

APPENDIX 2 – STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation – Ensure, through the use of the Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy, that outdoor sports facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.

- The PPOSS Assessment shows that all currently used outdoor sports sites require protection and therefore cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because shortfalls would occur both now and, in the future, if they were lost.
- Consideration should also be given to the protection of underused and poor quality sites from development or replacement as they may offer potential to meet shortfalls, particularly for rugby, in the future.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 99 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
 - An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- Although there are some identified shortfalls of match equivalent sessions i.e. for rugby union and cricket pitches, most demand is currently being met and most shortfalls are likely able to be addressed through quality improvements. However, qualitative improvements should be secured as a sports development initiative and should not be used to mitigate the loss of playing field arising from a non-sport development. It is therefore, not recommended as a priority to identify 'new' sites for provision.
- The PPOSS should be used to help inform Development Management decisions that affect existing or new outdoor sports and ancillary facilities. All applications are assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case by case basis taking into account site specific factors. In addition, Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of playing fields and will use the PPOSS to help assess those planning applications against its own Playing Fields Policy¹.

Recommendation – Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

- Several education sites are being used in Manchester for competitive play, predominately for football (e.g. grass pitches at Parrs Wood High School, grass and 3G pitches at Wright Robinson Leisure) or for hockey (William Hulme Grammar School). However, use is not necessarily formalised and further work should be carried out to ensure an appropriate community use

¹https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing_fields_policy

agreement is in place (including access to changing provision where required).

- For the remaining providers, National Governing Bodies, Sport England and other appropriate bodies such as the Football Foundation can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may not have direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from these bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of the agreement.
- In the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review, which announced public spending cuts, it is increasingly important for the District Council to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities. To facilitate this, where practical, it should support and enable clubs to generate sufficient funds, providing that this is to the benefit of sport.
- The Council should continue to explore alternative options for the future management of some sites within its playing field stock, including long-term leasehold or Community Asset Transfer (CAT). Potential benefits of this include reducing costs which may allow for the retention and possible improvement of other retained sites, as well as potentially opening up new routes to improvement of sites and access to external funding opportunities through club-led management models. This should be brought forward in a sustainable manner that supports to deliver local sport-specific priorities.

Recommendation - Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so

- To maximise community use of education facilities it is recommended to establish a coherent, structured relationship with schools. Several sporting facilities are located on education sites and making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the school/college and the local clubs.
- The Council and other key partners must work with schools and colleges to develop an understanding of the issues that restrict or affect community access.
- The highest priority sites for securing formal community access arrangements should be those schools which already have community use but do not have secured community use arrangements. These already provide an important role in meeting community needs but this must be secured to ensure continued use into the future. Where appropriate, it will be important for schools to negotiate and sign formal and long-term agreements that secure community use.

Recommendation – Improve quality

- Where facilities are assessed as standard or poor quality and/or overplayed, maintenance regimes should be reviewed and, where possible, improved to ensure that what is being done is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality.

- Ensuring continuance of existing maintenance of good quality sites is also essential.
- There is a need to improve poor quality changing provision and provide fit for purpose ancillary facilities in particular on multi pitch sites that accommodate adult and youth programmes.
- There is also a need to provide suitable male and female toilet provision on junior playing field sites to service players and spectators.

Recommendation – Secure developer contributions

- The PPOSS should be used to help determine the likely impact of a new development on demand and the capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity of existing provision or if new provision is required. Where a development is located within access of existing high-quality provision, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further provision or improvement to existing provision, as additional demand arising from the development is likely to result in increased usage (which can result in overplay or quality deterioration).
- Where it is determined that new provision is required to accompany a development, priority should be placed on providing facilities that contribute towards alleviating existing shortfalls within the locality. To determine what supply of provision is provided, it is imperative that the PPOSS findings are taken into consideration and that consultation takes place with the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). This is due to the importance of ensuring that the stock of facilities provided is correct to avoid provision becoming unsustainable and unused, such as single grass pitch football sites without adequate ancillary facilities or new cricket/rugby grounds located away from existing clubs. Instead, multi-pitch and multi-sport sites should be developed, supported by a clubhouse and adequate parking facilities which consider the potential for future artificial grass pitch development.
- Several planning policy objectives could be implemented to enable the above to be delivered:
 - Planning consent should include appropriate conditions and/or be subject to specific planning obligations. Where developer contributions are applicable, a Section 106 Agreement should be made that specifies, when applied, the amount that will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the permission and timing of the contribution/s to be made.
 - Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches. NGBs and Sport England can provide further and up to date information on the associated costs.
 - External funding should be sought/secured to achieve maximum benefit from the investment into appropriate playing pitch facility enhancement and its subsequent maintenance.
 - Where new multiple pitches are provided, appropriate changing rooms and associated car parking should be located onsite.
 - All new or improved outdoor sports facilities on school sites should be subject to community use agreements.

Recommendation - Consider opportunities to meet the need of community demand for playing pitches through new and proposed education facilities

- The Council and its relevant education partners should consider how the creation of new school facilities in Manchester can meet the needs of community sport. New facilities (and particularly those in major new residential developments) may provide opportunities to address shortfalls for grass playing pitches which have been identified in the PPOSS. Securing the use of new school facilities through a formal community use agreement is now embedded as part of planning process. This provides a platform for local sports organisations to securely access facilities and ensure local sport development priorities can be met from each site.
- The PPOSS should be used as a baseline to inform the facility mix of playing pitches at any new school developments in the City (in line with consultation with the National Governing Bodies of Sport) to ensure that both community and educational needs are provided for.

Recommendation – Consider opportunities for cross boundary development

- There is evidence, provided within the PPOSS, indicating Manchester accommodates significant levels of imported demand from surrounding local authorities, which puts additional strain on the capacity and accessibility of its provision. To a lesser extent there is also Manchester based demand accessing provision in surrounding authorities such as Tameside, Trafford, Bury, Salford, Stockport, Oldham and Rochdale (otherwise known as exported demand).
- In order to effectively address this problem, it is recommended that the Council works collectively with neighbouring local authorities and other relevant stakeholder (such as Sport England and NGBs) to identify co investment opportunities in order to deliver strategic projects to address cross authority demand issues/shortfalls. This will include which local authority any new provision should be located in, based on strategic viability, in addition to agreeing match contributions to any relevant funding streams.