

RESPONSE TO SPORT ENGLAND AND NHC PARKS AND LEISURE

This response addresses the latest Sport England (SE) comments on the Growing Baldock OPA, as discussed at a meeting on 9th July and followed up by email on 14th July 2026. It also responds to the informal comments of NHC Parks and Leisure, relayed to DLA at the NHC/U&C/DLA fortnightly meeting on 29th July 2026. It sets out Urban&Civic's (U&C) current proposed position on sports provision onsite and contributions to offsite facilities.

Outdoor Formal Sports Provision

U&C agree with the following SE proposed amendments to the S106 Heads of Terms which will set out the high-level specification for sports facilities in Eastern Park and the Urban Open Land:

- Eastern Park S106 Specification
 - addition of reference to '*adult, youth and mini*' football pitches'
 - addition of reference to one '*cricket square (minimum 10 pitches)*'
 - addition of reference to '*car/cycle parking*'
 - addition of reference to '*sports national governing body guidance*'
- Urban Open Land S106 Specification – in school outcome 2 (no secondary school on BA3)
 - addition of reference to dual use court facilities '*suitable for sports such as tennis and netball*'
 - addition of reference to '*car/cycle parking*'
 - addition of reference to '*sports national governing body guidance*'
 - addition of reference to 3G pitch being '*floodlit*'
- BA3 S106 Specification – in school outcome 1 and 3 (secondary school on BA3)
 - addition of reference to '*sports national governing body guidance*'
 - addition of reference to 3G pitch and courts being '*floodlit*'
 - addition of reference to accordance with '*current Sport England and sports national governing body guidance*'

The following two SE suggested amendments are not proposed to be incorporated in the Heads of Terms:

- requirement for 2 x 3G pitches in any school outcome, rather than at least 1 as currently drafted. The SE response sets out the rationale for the request for 2 x 3G pitches based on need generated by the development, informed by the SE calculator. Whilst this is not disputed per se, the following points are relevant to the consideration of the proposed overall level of provision of outdoor sports pitches, of which the 3G pitch forms a part:

The proposed development form as articulated in the Parameter Plan has been developed in close consultation with NHC officers and consultees, in alignment with the approved Strategic Masterplan (SMP). The resulting distribution and quantum of uses seeks to balance the need to deliver a scheme that accords with the requirements of the Local Plan allocations (3,245 homes across BA1, BA2 and BA3, employment, supporting community and education infrastructure, as well as offsets of development from Lower Bygrave and the ridgeline in BA1) with the aspiration to retain areas of ecological value and provide strategic scale open space to serve the new development.

These requirements combined with complex levels in some parts of the site, particularly BA1, and areas of archaeological interest including a Scheduled Monument, has led to a development that provides as much formal open space as is feasible, alongside substantial informal, amenity and ecological areas as part of the overall open space mix.

Formal open space is proposed within the most favourable areas from a topographical perspective i.e. the two flattest parts of the site, where there is also sufficient space to cluster sports pitches together alongside supporting infrastructure such as parking and a pavilion building. Other locations for sports pitches, such as Bygrave Common, have been considered but discounted, because they are unable to meet these requirements. The scheme therefore has sought to maximise the provision of formal open space taking into account these constraints and the need for the development to align with the requirements of the allocation and the SMP. The resulting provision of two large areas of formal open space will deliver substantial benefit to the community and a range of size pitches and courts to accommodate multiple sports.

As a result of the above, the development proposes a small under-provision of formal open space relative to the standards (11.67 hectares proposed vs. 12.29 hectare requirement in the NHC Developer Contributions SPD). This equates to a shortfall of only 0.62 hectares, equivalent to less than one adult size pitch. This is partially offset by the proposed 1 x 3G pitch, which can be counted twice in terms of use.

The small under-provision of formal open space is also compensated for by the significant overprovision of all other open space typologies within the development, most notably parks and gardens (overprovision of 33.14 hectares) and natural and semi-natural open space (overprovision of 31.53), with the former category in particular being capable of accommodating informal sports provision.

Finally, and importantly, provision of an additional 3G pitch brings significant additional cost to the project. NHC will need to consider the implications of this on project viability, in the context of the above identified constraints and the overall generous overprovision of open space within the development.

