

Draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy Artificial Grass Pitch – Scenario Paper September 2015

1.0: Introduction

The draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) sets out a vision for playing pitches in the City, which is:

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

The ‘Assessment Report’ and draft PPS show that a suitable number of types of Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) will be critical in delivering this vision.

This ‘scenario paper’ has been prepared jointly by the City Council and the Football Association, Rugby Football Union and England Hockey to begin the process of preparing and adopting a strategy for how AGPs could be delivered in the City.

This paper is subject to public consultation alongside the main PPS and your comments are invited on it.

2.0: Artificial Grass Pitches

There are several surface types that fall into the category of Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP). The three main groups are rubber crumb (third generation turf 3G), sand (filled or dressed) and water based.

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FA or FIFA certified and appear on The FA 3G FTP register <http://3g.thefa.me.uk/>. A growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play at all levels of football at and below the Conference North and South (Step 2) at present. Any new 3G being constructed for Step 3 and below must be built to meet the FIFA 1* performance standard, for Step 2 and above the FIFA 2* standard must be met. Football training can take place on sand and water based surfaces and whilst is not the preferred option it does serve an offer to football.

Hockey is played predominantly on sand-based / filled AGPs. Competitive play is limited on 3G pitches; 40mm pitches which meet the FIH performance standard may be suitable, in some instances, for beginner training, low level competitive matches are an option other than the preferred traditional Sand AGPs. However, this would be highly unlikely to meet the needs of hockey players in Gloucester and it is not the preferred option for The FA. There is a need therefore to maintain a suitable number of sand-based / filled AGPs to maintain and support the growth of hockey in the City.

World Rugby produced the ‘Performance Specification for Artificial Grass Pitches for Rugby’, more commonly known as ‘Regulation 22’ that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union (this is also adopted by rugby league). The artificial surface standards identified in Regulation 22 allows matches to be played on surfaces that meet the standard. Full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts can take place.

A summary of pitch types is provided at Table 1 below:

Surface	Category	Comments
Rubber crumb	Long Pile 3G (60mm with shock pad)	Rugby surface – can also meet football's standard - must comply with World Rugby type 22, requires a minimum of 60mm.
Rubber crumb	Long Pile 3G (55-60mm)	Preferred football surface (with or without shock pad – as long as it meets the relevant performance standard)
Rubber crumb	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	Acceptable surface for some competitive football as long as it meets the FIFA 1* performance standard
Sand	Sand Filled	Competitive hockey and football training
Sand	Sand Dressed	Preferred hockey surface and suitable for football training
Water	Water based	Preferred hockey surface and suitable for football training if irrigated.

Table 1: AGP type and sport suitability

3.0: Artificial Grass Pitch provision

Table 2 overleaf provides a summary of the current supply of AGPs identified in Gloucester. There are four full size AGPs as well as two at Hartpury College (just outside the study area) which are considered to accommodate a significant proportion of demand from within the City. However, there is no FA or World Rugby certified AGP within Gloucester suitable for competitive play, though Hartpury College has one of each. Two smaller AGPs at Abbeydale Community Centre and Waterwells Playing Field serve the training needs and five-a-side needs of local clubs and groups.

Appendix 1 identifies the location of all AGPs in the City, including those which are not full-size. It also shows the location of Blackbridge Playing Field and Gloucester City FC as potential locations for new AGPs.

Site name	Ownership/management	No. of pitches / Size	Pitch type / Age	Certification	Non-Technical Assessment*
Oxstalls Sports Park	Commercial	1 pitch 40m x 30m 1,200 sq m	Sand Dressed 1996 (refurb 2012)	None	One standard sand dressed pitch with floodlights, resurfaced in 2012. Used intensively by Gloucester City HC for matches and training as well by Cleevillians HC. Much competition with football training demand.
Severn Vale School	School	1 pitch 100m x 60m 6,000 sq m	Sand Filled 1994	None	Standard quality sand filled surface well in excess of 10 years old and requiring replacement. No hockey use and instead used significantly for football by both school and community clubs.

