



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 20 February 2024

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Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report, Key decision
Report Title	Newark & Sherwood’s Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy 2023-2033
Purpose of Report	To present the 2023-2033 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy for approval.
Recommendations	It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (as at Appendix A which has been published separately to the main agenda).
Alternative Options Considered	<p>The alternative option is to not adopt a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy.</p> <p>Neither the strategy itself, nor direct investment in playing pitches/ outdoor sports facilities, are a statutory responsibility of the district council. However, as articulated in section 1.2 and 1.3, the evidence to support the district council contributing to the delivery of facilities through its role as Local Planning Authority and in its role supporting healthy, active and sustainable communities, is strong.</p>
Reason for Recommendations	<p>The adoption of this strategy supports delivery across a wide range of community plan objectives, provides an evidence base for planning policy and future funding, and sets out priorities for investment to ensure that playing pitches and outdoor sports meet the needs of the growing population of Newark and Sherwood.</p> <p>In particular, the adoption of the strategy supports the following community plan objectives:</p> <p>Objective 1: Improve health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Objective 5: Protect and enhance the district’s natural environment and green spaces.</p> <p>Objective 7: Celebrate and invigorate community spirit, pride of place and a sense of belonging.</p>

1.0 **Background**

1.1 In December 2022 Newark & Sherwood District Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd (KKP) to develop a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan for the district.

1.2 The adoption of a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy is not a statutory requirement for district councils however, the Local Government Association state the following:

“...when it comes to why councils, health and wider partners should invest in creating the conditions and opportunities for communities to be active, the evidence is very clear. Not only does movement, physical activity and exercise reduce the risk of major illnesses, improve mental wellbeing and help manage existing health conditions, being physically active leads to better outcomes, including:

- i. improved learning and attainment*
- ii. increasing productivity in the workplace*
- iii. stress management*
- iv. the development of social skills*
- v. better social interaction*
- vi. improved air quality*
- vii. increasing social cohesion*
- viii. reducing the burden on social care and NHS services*

1.3 This strategy is brought forward in support of the wider objectives within the Community Plan including: to improve health and wellbeing, protect and enhance the district’s natural environment and green spaces and celebrate and invigorate community spirit, pride of place and a sense of belonging.

1.4 KKP has developed the strategy (as at Appendix A published separately to this agenda) using Sport England’s ‘Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance’ (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England’s ‘Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide’ (for “non-pitch” sports).

1.5 The PPOSS delivers the evidence required to ensure that sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future outdoor sport requirements. It provides a robust evidence base that will inform planning policy and other relevant strategies to enable the development of local policies, planning and sports development and is capable of:

- i. Providing a clear framework for all playing pitch and outdoor sport providers, including the public, private and third sectors.
- ii. Clearly addressing the needs of all identified sports within the area, highlighting particular local demand issues.
- iii. Addressing issues of population growth and major growth/regeneration areas.
- iv. Addressing issues of cross boundary facility provision.
- v. Addressing issues of accessibility, quality and management with regard to facility provision.
- vi. Standing up to scrutiny at a public inquiry as a robust study.
- vii. Supporting funding applications.
- viii. Providing realistic aspirations which can be considered within the local authority’s budgetary position and procurement regime.

- 1.6 The PPOSS includes outdoor sports facilities owned and operated by public, private and third sector organisations and includes: Football, Rugby Union, Rugby League, Hockey, Tennis, Cricket, Lawn Bowls, Netball, Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP's) and Athletics.
- 1.7 Most sports facilities within Newark & Sherwood are owned by town/parish councils or sports clubs/organisations. The PPOSS recognises that NSDC's role in the delivery of new or improved sports facilities is primarily to provide a robust evidence base and policy to support the securing of new on-site facilities or S106 contributions from housing development to enable the enhancement of existing or where required new provision.
- 1.8 The District Council's role is also critical as an enabler; engaging with and developing strategic partnerships with national and local sporting bodies, funders, private and third sector bodies and local clubs to co-ordinate projects and unlock the necessary funding to deliver such projects identified within the action plan.
- 1.9 The action plan cannot be delivered in isolation and in recognition of the role of partners in the delivery of sporting infrastructure, a partnership steering group has contributed to the development of this strategy, along with discussions with the eight Governing Bodies of Sports (NGB's) included in the PPOSS as outlined below and in excess of 50 sports clubs and education establishments as well as the Town and Parish Council's.
 - i. Bowls England
 - ii. England Athletics
 - iii. England and Wales Cricket Board
 - iv. England Hockey
 - v. England Netball
 - vi. Nottinghamshire County Cricket
 - vii. Nottinghamshire Football Association
 - viii. The Football Foundation
 - ix. Rugby Football Union
 - x. The Lawn Tennis Association
 - xi. Sport England

2.0 Strategy Findings

- 2.1 The strategy sets a vision to provide clear focus and desired outcomes for the PPOSS.

