

SECTION 6

Recreation and Leisure

6.0. RECREATION AND LEISURE

6.1. INTRODUCTION

- 6.1.1. In view of increasing personal incomes, the reduction in weekly working hours and more annual paid holidays; the pressure on recreation and leisure facilities is increasing. Recreation and leisure activities cover a wide spectrum varying from home based interests including gardening, house improvement and many indoor crafts and hobbies to active physical recreation outside the home.
- 6.1.2. The purpose of this part of the Report is to examine the provision of recreational facilities in the Local Plan area in terms of land and buildings and to identify any deficiencies and also requirements for future growth of the town.

6.2 PRESENT POLICIES

- 6.2.1. Facilities should be examined against the background of the relevant approved planning policies of the Herefordshire Structure Plan and those as proposed in the Written Statement of the new Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan. The general policies contained in the new Structure Plan are:-

POLICY R.1

"TO IMPROVE AND ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE WHILST MINIMISING THE IMPACT ON THE COUNTRYSIDE. TO ACHIEVE THIS THE COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:-

- (I) SEEK THE ADVICE OF A WIDE RANGE OF BODIES REPRESENTING COUNTRYSIDE INTERESTS BY MEANS OF A STANDING COUNTRYSIDE ADVISORY PANEL;
- (II) DEVELOP PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION SERVICES, ERECT SIGNPOSTS TO PROMOTE RECREATION AND PROTECT AGRICULTURE, AND ENCOURAGE PUBLIC INTEREST AND EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE;
- (III) TAKE ACCOUNT OF NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROVISION OF RECREATION FACILITIES;
- (IV) UNDERTAKE STUDIES OF PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE AREAS; AND
- (V) MONITOR THE USE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AND CHANGES IN RECREATIONAL DEMANDS BY CONTINUING CLOSE LIAISON AND CO-OPERATION WITH NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS CONCERNED WITH RECREATION."

Further policies on more specific aspects of recreation (i.e. camping, water recreation, informal recreation etc.), are also proposed in the new Structure Plan and will need to be observed in relation with policies contained in this Local Plan.

- 6.2.2. The new Structure Plan refers to the redirection of demand for recreation and leisure from urban areas to rural areas in view of social and economic changes. Nevertheless Policies R28 and R29 encourage the provision of open space and ancillary facilities in appropriate locations together with the joint planning and dual use of facilities.

6.2.3. Policies R19 to R24 deal with water recreation and in particular Policy R24 states:-

"TO RECONCILE THE COMPETING DEMANDS ON THE USE OF WATER AND WATERWAYS, IF NECESSARY, AND WHERE POSSIBLE, BY THE IMPOSITION OF CONTROLS."

6.3. PLAYING FIELDS, PLAY AREAS AND OTHER OPEN SPACE

AREA NO.	DESCRIPTION/ LOCATION	FACILITIES	PUBLIC/ PRIVATE	AREA	
				ACRES	HECTARES
1	South Herefordshire Lawn Tennis Club off Wilton Road	3 lawn tennis courts 2 hard courts	Private	3.18	1.29
2	Wilton Road Sports Centre, off Wilton Road	3 football pitches 1 Rugby pitch 1 cricket pitch	Private	16.66	6.74
3	Talbots Meadow, off Wilton Road	1 football pitch	Public	5.00	2.02
4	Crossfields, off Old Maids Walk	1 putting green (12 hole) 4 hard tennis courts	Public	2.25	0.91
5	Ross-on-Wye Bowling Club, off Old Maids Walk	1 green	Private	1.00	0.41

TABLE 15 PLAYING FIELDS AND SPORTS GROUNDS TOTAL 28.09 11.37

Source:- South Herefordshire District Council

6.3.1. The National Playing Fields Association recommended that the overall provision of open space should be in the order of 7 acres per 1,000 population to consist of 6 acres of playing field and one acre of other public open space. The recommendation was most recently confirmed in 1955 and it has been suggested that these standards were based upon some rather optimistic interpretations of surveys carried out prior to World War II. It is now considered that fewer adults are interested in playing organised team games. Indeed, with a more affluent society, a much wider variety of pursuits and interests are now open to people to spend their leisure time.

