

DRAFT GLOUCESTER PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY CONSULTATION SUMMARY & KEY QUESTIONS SEPTEMBER 2015

Introduction

The availability of a sufficient number and quality of playing pitches to provide for the Gloucester community's current and future sporting needs is very important to encourage participation in sport and physical activity and for general health and wellbeing.

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. Alongside this, Sport England has prepared guidance for local authorities setting out how a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) should be undertaken.

With this in mind the Council commissioned consultants, Knight Kavanagh and Page, to carry out the necessary research and prepare a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for the City in accordance with the Sport England model. The draft PPS has now been completed and is subject to a 6-week period of public consultation before being presented to Council for adoption early in 2016.

What is a Playing Pitch Strategy?

The purpose of a Playing Pitch Strategy is to ensure that there is sufficient quality and quantity of different sports pitches to provide for a community's current and future needs. It helps, amongst other things, to inform investment plans and health strategies, ensure effective management and maintenance of sports pitches, and ensure that new developments provide the right amount and type of sports facilities for the community's needs.

Preparation of the draft Gloucester PPS

The draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy has been prepared by consultants Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP), with involvement from Council officers, the main National Governing Bodies (NGBs) (the Football Association, Rugby Football Union, England & Wales Cricket Board and England Hockey), Sport England and other key stakeholders.

It has been prepared using information provided directly from sports clubs and schools, and an on site assessment of all sports pitches in the City.

It covers the following outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities; football; cricket; rugby union; rugby league; bowls; and tennis courts. It also considers Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) which can be used by several sports.

Using the information collected, together with an understanding of the factors that will affect participation in the different sports (for example population growth and trends in the different sports), an assessment of the adequacy of playing pitches and their associated facilities for the current and future community has been undertaken.

What does the draft Gloucester PPS say?

The headline findings of the draft PPS are:

- Gloucester is very actively engaged in sport, with good levels of participation in most sports and plans to increase this in the future.
- Most clubs from the City are able to play in the City. There are only a few clubs which have been 'displaced' but in most cases there are plans to bring them back.
- There is currently a shortage of pitches available at the right time to provide for the current demand for football and rugby union and this will increase over time. There are however enough to provide for cricket, rugby league, bowls and tennis.
- Many pitches in the City aren't currently maintained to a particularly good standard, and are overplayed, which affects how often they can be used for competitive matches and training.
- On some sites, the lack of suitably located changing rooms, and / or issues with the quality of changing rooms, is affecting the ability of pitches to be played by some teams.
- There are several Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) in the City, but none built to a '3G' standard. There is also a shortage of flood-lit training facilities. AGPs can be used much more intensively than grass pitches and is one of the reasons the quality of grass pitches is suffering from overuse. Increasing the number of AGPs, including three '3G' pitches, is going to be critical in providing for the needs of the current and future community in Gloucester.

The draft PPS sets out a Vision for playing pitches in the City, followed by a number of different Aims and Strategic Recommendations. These are designed to deliver the Vision and address the issues identified through the assessment work.

In addition to the main PPS, the City Council, working with the NGBs, has prepared three different scenarios looking at how the Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) could be delivered in the City.

The Vision, Recommendations and AGP Scenarios are summarised below for your information, along with some key questions, to which we would welcome your views.

What we want from you

The draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy and 'Artificial Grass Pitch – Scenario Paper' have now been published for a 6-week period of public consultation. The consultation will run between XXXXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXXXX. Your comments are welcomed on both documents.

Please note the full draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy, Assessment Report and AGP Scenario Paper are available to download from the City Council's website at www.gloucester.gov.uk.

Further information

If you require any assistance in responding to this consultation, please contact either Adam Gooch or David Pritchett, details below.

Adam Gooch
Planning Policy Service
Telephone: 01452 396836
Email: adam.gooch@gloucester.gov.uk

David Pritchett
Neighbourhood Services Manager
Telephone: 01452 396785
Email: david.pritchett@gloucester.gov.uk

Key Questions

The Vision

The draft PPS sets out a Vision that provides a clear focus for the rest of the strategy. The Vision is:

'To provide an accessible, high quality and sustainable network of outdoor sports facilities, which provide opportunities for all residents to access good sports, physical activity and recreational facilities'

Question 1

Do you agree with the Vision for the draft Playing Pitch Strategy?

