

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 25 FEBRUARY 2016

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

BISHOP'S STORTFORD NORTH S106 SPORTS INVESTMENT STRATEGY, DECEMBER 2015

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All Bishop's Stortford wards

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report presents the Bishop's Stortford North Section 106 Sports Investment Strategy, December 2015, to support the Council in its management of up to £3.65 million Section 106 contribution for the improvement of local sports facilities.
- The report seeks agreement to use the Strategy as part of the evidence base to inform and support preparation of the District Plan and to inform Development Management decisions and that the Steering Group be empowered to consider and make recommendations for future investments in consultation with relevant parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL: That Council, via the Executive, be advised that:

(A)	the project prioritisation criteria be approved;
(B)	the Steering Group, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, be empowered to consider and make recommendations on future investments to Council following consultation with the Sounding Board; and
(C)	the Bishop's Stortford North S106 Sports Investment Strategy, December 2015, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support preparation of the East Herts District Plan and for Development Management purposes.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Bishop's Stortford North is a mixed use development of 2,529 new homes plus community infrastructure including schools, health facilities, sports provision and community buildings. The whole site comprises 156 hectares on land reserved for development in the 2007 Local Plan known as Areas of Special Restraint 1 to 5 (ASRs) and a Special Countryside Area (SCA). Outline consent was granted for ASRs 1 to 4 in April 2014, Full planning consent for the first phase of development in ASRs 1 and 2 was approved in April 2014, outline planning consent was approved for the final phase of development in ASR 5 in August 2015. As part of the planning permission, agreements were made to secure up to £3.65 million to be invested in sports facilities in the town.
- 1.2 Plozajski Lynch Consulting Ltd (PLC) were commissioned by East Herts Council to undertake this study to provide a framework that will enable the Council to utilise the funding in the most effective, efficient and economic manner.
- 1.3 The full document is available to view on the Council's website (see link under Background papers).

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Sports Investment Strategy report comprises eight chapters, with chapter 1 introducing the study, setting out the rationale and scope of the work and the methodology employed. In order to understand how best to utilise the funding, a robust, evidenced-based strategy is required to identify local needs, identify the needs arising from the development, identify existing or potential new projects that may assist in meeting these needs, and establish a criteria-based approach to evaluating potential projects in order to assist the Council in deciding how best to utilise the funding gained, possibly in combination with other investment projects.
- 2.2 Chapter 2 summarises the proposals for the BSN development in terms of the quantum of development and its phasing, and in terms of the projected population growth arising from the development. The development of 2,529 new homes will generate an estimated population of 6,070 based on a national average household size of 2.45 people per dwelling. This growth can be matched to the existing demography (age profile) of the town, and

subsequently against the sport participation models used by Sport England to calculate demand for particular types of activity. An increased population of 6,070 people will significantly increase demand for sports facilities in the town.

- 2.3 This population growth is also used to calculate the financial contributions required to mitigate the impacts of this increased demand in terms of Section 106 negotiations. The development itself includes the construction of a new Hoggate's Park football ground and pavilion (£1,095,000), in addition to a total funding of £3,650,000 secured through the S106 agreement. The funding is phased to coincide with the development.
- 2.4 Chapter 3 considers the wider local context, including existing demographic, health and economic information. There is a relatively young age profile, a healthy and active population and lower levels of deprivation in the town, which will result in proportionally higher demands for sport and physical activity.
- 2.5 Chapter 4 considers the influences of strategic priorities and policies; local (including those of Uttlesford District Council and the Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads) and national. All local and national strategic policies are supportive of the need to provide facilities meet the sport and physical activity needs of local communities and to increase participation where possible. Appendix 1 of the strategy provides more detail about these policies.
- 2.6 Chapter 5 summarises the general position with regards to existing sports provision in the town. This draws on market segmentation data (the types of activities particular types of individuals are likely to participate in), the types of provision available and how this is provided, and the results of various user surveys. Further detail on the current demand for sport is provided in Appendix 2 of the strategy. An unusually high proportion of facilities are through the dual use of secondary school facilities. This has the effect of limiting access to evenings and weekends. So even though there appears to be good numbers of facilities, their usage capacity is quite limited. There is an imported demand from settlements in the vicinity of Bishop's Stortford. This does however provide opportunities to work with Uttlesford District Council to unlock improvements to facilities. There are very active and well-managed voluntary sports clubs, which provides a network of providers who would be well-placed to utilise funding to make improvements.

