

Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy Interim review - October 2017

The Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) was adopted in January 2016. In order to ensure it remains up-to-date and relevant, it is important it is updated on a regular basis, to maintain the momentum and commitment that has been built up in developing the PPS, and to ensure the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old.

The following paper answers each of the questions set out at Stage E of the PPS guidance, which is about delivering the strategy and keeping it up to date:

1. How has the delivery of the recommendations and action plan progressed? Are changes required to the priority afforded to each action?
2. How has the PPS been applied and what are the lessons learnt?
3. Are there any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area and other supply and demand information? What does this mean for the overall assessment work and key findings and issues?
4. Have there been any developments for a specific sport or particular format of sport?
5. Are there any new or emerging issues and opportunities?

The Delivery Group

The PPS is being delivered by the City Council, working with pertinent National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Sport England, Active Gloucestershire, Aspire Sport and Cultural Trust and the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association – the Delivery Group (DG). The DG meets at least every six months, taking responsibility for the monitoring and annual review of the PPS and providing a vehicle for ongoing engagement in its delivery.

This Interim Review of the PPS has been prepared by the City Council following discussion at meetings in March and September 2017 and has subsequently been signed off by the DG.

Supporting information

This Interim Review has been prepared using supporting evidence. These are provided as follows:

- Appendix 1: PPS Action Plan Update (October 2017)



Active
Gloucestershire



1. How has the delivery of the recommendations and action plan progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action?

Progress is being made in delivering all recommendations and actions on the PPS. A summary of current position is provided below.

Aim 1: To protect sport facilities for meeting current and future needs.

Recommendations

- a) *Protect sports facilities where there is a need to do so through local planning policy.***
 - Emerging planning policy in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and Gloucester City Plan (GCP) seek to ensure protection of important sports fields and ancillary facilities, as well as the provision of new on-site or off-site facilities through new development. The JCS is at the latter stages of preparation, with the Inspector's report expected shortly. The GCP is at an early stage in its preparation, with a Pre-Submission consultation scheduled for Autumn 2018. Since the PPS was adopted, the Debenhams playing field has been lost. This was justified through the planning process in the context of enabling the development of the sports hub at the University of Gloucestershire / Oxstalls Sports Hub. Suitable replacement provision is to be provided as part of the wider scheme.
- b) *Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.***
 - Approaches have been made to clubs via the NGBs to identify opportunities to improve tenure arrangements for clubs playing on City Council owned pitches, in order to facilitate funding bids, where available. Take up has been limited, but there are positive movements from Tuffley Rovers at The Lannett and Quedgeley Parish Council at Kingsway sports pitches. The City Council remains open to discussions around and further opportunities in the future.
- c) *Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is a need to do so.***
 - Active Gloucestershire and the City Council organised a workshop with all of schools in the city, held on 30th November 2016. The event began the process of creating a more coherent and structured relationship with schools, looking to establish, coordinate and monitor opportunities for increased community use of community facilities. Active Gloucestershire followed up the event with 1-2-1s with priority schools, with progress and future opportunities being monitored by the DG. Off the back of this event, the DG now prepared a six-monthly newsletter for all schools, highlighting opportunities for schools and pupils to engage in sports activity.
 - Following the grant of planning consent for a significant expansion of the University of Gloucestershire's Oxstalls Campus sporting facilities and a new business school, a 'Community Use Agreement' has been secured at Oxstalls Sports Park to ensure the needs of local hockey clubs are not adversely affected.

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

d) *Improve quality.*

- Between January 2016 and September 2017, improvements have been made to over 40% of grass pitches in the city. This includes specific pitch maintenance works, reconfigured pitch layouts to accommodate current needs, new posts or nets or bringing back into use previously disused playing fields. Full details are available in the Action Plan Update at Appendix 1.
- Three rugby clubs in the city have received 'NatWest Rugby Force' funding and support in order to help them achieve their development goals. For the Gloucester clubs, this has focussed around pitch maintenance and improvement including a visit from Keith Kent, the head groundsman for Twickenham Stadium.
- The RFU, FA and ECB have held pitch improvement workshops with clubs and groundsmen. This included an event at Gloucester Rugby's Kingsholm Stadium, lead by

the head groundsman of Twickenham stadium, Keith Kent. Further workshops are planned in the future.

- The FA and RFU have commissioned Pitch Improvement Officers to undertake reviews of priority sites and advise on a targeted programme of pitch improvement measures.
 - The DG has and continues to promote the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in its work, encouraging community input in establishing and, where possible, implementing for the needs of the local community.
- e) Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) for the management and improvement of sites.**
- Improvements to pitches and the priorities of the DG align with the hierarchy of provision made set out in the Action Plan and endorsed priorities list (November 2016).
- f) Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.**
- The DG works in partnership to deliver the aims, recommendations and action plan of the PPS. The group meets at least every six months and there are other targeted discussions and meetings outside of this as necessary. See Question 2 for further details.

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

- g) Secure planning gain for playing pitches from housing growth.**
- On-site provision or contributions for off-site provision have been secured from a number of larger planning applications. These include for example 'Winnycroft Farm' and 'Land South of Grange Road'.
- h) Rectify quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock.**
- Cumulatively the other recommendations and aims contribute towards this objective. It should be noted also that efforts have been made to bring into use pitches that at the time of undertaking the assessment stage of the PPS were found to be unused. Furthermore, efforts have been made to reconfigure / more intensively use existing pitches so as to better reflect the current needs of the community.
- i) Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demands.**
- The City Council is working with Active Gloucestershire is taking forward the Blackbridge Community Hub, the current focus being around feasibility and the business plan.

