or capable of being accessed by public transport.

Where appropriate the Borough Council will encourage joint provision arrangements that extend the availability of education facilities to permit their use by the general public.

6.4 **Recreation and Open Space Provision**

**Recreational Open Space In the Built Environment**

- 6.4.1 Areas of Open Space are important elements in meeting a broad range of recreational requirements, as they cater for all sections of the community and fulfil a variety of functions and provide a range of benefits. This section focuses primarily on the recreational value of the open space.
- 6.4.2 Open space may be in the form of formal recreational open space laid out for organised sport, equipped play areas for children, open areas that can reasonably be used for a variety of informal recreational purposes (such as 'Kickabout' areas) and other open spaces which may remain undeveloped because of historical, physical or policy constraints. These areas of open space whether formal or informal often make a valuable contribution to the amenity and character of an area. The common thread, however, is that open space will usually form an integral and crucial part of the urban fabric. Nevertheless, it is a resource which has been and remains under serious threat from development pressures and neglect.
- 6.4.3 The location, function and distribution of open space, whether formal recreational space or a general amenity open space is of particular importance and accessibility to users is vital. Proposals for the redevelopment of either formal recreational space or general amenity space (including allotments), whether in private or public ownership (including schools facilities) will be resisted unless equivalent or higher standard alternative provision can be made with similar or improved accessibility for the current users.
- 6.4.4 Great importance is attached to the retention of formal recreational open space and general amenity space within settlements. The value attached to a particular open space may relate to a variety of factors including the contribution it makes to the character of an area, its recreational value, nature conservation value or because it provides a break in the built environment. The general policies for the protection of open space are set out in the Environment and Development chapter. The following policy deals specifically with open space of both formal and informal use characteristics.

**POLICY RLT1 PROTECTION OF LAND WITH RECREATIONAL VALUE**

*Development will not be acceptable where it would result in the loss of areas having significant recreational value whether designated as Protected Open Space or otherwise. The significance of such areas will be considered using the following criteria:-*

- (a) the accessibility, size and quality of the existing open space and other open space located nearby;*
- (b) an assessment of the level of existing provision of open space in the area;*
- (c) its contribution to the range of formal outdoor playing space requirements in an area.*

6.4.5 The national context for recreational open space policy is set by central government which states that it is the Local Planning Authority's responsibility to have regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies of open space and to resist pressures for the development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest. Central Government guidance also encourages local planning authorities to draw up their own standards for provision for formal and informal sport and recreation, based on their own assessment of need.

6.4.6 Staffordshire Structure Plan 1986-2001 Policy 118 states that the desired level of open space provision in urban areas should be to a standard of seven acres per thousand population. The National Playing Fields Association recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.43 hectares per 1,000 population (a 'Six Acre Standard') which should comprise outdoor playing space for youth and adult use and outdoor playspace for children. The Borough Council have endorsed the NPFA's standards and these form the basis for the required level of open space provision in new development.

6.4.7 It is proposed that the NPFA's six acre standard be used as the basis for calculating existing levels of formal recreational open space for adult and children's use, in Stafford and Stone and for assessing deficiency levels of that type of provision in those settlements.

6.4.8 The Borough Council will seek to achieve a minimum standard of 2.43 hectares (6.0 acres) of formal outdoor playing space per 1000 population in urban areas as follows:-

- (i) Youth and Adult use                      1.6 - 1.8 ha (4 - 4.5 acres)
- (ii) Children's Formal Outdoor      0.6 - 0.8 (1.5 - 2 acres)  
      Playing Space

to be applied in conjunction with any available assessment of need for specific sports and recreation activities.

6.4.9 The above categories can be defined as follows:-

- (i) Youth and Adult use
- facilities such as pitches, greens, courts and miscellaneous items such as athletic tracks, putting green and training areas in local government ownership;
  - facilities as described above within the educational sector which are as a matter of practice and policy available for public use;
  - facilities as described above within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors which serve the leisure time needs for outdoor recreation of members of the public;
- (ii) Children's Formal Outdoor Playing Space
- can comprise one or more of the following categories of play areas:
    - (a) Local Areas for Play (LAPs) - small areas (0.01 ha (0.25 acres)) \*of unsupervised open space specifically designated for young children for play activities within 100m walking distance of home (60 m straight line distance);
    - (b) Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) - unsupervised play areas (0.04ha (0.04 acres)) \*equipped for children of early school age within 400 m walking distance of home (240 m straight line distance);
    - (c) Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) - unsupervised sites (0.1ha (0.25 acres)) \*servicing a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children within 1000 m walking distance of home (600 m straight line distance).
- (\*Minimum sizes of play areas exclusive of buffer areas - refer to N.P.F.A standards)

Each of these categories of play areas, or combinations of these categories as deemed appropriate, should be provided to meet the requirements of the 0.6 - 0.8 ha (1.5 - 2 acres) standard for Children's Formal Outdoor Playing Space.

6.4.10 Deficiencies in provision of playing space as defined by the National Playing fields Association are recognised within the Local Plan area. The scope for making good these deficiencies is limited however in an urban setting, for a number of reasons;

- (i) in areas which are well built up and lack facilities, there may be little or no land suitable for recreational use;
- (ii) other community needs may compete with recreation for the use of available land;
- (iii) the increasing cost of land acquisition for recreational purposes, laying it out and maintaining it, particularly where there is a substantial alternative development value, has reduced the Council's ability to implement such proposals.

6.4.11 While the Borough as a whole is reasonably well provided with publicly accessible playing space this masks local deficiencies. New facilities should be accessible to the communities they are intended to serve. It is considered that existing outdoor recreation facilities provide a important contribution to the overall level of open space in an area, and should be protected from future development. The Borough Council propose to make the most of opportunities that may occur, and recognise the potential contribution of new development proposals in making good deficiencies. The Borough Council will seek to enter into planning obligations concerning open space provisions, the need for which arises from and is required to serve the development proposed.

#### **Playing Fields**

6.4.12 The Borough Council shares the concern of the National Playing Fields Association's campaign to secure sufficient provision and protection of playing fields, children's playspace and other outdoor sites for sport and physical recreation. This concern includes, particularly those which for a time are under-used can be vulnerable to development pressures and once lost are extremely difficult and expensive to replace.

