

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND BETWEEN NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL AND SPORT ENGLAND

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement of common ground (SOCG) has been prepared by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Sport England in relation to the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Final Draft Borough Local Plan. It reflects the position between the two parties on a number of strategic matters and shared issues. This SOCG covers the Local Authority area of Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Statement is to document the strategic matters being considered and the progress made in cooperating to address them. It focuses on areas where there is agreement, and if appropriate those matters where work is ongoing to resolve differences. The Statement is intended to be 'live' and updated as circumstances change, and agreement occurs on any outstanding issues.
- 1.3 Sport England were consulted at each consultation stage associated with the Local Plan at Issues and Strategic Options, First Draft Local Plan and Final Draft Local Plan stages.

2. Purpose and List of Parties Involved

- 2.1 The parties involved include Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Sport England.
- 2.2 This is a statement of common ground between the parties. The statement provides a record of discussions between the parties and how far this has gone towards resolving issues. Meetings will continue on an ongoing basis and the statement of common ground may be updated accordingly.

3. Strategic Matters and Record of Agreement / Areas of Ongoing Discussion

- 3.1 The approach to the Statement of Common Ground is to follow the structure of the representations made by Sport England at Regulation 19 stage.
- 3.2 In their representation made on the Final Draft Local Plan (at Regulation 19 stage), Sport England have provided comments on the Local Plan, the following section(s) provide a summary of the comment made and reflects the current position in relation to matters raised.

Playing Pitch Strategy

- 3.3 The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Stage E Update [ED012a] identifies a need to undertake a new PPS with a particular focus on football and cricket due to changes in supply and demand since the publication of the PPS [ED012].

- 3.4 Sport England note the commitment to prepare a new PPS through 2025 but would want to see clear evidence of updating the PPS, through the establishment of a timetable and evidence of a tender brief being drafted etc.
- 3.5 Both parties agree that Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council have consulted with Sport England and relevant sporting governing bodies in drafting a tender brief to update the PPS. The timetable for the completion of the PPS is reflected in table 1 below: -

Table 1: Broad Timescales for Completion of Playing Pitch Strategy

Stage	Start	Finish
Preparing the brief and tender documents	November 2024	December 2024
Stage A: Procurement	Invitations to tender Jan 23 rd 2025 & tenders to be returned 24 th Feb 2025	Contract completion and Inception meeting by the end of March 2025
Stage B: Undertaking the Study	Summer Sports	Summer Sports
	April 2025	Sept 2025
	Winter Sports	Winter Sports
Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views	Sept 2025	January 2026
	Summer Sports	Summer Sports
	October 2025	December 2025
Stage D: Develop the strategy	Winter Sports	Winter Sports
	April 2025	Jan 2026
Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date	Jan 2026	March 2026
	March 2026	Ongoing

Strategic Objectives

- 3.6 In respect of strategic objective, SO9, Sport England have questioned whether the strategic objectives establish a hierarchy for the protection of spaces in the borough and whether such an approach is justified.
- 3.7 In response, the Council is proposing to modify the strategic objectives, to read as follows: -
- “SO-9(IX)....Maintain ~~and improve the vast majority of~~ the wide variety of open spaces ~~in urban areas~~ and improve green corridor linkages....”
- 3.8 The parties agree that the wording addresses the comments from Sport England in respect of the strategic objectives in the Local Plan.

PSD6 Health and Wellbeing

- 3.9 Sport England are supportive of the reference to Active Design within Policy PSD6 and its supporting text. However, Sport England considers that the decision maker should assess how proposals would follow the Active Design Principles. Sport England therefore considers that the policy would be more effective by requiring the applicant to demonstrate how new developments follow the Active Design Principles through the submission of a completed Active Design checklist.
- 3.10 The Council's position is that policy PSD6 'Health and Wellbeing' states that development follows Sport England Active Design Principles, and that completion of the checklist is one way that the applicant may demonstrate compliance with this requirement. However, it is proposed to make the following modification to criterion 1a of policy PSD6: Health and Wellbeing
- 3.11 Criterion 1a: Follow Sport England's Active Design Principles (as updated) **and provide evidence through the completion of an active design checklist**
- 3.12 The parties agree that the additional text addresses the comments from Sport England in respect of Local Plan policy PSD6.

SE6 Open Space, Sports and Leisure Provision

- 3.13 Sport England considers that Policy SE6 point 4 is not consistent with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 103 (a). This is due to the policy not allowing for the loss of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, following an assessment being undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements. It is noted that the supporting text for the policy, paragraph 11.33, seeks the submission of evidence where a facility is no longer meeting the needs of the community. However, this is not a policy requirement and the wording is not consistent with NPPF paragraph 103 (a).
- 3.14 The Council is in agreement with this point and would recommend including additional text in point 4, to reflect the requirements of the NPPF, as follows:-
4. Proposals which result in the loss of green / open space, sports and recreational buildings and land will only be permitted where:
- a. **An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirement** or it is demonstrated that the open space, buildings or the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better

provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable and accessible location; or

- b. The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss; or
- c. The proposed development is ancillary to the main use of the site and strengthens its function.

