

Examination of the Tunbridge Wells
Borough Local Plan

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Note Requested by the Inspector**

**Local Plan Examination
Note for Inspector in
response to Action Point
25 regarding Sports and
Leisure Needs**

Document Reference: TWLP/104



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1.0 Sports and Leisure Needs

Introduction

- 1.1 In response to correspondence from Paddock Wood Town Council to the Inspector (email dated 30 June 2022 and note dated 14 July 2022), the Inspector has asked the Council to clarify the evidence base in relation to sports and leisure needs across the borough. This is specifically in relation to the role of two reports prepared by Strategic Leisure for the Council, and the evidence used to determine the location of the proposed indoor and outdoor sports hub at Paddock Wood and east Capel.
- 1.2 This note provides the Council's position on this matter.

Evidence Base to the Local Plan

- 1.3 The Local Plan has been informed by various reports to ensure the sport and leisure needs for the borough over the Plan period can be achieved in full.
- 1.4 As noted at paragraph 6. 587 of the Local Plan “*An Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2018) has been undertaken to assess the current level of open space, sports and recreation provision within the borough. The full assessment comprises of an Open Space Study, an Indoor/Built Sports Facilities Needs Assessment, and a Playing Pitch Strategy. The approach to this work has been endorsed by Sport England. The overall study has assessed the availability, quality, quantity and accessibility of existing provision for identified sports facilities in the context of existing and future needs. The outcomes of the study have enabled the Council to adopt a strategic approach to the future provision, maintenance and enhancement of sports facilities*’.
- 1.5 The evidence base documents to the Local Plan in relation to sports and leisure needs comprises:
 - a. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2013-2033) – (June 2018) carried out by Ethos Planning [CD 3.26ci]
 - b. Tunbridge Wells Borough Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report – (June 2018) carried out by Ethos Planning [CD 3.26a]
 - c. Tunbridge Wells Indoor, Built, Sports Facility Needs Assessment – (June 2018) carried out by Ethos Planning [CD 3.26b]
 - d. Tunbridge Wells Playing Pitch Study – Carried out by Strategic Leisure – (November 2017) [CD 3.26d].

- 1.6 The Strategic Sites Masterplanning and Infrastructure Framework prepared by David Lock Associates [CD 3.66] looked specifically at the need and location for sports provision at Paddock Wood/ Capel stemming from the growth around the Strategic Sites; see the sub-section below.
- 1.7 In response to a specific question asked by PWTC, the Council confirms that the Site Options Analysis – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Sports Hub (July 2020) [PS_026] document, was specifically commissioned to consider options for the location of a sports hub for the main urban area of Royal Tunbridge Wells and does not consider provision or options at Paddock Wood.

Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Report

- 1.8 Strategic Leisure was jointly appointed by Sports England and TWBC (Leisure Services Team) to prepare a Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG) report for Tunbridge Wells Borough in 2021. This document provides a position statement which sets out where TWBC is in terms of planning for investment in physical activity over the next 5 to 10 years. It will be used within the Council to inform future leisure strategies, and would be needed to inform any initial funding discussions with Sport England if and when required by the Leisure Services Team at TWBC.
- 1.9 This document is not an evidence base document to the Submission Local Plan; nor was it commissioned by the Planning Policy Team. Notwithstanding this, as a key stakeholder, the Policy and Strategic Sites and Delivery Teams were consulted as part of its preparation and discussed the leisure proposals as set out in the Plan, along with the locations of the housing growth (particularly at Paddock Wood and Tudeley Village). Accordingly, the SOPG makes reference to this.
- 1.10 Moving on from this work, Strategic Leisure Ltd has been commissioned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Leisure Team) to produce a Leisure Investment Strategy which will assess the borough's existing and proposed leisure facilities and provide forward strategic planning for leisure investment and identify key issues/priorities for health and physical activity provision in the Borough. This work will build on the issues identified in the SOPG diagnostic work undertaken earlier in 2021 and reflect and build upon the Council's emerging Local Plan (including its evidence base) currently at examination. This is not an evidence base document to this Local Plan; instead, will be used to help inform the delivery of the leisure provision in the future. To confirm, Strategic Leisure was appointed in January 2022 and the report is expected to be completed in September 2022.
- 1.11 As part of this process, Strategic Leisure will be consulting with a number of key stakeholders to further understand key challenges in Tunbridge Wells in terms of health and physical activity, gaps in provision, future priorities, opportunities that exist in terms of delivery, partnerships etc. They will also consult with neighbouring authorities to continue to understand their current and future plans, and issues

relating to sport and physical activity provision, and how this may impact on Tunbridge Wells.

- 1.12 The Planning Policy and Strategic Sites and Delivery Teams will once again be a key stakeholder holder to discuss with Strategic Leisure the Council's Submission Local Plan, the Council's development strategy and specific sites that have been allocated to deliver that strategy.

Location of Sports Hub at Paddock Wood and east Capel

- 1.13 The Strategic Sites Masterplanning and Infrastructure Study prepared by David Lock Associates (DLA) [CD 3.66a] identifies the need for indoor and outdoor sports provision stemming from the growth as allocated through Policy STR/SS1. As noted in both this document and the Strategic Sites Topic Paper [CD 3.67], DLA undertook an ownership blind approach to masterplanning the allocation as a whole. The comprehensive masterplanning undertaken by DLA looked at a range of considerations including access, landscaping and flood risk, to form a sustainable new settlement based on garden settlement principles.
- 1.14 It explored different options for the sports hub and concluded that the location to the south-west of Paddock Wood would be the most appropriate in light of accessibility to the existing and proposed settlements (taking on board the active travel measures to be provided as part of the growth), and in light of other considerations such as landscaping and impact on the remaining Green Belt. The Council considered the options and concluded that the DLA preferred approach was the most appropriate.
- 1.15 The SOPG report prepared by Strategic Leisure, published in March 2022, is not an evidence base document, nor a Planning Services document, but did look at what was being proposed through the Local Plan as is it engaged with the Policy and Strategic Sites teams as key stakeholders in the preparation of this report. It concluded the proposal to the south-west of Paddock Wood *“provided an opportunity to co locate new indoor and outdoor physical activity provision on one site represents a significant opportunity for existing and new communities”*, and agreed with the masterplanning work that the site to the south west of Paddock Wood provides the *“optimum site for a new community physical activity facility is to the southwest of Paddock Wood”*.
- 1.16 The most recent item of work Strategic Leisure Ltd has been commissioned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Leisure Team) is the production of a Leisure Investment Strategy: this work will build on the issues identified in the SOPG diagnostic work published in 2022, to help inform the delivery of the leisure provision in the future as set out in the Local Plan.

- 1.17 Accordingly, the Council is satisfied that the proposed location as set out in the Local Plan is based on a comprehensive masterplanning exercise, which looks at sports and leisure provision as part of the transformation expansion of Paddock Wood, including land in east Capel, and is the most appropriate option moving forward. The Strategic Leisure SOPG report endorses the Council's approach in this regard; this was not used to inform the Council's decision making but does provide a helpful endorsement of the approach taken, hence why officers have drawn it to the Inspector's attention.

Conclusions

- 1.18 The Council trusts the above clarifies the position on the evidence base for sports and leisure provision within the Local Plan, and specifically how the Council determined the appropriate provision for a indoor and outdoor sports hub at Paddock Wood.

**If you require this document in another format,
please contact:**

Planning Policy

Planning Services

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Town Hall

Royal Tunbridge Wells

Kent TN1 1RS

Telephone: 01892 5 5 4 0 5 6