

Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Environment Select Committee on the progress of the draft Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy; to seek comments from the Committee on the draft; and endorsement of its production.

2. Background

- 2.2 The Playing Pitch Strategy is being developed to support the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the need for a single Wiltshire-wide open spaces standard. The Playing Pitch Strategy forms Part 3 of the Wiltshire Open Spaces Study.
- 2.3 The strategy has been developed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and informed by the former guidance provided in 'Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation', and its Companion Guide 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities', which is a tried and tested methodology.
- 2.4 The formation of Wiltshire Council as a Unitary Authority highlighted a lack of consistency between the former districts' playing pitch strategies, policies and underlying evidence bases covering different parts of Wiltshire, several of which date back to the early 2000s.
- 2.5 The existence of a robust, evidence based and up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy covering the entire local authority area will help to influence a variety of local authority functions, policy development and decision making in respect of the community playing pitch stock, including planning policy and planning applications, educational provision, funding, facility and asset management, development of pitch based sports, public health and the management and maintenance of provision.
- 2.6 Sport England is a statutory consultee in the planning process; and, both Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) are potential funders of capital projects for sports. A prerequisite of funding by these organisations for major capital projects involving playing pitches is that a playing pitch study/strategy of an acceptable standard should be available. Therefore it is essential that any strategic document is robust and can be referred to in future consultations. The presence of a Playing Pitch Strategy is seen as best practice by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, and by Sport England.

3. Main Considerations for the Council

3.1 Study Method and Process

3.1.1 Leisure Services has worked in partnership with Spatial Planning to develop both the Open Spaces Study and the Playing Pitch Strategy, both of which will be used as evidence bases for the review of the Core Strategy. (See Appendix 1 – Overview of the Open Spaces Audit, Playing Pitch Strategy Core Strategy).

3.1.2 In September 2014, a Steering Group was established to progress the development of the Playing Pitch Strategy. Membership of the group included Wiltshire Council officers, Sport England, the NGBs' officers for football, cricket, rugby and hockey (county development managers and regional strategic facility development managers) and the county sports partnership.

3.1.3 The approach to the project has taken full note of guidance produced in 2013 by Sport England. The guidance has five discrete stages, incorporating 10 individual steps, as summarised below.

Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1)

Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (Steps 2 & 3)

Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views (Steps 4, 5 & 6)

Stage D: Develop the strategy (Steps 7 & 8)

Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (Steps 9 & 10)

3.1.4 The study audited over 300 sites that have a record of being used for sports pitches. Over 600 sports pitches in total were assessed catering for over 900 teams playing football, rugby, cricket and hockey. The playing pitch quality assessment information collated includes:

- Site name, location and reference details
- Ownership and management type
- Number and type of pitches
- How accessible the pitches are to the community
- The quality of the pitches and ancillary facilities
- How the site and its pitches are maintained
- The current level of protection and security of tenure
- Views of users, providers and other parties.

3.1.5 Information has been collated through a series of consultations with the respective NGBs, pitch providers, local clubs, education providers and league secretaries, and included:

- Sports Clubs (Matches & Training)
- Casual and other demand
- Educational demand
- Displaced demand
- Unmet and latent demand
- Trends and changes in demand
- Future demand

3.2 Consultation and Strategy Adoption Process

3.2.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy Steering Group signed off Stages A, B, C and D of the draft Playing Pitch Strategy process resulting in the production of four key documents:

- **The Strategy:** This is an overarching document providing context and guidance for the future provision and protection of pitch sport opportunities within Wiltshire (Appendix 2).
- **Action Plan (Part 1):** This document has the generic actions relating to the steering group's objectives (Appendix 3).
- **The Community Area Profiles (Action Plan Part 2):** This document has 18 separate profiles, based on Community Board areas, providing a summary review of each community area (Appendix 4). These profiles only show sites which are priorities 1-3.
- **The Needs Assessment:** This document is the technical report examining overall supply and demand for pitch sports and is therefore the detailed 'evidence base' used to inform the other documents (Appendix 5).

3.2.2 The draft vision and aims of Wiltshire's Playing Pitch Strategy are:

'To achieve the best possible quality, quantity and type of playing pitch provision to meet the varying needs of Wiltshire's residents, throughout the local authority area.'

