

Canterbury District Netball League

Representation on the 'Draft Canterbury District Local Plan 2040' to include a provision for female sports facilities – more specifically, Netball facilities.

About Canterbury District Netball League

Founded in 1977; and about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, Canterbury District Netball League is one of the largest and most active female sports organisations in the district. The league provides competitive opportunities for females aged fourteen upwards, fostering teamwork, confidence, and lifelong participation in sport. Based at Birley's Sports Pavilion, the league attracts players from all parts of Kent including Canterbury, Maidstone, Thanet, Dover, and the surrounding villages. Our mission is to ensure that every female has the opportunity to take part in community-based netball within a safe and supportive environment, whilst also having the opportunity to play high level, competitive sport and push themselves to achieve their full potential within the sport. The league is ideally placed for youth players to naturally feed into once they transition into playing adult netball – bridging a gap and providing pathways for those graduating from school netball to local league netball. It also supports those at the more elite end – giving extra squad development opportunities to clubs playing at a county and regional level.

Submitted by: Estelle Brandreth – CDNL Secretary

Organisation: Canterbury District Netball League

Date: 17th May 2026

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

Policy Reference: SS2 – Sustainable Design Strategy for the District, SS5 – Infrastructure Strategy for the District, Policy C5 – Canterbury Urban Area, in addition to any or all policies that make reference to Sport, Recreation and Community Facilities.

1. Executive Summary

Canterbury District Netball League submits this representation to request that the Draft Local Plan explicitly recognises and provides for the development of dedicated netball facilities within the district. Netball is the largest participation team sport for women and girls in Canterbury – and across the UK. In Canterbury alone there are more than 500 active players across local clubs and schools. Yet there is no dedicated community netball facility which meets the England Netball or Sport England standards. Existing play depends on shared, weather-reliant courts, which puts constraints on schools and leagues. Local leagues can only access facilities as and when they are not required for school sport. Even when courts are available, they are not fit for purpose. There are either not enough courts to facilitate the number of teams in the league and the number of females wishing to take part, or the standard of the courts is so poor that they cannot be played on safely – particularly in poor weather. Also, due to lighting/staffing issues, in the colder, darker months, the courts cannot be used – therefore Netball cannot be played all year round within the district.

This omission means the current draft plan proposal conflicts with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 s.149 – as it appears to favour male and mixed sport over female only sport. Given the central role Netball plays in promoting female participation in sport, I would question whether not including provision for Netball within the draft plan directly affects the effectiveness of a plan to promote participation in sport.

We request amendments to:

1. Add reference to support under-represented groups - including women and girls, and those from certain religious background i.e. Muslims, who within their culture would only be allowed to participate in women only sport.
2. Commit to developing dedicated netball courts or hubs via partnership with organisations such as Active Life, Active Kent & Medway, and Kent Netball.
3. Recognise potential sites (Kingsmead Recreation Ground, Polo Farm Sports Hub, Canterbury Academy) and consider funding development at these sites using schemes such as the Community Infrastructure Levy or Sport England.

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

2. Covering Letter

17th 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 2040' – Provision for
Netball and Female Sports Facilities

Please find enclosed the formal representation from Canterbury District Netball
League.

As Secretary of the league and Captain of a team participating within the league, 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 effective and compliant, based on
the goals set out by the Draft Plan.

Netball plays a vital role in encouraging women's and girls' participation in sport and
physical activity, 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,

Estelle Brandreth
Secretary of Canterbury District Netball League
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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

League Size: Canterbury District Netball League serves roughly 150 members.

Wider Participation: Across clubs/leagues (Pilgrims, Canterbury Academy, Canterbury District Netball League), there are over 500 active players locally.

Facility Gap: All current training/matches occur on shared and predominantly outdoor courts – none meeting England Netball standards, nor being 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 funding were allocated.

3. Legal Compliance

Fails to fulfil National Planning Policy Framework obligations for inclusive recreation planning. 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.

4. Requested Changes

1. Amend the Plan to read a statement such as: “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 along the lines of: “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 sites such as Kingsmead Recreation Ground, Polo Farm Sports Hub, The Canterbury Academy campus, Kent College, or the development sites of Brooklands and UKC as potential sites for dedicated netball facilities.
4. Include delivery mechanisms i.e. funding, partnership working etc. to show a clear plan for implementing changes.

5. Conclusion

Amending the policy to include the above amendments will:

- Address an identified local gap in the allocation of resources for those in an under-represented group playing a sport with rising participation numbers.
- Ensure the policy promotes equality, which can be evidenced.
- Render the policy effective through partnership working.
- Keep the policy consistent with national policy promoting inclusive sport, wellbeing, and health equity.

Accordingly, Canterbury District Netball League formally requests these modifications to secure the Plan’s soundness, effectiveness, and legal compliance.

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