

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Planning Policy Sub-Committee	Date:	17 December 2015
	Cabinet		13 January 2016
	Council		28 January 2016
Subject:	Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2025		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	Yes	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2025		
	2. Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy		
	3. Assessment Report		
	4. Consultation response schedule with Steering Group comments		
	5. Schedule of changes post-consultation		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared following the completion of a six week public consultation on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy and Artificial Grass Pitch Scenario Paper, as agreed by Cabinet on 16 September 2015. It provides an overview of the outputs of the public consultation, and recommends that the revised Playing Pitch Strategy and Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy be adopted by the City Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- 1) The Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2020, as provided at Appendix 1, and the Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy, as provided at Appendix 2, be adopted by the Council; and
- 2) An officer led Delivery Group be established for a period of three years from adoption of Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015-2020 and the Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy to monitor, evaluate and review the delivery of the strategies and related action plan as set out in paragraph 9.2, which shall report to the Cabinet on an annual basis.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The availability of a sufficient number and quality of playing pitches to provide for the community's current and future sports needs is important in terms of encouraging participation in sport and physical activity, and for general health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 This is recognised in the Council Plan 2014 – 2017, a key deliverable of which is an adopted Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for the City, as well increased user satisfaction in the City's sporting facilities. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) further acknowledges that opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities and provides that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for sports and recreational facilities as well as opportunities for new provision.
- 3.3 In response, consultants Knight Kavanagh and Page were appointed to carry out a Gloucester Playing Pitch Assessment (the Assessment Report – provided at Appendix 3) and to prepare a PPS for the City. This has been ongoing for the past 15 months. The PPS has been prepared in accordance with Sport England's 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance', led by a dedicated Steering Group and informed by a significant amount of information from clubs, schools and key stakeholders, as well as on-site assessments of all playing pitch sites in the City.
- 3.4 In response to one of the key recommendations in the draft PPS, officers worked with representatives from the Football Association, Rugby Football Union and England Hockey to prepare an 'Artificial Grass Pitch Scenario Paper'. This provided three potential scenarios for how Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) could be provided for in the City and formed the starting point for preparing an Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy (AGPS).
- 3.5 The adoption of a PPS and AGPS are important for many reasons, including;
- To provide evidence to ensure the Council can develop planning policies to protect against the loss of important playing fields and that the right amount and type are provided as part of new developments;
 - To ensure that investment is directed into the most important projects;
 - To provide a new 'baseline' for the ongoing monitoring and review of the use, distribution, function, quality and accessibility to playing pitches; and
 - To provide the framework for the Council, its partners, key stakeholders, clubs and the community to work towards making improvements to playing pitches.
- 3.6 On 16 September 2015, Cabinet resolved to approve both the draft PPS and AGP Scenario Paper for the purposes of public consultation. This consultation has now been completed, the process and outputs of which have been summarised below.

Public consultation

- 3.7 The public consultation was launched on 24 September and lasted for just over six weeks until 6 November 2015. During the consultation period, electronic copies of the draft PPS, AGP Scenario Paper and other supporting documents were made

available on the City Council website, and hard copies were made available in all local libraries, the Guildhall, Tourist Information Centre and City Council offices.

