

Planning Policy Team
Maldon District Council,
Princes Road,
Maldon,
Essex CM9 5DL

1st October 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

MALDON DISTRICT DRAFT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONSULTATION

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above consultation document. Sport England is the Government agency responsible for delivering the Government's sporting objectives. Sport England is also a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing fields.

I would wish to make the following comments on the draft Local Development Plan:

Policy S1 – Sustainable Development

Support

Policy S1 is supported because principle 6 of the policy seeks to create sustainable communities by retaining and delivering local services and facilities which would include sport. Principle 10 is also supported as it seeks developer contributions to mitigate the impact of development on the capacity and constraints of local infrastructure and services which would include sport. Both principles are considered to be consistent with sustainable development and would accord with the NPPF.

Policy S2 – Strategic Growth

Object

It is noted that the Heybridge Swifts Football Club site (site ref: S2 (g)) has been identified as a strategic allocation to help meet the District's housing needs. However, there is no reference in this policy or the related strategic sites policy S4 to the need to relocate the football club as a policy pre-requisite of any residential development. A site allocation for residential would only be acceptable if a suitable alternative site for relocating the football club site to was identified in the local plan. Without this there would not be any certainty that the club could be relocated which would be essential to facilitate the redevelopment of this site. While Sport England is aware that the football club have been seeking an alternative site, unless the local plan allocated a suitable replacement site, there would be no certainty in planning

policy terms that the current site could be relocated in practice. Sport England has had experience of sports grounds being allocated for development in local plans which due to inadequate consideration being given to replacement provision in the local plan policies has resulted in development allocations not being delivered or clubs becoming homeless which in some cases has pre-empted the demise of sports clubs which formed an important part of community sports facility provision.

To address these concerns, it is requested that policy S4 confirms that as a pre-requisite of the Heybridge Swifts Strategic Allocation, that the club are relocated to an identified alternative site where replacement facilities are provided which are at least equivalent in terms of quantity and quality of provision. The policy should not permit any residential development until the replacement site is operational in order to ensure continuity of facility provision for the club. This approach would be consistent with Government policy in paragraph 74 of the NPPF and policy N3 of the emerging Local Development Plan as well as Sport England's playing fields policy www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/development-management/planning-applications/. The local plan should also make provision (in a policy and on the proposals map) for a related site allocation for the replacement site for the football club. These safeguards would also be necessary to ensure that any residential development is deliverable in practice as the club are unlikely to be in a position to vacate their current site until a suitable alternative facility has been delivered.

The Council will be aware of Sport England's role as a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing fields. To avoid potential objections and delays at a later date if this site is allocated for development, it is advised that discussions take place with Sport England on this matter before the local plan is finalised for submission. Further advice can be provided on how our concerns could be potentially addressed as well as advice on how to avoid some of the problems experienced by other local authorities who have allocated playing fields for development in their local plans.

Policy S4 – Maldon and Heybridge Strategic Growth

Object

This policy is objected to due to the lack of a reference to the need to relocate Heybridge Swifts FC as a pre-requisite of the proposed Strategic Allocation for this site. The reasons for this and the suggested changes to the plan to address this objection are the same as set out above in relation to the comments on policy S2.

Paragraph 2.55– Maldon and Heybridge Strategic Growth: Green Infrastructure and Community Facilities

Support

Support is offered for the reference to the strategic growth in Maldon and Heybridge making on-site sports facility provision informed by the Maldon District Green Infrastructure Study. On-site sports facility provision, especially outdoor sports facility provision, would be justified by developments of this size and would be necessary to ensure that the additional sports facility needs generated could be met without placing pressure on existing facilities in the area which may already be at capacity. The Green Infrastructure Study or its replacement would provide the appropriate evidence base for informing the scale and nature of provision that should be made within these developments.

Policy D1– Design Quality and Built Environment

Object

In addition to the principles in this policy that development must accord with, it is requested that an additional principle is added relating to promoting opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and layout of development. This approach would be consistent with the sustainable development principles set out in policy S1 and would accord with the plan's wider policy objectives relating to health, environment, transport etc. To assist local authorities in relation to implementing such a principle, Sport England's Active Design guidance (which is endorsed by the Government) provides design guidelines and principles for promoting sport and physical activity in new developments and would be particularly relevant to the master planning of the proposed Garden Suburbs and Strategic Allocations. Details of Active Design are on our website at www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/active-design/. Reference could be made to Active Design in the evidence base documents list.