- 2.7 Chapter 6 analyses the current sports facilities in Bishop's Stortford, using a methodology advocated in Sport England's 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide' (2014). This is an important step in this strategy. If there is any spare capacity in some types of existing facilities, it may be able to cater for the additional needs arising from the development, or if existing facilities are used to capacity or there is a demonstrable shortfall in current provision, extra capacity may be developed utilising some of the S106 funding. An assessment was undertaken for the following types of facilities, and a brief summary of the assessment is provided in Table 1 of **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. A detailed audit of current facilities is provided in Appendix 3 of the strategy.
- 2.8 Chapter 7 of the report sets out a number of existing proposals for development of sports facilities throughout the town and examines the extent to which they might address the needs arising from the BSN development. Further detailed analysis of the needs arising from the BSN development is contained in Appendix 4 of the strategy. There are currently 11 projects of various scales which could meet some of the needs arising to different extents. Table 7.2 of the Strategy (copied as Table 2 in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**) details the location, the type of development, estimated costs, the potential sources of funding, the needs addressed and the risks of each project. It should be noted that these projects are those that have already been identified to meet existing needs or aspirations of schools or clubs. Additional funding from the S106 contribution could allow some of the more advanced projects to be adapted to meet a greater number of needs. For some projects, where funding sources are unknown and are therefore less 'shovel-ready', the S106 funding could be the only means of the project coming to fruition.
- 2.9 Chapter 7 also considers whether there are alternative means to address the needs arising from the BSN development. Whilst the existing proposals could potentially meet all the identified sports needs arising from the BSN development, consideration needs to be given to whether the proposals represent the best way of making the necessary provision. Three alternative means are presented, including a single sports hub arrangement, a multiple sports hub arrangement or the enhancement of existing sites. Each option has positive and negative considerations.
- 2.10 A single sports hub would involve the creation of a new facility built to high specifications which would have the operational

economies of scale and would be able to meet the majority (if not all) of facility needs in one location. However, such a facility could require in excess of 25 hectares of land, which would inevitably be outside the built-up area of the town. Also, to replace buildings which have recently seen investment may not represent the best value solution.

- 2.11 A multiple hub arrangement would involve meeting all the main facility needs in several locations, including enhancing existing sports facilities as well as providing new sites. This option may be more deliverable on a number of smaller sites that may be more feasible to obtain permission and be located more centrally.
- 2.12 The enhancement of existing sites option would involve enhancing existing or already secured sites. This option has several advantages, namely secured land holdings, established facility management options and in most cases existing clubs, management, coaching and competitive structures, and an active membership, all of which are well placed to accommodate the needs arising from BSN subject to this enhancement. There are existing proposals at different stages of development, some of which are 'shovel-ready' once S106 funding becomes available.
- 2.13 This Strategy does not seek to determine which of the options presented in Chapter 7 are the most appropriate, but sets out in paragraph 7.7 of the Strategy a Project Prioritisation Criteria list that the Council could use in order to make this decision. With the collective costs of all proposals totalling some £22.8 million, and a maximum possible amount of funding of £9.245 million (taking into account other contributions and grants), there needs to be an objective mechanism for prioritising projects to ensure that the funding available is spent in the most effective way, to meet the widest needs of the new residents of the Bishop's Stortford North development. The 15 different criteria considerations include value for money, location in relation to the BSN development, running costs and environmental sustainability among others.
- 2.14 A Project Steering Group was established to manage the project on a day-to-day basis. The project steering group comprised project lead Will O'Neill, Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services, along with officers from the Planning, Environment and Leisure services. A Sounding Board Group was also established which comprised Executive Members, the Hertfordshire Sports Partnership, the East Herts Everyone Active Sports Partnership, Bishop's Stortford Town Council and Sport England.

2.15 Sport England have responded to the Strategy advising that given its narrow brief, the strategy does not strictly adhere to Sport England's guidance on undertaking needs assessments as National Governing Bodies were not consulted. This was not considered necessary as the study was focussed on a relatively small amount of money within one single town. However, it should be noted that the brief became more defined as the project progressed and the resultant strategy met the Council's requirements. It is worth reiterating that studies of this sort represent a snapshot in time and given that the potential funding arising from the Bishop's Stortford North development is not anticipated for several years, there is scope for undertaking more refined assessments of needs based on a clearer understanding of the situation at the time the funding is available. In the meantime, this strategy enables more detailed consideration of how the Council can address existing deficits of sport and recreation facilities in the town. The council is also commissioning a District-wide assessment which will meet the Sport England guidance.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

- The Bishop's Stortford North S106 Sports Investment Strategy, December 2015
www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies

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