6.4.13 There are a number of playing fields in the Borough, the majority of which are concentrated in Stafford and Stone. It is recognised that it is important to have sufficient playing fields to meet existing demands and cater for future growth. The loss of such facilities could have an adverse effect on participation in sport and could create further areas of deficiency. As well as meeting a demand for recreation, playing fields can often meet an unmet need for informal play space near housing areas. Any further losses of playing fields will be resisted, unless firm proposals are made for compensatory provision of at least comparable standard and which are accessible to the local community. In such cases, the Council will expect the developer to enter into a Planning Agreement to safeguard future provision.

6.4.14 In determining planning applications, the operational requirements of the user will be a significant factor in the assessment of any proposal involving the loss of private playing fields.

**POLICY RLT2 - LOSS OF PLAYING FIELDS AND SPORTS PITCHES**

*Development resulting in the loss of playing fields and sports pitches will not be permitted, apart from in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that:*

- (1) development will have no detrimental effect upon the standards required by the Borough Council for open space provision and;*
- (2) development will ensure the retention and enhancement of existing open space facilities readily accessible to the site or;*
- (3) development proposals would guarantee the provision of alternative open space facilities, of an equivalent or higher standard, at a location easily accessible to the same local community;*
- (4) In addition where a playing field or sports pitch forms part of the curtilage of another use, proposals involving the development of the land for the operational purposes of the user will be considered in the light of the operational needs of the user.*

**Green Network**

- 6.4.15 As previously noted, in both Stafford and Stone there are extensive open areas that have been defined as the 'Green Network'.
- 6.4.16 These open areas form a network which extend outwards from the town centres of Stafford and Stone and provide uninterrupted pedestrian links and wildlife corridors to the open countryside. The Green network, as defined on the proposals map, is also the location of formal recreation facilities such as playing fields, areas for informal recreation pursuits such as walking and bird watching and the location of sites of high nature conservation value. The Borough Council considers that this valuable recreation and tourist resource should be protected from development during the plan period and beyond. In particular development proposals on the edge of the network may adversely affect the quality of the environment and lead to gradual loss of this facility.
- 6.4.17 The Plan aims to promote the recreational and nature conservation value of the green network. This will be achieved by protecting existing recreation facilities (formal and informal), wildlife habitats and sites of high nature conservation value. In addition efforts will be made to improve the existing public footpaths in the Green Network, particularly where this will enable through access from the town centres to surrounding countryside. In some cases development proposals adjacent to the Green Network will be required, by use of planning agreements, to provide a footpath link to maintain and enhance pedestrian access to the Green Network and beyond the urban area.

### Allotment Gardens

- 6.4.18 Allotment gardens are an important element of open space provision within settlements, especially in older housing areas. The demand for allotments tends to be cyclic so it is necessary to ensure that the supply of allotments remains able to deal with any future increased demand. As valuable open space which provides an important resource for local residents, open space allotment gardens, both public and private, require protection from development of an irreversible nature. A number of allotment gardens are identified on the proposals map as Protected Open Space.
- 6.4.19 The Borough Council is committed to the protection of these sites and will ensure that any losses arising from redevelopment occur only in exceptional circumstances. It would be required that a replacement site be made available in advance of any proposed development that met all the recognised specifications of the existing site, including such factors as size, location, accessibility, soil and drainage characteristics and general environmental quality and suitability.

### ***POLICY RLT3 - ALLOTMENTS GARDENS***

*Applications for the redevelopment of allotment gardens will not be permitted unless an equally acceptable and accessible site can be made available for use prior to any development.*

### 6.5 **Visitor Attractions and Recreational Activities in the Countryside**

- 6.5.1 The countryside provides for a wide range of recreational, leisure and tourist activities and it is important that whilst existing facilities are conserved and enhanced, new facilities and areas of public access are provided. The changing roles of agriculture and forestry, plus changing economic circumstances of rural areas, have led to increasing numbers of farmers and landowners diversifying their activities and others seeking investment opportunities in leisure uses in the countryside. This includes provision of formal sport facilities such as golf courses and other developments including; craft centres, tea shops, working farms, museums, hotels, country clubs, Bed and Breakfast accommodation and self-catering holiday accommodation. This growing development interest is likely to continue throughout the Plan Period and it is important that pressures for development are balanced with protection of those qualities of the environment which attract people to the countryside.
- 6.5.2 The vast majority of visitors to the countryside are not participants in organised sport and recreational activities but visit on an informal basis. These visits include a wide variety of activities ranging from walking to visiting places of historic interest or just a trip to a garden centre, working farm or craft centre with tea shops. Many of these activities are considered in the section entitled 'Tourism'. Although much publicity is given to the growth of new activities and sports, use of the countryside is still dominated by these informal leisure activities. This was reflected in a national survey of countryside recreation

undertaken by the Countryside Commission in 1990 where organised sport had a 9% popularity when compared to other more informal activities.

- 6.5.3 The Borough Council will seek to ensure that informal recreation demands are accommodated in the countryside. To achieve this, measures will include; promotion of the public footpath and waterway network, way marking, co-ordinating with organisations to provide picnic areas and visitor centres in appropriate locations, encouraging the reuse of redundant buildings for small scale tourist activities and directing large scale leisure developments to redundant sites in rural locations. It is recognised, however, that over-use of sites and areas of scenic beauty can lead to problems such as path and vegetation erosion and damage to wildlife. The policies in this plan seek to ensure that these additional recreational facilities can be accommodated in the countryside without damage to the landscape or areas of nature conservation value.
- 6.5.4 Although informal recreation, is the most popular activity, a growing number of people take part in organised sport. Of all visits made to the countryside a significant proportion is made to visitor attractions and sites managed specifically for sport or recreation. The use of these facilities can relieve pressure on more sensitive areas. The Borough Council will also pay close consideration to current Government policy guidance when considering the merits of outdoor sports and recreation proposals in the Green Belt, in recognition of the role that such uses can play in serving the requirements of people living in built up areas nearby and thereby in reducing the need to travel greater distances into the open countryside.
- 6.5.5 The impact of Sport and Recreation activity in the open countryside and in sensitive areas in particular such as those of local, regional or national importance for their natural beauty, landscape diversity and nature conservation interest is, however, a matter of increasing concern. The following policy will apply to all recreational and visitor proposals in the countryside as will other relevant policies particularly those in the Environment and Development chapter.