- 3.15 The parties agree that the additional text addresses the comments from Sport England in respect of Local Plan policy SE6.

IN1 Infrastructure

- 3.16 Sport England notes that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) makes reference to Green and Blue Infrastructure, open space and sports though policy IN1 only refers to Green Infrastructure and maintenance. Sport England therefore consider for consistency the wording in Policy IN1 should be amended to align with the IDP.

- 3.17 The Council agree with this position and have proposed to add 'and blue' to criteria 5 of policy IN1 Infrastructure.

- 3.18 The parties agree that the additional text addresses the comments from Sport England in respect of Local Plan policy IN1.

KS3 Land at Blackbank Road

- 3.19 Sport England have objected to the allocation of this site with no replacement provision proposed. Should the allocation be retained then there should be criteria for policy requiring that the site is replaced in line with the requirements of policy SE6. The Council's position is that criteria 12 of policy KS3 considers alternative sports provision on the site. The policy also recognises that development should reflect masterplanning proposals for the wider Knutton area which anticipates improvements at the Wammy, a sports field in close proximity to the site, where changing rooms are to be built to improve a popular sports field. These improvements are intended to be complete in February 2025.

- 3.20 Sport England consider that criteria 12 fails to set out that alternative sports provision **will** be provided on the site. In relation to wider off site improvements no assessment has been undertaken as to whether this would meet NPPF paragraph 104a i.e. the playing field land is surplus to requirement or NPPF paragraph 104b that the off site works will be equivalent in quality to that proposed to be lost.

KS17 Knutton Recreation Centre, Knutton Lane

- 3.21 Sport England have objected to the allocation as drafted as no replacement provision proposed in line with policy SE6 and with it not being demonstrated that the site is surplus to requirement. Planning permission has recently been granted on the site for 55 dwellings with associated access (reference 23/00771/FUL).

TB19 Land South of Newcastle Golf Club

- 3.22 Sport England have requested criteria be added to policy TB19 to ensure that a ball strike risk assessment should be undertaken and any mitigation identified as being required then this should be implemented to ensure that any impacts on the adjacent golf course are mitigated.
- 3.23 The Council agree to this position and have proposed to add an additional criterion (13) to make reference to the need for a ball strike assessment, as follows:-

“13. To prepare a ball strike assessment to assess impact on Newcastle Golf Club and implement any recommended measures identified”

- 3.24 The parties agree that the additional text addresses the comments from Sport England in respect of Local Plan policy TB19.

BL18 Land at Clough Hall

- 3.25 Sport England have objected to the allocation of the site as no replacement is proposed and it not being demonstrated that the site is surplus to requirement. Should the allocation be retained a criteria should be inserted requiring that the playing field site is replaced in line with the requirements of Policy SE6 to ensure that the allocation is justified and consistent with NPPF paragraph 103. The Council's position is that criterion 8 of the policy requires the retention and improvement of playing pitches on the site, with appropriate ancillary facilities for football use.
- 3.26 Sport England maintains its position that the allocation will result in the loss of playing field land (not just the pitches marked out most recently) which has not been demonstrated to be surplus to requirement nor replaced (at least equivalent in quantity and quality) in line with NPPF paragraph 104 (previously NPPF paragraph 103).

TK6 Land at Coalpit Hill, Talke


- 3.27 Sport England have objected to the allocation as no replacement provision is proposed in line with SE6 and with it not being demonstrated that the site is surplus to requirement. Should the allocation be retained then a criteria should be inserted into policy TK6 requiring that the playing field is replaced in line with the requirements of Policy SE6, ensuring that the allocation is justified and consistent with NPPF paragraph 103. The Council's position is that the site is a lapsed site previously associated with education use from 2008.

3.28 Sport England maintains its position that it has not been demonstrated that the loss playing field land has been justified in line with NPPF paragraph 104 (previously NPPF paragraph 103).

4. Signatories and Governance Arrangements

4.1 In terms of governance, the authorities agree:

- that in response to any new evidence / changes in circumstances, informal discussions will occur between the parties on the issues referred to in this SoCG in the form of officer level meetings with escalation to more senior levels where necessary.
- that this SoCG will be reviewed when required including adding additional issues that may be identified through the process of forming the local plan;

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Name: Allan Clarke
Position: Planning Policy Manager
Date Agreed: 13.03.2025
Signature: 

Sport England
Name: Rajvir Bahey
Position: Planning Manager
Date Agreed: 13/03/2025
Signature: 