



# Woodside Playing Fields Masterplan - Consultation Report

Watford Borough Council

October 18



## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In November 2017, the Council appointed The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) to develop a masterplan and feasibility study for the creation of a strategic sports hub at Woodside Playing Fields in accordance with its Sports Facilities Strategy 2015-2025.
2. The Council's Cabinet met in June 2018 to review the draft masterplan and approved the further development of the outline proposals including consultation with stakeholders and the wider public. SLC has subsequently been appointed to manage this consultation on behalf of the Council.
3. A consultation plan was developed through discussion with the Council which identified the various stakeholders and agreed the methods of engagement. The stakeholder groups are categorised as follows:
  - Key occupiers - clubs or organisations currently located on the site and operating through lease arrangements or management contracts with the Council
  - Key stakeholders – interested parties such as local sports clubs, schools, ward Councillors, National Governing Bodies of sport and Sport England
  - Wider stakeholders – community groups and organisations and resident associations
  - General public.
4. The key conclusions arising from the consultation are as follows:
  - a) The consultation exercise was developed in partnership with the Council and delivered through a combination of face to face meetings, email correspondence and telephone discussions with identified occupiers and stakeholders and through drop-in sessions and an online questionnaire promoted to the wider public through the Council's website and social media channels.
  - b) Resident clubs on the site including the cricket, boxing and athletics clubs are supportive of the overarching principle of the masterplan to develop a strategic sports hub. Other key occupiers of the site including the Council's leisure operator, SLM and grounds maintenance contractor, Veolia also welcome the proposals.
  - c) The proposals are welcomed by Hertfordshire FA and the England and Wales Cricket Board but opposed by the England Indoor Bowls Association due to the proposed removal of the indoor bowls centre.
  - d) Sport England supports the principle of developing a strategic sports hub in accordance with the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy but would like evidence to justify the need for the proposed alternative use of the indoor bowls centre and to better understand whether the anticipated benefits of such facilities would outweigh the impact associated with the loss of indoor bowls.
  - e) Consultation with local gymnastics and performing arts clubs has revealed strong demand for additional indoor space and a lack of suitable alternative facilities. This feedback supports the proposed alternative use of the indoor bowls centre.
  - f) The online questionnaire generated 448 responses, with a high level of engagement from residents within 15 minutes of the site (68% of responses).
  - g) The results of the online questionnaire show a positive response from the general public to the draft masterplan proposals with 59% of respondents being either supportive or very supportive compared to 24% being unsupportive.

- h) There is considerable opposition to the draft masterplan from members and supporters of Watford Indoor Bowls Club. This was manifested most clearly through feedback provided at the public drop-in session at Woodside Leisure Centre.
- 5. The Council may wish to consider how they intend to report back the results of the consultation to stakeholders and the wider public and to advise them how this process will be used to further develop the plans for the site.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Watford has a great collection of parks and open spaces and these are an important part of what makes Watford an inviting place to live, work and visit. Watford Borough Council is implementing its Sports Facilities Strategy (2015-25) by focusing on the development of sports provision at one of the Strategic Sports Sites identified in the Strategy, Woodside Playing Fields.

1.1.2 In November 2017, the Council appointed The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) to develop a masterplan and feasibility study for the creation of new and improved sports and community facilities at Woodside Playing Fields.

1.1.3 The Council's Cabinet met in June 2018 to review the draft masterplan and approved the further development of the outline proposals including consultation with stakeholders and the wider public.

### 1.2 Our Terms of Reference

1.2.1 SLC has been appointed to manage the consultation exercise on behalf of the Council to provide members of the public and other key stakeholders with an opportunity to comment and feedback on the draft masterplan.

1.2.2 Key requirements of the Council's brief are as follows:

- Detailed and further engagement with stakeholders, playing field users and town-wide residents / visitors
- A consultation report summarising the comments received during the consultation exercise for the Council to consider further.

### 1.3 The Structure of our Report

1.3.1 The remaining sections of this report have been structured to meet the Council's requirements included in the brief, whilst ensuring a concise and accessible report setting out the core findings.

**Table 1: Report Structure**

Section	Key Content or Output	
2	Overview of Consultation Process	A description of the approach to the consultation
3	Stakeholders / Consultees	List of consultees engaged with during the process
4	Summary of Consultation with Key Occupiers and Stakeholders	Summary feedback from consultation with key occupiers and other stakeholders
5	Summary of Public Consultation	Summary feedback from the public drop-in sessions and results from the public online questionnaire
6	Conclusions and Recommended Next Steps	Key conclusions arising from the consultation exercise and some recommended next steps for the Council

1.3.2 Supporting information is included in an Appendix.

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## **2 OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION PROCESS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2.1.1 This section describes the approach and methodology adopted for the consultation process that was undertaken between the 6 August 2018 and 20 September 2018.

2.1.2 The principal objective of the consultation was to seek views from stakeholders and the general public on the draft masterplan proposals for Woodside Playing Fields.

### **2.2 Consultation Plan**

2.2.1 A consultation plan was designed through discussion with Watford Borough Council's Community and Environmental Services Team and Communications and Engagement Team. This was critical to ensure all parties agreed the approach and understood each other's roles and responsibilities in delivering the exercise.

2.2.2 The consultation plan included the following key elements:

- Identification of key occupiers / stakeholders on site and wider stakeholders including contact details for community and resident organisations and 'harder to reach' groups
- Agreed methods of consultation with these identified stakeholders including a combination of face to face meetings and email / telephone consultation
- Agreed approach to the wider public consultation through development of a 'micro-site' web page hosted by the Council containing masterplan drawings and supporting information and a link to the online questionnaire
- Agreed dates and venues for public consultation drop-in sessions
- Agreed methods of promoting the consultation including roles and responsibilities.

### **2.3 Key Occupiers/Stakeholders Engagement**

2.3.1 Engagement was undertaken with current occupiers of the site to provide existing user groups with an opportunity to feedback on the draft masterplan.

2.3.2 This engagement was carried out through a series of face-to-face meetings. It was designed to ensure the views of existing occupiers were fully understood and provided them with an opportunity to relay any concerns or issues about the scheme.

2.3.3 Other key stakeholders, including local schools, clubs and National Governing Bodies of Sport, were sent the draft masterplan and supporting information via email and invited to provide feedback via email or telephone. They were also provided with the link to the Council web page to complete the online questionnaire and promote it through their own communication channels.

2.3.4 The results of the engagement with key occupiers and stakeholders is described in Section 4 of this report.

### **2.4 Wider Public Engagement**

2.4.1 The Council were keen to seek the views of the wider public, including current users and non-users of the site and provide an opportunity for them to feedback on the draft masterplan.

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- 2.4.2 A short, user-friendly online questionnaire was designed by SLC in consultation with the Council, which was hosted on a dedicated web page, [yourwoodside.co.uk](http://yourwoodside.co.uk). In addition to a link to the questionnaire, the web page provided background information on the development of the masterplan, electronic copies of the masterplan itself including detailed plans for the Community Sports Hub and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. Hard copies of questionnaires were also available upon request.
- 2.4.3 The questionnaire asked a series of questions about how often the respondent visits Woodside Playing Fields, what they do there and how they travel there. A range of pre-selected answers were provided for respondents to tick together with a 'free text' box for them to provide other detail in response to the questions. The questionnaire went on to invite a score from respondents on their level of support for each of the facility options, the location and layout of these facility options and the draft masterplan as a whole. A scoring scale from 1 (unsupportive) to 4 (very supportive) was used.
- 2.4.4 The online questionnaire was available to complete between 20 August 2018 to 20 September 2018 and details of the results are provided in Section 5 of this report.
- 2.4.5 SLC also arranged two separate public drop-in sessions which were designed to provide an opportunity for members of the public to view the plans up close and discuss the rationale behind the proposals with members of SLC's project team. These took place at INTU Watford Shopping Centre on Wednesday 29 August 2018 and Woodside Leisure Centre on Wednesday 12th September 2018.
- 2.4.6 Information regarding the online questionnaire and public drop-in sessions was promoted on the homepage carousel of the Council's website, distributed through its social media channels and sent directly to a variety of community groups and organisations. Posters promoting the public engagement were also displayed at Woodside Playing Fields and the nearby Woodside Leisure Centre.
- 2.4.7 The Council's Facebook analytics revealed that the multiple posts promoting the online questionnaire accumulated a total of 137 likes. Additionally, the draft masterplan drawings on the Council's dedicated webpage received a total of 468 views.
- 2.4.8 The Council's leisure operating partner, Everyone Active, also sent emails with the link to the online questionnaire to c.15,000 local users registered on their database.



