

CABINET

31ST AUGUST 2021

MID DEVON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

Responsible Officer: Mr Stephen Walford, Chief Executive

Reason for Report: To endorse the Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy as a technical document that can be used by the Council

RECOMMENDATION:

Subject to any amendments made by the project Steering Group in the sign-off process, that Cabinet notes the content of and recommendations within the Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy (Appendix 1 to this report) and approves its publication.

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications arising from endorsing the Playing Pitch Strategy. The Strategy includes recommendations and actions which may involve the Council as a provider of Leisure Centres and public car parks, but does not place a requirement for Council to undertake these recommendations and actions.

Legal Implications: None. The Playing Pitch Strategy will not have any formal status as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Risk Assessment: The Playing Pitch Strategy will provide robust evidence that can be used to inform the preparation of development plans, masterplans, planning guidance, and other plans, programmes and strategies. It will be capable of being a material consideration for guiding planning applications submitted to the Council for determination and the decisions made on these.

Budget and Policy Framework: Budget provision has been made for using an external consultant to undertake and prepare the Playing Pitch Strategy for the Council. The Playing Pitch Strategy will be a technical document and can be used to help inform the Council's policy framework, including for decision-making purposes on land use planning matters and in making Section 106 planning agreements, and in considering requests for S106 funds or other financial support for playing pitch facilities.

Equality Impact Assessment: An up to date Playing Pitch Strategy can be used to help guide and inform decisions taken for the provision of sports pitches across the district that can be used by the whole community. It will not in itself lead to any impacts on the equality strands protected under the Equality Act 2010 (the 'protected characteristics').

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Preparation of the Playing Pitch Strategy will help the Council's Priority 3: Community, since it can be used to help support the

development of sports facilities that will benefit the district, and which can promote physical activity, health and well-being.

Impact on Climate Change: The Playing Pitch Strategy will not have any direct impact on climate change.

1.0 Introduction/Background

National planning policy and Sport England Guidance

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021, paragraph 98) makes clear that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

1.2 A new 'Playing Pitch Strategy' (PPS) is needed for Mid Devon to meet the national planning policy framework requirement. It will also need to be consistent with Sport England's guidance (2013) for preparing playing pitch strategies. Sport England will need to be satisfied that the PPS has been prepared in accordance with their requirements and is therefore 'fit for purpose'.

PPS status and its use

1.3 The PPS will be a technical document that can be used by the Council:

- To help inform the preparation of development plans, masterplans, planning guidance and other programmes and strategies.
- As a material consideration where relevant to help inform decisions made on planning applications submitted to the Council for determination.
- To help inform the consideration of requests for S106 funds or other financial support for playing pitch facilities.
- To help guide the Council's management of its playing pitch assets for which it is responsible.

1.4 The PPS can also be used by:

- Applicants for planning permission, where relevant, to help inform their development proposals submitted to the Council for determination.
- Private and third sector providers of playing pitches, and support local sports clubs and organisations, in making bids for funding from a variety of sources to maintain and improve provision.

Mid Devon PPS

- 1.5 A 'Playing Fields Strategy' for Mid Devon was published in 2010, originally as a requirement for the (now defunct) Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. An Open Space and Play Area Strategy was published in 2014, in part to support the evidence base for the planning policies contained within the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan. The scope of this study encompassed playing pitches but also looked more widely at the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space in general, including parks, play areas and other public open space. There is now a need for updated evidence and information specifically on the supply of and demand for playing pitches across Mid Devon district. This will help ensure that there is a good supply of high quality playing pitch facilities across the district to meet the sporting needs of local communities.
- 1.6 Cabinet approval for officers to commission a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) was given on 19th September 2019 (minute 52).
- 1.7 Officers commissioned a suitable consultant, Bennett Leisure and Planning to undertake the PPS following a procurement process. This consultant has significant experience in such work across the South West.
- 1.8 The PPS was completed in July 2021. This has taken longer, in part due to restrictions on movement placed through the covid-19 pandemic and the inability to visit some playing pitch facilities.

