



Date of Meeting	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2017
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Housing & Environment
Report Author	Paul Harris / Janet Butterworth
Public/Private Document	Public

## Playing Pitch Strategy

### Executive Summary

1. The Rochdale Playing Pitch Strategy assesses current and future demand for formal sports pitches in the borough over the 10 year period from 2016 to 2026. It provides a framework for resource prioritisation and informed planning decisions. It is a living document that will be reviewed on an annual basis to keep pace with the changing sports landscape in the borough.
  - 1.1 The Strategy has been developed through consultation with Sport England, the pitch sport National Governing Bodies, sports clubs, league associations, schools and colleges. It has been informed through a review of the borough's sports pitches and ancillary facilities.
  - 1.2 The Strategy is set in the context of the Council's community strategy and corporate plan and has close links with the Asset Strategy and the Local Plan. It recognises the important contribution made by sport in the local economy and in delivering corporate objectives.
  - 1.3 The key aims of the strategy are
    - an up to date audit and review of all the formal pitch sport assets in the borough including those managed by others
    - A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches (including ancillary facilities).
    - A series of recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance and development of the playing pitch stock.
    - A series of sport by sport recommendations which provide a framework for sport led improvements to provision.
    - A prioritised area-by-area action plan (where action is deemed necessary).
    - A sound evidence base to support planning policy and decisions
  - 1.4 The strategy focuses on the main pitch sports of cricket, football, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, rugby league and rugby union. It covers all pitches in the borough not just those owned by the council.

Overall the findings suggest that the borough currently has:

- Shortfalls of junior football provision and moderate spare capacity of adult and mini football pitches
- Shortfalls of cricket provision
- Rugby Union pitches are being played to capacity
- Rugby League pitches are being played to capacity
- Hockey pitches are being played to capacity
- Lacrosse pitches are being played to capacity
- Rounders pitches are being played to capacity
- There is a shortfall of 1 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) to meet current training demand

- 1.5 The strategy proposes a sports hub in each township area – these hubs are at Heywood Sports Village, Bowlee Playing Fields, Littleborough Sports Centre and Firgrove.

#### **Recommendation**

- 2.1 To consider and review the draft Playing Pitch Strategy.
- 2.2 Following consultation the final sign off of the strategy be delegated to the Director of Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Environment.

#### **Reason for Recommendation**

3. The Strategy will allow the council to move forward with its management of sports pitches in the borough. It sets out a clear framework and action plan for improvement and investment in facilities across the borough. It will allow the council to collect contributions from developers towards formal sports provision for the borough. It will open up opportunities for clubs to apply for external funding to support their growth and development aspirations.

#### **Key Points for Consideration**

4. An adopted Playing Pitch Strategy is recommended best practice. The Strategy has been produced in accordance with the Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance. Sport England and the pitch sport governing bodies have worked closely with the council in the development of the strategy and given their approval to this final version.
- 4.1 The assessment shows there are no surpluses of pitch provision and that some currently unused sites may be required to be brought back into use to meet future demand.
- 4.2 The strategy proposes a sports hub in each township area – these hubs are at Heywood Sports Village, Bowlee Playing Fields, Littleborough Sports Centre and Firgrove.
- 4.3 Where these hubs don't currently offer the full range of sports and facilities it is

proposed that they are supported by key school sites to supplement the offer.

4.4 A hierarchy of sites is proposed to help channel resources and investment.



4.5 The draft Playing Pitch Strategy was approved by Cabinet for consultation in October 2016. The response to the consultation from the public was limited but some strong feelings were expressed through the Township committees. Sport England, the FA and other pitch sport governing bodies also made comments.

4.6 These views have been considered and changes have been made to the strategy as a result. Sport England has reviewed the figures for population growth in the borough and has reviewed the capacity available at key sites, which has brought down the potential spare capacity in the borough and has highlighted a potential future shortfall of junior pitches in the borough. The FA has reviewed the proposals regarding artificial pitches in line with its own revised strategy and has suggested that a further full sized AGP is required to meet training needs.

4.7 The revisions have not affected the overall direction of the strategy. The aims of the strategy align with Sport England's aims to PROTECT playing pitches for formal sports; to ENHANCE facilities where this is needed to meet the needs of a particular sport or club or to increase capacity to meet demand; and to PROVIDE facilities where they do not currently exist.

4.8 The amended strategy shows how these issues will be addressed and how resources will be prioritised in accordance with the hierarchy of sites. The amended draft strategy and action plan is attached as Appendix 1.

4.9 There are still some issues outstanding with Sport England but these are matters of detail and will not affect the overall direction and objectives of the strategy. The strategy cannot be fully finalised until it has been signed off by Sport England and the pitch sport governing bodies.

#### **Alternatives Considered**

4.10 The council could not adopt a Playing Pitch Strategy. This would make it difficult for the council to seek developer contributions and for local clubs to

seek funding support from Sport England and other funding bodies.

### **Costs and Budget Summary**

5. There are no direct cost or budget implications associated with the adoption of the strategy.

A number of sites within the borough require improvements and investment. The extent of this investment has not been quantified at this stage. This work will be funded as much as possible from S106 contributions and external sources.

### **Risk and Policy Implications**

6. There is a risk that without an adopted strategy the council would not be able to collect developer contributions (S106)  
There is a risk that without an adopted strategy Sport England and the Sports Governing bodies will not consider applications for external funding from the council or from any sports club in the borough.  
The Playing Pitch Strategy provides an important evidence base to support relevant policies within the recently adopted Local Plan as well as subsequent policies within the emerging Allocations Development Plan Document. These policies are used in planning decisions and therefore it is important that they are underpinned by an up to date assessment of need.

### **Consultation**

7. Consultation with the township committees took place in October 2016  
Consultation with the public took place from the end of October 2016 until January 2017  
Consultation on this report has taken place with Equalities, Finance and Legal. Their comments have been incorporated in the report text

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>
8. Assessment Report 2016	Estates and Assets, N1R

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