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Planning Policy Team  
Chiltern District Council  
Council Offices  
King George V House  
King George V Road  
**Amersham**  
**Bucks, HP6 5AW**

6 March 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Response to the Chiltern District Local Plan 2014 – 2036 Initial Consultation (Regulation 18)**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the scope and issues to be addressed in the new Local Plan which sets out the Council's plans for delivery of the vision for Chiltern covering the period to 2036.

We are aware that this new Local Plan when adopted will replace the existing Local Plan adopted in 1997 and the Council's Core Strategy which was adopted in 2011.

As a sports club within the Chiltern District we support the approach taken within the New Local Plan to consider, updating planning policies, land use allocations and community uses to meet a variety of needs across the District, and local measures relevant to a Local Plan identified by local representative groups as a way of promoting and ensuring sustainable communities. Much like our views that were expressed in June 2013 in respect to the Council's proposed Delivery Development Plan Document (DDPD) which has now been withdrawn, we would like to play a part in helping to shape the future of the District in a positive manner.

Whilst the previous consultation in respect to your planning document, the DDPD, enabled members of the public and representative groups to make comment on a number of different points and policies, this consultation on the new planning document provides a different approach focusing on questions relating to visions, objectives, planning for specific needs and other considerations.

However, it is clear that a number of the points that were previously raised are still points for discussion and need to be at the forefront of the Council's new Local Plan in respect to the provision of Community Facilities and helping to protect the status of the sports

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clubs within the District, especially where they are the only sports club of that type within the District.

In response to Questions 1 to 3, and whether the visions of the Core Strategy remain valid, it is clear that it should be emphasised further that the Council should do their utmost to add to the existing services and facilities that serve the District through the construction of an athletics track which can be used to serve the athletics club and more importantly the local communities and the District as a whole.

We feel that linked in with Questions 1 to 3 is Question 4 and whether there should be other Spatial Strategy Options considered. An option to consider is the challenge of where to locate an appropriate site for such a provision. The option should be one that either looks at whether there is an opportunity to form a connection with an existing sporting community facility such as at a Leisure Centre, or in association with a school or college. It may even be prudent to consider utilising existing public open space areas, where the provision of such facilities with improvements to the public open space will bring additional benefits.

There is also the potential to provide such provisions within the Green Belt when considering opportunities for relocating open space uses that are compatible with the Green Belt.

Question 5 considers the need for specific types of development. We feel that our comments in respect to the previous questions have established that the Council should put a strong emphasis on the requirement for there to be an athletics track with the associated facilities within the Chiltern District.

Question 5 also enables us to provide the Council with information that supports our previous points.

It is with this in mind, that we, Chiltern Harriers Athletics Club, the only England Athletics registered club within the District and with a current membership of close to 600, consider the importance of having a Local Plan that provides focus of sporting provision and community facilities within the District and the need for the Council to support future development of such provisions including that of a track.

Despite the Olympics having finished over two years ago, there is still the need to preserve the Olympic Legacy with promoting sports facilities and in particular identifying sites that give rise to being considered for improving their existing facilities or establishing new facilities, and in particular an athletics track with a clubhouse, as the District does not have such a facility available to the public, and consequently the presence of one will help promote healthy communities.

In recent years Chiltern Harriers have had an increasing number of young athletes competing at the highest level in regional and national events, and continue to produce many County champions and County team representatives. This has come from honing their talents through our Coaches who dedicate their own time to help train these and the many others who attend the training sessions that the club puts on. The club is not only proud to boast a membership of almost 600 members, but also that almost half of those are made up by junior members. Total club membership has grown from 350 in 2008 to 550 in 2014. It is anticipated that this growth will continue at a similar rate of 10% per annum as the population realises the benefits of running. However with local population statistics indicating an 11.3% growth in the 10-14 age group and 5.7% in the 15 to 19 group over the plan period it is predicted that membership growth will be closer to 15%.

However, whilst as a club we are able to make use of a number of open spaces within the District, we have to travel further afield to find a suitable athletics track to provide the appropriate training facility for track and field events. Currently, the easiest track to travel to with suitable provisions is in fact at Watford in Hertfordshire.

In Buckinghamshire there are tracks at Milton Keynes (Milton Keynes AC); Stoke Mandeville (Aylesbury Vale AC); and Marlow (Wycombe Phoenix AC) but they are not as accessible for a variety of reasons and they are associated with rival athletic clubs within the county. None are within the Chiltern District.

Chiltern Harriers AC continues to improve year on year in terms of results during the winter cross country season where the club has finished third in the last two seasons in the Chiltern League competing against several larger clubs who have their own track and facilities. Although we do not have a track, our youngsters in particular perform exceptionally well in the Youth Development League and also achieve fantastic results in area and national events. We intend to enter a joint men's and women's track and field team in 2016 in the Southern League. We have some 30+ athletes competing for their County.

We would therefore like the Council to deliberate over the following as potential sites for such a set up:

#### **Amersham-on-the-Hill**

There is scope, and indeed a current public consultation by Amersham Town Council, to improve the existing pavilion and set-up to accommodate an athletics track at Hervines Park playing fields.

Utilisation and promotion of the fields associated with Amersham and Wycombe College on Stanley Hill for a sports facility including an athletics track should also be considered.