2.0 Process

- 2.1 The preparation of the Playing Pitch Strategy has followed the stages set out in Sport England's guidance (2013):
- Stage A (Prepare and tailor approach)
 - Stage B (Gather supply and demand data)
 - Stage C (Assess supply and demand data)
 - Stage D (Develop the strategy)
 - Stage E (Deliver the strategy)
- 2.2 The PPS has focused on the following pitch sports: football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls. The PPS has investigated further the need for 3G FTPs (Third Generation Football Turf Pitches) in Mid Devon, which has already been identified in the Local Football Facilities Plan for Mid Devon that has been prepared by the Football Association and Sport England. 3G FTP pitches are a high quality and indispensable part of modern football facilities and include artificial surfaces that replicate a good standard natural turf pitch. They can be heavily used all year round with no decline in quality. There is currently no 3G FTP provision in Mid Devon.
- 2.3 The PPS has involved a partnership approach, with a project Steering Group set up to oversee its production and for approval at the key stages. The project Steering Group has comprised of an elected Member and relevant

officers from the Council, Devon County Council, representatives in the South West from non-governing bodies for the main pitch sports, and Sport England.

2.4 The PPS's technical work has included:

- An analysis of population forecasts to 2026 and 2033. This is based on available demographic data and estimate of new housing through growth planned in the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan and with allowance for some additional growth at the three main towns and the proposed Culm Garden Village in this period following the expected adoption of a new Local Plan in mid-2025.
- Prediction of the numbers of teams which will be in operation and patterns of play.
- Quantitative and qualitative assessment of the existing supply of playing pitch facilities across Mid Devon and issues arising.
- Assessment of current shortfalls in provision and future requirements to 2033.

3.0 Stakeholder engagement

3.1 The findings of the PPS have been informed through engagement with pitch sports clubs, sports Non-Governing Bodies and providers of playing pitch facilities in Mid Devon. This has included contacting town and parish councils and has involved meetings with the main schools and community colleges at Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. This has followed Sport England's guidance (2013). The purpose of this stakeholder engagement has been to gather information about the supply of and demand for playing pitches in Mid Devon across the pitch sports subject to the PPS.

3.2 Sport England's guidance (2013) does not place a requirement for consultation with the wider community on the PPS.

4.0 Key findings and recommendations

4.1 The PPS includes a vision:

“To help guide the provision of playing pitch facilities in Mid Devon in relation to current and future needs to 2033, irrespective of ownership and operation, and to support the retention and enhancement of facilities that are appropriate, of high quality and which are sustainable. Provision should promote inclusivity, encourage sporting excellence and community development and cohesion and help to enhance physical and mental wellbeing.’

4.2 This vision is supported by 6 key objectives that are derived from Sport England's 12 planning for sport principles, and the PPS includes 8 overarching themes as follows:

- T1 Protecting, maintaining and enhancing playing fields
- T2 Encouraging and supporting education establishments to embrace secure community use of their pitch sport facilities
- T3 Ensuring that facilities are viable and sustainable

- T4 Ensuring the pitch sports and their facilities are fully inclusive
- T5 Supporting the voluntary sector
- T6 Promoting the benefits of playing pitch sports to health and well-being
- T7 Promoting increased participation and realising club development aspirations
- T8 Facilitate delivery

4.3 The PPS includes a section for each main pitch sport and each section sets out findings for the district split into the following sub-areas: Tiverton sub-area; Cullompton sub-area; Crediton sub-area. The PPS summarises the current and future pitch situation and sets out:

- current shortfalls in provision and how these might be addressed.
- future requirements (in addition to current shortfalls).

4.4 The PPS findings are detailed and lengthy and are not repeated in full in this report. However, the PPS has concluded that in terms of 3G FTPs, there is evidenced need for the equivalent of a full size 3G FTP in each of the main towns – Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton.

