

Scope and Objectives of Phase II of the Leisure Development Programme

INTRODUCTION

In November 2015 when members agreed to Phase I of the Leisure Development Programme (LDP), it was also agreed that Phase II of the LDP would focus on Kenilworth and the north of the district. At that point, no timescale was put to Phase II as it was very much dependent on the adoption of the Local Plan and some further clarity was required around a number of related projects that involved potential partners including Kenilworth Town Council, Kenilworth School, Kenilworth Wardens, Kenilworth Rugby Football Club and Warwick University.

Officers have been working closely with these partners and others over the last 2 years to consider opportunities for bringing together the aspirations of these organisations with those of Warwick District Council to produce an integrated “Vision for Kenilworth” that would deliver a wide range of sports and leisure facilities for the current and future population of this part of the district.

We are now at a point where we need to gather together the various projects that have been developing with our partner organisations and work up an integrated vision and a range of options in advance of consultation with partners and members of the public.

Phase I of the LDP has seen significant investment in WDC leisure facilities in both Warwick and Leamington Spa. The public leisure centres at Newbold Comyn and St Nicholas Park have benefitted from over £15million investment to refurbish and expand the provision, make them fit for purpose for the future, and provide appropriate services for the growing population in the south of the District (Appendix E) . It is now the turn of Kenilworth and the surrounding area to consider what is required and to enjoy the opportunity to deliver on its aspirations that will, on completion of Phase II, leave the north of the District with a tremendous range of modern sports facilities for the foreseeable future.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES/CONTEXT

WDC Fit for the Future:

1. Health & Wellbeing

The proposal to upgrade and expand the leisure provision in Kenilworth aligns perfectly with the Health strand of the FFF. Like Phase I of the Leisure Development Programme there should be a focus on providing facilities that will deliver on the objectives of the Sport England Strategy ‘Towards an Active Nation’ which highlights the vital role that sport and physical activity can play in the health of communities. The Strategy explicitly focuses on the need to get those who are currently “inactive” involved in activity, and the need to have quality facilities to support this objective. It is essential that facilities offer a range of provision that suits all sectors of the community and is designed in such a way that makes the facilities attractive and easily used.

2. Cleaner, Greener, Safe

There are opportunities in the refurbishment of the existing facilities, and in the construction of any new facilities, to ensure that they are designed in a way that maximises the sustainability of the facilities, and allows customers to access them in a sustainable way. This will latter point will be of particular relevance when considering modes of transport to Abbey Fields and Castle Farm facilities where car parking is limited; opportunities to encourage walking and cycling to these facilities will be explored as part of the project.

3. Infrastructure, Enterprise and Employment

These proposed projects will support the growth of the leisure market within the local economy and provide new sports and leisure facilities for the growing size of the population in Kenilworth. Early engagement with colleagues in Development Services and partners including Heritage England will ensure that the projects contribute to strong development in sensitive locations through the construction of attractive and appropriate leisure facilities.

WDC Local Plan:

The newly adopted Local Plan (September 2017) provides the long-term spatial vision for development in the District until 2029 and sets out the Council's policies and proposals to support development.

Significant growth is identified for Kenilworth in the Local Plan, with nearly 2,000 new dwellings being allocated across 6 sites together with 8 hectares of new employment land, education facilities including a new secondary school and primary school and new sites for relocated outdoor sports facilities.

Much of the growth is proposed to the eastern side of the town on land released from the Green Belt. Around 1,400 dwellings are allocated in this area on two adjoining strategic housing sites along with the employment land and education provision. A new Kenilworth School would replace the existing secondary school which is split across two sites and those existing sites are allocated for housing. Other facilities are likely to be provided to the eastern side of Kenilworth including a new primary school, community facilities and public open space/play facilities and there will be a need for new and enhanced highway infrastructure to support the development.

As the existing Kenilworth Rugby Club and Kenilworth Wardens sites are allocated for housing in the Local Plan, new sites are allocated at Castle Farm (to the west of the town) and land east of Warwick Road (to the south) for outdoor sports provision, although they remain in the Green Belt.

Kenilworth Development Brief

In order to guide development and ensure it is appropriately designed with the necessary infrastructure and delivered in a comprehensive manner, Development Services are preparing a Development Brief for the strategic sites to the eastern side of Kenilworth. It is anticipated that this

will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document late Autumn 2018, with a period of public consultation prior to adoption.

