

Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club

Representation on the Draft

Canterbury District Local Plan to 2040

Provision for Netball and Female Sports Facilities

About Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club

Founded in 2006, Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club is one of the largest and most active female sports organisations in the district.

The club provides inclusive coaching and competitive opportunities for girls from Year 5 through to adult level, fostering teamwork, confidence, and lifelong participation in sport.

Based at Polo Farm Sports Club, we draw players from schools across Canterbury, Whitstable, Herne Bay, and surrounding villages.

Our mission is to ensure every girl and woman in Canterbury has the opportunity to take part in high-quality, community-based netball within a safe, supportive and ambitious environment.

Submitted by: Carol Baker – Chair and Coach

Organisation: Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club

Date: 13 May 2026

Submitted to: Planning Policy Team, Canterbury City Council, Council Offices, Military Road, Canterbury CT1 1YW

Policy Reference: C15 – Sport, Recreation and Community Facilities

Contact details: Email: [insert email address] Telephone: [insert phone number]

Website: [insert club URL]

1. Executive Summary

Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club submits this representation to request that the Draft Local Plan explicitly recognise and provide for the development of dedicated netball facilities within the district.

Netball is the largest participation team sport for women and girls in Canterbury, involving more than 500 active players across local clubs and schools. Yet there is no dedicated community netball facility meeting England Netball or Sport England standards. Existing play depends on shared, weather-reliant courts, constraining school and club activity.

The omission means Policy C15 is not currently sound (NPPF §35), lacking positive preparation, evidence, and effectiveness. It may also conflict with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 s.149, given netball's central role in promoting female participation.

We request amendments to:

1. Add reference to under-represented groups, including women and girls, within Policy C15.
2. Commit in the supporting text to developing dedicated netball courts or hubs via partnership with Active Life, Active Kent & Medway, and Kent Netball.
3. Recognise potential sites (Kingsmead Recreation Ground, Polo Farm Sports Hub, Canterbury Academy) and delivery through Section 106 / CIL and Sport England funding.

These changes would make the Plan sound, justified, and compliant with national policy, advancing Canterbury's goals for inclusion, health, and wellbeing.

2. Covering Letter

13 May 2026

Planning Policy Team

Canterbury City Council

Council Offices, Military Road

Canterbury CT1 1YW

Dear Planning Policy Team,

Re: Representation on the Draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2040 – Provision for Netball and Female Sports Facilities

Please find enclosed the formal representation from Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club in relation to Policy C15 – Sport, Recreation and Community Facilities.

As Chair and Coach of the club, I am submitting these comments to highlight the urgent need for dedicated netball facilities in the Canterbury district. Our representation provides evidence of high participation among women and girls, identifies the shortfall in facility provision, and recommends specific changes to ensure the Plan is *positively prepared, justified, effective, and legally compliant*.

Netball plays a vital role in encouraging women's and girls' active participation, yet Canterbury remains without appropriate year-round facilities. Investment in a dedicated site would support the Council's objectives for health, wellbeing, and equality.

Please confirm receipt of this submission. I would gladly provide supporting data, letters of endorsement, or further details if required.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Baker

Chair and Coach Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club

[Redacted Signature]

3. Formal Representation Document

1. Summary of Representation

The Draft Local Plan recognises the value of sport and recreation but fails to make specific provision for female-focused sports or netball, despite strong local demand.

Without dedicated facilities, Canterbury’s female athletes lack equitable access to training and competitive environments.

2. Context and Evidence

- Club Size: Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club serves roughly 90 members (80 juniors + 10 adults), with waiting lists for both age groups.
- Wider Participation: Across clubs (Pilgrims, Canterbury Academy NC) and the Canterbury & District League, there are over 500 active players locally.
- Facility Gap: All current training occurs on shared or outdoor MUGAs at Polo Farm or schools – none meeting England Netball standards nor available year-round.
- Comparative Districts: Neighbouring areas (Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells) have committed dedicated netball courts within their sport masterplans.
- Partnership Potential: Strong relationships already exist with Active Kent & Medway, England Netball, and Sport England, providing clear delivery capacity if space were allocated.

3. Tests of Soundness

NPPF §35 Test	Current Deficiency	Evidence
Positively prepared	No site allocation or target for netball provision, despite quantified need.	500+ female players; multiple clubs oversubscribed.
Justified	Unequal focus on football, cricket, and general “pitches”; lacks balance.	Participation data show netball as top female sport locally.
Effective	No partners or delivery pathway named.	Active Kent & Medway and Kent Netball could fulfil this role.