### 3 STAKEHOLDERS / CONSULTEES

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section provides details of the different groups of stakeholders and consultees that were engaged with throughout the consultation period.

3.1.2 These groups are categorised as follows:

- Key occupiers - clubs or organisations currently located on the site and operating through lease arrangements or management contracts with the Council
- Key stakeholders – interested parties such as local sports clubs, schools, ward Councillors, National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and Sport England
- Wider stakeholders – community groups and organisations, resident associations
- General public.

#### 3.2 Consultation with key occupiers

3.2.1 Table 2 provides a list of the key occupiers that attended face to face meetings with SLC on 22 August 2018 in order to understand the rationale behind the development of the draft masterplan and to provide feedback.

**Table 2: Stakeholder Engagement – List of key occupiers**

Club	Names of consultees
Watford Town Cricket Club	Richard Bayliss (Club Chairman) Andrew Canning (Club Vice-Chairman / Secretary) Helen Canning (Club Secretary) Christine Southam (President)
Watford Boxing Club	Kenny Walker (Club Chairman)
OWLS Outdoor Bowls Club	Audrey Watts (Club Chairman) Sandy Wornham (Club Secretary / Treasurer)
Veolia (Grounds Maintenance Contractor)	John Priestly (Horticultural Manager)
Watford Harriers Athletics Club	Richard Parles (Club Chairman) Nick Jones (Club Vice-Chairman)
SLM (Leisure Operator of Woodside LC)	Karl Miles (Contracts Manager) Gary Foley (Woodside LC Centre Manager)

#### 3.3 Consultation with key stakeholders

3.3.1 Table 3 provides a list of key stakeholders that were invited to provide feedback on the draft masterplan.

**Table 3: Stakeholder Engagement – List of key stakeholders**

Organisation / Club	Name
FA/Herts FA	Karl Lingham, County Development Manager

Organisation / Club	Name
England and Wales Cricket Board	Jenni Jones, Regional Manager
Sport England	Roy Warren, Planning Manager
England Indoor Bowls Association	Steve Rodwell, Development Manager
Watford Sunday Football League	David Moxon, Secretary
The Dan Tien Performing Arts Studios	Amy Lazzarini
Watford Gymnastics Club	Nickie O’Sullivan
Dolphina Gymnastics Club	Teresa O’Neill
Garston Manor School	Christine deGraft-Hanson, Headteacher
Francis Coombe Academy	Deborah Warwick, Principal
Ward Councillors (Woodside ward)	Councillor Saffery, Councillor Cavinder and Councillor Collett

### 3.4 Wider Stakeholder Groups

3.4.1 Table 4 provides a list of community groups and organisations, within the borough, that were notified of the drop-in public consultation sessions and sent the online questionnaire to complete and send out to their users and members.

**Table 4: Wider Stakeholder Engagement – List of community groups / organisations**

Name
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils and Staff at West Herts College</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Groups and Organisations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Watford</li> <li>• Drum</li> <li>• Guidepost</li> <li>• Central Watford Mosque</li> <li>• Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha</li> <li>• Multi-cultural Community Centre</li> <li>• North Watford Mosque</li> <li>• Polish Community</li> <li>• WACA</li> <li>• Watford Senior Citizens Forum</li> <li>• Watford BC</li> <li>• Citizens Advice Bureau</li> <li>• W3RT CVS</li> <li>• Watford Community Housing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Groups and Organisations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mencap (Watford)</li> <li>• Mind</li> <li>• Phab</li> <li>• Sea Lions</li> <li>• Shopmobility</li> </ul>

Name
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Springboard</li> <li>• Talking newspapers</li> <li>• Watford Day Service</li> <li>• Watford Sheltered Workshop</li> <li>• Watford Social Centre for the Blind</li> <li>• Watford Latin American association</li> <li>• Associazione Lucani Di Watford</li> <li>• Herts Asian Women's Association</li> <li>• Polish Saturday School</li> <li>• Portuguese Community</li> <li>• Watford Chinese Association</li> <li>• Watford Hindu Group</li> <li>• Watford Indian Association</li> <li>• Watford Muslim Youth Centre Trust</li> <li>• Watford Nepalese Association</li> <li>• Bridge of Peace</li> <li>• Watford's Women's Centre</li> <li>• David Salter's Almshouses</li> <li>• Grow</li> <li>• New Hope</li> <li>• One YMCA</li> <li>• Watford Foodbank</li> <li>• Carers in Herts</li> <li>• Christians across Watford</li> <li>• Courtlands Residents Associations</li> <li>• Derby Road Baptist Church</li> <li>• First Church of Christ Scientist</li> <li>• Harebreaks Residents Association</li> <li>• Holyrood Church</li> <li>• Holywell Community Centre</li> <li>• Kingswood Residents Association</li> <li>• Leavesden Community Group</li> <li>• Leavesden Community Hub</li> <li>• Leavesden Road Baptist Church</li> <li>• LGBT community</li> <li>• Lemarie Centre</li> <li>• Meriden Community Centre</li> <li>• Meriden Residents Association</li> <li>• Quakers</li> <li>• Radlett Road Community Association</li> <li>• Redeemed Christian Church of God</li> <li>• Ritaj Multicultural Community Organisation</li> <li>• Salvation Army</li> <li>• Signpost</li> <li>• Soul Survivor</li> </ul>

Name
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St George's Day Charity Club</li> <li>• St Helen's Church</li> <li>• St John's Church</li> <li>• St Mary's Church</li> <li>• St Matthew's Church</li> <li>• University of Third Age</li> <li>• Victoria House Day Centre</li> <li>• Watford Synagogue</li> <li>• Watford Humanists</li> <li>• Watford Inter-faith Organisation</li> <li>• Wellspring Church</li> <li>• West Watford Community Association</li> <li>• Woodside Community Association</li> <li>• YMCA</li> </ul>
<p><b>Watford Residents Associations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary Way Action Group</li> <li>• Callowland Residents Group</li> <li>• Cassiobury Resident's Association</li> <li>• Cassiobury Triangle Residents Association.</li> <li>• Central Town Resident's Assoc.</li> <li>• Courtlands Resident's Association</li> <li>• Crosfield Court Resident's Association</li> <li>• Edward Amey Residents Association</li> <li>• Friends of Harebreaks Wood</li> <li>• Kingswood Residents Association</li> <li>• Leavesden Community Group</li> <li>• Leggatts &amp; Foxhill Residents Association</li> <li>• Meriden Resident's Association</li> <li>• Nascot Resident's Association</li> <li>• OVEG</li> <li>• Radlett Road Residents Association</li> <li>• Ridge Residents Association</li> <li>• Sherwoods Area Rep.</li> <li>• Vicarage Residents Association</li> <li>• Watford Fields Residents Association</li> <li>• Woodside Resident's Association</li> </ul>

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## **4 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH KEY OCCUPIERS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 This section outlines the key findings of the consultation with key occupiers and stakeholders.
- 4.1.2 Face to face meetings were held on site with key occupiers and a combination of email and telephone consultation was undertaken with wider stakeholders.

