

Brentwood Borough Council Golf Course Needs Assessment (Draft)

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Executive Summary:

Sport England has provided comments in response to Brentwood Borough Council's Draft Local Plan Preferred Allocations (January 2018). An objection was made on the proposal to develop the Dunton Hills Garden Village site on the grounds of the loss of Dunton Hills Golf Course, and there being no evidence to support whether or not there is appropriate golf course provision in the area if the golf course was developed. As a result, the Council has undertaken a Golf Course Needs Assessment.

The assessment concludes that there are 18 additional golf courses within a 20-minute drive catchment area from Dunton Hills Golf Course. These courses are located within Brentwood Borough, London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Borough, and Basildon Borough. Of these, 12 offer Pay-n-Play as an option, as available at Dunton Hills Golf Course.

Section 1: Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Dunton Hills Golf Course is located east of the A128 and opened in 1997 with an 18-hole golf course. The golf course has made several improvements since opening, including the opening of the Clubhouse, a separate 9-hole golf course, driving range, and mini-golf facilities.
- 1.2 Despite the improvements, there has been a gradual decline in usership since 2012, as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The owners of Dunton Hills Golf Course put the site forward for consideration for development as part of the Brentwood Local Plan process. This site is considered to have potential in assisting with meeting the borough's housing needs.

Dunton Hills Garden Village:

- 1.4 Large new settlements are seen as playing a pivotal role in delivering and meeting the country's housing needs. In response to this, in 2016 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England invited expressions of interest from local planning authorities to explore the feasibility of 'Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities'. Brentwood Borough Council responded with an expression of interest for Dunton Hills to be awarded Garden Village status.
- 1.5 In early 2017 MHCLG and Homes England announced that Dunton Hills was one of 14 new garden villages selected nationwide. This was in response to demonstration of the site's ideal location for genuine garden village potential and included the awarding of capacity funding to bring forward a scheme on the site through the Local Plan process.
- 1.6 Government's 2017 Housing White Paper is strongly supportive of Garden Villages because of the potential to deliver community benefits over-and-above what can be achieved through urban extensions, with statements including "provided they are supported by the necessary infrastructure, they are often more popular with local communities than piecemeal expansion of existing settlements."
- 1.7 Para 138 of the NPPF is clear that any Green Belt review should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. A development at Dunton Hills Garden Village meets this criterion in that it:
 - Takes advantage of existing transport connections at West Horndon and the A127, with infrastructure improvements being less than that required elsewhere;
 - Has less impact on Green Belt in the longer-term, meaning it Green Belt not carved up by smaller isolated and unsustainable alternative options;

- Its location in South Essex takes advantage of the wider regional economic growth of the region with jobs to support the longer-term sustainability of communities;
- It retains the character of Brentwood Borough, a “Borough of Villages”; and
- It delivers the quantum needed within and beyond the plan period.

Purpose of this report:

1.8 Sport England has provided comments in response to Brentwood Borough Council’s Draft Local Plan Preferred Allocations (January 2018). An objection was made on the proposal to develop the Dunton Hills Garden Village site on the grounds of the loss of Dunton Hills Golf Course, and there being no evidence to support whether or not there is appropriate golf course provision in the area if the golf course was developed. As a result, the Council has undertaken a Golf Course Needs Assessment.

1.9 This study is a high-level assessment conducted by officers in order to provide the required evidence base to determine if there is adequate golf course provision within the local area or if an additional golf course would be needed to replace and off-set the loss of Dunton Hills Golf Course.

Section 2: Planning Policy Context and Assessing Needs & Opportunities Guide

Planning Policy Context:

2.1 This Golf Course Needs Assessment has been produced in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which requires that "...planning policies are based upon robust and up-to-date assessments of needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision". (Para. 96)

2.2 Furthermore, Paragraph 97 states that existing open space, sports and recreational building and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