Consistent with national policy	Fails to fulfil NPPF §98–100 obligations for inclusive recreation planning.	Aligning with <i>Sport England’s Uniting the Movement</i> and <i>This Girl Can</i> would correct this.
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4. Legal Compliance

Because netball participation is predominantly female, the lack of suitable facilities fails to demonstrate due regard to the Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty under Equality Act 2010 s.149.

Planning policy should actively promote equitable access and remove structural barriers to women’s sport.

5. Requested Changes

1. Amend Policy C15 to read:

“The Council will support the development of new or enhanced facilities meeting the needs of under-represented groups, including women and girls – for example, dedicated netball courts or sports hubs designed to Sport England and England Netball standards.”

2. Add supporting text to the policy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan:

“The Council recognises a current shortage of dedicated netball provision and will collaborate with Active Life, Active Kent & Medway, and Kent Netball to identify and implement a community netball hub.”

3. Identify candidate sites such as Kingsmead Recreation Ground, Polo Farm Sports Hub, The Canterbury Academy campus, Kent College, or the development sites of Brooklands and UKC for feasibility and design work.
4. Include delivery mechanisms through Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funds, alongside bids to Sport England’s Community and Strategic Facility Funds.

6. Conclusion

Amending Policy C15 and its supporting text as proposed will:

- Make the Plan positively prepared by addressing an identified local gap;

- Ensure it is justified by evidence and equality data;
- Render it effective through explicit partnerships; and
- Keep it consistent with national policy promoting inclusive sport, wellbeing, and health equity.

Accordingly, Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club formally requests these modifications to secure the Plan's soundness and legal compliance.

4. Supporting Evidence (Appendices)

APPENDICES

A. Female participation numbers for Canterbury

Local Club and League Estimates

From local league and club registrations (2023-2025 averages):

Netball: around 400-500 active female players (across clubs and leagues).

Cdn1.Englandnetball.org

canterburypilgrimsnetballclub.co.uk

Hockey: ~400 female players at Canterbury Hockey Club.

Football: ~250 girls and women within Canterbury City Girls & Ladies FC teams.

Athletics/running clubs: ~300 female members across Invicta East Kent AC, Canterbury Harriers, and parkrun.

Swimming/gym/fitness classes: thousands of registered adult women across Active Life leisure centres (exact breakdowns not public).

B. Rising participation:

Netball is one of the fastest-growing sports for women and girls in Canterbury. Between schools, junior clubs, and adult leagues, there are over 500 active players locally, with teams frequently oversubscribed.

Limited dedicated courts: Currently, all formal play relies on shared or multi-use venues (Polo Farm, Birley's, or school courts). There are no full-time, council-owned netball courts meeting England Netball standards for year-round play.

C. Accessibility issues:

Court time is constrained by availability, weather, and competing bookings (e.g. tennis, basketball, PE timetables). This limits training hours, tournaments, and female recreational participation.

D. Evidence of Demand Clubs and Leagues:

Canterbury Academy Netball Club and Canterbury Pilgrims field multiple youth teams (ages 9-18) and regularly turn away players due to capacity.

Canterbury & District Netball League registers roughly 300 adult women each winter season.

Schools & Pathways: Local secondary schools (Barton Court, Simon Langton Girls', The Canterbury Academy) all compete in regional tournaments but rely on limited outdoor spaces.

E. Regional Context:

Kent Netball's county participation data identifies Canterbury as an under served district for dedicated facilities compared to Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells.

F. Community and Strategic Benefits

Gender equality & female participation: A dedicated facility directly supports Sport England's "ThisGirlCan" and Active Kent & Medway's objectives for women in sport.

Health & Wellbeing: Expands accessible physical activity for girls aged 9+, addressing inactivity and mental health priorities in Canterbury's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Education & talent development: Enables progression from school to club to county-level play, strengthening Canterbury's standing in regional sport.

G. Community cohesion:

Offers a shared venue for schools, clubs, and community sessions, potentially with dual use for fitness or wheelchair netball.

H. Facility Proposal

Type: 3-4 court outdoor complex with floodlighting, spectator space, and changing facilities; convertible to indoor use long-term.

Potential sites:

Kingsmead recreation Centre (existing Sports Centre, good central access)

Polo Farm expansion (current sports hub, strong management model).

Canterbury Academy campus (joint-use option via council-school partnership).

Kent College campus (joint use option via council school partnership)

Brooklands Development

UKC Development

I. Funding routes:

Council community sports capital grants

Sport England" Community Facilities Fund"

England Netball Strategic Facility Fund (if aligning with the county plan)

Section 106 or developer contributions tied to active recreation provision

Submitted as part of the formal consultation on the Draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2040. All information provided may be shared publicly under the Local Plan Regulations.

Contact details:

Website [Canterbury Pilgrims Netball Club](https://www.canterburypilgrimsnetballclub.co.uk)
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