

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018

Subject: Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy Update

Report of: Chief Operating Officer – Neighbourhoods

Summary

The Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (MPPS) and associated action plan forms part of the Council's evidence base for sport and leisure in Manchester. The MPPS frames the priorities for future investment and the continued development of the playing pitch and associated facility infrastructure across Manchester. The evidence base is utilised by the Local Planning Authority when considering planning applications in consultation with Sport England as a statutory consultee, who in turn will consult with National Governing Bodies of Sport as appropriate. This report provides an update on the progress being made on the development of the Action Plan, which underpins the Strategy.

Recommendations

1. Note the progress made with the development of the draft playing pitch strategy action plan and the planned further engagement with local ward members to inform a final draft of the plan.
 2. Note the final draft of the action plan will be brought back to a future meeting of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee.
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Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Executive – 13 December 2017 – Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy
- 2017 - Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report
- 2015 – 2016 Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report
- 2015 – 2016 Playing Pitch Vision, Strategy and Action Plan

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on the progress being made on the development of the Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (MPPS) Action Plan. The vision and strategy for Manchester's playing pitches was adopted by the Executive on 13th December 2017. Officers advised the Executive in December 2017 that the next step was to develop an associated site specific action plan (which will include over 278 sites) and bring back a further report with the progress made. This report provides that update.
- 1.2 The MPPS is used by the authority and stakeholders as a strategic document to support the determination of relevant planning applications through the associated consultation process. The MPPS also provides a clear strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between the strategy period 2017 – 2021. The strategy provides the following:
- A clear framework for all playing pitch providers, including the public, private and third sectors.
 - Clearly address the needs of all identified sports within the local area, picking up particular local demand issues.
 - Address issues of population growth, and or major growth/regeneration area.
 - Address issues of cross boundary facility provision.
 - Address issues of accessibility, quality and management with regard to facility provision.
 - Stand up to scrutiny at a planning inquiry as a robust study.
 - Provide realistic aspirations which are implementable within the local authority's budgetary position and procurement regime.
- 1.3 The MPPS frames the priorities for future investment and the continued development of the playing pitch and associated infrastructure across Manchester. Whilst the analysis within the MPPS will assist in determining the priorities for investment, any playing pitch or changing room improvement or development will be subject to sources of funding (primarily from external sources) being made available. Furthermore, in addition to external sources of funding being identified to bring forward improvements, the ability to deliver the sports specific recommendations made are in the main largely subject to sports clubs bringing forward relevant development plans, agreed in consultation with National Governing Bodies of sport and supported as appropriate by the Council.
- 1.4 The MPPS covers both playing pitches (Football, Cricket, Rugby league, Rugby Union, Hockey, third generation turf pitches (3G), other pitch sports i.e. Softball/Baseball, Gaelic football, American football, Lacrosse) and three priority outdoor sports (Tennis, Athletics, Bowls).
- 1.5 Pitch sports have been assessed using the guidance set out in Sport

England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy.

- 1.6 Outdoor sports have been assessed using Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance (2014). Non-pitch outdoor sports require a different methodology to assess demand and supply to that used for pitch sports.
- 1.7 A Steering Group has led and will continue to lead the MPPS to ensure the delivery and implementation of its recommendations and actions. It is made up of representatives from the Council, Sport England, Greater Sport, pitch sport National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), namely the Football Association (FA), Manchester County Football Association (MFA), England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Lancashire County Cricket Board (LCCB), the Rugby Football League (RFL), the Rugby Football Union (RFU), England Hockey (EH), English Lacrosse, and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) plus the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 This strategy follows on from the 2015 – 2016 interim strategy adopted by the Council at the 9th September 2015 Executive meeting. The 2015/16 PPS set the framework for investment into pitch developments into Belle Vue Sports Village and Armitage Sports Centre. Previous strategies set the investment framework for improvements which were delivered at Ronald Johnson Playing Fields, Didsbury Sports Ground, Hollyhedge Park and city wide pitch improvement works at major multi pitch sites including Hough End Playing Fields, Broadhurst Park and Cringle Fields.
- 2.2 The 2017 – 2021 strategy will provide the strategic rationale for future investment into a range of playing pitches and associated facilities across the city. The PPS will also be used to complement the adopted Indoor Facilities Strategy (September 2015) and other corporate strategies i.e. Schools Capital Programme and Housing Growth Strategy:

3.0 MPPS Vision, Strategic Aims and Conclusions

- 3.1 The vision was developed with stakeholders and describes what we are seeking to achieve through the MPPS:

“Manchester will provide a network of high quality outdoor sports facilities that are conducive to increasing and sustaining participation in sport and consequently contributing to making sport a habit for life”.