### **4.2 Key Occupiers**

#### ***Watford Town Cricket Club***

- 4.2.1 The club reported frequent vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the site, although there is much less anti-social behaviour during the winter months. CCTV would be required to help mitigate this.
- 4.2.2 The club made reference to a public right of way across the cricket field which has subsequently been re-routed in agreement with the Council. Despite the re-routing, the club still experiences issues with people walking across the outfield.
- 4.2.3 The club noted that the existing changing rooms for football are under-utilised. The club would make good use the cricket changing rooms in the new building but are concerned that the remaining changing rooms will not be well used due to a lack of demand. It was noted by SLC that the under-utilisation of the existing changing rooms was likely to be due to their condition rather than a lack of demand. Larger, refurbished changing provision would likely be used more and the wider improvements to the site would make it a more attractive venue for football clubs, leading to increased use.
- 4.2.4 The club has a large proportion of Muslim members that do not use the bar. Its members would however be interested in hiring the community hall for non-sporting events, such as Indian Weddings, and would need a larger space for this. A larger and improved communal space would also be used by the club to increase the number of mid-week events and clubs.
- 4.2.5 The size of the proposed community hall (currently designed as 100 person capacity) is considered too small for the needs of the club, as one of its key income streams is from private functions. The club would like a space that can seat between 130-150 people and reported that they have had several requests in the last few months for event space for 150 people (currently 80 can be seated in existing clubhouse). SLC suggested that the club maintains a record of such requests in order to demonstrate this demand.
- 4.2.6 The club has no concern regarding the cricket changing rooms being located on the first floor and when talked through the plans, were happy with the general layout and accommodation provided. Some elements e.g. size and location of bar store, were queried but SLC advised that these can be dealt with as part of the detailed design stage and the club would be involved in further discussions at that stage.
- 4.2.7 The club advised that the proposed gaps in the perimeter wall closest to the proposed café and new public courtyard would be a safety hazard. The boundary line is close to the pitch and balls are regularly hit onto the existing maintenance shed and therefore there is a danger of cricket balls being hit into the café and courtyard space.

- 4.2.8 Large netting has been installed at the southern end of the cricket field, which could be replicated to provide protection to this space, however the club feels that the netting may be unattractive and would require maintenance.
- 4.2.9 The club's preference is to maintain the historic wall as it is, partly due to the safety concerns described above but also because it contributes to the ground's unique character and is an important part of the overall setting. The club suggested that the courtyard space needs some more thought to overcome these concerns.
- 4.2.10 The club noted some concern regarding the concept of opening up the route through the existing depot area to improve general access. They are concerned that this may cause a safety and security issue if people are able to freely access the cricket field through the opening that is currently kept locked. The club would prefer that the site remains gated and locked.
- 4.2.11 The club noted some issues with a lack of car parking whilst athletics and swimming events are held. It was suggested that the previous arrangement for overspill parking with the school be revisited.
- 4.2.12 The club currently uses Francis Coombe School for winter training, but it would certainly be interested in making use of the proposed Multi-Use Activity Centre on site subject to the final facility mix.
- 4.2.13 The club is supportive of the adventure golf course, high ropes course and Multi-Use Activity Centre as long as they can be serviced with sufficient levels of car parking provision. The club would be particularly supportive of the more accessible (i.e. free-to-use or low cost) community facilities, as many of its members (local residents) are on low income.
- 4.2.14 Traffic flow is already an issue at the site, due mainly to the single entrance/exit point, that would worsen with new facilities. The club would be interested to see if it was possible to create an additional access route.
- 4.2.15 The club is content with the existing management arrangement of the facilities and is very keen to maintain a similar arrangement in the future. The club relies heavily on income generated through the bar and functions and stated that they could not survive without retaining this income. They would like to manage bookings for the community hall as well and would need to be keyholders for all gates, changing rooms etc.
- 4.2.16 The club noted major concern regarding the condition of the cricket square and outfield which it states has deteriorated considerably over the years and is impacting upon its ability to attract players and progress through the leagues. The club believes that significant investment into the buildings will not be worthwhile without investment into the playing facilities.
- 4.2.17 The club noted that they are unlikely to be interested in forming part of a wider Community Sports Association with other resident sports clubs as this may lessen its control over its own facilities. However, they would be keen to be part of a strategic management board which promotes a more joined-up approach to the operational management of the wider site.

***Watford Harriers Athletics Club***

- 4.2.18 The club is supportive of the general approach to the masterplan and acknowledged that improvements to the athletics facility are not a high priority for the Council as the existing facilities are largely fit-for-purpose. However, the club noted issues with the outdated

spectator stand and publicly accessible toilet building on the edge of the club's site and a lack of indoor training space.

- 4.2.19 Although the athletics facilities were not considered within the brief for the masterplan, the club would like to explore options for the replacement of the spectator stand through discussion with the Council. The club believes there may be external funding available to support this and noted that it may be beneficial to align this with the wider masterplan for the site.
- 4.2.20 The club is supportive of the proposed new facilities such as adventure golf and high ropes courses, as well as the new car parking. Generally, the family-feel it will bring to the site would be welcomed although an increase in footfall would not directly benefit the club as it is prioritising the identification of high-quality athletes at schools in Watford rather than actively seeking to attract new members from the general public.
- 4.2.21 In fact, the club is currently limiting its membership due to the number of qualified coaches it has.
- 4.2.22 The club were very supportive of the Multi-Use Activity Centre which would be very useful for the club as it could provide valuable indoor space to host winter training sessions.
- 4.2.23 There are large athletics meets every other Wednesday at the club during the summer months, which create pressure on car parking provision and access issues to the rest of the site for other users. The additional parking proposed would therefore be key in helping to mitigate this issue.
- 4.2.24 Site security was noted as an issue for the club who have experienced some problems with vandalism. Additional presence on site, as a result of the new facilities together with proposed new CCTV was welcomed by the club.
- 4.2.25 The club was also supportive of the suggestion to establish a new partnership board consisting of all the clubs and stakeholders on site. The club previously attended monthly meetings with the Parks Manager many years ago and noted that it was a useful opportunity to discuss common issues with the other clubs on site and would welcome the reestablishment of this approach.
- 4.2.26 The club is keen to provide comment again when the masterplan progresses to the detailed design stage.

**Veolia**

- 4.2.27 Veolia are happy with the plans for relocation of the maintenance and staff amenity facilities. Secure parking spaces for three vans are required in the car park (adjacent to the Veolia's new depot). The draft masterplan shows an extended car park (P1) which might be limited by existing trees and will require further consideration at detailed design stage.
- 4.2.28 The maintenance 'shed' could be reduced in size in the new scheme, as not all space is required within the existing building. An access route or yard is required to service the maintenance vehicles and a direct route onto the cricket outfield would be required for mowers.
- 4.2.29 It was confirmed that all 5 adult football pitches are used during the football season and that 10 changing rooms are required to accommodate these teams.
- 4.2.30 Veolia may be interested in managing the changing rooms and Rangers Office, if required. They have no interest in managing the Multi-Use Activity Centre and see SLM as ideally

placed to manage this facility. Veolia currently manage the public toilet block located adjacent to the Depot building but this has been problematic due to vandalism and opening hours being linked to their presence on site. Veolia therefore supports the plans to incorporate public toilets into the new Café building, access to which would be linked to Café opening hours.

- 4.2.31 Veolia reported a high degree of anti-social behaviour surrounding the upper car park and Depot building at the eastern end of the site. Veolia would be concerned about the security of the adventure golf and high rope courses and suggested that CCTV be installed to mitigate this issue.
- 4.2.32 The cricket pitches at the site need improvement and Veolia stressed that any improvement of the cricket clubhouse and changing rooms should be accompanied by improvement to the cricket squares and outfield. Veolia believe that investment in the buildings will be wasted without making the necessary improvements to the cricket squares and outfield. The cost of improving 3 cricket squares and one outfield (as two cricket pitches have football pitches on the outfield) has been quoted by an external contractor at £148K.
- 4.2.33 An existing management arrangement sees Veolia maintain the facilities at OWLS Bowls Club.
- 4.2.34 Veolia would like to see a more consistent approach to infrastructure and design across the whole site. It also expressed concern over the number of car parking spaces required during athletics meets and would like sufficient car parking to be made available on the site. The existing agreement for use of a temporary car park is limited to 21 times a year.
- 4.2.35 Veolia would welcome the establishment of a partnership board designed to create a more joined-up approach to wider management of the site.