**POLICY RLT4 RECREATION AND TOURIST FACILITIES IN THE**

**COUNTRY**

*Planning permission for the development of recreation and tourist facilities in the countryside will normally be permitted provided:-*

- (a) the proposal would have no detrimental effect upon surrounding countryside and landscape or land located in an area of nature conservation importance, sites of special scientific interest, or landscape value such as A.O.N.B. or S.L.A.;*
- (b) the proposal would not damage wildlife habitats or areas of ecological importance as identified in the Environment and Development Chapter of the Plan;*
- (c) the type and scale of development is appropriate to the location with particular regard to the character of its surroundings and where possible existing buildings would be retained and utilised within the scheme as identified in the Environment and Development Chapter of the Plan;*
- (d) the proposals would enhance both the quality and appearance of the landscape and retain wherever possible, existing trees, shrubs and hedges;*
- (e) the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses and residents and would satisfactorily meet the requirements of public utility arrangements including foul water drainage;*
- (f) traffic generation, parking and access requirements would not prove to be detrimental to the character of the site and surroundings, and parking facilities are retained within the curtilage of the building; and*
- (g) there would be no unacceptable loss to areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.*

6.5.6 The countryside is an acceptable location for a wide variety of recreational uses particularly where there is little or no requirement for built development, parking or new access arrangements. There has, however, been a growing tendency for recreational activities to be accompanied by proposals for provision of ancillary facilities. Although this can often provide an economic use for redundant buildings, proposals for other uses including; hotels, restaurants, fitness centres, or housing which are not directly related to the recreational activity will be considered separately under the relevant policy.

**POLICY RLT5 ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH RECREATIONAL USES**

*Applications for developments associated with recreational activities in the countryside should be limited to facilities which are clearly necessary and ancillary to the main recreational use.*

### Golf Courses and Driving Ranges

- 6.5.7 Nationally, golf is a 'growth sport' for which there is continued demand. Pressures for agricultural diversification, the apparent reversible nature of golf course development and recreational demand have tended to support the view that golf courses are an appropriate use in the open countryside.
- 6.5.8 By their very nature golf courses are extensive users of open land. In general, the usual features of a golf course are alien to historic or agricultural landscape and other areas of open countryside. One further area of concern is the growing tendency for golf course proposals to incorporate the development of ancillary facilities such as hotels, conference facilities, restaurants, squash and tennis courts, health centres and other sports facilities in addition to the clubhouse. This may occur as part of the original proposal or as a series of planning applications that starts with a golf course and adds built development, sometimes on the basis of need to make the golf course viable.
- 6.5.9 Golf courses can be viable without the need for associated large-scale development, although this is dependant on the scale, location and marketing of the project. Relevant government advice is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 'Sport and Recreation' and states that any significant associated developments, such as hotels, should be considered on their own merits. Therefore proposals for development of facilities which are considered to be additional to the main use (the golf course) will be assessed individually and not as part of an overall scheme.
- 6.5.10 A further area of concern is the trend to wards golf course proposals which affect historic parks and landscapes and schemes which incorporate the reuse of listed building. Golf courses inevitably involve the change in the character of the landscape and may affect either directly or indirectly, valuable wildlife habitats, geological and physiographic features and historic landscapes. Where a golf course development is permitted, the impact of the proposals will need to be minimised through careful design, layout and use of building materials appropriate to the locality.
- 6.5.11 There may be occasions where a golf course proposals can help to restore an ancient park or landscape of historical/archaeological importance and provide an economic use for redundant buildings. However, golf can only aid in the restoration of a landscape and associated buildings if its own impact can be limited. This can be achieved by;
- use of a larger area than would be normal for a golf course development;
  - taking account and making good use of existing landscape features and topography through the incorporation of existing water features and ridges or hollows;

- ensure that the layout and design of the golf course and any new development respects the character and setting of buildings of historic importance;
- identification of the 'historic core' of the site and protection of its setting within the overall development. Where an historic core is defined, the areas outside it should be designed to be sympathetic as possible, and should not disturb the framework of the original designed landscape.

6.5.12 The Borough Council will seek to limit the scale of new building and ensure that the permission is subject to enforceable conditions that secure, where appropriate, restoration of the historic landscape and any associated listed buildings or landscaping proposals are carried out in conjunction with construction of the golf course.

6.5.13 Applications for golf driving ranges raise similar issues, but tend to be of a more intrusive nature, as they necessitate, for example, the use of floodlights. For this reason applications will not be acceptable in the deeper countryside away from existing settlements or an established recreation use such as a Country Club or where they are likely to cause unacceptable levels of nuisance to local residents, and will only be encouraged where such intrusive elements have little effect on the environment.

6.5.14 The following policy will be applied in association with policy RLT4 and other policies within the plan, particularly those in the Environment and Development Chapter, when considering the merits of all proposals for golf and golf related development.

***POLICY RLT6 GOLF RELATED DEVELOPMENT***

*In determining applications for new golf courses, golf driving ranges and related developments, consideration will be given to;*

- (a) *the scale and design of buildings, structures, engineering and land-forming activities, and the extent to which works will have an irreversible impact on the landscape.*
- (b) *implications for the aquatic environment e.g. drainage and water resource.*

**Horse Riding**

6.5.15 The keeping and riding of horses for recreational purposes or as part of commercially based equestrian activities, is increasingly popular in the countryside. To provide for the growing level of participation there is an increasing number of BHS approved riding establishments in the region and proposals are likely to come forward for such uses in rural areas during the plan period. Horse riding activities can sometimes play a significant role in providing

new opportunities for both recreation and employment. Riding establishments can provide suitable use for redundant buildings and provide opportunities for farm diversification.