Aims and Strategic Recommendations

AIM 1: To **protect** sports facilities for meeting current and future needs.

Recommendations:

- (a) Protect sports facilities where there is a need to do so through planning policy.
- (b) Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- (c) Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is need to do so.

AIM 2: To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Recommendations:

- (d) Improve quality.
- (e) Adopted a tiered approach (hierarchy) for the management and improvement of sites (see page 28 of draft PPS).
- (f) Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.

AIM 3: To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where there is a current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

- (g) Secure planning gain for playing pitches from housing development.
- (h) Rectify quantitative shortfalls in current pitches stock.
- (i) Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

Question 2

Do you agree with the Aims and Recommendations of the draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy?

Sport-Specific Recommendations

The following sport-specific recommendations have been identified through the assessment work. They provide recommendations on how some of the issues identified can be addressed in the future.

Football grass pitches - Recommendations

- In a phased approach, look to transfer 25% of youth football (mini and 9v9) onto 3G for match play and establish a mix of 3G use and grass pitch in order to better achieve sustainability.
- Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as standard or poor quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality.
- Further investigate provision of joint sport maintenance equipment bank/s to better service the needs of clubs.
- Seek to develop Hub sites to service North and South of the City and explore options for Hub sites to cross subsidise grass pitches improvement across the City, for example at Plock Court.
- Where appropriate reduce usage on overplayed sites and transfer play to local sites which have spare capacity.
- Work with schools where possible to maximise and secure access to pitches on school sites which are currently unavailable for community use.
- Small amounts of existing spare capacity to be retained to help protect/improve pitch quality.
- Where appropriate, develop partnership and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own 'home' sites thus facilitating club development.

3G pitches – Recommendations

- Increase provision of 3G pitches in the City (current shortfall of up to three full size).
- Develop a 3G Pitch Strategy for the City which takes into consideration current proposals and optimal strategic location to effectively service all areas of the City.
- In partnership with EH look to convert one sandbased AGP to a 3G surface whilst maintaining adequate provision to accommodate hockey demand.
- Retain some use of sand AGPs for football training in order to ensure continued sustainability of existing provision.
- In a phased approach, look to transfer 25% of youth football (mini and 9v9) onto 3G for match play and establish a mix of 3G use and grass pitch in order to better achieve sustainability.
- Ensure that new 3G pitches are tested and subsequently FA registered. In addition, ensure that future 3G pitches are used to maximum potential to allow for future back to back programming of mini/youth matches at peak times.
- Ensure that sinking funds (formed by periodically setting aside money over time ready for surface replacement when required) are in place to maintain 3G pitch quality in the long term.

Cricket pitches – Recommendations

- Work with clubs to review quality issues on those pitches assessed as standard and poor quality, including outfield areas which are of lesser quality in relation the square at some sites.
- Address overplay where possible through increasing the number of wickets on squares or seeking access to additional provision.
- Establish security of tenure where viable and there is currently no written agreement in place, particularly at school sites or those sub-let through other providers.
- Explore potential to restore the squares previously marked at Plock Court (to good quality) if required in addition to the retained square which is currently unused to help meet any growth or potential increases in demand.
- Work with clubs to ensure appropriate access to and quality of ancillary facilities supports provision of pitches/sites.
- Utilise spare capacity at club sites to accommodate possible future demand for informal formats of cricket and junior/women/girls development.

Rugby union pitches – Recommendations

- Work with clubs to review quality issues on those pitches assessed as standard and poor quality in order to help reduce overplay.
- Work to reduce training on match pitches through access to dedicated floodlit training areas, including options to provide full size 3G pitches in partnership with the FA which are World Rugby compliant to help address shortfalls.

Rugby league pitches – Recommendations

- Ensure that rugby league continues to be accommodated and provided for in Gloucester.
- Explore opportunities to provide a full size 3G pitch in partnership with the RFU/FA which is RFL Community Standard compliant to address displaced demand.
- Reassess demand in three years time in order to identify if demand has increase to warrant the need for dedicated rugby league pitches to be provided in Gloucester.