- requirement for additional changing, toilet and refreshment facilities to support community use of the 3G artificial grass pitches and games courts in school outcomes 1 and 3 (school on BA3). The Sports Hall will be designed to include changing and WC facilities to support community use of all the school sports facilities. This arrangement has been delivered successfully at Houlton School in Rugby, another Urban&Civic scheme, where the sports hall facilities built to Sport England standards successfully support community use of the outdoor pitches, MUGA and sports hall, without any additional, separate provision. The Houlton School Community Use Agreement provides the Terms of Reference for the Management Committee that administers and monitors the use of the facilities by the community and will ensure the effective management and use of the sports and ancillary facilities to maximise their potential use. A similar arrangement will be in place for the Growing Baldock Scheme (see below).

Community Use of Secondary Sports Facilities

The community use of secondary sports facilities is to be controlled by planning condition, rather than S106 as requested by SE. The draft planning condition reads as follows:

Prior to use by the community of the sports facilities at the secondary school, if built on site, a Community Use Agreement to ensure such community access to school sports hall and 3G pitch(s) shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall include details of pricing policy, days and hours of use, access, users, management responsibilities, community use parking management and a mechanism for review, together with a timescale in which the Community Use Agreement shall be implemented. The school sports facilities shall not be used by the community at any time other than in compliance with the approved agreement. The approved Community Use Agreement shall be implemented and adhered to in perpetuity in accordance with the details hereby approved.

Offsite Contributions

We note the request for contributions to be made towards improvements to existing rugby and hockey facilities offsite and to the swimming pool facilities at the North Herts Leisure Centre. The former requires specific projects to be identified i.e. enhancements to existing rugby / hockey clubs within Baldock. The NHC sports and leisure team provided informal officer comments on the OPA requesting £700,000 contribution towards refurbishment of the leisure centre. This, as far as we are aware, has not been justified and publication of the Built Sports Facilities Strategy is still awaited, thus it is therefore not currently CIL Regulations compliant. A contribution would also need to be factored into the overall viability discussion.

A judgement on both these requested offsite contributions will therefore need to be made by NHC as part of ongoing discussions on the S106 Heads of Terms.

Community Building

We agree with the following suggested amendment to the Community Building outline specification within the Heads of Terms:

- addition of 'activity studio'

Proposed Heads of Terms

For clarity, the above agreed amendments are set out in the updated Heads of Terms below:

Sports facilities	Eastern Park (BA1) Area of formal open space to include football pitches (adult, youth and mini football pitches) and cricket square (minimum 10 pitches) a sports pavilion and car/cycle parking in accordance with current Sport England and sports national governing body guidance, unless alternative provision is agreed in writing with the LPA, in consultation with Sport England. Sports facilities at Eastern Park to be delivered in accordance with a detailed specification approved as part of the BA1 Design Code, as required by outline condition [x]. Delivery of these facilities comprised within wider strategic open space obligation to deliver "Eastern Park" by no later than [xx%] occupations in BA1 Urban Open Land (BA3) <u>In school outcome 2 (expansion of Knights Templar) –</u> • Area of formal open space to include at least 1 x full size floodlit 3G artificial grass pitches, dual use court facilities suitable for sports including tennis and netball, floodlighting, a sports pavilion and car/cycle parking in accordance with current Sport England and sports national governing body guidance, unless alternative provision is agreed in writing with the LPA, in consultation with Sport England. Sports facilities within the Urban Open Land to be delivered in accordance with a detailed specification approved as part of the BA3 Design Code, as required by outline condition [x]. • Delivery of these facilities comprised within wider strategic open space obligation to deliver "Urban Open Land" by no later than [xx%] occupations in BA3 • Payment of financial contribution [£TBC] to be paid as a contribution to the costs of expanding sports hall facilities as part
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	of Knights Templar expansion (to align with triggers for payment of relevant education contributions) <u>In school outcomes 1 or 3 (secondary school (small/big) on BA3) –</u> - Sports facilities will be delivered as part of wider school campus, to include at least 1 x full size floodlit 3G artificial grass pitch in accordance with current Sport England and sports national governing body guidance, the provision of floodlighting to the games courts and a sports hall to Sport England specification (minimum internal hall dimension of 690m2) - Additional payment of [£TBC] for uplift of onsite facilities in line with Sport England requirements (to align with triggers for payment of relevant education contributions)
Community Building	Community building (minimum floorspace requirement of [500sqm]) to be delivered as part of local centre in BA1 To be delivered in accordance with an agreed specification: S106 to define an <u>outline specification</u>: - Main hall - WCs - Kitchen area - Equipment stores 2 x meeting rooms - Activity studio - Security for youth groups Reserved matters application containing the community building to include a <u>detailed specification</u> to accord with the outline specification (in consultation with HCC GIU) Obligation to deliver the community building in accordance with the outline specification in the s106 and the RMA for the community building (inc. detailed specification) no later than [] occupations in BA1