

South Somerset District Local Plan 2006 – 2028

Independent Examination, May 2013

South Somerset District Council Hearing Statement

Issue 16

Health and Wellbeing

April 2013

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Question 16.1

Have the needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities been appropriately assessed? Is the Council's evidence base (e.g. 2011-2015 Open Space Strategy) sufficiently robust?

- 1.1 Since 2005, South Somerset District Council has been producing and updating robust assessments of existing and future needs of its communities, in order to ensure effective planning for open space, sport and recreation, in accordance with the original Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) and subsequently the NPPF (para. 73).
- 1.2 Individual assessments have been carried out for open spaces and sport and recreation facilities, in accordance with the PPG17 open spaces and sport and recreation facilities typology. In addition to the Open Spaces assessment, these include local facilities such as equipped play areas, youth facilities, playing pitches, changing rooms and community halls and strategic facilities, such as sports halls, swimming pools, artificial grass pitches, indoor tennis centres and theatres and arts centres.
- 1.3 In accordance with the original PPG17 guidance, each assessment has been prepared by:
 - identifying local needs by undertaking a range of consultation;
 - auditing a range of local and strategic facilities within the district to establish the quantity, quality and accessibility of each facility;
 - using this information to set quantitative, qualitative and accessibility/catchment standards for each facility type;
 - applying these standards to current and future populations at a parish, area or district level, to establish where there are shortfalls of provision;
 - setting priorities for the future.Information on the assessments and standards are details in the Open Space Strategy 2011- 2015 (CD 58) and Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (CD59). The strategic needs assessments were reviewed and validated at the council's Scrutiny Committee in October 2011.
- 1.4 The work for identifying local needs has been underpinned by a comprehensive range of consultations to ascertain the views of the local community, key interest groups and wider stakeholder. Initial wide ranging consultation was held at the start of the process of developing needs assessments and specific consultation has been undertaken for individual assessments. The consultation that has been carried out for recreation and leisure facilities includes:
 - a resident 'MORI' type survey to 2,500 households
 - site facility manager interviews
 - school facilities surveys
 - parish/town council surveys
 - a community hall survey
 - neighbouring authority officer interviews
 - public consultation workshops
 - a draft strategy public and stakeholder consultation exercise

- a review of parish and community plans
Prior to the formulation of the Open Space Strategy (2008/2009) SSDC undertook:
 - A residents survey
 - a review of the Young People Survey
 - a best value resident survey
 - a complete audit/assessment of our open spaces for content/facilities and quality
 - a review of all existing national/local policies
- 1.5 Audits have been carried out since 2005 as each assessment has been completed. Each local and strategic facility has been audited to establish the quantity, quality and accessibility of each one. The audit data for the playing pitches, changing rooms and strategic facilities was updated in 2012, following work carried out for a Somerset Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy by the 6 local authorities and SASP (Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership). Information regarding local facilities such as equipped play areas is updated on a regular basis as new facilities are developed or existing ones are expanded.
- 1.6 Standards information has been used to set local quantitative, qualitative and accessibility / catchment standards for each facility type. These standards are either based on:
- the current level of provision;
 - an increased level of provision; or
 - national standards, such as the Fields in Trust standard for equipped play and youth facilities
- 1.7 The quantitative standards have been previously listed and consulted upon as Policies HW1 and HW2 of the draft Core Strategy. However, due to the fact that the standards of provision will be reviewed during the life of the Local Plan, the specific standards were removed from the final version of the Proposed Submission Local Plan. This recommendation was endorsed by PMB at Workshop 8 on 29 September 2011 (CD116). The Council's District Executive adopted the Open Spaces Strategy and standards in March, 2011 and all the other standards were adopted in March, 2012.
- 1.8 The adopted quantitative standards are applied to current and future populations at a parish, area or district level, to establish where there are shortfalls of provision. Using the qualitative and accessibility standards, the data from the audits is used to identify any facilities, which need improvements. Maps are also produced to identify any geographical gaps in provision.
- 1.9 A revision on all the assessments is planned to incorporate the future population projections for the district in accordance with the finally proposed Council housing growth figures in Policy SS5 (CD 3B, M74). This will enable the standards to be applied to this agreed future population, in order to obtain an updated assessment of needs for the district at a local and strategic level reflecting the adopted Plan.
- 1.10 Using the information that is gained once the standards have been applied, enables the council to set priorities. These have been set for each strategic facility assessment, with short, medium and long term timescales, and will be reviewed every 5 years.

1.11 The various needs assessments are used:

- To inform the council's response to planning consultations, in order to seek planning obligations from Section 106 agreements, and CIL in the future
- To inform the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)
- To support parish plans and other strategies
- To support funding bids for new or improved facilities

1.12 South Somerset District Council have had the use of their needs assessments in seeking planning obligations, which have been validated through several appeals. The most recent one was an appeal for Land at Mitchell Gardens, Chard, Somerset, TA20 1QU APP/R3325/A/12/2176355. Using the quantitative standards in the needs assessments, the council were able to show the deficiencies in square metres within the area for the various facility types, in both 2009 and as projected for 2029 and the need that would be generated by the proposed and the proposals to address this need. The inspector concluded that "Para 49. It seems to me that in identifying deficiencies the Council have shown that contributions are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms..."

Question 16.2

Is the Council's approach to the provision of community facilities appropriate? Will community needs be satisfactorily met?

2.1 The definition of community facilities within the Health and Well being section of the Local Plan and Policy HW1 relates specifically to the provision of community halls. This definition could be expanded to include other local community facilities in the future, for which needs assessments have been completed and new standards adopted by the council's District Executive.

2.2 Specific reference to community halls is made within this section (11.5) as this was one of the more recent needs assessments to be developed, whereas the previous emphasis had been on open spaces and sports, recreational and cultural facilities. Community halls are identified as one of the facility types within the PPG17 facility typology for which councils should carry out needs assessments.

2.3 Following the consultation and audit commencing in 2009, the new standards for community halls (an urban standard for Yeovil, Market Towns and Rural Centres and a rural standard) were adopted at the District Executive in March 2012.

2.4 The assessment identifies the importance of community halls to South Somerset, and audited 120 halls that were defined as:

- open and accessible to all
- having a primary purpose of being a multifunction community building for the use of the communities they serve

The assessment has enabled the council to identify deficiencies at a parish level, and it found that although many communities, particularly villages, are well served community halls, Yeovil and some of the market towns in particular have historic deficiencies and aging halls that are not "fit for purpose" in 2013. In particular, the assessment found that 43% of the halls that were audited failed to meet the qualitative standard, and the largest qualitative shortfall is in Yeovil.

2.5 When the first phases of the Abbey Manor Park development, in Yeovil were built in the 1990's, the Council negotiated planning contributions for the provision of a

community hall. Since then there have been few developer contributions towards community hall provision across the district, although community halls have benefited from various other sources of funding. This funding is becoming increasingly difficult to access, and through the use of the adopted standards, the council is now seeking planning obligations towards community hall provision in communities where there is an identified need.

- 2.6 The majority of community halls are owned and managed by parish and town councils, or community organisations who were consulted during the preparation of the needs assessment. These organisations are always consulted again during the response to planning applications to ensure that the communities are involved and community needs are being satisfactorily met.
- 2.7 Through the use of Section 106 contributions or through the introduction of CIL, should community infrastructure be identified as deliverable through CIL funding, the council is therefore hoping to continue the process of either enhancing existing community hall provision to meet the needs of the increasing population or develop new community halls where a gap is identified.

Question 16.3

Is it sufficiently clear how progress will be made to ensure that the Sports Zone (policy HW2) will be delivered?