Kenilworth Town Council Neighbourhood Plan:

In developing plans and options for Phase II, officers will liaise with Kenilworth Town Council (KTC) to consider the results of the consultation undertaken by KTC as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is acknowledged that transport provision is a key element when considering leisure provision as is working in partnership with sports clubs and other local organisations who may wish to have an input into this project.

WDC Indoor Sports Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy:

In 2014 a facility audit was undertaken by Neil Allen Associates (NAA) to establish whether the range of leisure facilities was appropriate for the District, and if this provision would be able to meet the future needs and demands of the local community. The audit concluded that when using the Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM), the existing provision was largely in the right place and was providing a suitable range of activities and facilities for the people of Warwick District. There was no evidence to suggest that any of the facilities were under-used nor that there were parts of the District that did not have reasonable access to facilities. The model also took account of the anticipated growth of population in the District and at the time of assessment, used the then Local Plan figures to calculate demand. The audit recommended that the present facilities were retained, but that investment was made to bring the facilities up to modern standards and extended to provide additional health and fitness provision and an additional sports hall (located in Leamington). Based on these findings Phase I of the Leisure Development Programme was established in Warwick and Leamington, with a decision to address provision in Kenilworth on the completion of Phase I.

Given the constantly evolving nature of development in and around Kenilworth, an update of the audit was commissioned in 2015, again using the Facility Planning Model, and concluded that despite the additional housing growth, and the increased provision planned by both Warwick University and City of Coventry, there was no evidence to suggest that the approach for Phase II should be changed ie to base provision on existing facilities but with modernisation and expansion as appropriate.

Work is underway at the time of writing this report to update the Playing Pitch Strategy based on current data, and to refresh the Indoor Facilities Strategy to reflect the latest development sites in the north of the district and the aspirations of a number of Kenilworth based sports clubs. The updated strategies should be available later in 2018 and will inform Phase II as it evolves.

OBJECTIVES OF THE LEISURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In 2013, prior to the Council committing to investment in its leisure facilities, Councillors agreed a Vision and a series of Principles to underpin future leisure provision in the district. It is proposed that this vision and principles should also set the context for Phase II.

That the Council was committed to providing a Sports and Leisure service which delivers:

- Local Facilities, (built and playing pitches), for all sectors of the community.
- Modern Facilities that are fit for purpose, with flexible spaces
- Value for Money, fair pricing, and long term financial stability
- Sustainable model for provision
 - o Promoting the service to current and new users
 - o Engaging current and new users in healthy lifestyle choices
 - o Supporting continued attendance and commitment
 - o Developing opportunities to advance and compete.

Phase I of the LDP has seen significant investment by the Council in leisure provision in Leamington and Warwick, and now it is the turn of Kenilworth to embark on an equally ambitious programme of work that will result in an integrated model of leisure provision, combining local authority, education and local sports club facilities for the benefit of the growing population of the north of the district.

As described in the accompanying report Everyone Active will be involved in the design and development of options for Phase II. When a definite proposal is available for consideration, Everyone Active will recalculate their income and expenditure on the basis of the new opportunities, and inform the Council what the proposed changes would do to the sum paid to the Council. If the Council agrees to this change to the sum paid to the Council, then a revised financial deal will be agreed between the Council and Everyone Active. If the Council does not agree to the change proposed, then it can ask Everyone Active to re-consider, it can change the refurbishment proposals or it can decide not to go ahead with the refurbishment.

PROPOSED KEY ELEMENTS OF PHASE II

Overall Vision:

- The vision for Kenilworth as a whole should be aspirational in order to deliver provision that is fit for purpose for the foreseeable future.
- Proposals should not assume existing facilities remain as now with extra facilities/space bolted on. Proposals should consider how best to use the space available to us; this may involve a change in how space is currently used.
- Proposals should look at provision across Kenilworth rather than focussing on WDC assets in isolation. However, when considering investment, the Programme will concentrate on WDC assets and how they can be improved.
- “Health and Fitness” provision needs to be extended. Increased gym and studio space is required, but there are many ways that this can be achieved. This may include a public access gym at the school to serve the residents at the north of the town. Given the highly competitive health & fitness market, discussions should be held with Everyone Active regarding the “type” of gym that would best suit the demographic, remaining aware that some users do not want large gyms.
- What commercial opportunities could there be within any new facilities in addition to those currently operated by Everyone Active, that would increase the return from the facilities?
Eg: cafes, commercial crèche; treatment rooms