#### **Chesham**

There is local support to promote the Leisure Centre on White Hill as a key sporting facility with the provision of an athletics track, this is a site also associated with a school, Chesham Grammar School.

Chiltern Hills Academy involves another potential link with a school, together with the Stags Rugby Club on the same site with sporting fields and pitches.

Chesham Moor, with the town council owned outdoor pool and small leisure centre, has adjacent readily available fields which have potential.

#### **Little Chalfont**

There have previously been references made to there being improvements made to the pavilion facilities at Westwood Park. We would like the Council to consider this a potential location for an athletics track for the District in association within any improvements proposed at the park.

#### **Chalfont St Giles**

Newland Park has long been established as a community facility and in particular as a local sporting venue with sports pitches. This site would be an ideal location for the development of an athletics track and pavilion.

In respect to the land available at Newland Park we have seen that an application has been submitted, CH/2014/1964/FA, which incorporates a number of sports, but there does not appear to have been consideration for an athletics track. Is the application for sports facilities set in stone, because the description on the application is quite broad?

We have also seen that the only hockey club in the District, Amersham and Chalfont Hockey Club, have submitted an application for a hockey pitch and club house at the Amersham and Wycombe College on Stanley Hill, CH/2014/2274/FA, a site we have mentioned as a potential option for a track.

If permission is granted for such a set-up at the college, there would be little or no requirement for a hockey pitch to be sited at Newland Park. Therefore the loss of the hockey facilities at Newland Park would not actually result in a loss because of the relocation to another site within the District.

### **Chalfont St Peter**

Within Chalfont St Peter is the Chalfont Park Sports Association clubhouse and cricket pitch. The clubhouse is also home to Amersham and Chalfont Hockey Club, but with their potential relocation to Amersham and Wycombe College in Amersham, or even if they opt to move to Newland Park, we feel this would be an appropriate locality for an athletics track and its associated facilities. There is also the provision of a cricket pitch at the proposed Newland Park development and as there is no cricket pitch at Newland Park currently, Chalfont Cricket Club would also be in a position to relocate there.

Having read Policy CS29 of the Core Strategy we understand the Council's stance on encouraging the provision of new community facilities, which we would consider to include the provision of an athletics track.

We would therefore ask the Council to seriously consider the above sites and any other sites that may also represent a similar opportunity to provide a facility that is currently non-existent within the District and would not only give the younger residents of Chiltern District the opportunity to use such facilities but those of all ages.

The Infrastructure Delivery Schedule within Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy only refers to the sports pitches at Newland Park to be maintained, and where appropriate, enhanced to give improved facilities and wider access to the community. We believe that the new Local Plan provides the perfect opportunity for the Council to be more specific as to what facilities should be included to enable wider access to the community and that this should include the provision of an athletics track.

We, as a sports club, are also of the opinion that it should not just be limited to Newland Park as being a site where Community and Leisure facilities should be safeguarded or promoted, but other appropriate sites as laid out above.

When considering the aforementioned sites and points that we have raised, we have also given thought as to how a new community facility in the form of an athletics track would impact on the local surroundings. Whilst surveys have not been undertaken as to potential impact we are aware that a concern would be in relation to lighting and in particular floodlighting near residential properties.

The sites that have been referred to are either existing sports facilities where there are no local residents adjoining the site or are open playing fields where the nearest residential properties are separated from the site by established screening from trees.

However, sports facilities such as athletics tracks can be used all year round and as such would require floodlighting to enable use of the facility throughout the year, and we understand that this could have an impact on the surrounding area.

Technology has improved over the years and floodlighting can now be designed into schemes where it takes into account the need to restrict obtrusive light, not give upward

light when the floodlights are mounted in their normal configuration as well as being designed to ensure a 'cut-off' very near the boundary so that light spillage is kept to a minimum.

However, locations for such a community facility, including an athletics track, which the Council states in Policy CS29 it will encourage, are only likely to be accommodated in Green Belt areas as they are normally located outside of the residential development boundaries so as to negate impact on residential properties. Furthermore, we know that some of the sites we have referred to are located within the Green Belt.

Wycombe District Council have, however, approved the siting of a new athletics track within the Green Belt at Little Marlow, which has now been built.

In addition, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that there is already floodlighting located at Newland Park for the hockey pitch and therefore in locations of this nature, where a community facility is already in existence, we consider a precedent to have already been set. Although we appreciate that each site would be considered on its own merits.

We would therefore ask the Council to consider clarifying its position on floodlighting in terms of the lighting levels it would consider appropriate within the Green Belt and open it up for discussion prior to submission of the new Local Plan for examination.

Given the foregoing, we would look to work with the Council in agreeing the needs for an athletics track within the District and discussing requirements to comply with the future policies of the new Local Plan so as to enable a site to be put forward for formal consideration where the appropriate floodlighting, which is an essential feature of an athletics track, can be provided so light spillage and impact on the Green Belt are kept to a minimum.

In summary our need is for an all-weather track together with a club house which would be our headquarters. At present we are training in seventeen locations, thirteen in Chiltern District and four in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Parents of young athletes in particular have the chore of transporting their children to training venues over a large area and often siblings will be training at a different venue at the same time in say, Hillingdon, Watford or Chesham.

We would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to read through our comments.

Yours sincerely,



**Tony (W A H) Molesworth**  
**Secretary**