- 3.8 In order to raise awareness and encourage engagement, the following actions were undertaken:
- Notifications were sent to all relevant sports clubs through their respective National Governing Body (NGB);
 - Notifications were sent to relevant organisations and stakeholders;
 - Publication of a press release (which resulted in press coverage including a radio interview);
 - Article in City Life magazine;
 - Publication in County Council newsletter for schools; and
 - Social media notifications.
- 3.9 Whilst there were over 100 downloads of the draft PPS and 65 of the AGP Scenario Paper, only 14 responses to the consultation were received.
- 3.10 To summarise, there was general support for the PPS and the outputs identified, for example in terms of the quality of some pitches in the City and the need for more all-weather surfaces. In this regard, the AGP Scenario Paper was also welcomed as an attempt to set out how AGPs can best be delivered in the City in the future.
- 3.11 Specifically, discrepancies were identified in how the on-site assessment was reported in the Assessment Report and PPS for Winget Bowls Club and these have been corrected in the final PPS. Comment was also made that the situation for one club has changed since the surveys were undertaken in the 2014/15 season, and additional text has now been included in the PPS to clearly communicate the information represents a snapshot in time, but that it will be subject to annual monitoring by a new 'Delivery Group'.
- 3.12 Several officer changes have also been made, including for example correcting the situation at Innsworth Lane Sports Ground, which was originally shown as 'disused' but has since become operational.
- 3.13 With regard to the AGP Scenario Paper, several responses were received from existing and potential future AGP providers, informed by a meeting held during the consultation period. A response was received from Gloucester City AFC confirming the club is no longer pursuing a 3G quality pitch at Meadow Park. Equally, the FA has confirmed there is no longer an aspiration for a full size 3G pitch at Waterwells Sports Centre.
- 3.14 A schedule of responses made to the public consultation, including a response from the Steering Group is provided at Appendix 4. In addition, a schedule showing all changes made to the revised PPS and Assessment Report, as well as those made in preparing the AGPS, are provided at Appendix 5.
- 3.15 The revised PPS and Assessment Report now presented to Members has been signed off by the PPS Steering Group as satisfying the Sport England 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance'.

4.0 Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2025

4.1 The Vision for the Gloucester PPS 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.’

4.2 Following on from this, the draft PPS provides a range of sport-specific recommendations to address the key issues identified through the earlier stages of the process. As an example, this includes for rugby union the need to work with clubs to review pitch quality issues on those pitches assessed as ‘standard quality’ or ‘poor quality’ in order to help reduce overplay. The full schedule of sport-specific recommendations can be found at Part 3 of the draft PPS.

4.3 The draft strategy sets out three overarching Aims and, sitting underneath this, a series of Strategic Recommendations. These are summarised below for information. Full detail is available at Part 4 of the draft PPS.

AIM 1 – To protect the existing supply of sports pitches for meeting current and future needs.

To achieve this aim, it makes the following Strategic Recommendations:

- (a) Protect sports facilities through local 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 a need to do so.

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

To achieve this aim, it makes the following Strategic Recommendations:

- (d) Improve quality.
- (e) Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) for the management and improvement of sites.
- (f) Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.

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

To achieve this aim, it makes the following Strategic Recommendations:

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

4.4 Finally, the Action Plan sets out a range of different recommended actions / aims for all playing pitch sites in the City, within a defined hierarchy and level of priority, associated delivery partners, indicative timescales and costs. The full Action Plan of provided at Part 5 of the draft PPS.

- 4.5 In terms of delivery, the draft PPS is clear that the delivery of the Vision, Aims, Strategic Recommendations and Action Plan will require the continuation and expansion of key partnerships between the City Council, NGBs, Sport England, schools, further / higher education providers, community clubs and private landowners to maintain, enhance and deliver playing pitches. Delivery of the PPS is the responsibility of and relies on, all stakeholders.

5.0 Gloucester Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy

- 5.1 The AGP Scenario Paper set out three different options for the delivery of AGPs in the City in the future, based on an understanding of key issues, emerging proposals and the recommendations in the PPS. From this, officers have again worked with the NGBs to prepare an AGPS, detailed of which are set out below.
- 5.2 The priority for the City Council, as expressed in the PPS, is that the provision of AGPs should be strategically located so as to take into account emerging proposals and the optimal strategic location so as to effectively service all areas of the City. The PPS further recommends the Council adopts a tiered hierarchy of provision, including the identification of 'hub' sites, which are strategically located, are likely to be multi-sport with associated facilities, and accommodate at least three grass pitches and at least one AGP.
- 5.3 The public consultation revealed that two of the proposed options are no longer being pursued, as set out at paragraph 3.13 above. With this in mind, it is considered most appropriate that the strategy for AGPs should reflect the concept of a northern and southern hub.
- 5.4 The document also makes clear that the adoption of the strategy does not preclude proposals from coming forward in other locations (subject to appropriate funding and other considerations), but sets out the broad strategic context for how the City Council and NGBs consider, at this time, AGPs could be delivered within the City. The AGPS, along with the PPS will be monitored by the Delivery Group over time, and if one of the priority locations is found to be undeliverable, consideration will be given to revising the strategy.

