

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny

Meeting date: 27th October 2016

Heading: Overview and current status of the draft Playing Pitch Strategy	
Ward: Citywide	(if applicable)
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and current status of the draft Playing Pitch Strategy.

Background & Context.

1. The availability of a sufficient number and quality of playing pitches to provide for the communities current and future sports needs is important in terms of encouraging participation in sport and physical activity, and for general health and well being.
2. In December 2013 the new Bristol:Sport4Life Strategy was endorsed by the former Mayor and Cabinet as a city-wide strategy for sport and active recreation for the period 2013-2018, based on a vision that Bristol is a successful city of sport and active recreation where people are healthy and motivated to participate for life.
3. The Playing Pitch Strategy will contribute towards the objectives in the new Corporate Strategy 2017-2022, and the outcome of achieving alternative and more cost effective models for the delivery of service provision. It will be used to secure external funding towards facility enhancements. It will link directly to the refreshed Parks and Open Space Strategy and contributes directly towards the Bristol:Sport4Life Strategy (Attractive City) of which its successful completion is identified as a priority outcome.
4. The current financial challenges see the Council under increasing pressure to deliver more cost effective and efficient services. For playing pitch provision this will mean working with providers such as schools to ensure their grass pitches are accessible and available for community use. Across parks and open spaces it will mean rationalising changing provision to ensure only relevant ancillary facilities are provided, strategically located and managed in the most cost effective way. Where opportunities exist to provide alternative management arrangements these will be pursued.
5. The Playing Pitch Strategy solely focusses on playing pitches (natural and artificial), across the four main sports of rugby, football, cricket and hockey and their ancillary facilities such as changing rooms. Once complete it will provide a framework under which to help protect, enhance and provide the right combination of playing pitches and ancillary facilities in order to meet the current and future needs of the city's

population in the most cost effective and efficient way.

6. There are a number of drivers for developing the Playing Pitch Strategy including the need to provide evidence in order to inform decision making where provision and planning assessments are concerned; to help manage budgetary pressures to ensure the most efficient management and maintenance of playing pitch provision is in place; to develop a priority list of potential projects which will help to meet any current deficiencies, provide for future demands and feed into wider infrastructure planning work and to help prioritise limited internal resources and to secure external funding.
7. The Playing Pitch Strategy considers all c.500 pitches in the city regardless of ownership. It includes the Downs which provides c.37 football pitches. There are over 1100 teams which use the city's pitches.
8. It primarily covers the Bristol boundary. It does however; also consider those teams who travel outside of Bristol and those teams which travel in to Bristol to play their matches, recognising that the catchment for sports pitches in some cases goes beyond administrative boundaries.

Planning

9. National Planning Policy requires local authorities to carry out an assessment of the needs for sports and recreational facilities as well as opportunities for new provision. It is a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to have relevant and current planning policy in place. The Bristol Local Plan is in the process of being reviewed, including open space and recreational space designation, which must be based upon up to date need assessments. The Playing Pitch Strategy will feed into this policy review and will be used as required evidence.
10. National Planning Policy states: *'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'* (NPPF, Paragraph 72)
11. The analysis undertaken in the Bristol Playing Pitch Strategy is accordingly based upon a detailed assessment of local needs.
12. The key local documents regulating the implementation of the PPS visions into action on the ground are the council's statutory land use planning documents. The Bristol Local Plan is formed by several key documents; The Bristol Core Strategy (adopted in 2011); the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan (adopted in 2014); and the Bristol Central Area Plan (adopted in 2015). All documents contain material of relevance to playing pitch provision. The Parks and Green Space Strategy (adopted 2008) sets out the Council's access, quality and quantity standards in relation to open space (including sports facilities). These standards are incorporated into the Site Allocations and Development Management

Policies.