4.5 Attention is drawn to the fact that the PPS includes an Appendix 4: Masterplanning – East Cullompton (Culm Garden Village) and Appendix 5: Masterplanning – Eastern Urban Extension (Tiverton). Key findings for each are as follows:

Appendix 4: Masterplanning – East Cullompton (Culm Garden Village)

Recommendations:

Cricket: One pitch (8 wickets) needed to meet demand generated by East Cullompton / Culm Garden Village to 2033. This is in addition to a replacement pitch for the Cullompton Cricket Club, with additional wickets, which could help to meet demand from new housing elsewhere in the Cullompton Sub Area, plus expansion within the club.

Rugby: One additional pitch required to meet demand from the East Cullompton / Culm Garden Village to 2033. Note: Cullompton Rugby Club has long standing plans to relocate from Stafford Park and is considering sites within East Cullompton / Culm Garden Village. Replacement provision of 3 – 4 full size pitches and 2 – 3 youth pitches are required, which also includes an element to meet growth in demand from the wider Cullompton Sub Area to 2033.

Football: Two adult, two youth and two mini pitches to meet demand to 2033, potentially as a community hub. The development will also generate the need for 0.2 of a 3G football turf pitch (FTP) which could also be located within this hub; the wider PPS identifies the need for a 3G FTP to serve existing needs within the Cullompton area. Further feasibility work and consultation

with relevant stakeholders is required re: the benefits/potential of 3G FTP and sand based artificial grass pitch provision to serve the wider Cullompton area whether within the town itself (at Cullompton Community College) or in the new Garden Village (see Hockey below).

- Tennis: A minimum of 2, preferably floodlit, tennis courts. Consideration be given to SMART Access Technology¹.
- Bowls: No requirement identified although populations of this size do have bowling greens.
- Hockey: Contribution to an upgrade of the sand based Culm Valley Leisure Centre Artificial Grass Pitch within the next 2-5 years, which could include the provision of clubhouse facilities. Alternatively, the relocation of this AGP to a site within East Cullompton (to be provided before the Culm Valley Leisure Centre pitch is decommissioned). Further feasibility work and consultation with relevant stakeholders is required.
- Post 2033: It is predicted that growth in demand post 2033 in East Cullompton / Culm Garden Village (based on an additional 2550 homes) may result in an approximate doubling of the pitch requirement set out above i.e. up to one additional cricket pitch, one additional rugby pitch, six football pitches (2 senior, 2 youth and 2 mini), two tennis courts and contributions towards 3G FTP and sand based AGP provision.

Appendix 5: Masterplanning – Eastern Urban Extension (Tiverton)

Recommendations:

- Cricket: 1 new cricket pitch within the EUE (part of the need for which (0.6 of a pitch – 5 wickets) arises from the development itself but which could be made larger to address the shortfall in the town).
- Rugby: The development is expected to generate demand for 0.6 rugby pitch. Contribution to off-site provision is recommended, since one rugby pitch is not a sustainable level of provision and a minimum of 3 rugby pitches are required for a sustainable site. It is understood that the Tiverton RFC requires an additional pitch to meet expected growth from within the club and demand generated elsewhere in the Tiverton Sub Area.
- Football: Hub site with various pitches, ideally minimum of 2 adult and 2 to 3 youth/mini football pitches. Possible site for 3G FTP provision, but more likely to be contribution towards 3G FTP provision elsewhere within the town, for which there are several

¹ the installation of remote access systems which remove the requirement for on-site management and promote wide community use at new and existing courts

potential sites. (The development itself will generate demand for 0.1 of a 3G FTP).

Tennis: The Lawn Tennis Association has identified a requirement for 3 tennis courts with Smart Access Technology, with ideally at least 2 of the 3 courts floodlit to meet the needs of any future development in the area beyond the Eastern Urban Extension, essentially future proofing the facility. This is in addition to increasing public usage and club membership at Exe Valley Leisure Centre tennis courts.

Hockey: Contribution to improvements in maintenance and access to changing and toilets at Exe Valley Leisure Centre artificial grass pitch.

4.6 It should be noted that it is important to understand shortfalls in pitch provision, particularly in relation to the determination of planning proposals for the loss of playing pitches. Additionally, the PPS makes clear that access to additional playing pitches does not always involve new provision being required (i.e. the allocation of land for new pitches in a Local Plan). The PPS identifies opportunities in each sub-area where there are opportunities that could address deficiencies. This could include securing community use of school playing pitches, or where there is room for accommodating additional pitches on an existing site.