#### **SLM**

- 4.2.36 SLM are supportive of the draft Masterplan for the site, particularly in relation to proposals for bringing day visits from families to the site. They wondered if more “destination-type facilities” could be included within the Multi-Use Activity Centre to further attract families and day visitors.
- 4.2.37 SLM would be interested in forming links with Watford Boxing Club but accepts that it is the club’s space to manage, as per its agreement with the Council. There may be an opportunity to promote the club to leisure centre users for those interested in boxing.
- 4.2.38 SLM would be very interested in sitting on a management board for the site as this would strengthen their relationship with the clubs at the site.
- 4.2.39 SLM is currently making its own internal improvements to Woodside Leisure Centre, which will see improvement to the changing rooms, conversion of a squash court into a spinning studio, a mezzanine floor to accommodate another studio and increasing the capacity of its health and fitness suite with the additional of a toning suite. An increase in the demand for car parking is expected but no extension to the car park is planned by SLM and there is no requirement from planning to increase parking provision.
- 4.2.40 SLM advised that gymnastics programmes are thriving at the centre and would support any new provision on site for gymnastics, particularly for recreational and beginner classes as there is very high demand for these.
- 4.2.41 SLM would be very interested in managing the Multi-Use Activity Centre and possibly the proposed new Café. Management of the Community Sports Hub is likely to be of less



interest though. SLM would also be interested in managing the adventure golf and high ropes courses, as it is currently working with Go Ape on projects elsewhere. SLM also suggested installing the adventure golf course within the Multi-Use Activity Centre as this has worked well elsewhere.

4.2.42 The demand for car parking at the site is at its highest (peak time) at the leisure centre on weekdays at 4pm (swimming lessons) and from 5pm to 8pm (fitness classes and gym users). People exiting and entering the site at peak times are experiencing long delays – up to 15 minutes queue.

4.2.43 There has been a previous agreement in place with Francis Combe Academy for use of its car park at agreed times, but the relationship broke down after the security gate was left unlocked by SLM. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to revisit this agreement if the masterplan is developed to the next stage in order to mitigate pressure on parking during large events.

#### ***OWLS Bowls Club***

4.2.44 The club is happy with the proposed additional car parking surrounding the large tree next to the indoor bowls club, however they have doubts about the feasibility of additional proposed parking surrounding the OWLS site and up to the back of the Indoor Bowls Centre due to site contours. A lack of sufficient car parking at peak periods has been an issue for many years.

4.2.45 The club is generally supportive of the wider plans and the proposed new facilities and would welcome the increased footfall to the site. It sees the benefits of improvements to the surrounding area of the bowls club to attract new members.

4.2.46 It is satisfied with its existing provision and does not require improvements to the outdoor bowls facilities, but it has frequent requests from the public to use their toilets – additional public toilets as part of a new park café would therefore be welcomed by the club.

4.2.47 The club reports good communication with SLM regarding notification of large events at the leisure centre, which it can use to mitigate the increase in car parking demand by playing away matches on that day.

#### ***Watford Boxing Club***

4.2.48 The club is generally supportive of the site masterplans but noted some required changes to the initial design of the building that would better cater for its needs. The entrance into the main gym through the memorial archway, will cause congestion and restrict the club's ability to monitor payment of sessions. It requires a holding space/room for c.15-20 boxers to assemble before their session in the main gym starts. It currently holds boxers in the changing facilities and has them enter the building past the administration office. A similar setup in the future would be favoured by the club.

4.2.49 SLC were also shown the existing three rooms used at first floor level for office, fitness and additional storage which were required to be retained in the future development.

4.2.50 The club reported frequent anti-social behaviour in the car park adjacent to the boxing club. The club supports the notion of increasing visibility onto the car park at the back of the building, to enhance security, and CCTV / security lighting would be welcomed.

4.2.51 The existing two changing rooms meet the needs of the club in terms of size, but they are in very poor condition and put off some people (particularly women and girls) from joining the

club. If new changing rooms were provided, the club would look to attract more female members to utilise the new facilities.

4.2.52 The club requires as much internal wall space in the main gym as possible for its equipment (predominately punching bags) to be hung permanently. Access into changing rooms would therefore need to be carefully considered to ensure wall space isn't lost.

4.2.53 The ventilation of the building is poor and there is no heating. The club would like air conditioning in the new building.

### **4.3 National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs)**

#### ***Hertfordshire Football Association (HFA)***

4.3.1 Overall, HFA are supportive of the proposed developments and are satisfied that the comments provided previously during development of the masterplan have been successfully incorporated.

4.3.2 HFA did note that the changing rooms allocated for football use should meet FA minimum standards in relation to changing space, showers, WCs and general safeguarding principles. They are happy to make further comments as the project progresses and more detailed drawings are available.

4.3.3 The comments provided previously by the HFA relating to the project are provided below for reference.

4.3.4 There is demand for 1 full size 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) within Watford and 2 within Three Rivers.

4.3.5 There is a full size 3G ATP at Parmiter's School (less than a mile away) and another school nearby (St Michael's) has a sand filled ATP. The Council will therefore need to consider the business case for conversion of the existing ATP to 3G, taking this into account.

4.3.6 HFA believe there is strong potential for this site to become a 'hub' for football activities and/or football development. Hertfordshire has 11 'super clubs' (45 teams or more) across the county. There are none in Watford at present, due mainly to a lack of appropriate facilities but HFA would like to develop one. With the right facility mix there is a possibility to use Woodside as this hub due to its location. A good facility is an enabler to growth and participation.

4.3.7 There is a change in focus in youth football towards central venues – again there could be an opportunity to (eventually) use Woodside as a youth football/walking football/disability football centre if a full size 3G ATP is provided.

#### ***England Cricket Board (ECB)***

4.3.8 After consulting with local development officers in Watford, the comments that the ECB provided previously during the development of the masterplan remain valid. These comments are provided below for reference.

4.3.9 The ECB are pleased to see the proposed plans to redevelop the pavilion and improve the ancillary facilities on site and are supportive of the developments.

4.3.10 Security of tenure continues to be an issue although the cricket club are in discussions with the Council on an ongoing basis regarding a new 'extended' lease.

- 4.3.11 The issue of poor-quality cricket pitches at the site is still ongoing. The new ancillary facilities will be great, but there is concern that the overall cricket provision will not be sustainable without good quality pitches. The grounds maintenance contractor (Veolia) have limited hours allocated to work on the grass square on the main ground at Watford Town CC (22 Grass Strips) and the club are not allowed to do any additional work on the ground, despite offering.
- 4.3.12 The proposed main cricket changing rooms on the masterplan will need to be designed to ECB standards. However, it was accepted that some changing rooms are shared with football and may therefore be designed smaller.

### ***Sport England***

- 4.3.13 Overall, Sport England is supportive of the principle of a masterplan being prepared for the Woodside Playing Fields site as this represents a positive response to the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy 2015-25 which identified the site as a strategic sports site. Sport England also welcomes the consultation with stakeholders.
- 4.3.14 However, as only the executive summary of the feasibility study, FAQs and masterplan documents were available at this stage to comment on, the scope of Sport England comments is limited at this stage.
- 4.3.15 Sport England requested that there is an ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders that would be affected by the proposals especially the sports clubs and sports governing bodies. The views of these stakeholders will be essential for informing and refining the various proposals as they evolve.
- 4.3.16 In relation to the sports governing bodies, a dialogue should particularly be maintained with the Football Foundation / Herts County FA, ECB / Cricket East, England Indoor Bowls Association (EIBA) and England Golf.
- 4.3.17 Sport England will be a statutory consultee on any future planning application affecting the playing fields or the ancillary facilities (pavilions, parking etc.) that support the site, so it will be important for them to be engaged as the proposals develop to ensure that any issues are identified and discussed at an early stage.
- 4.3.18 The principle of creating a community sports hub for the cricket, football and boxing clubs that use the site is welcomed as this would enhance the supporting facilities available to these clubs and would offer potential to provide a sustainable model for supporting sports activity over a long-term period which would assist with maintaining and increasing participation.
- 4.3.19 As the proposed floor plans are indicative, consultation with the sports clubs and the relevant governing bodies to ensure that the facility mix, and design and layout is responsive to their needs and will help deliver a sustainable management model. The detailed design and layout should accord with the FA, ECB and Sport England's design guidance as far as possible within the context of the constraints imposed by the layout of the existing buildings. These bodies should also be engaged with any potential management models including the Community Sports Association option that is referenced.
- 4.3.20 Sport England reiterated the ECB's view that they welcome investment into the pavilion facilities but wish to ensure that they are compliant with ECB/SE design guidance. The main issues for the cricket club at the site relate to the maintenance of the squares. The ECB, Cricket East and WTCC would be happy to work with the Council and provide support during the implementation of the masterplan.