Site name	Ownership/management	No. of pitches / Size	Pitch type / Age	Certification	Non-Technical Assessment*
St Peters Roman Catholic High School	School	1 pitch 110m x 70m 7,700 sq m	Sand Dressed 2003	None	Standard quality sand dressed pitch with floodlighting in need of surface replacement. Built in partnership with West Bromwich Albion FC academy which has exclusive access some nights, therefore limited community use capacity other than weekends. Used by Gloucester City HC as an alternate venue.
University Of Gloucestershire (Oxstalls Campus)	University	1 pitch 100m x 60m 6,000 sq m	Sand Filled 2002	None	Standard quality sand filled pitch with floodlighting. Owned by University of Gloucestershire. In excess of 10 years old and therefore requires resurfacing. Mainly used by student teams for training and BUCS hockey matches on Wednesday afternoons with no further capacity available. Plans for this pitch to be lost within current plans for development of the site to accommodate the University's Business School.
Hartpury College	College	1 pitch 120m x 75m 9,000 sq m	Long Pile 3G (65mm), shock pad 2012	World Rugby Reg 22	Standard
Hartpury College	College	1 110m x 60m 6,600 sq m	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm) 2005		Poor

Table 2: Full size AGPs in Gloucester

*** Full 'Non-Technical Assessment' available in the Draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 'Assessment Report'**

4.0: Current position and key issues

Football (3G AGPs)

- There are currently no full size 3G pitches within Gloucester. The FA model suggests that there is a current shortfall of three full size 3G pitches to meet demand for football training. Consideration needs to be given to any football use that currently takes place on sand based pitches.
- There is also a growing demand for all age groups to play on 3G pitches, particularly at youth level but in this instance also at adult level where there is the greatest issue with capacity due to quality and shortfall of grass pitches.
- From the 2014/15 season only 3G pitches with a valid performance test and listed on the FA Register can be used for competitive play. At present, there are no 3G pitches located within Gloucester and therefore no AGPs have undergone the FA's performance test to allow league competitive football to be

played. Please note this is the responsibility of the pitch provider and has an associated cost of circa £1,500. Once a site passes the performance test and adheres to a quality maintenance schedule the facility can appear on The FA register for 3 years.

Hockey (Sand AGPs)

- There are four AGPs suitable for competitive hockey within Gloucester; Oxstalls Sports Park, Severn Vale School, St Peters High School and University Of Gloucestershire (Oxstalls Campus).
- Three are used for hockey and Severn Vale School is solely used for football (Community use).
- St Peter's Roman Catholic High School and Severn Vale School scored the joint lowest for quality (both 56%) of the four pitches and given that the surfaces are over 10 years old will require refurbishment/replacement within the next few years and exact timescales are to be confirmed.
- Overall Gloucester is adequately provided for with regards to AGPs suitable for hockey matches at present. However, access to pitches for hockey training is a key issue as all AGPs are operating at capacity midweek primarily due to football training (given the absence of a 3G pitch).
- There is a need for three full size hockey suitable AGPs to service current and future demand for competitive hockey in Gloucester if 3G provision is provided to cater for footballs need and allow Hockey participation to grow.

Rugby union (3G AGPs)

- There is no World Rugby certified AGP within Gloucester suitable for competitive play, although Hartpury College has one (just outside the study area).
- Overall there are insufficient grass pitches in Gloucester to service current and future demand, totalling a future requirement for a further 51.25 and 4.75 match equivalent sessions on senior and mini pitches respectively.

5.0: Summary of AGP shortfalls

Table 3 below sets out current and future demand for AGPs in Gloucester, as determined by the draft PPS.

Sport	Current demand	Future demand (2037)
Football (3G AGPs)	Potential shortfall of up to 3 3G pitches based on FA model for training.	Potential further shortfalls based on FA model for accommodating competitive play.
Rugby union (3G AGPs)	Current shortfall of at least 1 rugby union compliant 3G pitch	Future shortfall of union compliant 3G pitches
Hockey (Sand AGPs)	Current competitive demand is being met and is accommodated on 3 sand AGPs. Current training demand is at capacity due to use by football/rugby clubs.	Future demand may not be met in light of potential pitch loss at the University.

Table 3: Identified AGP shortfalls from the PPS Assessment

6.0: Potential plans affecting AGP provision in Gloucester

- University of Gloucestershire proposes the redevelopment of its Oxstalls Campus which is likely to include the loss of the sand-based AGP, but with two new 3G pitch/s at Oxstalls Sports Park/Bishop's College
- Proposal at Gloucester City FC (currently displaced to Cheltenham) for a new 3G stadia pitch.