13. There is a common misconception that a playing field will lose its status/designation if it has not been marked up and used as formal sports pitches for 5 years or more. It may be classed as “disused” but this does not mean it cannot be used in the future if there is an identified need.
14. Similarly, there is also the misconception that “playing fields” refer only to the area where an actual pitch is marked up on a green space. Furthermore, under current planning policy designation a large proportion of open space, including both public and private land is protected as ‘Important Open Space’. If a ‘disused’ playing pitch is designated as Important Open Space, it will benefit from a strong level of planning protection.
15. A site unavailable because it is disused – is any site where pitches were once, but are no longer, marked out and remain undeveloped.
16. If a playing field has not been used for more than 5 years Sport England’s policy (See appendix 1) still applies. The policy relates to playing fields or land last used as playing fields, irrespective of when this use last occurred. The five year reference within Statutory Instrument 2010/2184 relates to the time limit for when Sport England should be consulted as a statutory consultee on any planning application.
17. Sport England would still expect to be consulted on applications falling outside of this five year limit but this would be in a non-statutory capacity and comments will generally be requested by planning officers whenever a playing pitch, active or otherwise, is involved in a planning application. Sport England would still be guided by its Playing Field Policy in assessing such applications.

Methodology

18. In developing the draft Playing Pitch Strategy, Sports Officers have followed the Sport England methodology to ensure a comprehensive overview of Bristol’s pitches has been developed. This methodology is the preferred methodology followed by local authorities (See Appendix 2)
19. A project steering group has been set up to support the development of the work which includes council officers from sports, planning and parks, the regional planning officer from Sports England and regional National Governing Body (NGB’s) officers from football, rugby, cricket and hockey.
20. The original needs assessment, which looks at supply and demand, was undertaken in 2012. Since this time officers have faced a number of challenges in completing this work including a change in the Sport England methodology and organisational changes.
21. The needs assessment has been undertaken in consultation with Clubs, NGB’s and Sport England, to establish the quantity, quality, availability and accessibility of all playing pitches across Bristol (regardless of ownership) in order to fully understand and help evidence the strategic need for pitch provision. For example, questionnaires have been sent out to all sports clubs and schools. Telephone calls have taken place with some of the larger clubs and providers.

22. On-site quality assessments have been undertaken on all pitches, both public and private, in accordance with sports specific criteria set out in Sport England's guidance.
23. For the reasons highlighted in paragraph 20 some of the data now needs to be recollected prior to finalising a draft strategy for consultation.
24. An equalities impact assessment forms part of this strategy work.

Findings

25. Once complete the strategy and findings will form part of the Council's evidence base for sport and leisure. It will help frame the priorities for future investment and the continued provision and development of playing pitch provision across Bristol.
26. Data collected as part of this work will help inform decision making where future saving proposals are considered.
27. The evidence base created will be utilised by the Local Planning Authority when considering planning applications in consultation with Sport England as a statutory consultee, who in turn will consult with NGB's for sport as appropriate.
28. The analysis within the strategies will assist in determining the priorities for future work and investment, although playing pitch enhancements or developments will be subject to sources of funding (primarily from external sources) being made available.
29. In accordance with the findings from the needs assessment, potential capital projects have been identified in the event funding becomes available. Progression of any potential projects will be subject to funding being available and both council and sport's governing body criteria being met.
30. As an example, the types of criteria used to determine the priority of one project over another includes; whether the site is a single or multi pitch site, whether the site is in an area of high deprivation, whether the project has the potential to increase participation, whether the project is supported by the Parks department.
31. In accordance with the findings from the needs assessment we know there is a large stock of mini, junior and adult football pitches that are not available for community use on school sites. This will be reflected in the emerging action plan and actions identified to help resolve this issue.

Vision, Strategy Recommendations & Action Plan

32. Based on work to date a draft summary of the proposed vision, key findings, needs, opportunities and challenges is illustrated in Appendix 3.
33. Based on the existing data, summary comments on the key elements of the supply of sports pitches can be seen at Appendix 4.
34. A draft strategy is nearly complete. This will provide a range of sport-specific

recommendations to address the key issues identified through the assessment of needs and opportunities.