- 4.3.21 The potential loss of the indoor bowls centre is of concern to Sport England as the masterplan documents have not provided any detail to justify the loss of the facility. While reference is made to Watford Indoor Bowls Club having a declining membership, no supporting needs assessment has been provided to assess the impact of losing the bowls facilities and no mitigation has been proposed. Sport England would therefore object to this proposal in its current form as it has not been demonstrated that the indoor bowls facility is genuinely surplus to requirements which would be necessary to demonstrate that the proposal would accord with Government planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 97). Discussions will need to take place with Sport England and EIBA if this proposal is progressed as well as the bowls club.
- 4.3.22 In relation to the options presented for converting the indoor bowls centre to an alternative use, as no information has been provided to demonstrate the need for these facilities it is not possible to provide informed comment on whether the benefits associated with such facilities would outweigh the impact associated with the loss of the bowls centre. Again, a detailed needs assessment would need to be prepared to support the preferred option for the conversion of the centre to justify the new facilities and confirm the sport related benefits that they would offer. The relevant sports governing bodies should be consulted for their advice.
- 4.3.23 England Golf's comments on the principle and design / layout of the adventure golf facility should be sought. If the feasibility study has demonstrated a need for this facility and England Golf are supportive, Sport England would support this element of the proposed masterplan.
- 4.3.24 As the Council's Sports Facility Strategy is no longer up-to-date in relation to needs for artificial grass pitches, the views of the Football Foundation and the Herts County FA should inform the need for this facility. As it is understood that the Herts County FA are supportive of the need for a single 3G AGP on this site, the proposal to convert the surface of the existing AGP is supported in principle.
- 4.3.25 The Football Foundation and the Herts County FA should be engaged on the design and layout of the pitch conversion if this is progressed as well as key clubs that would use the facility. While it is understood that there is no hockey use of the facility Sport England would request confirmation of this given the implications for hockey associated with conversion to a 3G surface.
- 4.3.26 Overall, the adoption of the masterplan would not be supported in its current form due to the impact on indoor bowls not being justified.

***England Indoor Bowls Association (EIBA)***

- 4.3.27 The EIBA, as the National Governing Body for Level Green Indoor Bowls in England, has provided some initial, brief feedback on the masterplan noting disappointment regarding the proposed removal of Indoor Bowls from the site. As they understand, it will result in a large number of members giving up the sport and therefore becoming, in all probability, inactive.
- 4.3.28 The EIBA has subsequently been invited to provide further comment on the masterplan but at the time of writing this report, SLC has received nothing further.

#### **4.4 Other Key Stakeholders**

##### ***Watford Sunday Football League***

- 4.4.1 The Watford Sunday Football League are fully supportive of the masterplan proposals both in terms of the needs for football specifically but also from a wider sport and leisure perspective.
- 4.4.2 The League was pleased to see that the masterplan proposals will provide improved changing facilities for football and increased parking.
- 4.4.3 The League queried whether the number of changing rooms provided would be sufficient to accommodate the maximum capacity of pitches on site. SLC responded to advise that a pragmatic approach had been taken by providing sufficient changing for when all 5 adult pitches are in use at the same time (which is rare based on the existing programme of use.) Junior teams generally do not require changing and some phased scheduling of fixtures (i.e. later kick offs) could be implemented in the event that all pitches on site, including women's, were required on the same day.

##### ***The Dan Tien Performing Arts Centre***

- 4.4.4 The Dan Tien Performing Arts Centre (DTPAC) are a well-established performing arts organisation based at Harebreaks Community Hub, Watford for the last 5 years.
- 4.4.5 DTPAC have an opportunity to extend the lease with Watford Community Housing Trust (WCHT) for a further 5 years but are outgrowing the space and there is no additional space available to them. They pay a rent to WCHT for exclusive occupation of a large studio space and 3 additional small rooms, a waiting room and office.
- 4.4.6 DTPAC have approximately 500 students enrolled, the vast majority of which (95%) are children. Numbers have grown steadily over the years and there are between 30 and 50 currently on a waiting list. They run a Council-funded programme of dance classes for children with special educational needs and are currently applying for funding to support a programme of dance sessions in care home settings. They have also worked with WCHT to deliver subsidised sessions for families on low income.
- 4.4.7 DTPAC advised that there are no other community centres available that can provide suitable facilities to allow them to grow. They would therefore be very interested in potentially making use of the Multi-Use Activity Centre shown on the masterplan. DTPAC would ideally like exclusive use of space due to their extended programme but would be happy to allow third parties to rent space when not in use.
- 4.4.8 DTPAC were fully supportive of the proposed masterplan of the site, noting a need for regeneration of the site and new facilities for families.

##### ***Watford Gymnastics Club***

- 4.4.9 Watford Gymnastics Club (WGC) were set up 4 years ago and currently have approximately 400 members with around 30 on a waiting list. The club has created a facility within the sports hall of the YMCA building in the centre of Watford and provides primarily recreational gymnastics for local children. The club has paid for all of the equipment and pays a rent to the YMCA for exclusive use of the space.
- 4.4.10 WGC are approaching capacity at the YMCA and are currently looking for an alternative site to enable them to grow the club and develop a pathway of progression from beginners through to elite gymnasts. There is currently a lack of quality gymnastics facilities in Watford

to serve talented gymnasts who often have to travel to alternative facilities in Harrow or Hemel Hempstead. This is particularly the case for male gymnasts.

- 4.4.11 The club noted that there is strong demand for gymnastics locally and also within the wider area. For example, Harrow Gymnastics Club currently has a waiting list of c. 2,000.

***Dolphina Gymnastics Club***

- 4.4.12 Dolphina Gymnastics Club (DGC) has a 10 year lease on an industrial unit which they have occupied for 4.5 years. They have fitted out the facility using some external funding to create a purpose built facility. They are able to exercise a break clause if they wish and are aware of neighbouring units who would like to take it over.
- 4.4.13 DGC noted strong local demand for gymnastics and for good quality facilities. They operate 7 days a week and membership has grown from 230 to nearly 1,000 members. They operate a waiting list which they regularly review and keep under control. DGC also noted a strong demand for indoor space generally, with requests for use of the facility from martial arts clubs and cheerleading clubs.
- 4.4.14 Providing enough suitably qualified coaches to meet increasing demand is an ongoing challenge for the club. Whilst they may be interested in expanding the club through use of additional indoor space proposed within the masterplan, they have the logistical challenge of providing suitable staffing levels across two sites.
- 4.4.15 DGC noted some concern regarding the impact upon their club in the event that gymnastics facilities were provided at Woodside Playing Fields.

***Garston Manor School***

- 4.4.16 Garston Manor is a special educational needs school located on Horseshoe Lane, opposite Woodside Playing Fields.
- 4.4.17 The headteacher is supportive of the proposals contained within the masterplan and the school would likely use the playing fields more often as a result of the improved facilities.
- 4.4.18 Use of the playing fields is very important in helping the students to experience new and different settings and environments. The proposed adventure play area and sensory garden would be particularly attractive to the school, as would the high ropes facility.
- 4.4.19 The headteacher enquired about accessible changing and toilet facilities and was pleased to hear that the plans include these within the Community Sports Hub area.