“To ensure that there are enough playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities in Newark & Sherwood of the right type and the right quality to help its residents to increase their physical activity levels and support their mental and physical health and wellbeing now and in the future.”

- 2.2 To achieve this vision the PPOSS will deliver the following objectives:
 - i. Ensure that all valuable facilities are protected for the long-term benefit of sport.
 - ii. Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of playing pitches and management of sports clubs.
 - iii. Ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and projected future demand.
 - iv. Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer-term aspirations.

2.3 The Strategy applies the principles of Sport England’s ‘Strategic Planning Model’ aims and will allow the Council to align its objectives to the three Planning and Strategy objectives which seek to ‘Protect existing facilities’, ‘Enhance/ enhance access to, existing facilities’ and ‘Provide new facilities’.

2.4 The strategy identifies the following priority recommendations across each sport (below). Further detail by geography and at club and facility level, are contained within the strategy.

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect the existing quantity of pitches (unless replacement provision meets NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy requirements and is agreed upon and provided). ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality. ◀ Utilise the Football Foundation’s PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision. ◀ Work to accommodate future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity. ◀ Seek to gain access to sites not currently available for community use, particularly where large quantities of pitches are provided, such as Dukeries Academy and John Hunt Primary and Nursery School. ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer, such as Sherwood Fields (Robin Hood Colts FC) and The Acres Playing Field. ◀ Where appropriate, help to facilitate partnerships and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own sites. ◀ Work with the necessary stakeholders to source a suitable site for Newark & Sherwood United FC to support the growth of the Step 5 club. ◀ Work with Nottinghamshire FA and the Football Foundation to update the current Local Football Facilities Plans (LFFP) as to have a more up-to-date picture for the future of football in Newark & Sherwood.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect current stock of 3G pitches. ◀ Work with relevant partners to deliver additional 3G pitches in the district to cater for football training demand. ◀ Work with partners such as the Football Association, Football Foundation, the Rugby Football Union, Sport England and other National Governing Bodies as applicable to identify the most suitable locations to build new 3G pitches to alleviate known shortfalls. ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place. ◀ Ensure that all other full size and larger smaller sized pitches remain on the FA register and are re-tested every three years to sustain certification. ◀ Ensure all current and future providers have in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability. ◀ Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA recommended dimensions and quality performance standards. ◀ Look to increase the number of 3G pitches within Newark & Sherwood at relevant sites by using the findings from the PPOSS and the 2019 Local Football Facilities Plan, with priority sites such as Newark Academy and one of the grass pitches and Minster School.

Sport	Priority recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Look to install new full size 3G provision in the Southwell Analysis Area as the reduce shortfalls, with a priority placed on a multisport offering with a WR 3G pitch as to reduce football and rugby union shortfalls. ◀ Look to transfer mini demand from grass pitches to 3G in line with the FA ambition for 50% of all mini match play to take place on 3G pitches. ◀ Work with Nottinghamshire FA and the Football Foundation to update the current LFFP as to have a more up-to-date picture for the future of football in Newark & Sherwood.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect existing quantity of cricket squares. ◀ Retain a supply of disused sites to serve as a strategic reserve for future demand. ◀ Improve quality at sites assessed as poor and standard quality and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good through partnership working with NCCC. ◀ Address overplay via quality improvements, NTP installation and consideration of hybrid wickets in the future. ◀ Pursue improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement in place, particularly those engaging in lease renewals. ◀ Improve the changing and ancillary facilities where there is a need to do so, with priorities placed at Newark Ransome and Marles CC, Coddington and Winthorpe CC and Edingley CC. ◀ Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities, as four clubs raise the need for additional training facilities at its home sites. Support should be provided to Farndon CC to install fixed lane practice nets to the former bowling green at Farndon Recreation Ground. ◀ Continue to support ECB initiatives such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect the existing quantity of rugby union pitches including those used for curricular and extra-curricular demand. ◀ Support clubs in taking part in the GMA pitch advisory service to explore technical requirements to improve pitch quality to address overplay. ◀ Work with clubs to improve their ancillary offer where this a need to do so, such as the poor quality provision at Boughton Sports Field accessed by Ollerton RFC. ◀ Look to increase the number of sports lit pitches or install dedicated sports lit training areas at sites where it would be beneficial for clubs to do so, with priority places on the senior pitch at Minster School for the use of Southwell RFC. ◀ Ensure that any residential development considers potential increases in demand for the sport and that new provision or contributions are properly sought through utilisation of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator. ◀ Consider the feasibility of the development of a WR compliant 3G pitch, with the senior pitch at Minster School the most appropriate choice with Southwell RFC and Southwell City FC as partner clubs. ◀ Work with Ollerton RFC to agree a long term tenure agreement for Boughton Sports Field to ensure the clubs long term sustainability.
Rugby league	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Continue to ensure that any demand continues to be met outside of the Authority.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect the sand based AGPs at Magnus Sports Centre and Minster School for continued hockey use. ◀ Work with partners to provide a replacement surface to the AGP at Minster School. ◀ Ensure all hockey suitable AGPs have a sinking fund in place for their eventual refurbishment.