Strategy Aims and Recommendations

Strategic Aim	Recommendations
Aim 1 -To protect the existing supply of playing pitch facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect playing field sites 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 education facilities where there is a need to do so.
Aim 2 - To enhance playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) Rectify quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock. h) Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

3.2 The headline conclusions from the PPS Assessment Report is as follows:

- There are 29 (3G) pitches, 26 are available for community use and 13 are licensed by FA / FIFA for competitive adult play.
- When applying our population growth to 2035 within the supply and demand model, (135,000 more residents) the modelling indicates a requirement for a total of 19 3G pitches. Therefore today, Manchester already has an oversupply of 7 3G pitches. For the most part, this impacts on football provision with usage dispersed across the city and in many cases venues operating at below maximum capacity levels. Given this, in purely numerical terms, it is unlikely that using 3G pitches as mitigation to the loss of some playing fields would be supported unless new demand could be evidenced. A more detailed mitigation and exemption evidence base would be required.
- 25% of grass pitches are rated as poor quality and a number of sites also have poor quality changing provision which when these factors are combined have a detrimental impact to sports participation.
- Generally in quantity terms Manchester has enough facilities to serve current demand, however, for most sports the future demand for provision identified in Manchester can be overcome through maximising use of existing pitches through a combination of:
 - Improving pitch quality in order to improve the capacity of pitches to accommodate more matches.
 - Securing long term community use at school sites

- Only Rugby Union indicates a need for additional pitches (grass) to meet current demand, so where possible we should to develop new grass Rugby Union pitches.
- The MPPS indicates we should protect, provide and enhance all facilities we current have and any loss of playing field land should be considered in the context of this Strategy, working closely with Sport England and meeting some of the recommendations of the MPPS.
- Sports Specific analysis of the strategy can be found in appendix 1.

3.3 The MPPS currently states that for all pitch sports included in the pitch strategy, the **current demand for pitch use by clubs and groups is currently adequate, except for Rugby Union which requires more pitches to meet playing needs.** In addition, some sports and some areas where demand for pitches is currently being met, given the predicted future requirements access to more pitches will be required.

3.4 There is a **need to protect all existing playing pitch provision until demand is met.** Some shortfalls in pitch availability can be reduced through increased access to existing provision. For example; if all 3G pitches were licensed by the Football Association for league and cup football matches (currently 13 are not licensed), then additional use would be possible, given at present that 25% of grass pitches are poor quality and not suitable for some standards of competitive play.

3.5 For most sports the future demand for provision identified in Manchester can be overcome through maximising use of existing pitches through a combination of:

- Improving pitch quality in order to support an increase in the amount of play possible on pitches.
- Change the type of pitches i.e. football to rugby where too many pitches exist in that sport.
- Securing long term community use at school sites.
- Working with commercial and private providers to increase usage.

3.6 Given the need to protect all existing playing fields until demand can be met, The Council and Sport England will continue to work closely to ensure the optimum balance is achieved of playing pitch provision and community need, whilst considering the strategic context of population growth, housing growth, and education growth. The use of the MPPS, through the planning process provides the mechanism to achieve this balance going forward.

4.0 MPPS Action Plan

4.1 Following the site specific assessment work undertaken and the adoption of the MPPS, over the past nine months, the Council has been working with National Governing Bodies of Sport and Sport England, to develop a draft city wide site specific action plan.

- 4.2 The first draft of site-by-site action plan has been developed, which includes a total of 278 individual sites. It seeks to address key issues identified in the accompanying assessment report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. Strategically significant provision and provision that other providers are less likely to make have been prioritised as part of a tiered approach.
- 4.3 The tiered approach will allow for facility developments to be prioritised and programmed within a phased approach. The identification of these sites is based on their strategic importance in a City-wide context i.e. they accommodate the majority of demand or the recommended action has the greatest impact on addressing shortfalls identified either on a sport by sport basis or across the City as a whole. The tiered site criteria that has been recommended following the engagement with the stakeholders is as follows:

Hub sites	Key sites	Local sites	Reserve sites
Strategically located. Priority sites for MCC and NGB.	Strategically located within the Analysis Area.	Serves the local community. Likely to include education sites.	Serves the local community.
Accommodates three or more good quality grass pitches. Including provision of at least one AGP.	Accommodates two or more good quality grass pitches.	Accommodates more than one pitch.	Likely to be single-pitch site.
Single or multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision.	Supports informal demand and/ or training etc.
Maintenance regime aligns with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime either by the club or in house maintenance contract.	Basic level of maintenance i.e. grass cutting.
Good quality ancillary facility on site, with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Good quality ancillary facility on site, with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Appropriate access changing to accommodate both senior and junior use concurrently (if required).	No requirement for access changing to accommodation.

- 4.4 Based on the assessment of supply and demand, a number of sports specific recommendations have been made that can be found in appendix 1. These recommendations have been used to inform the draft action plan priorities.

