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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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OFFICIAL REPORT

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[LORD THURLOW]

training for professional planners. As the Government attempt to squeeze hundreds of thousands of housing units into a limited space, with lasting effects on the landscape and the quality of life of residents, it is an opportunity to kickstart a new era, with an intelligent planning discipline for the benefit of society as a whole. I look forward to the Minister's comments and hope she will accept this proposal. I beg to move.

1.45 pm

Lord Moynihan (Con): My Lords, Amendment 99AA in my name is the first of a number of amendments we will be considering over the coming weeks on the importance of sport and recreational provision being an essential priority for planning policy in this country. At a time when playing fields are under threat, swimming pools are being closed and obesity is a growing reality among the population, especially young people, the need for a national plan for physical activity, recreation and well-being is vital if we are going to turn the tide and deliver a legacy for a country that rightly still celebrates the outstanding Olympic and Paralympic Games of London 2012. I declare an interest as a member of the Olympic committee which had oversight of the Games from 2005 until 2012, a board member of the London organising committee of the Games, and then chair of the British Olympic Association responsible for Team GB and the 29 gold medals that our Olympic athletes delivered.

Although we had a wonderful Olympic and Paralympic Games, which left a legacy of regenerating the East End of London well ahead of the projected schedule—in fact, 10 years earlier than would otherwise have been the case—we failed to deliver a lasting sports and physical activity legacy for our country. Today, this amendment provides the opportunity for the Government to deliver that long-overdue legacy and demonstrate to the country a true commitment to sport and recreation.

The reason is unequivocally clear. The planning system provides the building blocks for the provision of open spaces, play areas, sport and recreational facilities and the well-being of the nation. As with the East End of London in the run-up to London 2012, every single facility under the leadership of Sir John Armitt, the inspirational leader of the Olympic Delivery Authority, was built with legacy use for the community in mind. Nothing failed to be considered in that context.

I want to take that experience of the Olympic Games in London nationwide. That is why my amendment would place in law a requirement that:

“Training for all members of local planning authorities must include an emphasis on healthy placemaking, which includes planning adequate provision of sport and physical activity spaces and facilities to meet communities’ needs”.

It is for not just some members of planning authorities but all.

In the planning for London 2012, we learned a great deal from Australia and the success of the superb Sydney Olympic Games in 2000. Today, seven years in advance of the Games, the Minister from Queensland responsible for the Games in Brisbane is here to listen to and learn from our debate in person. He is the hard-working Deputy Premier, Minister for State

Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations in the Government of Queensland, Jarrod Bleijie. He is an outstanding politician, responsible for the delivery of his vision of a lasting legacy for the 2032 Games in Brisbane—for the people of Queensland, well beyond the closing ceremony. We wish him well. I briefly place on record that the relationship between Britain and Australia in sport is defined by a deep and historically significant, though always contentious, rivalry, which is second to none. Yet, although that rivalry is often intense, it also involves a strong sense of mutual respect and a shared sporting heritage that continues to evolve.

So, to reflect that close relationship, what can the Government do today? They can accept this amendment. Why? Because, as the Schools' Enterprise Association stated, 500 swimming pools have been lost since 2010, totalling a massive 34,859 square metres of water space lost to the public. Of all the pools lost in that time, almost half—42%—have been lost since 2020, and this continued into the last year. With increasing financial pressures, ageing facilities and rising operational costs, many more pools and leisure centres are at risk of closure. Of the 10 local authorities that have seen the biggest decline in pool space, 70% have higher-than-average indices of multiple deprivation, risking exacerbating already-stark health inequalities.

By the end of Committee on this and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, I aim, with my colleagues from across the Committee, to set out the building blocks for a national recovery plan for physical activity. This amendment, and others that ukactive and colleagues across the political divide, both in the House and in this Committee, are promoting, necessitate the integration of sport and physical activity facilities into planning law. We want to ensure that this is given weighting in priority that is equal to other facilities and services. It is essential that sport and physical activity are understood as the bedrock of health and well-being within a community and that there is adequate provision of facilities on this basis.

By accepting this amendment, the Government would take a small but necessary step to meet residents' needs and provide the necessary training for all members of local planning authorities to understand the importance of adequate provision of sport and physical activity spaces and facilities to meet community needs and the health and well-being of the nation.

Baroness Boycott (CB): My Lords, it is a delight to follow the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, on his amendment. I entirely agree with everything he says. Not that long ago, a lido not far from where my daughter lives in east London was ripped down and turned into, of all things, a car park, which seems an ultimately depressing sanction on today. I can tell him right now that, if he chooses to divide the House on that subject in the future, I will walk behind him through the Lobby. I thank him.

On my Amendments 100, 101 and 102, I am very grateful to be supported by the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, on all three and by the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett of Manor Castle, on Amendment 100. They are in addition to Clause 50, and they are about training to do with climate change, biodiversity and ecological