6.3.2. More recently, a publication prepared by the Sports Council entitled 'Planning for Sport' suggests that between 2.5 acres and 4 acres of playing fields might be required per 1,000 population. The Report stressed that these figures should not be applied as an absolute standard but that the actual amount depended on local requirements and on the degree of multi-use of sports areas e.g. the use of cricket grounds for football or rugby out of season.

- 6.3.3. Although there may be a reduced requirement for playing fields, there nevertheless remains a need to provide a reasonable level of open space for all forms of outdoor recreation. Even though Ross-on-Wye is a small market town set in open countryside, open space provision must be adequate as the surrounding well farmed agricultural land is not, in the main available for recreation and must be protected.
- 6.3.4. Playing fields
- Plan 7 shows the location of existing playing fields, outdoor sports facilities and other open space. Playing fields are principally in the Talbots Meadow and Crossfields Areas and Table 15 shows the acreages and range of facilities provided.
- 6.3.5. In total, the area of playing fields amounts to 28 acres or just under 3.4 acres per 1,000 population which compares favourably with the figures indicated by the Sports Council in 'Planning for Sport'. This document further suggest that provision of about 1.25 acres per 1,000 population should be allocated for rugby, football and cricket or about 10.5 acres for a town of Ross-on-Wye's present size. In fact there are over 21 acres of playing fields for these activities.
- 6.3.6. Similarly, in the case of tennis, the Report suggests that on a pro rata basis, there should be one court per 1,400 population, or a total of 6 courts for the town as a whole whereas there are a total of 14 courts (8 lawn and 6 hard courts), no doubt reflecting the popularity of this sport in Ross.
- 6.3.7. In the case of bowling greens, one green per 6,000 population is advocated, thus the Ross-on-Wye Bowling Club green (six rinks) should be adequate for the town's present needs.
- 6.3.8. Consultation with the Secretary of the Ross-on-Wye District Sports Advisory Council has not indicated any great need for additional outdoor facilities other than the possible dual use of the John Kyrle High School playing fields and athletic track. In respect of the latter, there is no such provision for public or private use in the town and this suggestion would merit investigation especially in view of Structure Plan Policy 8.7 vi) and Review Policy R29. One further outdoor development suggested by the Sports Advisory Council was for the development of a sports area in the Lincoln Hill, Archenfield and Roman Way area however, it is doubtful if any of the existing open spaces would be suitable in view of their limited size and/or sloping form.
- 6.3.9. Golf course
- Although there is no course immediately adjoining the town, there is a well established 18 hole Golf Course at Jays Green, Gorsley, approximately five miles to the east of the town and conveniently reached by the M50 Motorway.
- 6.3.10. Any over subscription to this Club might well be overcome when the proposed golf course is completed at Belmont near Hereford. There is also an 18 hole golf course at Monmouth, some 10 miles west of Ross via the A40 Dual Carriageway.

6.3.11. Play areas and other open space

In addition to playing fields, there should be adequate open space for informal recreation which can conveniently be divided between the needs of the various age groups of the townspeople and indeed visitors. For the purposes of this Report, the groups have been considered as follows: under fives, five to elevens, eleven plus and finally adult informal recreation.