6.5.16 An essential resource for riding is the bridleway network which consists of paths over which the public has right of way on horseback, or on foot or on a bicycle. The Borough and County Councils have a responsibility to ensure that all rights of way are passable and appropriately signposted and waymarked. It is also necessary to ensure that new development does not infringe upon the existing bridleway network. Development proposals which require the diversion of a bridleway or footpath will be subject to policy RLT7 and may not be permitted if the proposed diversion would be unduly detrimental to the quality of the right of way.

6.5.17 As for all development proposals in the countryside, applications for development involving horses should take particular care to minimise the impact of the proposal on the countryside and amenity of local residents. To this end proposals will be considered with regard to policy RLT4 and other environmental policies in the plan. In some cases this may involve stipulating the siting of buildings and stables. The reuse of redundant agricultural buildings will be encouraged and new buildings, where necessary, should be designed to blend with their surroundings. In some cases the siting of buildings and stables will need to be stipulated. Where applications for equestrian and riding centres are linked to hotel, residential or other accommodation, these elements will be considered under the relevant recreation or housing policies for the location in question.

#### ***POLICY RLT7 - RIGHTS OF WAY AND EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT***

*Applications for the development of new equestrian and riding centres will normally be acceptable where the nature of their operations would have no detrimental effect upon existing rights of way. Proposals should normally be readily accessible to and from the existing bridleway networks.*

6.5.18 This policy applies to equestrian and riding centres which operate to provide a recreational facility. It does not apply to commercial horses breeding and rearing facilities, which would be considered under policies relating to new commercial buildings or uses.

#### **Water Based Activities**

6.5.19 There a number of water based activities which take place in the Borough including; angling, canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, jet skiing and boating. A Regional Strategy Topic Study by the West Midlands Council for Sport and Recreation identifies the River Sow and Penk as an important resource used for angling and canoeing. The canal network also provides a valuable tourist resource which is increasing in usage and consequently pressures for development of related activities such as marinas and mooring points. Policies

in this plan seek to safeguard the existing resource and encourage and promote recreation use of the canals and provide suitable sites within settlements to accommodate future development.

- 6.5.20 The provision of water sports such as jet skiing is concentrated at Trentham Park. It is considered that this is a suitable location for such activities although future development proposals may be subject to conditions which will serve to safeguard the amenities of local residents. Elsewhere in the Borough proposals to use areas of open water for water sports will be considered in light of their potential ecological and environmental impact as well as other policy considerations.

#### ***POLICY RLT8 WATER BASED RECREATION***

*Development of water-based recreation and for public access to bodies of water will normally be permitted where it will not cause material harm to the ecological interests of the area.*

#### **Canals**

- 6.5.21 It is recognised that canals and their towpaths are valuable assets and have great potential for recreation, education, nature conservation and tourism. In addition to providing valuable linear open spaces they also form important footpath links between urban areas and the countryside.
- 6.5.22 The Borough has an opportunity to benefit from canal traffic. There is a valuable heritage of canals throughout the Plan area comprising the Shropshire Union, Staffordshire and Worcestershire and the Trent and Mersey Canals, all of which are designated Conservation Areas. There are mooring facilities throughout the network and boatyards at Norbury, Great Haywood and Stone. These areas can benefit from attracting visitors both from within the Borough and from further afield, and both in the form of general "Boaters" as well as other visitors.
- 6.5.23 Stone has significant potential for development of canal based tourist facilities and it is proposed that the focus of future provision be there. Historically, Stone prospered as an important commercial centre on the canal which accounted for the town's early growth. Although the importance of canal based freight traffic has declined over the years, the canal remains an important asset to Stone. Today, one of the most important wharfs, opposite the Trent Hospital, is still in use for boat repairs. However, some buildings have been removed and others neglected and abandoned. To the south of Stafford Road Bridge, the large brick warehouse, was once a busy and important wharf. This area of Stone has considerable tourist potential for canal based activities which is yet to be fully exploited.
- 6.5.24 In order to promote the greater use of the canal and its setting, encouragement will be given to canal orientated redevelopment/reuse of canalside sites, particularly in Stone and at the Meaford Power Station site.

- 6.5.25 Outside of Stone there may be potential for development of canalside facilities. These should be restricted to within the confines of existing settlement and not result in new development in open countryside or the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Favourable consideration will be given to development proposals which seek to adapt or reuse existing buildings alongside the canal for tourist/canal based facilities. Any canalside development should contribute positively to the function and appearance of the canal and should take account of the need to protect conservation areas and wildlife. Canal sides are often rich in wildlife and care will need to be taken to ensure that any development avoids undue disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- 6.5.26 New canalside development can invariably impose increased pressures upon existing infrastructure and maintenance regimes in the locality. Where appropriate, the Borough Council will seek to negotiate through planning obligations for the continued supply of services, to and maintenance of all canal corridors affected by new development to the required standard.

#### ***POLICY RLT9 CANAL RELATED DEVELOPMENT***

*New canalside facilities such as moorings, service facilities, information points restaurants and heritage attractions will normally be acceptable within or adjacent to settlements and canal junctions.*

*Development proposals will be subject to the restrictions upon development in the Green Belt and proposals should ensure that development is in keeping with policies to protect open countryside, areas of landscape value, the Green Network, conservation Areas, wildlife and nature conservation value of the canals. Such development should not deleteriously impact upon the nature conservation resource of the area.*

#### **Other Sports and Recreation Activities**

- 6.5.27 There is also demand for the less traditional type of sports facilities, such as clay pigeon shooting, motor cycle scrambling, war games and so on. These activities are likely to cause noise, landscape and ecological disturbance. Suitable locations may, however, include degraded land, former mineral sites or set aside farming land which meet all other criteria.
- 6.5.28 Some activities benefit from Permitted Development Rights, for limited periods during any one year. When considering planning applications for such uses the Council will take into account a number of factors including; noise disturbance to local residents, potential impact upon the ecological value of an area and its wildlife, the level of usage likely and scale of activities proposed, the level of traffic generation and capacity of the local road network and visual impact on the landscape. Where a continued use or intensification of an existing use poses a real threat to the amenity of an area and could be damaging to a fragile area,

such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Council will make, with the approval of the Secretary of State a direction under Article 4 of the General Development Order withdrawing the permitted development rights and requiring a specific planning application to be made for a temporary use.