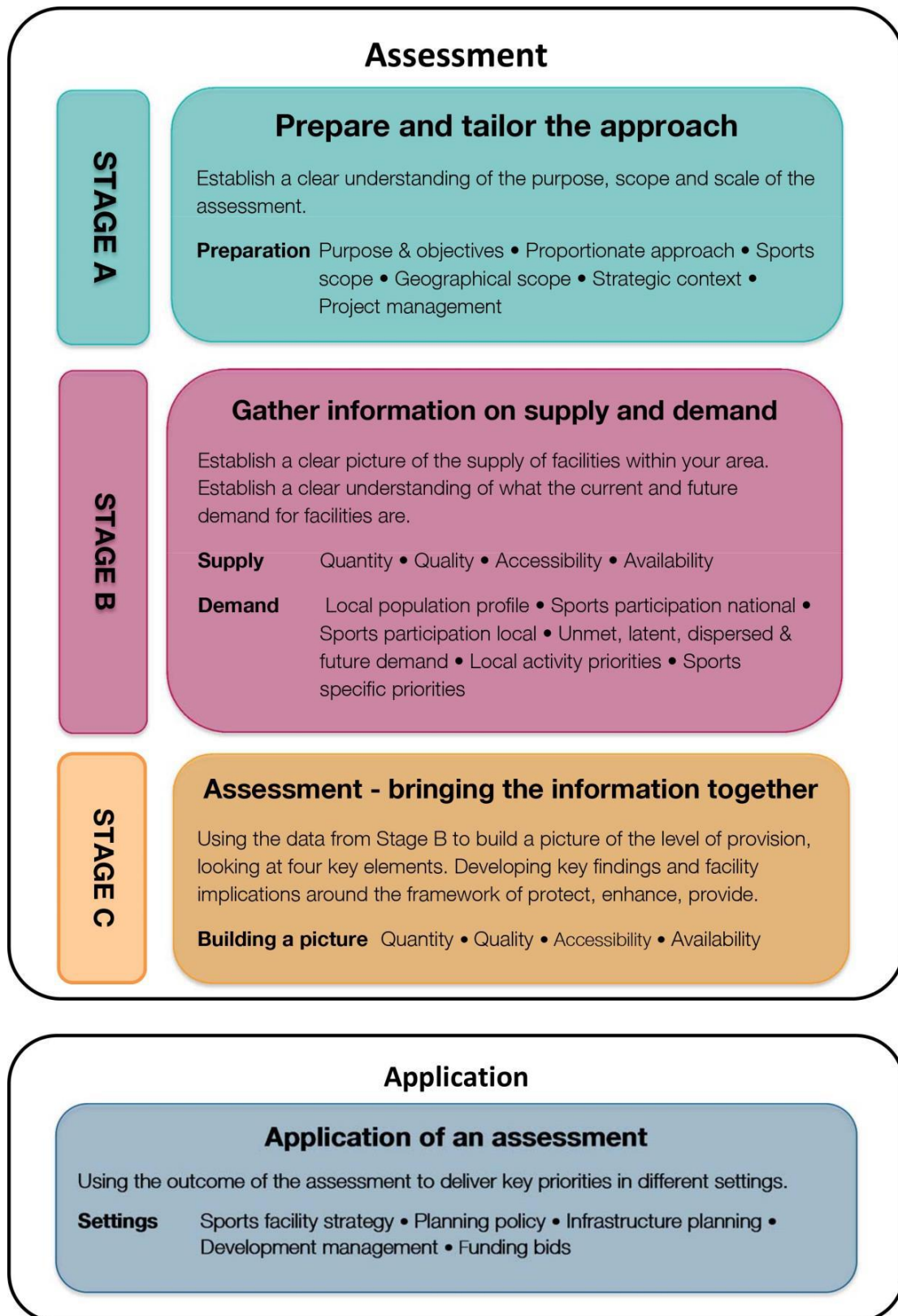
- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space buildings or land to be a surplus requirement; or
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide:

2.3 Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunity Guide (2014) was used to inform this assessment. This guide sets out an approach to undertaking need assessments for sport and recreation facilities, in order to be compliant with the NPPF. The approach adopted to develop this needs assessment has utilised the process set out in the guide, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

2.4 England Golf and Sport England are aware that the Council are undertaking this assessment. Both organisations have been consulted with as part of its development and will continue to be consulted as part of any review or related work.

Figure 1: Golf Course Needs Assessment Process¹



¹ Sport England assessing needs and opportunities guide for indoor and outdoor sports facilities, July 2014

2.5 The guide's approach requires consideration of the following:

- **Quantity** – what facilities there are in the area, and how many there are. It is also necessary to look at different catchments to assess the quantity in a more segmented way, i.e. ratio of 'pay and play' courses as opposed to all courses. Relative supply can be assessed but this should not be adopted as a proxy for need and demand.
- **Quality** – how good facilities are, to include perceptions from users (where available on websites etc), an age proxy from Sport England's Active Places Power data and any accreditation by Cornwall Golf Union. An assessment of fitness for purpose could also be made, but this is subject to the same constraints as above.
- **Accessibility** – where facilities are located. This will include catchment areas and demonstrate whether there are sufficient courses in the area.
- **Availability** – how available facilities are based on the peak and off-peak tee times of the surrounding golf courses.