Hockey – Recommendations

- Prioritise and retain three sand AGPs to accommodate current and future hockey demand and to ensure continued sustainability.
- Oxstalls Sports Park to be protected for long term hockey use.
- Ensure pitch quality is of a good standard and ensure that sinking funds are in place to maintain sand AGP pitch quality in the long term.
- Maximise use of existing sand AGPs to accommodate (as a priority) Gloucester clubs training and competitive demand through effective programming.
- Work with Gloucester City HC to help facilitate membership growth and ensure sufficient access to Oxstalls Sports Park.
- Work with stakeholders in potential new 3G pitch developments to fully determine capacity which may be made available through transfer of football demand.
- If the sand AGP ensure mitigation through an improvement in existing pitch quality and secured hockey access at an alternative site.

Bowling greens (outdoor) – Recommendations

- Ensure that quality of greens and appropriate maintenance is applied to sites which are considered to be being played to capacity and beyond.
- Address spare capacity and maximise the availability of bowling greens for pay and play in order to raise the profile of the game, increase levels of membership and the revenue generated by sites.
- Support clubs which plan to attract younger people through hosting events such as family days as well as establishing links with local primary schools.
- Where demand exists, ensuring that quality is sustained or improved.

Tennis (outdoor) – Recommendations

- Improve court quality and seek investment to sites which are available for public/community use.
- Ensure clubs can access the appropriate standard of courts to allow LTA competitions to be played.
- Maximise use of school courts to ensure that future demand for courts can be met in Gloucester.

Question 3

Do you have any views on the sport-specific recommendations?

Question 4

Are there any other sport-specific recommendations that you think should be included?

Action Plan

The draft PPS includes a site-specific Action Plan. It seeks to address key issues identified through the assessment work, setting out recommendations for every playing pitch site in the City based on current levels of usage, quality, future demand and its potential for enhancement.

It is recommended that a 'hierarchy of sites' is adopted by the Council, in order to help prioritise investment and the improvement of different sites, based on their importance in providing sports facilities. The criteria for the 'hierarchy of sites' is provided below for your information.

Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites	Reserve sites
Strategically located. Priority sites for NGB.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Serves the local community. Likely to include education sites.	Serves the local community.
Accommodates three or more good quality grass pitches. Including provision of at least one AGP.	Accommodates two or more good quality grass pitches.	Accommodates more than one pitch.	Likely to be single-pitch site.
Single or multi-sport	Single or multi-sport	Single or multi-sport	Supports informal

Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites	Reserve sites
provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	provision.	usage and/ or training etc.
Maintenance regime aligns with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime either by the club or in house maintenance contract.	Basic level of maintenance i.e. grass cutting and line marking as required.
Good quality ancillary facility on site, with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Good quality ancillary facility on site, with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Appropriate access changing to accommodate both senior and junior use concurrently (if required).	No requirement for access changing to accommodation.

The Action Plan then goes on, for each site, to set out the results from the assessment work, future recommended actions, partners required to deliver the actions, timescales and an indication of costs. The Action Plan and associated citywide map is provided separately to this document. Please refer to this for further information.

Question 5

Do you have any views on the Action Plan and hierarchy of sites?

Question 6

Do you agree with the recommendations for specific playing pitch sites? (please identify which of the playing pitch sites you are referring to in your response)

Artificial Grass Pitches – Scenario Paper

The Assessment Report and draft PPS show that the delivery of a suitable number and type of Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) will be critical in delivering the Vision and recommends that a ‘sub-strategy’ is prepared, showing how these could be delivered in the City.

In response, the City Council has worked with the Football Association, Rugby Football Union and England Hockey to begin this process by preparing a ‘Scenario Paper’.

It is important there is a sub-strategy in place to ensure adequate provision is made for each of the different sports. For example, one of the 3G pitches for which there is capacity in the City needs to be constructed to a ‘World Rugby’ standard. Equally, it is also important that other forms of AGPs (sand-dressed and sand-based) are maintained in the City for hockey purposes, as 3G standard pitches cannot be used for competitive hockey.

The Scenario Paper sets out three different scenarios, having regard to emerging proposals that would affect the number of AGPs in the City.

Full details are available in the AGP Scenario paper, which is available to download from the City Council’s website.

Question 7

Do you have any views on the three scenarios for the delivery of AGPs in Gloucester?

Question 8

Are there any other scenarios that you think should be considered?