

Liz Pickering

From: Gary Parsons [REDACTED]
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To: Liz Pickering
Cc: Jill Borrow
Subject: Mid Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy
Importance: High

Thank you for inviting Sport England to comment on the Mid Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy initial consultation.

Sport England believes that sport has an important role in modern society and in creating sustainable and balanced communities. Sport and physical activity is high on the Government's national agenda as it cuts across a number of current topics that include health, social inclusion, regeneration and anti social behaviour. The importance of sport should be recognised as a key component of Green Infrastructure (GI), and not considered in isolation.

The following comments are provided within the context of:

- PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (OPDM, 2002).
- Sport England's "Planning for Sport & Active Recreation: Objectives & Opportunities (Interim Statement)" (2005).
- Sport England's web based "Planning Contributions Kitbag" (2011).

Policy

The revised Planning Policy Guidance note 17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation' which was published by Government in July 2002 stresses that to ensure effective planning for open space, sport & recreation it is essential that the needs of local communities are known. Local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreation. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels.

Sport England advocates that new developments should contribute to the sporting and recreational needs of the locality made necessary by their development. This approach, with regard to all development not just residential, is strongly endorsed in the revised PPG17, which states in paragraphs 23 and 33 that:

"Local authorities should ensure that provision is made for local sports and recreational facilities (either through an increase in the number of facilities or through improvements to existing facilities) where planning permission is granted for new developments (especially housing)."

"Local authorities will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs."

Planning Policy Statement 12 defines green infrastructure as 'a network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities'. It goes on to state that the local planning authority 'core strategy should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for the area, taking account of its type and distribution. This evidence should cover who will provide the infrastructure and when it will be provided. The core strategy should draw on and in parallel influence any strategies and investment plans of the local authority and other organisations.'

In a guide written to support the strategic planning of GI the Town and Country Planning Association described GI as referring to,

"...a strategically planned and managed network of green spaces and other environmental features vital to the sustainability of any urban area." "GI includes new and established green spaces, which should thread through and surround the built environment, connecting the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. It should be delivered at all spatial scales" TCPA 2008

The consultation draft for a new PPS entitled 'Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment' proposed to replace PPS9 and PPG17 along with parts of PPS7 and PPG20 defines Green Infrastructure as:

...“a strategic network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life in sustainable communities. It delivers a broad range of functions and provides vital socio-economic and cultural benefits which underpin individual and community health and wellbeing. These functions include: conserving and enhancing the natural environment; providing wildlife corridors; reducing noise and air pollution; and helping communities to adapt to a changing climate through water and carbon management. In urban areas, functions include providing routes (e.g. footpaths and cycleways) which link areas of open space within settlements; providing sustainable drainage, flood storage and urban cooling; and providing a wide range of opportunities for engagement and active citizenship, relaxation and quiet contemplation, sport, recreation and children’s play.”

Consultation paper for a new PPS – Planning for Natural and Healthy Environment, March 2010.

Sport and Green Infrastructure

It is clear that outdoor sport already takes place in areas that could be considered part of the existing green infrastructure network, river and green corridors provide space for sports such as canoeing, sailing and horse riding events, and wider open space in the countryside plays host to climbing, all types of cycling events among many others. Other sports possible, but not an exhaustive list, are as follows:

- Angling
- Mountaineering
- Orienteering
- Archery
- Motorsports
- Athletics - running/walking.
- Water sports including swimming (outdoor)

Playing fields

Green Infrastructure will also include formal sports that have identifiable facilities, like pitch based sport on playing fields. PPG17 makes it clear that open space can perform a variety of functions, so playing fields may serve informal recreation and support wildlife corridors.

Sport England has been a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect playing fields since 1996 due to concern over losses. This means that any planning application that affects a playing field has to be referred to Sport England for comment by the local authority. Working through the planning system Sport England naturally want to supports and engage with the strategic planning for pitch based sports, the main users of playing fields.

Sport England works closely with the key pitch based sport National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to support our work on playing fields. We meet regularly at a local level with the Football Association, England Cricket Board, Rugby Football Union, Rugby Football League and England Hockey to assist in developing capital projects and offering support around planning applications and strategic planning through our work with local authorities.