35. As an example, this includes for football, enhancing the large number of poor pitches and changing facilities- specifically the ones most heavily used. For cricket, increasing the number of 'pay and play' facilities to meet the demand from the BME cricketing population. For hockey the need to secure additional playing and training time for the development of hockey in the south of the city and for rugby, to improve the number of poor quality pitches in the city through alternative usage patterns, improved standards of maintenance and capital interventions.
36. The action plan being developed will set out a range of different recommended actions for playing pitch sites in the city, within a defined level of priority.
37. There are no financial considerations arising from the development of this strategy. Any future investment decisions for playing pitches will be subject to an agreed business case and funding.
38. The strategy and needs assessment is intended to inform decision making and focus any future resources most efficiently and effectively. A review of costs and tariffs will be undertaken.

Next Steps

1. Due to the time lapse since the original needs assessment, officers need to recollect the data to ensure the most accurate is used prior to public consultation. This is under way.
2. Once the data has been recollected and the draft strategy agreed internally, officers will follow the decision making pathway and present the draft PPS to the neighbourhood's scrutiny commission prior to public consultation.
3. Following consultation the proposed final draft PPS will be presented by officers and follow the decision making pathway for consideration by the council for adoption.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Sport England Playing Pitch Policy

Appendix 2: Sport England Methodology

Appendix 3: Executive Summary - Bristol Playing Pitch Strategy Overview

Appendix 4: Summary comments on the key elements of the supply of sports pitches

Appendix 1

Sport England Playing Pitch Policy

Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect playing fields and will give advice to the Local Planning Authority on such matters

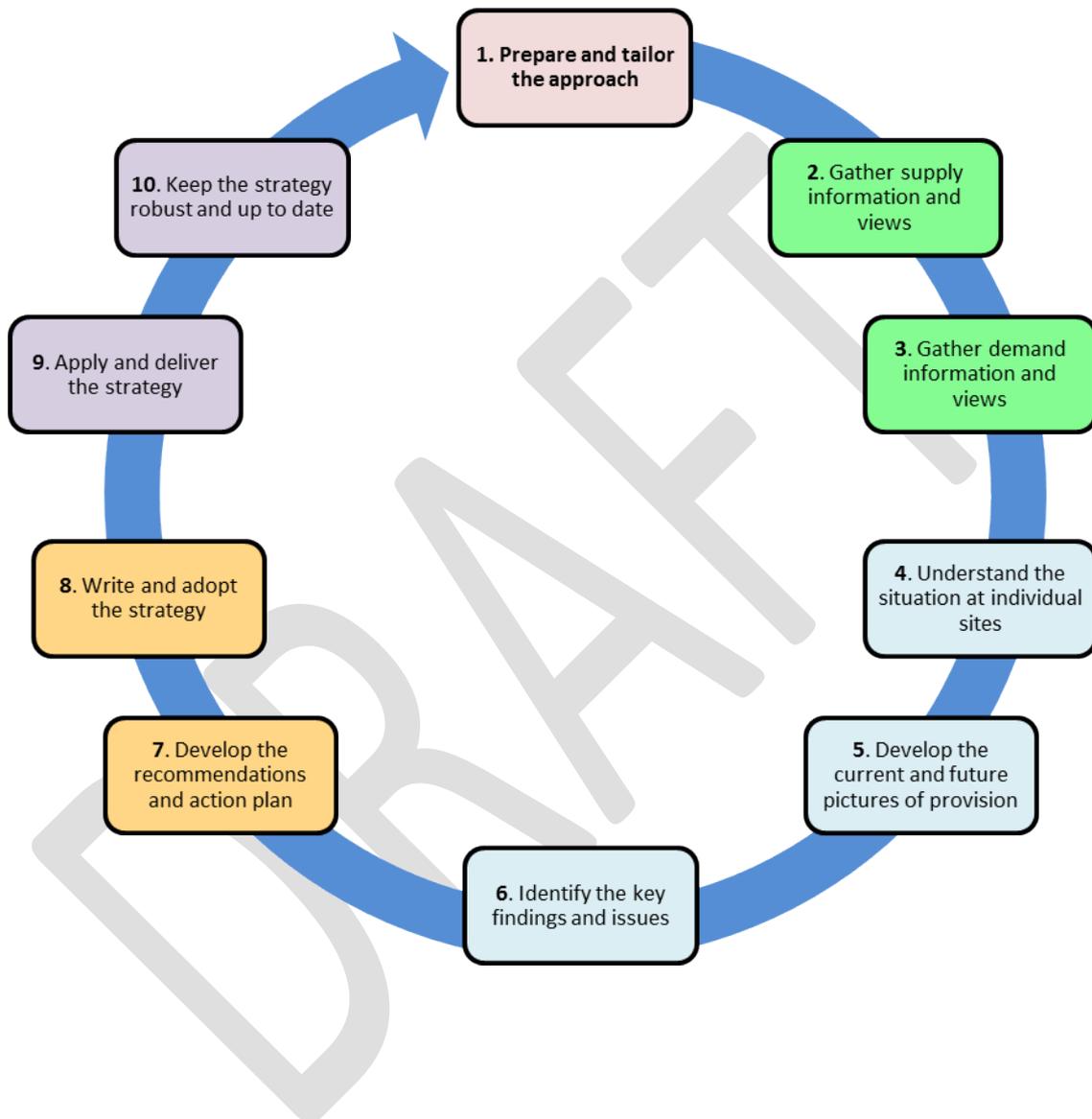
<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/development-management/planning-applications/>.

