Tandridge District Council

Our Local Plan 2033

Examination - Note for Inspector

Playing Pitches Re-provision in Warlingham - November 2019

November 2019

Document Reference TED28
1. Introduction

1.1 Following consideration of this issue in the Examination Matter 6 Hearings, the Inspector asked the Council to clarify its approach to the pitch loss and replacement issues arising from proposals for housing development on sites HSG 15 a and b and HSG 18. It was asked to do this in three respects:

- Existing and future District-wide need for 3g pitches
- Need for replacement pitches resulting from proposed losses at Warlingham
- Need resulting from new development at Warlingham

1.2 The Inspector also suggested the Council should consider the potential for local re-provision in Warlingham and that in doing so it might be beneficial to liaise with interested parties to further clarify location options.

1.3 This note has been drawn up in consultation with Sport England, who support its contents.

2. Needs for Pitches

District-Wide Need for 3g Pitches (Existing and Future)

2.1 The Council employed consultants KKP to prepare a Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (INF13 and INF14). KKP worked closely with Sport England and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and they accepted the findings.

2.2 The overall District-wide position regarding playing pitch needs is broadly summed up on page 7/8 of INF13 and INF14, which states:

"The existing position for all sports is either that demand is broadly being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the creation of some additional shortfalls and the exacerbation of some existing shortfalls. There are current and future shortfalls of sand-based AGPs for hockey, 3G pitches and rugby union pitches and future shortfalls of football pitches and cricket squares.

Despite the above, it must be noted that the shortfalls evidenced are relatively minimal when compared to other local authorities nationally. As such, for the most part, no new provision is required; it is considered that shortfalls can be met through the better utilisation of existing provision, such as via pitch re-configuration and encouraging or enabling access to unused/unavailable provision.

Notwithstanding, a shortfall of 3G pitches can only be met through increased provision. With resources to improve the quality of grass pitches being limited, an increase in 3G provision could also help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, thus reducing overplay, which in turn can aid pitch quality improvements. Creating additional 3G pitches will also assist in the alleviation of hockey shortfalls given that it will enable football demand to transfer from existing sand-based AGPs."
Where demand is being met, this does not equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered as a solution to overcoming current shortfalls and accommodating existing or future demand. There is a resultant need to protect all existing playing pitch provision until all demand is met, or there is a requirement to replace provision in accordance with Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy exceptions.

For low value sites, e.g. single pitch sites that are rarely used and are without appropriate ancillary facilities, there could be a case for rationalisation providing that there is no net loss of playing pitch space. As an example, the proceeds acquired from the loss of single pitch sites could contribute towards the creation of a multi-pitch site or the extension/improvement of an existing multi-pitch site. Similarly, the proceeds from any development could go towards increasing the 3G pitch stock”.

2.3 Current and future quantitative needs are summed up on Table 1.1 on page 7 of INF13 and page 40 of INF14. The PPS indicates a current shortfall of two full-size 3g pitches, which will rise to a shortfall of three by 2033.

2.4 Pre-existing needs for 3g in the PPS are calculated on the amount of training provision necessary to serve the existing number of teams in Tandridge.

2.5 However, it is important to note that in addition to providing for training needs, moving more match play to 3G pitches is supported by the FA, (see INF13 page 15). This underlines why the FA, as well as Sport England and other NGBs favour the draft Local Plan proposal to encourage replacement of the Warlingham grass pitches with 3g. New 3g pitches are a desirable qualitative improvement to sports facilities, but also a significant investment justified by intensive use for both training and matches.

2.6 In addition, the PPS (page 40 on INF14) notes that there are no World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in Tandridge. However, evidence suggests that the District is a location with demand for such provision. It could be created through a development partnership with the FA, since a world rugby compliant pitch can also be used for football. Page 72 of INF14 also notes Warlingham Rugby FC is overplayed and there is a shortfall of pitches.

2.7 Subsequently, the above needs have been reflected in the draft Tandridge Our Local Plan 2033 (MD1) through’ Policy TLP39: Providing Playing Pitches and Built Leisure Facilities’ which supports the delivery of three new 3g pitches across the District, including one that is ‘World Rugby compliant’.

2.8 Full size 3g pitches provide flexibility for training and matches in all team sizes and can often be linked to schools to assist in effective use and management. Football is the main sport pitch demand issue. The proposed new provision is seen as reflecting the Football Association (FA)’s approach to meeting changing needs; particularly a decline in adult participation in the 11 a side game, but growth in youth football).

