

South Staffordshire Council

Local Plan Review

Publication Plan

Future Housing Growth & Playing Pitch Requirements Topic Paper

April 2024

Contents

Section		Page
1.	Introduction	1
2.	National Policy & Guidance	1
3.	South Staffordshire Playing Pitch Strategy	1
4.	Playing Pitch Provision and Local Plan Policy	5

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is one of a series of topic papers which has been produced to support the emerging South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Publication Plan 2024.
- 1.2 This Topic Paper outlines the key findings and recommendations from the South Staffordshire Playing Pitch Strategy 2020 (PPS) and how this has influenced the Council's approach to formulating policy on the protection and provision of outdoor sport facilities.

2. National Policy and Guidance

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being. Access should be provided to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical recreation. The NPPF para 102 requires that the formulation of planning policy on this matter should be based upon robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for sport and recreation facilities and requires that the planning system provide a measure of protection for existing sports and recreational buildings.
- 2.2 Sport England is the non-departmental Government body responsible for increasing public participation in sporting activities. As part of this remit, Sport England engages with Local Planning Authorities to secure the retention of existing provision and support the growth of new facilities to meet changes in demand. A key element of this approach is the promotion of a calculator to quantify the level of contribution which should be provided as a consequence of the new development proposed in local development plans. Sport England also provides detailed guidance on the approach to adopt in undertaking a robust assessment of sport and recreation facilities which can meet the assessment requirements identified in paragraph 102 of the NPPF.

3. South Staffordshire Playing Pitch Strategy

Background

- 3.1 The council commissioned consultants Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd (KKP) to produce a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) to assess the quantity and quality of playing pitches within the district. The PPS which was published in 2020 provides a wide overview of the supply and demand of outdoor sports facilities. In addition to providing crucial evidence to support the review of the Local Plan it will provide information to support

the work of other partner agencies such as National Governing Bodies and sports organisations.

- 3.2 The PPS has been produced in-line with guidance provided by Sport England and has examined the major pitch sports in the district (football, cricket, rugby union and hockey) and also the main non-pitch sports (bowls, tennis, netball and golf). The Playing Pitch strategy provides a robust and up-to-date assessment of facilities to support the formulation of local plan policies.
- 3.3 The strategy documents comprises a number of elements including an assessment of supply against current and future demand scenarios, a number of strategic recommendations and an action plan. Whilst the strategy has been commissioned by the district council, responsibility for the delivery of the strategy extends beyond the local authority to include a number of partner agencies including the National Governing Bodies, sport organisations, educational establishments and parish councils.
- 3.4 Sport England recommend that strategies should be subject of periodic updates to ensure that the findings and recommendations remain relevant and robust. To help meet this requirement the district council has embarked on a regular review of the findings of the study with relevant National Governing Bodies and Sport England and has produced an addendum to the original study to reflect ongoing changes.

Key Findings & Sport Specific Recommendations

- 3.5 Reflecting the rural geography of the district and the lack of a single large settlement the strategy identified five localities which cover the entirety of the district and which has acted as a framework for the detailed study of playing pitch resources. A survey of all known outdoor sport facilities within the district has been undertaken and discussions held with various sports clubs to build a picture of current capacities and future aspirations. This assessment has identified a number of current and future shortfalls of football pitches, 3G pitches, cricket squares, rugby union and hockey pitches. The strategy did however conclude that ‘the shortfall evidenced are, for the most part relatively minimal’.
- 3.6 The findings of the playing pitch assessment indicated that most current and future shortfalls could be addresses via quality improvements and/or improved access arrangements. The PPS identified a number of key recommendations for each of the sports included in the assessment and these are summarised in the table below. Site

specific improvements which would help to deliver these recommended improvements has been identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan.