Sport and the Natural Environment

Every year hundreds, if not thousands, of such sporting events take place that rely upon the natural environment. A lot are the transient, peripatetic sporting events that the organising club sets up, the competition takes place, and afterwards any equipment (e.g. signage, fences, ropes, show jumps) are dismantled and the land reverts to its original use. These events can include equestrian activities, motorsport, cycling, running, canoeing and climbing events.

What all these sporting activities tend to have in common is a control point where participants assemble, register for the event, and it acts as the start/finish point for the competition; sometimes village halls can support this. Such activities may have some purpose built ancillary facilities, such as a floating pontoon, clubhouse, bunkhouses, changing rooms and storage units. Although not always essential this supporting infrastructure can be crucial to enable a good level of competition.

Because of the transient nature of these type of events, they tend to operate outside the planning system and rely on the provisions of Class B, Part 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Part 4 allows for the temporary change of use of land for either 14 or 28 days a year. Because of this, many local authorities do not even know that the events are taking place in their area. Occasionally some events do require planning permission and this tends to be where permitted development rights do not apply, or that the events have taken place more than 14 or 28 days per year and therefore exceed their permitted development rights.

These events tend to use a range of different landscapes such as forests, waterways, moorland, old quarries, natural features such as rock faces and agricultural fields. Whilst some rely on using the rights of way network, other

might use permissive routes such as private moorland tracks with the land owner's consent. Horse riding and mountain biking do also rely on manmade and more permanent cross county courses, which can sometimes require planning consent depending on scale and engineering work required.

Sport on manmade routes and more peripatetic activities do happen in areas with landscape protection designations. The Scott Trial (see case study), for example, takes place in part on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, with the consent of the local planning authority and Natural England. Many rock faces are also designated SSSIs but still accommodate climbing competitions through a managed access protocol. Therefore landscape protection does not necessarily rule out a sporting event taking place.

Case Study 1: Endurance:

Endurance is long distance competitive horse riding. Many of these competitions take place in the countryside and utilise existing rights of way or tracks that cross private land.

They tend to have a control point, this could be a field, or a local livery where there are access to stables. Rider register with the organiser at the control point and start the ride and finish the ride from the control point. The competition covers a number of routes set out at different competitive levels from novice to advance and riders are timed as they leave and return to the control point.

The routes can be well defined such as a bridleway, or marked out with flags and markers to indicate the way. These events tend not to rely on permanent facilities, instead they are set up a few days before the event takes place and then after the event the flags, markers, control caravan anything else associated with the event are removed from the site.

Endurance relies on a variety of different routes that can include river crossings, open moorland, forest tracks or even the beach.

Case Study 2: The Scott Trial, Yorkshire Dales

Many sporting events can be long standing ones. The Scott Trial has an extensive history beginning initially as an annual competition in 1907 where factory employees at the Scott Motorcycle factory in Keighley, West Yorkshire, rode road going machines along various tracks and open moor land in the Yorkshire Dales - many of the roads were not metalled in those days. The event attracted many spectators and these spectating Edwardians viewed the event as '*a fair old scramble*' and hence the term 'motorcycle scrambling' was born.

The event takes place in and around Arkengarthdale and Swaledale towards the end of October and has run every year, bar the war years (due to fuel rationing), since 1907. The Scott Motorcycle Trial is one of the oldest motorsport events in the UK, possibly the world. The Trial began well before Leeds United Football Club was ever established and is possibly the oldest running (bar the war years) outdoor sporting event in Yorkshire after Grand St Ledger horse race at Doncaster.

Sport England guidance and GI

Sport England aims to provide best practice guidance on designing and planning sports provision. We also offer advice and support in strategic planning for sport to assist in plan marking and have long been engaged with policy development which promotes the interests of sport and recreation at regional, sub-regional and local levels.

Key parts of our website offer support in developing policies for sport page:
http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/developing_policies_for_sport.aspx

Many if not all of this guidance can equally be deployed to develop policy and strategies specifically on GI in relation to outdoor sports facilities.

Gathering evidence

A fundamental part of any plan or strategy is developing evidence based policy. Sport England web tools and staff can assist with the cataloguing of existing sports facilities and strategically planning new ones around growth and development.