Policy E3 – Community Services and Facilities

Support

This policy is supported as it seeks to retain and enhance community services/facilities (which would include sports facilities) for meeting the community's needs. In particular, the policy seeks to protect existing facilities which are needed, seeks development to make provision for meeting increased needs and is positive towards the provision and enhancement of such facilities. This approach would be consistent with the local plan policy on sustainable development (policy S1) and the NPPF (especially paragraphs 69-74). For information, Sport England has recently (June 2013) published its new guide on Forward Planning which has been aligned with the NPPF and covers our guidance on the key issues that should be covered in

local plans relating to sport. The guidance is on our website at www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/forward-planning/. The guide focuses on how local plan policies should make provision for protecting, enhancing and providing sports facilities. Policy E3 is considered to accord with the advocated approach but you may wish to add to the policy or its clarification in the context of this guidance.

It is suggested that the Green Infrastructure Study is added to the list of key evidence base documents that support the policy as this provides the evidence base for informing proposals affecting sports facilities.

Policy N3 – Open Space, Sport and Leisure

Object

This policy is broadly supported as it seeks to protect existing sports facilities and requires development to make provision for improving the provision of such facilities. This broad approach would be consistent with the local plan policy on sustainable development (policy S1) and the NPPF (especially paragraphs 69-74).

However, as well as protecting facilities and securing provision through new development, planning has a role in promoting the provision/enhancement of new and existing open space, sport and leisure facilities through positive policies towards such development and where necessary site allocations. To address this, it is requested that the policy be amended to promote or encourage the principle of new open space, sport and leisure facilities in suitable locations and reference should be made to such provision being informed by the Green Infrastructure Study. This addition would strengthen the policy by introducing a positive approach towards new and enhanced provision which would accord with the NPPF and the local plan's sustainable development policy (S1) and wider policy objectives. If appropriate, site allocations for new facilities should be made in response to the evidence base. Section 3 of Sport England's Forward Planning guide www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/forward-planning/ provides more detail in relation to this matter.

Policy I1 – Infrastructure and Services

Support

Policy I1 is supported because it seeks to ensure that existing infrastructure and services (including sports facilities) are protected and improved to meet the community's needs and that developers make the necessary provision to meet the additional infrastructure/services needs generated by their developments. This approach would be consistent with the local plan policy on sustainable development (policy S1) and the NPPF.

Policy I3 – Primrose Meadow Planning Brief

Object

An objection is made to this policy due to the lack of recognition that part of Primrose Meadow (the area owned by Plume School) is currently used as a playing field for football training by Maldon & Tiptree Youth FC and has been used for formal community football use for many years. The loss of a substantial part of the site to facilitate the potential expansion of the Plume School would therefore be objected to unless provision was made for retaining/enhancing the playing field for community use or replacing the playing field off-site. While reference is made to part of the site being retained for amenity greenspace, this does not reflect the need to retain or replace the formal community sports use of the site.

To address these concerns, it is requested that policy I3 and its supporting clarification makes it explicit that the area of the site that is used as a formal playing field will need to be retained or replaced as part of any development and that detailed guidance on this will need to be included in the Planning Brief. Any off-site replacement playing fields proposed as mitigation would need to be allocated in the local plan. This will be essential to ensure that the proposals accord with policy N3 of the emerging local plan as well as paragraph 74 of the NPPF and Sport England's playing fields policy.

The Council will be aware of Sport England's role on planning applications affecting playing fields and that we were consulted as a statutory consultee on a planning application (Ref: FUL/MAL/09/00426) for a previous development proposal on this site in 2009 (which was refused) . To avoid potential objections and delays at a later date if this site is progressed for school expansion, it is advised that discussions take place with Sport England to inform the proposed local plan policy and Planning Brief on this matter. Further advice can be provided on how our concerns could be potentially addressed as well as advice on how to avoid some of the problems experienced by other local authorities who have allocated playing fields for development in their local plans.

I hope that these comments are helpful to you in progressing the local plan. I would be happy to discuss my comments further with the Council and provide additional advice if required.

Creating a sporting habit for life



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Warren".

Roy Warren
Planning Manager

Direct Line: 0207 273 1831

E-Mail: roy.warren@sportengland.org