

Representor: Sport England

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Matter 5: Plan level Infrastructure and Strategic Transport

Issue 1: Whether the approach to Plan level infrastructure provision is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. This issue includes detailed consideration of Policy PLP50.

- 1) Have the impacts of the development anticipated by the Plan on supporting infrastructure, including healthcare, early years, education, leisure and sports facilities, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, and wastewater, been adequately assessed and evidenced?

Sport England: No, Sport England does not consider the council's assessment of their needs for leisure and sports facilities, which includes their Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and Indoor Built Facilities Strategy, represents a robust and up to date evidence base. Paragraph 103 of the Framework (2024) under which the local plan is examined states:

Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

Paragraph 103 makes clear that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need for sport and recreation facilities. It was disappointing that the Council changed from its initial position of agreeing to undertake new assessment of needs to its decision not to proceed with the work. Both the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (2018) and the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy (2017) were completed several years ago. Furthermore, both the demand and supply data used to inform these studies was collected before 2017-

18 and is now approximately 9-10 years old. There has been no review or refreshing of the data and/or the findings of the studies since then.

Sport England recognises that there have been positive developments for sport within the council area with a number of important projects delivered or in the pipeline since the adoption of the 2017-18 studies. However, without an up to date and robust assessment of need there is no strategic understanding of how the demand and supply position for sport may have changed as well as to identify how needs may change in the future and an up-to-date strategy to meet those identified needs.

On that basis, Sport England considers that the approach to plan for sport and leisure provision is not positively prepared; justified and consistent with national policy. There is not an up-to-date objective assessment of needs including an understanding of unmet needs, nor is there an up to date and robust strategy to meet those needs. This approach is inconsistent with paragraph 103 of the Framework.