6.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 6.1 The PPS sets provides the framework for the Council, its partners, key stakeholders, clubs and the community can work towards making improvements to playing pitches. It therefore sets out the circumstances where ABCD can help to contribute towards implementing the vision, aim and recommendations.

7.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 7.1 During the preparation of the PPS various different alternatives, or scenarios, to address the issues identified at the assessment stage of the process were considered, and the most suitable / deliverable strategy identified. The different scenarios considered are clearly presented in the PPS, AGPS and associated Assessment Report.

8.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 The PPS and AGPS have been prepared in accordance with the Sport England guidance, informed by a significant public consultation and have now been signed off by the Steering Group. They represent the best and most appropriate strategies for improving and enhancing playing pitches in the City.

9.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 9.1 Adopting the Playing Pitch Strategy is the starting point. The PPS sets out a range of different aims, recommendations and an associated action plan that will require delivery and monitoring over time. As set out in the PPS, the success of the PPS will be dependent upon regular engagement between all parties involved and each member of the existing Steering Group should take the lead to ensure the PPS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence.
- 9.2 It is therefore proposed that the existing Steering Group, which has proved an incredible useful vehicle in the preparation of both the PPS and AGPS, be morphed into a new 'Delivery Group'. It will be lead by the City Council, with representation from the various NGBs and other key stakeholders. It is proposed the group is established for a period of three years and meets on a six-monthly basis, with the first meeting taking place in February 2016. It will take responsibility for the monitoring and annual review of both the PPS and AGPS, and provide a vehicle for on-going engagement in its delivery. This approach reflects the fact that the delivery of the PPS is the responsibility and relies on all stakeholders. Progress will be reported to Cabinet on an annual basis and specific delivery projects will be brought for consideration at Senior Management Team as and when relevant.

10.0 Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are various financial implications for the City Council associated with the both the PPS and AGPS. These include for example, changes to maintenance regimes and improvements to the quality of pitches in City Council ownership. However, it is not possible at this time to quantify what these are. It is the case that the delivery of some specific projects will often draw funding from a range of different sources and this is something that will be coordinated through the PPS delivery group. Suitable funding streams for the delivery of specific projects will be identified in advance of them being initiated. If funding is not available, then projects will not go ahead.
- 10.2 There will also be implications for the Development Management Service in terms of S106 contributions to playing pitch provision, and in the longer term, for the Planning Policy Service in terms of specific playing pitch requirements arising from new development in the emerging development plan.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

11.0 Legal Implications

- 11.1 There are various legal implications arising from both the PPS and AGPS. This includes for example, the potential for 'Community Asset Transfer' of playing pitch sites in City Council ownership. However, it is not possible at this time to set in detail what these are. It is the case that the delivery of some specific projects will

have legal implications and this is something that will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- 11.2 Furthermore, once adopted, the PPS and AGPS will become a body of evidence that will inform the emerging development plan for the City and also be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

12.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 12.1 A risk register has been completed and identified the main risks as being the failure to deliver the adopted PPS and AGPS. The creation of the Delivery Group, tasked with the engagement on the delivery, monitoring and review of both strategies will ensure appropriate action is taken deliver them.

13.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 13.1 A PIA 'Screening' has been undertaken and shows that the draft PPS would not effect a particular group any differently to any other. A full PIA is not therefore required.

14.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 14.1 N/A

Sustainability

- 14.2 The PPS and AGP Strategy, once adopted, will have a positive effect on sustainability in Gloucester, providing a framework for the protection, enhancement and provision of playing pitches in the City for the next 5 years. It will also set a good foundation for the ongoing consideration of playing pitches through future updates to the strategy.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 14.3 Not applicable.

Background Documents:

Consultation Draft Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy
Consultation Artificial Grass Pitch Scenario Paper