

Matter 14: Infrastructure and Delivery

Issue 4 Question 3

- 1.1 We are unclear also about the distinction but would still want safeguards to protect Leisure facilities in the civil Parish of Ongar from being relocated outside the Parish.
- 1.2 We would appreciate clarity and openness. We still maintain that it would be against NPPF para 73 and 74 and consider that Policy D4 is worded to enable Ongar Leisure Centre to be relocated outside Ongar civil Parish with impunity. Our mistrust is based on actions and obfuscation on the [part](#) of EFDC to date
- 1.3 Whilst not repeating our Representation to Reg 19, the following offers some updates
- 1.2 Despite having NO response from EFDC to:
- Ongar Town Council's Report of March 2017
 - a letter from Save Ongar Leisure Centre Group and petition of 2,500 in July 2017
- It came as a pleasant surprise that the Submission Version of the Local Plan had removed Ongar Leisure Site from being an allocated residential site for 48 new homes!
- 1.3 Since our Representation to Reg. 19 in January 2018 and various emails from ONPCG to Portfolio Holder of Leisure Services and Leader of EFDC Council, seeking information about the future of Ongar Leisure Centre, we have had nothing but obfuscation in response. Officers and Councillors keep stating that it has not yet been decided. But it can take years to agree fund and build new Leisure facilities and we knew that
- A new venue in North Weald had been identified.
 - PFP were running down some services at Ongar to give a false report of demand e.g. a crèche; shorter times for badminton to prevent their being able to have decent competitions; no waiting lists for classes so that some classes were withdrawn if not completely full; putting up prices beyond club's means; making swimming schedules inconvenient for the Ongar Academy etc.
- 1.4 4 Global was only brought in to do rather hurried reports prior to the Submission, following Sport England's highly critical response to the Draft Plan.
- 1.5 4 Globals' reports for EFDC also stated that Ongar Leisure Centre was to close.
- 1.6 PFP only had a maintenance contract for 5 years for Ongar
- 1.7 The refurbishment for Ongar was minimal.
- 1.8 The swimming pool is at end of life and expensive to heat so there will need to be a refurbishment or new Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre shortly
- 1.9 The closure of Ongar Leisure Centre (with one of only 3 swimming pools in the district) and Epping Leisure Centre was to have part funded a new Leisure centre and swimming Pool at North Weald.
- 1.10 A new Leisure Centre for North Weald is still in the Local Plan Policy P6 O(i).

ONPCG *working with Ongar Town Council to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Ongar*

**Ongar Neighbourhood Plan
Community Group**

- 1.11 Epping Leisure is to close, but a new Leisure Centre has recently been announced to be part of the amended St Johns Road redevelopment and approved by EFDC.
- 1.12 What therefore is the intended fate of Ongar Leisure centre? Close or Refurbish/Relocate in Ongar?
- 1.13 ONPCG recent residents' survey and a similar one last autumn, overwhelmingly indicated that Ongar residents value and use the Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool but would not or would not be able to use a new one in North Weald or Epping.
- 1.14 Furthermore we know that users come to Ongar from neighbouring settlements including outside EFDC
- 1.15 We would therefore appreciate the change of wording to D4 as requested in our Representation to Reg. 19 to protect the amenity in Ongar as below:

“Amendment to Policy D4

4. ONPCG therefore propose the altering of the wording in Policy D4 section H by striking out the words

“Other than proposals which involve the comprehensive relocation of facilities...”

This section needs striking out. As it reads at present, it paves the way for EFDC to relocate Ongar's Leisure Centre outside the civil area of Ongar with no involvement of the members of Community or any of its representatives, including Councillors, Community Groups etc.

5. In addition, ONPCG insist that any 'proposals' being considered by EFDC which would result in the loss of facilities, should require not just an 'Assessment' but that the 'Assessment' should be objectively made by an independent body approved by Sport England (in the case of leisure and sports facilities) and with a 'brief' that is known to and approved of by the community including OTC and the NP Steering Group/ONPCG.11

6. These amendments to the wording of the Policy D4 are NOT minor amendments but are major amendments and fundamental to local democracy, the Localism Act. NPPF paras 73 and 74 need to be reinforced in respect of settlements such as Towns. ONPCG respectfully request that these are treated as major amendments or issues relating to D4 and dealt with by direction of the appointed Examiner/Inspector for the Local Plan

Suggested wording for Policy D4 Community, Leisure and Cultural Facilities ...

“H. Any development proposals that would result in the loss of community, leisure and cultural facilities must be accompanied by an independent objective assessment by an approved Body such as Sport England (in the case of Leisure Facilities) which

demonstrates that the facility or land is surplus to requirements and that it has been unsuccessfully marketed for a minimum of 2 years. The

assessment must also evaluate the quantity and quality of existing facilities in the locality and assess the need and value to the community. The

views of the local community on any loss must be sought as part of this assessment.”

Inserts are in red

And NOT

H. ~~Other than proposals which involve the comprehensive relocation of facilities~~, any development proposals that would result in the loss of community, leisure and cultural facilities must be accompanied by an assessment which demonstrates that the facility or land is surplus to requirements and that it has been unsuccessfully marketed for a minimum of 2 years. The assessment must also evaluate the quantity and quality of existing facilities in the locality and

assess the need and value to the community. The views of the local community on any loss must be sought as part of this assessment.”

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