- 6.5.29 While not strictly recreational in nature, occasional markets have a similar or greater impact than many recreational uses that also enjoy permitted development rights. It is therefore considered to subject these to similar constraints and control.

***POLICY RLT10 - RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES CAUSING NOISE OR OTHER NUISANCE***

*In considering specific proposals involving powered vehicles, clay pigeon shooting, combat (war) games, occasional markets and other similar uses likely to result in noise or other nuisance, the Borough Council will take into account the effect of the proposals on the amenity of nearby residents, sites of nature conservation value, wildlife, the character and amenity of the countryside and highway consideration.*

**Areas Sensitive to Visitor Pressure**

- 6.5.30 Within the Borough there are a number of areas of high landscape value and natural beauty. In the south east is the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in the north the Hanchurch Hills both situated within Special Landscape Areas and Green Belt.
- 6.5.31 Cannock Chase and Shugborough Estate are major attractions to people visiting the Borough. Whilst this should be encouraged, visitor pressure and provision of tourist facilities can often have an adverse impact on the environment and landscape. Cannock Chase is designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' in order to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. This involves protecting the flora, fauna and geological as well as landscape features. In addition to its scenic beauty the majority of Cannock Chase within the Borough is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This covers a large, diverse area of semi-natural vegetation comprising the most ecologically valuable part of the former Royal Chase.
- 6.5.32 Although recreation is not an objective of the AONB status, the Chase is extensively used for recreation purposes and there is a growing need to reconcile recreation demands (mainly informal) with conservation. The Borough Council considers that active management and strict planning policies need to be rigorously applied if the historic landscape and wildlife qualities are to be preserved. The Cannock Chase Study, currently under going a review, has identified a concern for development on the edge of the AONB which is incompatible with its designation. It is not only the AONB which needs to be safeguarded but also its setting and environs.

- 6.5.33 In the north of the Borough, the designation of a Special Landscape Area recognises the value of a landscape which does not enjoy other statutory protection for its scenic beauty. In particular the Hanchurch Hills area is considered to be landscape worthy of retention.

***POLICY RLT11 - AREAS OF HIGH SCENIC QUALITY***

*Within the Cannock Chase, Hanchurch Hills and other areas of high scenic quality, applications for tourism and recreational facilities will only be permitted where they are in keeping with policies in this plan which seek to conserve and enhance the landscape and nature conservation value of an area.*

- 6.5.34 Historic Parks and Gardens are also an important visitor attraction in the Borough and make a valuable contribution to the quality of the landscape. A number of these have been included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. These include; Sandon Park, Shugborough Park and Trentham Park, Policies in this plan seek to safeguard these historic landscapes and manage them in a way that will enhance their visitor potential.

**Historic Buildings**

- 6.5.35 There are a number of buildings and structures of architectural and/or historic interest in the countryside which form an important part of the Borough's heritage. The promotion of visitor attractions such as Shugborough Hall and Izaak Walton's Cottage plays an important role in the Council's Tourism Strategy 'Into the 90's'. The value of many historic buildings owes as much to its setting as its individual architectural character. For example, Shugborough Hall is located in an attractive landscaped park which is listed by English Heritage as a Grade I 'Historic Park and Garden'.

- 6.5.36 The need to protect the character of the landscape is as important as preserving the character of a listed building. The Council has powers under the Town and Country Planning Acts to designate Conservation Areas. These are areas which are 'of special character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Policies in this plan seek to protect the character and setting of Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Ancient Monuments and sites of high archaeological value from inappropriate development.

**Footpaths**

- 6.5.37 Enjoying the countryside on foot is a popular pastime of many local residents and visitors to the Borough. Participation ranges from long distance walkers, often as part of events organised by groups such as the Ramblers Association to the more casual walker. The Borough has an extensive network of public footpaths and bridleways which provide comprehensive access to the countryside. The Staffordshire Way passes through the Borough. The protection, maintenance and improvement of these routes and other footpath

links such as the Stafford-Newport greenway and other links within the Green Network are important objectives of this plan. The public footpath network is also complemented by many miles of canal towpaths which have been acquired specifically for development of public access.

- 6.5.38 The Countryside Commission identified the rights of way network as the single most important means by which the public can enjoy the countryside. The Borough and County Councils have responsibility to ensure that all rights of way are passable and appropriately signposted and waymarked. The improvement of access and enjoyment of the countryside will be encouraged through the development and promotion of footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths. Stafford Borough is active in promoting the use of the existing public rights of way network, and has published a number leaflets on circular walks in the Borough.
- 6.5.39 It is important to ensure that the existing rights of way network is not lost to development. The legal means exists to divert a right of way if development permitted cannot take place unless a diversion is made. In such cases, it is valid to consider the right of way in determining the application and explore ways in which it might be integrated into the scheme in a manner that does not detrimentally effect the security of adjoining properties, the safety of users and that whenever possible, enhances the local environment. Routes should avoid isolated locations away from other activity.
- 6.5.40 It will be desirable where appropriate, to re-route rights of way through areas of open space and ensure that the accessibility, direction and setting of any diverted route should be at least as attractive as the route to be diverted.
- 6.5.41 A comprehensive review will be carried out of the strategic footpath network in the Borough with a view to providing extensions to complete the missing links and join up with footpath networks outside the Borough. In Stafford and Stone the Green Network provides pedestrian links to the countryside. Where appropriate development proposals will be required to provide adequate pedestrian access to the Green Network.

***POLICY RLT12 DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY***

*Where a proposed development requires the diversion of a public right of way, adequate alternative provision will be required to maintain the existing right of way. Planning permission may be refused if the required diversion would be unduly detrimental to the quality or convenience of the right of way.*

**Tourism and Other Visitor Facilities and Attractions**

- 6.5.42 The Borough Council recognises the important role which tourism plays in attracting economic investment to the Borough and providing local income and employment. Tourism covers a wide variety of activities and impinges on many

different types of location, both urban and rural. Trends in tourism are constantly changing as new types of activity, new attractions and new destinations become popular. There is a danger, however, that inappropriate development could destroy the very qualities which serve to attract people to the Borough. The objective for tourism is therefore to achieve a sympathetic balance between tourist development and conservation. Tourism developments that are unsympathetic and out of scale with their surroundings will not be permitted. The Borough Council will encourage the improvement of existing visitor/tourist attractions.