AREA NO.	LOCATION	TYPE	FACILITIES	AREA	
				ACRES	HECTARES
6	Roman Way/Archenfield Road	Local open space	None	2.27	0.92
7	Off Redwood Close	" "	"	1.42	0.57
8	Corinium Road	" "	"	3.20	1.29
9	Falaise Close	" "	"	0.68	0.28
10	Duxmere Drive	" "	"	0.73	0.29
11	Dean Hill Park, Sussex Avenue	Play area	Play equipment	0.20	0.08
12	Tudorville playground	" "	"	0.48	0.19
13	Porter Memorial Playground	" "	"	0.25	0.12
14	Oaklands - Springfield	" "	None	0.20	0.08
15	Berryfield Place - Brampton Road	" "	"	0.17	0.07
16	Off Mayhill Road	" "	"	0.40	0.16
17	Fourth Avenue, Greytrees	" "	"	0.17	0.07
18	Sixth Avenue, Greytrees	" "	"	0.15	0.06
19	Rope Walk Meadow	" "	Play equipment	0.20	0.08
TOTAL				10.52	4.26

TABLE 16 PLAY AREAS AND OPEN SPACE

6.3.12 a) Under fives - Facilities for this group should be provided within sight of home on small safe landscaped areas or preferably in back gardens. There are few housing areas in the town where this need cannot be met in back gardens particularly as there are only a small proportion of flats and generally these are not occupied by families with small children. In any event, the majority of flats have suitable surrounding open space where small children could play within sight of home. In the case of some of the new housing development at Archenfield, the small gardens are augmented by incidental open spaces, very often situated at the end of culs-de-sac and are suitable for this age group.

- 6.3.13. b) Five to elevens - The age group ideally require space larger than the average modern private garden where they can play informal games and preferably should have some play equipment such as slides, swings and climbing apparatus. These areas should ideally be no less than 0.25 acres (1,000 square metres) in area and should be within five minutes walking distance of home (about quarter of a mile), preferably away from trafficked areas and the journey from home should not involve crossing any major or heavily trafficked roads. Plan 7 shows the location of play areas and other local open spaces and it is considered that sites 6 to 19 are suitable to serve this age group. Table 16 lists the individual sites, their size and any play facilities. Based on the accessibility criteria described above, it is apparent that only the older residential areas on the eastern side of the town are poorly served.
- 6.3.14. It can be seen that most play areas have been or are to be provided as an integral part of recent developments at Archenfield, Springfield and Greytree although additional facilities have been provided recently at the A. M. Porter Memorial Playground in Greytree Road and at Dean Hill Park in Sussex Avenue.
- 6.3.15. Ideally, play grounds for this age group should have some play or adventure equipment. Only four of the existing sites are so equipped but it is unlikely that the situation can be improved in the present economic climate.
- 6.3.16. Whilst a play area has been indicated between Mayhill Road and Brampton Road. (Area No. 16), this is not an officially recognised facility and ultimately may be required for some additional Council development.
- 6.3.17. c) Over elevens - The principal requirements for this group, are reasonably large areas for ad hoc games and other activities. A minimum size of about one acre is desirable to allow sufficient space for games such as cricket and football and should preferably be within a 10 minute walking distance of home (about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile). Recent open spaces provided in the Archenfield area (Area Nos. 6 to 10 - Table 16) are mostly of sufficient size to cater for the needs of this age group as well as meeting the needs of the five to eleven year olds. The riverside amenity areas (see Table 17) are also suitable to serve this age group. The areas that are not well served bear a relationship to the previous group but are not quite so extensive.
- 6.3.18. d) Adult informal recreation - Whilst the playing fields and outdoor sports facilities referred to in paragraph 6.2.4. et seq. generally meet the needs for active pursuits there is still a requirement for local open space and town parks for more passive adult recreation. Table 17 shows that there are fairly extensive areas of open space and parkland principally along the banks of the River Wye suitable for this age group.
- 6.3.19. The riverside open space is a particularly attractive feature of Ross-on-Wye and although the busy A40 Trunk Road (Wilton Road) bisects part of this open space system, there are pedestrian links under the road via a number of flood arches.
- 6.3.20. Many improvements have been made to this riverside open space system by the former Urban District Council and the South Herefordshire District Council including raising and levelling of Rope Walk Meadow during the construction of the M50 Motorway together with many improvements in the Wilton Road/Talbots Meadow area in recent years. In addition to serving the inhabitants of the town, the riverside also provides an important attraction for visitors and tourists.