Table 1: Summary of PPS Sport Specific Recommendations

Sport	Key Recommendations
Rugby Union	<p>Protect existing pitches</p> <p>Large housing developments consider on-site provision, if demand sufficient</p> <p>Smaller housing schemes seek developer contributions to improve existing sites.</p> <p>Improve quality of pitches.</p> <p>Install floodlighting to support training demands</p> <p>Shortfalls can be met through better utilisation of existing provision</p>
Football	<p>Protect existing pitches.</p> <p>Large housing developments consider on-site provision, if demand sufficient</p> <p>Smaller housing schemes seek developer contributions to improve existing sites.</p> <p>Invest in pitches rated as poor quality.</p> <p>Transfer overplay to sites with capacity.</p> <p>Secure tenure</p> <p>Reconfigure pitches to better reflect type of demand.</p>
Cricket	<p>Protect existing cricket squares</p> <p>Large housing developments consider on-site provision, if demand sufficient</p> <p>Smaller housing schemes seek developer contributions to improve existing sites</p> <p>Examine potential for installing non-turf pitches</p> <p>Ensure security of tenure</p>
Hockey	<p>Protect existing pitches</p> <p>Security of tenure</p>
3G	<p>Protect existing pitches</p> <p>Two new pitches to meet existing demand</p> <p>Additional pitches should demand increase further</p> <p>New World Rugby 3G pitch/new dual use pitch</p> <p>Sinking fund for on-going maintenance</p>
Bowls	<p>Protect existing provision</p> <p>Improve quality at sites rated poor</p> <p>Maintain green quality where membership increases</p>
Tennis	<p>Retain and sustain quality of club courts</p> <p>Improve quality of local authority courts</p> <p>Support floodlight installation</p>
Netball	<p>Protect quantity of courts</p> <p>Improve quality at sites rated poor</p> <p>Improve engagement between England netball and schools</p>
Golf	<p>Retain all current golf courses</p> <p>Sustain course quality</p>

Aims and Strategic Recommendations

As well as providing guidance in relation to the provision for each sport the PPS also identified three overarching aims and associated strategic recommendations which provide the focus for action to support the provision of outdoor sport facilities in the district. Where relevant these aims and the associated strategic recommendations have influenced the policy approach within the emerging local plan.

Aim 1: To protect the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

Aim 2: To enhance outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improved quality and management of sites.

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

Playing Pitch Strategy Addendum

In May 2023 the District Council following consultation with partner agencies produced an updated addendum to the PPS which identified a number of significant changes since the publication of the strategy in 2020. The most significant changes were:

- limited reopening of facilities at Chase Park which is now re-hosting cricket and hockey matches.
- significant increase in the number of FA affiliated football teams in the district.
- significant growth in women's and girl's cricket.

The reopening of facilities at Chase Park and increase in participation rates is to be welcomed. It is not considered that these changes would alter the main conclusions and recommendation in the PPS namely that there is a need to protect existing resources and seek opportunities to enhance provision from a qualitative improvement in the playing pitch stock and a need to explore opportunities to increase access. The significant increase in football teams is likely to increase the pressure for enhanced 3G pitch provision within the district.

4. Playing Pitch Provision and Local Plan Policy

- 4.1 The findings and recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy have informed the formulation of Local Plan policy in relation to outdoor sports facilities provision. The PPS (along with future updates) will provide evidence to inform discussions with developers and partnership organisations as to the best means of addressing shortfalls arising from new housing developments.
- 4.2 The existence of current and projected shortfalls in provision as identified in the PPS has been reflected in local plan policy which includes measures to protect the existing supply of facilities. This will prevent existing shortfalls from being exacerbated.
- 4.3 The provision of new outdoor sports facilities has been identified as a requirement on the larger strategic housing site allocations at Land East of Bilbrook (Policy SA1) and Land North of Penkridge (Policy SA2). Discussions on this matter is on-going with the relevant partner organisations and Sports England to ensure that the new provision adequately reflects the needs likely to be generated as a result of these new housing developments.
- 4.4 In relation to the non-strategic housing sites within the plan the PPS recommends that Sports England's Playing Pitch Demand Calculator is used to identify potential levels of demand and possible developer contributions. It is proposed that any funds generated through s106 contributions should be employed to improve the capacity of the existing stock of playing fields through improvements to the quality of pitches and facilities. Guidance on how this may best be achieved should be based on the finding of the PPS and also ongoing discussions with the principal partner agencies.