Green Infrastructure, Open spaces, sport and recreation
[Section 6.7 of Core Strategy]
As proposed to be revised by NFDC in response to Hearings’ Questions

2.24 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy is the principal policy relating to open spaces, sport and recreation.

2.25 There are close links between the proposals for open space, sport and recreation and the policies relating to biodiversity and nature conservation (Core Strategy Policy CS3) healthy communities (Core Strategy Policy CS5) and to the proposals for footpaths and cycleways (as set out in Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this Plan).

2.26 The provision of additional public open space and green infrastructure also has a significant role in mitigating the recreational impacts of new residential development on internationally designated nature conservation sites (in accordance with the Habitats Regulations).

2.26a Some strategic green infrastructure issues cross local authority areas. The Council will work with other local authorities to secure the delivery of appropriate strategic GI projects.

2.27 This Plan recognises the important contribution that the green spaces and features (green infrastructure) makes to the quality of life in the towns and villages, and the impact this can have on health and well-being.

2.28a Policies in this Plan:

- protect existing areas of public and private open space – both informal (amenity) and formal (sports pitches) (See Policy DM7 ); and
- provide a framework for the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy, which amongst a number of purposes, will assist in the delivery of measures to mitigate the recreational impacts of residential development on internationally important nature conservation sites.(See Policy DM9).

2.28b Important landscape features are also protected by saved policy DW-E12 (protection of landscape features) from the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration and the Landscape Feature designations of that Plan identified on the Proposals/Policies Maps. There will be an early review of landscape feature designations.

2.29 In addition, policies set out in Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this Plan, give detailed proposals for the provision of new public open spaces and green infrastructure. Some are set out as site specific proposals, others are required as part of development proposals made in this Plan.

Policy DM7: Protection of public open space, private recreation land and school playing fields

Development will not be permitted on public open spaces, private recreation land/ playing fields /sports grounds and school playing fields, as shown on the Proposals Map, or on open space provided as a requirement of a development scheme. In
appropriate circumstances, small scale development of ancillary facilities to enhance the recreational use of these areas may be permitted. An exception to this policy may be made where the loss of existing open space (public open spaces, private recreation land, playing fields, sports grounds and school playing fields) resulting from a proposed development will be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, in a suitable location.

2.31 Policy DM7 and saved policy DW-E12 from the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration relate to specific ‘green features’ which make a significant contribution to the green infrastructure within the towns and villages. These designations alone can appear as isolated areas on the Proposals/Policies Maps. However they are usually part of a wider network of green areas and open spaces (collectively referred to as green infrastructure) within towns and villages which support leisure and recreation activities, wildlife and biodiversity and add to the wider quality of life of those living in built-up areas. The wider green infrastructure network in each town and village is an important part of the character of an area and its local distinctiveness, and will be identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy which will be prepared as a Supplementary Planning Document to this Plan.

2.34 Policy DM9 provides the overall framework for the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be a key document for identifying neighbourhood level projects to enhance green infrastructure within the towns and villages, which will provide recreational and biodiversity benefits and helping to mitigate the recreational impacts of residential development on internationally important nature conservation sites. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will also identify green infrastructure features (not already identified in the Local Plan) which contribute to the local networks of green infrastructure by providing important connecting linkages. Some of these features have already been identified in the adopted Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Documents.

2.35 Detailed information about projects to improve and enhance open space and the green infrastructure network will be included in the Green Infrastructure Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

Policy DM9: Green Infrastructure

Proposals which create, maintain and enhance a network of green infrastructure will be supported, particularly where they provide recreational opportunities which will contribute towards the mitigation of recreational impacts of proposed development on internationally important nature conservation sites.

Development proposals should maintain, and where possible enhance, the integrity of the network of green infrastructure.

In particular development proposals should seek to:
(i) enhance ‘green links’ between green spaces within the settlements and between the built up area and the countryside, without increasing recreational pressures on internationally protected nature conservation sites;
(ii) maintain green buffers between development and major transport routes;
(iii) maintain and enhance the character of tree lined streets and streets with spacious verges;
(iv) make a feature of watercourses and their banks, and avoid putting a
watercourse into a culvert.

In designing new development, developers should minimise the loss of existing ‘green’ features on a site and maximise the potential to maintain or create wildlife corridors through a site, even where the loss of some trees and hedgerows is unavoidable.

A Green Infrastructure Strategy Supplementary Planning Document will be prepared which will set out a strategy for enhancing green infrastructure in and adjoining the towns and villages. It will include:

- identification of the green infrastructure linkage features (as set out in above) which contribute to the network of green infrastructure and which have an important role in providing connectivity between other green infrastructure identified in the Local Plan; and

- identification of neighbourhood level projects which will assist in relieving recreational pressures on internationally important nature conservation sites.

2.36 The Council will work with others, including nature conservation organisations, in preparing the Green Infrastructure Strategy, to ensure that appropriate projects are identified to assist in the delivery of mitigation measures to address recreational impacts on internationally important nature conservation sites.

2.37 The features referred to in parts (ii) (iii) and (iv) of policy DM9, will be identified through the Green Infrastructure Strategy. ‘Green buffers’ between development and major transport routes, tree lined streets, spacious verges, and watercourses all provide connecting elements of green infrastructure within a settlement, and have amenity and biodiversity value.