6.5.43 The need to conserve the natural landscape and heritage of the Borough must be balanced with enabling the provision of appropriate visitor facilities. For example, a visit to a stately home or working farm will often involve some element of spending, whether it be in the main visitor attraction or ancillary facilities. Proposals for restaurants, tea shops, craft centres, garden centres, workshops and museums will often accompany the growth of a tourist attraction. This additional development can contribute spin-offs in terms of economic benefits and job creation. However, a simple change of use may result in damage to the environment and the proliferation of other activities normally unacceptable in a particular locality, for example, large parking areas and sales areas leading to the construction of new buildings.

6.5.44 The Borough Council's Tourism Strategy 'Into the 90's' sets out the context for tourism in the area. The overall strategy identifies a number of short and long term measures which are considered necessary to promote the Borough as a tourist destination. These include:-

- improved marketing of the Borough locally and regionally;
- environmental improvements, particularly an upgrading of Stafford Town Centre;
- recognising the opportunity to promote Stone as a canal centre and seeing the canal network, throughout the Borough, as a focus for tourism;
- improvement and promotion of heritage facilities in the Borough such as Stafford Castle and Izaak Walton's Cottage;
- expanding the provision of visitor accommodation by volume, quality and throughout the area;
- infrastructure improvements;
- development of a rural tourism strategy.

6.5.45 Stafford Borough has much to offer visitors and the Borough Council intends to promote the area's many attractions to ensure that the potential for tourism is fully realised. Visitor facilities and attractions in the Borough range from

buildings of architectural or historical interest and sites of high archaeological value to areas of scenic beauty, sites of nature conservation value, wildlife and waterways based on the canal network. The diversity and quality of facilities provided must be encouraged and enhanced.

- 6.5.46 The Borough Council will encourage the provision of tourist/ visitor facilities where it involves the reuse of redundant buildings subject to other considerations such as traffic generation. In rural areas many farm buildings are under-utilised or redundant by virtue of changes in agricultural methods. Some may be suitable for conversion to provide visitor facilities in the form of craft workshops, museums and so on.
- 6.5.47 In granting permission for conversions to visitor facilities, the Borough Council will seek to restrict any significant expansion of such activity especially where it will result in unacceptable levels of traffic generation and loss of amenity to local residents.
- 6.5.48 Proposals for new tourist attractions, particularly those based on existing themes/uses, will be encouraged. This would include for example; working farms, museums, craft centres and other facilities encompassed by the "heritage theme". Any large scale tourism development in rural areas will be directed towards derelict or underused sites such as Meaford Power station or Cold Meece.
- 6.5.49 Development of new tourist activities will be judged essentially upon their effect on the environment. Access and location are obviously important criteria, especially with uses which generate heavy traffic (both in terms of high flows and heavy lorries), and with regard to the availability of public modes of transport to the user.

#### ***POLICY RLT13 DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS***

*Planning permission will normally be given for the development of new tourist/visitor attractions which are related to the rural, industrial, cultural, historic, architectural and wildlife heritage of the Borough and provided that the proposals do not conflict with other policies in this plan, particularly those concerning environmental and landscape conservation.*

#### **6.6 The Provision of Tourist and Visitor Accommodation**

- 6.6.1 The Borough Council's Tourism Strategy 'Into the 90's' recognises that existing accommodation is insufficient in terms of quantity and quality to deal with the emerging tourist demand. A variety of accommodation is required, from high quality hotel development, to budget priced bed and breakfast or farmhouse accommodation.
- 6.6.2 There is demand also for self-catering accommodation, embracing holiday cottages, tent and touring caravan sites. There is scope for more accommodation

of this kind, appropriately designed and sensitively sited at suitable locations in those parts of the Borough with tourism potential. Suitable occupancy conditions will be applied to restrict use to tourist purposes.

- 6.6.3 Additional visitor accommodation can be provided in a number of ways including; new development, improvement of existing facilities through appropriately designed extensions, conversion of existing dwellings in rural areas or the conversion of redundant buildings (for example farm buildings), new touring caravan and camping sites and holiday chalet and static caravan sites.

#### **New Development: Hotels and Guest Houses in Urban Areas**

- 6.6.4 The County Structure Plan encourages the provision of major hotel development, budget hotel accommodation and motels in urban areas. In accordance with this policy, provision of visitor accommodation resulting in new development should be limited to existing urban areas. Major new hotels such as those with conference facilities, will be favoured within the main urban areas, in particular near or within the town centres of Stafford and Stone.
- 6.6.5 Outside existing settlements there will be strict control over the construction of new buildings for serviced or self-catering accommodation. The visual impact and intrusive nature of such development on the landscape is normally much greater than conversion of existing buildings.
- 6.6.6 Whatever the type of new accommodation or its location, it should fit well within its surroundings, having regard to siting, scale, design, materials and landscaping and should be in harmony with the local environment (taking account of noise, traffic and parking in the vicinity). In particular new hotels and motels can be visually prominent and good landscaping is important.

**POLICY RLT14 - HOTELS AND GUEST HOUSES**

*Within the main urban areas of Stafford or Stone or within the Residential Development Boundaries of Selected Settlements and subject to other policy considerations, the development of hotels and guest houses will be encouraged providing that:-*

- (a) the site will be served by a satisfactory access to the highway network;*
- (b) the proposal complies with the Council's Parking Standards;*
- (c) the development will not cause additional traffic to be introduced into residential or other sensitive areas or create or aggravate existing traffic problems;*
- (d) the development will not cause a nuisance likely to give rise to complaints about noise, particularly at unsociable hours;*
- (e) the design, scale and landscaping of the proposed development will be in keeping with its surroundings.*

**Extensions to existing Hotels, Guest Houses and other serviced accommodation in all areas.**

6.6.7

These should be in keeping with the scale and character of the original building and its location particularly where the proposed extension is to a listed building or within a special area of control such as The Green Belt, conservation areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or Special Landscape area. It is important that proposals for the extension of existing premises will be able to provide adequate car parking.

