

CABINET

5TH APRIL 2022

MID DEVON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

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

Responsible Officer: Richard Marsh, Director of Place

Reason for Report: To approve the Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy

RECOMMENDATION:

To Cabinet that:

1. **The Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy (Appendix 1 to this report) is approved.**
2. **The status of the Strategy as a technical document and the recommendations therein (including the setting up of a Strategy Delivery Group) be noted.**

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) albeit it will fall within the confines of a material planning consideration.

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: The Playing Pitch Strategy has been funded through the Forward Planning budget for evidence and technical studies. 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 (including Section 106 planning deeds) 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 relevant 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 A draft 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 national-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 and wider public consultation

3.1 The findings of the PPS have been informed through engagement with pitch sports clubs, sports National-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 On 28th September 2021 the Cabinet approved the publication of a draft Playing Pitch Strategy for public consultation (minute 75). This followed clarification from Sport England that public consultation would be needed as set out in its guidance for the preparation of such strategies.

3.3 The draft Playing Pitch Strategy was subject to a 6 week period of public consultation which closed on 22nd November 2021. Comments were received from 32 individuals and organisations. These are detailed in a report in **Appendix 2**, which includes an analysis and responses to these, and are also summarised in **Appendix 3**. All comments received have been carefully considered and the draft Playing Pitch Strategy has been updated through three amendments to the Site Actions Plans, including:

- A correction about the ownership of Willand Tennis Court (see Appendix 1 Site Action Plans page 16, site reference MDCM.87 Willand Lawn Tennis Club)

- Noting the aspirations of Bradninch Football Club (see Appendix 1 Site Action Plans page 13, site reference MDCM.29 Kensham Football Field)
- And, an update in relation to information provided by the Moorchard Bishop Playing Fields Association (see Appendix 1 Site Action Plans page 18, site reference MDCR.39 Morchard Bishop Sports Club)

3.4 Several respondents have made comments in relation to the population forecasts and the housing numbers that have been used to inform the Playing Pitch Strategy. The population figures are derived from 2011 Census and Office for National Statistics population estimates and are therefore robust. These have been adjusted to take account of forecast house completions in the district taken from the trajectory included in the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan and with an allowance for some further planned house completions from 2026 that might arise through a new Local Plan.

3.5 The figures included in the draft version of the Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy have been looked at in detail and have been amended where it was found necessary so as to be consistent with the annual forecast house completions in the housing trajectory included in the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan. The amended figures are included in an expanded explanation of the method used for calculating population estimates at pages 49 – 51 of the final version of the Playing Pitch Strategy (**Appendix 1** to this report).

3.6 These amendments have not affected the substantive findings of the Playing Pitch Strategy. The recommendations for playing pitch provision are rooted in an assessment of future demand from engagement with sports clubs in the district, and the population forecasts have been used by the consultant to provide a context for this.

4.0 Sign off from the Steering Group

4.1 The updated Playing Pitch Strategy has been provided to the project Steering Group for the purpose of it being signed off. Confirmation of sign off has been received from representatives of the sports National-Governing Bodies for football, rugby, cricket, hockey and the Lawn Tennis Association. Sport England has also confirmed that it supports the finalisation of the work.

5.0 Key findings and recommendations

5.1 The PPS included in **Appendix 1** to this report 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.’

5.2 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

5.3 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).

5.4 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.

5.5 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). A summary of the recommendations from these Appendices is as follows:

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

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS / TO MEET DEMAND GENERATED BY DEVELOPMENT IN EAST CULLOMPTON/CULM GARDEN VILLAGE TO 2033	
Sport	Recommendations
Football	To plan for an area of 4 hectares (capable of accommodating a minimum of three adult and four youth/mini (11v11, 9v9, 7v7 and 5v5) football pitches and changing accommodation/clubhouse) as a hub pitch site. Consideration to be given to the ‘Community Hub’ site being taken on by a club/organisation if the appropriate ancillary facilities are provided and a possible commuted sum made available to help with the early years establishment of the site as it grows to maturity.
Football – 3G FTP	The development will also generate the need for 0.2 of a 3G football turf pitch; the wider PPS identifies the need for a 3G