***Francis Combe Academy***

- 4.4.20 Despite numerous attempts to discuss the masterplan with the Principal of Francis Combe Academy, at the time of writing this report SLC has yet to receive any feedback or secure any engagement with the Academy.

**4.5 Summary**

- 4.5.1 Overall, the current occupiers and resident clubs consulted are supportive of the draft masterplan proposals, including those new facilities that are designed to attract additional visitors to the site.
- 4.5.2 Parking was a key concern for occupiers and resident clubs who cited plenty of examples of the current issues with parking. The additional proposed parking was therefore welcomed although there remains the challenge of a single point of entry/exit on Horseshoe Lane.

- 4.5.3 Some concerns were raised in regard to security of the site and occupiers and clubs welcomed the proposed CCTV and stronger 'presence' created by the developments. They also supportive of the establishment of a site-wide 'Partnership Board' consisting of representatives of these groups, which is designed to facilitate a more joined-up approach to overall management of the site.
- 4.5.4 There were some queries and concerns regarding the internal layout of some facilities in the Community Sports Hub but it was acknowledged that these were high-level drawings to inform the masterplan and that any required amendments to room sizes and layouts would be dealt with at the detailed design stage.
- 4.5.5 Consultation with SLM has highlighted the potential of extending the existing leisure centre partnership to include the management of particular new facilities. This could help deliver a more consistent service and establish a clearer identity across the site.
- 4.5.6 Consultation with NGBs for football and cricket has revealed overall support for the proposals although the ECB stressed the need to invest into the playing surfaces as well as the ancillary facilities. The local football league has also responded positively to the proposals.
- 4.5.7 Sport England are supportive of the principle of developing a masterplan to deliver a key objective of the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy. However, it would not be supportive of the proposed loss of indoor bowls without sufficient evidence to justify the need for the replacement facilities and whether the benefits associated with such facilities would outweigh the impact associated with the loss of the indoor bowls centre.
- 4.5.8 Consultation with local gymnastics and performing arts clubs has revealed strong demand for additional indoor space and a lack of suitable alternative facilities. This feedback supports the proposed alternative use of the indoor bowls centre.



## 5 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section provides a summary of the comments received from the public drop-in sessions held at INTU Shopping Centre and Woodside Leisure Centre and a summary of the results from the online questionnaire. A full version of the report on the online questionnaire is provided as an appendix to this report.

### 5.2 Public Drop-in Sessions

5.2.1 Two public drop-in sessions were held during August and September 2018 designed to provide an opportunity for local residents to view the plans, ask questions about the rationale behind the proposed facilities and to provide feedback on the draft masterplan.

5.2.2 The drop-in sessions were promoted on the Council's website and publicised through its social media channels and sent to a variety of community groups and organisations. Posters promoting the sessions were also displayed at Woodside Playing Fields and the nearby Woodside Leisure Centre.

#### ***INTU Shopping Centre – 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018***

5.2.3 The draft masterplan and accompanying detailed area drawings were displayed at a kiosk in INTU shopping centre throughout the day, supported by members of the SLC team.

5.2.4 Feedback from members of the public was positive and a selection of written comments is provided below

- *"Looks very exciting, very well thought out"*
- *"Looks great – I'm a current user of Woodside LC so looking forward to more community facilities on the site"*
- *"Very good idea, we would certainly use the new facilities"*
- *"Much needed improvement for football for younger generation. Been going to Athletics meetings for 20 years, so looking forward to more car parking"*
- *"Very supportive of improving the boxing club"*
- *"Really like the plans. I walk my dog there every day and would love to see improved facilities"*
- *"It would encourage more frequent use of the site. My husband plays cricket and would like to join club if facilities are improved"*
- *"I'm interested in the Adventure Golf. Overall plans look really good, facilities on site need improving."*

#### ***Woodside Leisure Centre – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018***

5.2.5 The draft masterplan and accompanying detailed area drawings were also displayed at Woodside Leisure Centre from 12pm to 6pm, supported a member of the SLC team.

5.2.6 The session was almost entirely dominated by members and supporters of Watford Indoor Bowls Club and the written comments provided below reflect their strong opposition to the proposal for alternative use of the existing Indoor Bowls Centre. The issue dominated the session to such an extent that little time was available to discuss the merits of the wider



scheme and to seek the opinion of other members of the public who may have been interested (and perhaps supportive) of other proposed facilities on the site.

- *“I would like to express concern and disappointment of the proposed closure of the indoor bowls centre. I constantly hear about the older generation needing to exercise and keep as fit as possible and bowls is a very good way for us “oldies” to do so. I and many club members are dismayed at this nonsense proposal”*
- *“Bowls club should remain open – no other facilities for older people existing”*
- *“It’s a good idea to develop the site but the indoor bowls club should be retained as it is a successful working club enjoyed by over 300 of us. Although we are mainly senior we welcome all ages. Surely there is enough space available for all the proposed new facilities whilst retaining the indoor bowls building. The bowls club keeps us healthy and active and gives a social outlet”*
- *“The Bowls Club should remain for the people who are of a certain age. It is very wrong to take that away from us”*
- *“As a member of the bowls club I am hugely disappointed that the intention is to take this facility away from us. Not all the members are “old”, but the government wants to keep “older” people active, socialised, happy and reduce strain on the NHS & Care services. There is too much emphasis on the younger generation who will, after all, all become old – it is inevitable! Bowls is a very social activity keeping both mind and body fit. There isn’t anywhere else locally for indoor bowls whereas badminton, karate etc can be accommodated in any community space or school. The Council clearly wants the bowls club out and is finding reasons (excuses) to get rid of it. This consultation is a paper exercise”*
- *“We need to support the bowls club as there are over 300 active members that need this facility. In this, only catering facilities for the younger generation. The government are supposed to be encouraging the older generation to remain active”*
- *“Parking!!! It’s a bull fight already. You want to bring more people to the area but not much more parking being provided”*
- *“Good points: Extra gravel paths - they are needed, extra parking – again much needed. Bad points: Crazy golf, crazy idea, destroying active bowls club – a much needed facility for the people of Watford”*
- *“I think that we should support the Bowls Club, not remove it. Firstly, there are many more elderly people who are fit and well and need to exercise and also meet & socialise with their friends. In addition, bowls is also a sport for younger people and they should be encouraged to try the sport”*
- *“Think about the older person – keep the bowls club”*
- *“Can the indoor building be made bigger to accommodate all? I have been told outdoor bowls is closing – cannot that be used?”*
- *“The proposals will result in the removal of all bowling facilities for the older people. The suggested alternative is Herts IBC is not practical if a car is not available. It is now virtually certain that the OWLS BC will close in March 2019 releasing all the land they now occupy. Should not consideration be given to provide reduced bowling facilities (indoor) on the land that OWLS now occupy (say 4 rinks instead of 6). The present proposals will result in remove of all bowling facilities at Woodside. It should also be kept in mind that bowling is of great social import to the older generation, particularly those who live alone”*

