

Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy
Artificial Grass Pitch Update
January 2019

Introduction

1.1 This update to the Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy (AGPS) has been prepared by the Playing Pitch Strategy Delivery Group (PPSDG). The PSDG was put in place following the adoption of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) by the Council and has core representation from the following:

- Gloucester City Council (GCC)
- Sport England (SE)
- Active Gloucestershire (AG)
- Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust (ASCT)
- Football Association (FA)
- Rugby Football Union (RFU)
- England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)
- England Hockey (EH)
- Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

Need for an update

1.2 An 'Interim Review' of the PPS was completed in September 2017 and endorsed by the Council shortly after. The review concluded that at that time, the needs for artificial surfaces in the city were as set out in the PPS, but the level of activity indicated it would likely be necessary an update is required within 12 months.

1.3 Discussions with the PSDG in March 2018 concluded a review was necessary. This is because of the following reasons:

- Increasing interest from various parties in new artificial surfaces to provide for different needs;
- Evidence from use at the new 3G surfaces at Oxstalls Sports Park that indicate there is a need for additional facilities; and
- Initiatives from the sports governing bodies that could create additional need.

1.4 Cricket clubs do not play or train on artificial pitch surfaces and their needs are not therefore factored into this assessment.

Playing Pitch Strategy position

1.5 The adopted PPS (2016) calculated there was a need for the following artificial sports surfaces in the city:

- 3 x full-sized 3G surfaces (all football compliant, 1 x 'world rugby' compliant); and
- 3 x full-sized sand-based surfaces (suitable for hockey play) with floodlighting.

1.6 The sand-based surfaces already exist in the city, but some require a new carpet. The surfaces are located at Oxstalls Sports Park, Severn Vale School and St Peter's School.

1.7 The associated AGPS sets out a strategy for the 3G surfaces to be located at a northern sports hub at Oxstalls Sports Park and southern hub at Blackbridge. The existing sand-based surfaces will be retained and re-carpeted where necessary. Existing youth 3G

surface at Abbeydale Community Centre and youth sand-based surface will also be retained.

New artificial surfaces in Gloucester City

- 1.8 Since this time, the following developments have taken place:
- 2 x full sized 3G surfaces delivered at Oxstalls Sports Park as part of a University of Gloucestershire development (both suitable for football play, one 'World Rugby' compliant). The facilities have secured community use with Community Use Agreements in place and high usage that has resulted in a realignment of usage in order to accommodate the needs of football, rugby and hockey;
 - 1 x new sports hall delivered at the University of Gloucestershire, again with secured community use. The hall can accommodate 12 badminton courts, or three netball / basketball / 5-a-side football courts.
 - 1 x $\frac{3}{4}$ 3G surface delivered at St Peters School ('World Rugby' compliant) for training purposes. The pitch is also suitable for affiliated match play (Youth 11v11); and
 - 1 x sand-based AGP resurfaced at St Peters School.
 - 1 x sand-based AGP at King's Schools (Archdeacon Meadow) granted planning permission and under construction.
- 1.9 The emerging Blackbridge Sports and Community Hub project is being taken forward by Active Gloucestershire, the City Council and a project group. The current proposal includes the provision of a full-size 3G surface, other grass pitches and community facilities.
- 1.10 Based on the outcomes of the adopted PPS, two of the three 3G surfaces have been delivered, as well as an additional training 3G surface and a full-sized sand-based surface is under construction at King's School.

Understanding future needs

- 1.11 To inform this assessment, each of the sports has re-considered the needs of their clubs. This is set out below:

Football

- 1.12 The FA has an 'AGP Mapping Model', which, based on population figures and the number of teams playing in the local authority area, provides a need figure for artificial surfaces based on current and future needs for training and match play. The full calculation is provided at Appendix 1 and concludes a need for up to an additional 2 full-sized 3G surfaces to provide for the needs of football above and beyond those currently operating in the city. This is a net increase of +1 compared to the adopted PPS.
- 1.13 Gloucester has been identified by the FA as a hotspot for increasing female participation in football. The impact on demand of this initiative should be monitored and reviewed by the PPS Delivery Group.
- 1.14 In addition, it is worth noting that The FA commissioned the preparation of Local Football Facilities Plans (LFFP) for all local authorities by 2020. Gloucester City's LFFP was completed in December 2019 and identifies priority facility projects for potential investment across The FA's four national investment priorities; (1) 3G Football Turf Pitch, (2) Improved grass pitches, (3) Changing rooms, pavilions and club houses, and (4) Small-sided facilities

Rugby

- 1.16 At the time of writing, the RFU is considering Round 4 of its Rugby Turf Programme and Gloucester City is identified as an area of interest. A feasibility exercise has been undertaken, looking at likely demand from clubs and it has identified there is capacity for an additional 'World Rugby' compliant 3G surface in the city.
- 1.17 A new facility is likely to be fully funded by the RFU on either a freehold club site or a long lease of 30+ years; options for this are currently being considered.