Section 3: Supply Analysis

3.1 A desktop analysis of the golf courses within a 20-minute drive catchment area from Dunton Hills Golf Course, was conducted to determine the quantity, quality, accessibility, and availability of golf courses within the area. This was achieved by using the Sport England's Active Places Power data, supplemented by website and telephone conversations with the individual golf clubs. A map illustrating the locations for the other golf courses within the catchment area can be found in Appendix 2.

3.2 The following golf course facilities set out in Table 1, have been identified as being within a 20-minute driving catchment of Dunton Hills Golf Course. As illustrated in the table, there are 18 additional golf courses within a 20-minute drive catchment area. These courses are located within Brentwood Borough, London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Borough, and Basildon Borough. Of these, 12 offer Pay-n-Play as an option, as available at Dunton Hills Golf Course, which are highlighted in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Golf Courses within a 20-minute Drive catchment area of Dunton Hills Golf Course

Site Name	Holes	Length	Access	Local Authority
Belhus Park and Country Club	18	46 acres	Pay-n-Play	Havering
Brentwood Golf Club	18	6,571 yards	Membership	Brentwood
Mayland Golf Course	18	5977 yards	Pay-n-Play/ Membership	Havering
Bentley Golf Course	18	6,703 yards	Pay-n-Play / Membership	Brentwood
Romford Golf Course	18	6383 yards	Membership	Havering
Risebridge Golf Course	18	6278 yards	Membership/ Pay-n-Play	Havering
Basildon Golf Course	18	6200 yards	Members / Pay-n-Play	Basildon
Stock Brook Country Club	27	6950 yards	Membership/ Pay-n-Play	Basildon
Orsett Golf Course	18	6693 yards	Membership	Thurrock
St Cleres Hall Golf Course	9	5934 yards	Pay-n-Play	Thurrock
Burstead Golf Club	9 and 18	6275 yards	Membership / Pay-n-Play	Basildon
South Essex Golf Centre	18	7072 yards	Membership/ Pay-n-Play	Brentwood
Warley Park Golf Course	9	3244 yards	Membership	Brentwood
Thorndon Park Golf Course	18	240 acres	Membership	Brentwood
Hartwood Golf Course	18	6139 yards	Membership / Pay-n-Play	Brentwood

Site Name	Holes	Length	Access	Local Authority
Mardyke Valley Golf Club	18	140 acres	Membership / Pay-n-Play	Thurrock
Top Meadow Golf Club	18	6228 yards	Membership / Pay-n-Play	Havering
Langdon Hills Golf and Country Club	18	6582 yards	Membership	Thurrock
Dunton Hills Golf Club	18	6252 yards	Pay-n-Play	Brentwood

3.3A fuller description of the local facilities within a 20-minute drive of Dunton Hills Golf Club that offer a Pay-n-Play option are set out in Table 2 below, as a means of identifying the roles that these facilities play in meeting demand in the area for golf that offer similar pricing schemes to Dunton Hill Golf Course.

Table 2: Pay-n-Play Golf Course and Descriptions

Golf Course	Description of Services Offered
Belhus Park and Country Club	Belhus Park Golf & Country Club is located in the grounds of former Belhus Mansion. It is a well establish 18-hole course which extends over 46 acres of parkland, with open fairways on the front 9 and more demanding tree-lined fairway on the back 9. The course is a par 69, suitable for beginners and experts. The green fees for a round of golf during the week is £15.00 and weekends £18.00 for non-members. The golf course is equipped with an 11-bay floodlit, automated driving range open to the general public. Tee times range from £5.00 to £6.25.
Mayland Golf Course	The Mayland Golf Course was established in 1936 and is an 18-hole, par 71 championship golf course. Green fees for non-members range from £15.00 to £30.00 depending on day and time.
Bentley Golf Course	Bentley Golf Course was established in 1972. The Club was purchased by the Members in 2004. The golf course extends to 6,703 yards (par 72) and comprises four par 3's, ten par 4's and four par 5's. The golf course also provides a practice ground, clubhouse and professional shop facilities. The golf course provides a verity of membership options depending on a person's household income to allow for the facilities to be open to the entire community. Concession Memberships are available for £10 a week; however further discounts are available for those who qualify due to low income status. For those wishing to use the golf course as a visitor the green fees for during the week for £37.50 and weekends £45.00 (reservation is required).

Golf Course	Description of Services Offered
Risebridge Golf Course	Risebridge Golf Course was founded in 1972. The course is built on 156 acres of land and has a total play length of 6,278 yards. There are an 18-hole and 9-hole rounds of golf and a driving range available. Prices range between £16.50 to £25.00 per game for an 18-hole round of golf and £10.00 to £14.00 per game for 9-hole round of golf. Memberships are also available ranging between £555 (5 day season ticket) to £715 (7 day season ticket) per annum. Driving range prices range from £3.00 (for 30 balls) to £5.00 (for 90 balls).
Basildon Golf Club	The Basildon Golf Course was established in 1958 and is an 18-hole course. The fees for a round of gold vary - £17 for seniors, £20 for Basildon residents, and £22 for non-Basildon residents.
Stock Brook Country Club	The Stock Brook Country Club consists of 18 holes of golf on a 6,950-yard course. The course is a par 35. For a round of golf the green fees are £35.
St Cleres Hall Golf Course	St Cleres Hall Golf Course is a newly refurbished, flood lit 19 bay driving range and 9-hole golf course. Golfers have the choice between paying £6 per round of golf or £10 per day. The driving range consists of a multi-shot with 6 target greens ranging from 50 yard pitch to a 300 yard drive. The range has 19 under cover bays. The driving range costs £2.00 for 30 balls.
Burstead Golf Club	Burstead Golf Club was designed by Patrick Tallack in 1993. The cost for a round of 18-holes of golf is £15 during the week and £20 on weekends.
South Essex Golf Centre	South Essex Golf Centre consists of 18-hole round of golf open to members and non-members. The course is 7,000 yards. The Club offers a number of different green fees depending on the time of day and day of the week a golfer books their tee time. Green fees range between £19-£25. There is a driving range which consists of 12-bay flood lit covered driving range and footgolf. Footgolf cost £15.00 per player over the age of 16 or £10 per play under the age of 16, with a £5.00 deposit for the ball.
Hartswood Golf Course	Hartswood Golf Course is a municipal 18-hole golf course. The golf course offers both membership and pay-n-play options. Concessionary rates are available for those over 60 years old and under 18 years old, as well as a junior annual membership for £52. Annual season members range from £715 for a seven day a week access pass to £602 Monday to Friday access pass. Pay-n-Play adult fees range from £10-£19 weekday

Golf Course	Description of Services Offered
	depending on the time of day, £11-£25 for weekends and public holidays, and a concession price of £10-£16.
Mardyke Valley Golf Club	The Mardyke Valley Golf Club is an 18-hole par 70 course with a golf clubhouse. There are a number of membership options available, with monthly payment plans to make it more accessible for people to obtain a seasonal pass. The golf course also offers pay-n-play rates, £18 weekdays and £25 weekends.
Top Meadow Golf Club	Top Meadow Golf Club offers both a 9-hole and 18-hole rounds of. The club also offers banquet and conference halls, hotel, and restaurant facilities. During weekdays 9-hole round of golf is £9.00 and 18-hole round of golf is £16.00 and includes breakfast. The price for a round of golf on weekends is £11.00 for 9-holes and £19.00 for 18-holes.

3.4 All the above listed golf courses have indicated that they have additional capacity to accept new members and those wishing to utilise the pay-n-play option during both peak and off-peak tee times.

Section 4: Demand Analysis

- 4.1 Sport England have produced results from a number of surveys to highlight the participation rates for individuals' sports. Although the most recent report illustrates that those who participate in golf at least once a week has remained stable between 2014 and 2016, when comparing the data collected between 2006 and 2014 there was a decline in the overall participation rate in golf.
- 4.3 As previously mentioned in section 1 of this report, the Dunton Hills Golf Club has been experiencing a gradual decline in players since 2012, which corresponds with the national trends for the decline participation rates for golf.
- 4.4 This decline is most likely due to the number of other golf clubs within the area and competing additional services and facilities as identified in tables 1 and 2 above.
- 4.5 The England Golf publication, 'Understanding Your Market', highlights a number of additional services that golf clubs have introduced in an effort to maintain membership. The study also outlines the different types of golfers and the impact that the weather can have on participation rates. A copy of this assessment is included in Appendix 3. Upon review of the golf courses within the 20-minute catchment area, a majority of courses do offer other services and facilities such as footgolf, restaurants, banquet and conference hall hires, and so on. Where more services and facilities are offered this allows for additional revenue streams and diversification.
- 4.6 All of the clubs identified within the 20-minute catchment area have indicated their capacity to take on additional golfers during both peak and non-peak times, whether this be through the form of a membership or as a visitor (pay-n-play). Therefore, those individuals who currently use the Dunton Hills Golf Course would have access to alternative golf courses, both within Brentwood Borough and outside in the wider local area.

