

Additional Comments from Henley-on-Thames Bowling Club

The commentary below relates to whether the Local Plan is sound.

In Part 4: Local Leisure Facilities, Final Report Dec 2016, Section 3 - Outdoor Bowls, there seems to be no recognition of that the game of Outdoor Bowls is in decline and as a result, existing facilities may well be more than sufficient until 2034.

It reports that in 2015 the Clubs of Wallingford and Peppard closed and in relation to Peppard, it closed despite there being over 50 members. The report failed to recognise that at the time Peppard closed, the number of "playing" members was around 25 (not 50) making it unsustainable in terms of the existing annual fees. Many Clubs may have reported membership numbers by counting both "playing" and "social" members.

The understanding of Oxfordshire Bowls that the closure of the Peppard club was due to a lack of volunteer support was not really the whole story. It was due to the lack of "playing" members. It is true that no-one would volunteer to run the Club but that was because with so few players, arranging matches was next to impossible. Without matches to raise money to maintain the green and other facilities, subscription fees would have had to increase considerably, say 5-fold to maybe £500 pa. Affordable for some but probably not the majority.

Henley-on-Thames Bowling Club has similar issues with regard to falling "playing" members and the majority of Clubs it arranges matches with report the same thing. The true "playing" membership has been holding at around 50 over the last 3 seasons helped by picking up 5 players from Peppard when that club closed in 2015.

In the "Sustainability Appraisal of the Publication Version of the Local Plan 2018, Page 9", the "Infrastructure Delivery Plan" states that:

"The demand for outdoor bowls is currently in balance with supply but an additional green will be required by 2033."

This is an unlikely conclusion given member numbers remaining static or more likely, reducing.