Need for Replacement Pitches Resulting from Proposed Losses at Warlingham (Policies HSG15 and 18)
2.9 As stated in the Council’s Hearing Statement (Para. 6.78.1) the Council also needs to offset/replace the loss of the following three recreation sites allocated for housing in Warlingham:

- John Fisher Sports Club (Policy HSG15a)
- Greenacres Leisure Centre (Policy HSG15b)
- Shelton Sports and Social Club (Policy HSG18)

2.10 Policies HSG15 and HSG18 both stipulate that replacement provision should be provided to an ‘equal or better standard’.

2.11 Sport England confirm there is no available formula to indicate the amount of 3g provision necessary to replace grass pitches on an equivalent basis, although current levels of match-play can provide a useful steer. Together HSG15a and HSG15b currently host 35 teams, predominantly juniors. As set out in the Council's Hearing Statements the loss of site HSG18 (where there is no current match-play) should also be compensated, as advised by Sport England and according to case-law.

2.12 The current Local Plan policies HSG15 and HSG18 deliberately provide for some flexibility regarding type of replacement. They do not specify that replacement provision must be exclusively 3g, just provision of ‘equivalent or better standard’. Therefore, it is implicit that a re-provision / compensation package can, in addition to 3g, also include grass pitches or even qualitative improvements that enable more match-play on other sites. The finally agreed re-provision / compensation package would need to be determined in liaison with users, Sport England and National Governing Bodies (NGBs).

Needs Resulting from New Development at Warlingham

2.13 The PPS (page 13 of INF13) calculates the needs of the new Garden Settlement based on Sport England’s New Development Pitch Demand Calculator¹. This is based on 4000 new homes proposed, assuming 2.25 people per dwelling = 9,000. It identifies 7 standard pitches are required.

2.14 Based upon comparison to this Garden Community figure above (7 pitches for 9,000 persons), 0.525 of a standard grass pitch will be required from the development of HSG15/18 (300 homes, 675 persons).

3. Potential Location Options for Re-provision in Warlingham

3.1 During the hearing sessions there was a discussion about options for the re-provision of the lost Warlingham playing pitches locally. The Council are aware of several opportunities to re-provide replacement playing pitches within the Warlingham area, either 3g or grass.

Therefore, the Council’s view is that there is a clear prospect of local replacement and a potential fall-back position of replacement at South Godstone Garden Community. In the hearing discussion it was being suggested by some objectors to the Plan that the Garden Community was the only realistic replacement option. This is not the case.

3.3 Four options are identified below:

Option 1 – Land west of site HSG15

3.4 The Statement of Delivery between TDC and Cala Homes/All land Owners – HSG15A (SADE34) establishes the availability of land adjacent to HSG15 for pitch provision. The option agreement held by CALA includes not only HSG15a but also some 20 acres immediately to the west (and abutting it) which the promoter sets out is "a level site ideally suited to be utilised for replacement playing pitches".

3.5 The promoter for HSG15a identifies that as HSG15a and the adjacent land are under a single option agreement to CALA, that CALA is perfectly placed to "seamlessly" deliver the replacement playing pitches in conjunction with the residential re-development of HSG15a in line with the Statement of Delivery.

3.6 TDC support the principle of re-locating playing pitches to the west as this provision will still be located within the Warlingham area. However, the land to the west of the site will remain in the Green Belt and Green Belt policies will apply; with the playing fields constituting an appropriate open use in Green Belt.

3.7 On the basis of the above description, this site could comfortably host a large number of pitches.

Option 2 – Chartwell’s suggested location

3.8 At the Examination in Public, Chartwell disclosed that they were in discussions with a landowner to provide a site to replace the playing pitches from their proposed housing development site HSG18 – Former Shelton Sports Ground, within the Warlingham area. The Council sought further information from Chartwell where this site may be, however, Chartwell informed the Council that they are still in negotiation with the landowner and therefore cannot disclose this information at this time. Chartwell have confirmed that they will share the site information with the Council at the relevant time. Therefore, it is possible that this option 2 site is the same location as one of the other options discussed. No further info on site location forthcoming as of 11/12/2019. It is assumed that, as with option 1, Green Belt policies and appropriate development considerations will apply.

Option 3 – Former Boy's Club on Chelsham Road, Warlingham (Surrey County Council land)

3.9 Surrey County Council have identified that the site of the Former Boy's Club on Chelsham Road, Warlingham could be used for the re-provision of the playing pitches within the Warlingham area. The site measures circa 3 acres in area and is within the Chelsham & Farleigh Parish Council area. As with option 1, Green Belt policies will apply.
3.10 A provisional ‘without prejudice’ view from a Parish Council representative is that this site may be best suited to 3g of all the local options, since it is run-down and suffering from social issues and there would be less impacts on rural character.