Sport	Priority recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Consider a 3G pitch conversion to the 20-year-old AGP provided at Dukeries Academy to reduce shortfalls in the Sherwood Analysis Area. This should only take place if the AGP at Minster School has already been resurfaced.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect existing quantity of currently used greens and, as a minimum, sustain quality. ◀ Ensure that any proposed development of currently used greens is mitigated in line with NPPF. ◀ Assist clubs, where possible, with any future ancillary provision improvements such as Blidworth BC, Ollerton BC and Bilsthorpe BC. ◀ Monitor capacity levels of highly supported clubs such as Southwell Town BC and Newark Northern BC to ensure they have sufficient capacity. ◀ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised. ◀ Look to extend the current lease agreement with Newark Northern BC and Newark Town Council as to secure its long-term security.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect existing quantity of courts. ◀ Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs or that are (or could be) well used for recreational demand. ◀ Linked to the above, improve park courts as a priority to create a year-round recreational tennis option to meet local demand. ◀ Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g., ClubSpark) to support the customer journey and through investment into facilities and accompanying ancillary provision. ◀ Work with Caunton TC towards its goal of installing additional courts at its site to support the Club with its current capacity balance. ◀ Ensure sinking funds are put into place by providers for long-term sustainability. ◀ Explore installation of additional sports lighting at club-based venues, such as Newark TC. Support Collingham TC, Caunton TC and Southwell LTC in upgrading its current sports lights to LED. ◀ Improve ancillary provision at club sites, where it is required, such as improving the offering at Farnsfield TC (Farnsfield Bowling and Tennis Club).
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect quantity of courts. ◀ Seek to improve poor quality courts quality through resurfacing or improved maintenance. ◀ Explore options to increase sports lighting across Newark & Sherwood. ◀ Open discussions with sites that already allow community use of other facilities to determine whether provision could be opened for community use, such as The Suthers School and Magnus Sports Centre. ◀ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball, with Minster School a possible venue for hosting such sessions. ◀ Facilitate improved engagement between England Netball and schools. ◀ Look to install sports lights to the provision at YMCA (Newark), The Suthers School and Magnus Sports Centre as a means of increasing the total number of sports lit courts.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Ensure the track and supporting facilities at the YMCA (Newark) are retained and remain in good condition for as long as possible. ◀ Support clubs, running groups, events and England Athletics initiatives such as Park Run and pursue increased participation, where possible.

Sport	Priority recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="400 197 1385 297">◀ Continue to increase participation both within affiliated clubs and the wider running market, signposting potential club members from the likes of Parkrun events and other health initiatives. <li data-bbox="400 297 1385 405">◀ Considerations should be made for the installation of mini, compact or active tracks to the North of the District as to increase the amount of athletics provision provided. <li data-bbox="400 405 1385 510">◀ Considerations should be made to resurface the 400m cinder track with a macadam or low-cost synthetic surface to create a better-quality running facility.