Cost comparison:

- 4.7 As seen in Table 2, the cost for an 18-hole round of golf ranges from £10 to £35. Dunton Hills Golf Course currently charges £12.50 for a round of golf on the main golf course during weekdays and £20 on weekends.
- 4.8 As illustrated in the Table 3 below, Dunton Hills Golf Course typically offers a reduced green fee during the week compared to the rest of the courses. However, Belhus Park, Basildon, Burstead, and Top Mead Golf Course all offer comparable green fees on the weekends to that of Dunton Hills Golf Course.

Table 3: Green Fees Charges for Adults*

Golf Course	Pay-n-Play Green Fees (18-holes)		
	Weekdays	Weekends	Concession
Belhus Park Golf Course	£15.00	£18.00	£12.00
Mayland Golf Course	£15.00	£30.00	
Bentley Golf Course	£37.50	£45	
Risebridge Golf Course	£16.50	£25.00	
Basildon Golf Course	£20.00 Basildon resident £22.00 non-Basildon resident	Same as weekday rates	£17.00
Stock Brook Golf Course	£35.00	£35.00	
Burstead Golf Course	£15.00	£20.00	
South Essex Golf Course	£19.00	£25.00	
Hartwood Golf Course	£19.00	£25.00	£16.00
Mardyke Valley Golf Course	£18.00	£25.00	
Top Meadow Golf Course	£16.00	£19.00	
Dunton Hills Golf Course	£12.50	£20.00	

*The rates displayed are based on the adult day time rates as published on the individual golf course websites at September 2018. There are varying prices depending on a persons age (concession rates) and time of day of the tee time (i.e. twilight tee times are less then those displayed above).

4.9 Belhus Park Golf Course, Basildon Golf Course and Hartwood Golf Course all offer concession green fees based on a persons age and/or financial situation, to allow golf to be more accessible to those who otherwise may not be able to afford it.

4.10 The majority of golf courses also offer a payment plan / monthly fee for those who wish to buy membership. Belhus Park and Mardyke Valley Golf Club both offer concession membership rates for those of low-income status.

Section 5: Conclusion

- 5.1 The Council was informed that due to the decline in golfers at the Dunton Hills Golf Course, the club does not have the financial resources to make any further improvements, such as those suggested within the Understanding Your Market document published by England Golf (Appendix 3).
- 5.2 There are 18 additional golf courses within a 20-minute drive catchment area from Dunton Hills Golf Course, 12 of which offer a pay-n-play option.
- 5.3 Although Dunton Hills Golf Course's green fees are less than most of the other courses within the catchment area during weekdays, Belhus Park and Hartswood Golf Courses offer concession pay-n-play options for those of low-income status. A number of the golf courses also offer reduced green fees for those golfers interested in a 'twilight' round of golf during weekdays. Belhus Park, Basildon, Burstead, and Top Mead Golf Course all offer comparable green fees on the weekends to that of Dunton Hills Golf Course.

Section 6: Next Steps

- 6.1 The information in this assessment has been prepared by officers to illustrate the golf course provision within a 20-minute drive catchment area from Dunton Hills Golf Course, to determine whether an additional golf course would be needed due to the loss of this facility. This report will be reviewed by England Golf and Sport England for sign off. Discussion with both organisations have taken place throughout the process.

Appendix 1: Green Fees at Dunton

Date	No of Green Fee Cards	Driving Range Tokens	No. of Mini-Golf Cards
2004-2005	68805	13839	-
2005-2006	67509	15863	1598
2006-2007	64794	16665	1901
2007-2008	61546	19508	2028
2008-2009	58754	19040	1858
2009-2010	57767	16484	1813
2010-2011	49937	16782	1533
2011-2012	64581	18938	2021
2012-2013	45534	16646	1313
2013-2014	36745	12394	1444
2014-2015	35487	11754	1533
2015-2016	36691	11101	1325
2016-2017	31905	12049	1224
2017-2018	35815	12335	1067

Appendix 2: Map of golf courses within a 20-minute drive catchment area from Dunton Hills Golf Course



Appendix 3: England Golf – Understanding Your Market

<https://www.englandgolf.org/page.aspx?sitesectionid=327>