Abbey Fields:

- Proposals should look at the whole park and consider what could be achieved for the park and the facilities within it, whilst being aware of the constraints. The facilities to consider should include the swimming pools, tennis courts, play areas, parking, cycle route, and should also consider options to add new facilities to this site eg Visitor Centre.
- Abbey Fields swimming provision could be expanded to include a teaching pool, flexible water space, a smaller outdoor fun pool/splash park. Consider family usage in addition to lane swimming and teaching.
- Should also include the opportunities for expanded café provision at this site serving the leisure centre and the park.
- What “dry” activities would work at Abbey Fields alongside the swimming?
- Is there an opportunity to add some flexible indoor space at Abbey Fields that could double up as teaching room, studio, meeting room?
- Consider bringing the current park public toilets into the new building, enabling the quality of the public toilets to be improved and better maintained and supervised.

Castle Farm Recreation Centre and sports fields:

- Proposals should look at the whole area including the leisure centre, petanque terrain, skateboard ramp, play area, football pitches, Scouts area, car parking and consider how best to use the area in future (in parallel with the proposals from the Wardens).
- Kenilworth Wardens proposals anticipate a planning application in early 2019, construction commencing in 2019, and the club moving from Glasshouse Park in autumn 2021 to start the 2021 football season at Castle Farm.
- Proposals should consider if there is an opportunity to move the Scouts from Castle Farm, and initial discussions have taken place with the Scouts who are not opposed to this in principle providing that they are no worse off than at present. This will depend on land ownership issues and agreement with 3rd parties. This would widen options with the Castle Farm building either in its current form or as a completely remodelled site.

Kenilworth School – new site:

- Relocation of Kenilworth School is a key element of the Kenilworth Development Brief – see above
- Provision for community access at Kenilworth School needs to be no less than is currently enjoyed at Meadow Community Sports Centre and other school spaces. There is an opportunity for this to be significantly enhanced, dependant on the availability of finance.
- Discussions continue with the school and Arup to agree the layout of the site to make the sports facilities optimal for community use as well as school use.

Local sports Clubs – including but not limited to: Kenilworth Wardens, Kenilworth RFC, Kenilworth Tennis and Squash Club, Kenilworth Town FC.

- The project will seek to consider the overall provision of football facilities in Kenilworth, working with local clubs to make best use of existing facilities and consider opportunities to develop provision in line with the Playing Pitch Strategy. This will include the work already underway with Wardens Football Club but will include other local clubs too.
- Whilst not strictly in Kenilworth, the project will also include the ongoing dialogue with Khalsa Hockey Club and the clubs emerging plans on the Bericote Lane site to make it more of a community facility. The Council are keen to explore opportunities to include community use as part of this project and will continue to work with the club to this end.
- In the same way as considering the wider provision of football, the project will also look at tennis provision across the town and investigate opportunities to improve provision and make it more accessible to all sectors of the community.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Design statements:

- The design stage of Phase II is an opportunity to get Councillors and local people excited about the opportunities that exist within the sites and understand what future provision could look like. If individuals can see what they would be getting at the end of the project this may assist when difficult decisions about car parking and cycle access for example are required.
- A design statement will be developed for each site at the next stage of the project. This will describe the key design principles, the proposed facility mix', design features, how it would be used, and how it would work with the rest of the site to make it a destination rather than just stand alone leisure centre.

Transport considerations

- There is an opportunity to review the car parking strategies at Abbey Fields and Castle Farm as part of Phase II. This would include raising awareness of other car parks that could be used by customers of the leisure facilities (eg Abbey End, Kenilworth Castle etc) in addition to those on site at Abbey Fields and Castle Farm.
- We should extend this work to consider cycle routes and connectivity in and around the town, walking routes and signposting etc to encourage sustainable travel options .May need to include incentives for leisure centre customers using the car parks further away or use of cycles to deter use of on site car parking.

Heritage constraints

- Abbey Fields - as Members will be aware the swimming pool is within the site of a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore any proposals to extend or develop this

site will need to be done so in liaison with Heritage England and the appropriate consents sought before any proposals can be considered viable.

- Castle Farm – likewise, development within the site of Castle Farm and adjoin public open space is also of a sensitive nature given its historical significance and proximity to Kenilworth Castle. Therefore similar caution will be required in developing proposals for this site.