- *“What happened to sport for all?”*
- *“If it’s really necessary to build a trampolining court, why not save yourselves all the trouble. Use the outdoor bowling (OWLS) to build on and keep the indoor bowls facilities. Membership will grow when the threat of closure has been removed.”*
- *“Someone from the Council should have been here”*
- *“Where is/was a rep of Watford Council? Facilities for the older generation are in decline. This should not be allowed to happen.”*
- *“Extremely disappointed to find that Watford Council did not have the courtesy or courage to send a representative to this open survey day. Cannot believe that the indoor bowls club is not included in the new plans – again activities suitable for the “elderly with healthy impairments” are not for inclusion, as these do not increase profits as fast as activities for younger fitter people. It will just cost the NHS more when these people fail to keep active and mentally alert from being members of WIBC.”*
- *“Watford Council have overcharged WIBC rent/lease for many years as proved by their own admission to Court for the ongoing case. If Watford Council had charged less the annual membership fees could have been considerably less and attracted new members. Shame on you Watford Council!!”*
- *“I’ve been a member of WIBC since it started. I am 81 years old and disabled with no transport and with no way of getting to Herts IBC, and I will be lost without WIBC.”*
- *“You are not considering the middle age / elderly to keep us fit and well which would enable us to stay out of an overworked hospital by getting dementia / heart problems etc through lack of exercise. Destroying our companionship of meeting together in a well-run bowls club.”*
- *“What is proposed for the elderly in view of the fact that WIBC may be lost?”*
- *“It seems that the proposals will improve the area, but I am concerned for the generation that use the bowls club. It seems that the younger generation are being favoured over the older generation. I think serious thought needs to be given as to what can be suggested direct to the members, how they will be able to utilise the new improved building. Social needs should not always be overruled by financial needs. Hopefully W.C will be able to come up with some good suggestions so that everyone enjoys life.”*
- *“Why are the older generation not consider worthy as having an bowls club. Older generation needs must be considered. We pay our rates and taxes. It costs more to put older people into care homes. All people will get older.”*
- *“Very exciting plans - look forward to them progressing. Much better use of the whole site – to be enjoyed by the whole community.”*

### **5.3 Online Questionnaire**

- 5.3.1 The consultation with the wider general public also consisted of an online questionnaire, hosted on a Council web page which was publicised by the Council through its social media channels and promoted at the drop-in sessions. The questionnaire was also sent out to key stakeholders, current users, local sports clubs and identified organisations who may have an interest in the future development of Woodside Playing Fields.
- 5.3.2 The online questionnaire generated a total of 448 responses.

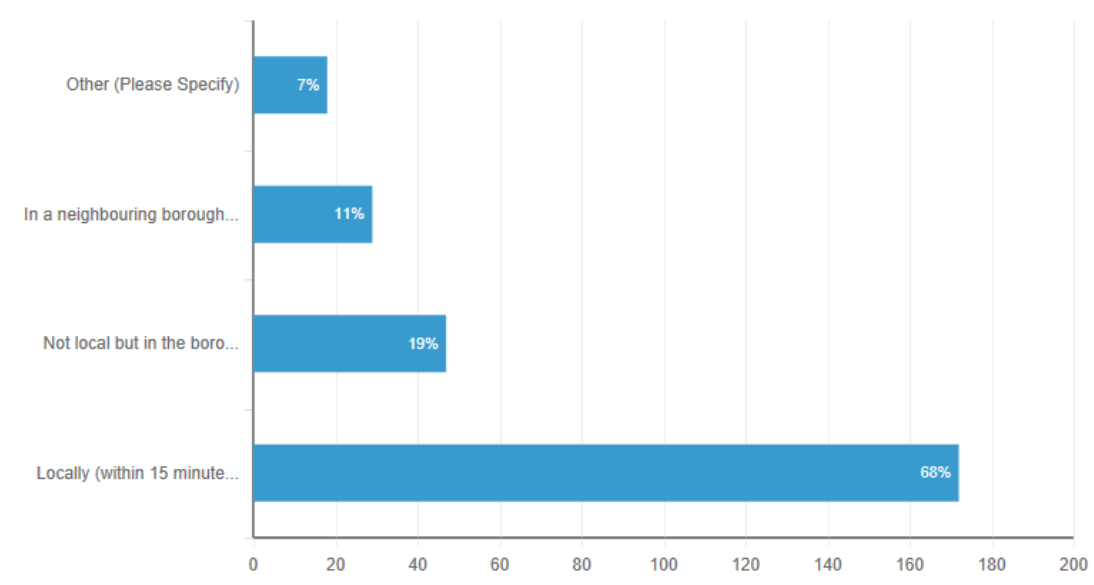
5.3.3 A summary of the key findings is provided below and a copy of the report showing the full results can be found in Appendix 1.

**Key Results**

5.3.4 The questionnaire asked respondents to identify where they lived in relation to Woodside Playing Fields. 68% of respondents stated they lived locally to the site (within 15 minutes) as shown in Figure 1.

5.3.5 This positively demonstrates that the online engagement reached and engaged with the immediate locality and those people most likely to use the site. It also highlights how the local community wished to engage in providing feedback on the masterplan project.

**Figure 1: Residency of questionnaire respondents**



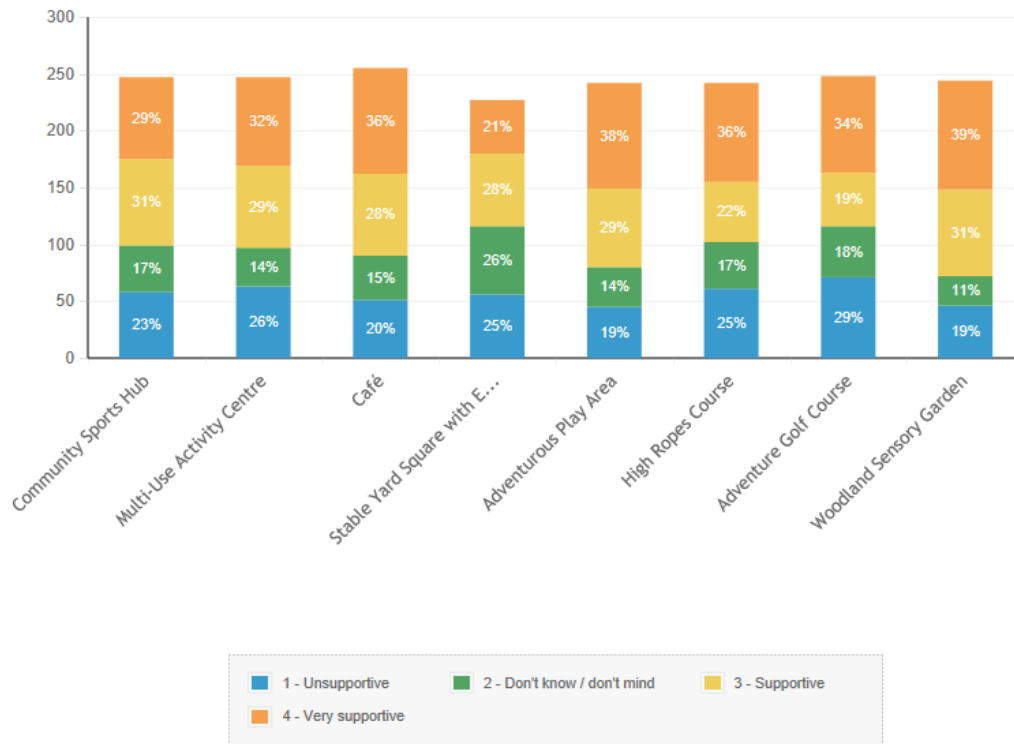
5.3.6 The questionnaire also asked respondents to rank their support for the proposed individual facilities within the Woodside Playing Fields draft masterplan, where 1 indicated they were unsupportive and 4 indicated they were very supportive. This was designed to draw out whether any particular facilities were more or less popular than others.

5.3.7 As demonstrated in Figure 2, the facilities with the highest support were as follows:

- Woodland Sensory Garden (70% selected either very supportive or supportive)
- Adventurous Play Area (67% selected either very supportive or supportive)
- Café (64% selected either very supportive or supportive)
- High Ropes Course (58% selected either very supportive or supportive).

5.3.8 The facilities that had the least support were Adventure Golf Course and Multi-Use Activity Centre (29% and 26% selected unsupportive respectively).