- Proposals for development of a 'hub site' at Blackbridge Playing Field which could accommodate provision of an AGP.
- At the time of consultation for the PPS, Severn Vale School acknowledged the need to replace the AGP surface and stated that it would like to retain a hockey suitable pitch, although there is no current hockey use by community clubs.
- A significant amount of midweek capacity at St Peters High School is taken up by West Bromwich Albion FC academy teams. The professional football club is a partner and stakeholder in the AGP. The pitch is in need of replacing but given the football partnership it is more likely that the School/Club would want to replace it with a 3G surface.
- Potential for Waterwells Sports Centre to accommodate a 3G pitch to service Quedgeley Wanderers FC (early stages).

7.0: Recommendations from Draft Playing Pitch Strategy

Football (3G AGPs)

- 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 – FA recommend £25k per annum in today's market) are in place to maintain 3G pitch quality in the long term.

Hockey (Sand AGPs)

- 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.

Rugby union (3G AGPs)

- 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.

Overall summary

- Providing new 3G pitches for football could (managed/programmed appropriately) free up capacity to accommodate future/unmet training demand for hockey.
- If the sand AGP was to be lost at the University it will result in three remaining AGPs to service hockey, Oxstalls Sports Park, St Peters High School (in need of replacement) and Severn Vale School (in need of replacement). Without like for like replacement of a sand AGP for hockey, all three remaining AGPs would need to be retained/protected for hockey use. However, hockey use would need to be maximised/negotiated at St Peters
- High School and Severn Vale School and the quality of both would need to be improved to ensure long term hockey use.

8.0: Potential scenarios

The following 3 scenarios are examples of how AGPs could be delivered across the City in order to contribute towards the PPS Vision. Appendix 1 shows the location of the different sites.

Scenario 1: University of Gloucestershire Proposal delivered

- 2 x 3G at University of Gloucestershire / Oxstalls Sports Park – 1 being World Rugby compliant both FA compliant (potential loss of sand AGPs)
- 1 x stadia 3G at Gloucester City FC (possible issue on the hours of use for this site)
- 1 x 3G at either Blackbridge Playing Field (World Rugby compliant) or Waterwells Playing Field (FA compliant only) – scoring matrix to identify the priority site
- 1 x sand at Oxstalls Sports Park
- 1 x sand at Severnvale school (surface upgraded)
- 1 x sand at St Peters school (surface upgraded)

Notes

- Displacement from Hartpury College to be looked at and will impact on the x4 3Gs proposed
- All new 3G subject to:
 - Usage showing good levels of use with developments plans for growth and minimal/no displacement;
 - Strong business case showing sustainability with strong maintenance and sinking funds in place;
 - Planning permission being secured; and
 - Capital funding in place to deliver the build.

Scenario 2: No development at University of Gloucestershire

- 2 x sand AGPs at University of Gloucestershire / Oxstalls Sports Park
- 1 x stadia 3G at Gloucester City FC
- 1 x 3G at either Blackbridge Playing Field (FA and World Rugby compliant) or Waterwells Playing Field (FA compliant only) – scoring matrix to identify the priority site
- 1 x sand at Severnvale school (surface upgraded) – Logically due to no hockey use of site, this site to resurface to 3G (FA compliant but small adult size pitch)
- 1 x sand at St Peters school (surface upgraded)

Notes

- Displacement from Hartpury College to be looked at and will impact on the x3 3Gs proposed
- All new 3G subject to:

- Usage showing good levels of use with developments plans for growth and minimal/no displacement;
- Strong business case showing sustainability with strong maintenance and sinking funds in place;
- Planning permission being secured; and
- Capital funding in place to deliver the build.

Scenario 3: Hybrid of Scenarios 1 & 2

- 1 x 3G (FA and World Rugby compliant) at University of Gloucestershire / Oxstalls Sports Park
- 2 x sand based AGPs (one new) at University of Gloucestershire / Oxstalls Sports Park
- 1 x 3G at either Blackbridge Playing Field (FA and World Rugby compliant) or Waterwells Playing Field (FA compliant only) – scoring matrix to identify the priority site
- 1 x sand at Severnvale school (Surface upgraded) – Logically due to no hockey use of site, this site to resurface to 3G (FA compliant but small adult size pitch)
- 1 x sand at St Peters school (Surface upgraded)

Notes

- Displacement from Hartpury College to be looked at and will impact on the x3 3Gs proposed
- All new 3G subject to:
 - Usage showing good levels of use with developments plans for growth and minimal/no displacement;
 - Strong business case showing sustainability with strong maintenance and sinking funds in place;
 - Planning permission being secured; and
 - Capital funding in place to deliver the build.

Appendix 1: Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) locations in Gloucester