6.3.21. Reference should also be made to the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean where there are a number of country parks and picnic areas which are readily accessible by car from Ross-on-Wye. For more energetic townspeople, the Wye Valley Walk extends for 34 miles from the Wilton Road Car Park to Chepstow offering opportunities for walks as far as may be desired by the individual.

AREA NO.	DESCRIPTION/LOCATION	AREA	
		ACRES	HECTARES
20	Rope Meadow Walk	6.46	2.62
21	Memorial Gardens off Wye Street	0.38	0.16
22	The Prospect	1.05	0.43
23	Caroline Symonds Gardens	3.74	1.51
24	Long Acres	7.68	3.10
25	Talbots Meadow	10.03	4.06
26	Dean Hill Park, Sussex Avenue	0.91	0.37
27	Woodland area below John Kyrle's Walk	2.58	1.04
28	Wilton Road Car Park Picnic area and pond	0.73	0.29
TOTAL		33.56	13.58

TABLE 17

PARKS AND AMENITY AREAS

6.3.21. Reference should also be made to the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean where there are a number of country parks and picnic areas which are readily accessible by car from Ross-on-Wye. For more energetic townspeople, the Wye Valley Walk extends for 34 miles from the Wilton Road Car Park to Chepstow offering opportunities for walks as far as may be desired by the individual.

6.3.22. Allotments

In many parts of the country there has been a revival in the demand for allotments however, there are only two allotments in use in the Local Plan area. These are at Cawdor Arch Road (1.56 acres) and at Tudorville (1.76 acres). An additional area of land at Cawdor was allocated on the approved Town Map for Ross-on-Wye but is not used for this purpose at the present time perhaps reflecting a local lack of interest.

6.3.23. Overall provision of open space

Ross-on-Wye is now well endowed with open space and playing fields when compared with the overall National Playing Fields Association recommended standard of 7 acres per 1,000 population. Currently, the total provision of 72.37 acres within the Local Plan area (excluding allotments) represents 8.7 acres per 1,000 population.

6.3.24. The principal deficiencies seem to be in the distribution of play areas and local open space along the northern and eastern extremities of the town. Such deficiencies might be redressed in the event of new residential development being proposed on the northern or eastern extremities of the town.

6.3.25. In respect of playing field facilities, it would be desirable to include proposals for the dual use of an outdoor athletics track and sports field at John Kyrles High School. Such schemes might incur financial contributions from a variety of sources in order to provide hard surfaced facilities to satisfy the Education Authority.

6.4. INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

6.4.1. Ross-on-Wye swimming pool - Completed and currently administered by the South Herefordshire District Council, this project was initiated and commenced by the former Ross and Whitchurch Rural District Council. The pool is sited close to the central shopping area and adjoins a large public car park and in view of its convenient situation, continues to draw people from a wide rural catchment area as well as from in the town. There is one 25 metre pool which in addition to normal public use, is used by the Education Authority during school term and for water polo during certain evenings.

6.4.2. John Kyrle Sports Hall - The original school sports hall has recently been extended on the initiative of the District Council assisted by the Town Council and had been grant aided by the West Midlands Sports Council so that the facilities may be used more widely by the local community.

6.4.3. The Hall is principally available for public use during evenings, weekends and school holidays and consists of a playing area of 30m x 17m with changing and shower facilities and a viewing area at first floor level.

6.4.4. The playing area is marked out and equipped for the following activities although only one sport can be played at one time:-

Badminton	4 courts	Hockey	1 court
Tennis	1 court	5-a-side	1 court
Basketball	1 court	football	
Netball	1 court	Volleyball	1 court
Cricket	2 practice nets and wicket mats		

6.4.5. Squash Courts - At present, there are no squash courts, public or private in the Local Plan area which is surprising in view of the fast growing popularity of this sport throughout the country. The Ross-on-Wye and District Sports Advisory Council have referred to the need for squash courts in Ross-on-Wye and have suggested that an area adjoining the Swimming Pool might be appropriate.

6.4.6. Rifle and Pistol Shooting - The Ross-on-Wye Rifle and Pistol Club currently meet at the T. A. Centre in Alton Road where there are indoor facilities for small bore, full bore and air pistols whilst occasional use is permitted of the full bore range (up to 600 yards) at the rear of Woodside off Gloucester Road. The Club are proposing to move to new indoor premises in the former railway cutting off Greytree Road where planning permission has recently been granted.

6.5. WATER BASED SPORTS

- 6.5.1. The River Wye is famed for its salmon and trout fishing however, fishing rights are mostly in the hands of Clubs or private interests. The Ross-on-Wye Angling Club provides good trout and coarse fishing and also has a stretch of salmon water available to members.
- 6.5.2. The Ross-on-Wye Rowing Club adjoining Rope Walk Meadow has a recently extended boathouse and clubroom with a large number of boats for the use of Members.
- 6.5.3. Canoeing on the Wye is growing in popularity and the District Council have previously endeavoured to provide an adequate canoe launching area but without success to-date. Improved facilities for canoe launching are still desirable in an appropriate location and should have good vehicular access.
- 6.5.4. Motor boating is neither practicable, in view of navigational difficulties on this stretch of river nor desirable in view of the area's natural beauty.

6.6. OTHER LEISURE FACILITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

- 6.6.1. A significant proportion of leisure time is occupied with social and cultural activities. Apart from the many sporting associations, there are numerous other organisations who meet in the town ranging from societies catering for an interest in a particular subject (such as chess or photography) to voluntary aid and welfare groups including St. John Ambulance and W.R.V.S. Many of these groups meet in church or community halls and also in licensed premises.
- 6.6.2. In respect of youth leisure, there is a fairly wide range of organisations including Scouts and Guides, Air Training Corps and Army Cadets. There is also an active Youth Club with purpose built premises in Hill Street.
- 6.6.3. Reference is made to adult education under the heading of Community Facilities, however, it is important to mention that an extensive range of non-vocational day and evening adult classes are held in the Local Plan Area. The venue for these classes includes the Old Grammar School in Ryefield Road, Ashfield Park Primary School, Overross and the Horsa huts in Cantilupe Road.
- 6.6.4. It is also important to mention that many people also spend a portion of their leisure time in licensed premises where they are able to meet friends over a drink or participate in darts leagues and other pub games such as dominoes and cards. At the time of preparing this report, there were nineteen public houses in the Plan area whilst planning permission has recently been granted for new licensed premises adjoining the Oaklands Development at Springfield.
- 6.6.5. A new but small theatre has been constructed on the site of the old Fire Station off the Royal Parade but the internal work has still to be completed. The Ross-on-Wye Operatic and Dramatic Society have most recently staged productions at the Old Grammar School in Ryefield Road but future events will be held at the new theatre when completed.
- 6.6.6. There is one small cinema and a snooker club in Broad Street but there are few other commercial leisure activities in the Plan Area.

6.7. SUMMARY OF PROBLEMS

6.7.1. Although provision of recreational facilities is generally good in the Local Plan area, a number of deficiencies have been identified:-

- a) There is a shortage of play areas for the five to eleven age group in the northern and eastern extremities of the town,
- b) There are similar deficiencies in provision of play areas for the over eleven age group but not quite so extensive as the above group,
- c) Provision of athletic facilities in the area is poor. This deficiency might be rectified by dual use of improved outdoor facilities at John Kyrle High School.
- d) At present, there are no squash facilities in the Local Plan Area. A site for squash courts would be desirable if the requisite funding or sponsoring could be found.
- e) New or improved play equipment is desirable in some of the existing play areas.