Sport England assesses proposals affecting playing fields in the light of its Playing Fields Policy: 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England' and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (in particular para 74). It contains a policy of resisting the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, unless the following exceptions are met:

- A. A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.
- B. The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use.
- C. The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of, or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing area of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facility on the site.
- D. The playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of the development.
- E. The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

Appendix 2

Sport England methodology for developing a playing pitch strategy



Bristol Playing Pitch Strategy Overview

Appendix 3

Vision

- To protect, enhance and provide the right combination of playing pitches to meet the current and future needs of the city's population.
- To increase participation in playing pitch sports through offering the best player/participant experience possible in terms of playing pitches and ancillary facilities at the most cost effective price to both the user and provider.

Priority sport specific actions (that reflect the key issues and findings)

	Protect	Enhance	Provide
Cricket	The cricket sites within the Bristol boundary to prevent no further displaced demand out of the city	The quantity, quality and availability of the "pay and play" cricket facility stock to meet the club's needs	New cricket facilities within Bristol to meet the demand from Bristol residents and prevent any further displaced demand out of the Bristol boundary
Football	The overall quantity of pitches in the city to cope with future demand from all age groups	The large number of poor pitches and changing facilities- specifically the ones most heavily used	Develop a balance of adult, youth and mini football pitches that provides the best fit for the city's demands
Hockey	The number and quality of hockey suitable (sand based) AGPs in the city	The number of hours that sand based AGPs are made available for hockey throughout the week	Additional playing and training time for the development of hockey in the south of the city
Rugby Union	The current sites within the Bristol boundary so no more are displaced to outside the city	The large number of poor quality pitches in the city through alternative usage patterns, improved standards of maintenance and capital interventions	Access to 3G artificial grass pitches in strategic locations that are IRB compliant for competitive training and match play

Bristol needs summary

- We need to significantly increase the number of "good" standard grass pitches
- We need to close & rationalise changing provision and improve the changing facilities at the most heavily used sites
- We need to utilise all pitches in the city regardless of ownership.

