# **Land West of Park Farm, Thornbury (APP/P011999/W/21/3288019)**Response Note to SGC Open Space Note (October 2022)

The Note produced by SCG entitled ‘Note On Outdoor Sports Facilities (OSF)’ (referred to as the ‘Note’) provides the evidential basis upon which the local planning authority contend there is a shortfall in the current provision of formal open space within Thornbury to meet the needs arising from the development. We do not consider that this represents robust and credible evidence sufficient to satisfy the tests for planning obligations prescribed in Section 122 of the CIL regulations. On the contrary, we contend that the financial contribution proposed by the local planning authority is not *“necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms”*.

The Note prepared by SGC does not change our previous position on this matter. We have the following comments to make on the note which support that conclusion:

1. Page 2 of the Note points to Core Strategy Policy CS24. This requires a minimum of 1.6ha/1,000 population of Outdoor Sports Facilities (16sq.m./person) where there is not capacity in existing local accessible provision to serve additional residents from new developments. We do not contest the wording of the policy but instead contend that there is sufficient capacity and therefore no policy basis upon which to seek a financial contribution.
2. Page 4 of the Note contains the audit of provision. The list provided excludes a number of other facilities which area available for use by the community and/or sports clubs. These include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Sports Provision** | **Comments** |
| Manorbrook Primary School | 1no. Junior 11v11 pitch | Available according to the website pitchfinder.org.uk and also referenced in the SGC Playing Pitch Strategy (September 2020). |
| Marlwood School Playing Pitches | 3no. Adult 11v11 pitches | The audit recognises the availability of the artificial pitch but a recent press statement indicates that grass pitches are also now available for community use. This represents an additional resource to that accounted for within the SGC Playing Pitch Strategy (September 2020). |
| Castle School Sixth Form Centre | 1no. Adult 11v11 pitch | Available according to the website pitchfinder.org.uk and also referenced in the SGC Playing Pitch Strategy (September 2020). |
| Alveston Jubilee Playing Field | 1no. Adult, 1no. Junior and 1no. Cricket pitches | Available according to the SGC Playing Pitch Strategy (September 2020). |
| The Ship Field Cricket Ground | 1no. Cricket Pitch | Identified on the POS audit map on page 5 of the Note and also available according to the SGC Playing Pitch Strategy (September 2020). |
| Thornbury Town FC | 1 Adult pitch | Available for club use only but actively seeking to expand membership. |

If the additional provision above, which includes a number of large playing pitches, is factored into the audit this will substantially increase the quantum of provision within 8.1km of the development.

1. The reason on-site provision is not proposed is that the evidence shows there is no demand for such provision due to the availability of facilities within the local area.
2. There are no specific projects identified for which funding is being sought. All that has been made available in the Note is a summary of a brief survey undertaken by the Council of Thornbury Lawn Tennis Club, Thornbury Football Club and Thornbury Rugby Club.

Very limited, if any, reliance should be placed on the outcome of a brief survey of these sports clubs. There is every incentive for the clubs to advise that there is pressure on existing facilities in the context of there potentially being money available to expand or enhance their existing provision. It is not at all surprising that they would therefore say ‘yes’. Furthermore, a simple question of *‘Do you have any funding in place for these improvements?’* does not reveal whether the club has sought funding from external bodies, whether it applied for funding and has been rejected etc.

1. Contrary to the position now adopted by SGC, the only published evidence in the Playing Pitch Strategy indicates that there is no shortfall of pitches within Thornbury. That conclusion was reached without the inclusion of the addition playing fields to be delivered at the Park Farm development. Curiously, there is no mention of the Playing Pitch Strategy within the Note.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons set out in this Note, we do not consider the evidence has been presented by the Council justifies a need for additional playing pitch provision to serve the needs arising from the development. If however the Inspector disagrees with this conclusion, there is a financial contribution contained in the draft Section 106 which would overcome the Council’s objection.