Active Places
www.activeplaces.com

Active Places is an online and interactive database of all sports facilities, whatever ownership, currently accessible to the community. It is maintained and managed by Sport England and updated annually. The website allows you to search for sports facilities anywhere in England in a number of different ways. You can browse an interactive map of the country, search for facilities in your local area, use the name and address of a specific facility to find out more information, such as facility type, opening hours and contact information. The website also includes an additional resource, Active Places Power, which requires registration with the use of a password and allows the user to interrogate the data by local authority area for further analysis. We are currently unable to grant Active Places Power access to private sector organisations.

Active Design

Sport England believes that being active should be an intrinsic part of everyone's life pattern. The master planning of new housing proposal has a vital role in providing easy access to a choice of opportunities for sport and physical activity to suit all age groups for making new communities more active and healthy.

Through an analysis of the current health agenda and urban design principles and good practice, the term ACTIVE DESIGN has been adopted to describe ways in which master planning can promote healthy environments through creating healthy environments through creating conditions for participation in sport and physical activity and the use of active travel modes (walking and cycling). Three overlapping Active Design objectives have been identified that should be promoted by master plans: improving accessibility; enhancing amenity and increasing awareness.

Sport England has commissioned research and production of a guide to assist those master planning new developments through promotion of sports participation and physical activity through the design and layout of development. A copy can be downloaded from:

http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance/active_design.aspx

Playing Pitch Strategies

A crucial element of meeting the requirements of PPG17 – Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation (2002) and just as valuable in scoping existing playing field supply and strategically planning for current and future demand. For more information please see:

http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/putting_policy_into_practice/assessing_need_and_demand.aspx

Sport England also has a range of other tools to assist in strategic planning:

1. Facilities Planning Model
2. Sports Facility Calculator
3. Planning Contributions: the Kitbag
4. Planning Bulletins
5. Facility Design Guidance
6. Significant Areas for Sport
7. Sustainable Community Sports Hub Toolkit
8. Strategic Planning Framework for Sport

http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance.aspx

Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit

As part of the Department of Culture Media and Sport, Sport England along with the other cultural agencies has developed jointly a toolkit to assist in the strategic planning for culture and sport. The Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit is a practical source of information and advice for all practitioners involved in culture and planning.

<http://living-places.org.uk/culture-and-sport-planning-toolkit/culture-and-sport-planning-toolkit.html>

How can we help your authority plan for GI?

Sport England can help you plan for Green Infrastructure (GI) in the following ways:

Using our tools and guidance

Sport England is happy to provide further advice and guidance on how to use Sport England's tools.

Contact your local Sport England Office for further information:

http://www.sportengland.org/about_us/how_we_are_structured/our_local_offices.aspx

Incorporating existing strategies into a Green Infrastructure Strategy

Any existing sports strategies should feed into a GI strategy. This should include the Council's playing field strategy (to protect playing fields from development), the Open Space/PPG17 Strategy, Culture and Leisure strategies and any other sports development strategies that the Council has.

Green Infrastructure plans should acknowledge that some sporting activities may take place in areas with nature conservation designations. This includes sports that use natural features such as caving and climbing as well as sport events (such as those mentioned above). GI plans should recognise those areas that are regularly used for sport events and acknowledge the events take place and that these will not be ruled out by nature conservation designations but that this relationship can be managed.

If your local authority area has significant areas of green, or blue, infrastructure and open countryside then it may be appropriate to look at the needs of those sports that will use these areas (e.g. sailing, cycling, triathlon, caving, climbing etc.) as part of a separate assessment. The needs of existing and growing community sports clubs and users can then be taken into account when designating areas for multi-purpose use, i.e. for sport and for nature conservation and feed into the preparation of management schemes.

A GI plan should also provide facilities, such as parking close to permanent natural features that are used for sport and seek to provide solutions to ensure that the impact on local residents and agriculture in the area from sporting activity is minimised.

Developing projects and identifying opportunities

Through our close working with the national governing bodies for sport, Sport England has developed substantial local intelligence of local sporting opportunities. We are regularly in contact with NGBs and could help identify those sports that use existing green infrastructure in your area. Your local Community Sports Partnership (Active Devon) may also be able to help with identifying sports that use existing Green Infrastructure.

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Creating sporting opportunities in every community

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