provision	<p>FTP to serve existing needs within the Cullompton area. Possible sites for 3G FTP provision to be further investigated – either within the hub, or on a new school site or on a more established site with a current community offer. (Area of land required for full size 3G FTP = 0.74 hectares).</p> <p>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).</p>
Cricket	<p>One pitch (8 wickets) needed to meet demand generated by East Cullompton/Culm Garden Village to 2033. The inclusion of a non turf wicket would increase the capacity and flexibility of the ground.</p> <p>(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). (Area of land required for a cricket pitch = c1.3 hectares.)</p>
Rugby	<p>Cullompton Rugby Club have long standing plans to relocate from Stafford Park and is considering sites within East Cullompton/Culm Garden Village. Replacement provision of four full size pitches and three mini/midi pitches is supported by the Strategy, to include an element to meet growth in demand from the wider Cullompton Sub Area to 2033 and from East Cullompton/Culm Garden Village, as new demand is likely to grow from the existing club. (Area of land required for adult rugby pitch with run offs = 1.2 hectares; thus total area required c.7 hectares).</p>
Hockey	<p>Contribution to the upgrade of the sand based Culm Valley Leisure Centre Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) within the next two to five years, which could include the provision of clubhouse facilities. Another possibility is 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.</p>
Tennis	<p>A minimum of two floodlit tennis courts. Installation of SMART Gate Access Technology¹ would be required when new courts are built.</p>
Bowls	<p>No requirement identified although populations of this size do have bowling greens.</p>
Post 2033	<p>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</p>

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

	and sand based AGP provision.
	<p>The need to maintain a balanced distribution of sports facilities across Cullompton as the East Cullompton/Culm Garden Village site develops is very important to the wellbeing of the town. Various options presented, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult football pitch through S106 in NW Cullompton – site already identified • The development, improvement and consolidation of facilities at Cullompton Community College, • Upgrading of facilities at CCA Fields

Appendix 5: Masterplanning – Eastern Urban Extension (Tiverton)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS / TO MEET DEMAND GENERATED BY DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION TIVERTON TO 2033	
Sport	Recommendations
Football	To plan for an area of 3 hectares (capable of accommodating a minimum of two adult and four youth/mini (11v11, 9v9, 7v7 and 5v5) pitches and changing accommodation/clubhouse) as a hub pitch site
Football – 3G FTP	Contribution to off-site provision of a 3G FTP at other sites identified within the town. (The development itself will generate demand for 0.1 of a 3G FTP).
Cricket	Possible site for one new cricket pitch (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). If not feasible within the EUE, off-site contribution to the provision of a new pitch elsewhere in the town. (Area of land required for a cricket pitch = c1.3 hectares.)
Rugby	The development is expected to generate demand for one rugby pitch. Contribution to off-site provision is recommended elsewhere, since one rugby pitch is not a sustainable level of provision and a minimum of three rugby pitches are required for a sustainable site. (Tiverton RFC requires an additional pitch to meet expected growth from within the club and demand generated elsewhere in the Tiverton Sub Area). (Area of land required for adult rugby pitch with run offs = 1.2 hectares).
Hockey	Contribution to improvements in maintenance and access to changing and toilets at Exe Valley Leisure Centre artificial grass pitch and resurfacing of AGP in next two to five years with a sand dressed surface.
Tennis	Three floodlit tennis courts. Installation of SMART Gate Access Technology would be required when new courts are built.

5.6 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.

- 5.7 The PPS includes a section with 'Site Action Plans' (see **Appendix 1** to this report). This includes recommended actions 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 – less than £50k, medium £50k – 250k, high £250k +).
- 5.8 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. There will be a need to consider how the Council can resource a Delivery Group in terms of the capacity of relevant officers, and what actions recommended in the Playing Pitch Strategy should be prioritised.
- 5.9 Officers are 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.

6.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group

- 6.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) was consulted on the final version of the Playing Pitch Strategy at its meeting on the 14th March 2022 and has endorsed the recommendations to the Cabinet. The PPAG reminds the Cabinet of its resolution made on the 28th September 2021 (minute 75) that officers investigate the need for a built sports facilities study and the merits for a Sports Supplementary Planning Document. While feasibility work is ongoing for a built sports facility study (e.g. swimming pools, athletics facilities, sports halls etc) it is understood this work could take up to 18 months to complete using a suitable consultant and subject to the capacity of the Forward Planning team to lead it. The work could help inform the preparation of Plan Mid Devon at its draft policies and site options stage and the subsequent draft 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.

7.0 Next steps

- 7.1 Subject to Cabinet approval the updated Playing Pitch Strategy (**Appendix 1**) will be published on the Council's website, together with the Report of Consultation Responses and Analysis (**Appendix 2**) and Summary of Consultation Responses (**Appendix 3**).
- 7.2 Sport England's guidance outlines the Stage E delivery / implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy. 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 a 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:

Tristan Peat, Forward Planning Team Leader 01884 234344 / tpeat@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member seen and approved [yes/no – name of Cabinet Member], Leadership Team seen and approved [yes/no]

List of Background Papers and Links:

Appendix 1 Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy Main Strategy Document (January 2022) and Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy Site Action Plans (January 2022)

Appendix 2 Consultation Responses and Analysis February 2022

Appendix 3 Summary of Consultation Responses February 2022

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