

**South Cambridgeshire Local Plan
Examination**

**Matter SC8: Promoting Successful
Communities**

On behalf of Grosvenor/Wrenbridge (ID. 21321)
12 September 2016

Matter SC8: Promoting Successful Communities

SC8D Policy SC/4: Meeting Community Needs

- ii. **Should the policy indicate how the Council would respond to proposals for sub-regional community, sports and leisure facilities? Is it still the Councils' joint intention to explore suitable sites for a community stadium, ice rink and concert hall or rather to consider any future planning applications for such facilities on their own merits?**

- iv. **Should the policy make specific reference to supporting the provision of facilities which would enable greater participation in football e.g. in respect of the Football Association's disabled persons, females, youth and veteran categories; and for purely recreational purposes?**

Should the policy indicate how the Council would respond to proposals for sub-regional community, sports and leisure facilities? Is it still the Councils' joint intention to explore suitable sites for a community stadium, ice rink and concert hall or rather to consider any future planning applications for such facilities on their own merits?

Increasing participation in sport and improving health and wellbeing is both a national and local objective. Access to high quality formal and informal sport opportunities encourage people to live healthy lifestyles and can make an important contribution to the well-being of communities.

Cambridge is a regional destination for sport and leisure. However, existing supply of sporting facilities are failing to meet the demands and needs of the community in both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge.

For the past ten years, South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils have explored whether there is a need for a community stadium. As part of this process Grosvenor/USS considered the potential to provide a standalone community stadium for Cambridge United Football Club (CUFC) with supporting facilities on a site south of Trumpington Meadows.

However, following consultation and further review, the provision of a standalone facility has been reconsidered. Whilst the need to meet the needs of CUFC and deliver the benefits from new sports facilities are vital, it is considered that the best way to meet this need is through the refurbishment of the Abbey Stadium and development of a new sports hub.

Grosvenor/USS have submitted two planning applications for these facilities:

- a. Cambridge Community Stadium – the enhancement of the existing Abbey Stadium, to improve the stadium facilities, increase capacity, provide new ancillary facilities (club shop, ticket office, supporters club) and a range of commercial uses.
- b. Cambridge Sporting Village – a new enabling residential community south of Trumpington Meadows, including extensive outdoor and indoor sports pitches (which could provide for football, rugby and hockey), a closed circuit cycle track and BMX facility.

These planning applications are linked and could not be delivered in isolation.

There is still a need for the community sporting facilities which are being provided. The proposals will increase community access to a range of sporting facilities and in effect provide the benefits of the previously proposed community stadium over two sites.

Through the plan-making process, South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils' have jointly prepared an evidence base which has consistently identified a need for an enhanced sports provision.

A Major Sports Facilities Strategy (2005) prepared by Cambridgeshire Horizons identified a community stadium as a sub-regional priority. It also recognised the need for a number of synthetic sports pitches for football and hockey. The study concluded that it would be preferable for the facilities to be co-located.

Subsequently, the Cambridge Community Stadium Feasibility Study also highlighted the potential benefits of providing a community stadium for the sub-region and it was anticipated that CUFC would be the main tenant of the facility.

This led to the Councils' undertaking a review of the evidence and site options for a community stadium. This review concluded that demonstrable need for a community stadium is a subjective issue and should be tested through public consultation. However it also suggested that the right package of uses in a suitable location would deliver benefits for the wider sub-region. A number of sites were considered for a standalone stadium but major issues were found with all of them.

The Councils' recently published a Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sports Facility Strategy in May 2016. These strategies identify a significant need for new and improved facilities across the majority of sports including football, hockey, rugby and cycling. There was no mention of a community stadium.

We consider that the Playing Pitch Strategy and the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy represent the minimum level of additional provision needed. Whilst the studies address needs of clubs it is not clear how the needs of community users, CUFC and organisations such as the Cambridge United Community Trust (CUCT) have been factored in. For example, CUFC still require investment in its stadium and an indoor sports facility to allow its Academy to progress, and the viability of providing these facilities is an

important consideration. Therefore it is considered that there are limitations to the strategy in terms of identifying overall demand for sports facilities and that the actual demand is likely to be higher.

Whilst the strategies identify potential options for new facilities, in the majority of cases feasibility and viability have not been tested. Furthermore, the strategies are not referenced in the Local Plan and there is no clear expression that there is a reasonable prospect of these facilities being delivered.

A suitable approach to meeting the sporting needs of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire could be to disaggregate the stadium and sports hub. The studies do not consider this as an option, yet this would successfully provide many of the principles of a community stadium. There are many benefits to this approach as the co-location of sporting facilities in a sports hub would maximise synergies and efficiencies for management and usage.

We consider that the policy and supporting text should place a greater emphasis on the provision of new sports facilities in suitable locations to meet the identified needs of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge.

Should the policy make specific reference to supporting the provision of facilities which would enable greater participation in football e.g. in respect of the Football Association's disabled persons, females, youth and veteran categories; and for purely recreational purposes?

The role in which sport plays in a town or city increases in significance if sporting teams are successful. Professional sporting teams act as a focus for social interest in a city and provide a sense of city pride. They generate interests in sport participation, inspire people to want to take part in sport, provide entertainment and add to cultural life in a city.

CUFC have a First Team established in the Football League with increasing attendances, an Academy recognised by the Premier League, a Shadow Academy offering a full-time education scholarship, a Youth Development scheme providing professional coaching to gifted youngsters in Cambridgeshire, a Community Sport scheme and a Community Trust delivering strongly against its education, health and inclusion objectives.

Cambridge United Community Trust is the charitable arm of the Club. The Trust's aim is to use CUFC's resources to positively affect people's lives in Cambridgeshire by delivering projects across the themes of education, health and inclusion.

CUFC and CUCT are embedded in the community and are key providers of programmes for participation in football for youth, education, elderly and disabled persons. They are therefore an important consideration in the overall needs of Cambridge which the Local Plan should be seeking to support. Other organisations such as Cambridgeshire FA also provide important programmes for these user groups.

Supporting CUFC and CUCT will continue to bring positive benefits to the city in terms of sports participation, social cohesion and community well-being and pride.

The Councils' Playing Pitch Strategy published in May 2016 identified significant needs for new or improved football facilities. In particular it identified a need for more 3G pitches and floodlit facilities. It also recognised the need to ensure the long term sustainability of junior clubs by providing the long term security of playing facilities, and investing in multi-pitch hub sites.

CUFC and the Cambridge United Community Trust (CUCT) were not consulted on the publication of this strategy and therefore their needs were not considered. This is a limitation of the study as CUFC and the CUCT are important providers of community sporting programmes in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge.

The evidence base prepared by the Council also explicitly identified the need for CUFC to improve its facilities. CUFC currently have no access to indoor training facilities, which are essential to its Academy moving up to the next tier.

It is important that the policy recognises the importance of organisations such as CUFC, CUCT and Cambridgeshire FA in encouraging participation in football and other sports amongst the specific user groups identified. This places further weight in ensuring that the policy provides sufficient support for the provision of new sports facilities.



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