

OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Rocks Lane Multi Sports Centre

The Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) designation is unique to London and protects strategically important open spaces within the built environment. It was introduced in the 1969 Draft Greater London Development Plan as a protective designation for open land within the urban area. It was recommended that parks, woodlands, golf courses, nursery gardens, cemeteries and other open land which might otherwise be at risk of development should receive this designation. The aim and criteria for MOL are set out in the London Plan.

MOL plays an important role as part of the borough's and London-wide green infrastructure network. It is open land or water, either publicly or privately owned and with or without public access. While Green Belt land in the borough is limited, a significant proportion of the borough is designated MOL (51.9%), which includes the borough's large green spaces including Richmond Park, Bushy Park and Kew Gardens. There is also a substantial proportion of MOL covering the River Thames and watercourses, as well as the surrounding linear green spaces.

Richmond Council Policy 37. Public open space, play, sport and recreation

A. Public Open Space, children's and young people's play facilities as well as formal and informal sports grounds and playing fields will be protected, and where possible enhanced. Improvements of existing facilities and spaces, including their openness and character and their accessibility and linkages, will be encouraged.

B. New open spaces, play facilities and formal and informal land for sport and recreation should be linked to the wider green infrastructure network as they play an important role in creating social cohesion, encouraging and promoting healthier and more active lifestyles. In addition, green open spaces are especially important for biodiversity and the improvement of wildlife or ecological corridors as well as contribute in reducing the likely effects of climate change. Furthermore, the provision of new open spaces and actively encouraging new users and visitors to utilise these spaces will alleviate recreational pressures on sites designated for biodiversity.

The Rocks Lane Multi Sports Centre is a well established sports facility at this location in Barnes Common and serves the wider community of all ages, so the application proposal is supported by policy 37. The proposed new courts will be mostly of a 'see through' glass construction and, as such, will not impede any sense of openness in the MOL.