Furthermore, a series of short term actions have been recommended that will make the biggest difference in playing pitch provision. These short term actions are summarised below:

Site ID	Site/organisation name	Analysis Area	Action	Indicative cost ¹
Various		Various	Seek FA/FIFA certification of full sized pitches to increase capacity available for match play at peak time – may include need to improve quality to pass testing.	Low
New school builds/extensions (various)		Various	Determine mix of new sporting provision and secure access through a Community Use Agreement.	High
105	Heaton Park	North	Progress discussions about developing the site as a strategic sports hub	High
158	North Manchester RUFC	North	As a matter of high priority, renegotiate the current lease agreement due to expire in 2020. The site is leased by the Council to the Co-Operative, then in turn sub-leased to north Manchester RUFC.	Low
27	Boggart Hole Clough	North	Repair and resurface track, improve changing and floodlighting quality	High
35	Broadhurst Playing Fields	North	Improve grass pitch quality and associated changing provision	High
141	Manchester Regional Arena	North	Resurface both indoor and outdoor tracks as planned and seek to host more high profile elite events.	High
8	Alexandra Park	Central	Seek to increase capacity through installation of a second non turf pitch is feasible. Consider options to also create net training provision.	Low – Medium
12	Armitage Centre	Central	Replace the Firs Pavilion with new better quality, flexible function ancillary/changing	Medium

			provision – seek to secure internal funding.	
	Rushford Park	Central	Seek investment to improve pitch quality, increase small sided provision for juniors and improve associated car parking facilities.	Medium
237	Active Lifestyles Centre	Central	Replace and re-open 3 x AGP 5-a-side pitches which are currently closed.	Medium
265	Wythenshawe Park	South	Progress discussions about developing the site as a strategic sports hub - Repair and then resurface track, improve ancillary changing and floodlighting quality. Improve grass pitch quality. Develop sports hub concept as part of park masterplan.	High
113	Hough End Playing Fields	South	Progress discussions about developing the site as a strategic sports hub.	High
139	Manchester Enterprise Academy	South	Deliver new 3G pitch with WR compliancy and secure community use – maximising it for rugby to serve current shortfalls. (Delivered)	High
148	Merseybank Playing Fields	South	Seek to develop a sustainable model for asset transfer with Fletcher Moss Rangers FC. Key need to improve changing provision though options to develop the site as a multi-sport hub should also be considered and the potential need to provide changing facilities for more than one sport.	Medium
269	Powerleague South (Whalley Range)	South	Seek alternative management arrangements for the site to ensure continued operation and use.	Low
40	Broughton Park RUFC	South	Seek to improve pitch quality of the training pitch and reduce impact through increased access to World Rugby compliant 3G provision.	Low - Medium
77	Didsbury Sports Ground	South	Develop lease with the Council to include pitches at	Low

			Fletcher Moss Gardens and Brooms Edge.	
89	Fletcher Moss Gardens	South	Deliver installation of floodlighting to deliver the community tennis park hub model with digital access gate (Delivered).	Medium
MMU			Determine potential strategic plans for increase in student demand and provision of required sports facilities – including potential creation of new or development of existing	High

- 4.5 In addition to the above short term priorities, the full city wide action plan (278 sites) contains the full set of site specific recommendations. Officers have worked to convert this full action plan a total of 32 individual ward plans as indicated below.
- 4.6 The ward plans identify ward specific site priorities which have been informed by the assessment report of playing pitches in each ward. The actions contained in the ward specific plans were also developed following consultation with community sports organisation who are active at a neighbourhood level. Equally the various National Governing Bodies of Sport, Sport England and other local stakeholders including schools and universities have been given the opportunity to comment.
- 4.7 All ward councillors have been provided with a copy of the ward action plan for their ward. Councillors have been offered a briefing on the ward plans and further engagement is now planned over the next three months, with a view that final draft ward plans will be developed that will inform the final draft of MPPS Action Plan to be brought back to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

5.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

- 5.1 The Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy forms part of the Council's evidence base for sport and leisure in Manchester. The MPPS frame the priorities for future investment and the continued development of the playing pitch and associated facility infrastructure across Manchester. The evidence base created is utilised by the Local Planning Authority when considering planning applications in consultation with Sport England as a statutory consultee, who in turn will consult with National Governing Bodies of Sport as appropriate.
- 5.2 The MPPS associated action plan will determine local ward based priorities that will ensure a clear plan to protect, provide or enhance local provision is in place and will provide a framework for the Council and local stakeholders to drive improvements in provision. As investment is made available these

plans will provide the evidence base upon which investments in pitch provision can be made.

5.3 The following key next steps are planned to finalise the action plan:

- Further engage local members with the draft ward plans.
- Following local members engagement use the consultation feedback to inform local plans and city wide action plan.
- Bring back to the Equalities and Scrutiny Committee the final draft action plan for review in early 2019.
- Seek adoption to the city wide action plan from the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer – Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Executive member for Schools, Culture and Leisure.
- Implement of the strategy and action plan through a Council led Steering Group.