**POLICY RLT15 - EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING VISITOR ACCOMMODATION**

*Proposals for extensions to existing hotels, guesthouses and other serviced accommodation for tourists will normally be allowed, provided that all of the following criteria are met:-*

- (a) the building is conveniently located in relation to the surrounding road network, and safe access can be obtained;*
- (b) the residential amenities of neighbouring areas are safeguarded;*
- (c) the proposed development is in keeping with the scale, character, design of the existing buildings and the locality;*
- (d) parking facilities commensurate with the proposed use are provided within the curtilage of the building; and*
- (e) in the case of listed buildings, Policies E & D23, E & D24 and E & D25 are applied where applicable.*

**Conversion of existing buildings in rural areas**

- 6.6.8 In general the conversion of existing dwellings and redundant buildings, is preferable to new construction in the countryside as this usually results in a less obtrusive appearance in sympathy with the existing character of an area and can sometimes provide an economic use for an otherwise redundant building.
- 6.6.9 With the changing economic conditions in agriculture farmers are increasingly seeking ways to diversify and supplement their income. Farm diversification schemes are encouraged by central government and farm establishments often lend themselves well to the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation. There are also an increasing number of agricultural buildings which have become redundant for their previous use and these may often be particularly suited to conversion for self-catering holiday accommodation.
- 6.6.10 In addition to farm diversification schemes there are often historic buildings which may be suitable for conversion to serviced accommodation such as to a Country House Hotel. In some cases such a use will prevent the building from falling into neglect and will provide a viable economic use. In considering proposals to convert a listed building for accommodation purposes, the preservation of the architectural or historic character of the building and its setting will be of paramount importance.
- 6.6.11 Aside from historic and agricultural buildings, there are many other redundant or semi-obsolete buildings - such as closed mills, warehouses or railway stations - that can lend themselves well to adaptation, conversion and modernisation as Country House Hotels, other hotels, public houses, motels or restaurants. To

convert such buildings to compatible use can bring life back to an otherwise wasted asset thus conserving a useful and often attractive building, improving a neglected site and helping the local economy. Such schemes should not include a significant element of new development, particularly schemes in open countryside.

6.6.12 Conversions of existing dwellings or redundant buildings to serviced accommodation will usually result in extra activity at a site and care must be taken to ensure that exiting nearby residents or road-users are not unduly adversely affected.

6.6.13 The conversion of existing buildings to provide hotels, guest houses, other serviced accommodation or self-catering/ timeshare accommodation will be considered with regard to policy RLT4 and E & D17 and other policies appropriate to the nature of the building and its location and other relevant circumstances.

#### **New Touring and Camping Sites**

6.6.14 It is recognised that an increasing number of people enjoy taking their holidays by staying in caravans or by camping and therefore it is anticipated that demand for suitable sites is likely to grow during the plan period. The policies in this plan seek to ensure that any new sites are well located as caravans and associated vehicles can be visually intrusive unless well screened. Open sites should be avoided as should areas of high landscape value or environmental quality, such as near a site of nature conservation importance. Development of this kind in areas of Green Belt would only be permitted in very special circumstances. The location of any new site is also important in order that danger or inconvenience is not caused to other users. Therefore, accesses to sites require good visibility splays and sites should be convenient for the main road network, especially in the case of touring caravans. Furthermore, the location of a site close to a town or village can be more likely to result in benefits to local shop keepers and traders from the visitors. The following policy will be applied in association with policies RLT4, E & D10 and other policies within the plan when considering the merits of proposals of this nature.

#### **POLICY RLT16 - TOURING CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES**

*Planning permission for touring caravans and camping sites will only be granted where:-*

- (a) the site is well screened from all directions; and*
- (b) the development would not when in operation present an unacceptable burden upon the local road network.*

### **Holiday Chalet and Static Caravan sites**

- 6.6.15 Sites for chalets or static caravans will be controlled more strictly than those for touring caravans because they are by their nature more permanent and larger. The potential visual impact is therefore significantly more and they are liable to detract from the appearance of rural surroundings. Development in the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other areas of high landscape value or environmental quality will therefore only be permitted in very special circumstances. Outside of these areas, proposals will have to demonstrate special justification and will be very carefully controlled in terms of design, layout and location.
- 6.6.16 The following policy will be applied in association with policies RLT4, E & D10 and other policies within the plan which deal with development in the Green Belt, the AONB and other sensitive areas.

### **POLICY RLT17 - HOLIDAY CHALETS AND STATIC CARAVANS**

*The development of a site for holiday chalets and static caravans will not normally be allowed unless:-*

- (a) the site is unobtrusive and can be well screened and landscaped to a high quality;*
- (b) the location of the site would place no unacceptable burden on the local road network;*
- (c) the site is closely related to a settlement or existing tourism attraction where a range of facilities are available; and*
- (d) the proposed development would not bring about the undue concentration of sites in any one locality.*

### **POLICY RLT18 - SELF CATERING HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION**

*Where planning permission is given for self-catering accommodation, conditions will be applied to limit its use to short stay holiday purposes, explicitly excluding any other uses in Class C3.*

### **Visitor Services**

- 6.6.17 To ensure that Stafford Borough attracts visitors, it is important that adequate visitor services are provided to assist in increasing the comfort and well being of the visitor and enhancing the attraction of the Borough as a tourist destination.
- 6.6.18 The Borough Council will encourage, where appropriate, the provision of services for the use of visitors to the Borough, including signposting of tourist attractions and services, public conveniences, car parking, information and interpretation facilities.

6.7 **Recreation, Leisure and Tourism Proposals**

6.7.1 ***Proposal T1 - Trent and Mersey Canal Policy Area, Stone***

*It is proposed that the area shown on the Stone Area Inset Map as T1, be identified as an area for canal related development.*

**Acceptable uses**

6.7.2 Applications for small scale employment, craft, residential, retail, tourist uses will normally be acceptable providing that where appropriate existing buildings are retained/reused and integrated within any new development and any other relevant policy considerations can be satisfied.