Option 4 – Qualitive Improvements

3.11 The PPS does mention the need for some local qualitative improvements on other pitch sites in existence in the Warlingham area. These could also potentially be facilitated to partially offset and mitigate local loss to provision. For example:

- See page 31 of INF14:
  
  ‘The ancillary facilities at Warlingham Sports Club are considered to be adequate in quality: however, Warlingham FC reports an ambition to develop the provision in order to make the site more suitable for women’s and girls activity.

- See page 72 of INF14:
  
  – Warlingham Rugby Club – concern that changing facilities, although new, do not cater for female participation.

4. Conclusions

Policies HSG15 a and b and HSG18

4.1 The policy requirement to replace the losses of HSG15 a and b and HSG18 with provision of equal or better standard remains in place and includes some appropriate flexibility as to the precise form of the replacement.

4.2 Policy requirements also remain in place to replace ahead of development; and to determine the compensation package with Sport England and relevant NGBs at the time of application.

4.3 There are clearly several very realistic several local options to re-provide / compensate the loss of local pitches in Warlingham. This means that the housing sites are likely to be deliverable (initial 5 years of the plan period). They are certainly developable (beyond 5 years), even if all or part of the replacement package includes development at South Godstone Garden Community. The position can be suitably reflected in the final housing trajectory assumptions, without detriment to the overall plan housing delivery position.

4.4 Nevertheless, following the hearing discussion the Council considers that, in the interests of the clarity of the Plan, it would be beneficial to further modify Policies HSG15 and HSG18 to:

1. Prioritise local replacement within Warlingham
2. Present the South Godstone Garden Community development as a fall-back option only, for part or all the re-provision / compensation
3. Stipulate the requirement for one full size 3g pitch somewhere within the settlement of Warlingham as part of the overall compensation package for the losses of HSG15a, HSG15b and HSG18.

4. Confirm flexibility regarding the means of compensating Warlingham losses (of an equal or better standard) so that, in addition to 1 x 3g pitch, it may include or partially include local grass pitch replacement, or suitable local qualitative improvements that enable more match-play on other local sites.

5. Stipulate that replacement compensatory provision should, as a minimum, fulfil the match-play and training needs of clubs currently using the Warlingham sites.

4.5 Given that at least one option for local re-provision remains commercially confidential, and others require further discussion with landowners, the Council considers it important that the policy retains flexibility within the policy regarding the specific location of replacement sites.

4.6 The key points are that through these further suggested main modifications, the Council can clearly prioritise local re-provision / compensation, and is confident that this is achievable.

Policy TLP39 and District Wide Need for 3g

4.5 As set out in Local Plan Policy TLP39 and section of this report, there is a need for 3x full size 3g pitches by 2033 across the District, including one that is world rugby compliant. This remains in place, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.8 of this report.

4.6 Provision of one 3g pitch in Warlingham, sits alongside the current plan commitment for ‘up to’ two 3g at South Godstone Garden Community (Policy SGG1 modification TED01) giving a District wide total of three. This gives compatibility with the requirements of Policy TLP39.

4.7 The wording ‘up to’ in relation to the South Godstone is considered necessary to allow some flexibility, for example in case a ‘windfall’ 3g pitch was brought forward elsewhere in the District prior to the South Godstone Garden Community being built. This possibility would, most likely achieved through a school or club initiative on an existing site, using grant funding sources). In such a circumstance it may only be necessary to have one new 3g in SGGC to achieve a District wide total of 3x3g.

4.8 For 3g provision within the new Garden Community, the development of a secondary school provides an opportunity to make efficient use of land and maximise community benefits by providing at least one ‘shared community use’ 3g pitch alongside the new secondary school.

Overlap of Provision – Warlingham Re-provision / Compensation and Pre-Existing Training Needs

The Local Plan will therefore ensure both the District wide need for 3 x 3g achieved (as established in Policy TLP39), as well as prioritising that the losses of pitch provision from Warlingham sites are compensated locally.
When considering how the needs in section 2.1 (pre-existing needs for 3g training pitches) and section 2.2 (Needs to compensate Warlingham pitch loss) of this report relate to each other, it is important to note that unlike grass, 3g surfaces can accommodate all week use for both training and match-play. The PPS (Page 17 of INF13) suggests that new 3g pitches could cater for both existing training shortfalls as well as match-play demand attracted to the sites that will be lost. Therefore, a degree of overlap is possible so that both needs can be accommodated on the same sites. This is achievable as training traditionally takes place on a weeknight evening (Monday -Thurs), and match-play takes place on a weekend (Sat or Sun).