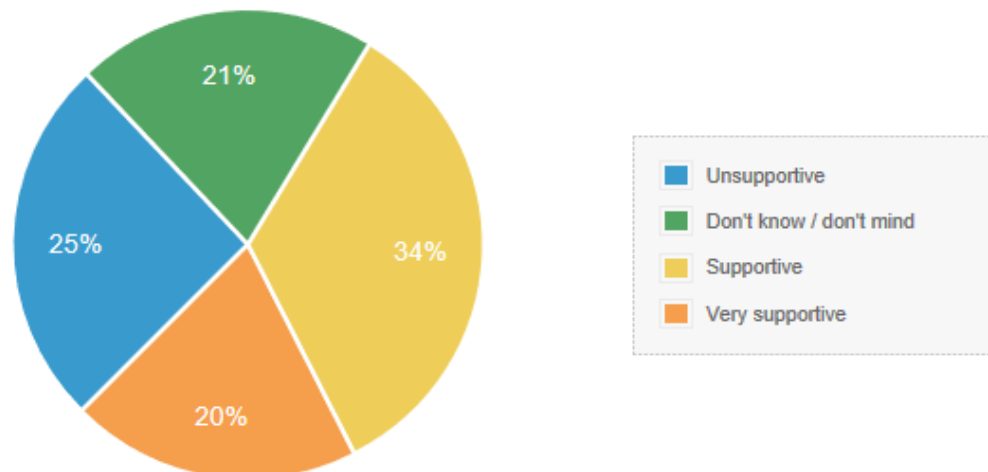
**Figure 2: Support for proposed facilities within draft masterplan**



5.3.9 The questionnaire also asked respondents to rank their support for the proposed layout and location of facilities within the Woodside Playing Fields draft masterplan. This was designed to gather feedback on whether respondents felt that the different facilities were positioned correctly on the site.

5.3.10 Figure 3 illustrates the summary of responses given. Positively, 20% of respondents are very supportive and 34% of respondents are supportive of the proposed layout and location of facilities. This indicates an overall percentage of 54% of support, compared to the 25% of respondents who expressed they were unsupportive of the proposed layout and location of facilities.

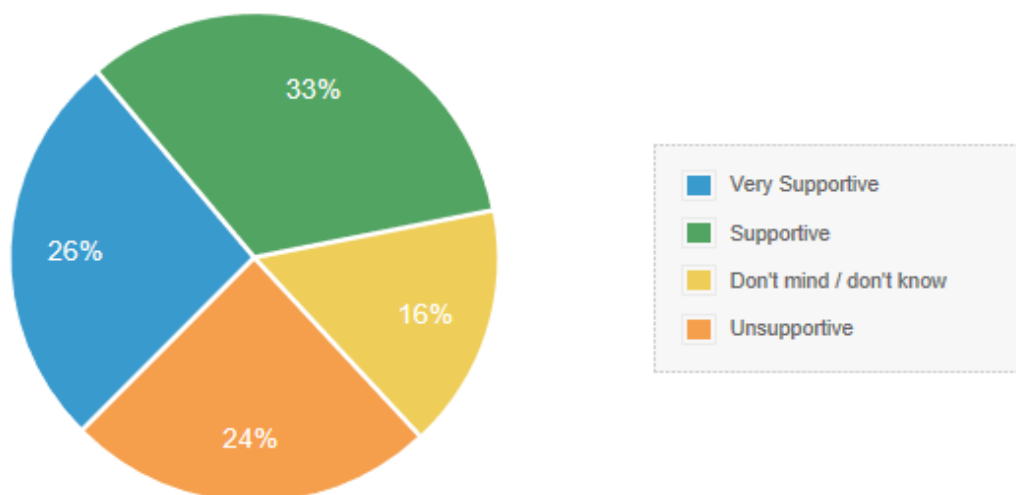
**Figure 3: Support for the proposed layout and location of facilities within the draft masterplan**



5.3.11 The questionnaire also asked respondents to rank their overall support for the Woodside Playing Fields draft masterplan proposals, as illustrated in Figure 4.

5.3.12 26% of respondents stated they were very supportive of the draft masterplan proposals, with a further 33% stating they were supportive. This indicates 59% of all respondents positively support the draft masterplan proposals compared with 24% of respondents who stated they were unsupportive.

**Figure 4: Overall support for the draft masterplan proposals for Woodside Playing Fields**



5.3.13 The questionnaire also allowed respondents to submit comments about the draft masterplan and the proposed facilities. A total of 240 comments were received. Common positive feedback was as follows:

- *A positive development for Watford*
- *Fantastic additional activities for children*
- *Activities such as the addition of Adventure Golf could attract new young persons to the area*
- *Thoughtful plans for the grounds*
- *Proposals will improve Woodside and make better use of the available space*
- *Very much-needed for youth, residents and the community.*

5.3.14 Conversely, common negative feedback was as follows:

- *Most of the facilities seem to be aimed at children or young adults, with little for older citizens*
- *The proposed activities of multi-use activity centre are all available at Woodside Leisure Centre*
- *Disabled activities / facilities need more representation and inclusion*
- *Over-development of Watford's parks and open spaces*
- *Significant disappointment of the removal of indoor bowls facilities*
- *Concerns over traffic congestion and parking provision and its impact on the site's peaceful character.*

## **5.4 Summary**

- 5.4.1 The public consultation exercise has secured good levels of engagement and was successful in capturing the views and opinions of local people on the draft masterplan for Woodside Playing Fields.
- 5.4.2 The results from the online questionnaire showed a positive response to the draft masterplan proposals with 59% of respondents being either supportive or very supportive compared to 24% being unsupportive.
- 5.4.3 There were plenty of comments in support of additional and improved indoor and outdoor facilities for the community, although these were interspersed with negative comments from those who are concerned about over-development of the site, removal of the indoor bowls centre and anything that would impact negatively upon the peaceful nature of the site.
- 5.4.4 The public drop-in session at INTU shopping centre was successful in providing an opportunity for the general public to view the plans, ask questions and provide feedback. However, the session at Woodside Leisure Centre was monopolised by members and supporters of Watford Indoor Bowls Club who wished to express their concern over the proposed alternative use of this facility.

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## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS**

### **6.1 Conclusions**

6.1.1 The key conclusions arising from the consultation on the draft masterplan for Woodside Playing Fields are as follows.

1. The consultation exercise was developed in partnership with the Council and delivered through a combination of face to face meetings, email correspondence and telephone discussions with identified occupiers and stakeholders, and through drop-in sessions and an online questionnaire promoted to the wider public through the Council's website and social media channels.
2. Resident clubs on the site including the cricket, boxing and athletics clubs are supportive of the overarching principle of the masterplan to develop a strategic sports hub. Other key occupiers of the site including the Council's leisure operator, SLM and grounds maintenance contractor, Veolia also welcome the proposals.
3. The proposals are welcomed by Hertfordshire FA and the England and Wales Cricket Board but opposed by the England Indoor Bowls Association due to the proposed removal of the indoor bowls centre.
4. Sport England supports the principle of developing a strategic sports hub in accordance with the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy but would like evidence to justify the need for the proposed alternative use of the indoor bowls centre and to better understand whether the anticipated benefits of such facilities would outweigh the impact associated with the loss of indoor bowls.
5. Consultation with local gymnastics and performing arts clubs has revealed strong demand for additional indoor space and a lack of suitable alternative facilities. This feedback supports the proposed alternative use of the indoor bowls centre.
6. The online questionnaire generated 448 responses, with a high level of engagement from residents within 15 minutes of the site (68%).
7. The results of the online questionnaire show a positive response from the general public to the draft masterplan proposals with 59% of respondents being either supportive or very supportive compared to 24% being unsupportive.
8. There is considerable opposition to the draft masterplan from members and supporters of Watford Indoor Bowls Club. This was manifested most clearly through feedback provided at the public drop-in session at Woodside Leisure Centre.

### **6.2 Recommended Next Steps**

6.2.1 The Council may wish to consider how they intend to report back the results of the consultation to stakeholders and the wider public and to advise them how this process will be used to further develop the plans for the site.

6.2.2 As part of this feedback process, the Council may wish to address and respond to concerns or questions about the draft masterplan.

6.2.3 Assuming the Council wish to progress the masterplan through to detailed design stages, it will be essential to maintain regular dialogue with key occupiers to ensure the final plans meet their requirements.

## APPENDICES



## **7 APPENDIX 1: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE REPORT**

### **7.1 Introduction**

7.1.1 A report on the online questionnaire is provided as a separate document.



**This report has been written by The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC). SLC was established in 2009 and advises organisations by developing effective strategies, planning sustainable facilities and procuring successful operational partnerships.**

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