**Location**

6.7.3 This area is located near Stone town centre and includes the Trent and Mersey Canal and adjacent land. The area is bounded to the west by the washlands, to the east by Crown Street and Newcastle Street (B5207), to the south by Stafford Street (A520) and to the north by housing.

**Background and Description**

6.7.4 The Trent and Mersey Canal is situated on the western edge of Stone town centre. The construction of the Canal, completed in 1777, stimulated a substantial growth of the town during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The canal is of historical importance and makes a significant contribution to the overall character of Stone. The canal's value is not only aesthetic, it provides a valuable tourism/recreation resource as well as a location for employment uses. Although some improvements have taken place, such as provision of footpaths, the full potential of this area is yet to be realised.

6.7.5 This area is diverse in character with a range of uses including car parking, employment uses, a bowling green, garden centre, caravan storage and some vacant land. There are a number of listed buildings within this general area including Trent Hospital and some buildings associated with the boat-builders yard. Additionally, the area contains a number of industrial archaeology sites including the canal itself and its associated locks and bridges. The area lies largely within Stone's Conservation Area and includes part of the "Green Network".

6.7.6 Development proposals should focus on the northern sector of this policy area. The Bowling Green which lies in the middle should be retained as should the open aspect of the southern sector with its views across the Canal to the washlands area.

6.7.7 Given the location of this area and its tourism/recreation potential, any development should include high quality landscaping. Sensitive landscaping

could improve the environmental quality of this area and setting of the listed buildings. Development proposals could include some element of hard landscaping which could enhance the tourism/recreation potential of the area.

- 6.7.8 The main constraint to regeneration of activity in this area is the limited amount of land available for development. The area is physically constrained by the canal to the west and Crown Street/Newcastle Street to the east. There are also difficulties providing adequate access and additional car parking. Adequate provision should be made for pedestrian linkages to the town centre. Given the diversity of uses and landowners in the area, land assembly may be a constraint to any comprehensive redevelopment scheme.

#### **Water Supply and Drainage**

- 6.7.9 Severn Trent Water have stated that a water supply can be made available to this area. The Scotch Brook crosses this site in culvert to the south-east corner and development should not be permitted over or within 3 metres of the edge of this culvert.
- 6.7.10 Developers should ensure that capacity is available in the public foul sewage system for both foul and trade effluent discharges. Several public sewers cross this area and there should be no building over these sewers.

#### **Highways and Access**

- 6.7.11 Primary vehicular access is currently from Crown Street. The area under consideration is a narrow strip of land between the canal and Crown Street. Access into the area is difficult and limited. The car parking facilities at the canalside should be retained.

#### **Hotel Development at Creswell**

- 6.7.12 *Proposal T2: Hotel Development: Land at Creswell, Stafford*

*Land shown as T2 on the Proposals Map is allocated for hotel development.*

- 6.7.13 Land adjacent to Junction 14 of the M6 at Creswell near Stafford has been the subject of unimplemented consents for the development of a hotel. This Plan now allocates that land for development of the approved hotel project.

#### **6.8 The Trentham Gardens Estate**

- 6.8.1 In addition to the specific land use proposals T1 and T2, this Plan also defines an area at the Trentham Garden Estate which is expected to be the subject of major recreation, tourism and leisure development proposals. The Plan provides for such schemes through Policies RLT 19 and RLT 20.

- 6.8.2 The Trentham Gardens Estate is of “major heritage” significance extending to about 320 hectares. Within it are areas of woodland, gardens, various listed buildings associated with the former Hall, a conference centre and a range of leisure and recreation facilities.
- 6.8.3 The whole estate is an historic landscape being a grade II\* Park in English Heritage’s Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The estate also contains Sites of Special Scientific Interest at Kings and Hargreaves Woods.
- 6.8.4 The estate is a significant leisure resource within the Borough and sub-region and over the last 50 years has developed a wide variety of visitor uses associated with recreation, leisure, conference, exhibition, banqueting and entertainment. The site is not currently meeting its full recreational potential and requires upgrading and improvement. It has potential for a wide range of leisure uses and expansion of its historic buildings, gardens and landscape.
- 6.8.5 Policies RLT19 and RLT20 below set out the basic principles and criteria by which planning applications for The Trentham Gardens Estate will be assessed.
- 6.8.6 It is considered that development proposals within the range of uses identified in policies RLT19 and RLT 20 should form part of a comprehensive development strategy which also addresses the issues of conservation of the historic built and natural environment. This process would be assisted by the production of a planning brief which builds upon the parameters set out in the above policies.

**POLICY RLT19 - ACCOMMODATING NEW DEVELOPMENT AT TRENTHAM GARDEN ESTATE**

*The Trentham Gardens Estate as defined on the Inset Proposals map is identified as a recreation, leisure, tourism, and visitor attraction.*

*All applications for development at the site will be assessed against the following criteria:*

- (i) Conservation of the historic buildings, gardens and landscape.*
- (ii) Conservation of the natural environment including flora and fauna.*
- (iii) The enhancement of recreation/leisure facilities within the district/region.*
- (iv) Impact on the highway network.*
- (v) Effect on the purposes and objectives of Green Belt policy.*
- (vi) The scale of economic benefits to the district.*
- (vii) Consistency with other policies in the plan.*

*In considering applications for development the Local Planning Authority will carry out an assessment against the above criteria and expect a balance of advantage to be demonstrated.*

**POLICY RLT20 - APPROPRIATE INFILL USES AT TRENTHAM GARDENS ESTATE**

*Subject to assessment against the criteria set out in Policy RLT19 development and appropriate infilling will be allowed within the northern area of the estate as defined on the Trentham Garden Estate Inset Proposal Map, for the following range of uses:-*

- Outdoor sport and recreation.*
- Indoor leisure and entertainment facilities.*
- Hotel-Conference Centre.*
- Exhibition facilities.*
- Heritage/recreation/craft related retailing.*
- Garden Centre.*
- Visitor facilities.*