- *Provide an evidence base that underpins the statutory land-use planning process in respect of its forward planning and development control functions (i.e. the Core Planning Strategy).*
- *Underpin the development of a range of council policies and strategies, including the development plan framework; leisure strategies; public health strategies and community infrastructure plans.*
- *Support the overall management, protection, improvement and conservation of the playing pitch stock to the best advantage of the residents of Wiltshire.*
- *Create an environment for sport and healthy physical activity which helps to improve the health and wellbeing of the population, increase participation levels and reduce inactivity and inequalities.*

- *Inform the council in its negotiation and securing of Section 106 agreements, and other developer contributions.*
- 3.2.2 Whilst the Playing Pitch information will be used to underpin the Core Strategy, the Strategy itself should be formally adopted by the council in its own right and in this respect the Playing Pitch Strategy will follow the council's process to gain Cabinet approval.
- 3.2.3 The process and format for external consultation on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy has been agreed by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet.
- 3.2.4 Notwithstanding the significant amount of consultation and development already undertaken in the preparation of the draft strategy, action plan and needs assessment, Wiltshire Council recognises the vital importance of local knowledge. Hence the Council is seeking the views of local communities and other interested parties about the issues and priorities identified for each of the Community Areas together with correcting any omissions or inaccuracies in the base data. The documents were therefore submitted for public consultation on 22 November using Planning's on-line consultation tool 'Objective' for a period of six weeks. The consultees include: Community Area Boards, town and parish councils, developers and the National Governing Bodies of Sport.
- 3.2.5 As part of the consultation process, the Environment Select Committee, is invited to comment on the draft strategy.
- 3.2.6 Once the consultation period has ended and documents amended accordingly, the final draft of the strategy will be taken to Cabinet on 07 February, 2017.

4. Safeguarding Considerations

- 4.1 There are no safeguarding implications associated with the Playing Pitch Strategy.

5. Public Health Implications

- 5.1 Outcome 5 of the council's 2013 - 17 Business Plan states that: 'People in Wiltshire have healthy, active and high quality lives'. To deliver this, the Council will ensure that 'public health is integrated into the heart of all services'. (Key action 10).
- 5.2 Outcome 4 states that 'Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment'.

- 5.3 Leisure Services are an intrinsic part of the Council's wider Public Health services. These services are able to build on existing links between each other and other Council services to maximise opportunities to promote healthy behaviours, choices and environments to help Wiltshire's population stay active. This includes access to both open space and formal sports pitches to support healthy lifestyles.

6. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

- 6.1 From an environmental perspective the Playing Pitch Strategy seeks to protect formal green space, where that space is used for pitch sports and where feasible that the relevant space is enhanced to incorporate better drainage, layout and access.

7. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

- 7.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy identifies where there is potential under provision of facilities and opportunities for the development of new sites. The strategy will therefore help to increase participation in sports across the county, particularly in areas with greater deprivation.
- 7.2 The Playing Pitch Strategy supports "Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation". This cross-government strategy seeks to address flat lining levels of sport participation and high levels of inactivity in England. Funding will partly be targeted at groups with low participation rates to encourage those who do not take part in sport and physical activity to get involved. This includes supporting women, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people.

8. Risk Assessment

- 8.1 The adoption of a Playing Pitch Strategy will negate certain risks associated with not having a strategy. The Playing Pitch Strategy provides clarity regarding priorities for Wiltshire. It provides underpinning documentation to the Core Strategy regarding green space; gives sports organisations including Sport England and National Governing Bodies of sport robust needs based evidence to support funding and planning applications; provides strategic direction to support the use of developer contributions; and secures existing playing pitch space through planning policy regulations.
- 8.2 Adopting a county-wide Playing Pitch Strategy may appear to suggest a loss of local influence, however local sports clubs and the county's NGBs representatives have been engaged in the development of the strategy. The formal consultation process further mitigates this aspect. Any future improvements or developments will be made with clubs, land owners and lessees engaged in the process.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy. It

is important to note that the strategy does not tie Wiltshire Council into developing pitches financially, rather it provides a planning document that allows the strategic improvement and development of sports pitches to be delivered by a range of partners and funding bodies.

- 9.2 It is anticipated in Year 1, following the adoption of the Strategy, that the NGBs will identify their priority development areas, for the Steering Group to consider. It will be for the partners to work with local clubs, sports associations, town and parish councils to support developments and for developers to identify where they can invest their contributions as well as the council identifying the best use of S106 and CIL funding.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 There are no legal implications associated with the Playing Pitch Strategy.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 A Playing Pitch Strategy for Wiltshire is an important document that underpins the core strategy and provides robust evidence for organisations such as Sport England who are statutory consultees in the planning process. Whilst not a statutory requirement in itself, the Playing Pitch Strategy is vital in providing an informed evidence base for the protection and future development of formal outdoor space.

12. Proposal

- 12.1 The Environment Select Committee is invited to comment on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy and endorse its production.

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director

Report Authors: John Goodall, Consultant in Public Health
Louise Cary, Head of Service, Leisure Strategy

Date of Report: 13 December 2016

Background Papers

None

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Overview of the Open Spaces Audit, Playing Pitch Strategy and Core Strategy
Appendix 2: Draft Playing Pitch Strategy
Appendix 3: Action Plan Part 1 (generic actions to deliver the strategy)
Appendix 4: Draft Community Area Profiles (Action Plan Part 2)
Appendix 5: Needs Assessment