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To: Planning Policy
Subject: 20210212 East Devon Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment – Call for Sites 2021

Sport England is the Government agency responsible for delivering the Government’s sporting objectives. Maximising the investment into sport and recreation through the land use planning system is one of our priorities. You will also be aware that **Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing fields.**

The new Sport England Strategy ‘Uniting the Movement’ Sport England believe sport and physical activity has a big role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all. <https://www.sportengland.org/why-were-here/uniting-the-movement>

CALL FOR SITES

Sport England would be concerned if any of the ‘identified sites for development’ are, or have been, or are proposed for sport and recreation buildings or land including playing fields.

Sport England would assess council documents in the light of Sport England’s **Planning for Sport: Forward Planning** guidance. A copy can be found on our Planning for Sport section of the website <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport>

The overall thrust of the statement is that a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities for sport is necessary, new sports facilities should be fit for purpose, and they should be available for community sport. To achieve this, our objectives are to:

PROTECT sports facilities from loss as a result of redevelopment

ENHANCE existing facilities through improving their quality, accessibility and management

PROVIDE new facilities that are fit for purpose to meet demands for participation now and in the future.

Comment 1 - Local Plan & robust and credible evidence base

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2019 states:

Paragraph 96 - 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. 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.

In light of the above, it is Sport England’s approach to challenge the soundness of Local Plan documents which are not justified by;

- an up to date playing pitch strategy (carried out in accordance with a methodology approved by Sport England)
- an up to date built sports facilities strategy (carried out in accordance with a methodology approved by Sport England).

By up to date Sport England means undertaken within the last 3 years for a Playing Pitch Strategy, and within the last 5 years for a Built Facilities Strategy.

Comment 2 - protecting open space, sport and recreational buildings and land

Sport England acknowledges that the NPPF is promoting “sustainable development” to avoid delays in the planning process (linked to economic growth). That said, the NPPF also protects open space, sport & recreation land & buildings (including playing fields) paragraph 97:

Paragraph 97 - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or***
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or***
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.***

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We have updated our Privacy Statement to reflect the recent changes to data protection law but rest assured, we will continue looking after your personal data just as carefully as we always have. Our Privacy Statement is published on our [website](#), and our Data Protection Officer can be contacted by emailing [Gaile Walters](#)

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