Hockey

- 1.18 The City Council met with representatives from EH and the one major club in the city – Gloucester City Hockey Club (GCHC). At the time of writing this AGP update, participation levels are around the same as they were when information was collected as part of the PPS in 2014/15 with between 260 and 300 players. The club currently plays and trains across two sites in the city; Oxstalls Sports Park and St Peter's Roman Catholic High School. In addition, the club has limited usage for training purposes at Dean Close School, located in Cheltenham achieved through individual personal contact with the facility provider. It is also understood that match sessions have been secured at the new full-sized sand-based surface at King's School.
- 1.19 The club (GCHC) recently appointed a new chair and management team and has aspirations to grow significant over the next five years. This includes a doubling of players to become a 500+ club. EH consider this is achievable given Gloucester's population and 'untapped' player opportunities at schools, the University and the community more widely. The club intends to prepare a Development Plan over the next few months in order to take this forward.
- 1.20 Both EH and GCHC agree that the club is currently underperforming in terms of the number and demographic of players, which is not reflective of Gloucester. Key issues in preventing the club to move forward are:
- A lack of identity with the nomadic nature of the club in terms of having to play and train at several locations and the absence of a clubhouse on site; and
 - A lack of engagement with the community, for example not having formal links with schools and the university and different playing offerings.
- 1.21 At the present time, given the current position of the club, it would be inappropriate to identify specific additional pitch requirements. However, it is clear that this may change in the near future as the club implements its Development Plan and it is therefore important this is monitored by the PPS Delivery Group.

Educational establishments

- 1.22 Since the adoption of the PPS and AGPS, engagement with schools has been maintained with Active Gloucestershire on a needs led basis. The status for schools is as follows:
- ***Barnwood Park Arts School:*** Expressed a desire for a new sports hall and Sport England have been consulted on a design. This is an emerging proposal.
 - ***Kings School:*** At the time of writing, the school has submitted a planning application for a new full sized sand-based AGP with floodlighting at their Archdeacon Meadow site. It is understood the facility will provide some dedicated community use.

- **Ribston Hall High School:** An FA girls football hub, the school has expressed previous interest in using Blackbridge.
- **Severn Vale High School:** No specific needs identified however the existing sand-based AGP is in poor condition and needs resurfacing.
- **Gloucester Academy:** It is understood the school has ambitions to grow sports provision and this will continue to be monitored.
- **Crypt School:** See reference to Blackbridge. The school has a desire to open up existing indoor / outdoor facilities to capitalise on the Blackbridge development.
- **Sir Thomas Rich:** No further needs identified.
- **St Peters High School:** The existing sand-based facility has recently been resurfaced and a new $\frac{3}{4}$ size 3G surface has recently been constructed and is operational.

Other needs

- 1.23 One ward in the city, Barton and Tredworth, has no playing pitches located within it, albeit it is in close proximity to Gloucester Park. The City Council is currently working in partnership with St James Church of England School, residents and community groups and has established that a site called 'The Glebe' has the potential to provide for local needs, including the potential for a youth sized artificial surface and ancillary facilities.

Cross-boundary

- 1.24 Gloucester is a tightly bound local authority with development on its periphery, located in the neighbouring local authorities of Tewkesbury Borough Council and Stroud District Council. In addition to this, the adopted Local Plans allocate strategic urban extensions to the north, east and south of the City. These communities will be located within the 'travel to play' area and need to be considered as part of this update.
- 1.25 At the present time, there is one full-sized sand-based surface at Brockworth School, to the east of Gloucester City, which has secured community use. Further afield, there are two full-sized 3G surfaces located at Hartpury College, which again has some secured community use and is sometimes used by Gloucester clubs.
- 1.26 Recent planning permissions in Tewkesbury Borough and District, but adjacent to Gloucester will deliver a range of new sports facilities, but no artificial surfaces.
- 1.27 Tewkesbury Borough Council is nearing completion of a Sports, Social and Open Spaces Study. This study concludes that whilst there is a need for additional artificial surfaces in the Borough, that these are not required to the north of Gloucester City.
- 1.28 Stroud District Council has recently commissioned consultants to undertake a similar assessment, but at the time of writing there are no tangible outputs. The results of the assessment will be reviewed once available.

Conclusion on future needs

- 1.29 At the time of writing, there is an identified additional need for 1 x full-sized football compliant 3G surface and 1 x full sized 'World Rugby' compliant surface.
- 1.30 In terms of the full-sized football compliant surface, having regard to the PPS and an understanding of where need currently exists, the Delivery Group is of the view it would best be delivered at either Blackbridge or Waterwells Sports Centre.

- 1.31 With regard to the ‘World Rugby’ compliant surface, RFU funding criteria require this to be delivered on a freehold club site and discussions have already commenced in this regard.
- 1.32 There may also be a specific community need for a smaller artificial surface at the Glebe and the City Council is currently working with the community to take this forward.
- 1.33 Notwithstanding the above, it is clear there is significant ongoing activity in and around the city and will be necessary for the PPS Delivery Group to monitor this and review the AGP Strategy as necessary.
- 1.34 Taking into account all of the above, the revised AGP Strategy to provide for the needs of Gloucester is as follows:

Facility	Surface	Note
Northern Sports Hub (Oxstalls Sports Park)	1 x full sized sand-based AGP. 2 x full-sized 3G AGPs (both football compliant, 1 x World Rugby’ compliant).	In situ. Completed Autumn 2017 and operational.
Southern Sports Hub (Blackbridge Sports and Community Hub)	1 x full-sized 3G AGP	Emerging proposal
Severn Vale School	1 x full-sized sand-based AGP	Poor condition. To be resurfaced and retained.
St Peters Roman Catholic School	1 x full-sized sand-based AGP 1 x ¾ sized 3GAGP (World Rugby Compliant)	Recently resurfaced and to be retained
King’s School (Archdeacon Meadow)	1 x full-sized sand-based AGP	In situ. Completed winter 2018/19.
Waterwells Sports Centre	1 x full-sized 3G AGP	Proposed
To be confirmed	1 x full-sized 3G AGP (World Rugby compliant)	RFU taking forward
The Glebe	1 x youth-sized AGP	Proposed