The big challenges/opportunities

- A reduction in BCC budgets
- A review of all tariffs
- To pursue alternative cost effective options for the ongoing provision, management and maintenance of grass pitches and ancillary facilities
- New forms of games and changing patterns of demand
- Growing the number of AGPs
- Major property developments in areas bordering Bristol boundary

Key messages

- Pitches should not be considered as sport or age specific but as part of an overall stock of playing fields.
- The overall quantity of pitches (i.e. playing field space) is adequate to meet current and future demand.
- Considerable work is required to provide the right combination of pitches and to improve the overall quality of pitches and changing provision in the most cost effective way.

Appendix 4

Summary comments on the key elements of the supply of sports pitches

General

- There are a number of pitches that are used but do not have a community use agreement. In theory their owners could stop access at any time which would cause an immediate problem for the teams playing there and a potential knock on effect as these teams search for other pitches.
- There are a large number of good quality pitches owned by independent schools just outside the city boundary. Some are used by the community but several are not.
- There are only two recorded instances of pitches being over-marked (at the Packers ground) in the city.

Cricket

- There are a relatively low number of cricket pitches in the central & east of the city compared to the north and south.
- Nearly all cricket pitches available to the community have some sort of secured community use agreement.
- Only three cricket pitches have been graded as “poor”.
- Only 4 pitches are available for pay & play cricket. All are in local authority ownership and three of the four are graded as “poor”.
- The majority of cricket pitches have changing facilities graded as “good”.
- There are 27 cricket pitches outside the Bristol boundary used by Bristol based teams (only 36 inside the boundary).

Football

- There is a large stock of youth and mini football pitches that are not available for community use, these are mostly school pitches.
- There are 19 adult football pitches available but not used by the community, mostly on school sites.
- There are a low percentage of football pitches graded as “good”.
- There are a high percentage of adult football and mini football pitches graded as “poor”.
- There are a high percentage of adult football pitches with changing facilities graded as “poor”.
- 91 of 152 adult pitches are owned by the local authority.

- 21 adult football pitches outside the Bristol boundary are used by Bristol teams. This number does not provide any insight in to the number of Bristol residents who play for teams that originate outside of the city.

Hockey

- The vast majority of sand based AGPs used for hockey are in the north of the city.
- There are considerably less full sized, sand based AGPs in the south and central & east of the city.
- Three pitches that are used do not have a secured community use agreement.
- There are 11 AGPs (nine sand, two water) outside the Bristol boundary used by Bristol based teams, mostly in North Somerset. There are only 10 sand based AGPs in Bristol.
- No hockey clubs in Bristol directly own their own pitch.
- Cost of pitch hire across Bristol sites has not been identified.

Rugby Union

- The majority of mini/midi rugby union is played on senior pitches.
- There are very few specific mini/midi rugby union pitches in the city however there may be more temporary pitches used for mini/midi games than identified.
- There are 17 senior rugby union pitches available but not used by the community, mostly on school sites.
- There are a low percentage of rugby pitches graded as “good”.
- There are a high percentage of senior rugby union pitches graded as “poor”.
- None of the rugby specific sites have had their changing facilities assessed as this was not required in the methodology.
- There are 27 senior rugby union pitches outside the Bristol boundary used by Bristol based teams.

Artificial Grass Pitches

- Most of the small AGPs do not have community use agreements but are heavily used.
- There appears to be a lack of full size 3G AGPs in the North of the city. This is negated to some extent by the South Gloucestershire stock but should still be considered as an issue.
- There are considerably less full sized, sand based AGPs in the south and central & east of the city.
- There are a relatively large number of small AGPS in the south of the city. This is due to a privately owned “Goals Soccer Centre”. There is also one of these centres just outside the northern boundary in South Gloucestershire.
- There are no AGPs graded as “poor” (but little information is available of future planning and sinking funds to maintain this quality).
- There is currently only one 3G AGP in the city that meets the FA’s standard for competitive play (St Bedes Catholic College).
- There are currently no 3G AGPs in the city that meet the RFU’s standards for competitive play.

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