2. How has the PPS been applied and what are the lessons learnt?

- The PPS is being applied consistently by all members of the DG. A full DG meeting is held on a six-monthly basis. Other organisations and individuals are invited as and when necessary to provide input on specific projects.
- Outside of this, targeted discussions have been held between different parties around specific priority issues. This has included individual sessions between the Council and NGBs to identify opportunities around secure of tenure for priority clubs as well as a workshop session with local schools.
- The DG feels that the current frequency and structure of meetings works well and does not need to change.
- Particular strengths of the Gloucester PPS Delivery Group are:
 - Strong management and commitment from City Council officers;
 - Consistent and committed representation from City Council officers, Sport England, the National Governing Bodies, Active Gloucestershire and Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust.
 - Consistent representation from the same Council officers with a broad range of skills and experience. Representation from planning officers was identified as particularly important in making the link between the delivery of the PPS, provision of new

playing fields and ancillary facilities through new developments and S106 funding opportunities for off-site provision and improvements.

- The Gloucester City model in implementing the PPS is recognised and recommended to other local authorities. The FA is developing a national case study based on the way Gloucester is delivering its PPS.

3. Are there any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area and other supply and demand information; what does this mean for the overall assessment work and key findings and issues?

- The sports hub proposal at the University of Gloucestershire and Oxstalls Sports Park has now been granted outline planning permission and the development is in the advanced stages of construction. At the time of writing, one of the 3G pitches is operational, with the other scheduled to open by the beginning of November 2017. These are the first 3G quality pitches in the city.
- The development of the Blackbridge Community Sports Hub in Podsmead continues to progress well as it moves onto the design phase of the project. Working with the County Council flood alleviation team, and joint funded by the Podsmead Big Local, Robert Bray Associates have been commissioned to produce concept designs for the site, incorporating the flood prevention schemes and the new facilities. Active Gloucestershire is continuing to explore a range of funding options for the new road around the athletics track, community hub, 3G artificial grass pitch and landscaped park area.
- New supply is coming forward through various planning consents.
- Elsewhere improvements have been made to existing playing fields and ancillary facilities.
- Overall, the Delivery Group does not feel there are any changes to particularly important sites, or to supply and demand information that would affect the key findings and issues.
- The DG has reviewed participation using the most recent affiliation information. It shows that, overall, participation in the different sports remains similar or has increased slightly since the information was last collected under Stage B of PPS preparation. It is not considered therefore that at this time, any changes to the PPS are necessary.
- To inform the Interim Review, consideration has been given to the need for artificial grass services in the city. The current approach for this is set out in the Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy (AGPS), which was adopted alongside the PPS. This set out the need for three 3G quality pitches and three sand/water-based pitches. The main users of artificial surfaces are football, rugby and hockey, with each having their own particular needs. The current position is:
 - Football: Updated scenario testing has been undertaken, looking at additional potential demand from training. The model suggests that almost four full-sized 3G pitches could be required over the ten-year strategy. However, when considering the existing smaller 3G surface at Abbeydale Community Centre and football usage on existing sand AGPs, it is not considered appropriate to amend the figure at this time. It will be important for the DG to monitor this closely, particularly considering the drive in womens and girls football in the city (see point 5 below).
 - Rugby: Current supply in the city currently meets demand, as set out in the national Rugby 360 AGP programme.
 - Hockey: The current AGP strategy is being delivered and remains fit for purpose at this time, although only low level introductory hockey can now be played on 3G (40mm) pitches when no alternative sand-based AGP is available. With this in mind, it will be important for the DG to continue to monitor activity around current and proposed artificial surfaces and review the strategy if necessary.

4. Have there been any developments for a specific sport or particular format of sport?

- Walking sports (rugby, football) are becoming increasingly popular but tend to be undertaken during off-peak times and so do not affect peak play.
- Gloucestershire FA has identified Gloucester as a 'hotspot' in delivering the 'FA Women and Girls Strategy 2017 – 2020', being an area where activity exists but there is capacity to grow. The main aim of the new strategy is to double female participation in football. At present capacity exists to support the early stages of the implementation of the strategy but it will be important for the DG to monitor progress and further consideration made as part of the next PPS interim review.
- Other than the point above regarding women's/girl's football, the DG agrees that there aren't currently any developments in a particular sport or format of sport in Gloucester that would change the aims and recommendations of the PPS or necessitate a fuller review.

5. Are there any new or emerging issues and opportunities?

- There are increasing proposals in the city for new artificial surfaces as well as potential further demand. The DG will continue to monitor these proposals and update the AGPS as and when necessary.
- Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council have commissioned KKP to undertake their playing pitch, open space and community facilities strategy for their local authority area. Given they are JCS partners with Gloucester City Council, and the development of strategic allocations that affect Gloucester, is it important to ensure greater liaison to ensure the respective PPSs are delivered in a coordinated manner.
- The Gloucester PPS does not include consideration of built facilities. This is a gap that may need filling and City Council officers will consider this more fully.

CONCLUSIONS

- The current DG structure, representation and frequency of meetings work very well. The work of the DG to date has led to significant improvements in the city. To maintain momentum, it is important for the City Council to maintain strong leadership and that the rest of the DG maintains their current commitment.
- A review has been undertaken of updated supply and demand information, improvements made to the different playing pitch sites and any developments in priorities and formats of sports. Whilst significant progress has been made in delivering the PPS, it is not considered at this time that these necessitate a reconsideration of the aims and recommendations of the PPS or the AGPS. It is however important that this continues to be monitored by the DG in the future.