2.5 **Conclusions from the Strategy:**

The following conclusion have been drawn by KKP within the strategy:

- 2.5.1 The existing position for most sports is that there is a mixture of shortfalls, spare capacity and sufficient capacity, the future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of shortfalls for some sports and in some areas where demand is currently being met.
- 2.5.2 3G pitch shortfalls will remain in four of the five analysis areas, with shortfalls most apparent in the Newark Analysis Area. As such efforts should be made to increase the number of 3G pitches as to better support football demand.
- 2.5.3 Rugby union has shortfalls apparent at two of the three club-based sites, whilst Ollerton RFC is looking to agree security of tenure for its site. Shortfalls at Newark RFC are minimal with the Club's large site able to accommodate lots of demand, whilst Southwell RFC requires support to reduce its heavily overplayed pitches.
- 2.5.4 Hockey demand within Newark & Sherwood is currently adequately catered for. However, the existing pitch at Minster School is due to fall out of use over the lifespan of the PPOSS and will require a surface replacement.
- 2.5.5 From a non-pitch perspective, in general, current and future demand is being met across Newark & Sherwood, however, on a site-by-site basis there are shortfalls identified.
- 2.5.6 Where demand is being met, this does not equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered a potential solution to overcoming shortfalls. As such, there is a clear need to protect all existing provision until all demand is met, or there is a requirement to replace provision to an equal or better quantity and quality before it is lost, in line with NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. In addition, there remain some area and site-specific issues that need resolving despite no overall capacity issues, such as those relating to quality and security of tenure.
- 2.5.7 Where shortfalls are present, for the most part, they can be met by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, installing additional sports lighting, improving ancillary facilities, and enabling access to existing unused provision, such as at unavailable school sites. However, there is an overall shortfall of full size 3G pitches identified across Newark & Sherwood, and these shortfalls cannot be addressed unless this type of pitch is approved and constructed.

3.0 Funding the Strategy and Action Plan

- 3.1 The strategy demonstrates, that whilst the provision of sport and recreational facilities is not a statutory responsibility for Newark and Sherwood District Council, the council is committed to realising benefits from the sustainable provision of playing pitches and outdoor sporting facilities for residents, communities and the economy.
- 3.2 A detailed assessment of each facility across the district, along with recommendations is included within the strategy document. Strategic partnerships will be essential to addressing the vast majority of recommendations within the action plan and will be central in unlocking access to facilities not currently accessible to the public and to unlocking funding.
- 3.3 Accordingly the District Council will work with key partners to ensure there is a shared understanding of the demand for playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities, the benefits of provision and the shared responsibility to deliver for communities through collaboration with:
- Local sports clubs and providers
 - National Sporting Bodies e.g. The Football Foundation
 - Private Sector Investors e.g The Premier League
 - Grant making bodies
 - Town and Parish Councils
 - Schools and other providers of local playing pitches
 - Central Government Funders e.g. to access Levelling Up/ Shared Prosperity/ Other funding
 - Housing Developers – in the negotiation of S106/ CIL contributions
 - Sport England
 - Nottinghamshire County Council and Public Health
 - The NHS
- 3.4 Where a need is identified, aligned to council priorities, the council may support projects through direct investment including through the allocation of S106 contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy where appropriate, and through direct capital investment.
- 3.5 Capital investment by the district council, where clear priorities have been identified and where the benefits to the community are clear, will support a range of long-term objectives within the community plan. Commitment from the council will also act as a significant enabler when working with other funders, demonstrating the council's commitment, driven by a robust evidence base, to jointly contributing to facilities in the district.

Addressing the Most Pressing Need

- 3.6 In recognition of the most pressing need within the strategy, the delivery of 3G pitches across the district, officers have been working with the Football Foundation, Football Association and Premier League to develop a strategic 'portfolio' approach to funding multiple football pitches across Newark and Sherwood.

- 3.7 A portfolio approach would allow the council and partners to plan for the future and secure economies of scale and value for money by delivering a programme of investment rather than one pitch at a time. There is national interest from the Football Foundation and Premier League as to the ambition of Newark and Sherwood District in forward planning for delivery and the strength of our data in determining need.
- 3.8 This project, if approved, would aim to secure match funding for 5x 3G pitches across Newark and Sherwood to be delivered over a three-year period. It is anticipated that the total capital cost of this investment would be circa £5m of which a minimum of 60% would be secured externally with 40% (£2m) maximum contribution from the district council. Securing the council's commitment for this will be critical in taking forward a formal application with the football Foundation for our portfolio approach.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications – FIN23-24/2070

- 4.1 There are no further direct costs associated with these strategies, however, further capital and revenue budget provision to progress a selected number of the Council's ambitions to improve sports and recreation facilities in the district (including those described in section 3.6-3.8) has been included in the Draft 2024-25 budget for member consideration. Revenue budget will enable schemes to be developed through appropriate project management whilst capital monies will be used for direct provision and leverage where appropriate to secure external capital and revenue investment.
- 4.2 **Equality and Diversity**
The Play Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy is designed to increase the accessibility of play pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the district. Projects brought forward by the council under this strategy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that the project does not place barriers to participation or cause disadvantage to any protected groups.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None