4.7 The PPS includes a section with actions plans. This includes recommended actions in the form of:

Policy Actions; Decision Making Actions; Delivering Improved Facilities; Enhancing Participation and Well-being; Management and Maintenance of Facilities; PPS Delivery Framework; and

Action Plans for the Tiverton sub-area; the Cullompton sub-area; and the Crediton sub-area. Each Action Plan sets out: options and recommended actions in relation to existing playing pitch facilities in each sub-area; identifies partners to deliver the action; a timescale (short term 1 – 3 years, medium term 3 – 8 years, longer term over 8 years); and a cost band (low, £50k, medium £50k – 250k, high £250k +).

4.8 The PPS recommends that a 'Delivery Group' is established to oversee the implementation of the strategy and to monitor progress towards the identified action points that it has recommended. This Delivery Group could be led by the Council and be based on the membership of the project Steering Group referred to in paragraph 2.3 of this report.

4.9 At the time of preparing this report, the Playing Pitch Strategy is awaiting final approval / sign-off from the project Steering Group that has overseen its preparation. This includes Sport England. The Cabinet will be updated verbally at the meeting of the latest position over sign-off by the project Steering Group including any amendments. Officers are also waiting for the consultant to provide the completed Stage B database of supply and demand data) and finalised Stage C assessment of that supply and demand data.

5.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group

5.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group met on the 4th August 2021. The group noted the contents of the PPS and has expressed a wish that the PPS is subject to public consultation before it is finalised and that this forms part of the recommendation to Cabinet.

5.2 Officers have pointed out that the PPS is a technical document and has been subject to stakeholder engagement. It has been prepared in accordance with Sport England's guidance (2013) and this guidance does not place a requirement for wider public consultation. Should the PPS be subject to public consultation it is unclear how comments received could influence the technical nature of the assessment, and also how these could be taken into consideration to amend the PPS once it has been signed off by the project Steering Group. As such a public consultation would not meet with the Gunning principles for consultation i.e.:

- Consultation must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage.
- Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response.
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.

5.3 The Planning Policy Advisory Group has also expressed a wish that a further study is undertaken of built sports facilities (e.g. swimming pools, athletics facilities, sports halls etc.), which together with the PPS can be used to help inform the preparation of the Sports Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and that this SPD will be subject to public consultation. Cabinet is advised that officers will need to investigate what technical study may be needed for built sports facilities and how this can be used to inform the preparation of a new Local Plan. Officers intend to review SPD needs in connection with the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan at a future meeting of the PPAG so that prioritisation, resources and timing may be considered.

5.4 In light of the wishes of the PPAG, Cabinet may like to consider the addition of a further recommendation set out below. However in doing so, Cabinet's attention is drawn to the content of paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 above.

"Officers investigate the need for a built sport facilities study, and the merits for a Sports Supplementary Planning Document which would provide an opportunity for public consultation on the provision of sports facilities in Mid Devon".

6.0 Next steps

6.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy is a technical document and does not have any formal status as a supplementary planning document. There is no

requirement for it to be subject to public consultation. However, it will be published on the Council's website for information purposes.

- 6.2 One of the PPS's recommendations is "establish a Playing Pitch Strategy Delivery Group with membership of the current Steering Group and other key stakeholders, including main Secondary Schools and Blundell School representatives. To meet on six monthly basis and progress, monitor and review the Priority Projects and Actions Plans." Officers will investigate how this recommendation can be taken forward. This matter can be considered at a future meeting of the Council's Development Delivery Advisory Group (DDAG).

Contacts for more Information:

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration), Leadership Team.

List of Background Papers and Links:

Appendix 1 Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy

Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance:

[pps-guidance-october-2013-updated.pdf](#) ([sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com](#))

<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-for-sport-guidance/>

Mid Devon Local Football Facilities Plan

<https://localplans.footballfoundation.org.uk/local-authorities-index/mid-devon/mid-devon-local-football-facility-plan/>

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf