

BRACKNELL TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITY LAND POLICY

The object of this policy is to protect existing areas of open space from any type of development. This includes smaller open areas, woods, copses and ponds where recreational use is incidental to their primary function as attractive features in otherwise built-up areas; or as wildlife habitats. This policy also covers privately owned areas to which there may be no public access e.g. privately owned gardens where there is an existing planning condition that denies fencing.

Bracknell Town Council will only consider the possibility of change of use of amenity open space, if:

- 1) the land does not now, or is unlikely, in the future to fulfill a useful purpose in terms of its appearance, landscaping, recreational use or wildlife value
- 2) the loss of this amenity open space would not set a precedent for other similar proposals, which cumulatively would have an adverse effect on the locality.

All planning applications which are presented to Bracknell Town Council are discussed at the fortnightly Planning Committee Meetings where the Town Council has the opportunity to submit comments to the Borough Council (but not to make decisions). All Planning decisions are made by the Borough Council. Each and every Town Councillor who wishes can attend any planning Committee Meeting and be invited to speak by the Chairman.

Common reasons for enclosure include an increase of garden area for example to allow for the construction of an extension or to bring the land under control for maintenance, especially to prevent littering, dog fouling or other nuisances. Such areas, particularly if part of the highway, may be important for traffic safety reasons. Other areas may be an integral part of the overall design and layout of an estate, contributing to the appearance and character of that estate. Enclosure, in these cases, particularly by high screen walls and fences, could seriously alter the symmetry and attractiveness of an area and destroy the singular character of an estate or locality. In addition, some verges or amenity areas support trees that contribute to the amenity of the area, and it is important that these are retained.

Lack of maintenance of amenity land is not necessarily a valid reason to allow the purchase of this land. On occasion, small residual areas of land which do not form an integral part of an estate layout or design do become unsightly through lack of maintenance, and in these cases there may be exceptional grounds for permitting their change of use and enclosure. In some cases, a low wall or fence will be more appropriate than a screen structure.

Bracknell Town Council will assess proposals for the enclosure of grass verges, amenity areas or other open land against the following criteria (each application will be viewed on its own merit):-

- i) The contribution made to the overall design, layout and symmetry of the estate or locality and the general amenity and character of the area.
- ii) Highway safety;
- iii) The design of any enclosure, wall or fence; and
- iv) The retention of important amenity trees.

If amenity land is to be used for car parking Bracknell Town Council will encourage the use of a reinforcement system for grass protection to safe guard the street scene.

This policy supports Bracknell Town Council's vision which is to 'be the guardian of the Town's parks, play areas and public spaces and to safeguard them from possible future development'. To this end Bracknell Town Council will endeavour to obtain more land when available for the use of local residents as either recreational open spaces or for allotment use.