

## **NOTES ON POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION PROVISION REQUIRED AS A RESULT OF THE RAF HALTON RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

This review explores the potential additional open space, sport and recreation provision as a result of the proposed residential development of RAF Halton. The typologies used are those set out in the 2017 *Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs for Aylesbury Vale* report, and the standards applied are those identified within that report. The report originally assumed 800 new homes would be built in Wendover. The proposed 1,000 new homes in Halton now supersedes that proposal, and this paper takes account of the removal of the proposed 800 homes in Wendover and the new proposal for 1,000 homes in Halton.

The review assumes that 1,000 new households on the RAF Halton site will generate an additional population of 2,500 people, based on an average 2.5 people per household. This would bring the total population of the Halton/Wendover settlement to an assumed 11,000 people. Any new or upgraded facility provision should meet the qualitative standards set out in the 2017 *Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs for Aylesbury Vale* report

There are three perspectives from which the proposed housing development can be viewed:

1. The theoretical additional demand for sports and leisure facilities that will be generated specifically from the new housing growth. This is based upon the parameters set out in the *Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs for Aylesbury Vale* and the consequent "2017 Ready Reckoner". When combined with point 3 this allows the Council to identify whether actual facility provision will be needed or whether a financial contribution to existing facilities will be required.
2. The overall demand for sport and leisure facilities that needs to be met when the new housing development is added to the demand created by the existing population in the Halton and Wendover area.
3. The actual facility provision that currently exists and the extent to which the demand created by 1 and 2 above is already met by that provision.

The main caveat to this review is:

- Whilst qualitative criteria for each typology are set out in the *Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs for Aylesbury Vale* this assessment is a quantitative based one, and has not involved a detailed qualitative visit and audit of all the relevant facilities in the area. From a practical view this would also require access to the RAF Halton base and obtaining of the necessary security access. At some point when proposals are clearer qualitative assessments will be required where a contribution to existing facilities, rather than the provision of new ones, is identified.

For the sake of simplicity each of the three perspectives above is reviewed by individual typology.

### **Sports Halls**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 0.7 of a badminton court, or a capital contribution of £427,235 based upon the Sport England Facility Calculator (the capital cost is for a proportion of an indoor four court hall with changing and other ancillary facilities, not solely a fraction of a badminton court – the same principle applies to the other typologies).

Taking the total Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included, there is a theoretical, self contained demand for a three badminton court hall. The John Colet School in Wendover has a four court sports hall which is available for community use outside of school hours. There also appears to be a four court sports hall on the RAF Halton site, although this is not included in any community use calculation. The 2016 Sport England Facilities Planning Model (FPM) run for Aylesbury Vale identifies that there is currently an adequate supply of sports halls, but as most of these are on education sites there may be limited opportunity for these facilities to meet the needs of a growing population. Depending on the condition and layout of the RAF Halton sports hall there may therefore be a good argument for retaining this facility, although according to the Sport England Active Places Power database the hall was built in 1940 and has not been refurbished. It would be difficult to argue that a developer should provide a brand new sports hall, but the contribution identified in the first paragraph could be used to upgrade the RAF Halton Sports Hall for public use if required.

### **Swimming Pools**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 0.51 of a swimming pool lane, or a capital contribution of £472,144.

Taking the Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included there is a theoretical self-contained demand for 2.2 swimming pool lanes. The FPM identifies that there is currently adequate pool provision to meet demand in Aylesbury Vale, and two of the pools that sit within the supply equation are in the Wendover/Halton area. Once again the John Colet School has a 25m x 8m pool with assumed community use, whilst the RAF Halton has a 30m x 11m pool with some very limited access for the community. It is therefore difficult to justify the need for additional pool provision in this location. The cost of running pools means that, unless there is a strong rationale or community/club wish to operate the Halton facility, the pool at RAF Halton may not be required. Its age and condition may also have a bearing on this decision, having been built in 1940, but this will be dependent on a visit and qualitative audit.

### **Community Centres**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 0.5 of a community centre, or a capital contribution of £2,066,037 (although cheaper build options may be available).

Taking the Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included there is a theoretical self-contained demand for 2.09 community centres. Currently there is the Halton Village Hall and Wendover Memorial Hall. Both are reasonable facilities which broadly meet the standards set out in the Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs for Aylesbury Vale. Additional new provision is therefore unnecessary, although a qualitative review of the facilities may identify improvements/additions where a capital contribution from the developer can be justified.

### **Artificial Grass Pitches**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 0.07 of an Artificial Grass Pitch, or a capital contribution of £71,793.

Taking the Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included there is a theoretical self-contained demand for 0.33 of an AGP. However, the wider catchments of AGP's also need to be considered, and the Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs for Aylesbury Vale

includes the provision that exists in Halton and Wendover within the wider assessment of need for the Vale. RAF Halton has a full size, sand dressed floodlit hockey pitch which is used by a number of hockey clubs as well as the RAF itself. According to Active Places Power the pitch was refurbished in 2015, although the changing facilities were not. The pitch should therefore be retained for community use and any capital contribution be made to improving or upgrading the facility that exists.

### **Grass Sports Pitches with Pavilion**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 1.8 Grass Pitches with pavilion, or a capital contribution of £730,000.

Taking the Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included there is a theoretical self-contained demand for eight grass pitches (with equivalent pavilions). RAF Halton alone has a substantial number of grass football and rugby pitches equating to this number. In addition there is a range of grass pitches at the John Colet School in Wendover.

There is certainly a rationale for the provision (or retention) by the developer of two grass football pitches with pavilion to the standards set out in the Assessment of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs study. The provision or retention of additional pitches should be considered within the broader context of a more detailed Playing Pitch Study for Aylesbury Vale as a whole, which may identify additional need. The retention or otherwise of the space upon which the current pitches stand will also depend on the final layout of the housing development and the specific requirements for the various levels of open space within that layout.

### **Cricket Wicket**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 0.7 of cricket wicket, or a capital contribution of £14,000.

Taking the Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included there is a theoretical self-contained demand for three cricket wickets. There are already two in Wendover – one at the John Colet School and one at Wendover Cricket Club, and a further one on the RAF Halton site, which should therefore be retained.

### **Outdoor Tennis**

The additional demand created by the RAF Halton development alone would equate to 1.75 tennis courts, or a capital contribution of £175,000.

Taking the Halton/Wendover population with the Halton growth included there is a theoretical self-contained demand for just under eight outdoor tennis courts. Halton is in fact well served by both indoor and outdoor courts at the Halton Tennis Club with six indoor courts and ten outdoor courts. Wendover Tennis and Squash Club has four outdoor courts. Eleven of the courts are floodlit. Additional provision is therefore unlikely to be required, although a capital contribution to the development of existing facilities may be.

### **Open Space**

The position regarding the various open space typologies is more complex as this will largely depend on the design of the development, although given the rural nature of the area and the proximity of

Wendover Woods much of the criteria for accessibility to larger areas of open space will in all likelihood be met. The Council's Green Spaces team is best placed to advise on the specific requirements once plans are being developed, but from a standards perspective there should be 5 hectares of accessible natural green space, 3.5 hectares of incidental open space, and 3 hectares of major open space to serve the specific population created by the development of the RAF Halton site.

*Torkildsen Barclay, September 2017*