

DSN position and response to DBC Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth (to 2038)

Background to DSN: DSN represents local community sports clubs and those participating in sport within the Dacorum community. We have been in dialogue with and lobbying Dacorum Borough Council for many years helping to establish the opportunities and needs for sporting facility development locally. This has included contributing to and consulting on the Council's '[Playing Pitch Strategies & Action Plans](#)' (the latest being June 2019) and the recently developed [Sports and Physical Activity Strategy](#). We are also represented on the DBC Sport and Leisure Action Board and have made submissions to previous local plans.

The new Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth (to 2038): This DBC plan is currently [open for public consultation](#), to which anyone can contribute **until 7 February 2021**. The Local Plan will be supported by the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan that is currently in development.

This DSN document provides an overview of DSN's response to the Local Plan and our submission to the Consultation process for that plan. It also indicates what DSN's objectives will be in endeavouring to work with DBC planners on developing and shaping the Infrastructure Plan into specific proposals that will meet sporting needs across the Borough as a whole as well as the specific needs of individual towns/areas within it. Our objective is that DSN will be fully involved and consulted to try and ensure that the plans will, not only be used to address current well documented need, but also plan to meet the further increase in sporting facilities needed to meet the significant population growth that will result from the increased housing numbers.

The benefits to DBC of working with DSN and local community clubs: All Local Councils are struggling to balance what has been decreasing income and increased demand for services over recent years (although this may in the future be partially mitigated by the increased housing numbers). So, planning for sustainable development of new sporting facilities and working in partnership with third sector partners (such as DSN and sports' NGBs) becomes essential, as this can provide access to additional funding, and partners who can undertake facility development and management at little or no cost to the Council; and especially if planning strategy enables such facilities to be planned and developed in sustainable formats (especially in larger concentrated units, such as hubs and multi-sport venues) that can be managed by the community, including by established and well managed clubs.

In Dacorum, DSN are uniquely placed to understand local sporting needs, the opportunities for development of new facilities; and the ability to bring together local partners (including clubs, other community and charitable organisation and potential new funding contributors) to help facilitate development and or management of such new facilities.

Current facilities undersupply and increased future demand: There is currently a shortage of required and appropriate quality sporting facilities for many sports and in most of the towns and key community areas within Dacorum. In many cases this is not due to lack of funds but lack of space to accommodate new facilities or expand existing ones. These current shortages are in many cases defined in the Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan (June 2019) and also in Indoor Sporting Facilities studies for the area. They are also clear from representations that we and other community sports bodies and clubs (such as the FA, Berkhamsted Raiders and Tring Sports Forum) have been making direct to DBC and HCC in recent years.

With such a significant increase in housing numbers and the associated increase in population, this undersupply will increase to a critical level and therefore a coordinated plan is needed to provide the necessary new pitches and other facilities that will be required – including where these can be located and when this can be facilitated and possibly part funded by individual or consolidated developers/developments.

DSN believe that a key consideration for the new local plan should be the allocation of potential sites for new sporting facilities – especially sporting hubs (see below). This should obviously be incorporated into the infrastructure plan, but we also believe it should be considered as part of the site allocations decision in the main Local Plan – especially to ensure that sporting hubs and major multi-use/multi-sport facilities are allocated the space needed along with the sites for housing.

The current evidence base for projecting increased demand in sporting facilities regrettably is out of date in that it uses ONS projections for population growth to 2036 of just under 12.9%; whereas the proposed housing numbers in the Local Plan indicate an increase in population of 27%. So, the evidence being used underestimates the likely increase in demand upon sporting facilities by over 100%.

Special attention to local needs as well as Borough wide provision: As well as taking a holistic view of sporting facility development across the Borough, it is clear that specific plans are needed for the individual communities most affected by increased housing numbers, e.g. Tring, Berkhamsted and local areas within Hemel - including the major new development areas such as Hemel Garden Communities.

As clearly evidenced by DBC data on file, the towns of Tring and Berkhamsted are already experiencing major shortages of playing pitch space and lack of room for expansion of existing clubs and sporting facilities. So significant coordinated plans are needed for increasing the playing spaces within both these towns which will be experiencing the highest percentage of population increases. In this respect we support the Bulbourne Cross Development Proposal (see below and also <https://www.bulbournecross.co.uk/>).

Furthermore, a plan should be developed to take advantage of the scale of the Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) development, and the green spaces that will be needed within it, to create major new sporting facilities and venues. This would support the HGC Charter via: Principle 1 (Connective Green Infrastructure); Principle 4 (Vibrant Communities); and Principle 9 (Active Local Stewardship).

The importance of Hubs: In the past, new housing plans have tended to include the ad-hoc sprinkling of individual football pitches or play spaces within individual developments, as this was seen by developers as a way to satisfy green space provision and section 106/CIL contributions. However, such facilities have been clearly proven to be unsustainable and now go against Sport England guidance. Multi-sport/multiuse facilities are much more sustainable and contiguous pitches and facilities can be better managed and maintained as community assets by the local communities and clubs that use them.

Proposals for developments such as that by Thakeham at Bulbourne Cross (in partnership with the Berkhamsted Sports Grounds Charity Association) which incorporates a consolidated and sustainable new multi-facility sporting hub should therefore be encouraged and given preference. Other appropriate developments should also be directed to seek ways of incorporating such sporting facilities within their plans, especially where they meet local need.

Encouraging clubs to make individual responses to the Local Plan consultation: DSN is encouraging all local community sports clubs to submit their own individual responses to the Local Plan consultation especially where they feel that proposals either help or fail to meet their local requirements, or where they can see better opportunities that may not have been considered by the plan as currently presented. We would also welcome clubs to copy their responses and ideas to DSN via secretary@dacorumsports.net

Clubs can view the DBC plan and respond to it via the DBC portal at...

<https://consult.dacorum.gov.uk/kse/event/35755>

Contact Dacorum Sports Network via email secretary@dacorumsports.net