

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the executive summary for Birmingham's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). Both the Strategy and the preceding Assessment Report have been produced in accordance with Sport England guidance and both have achieved sign off from National Governing Bodies (NGBs). The study covers the period up to 2031, in line with the Birmingham Development Plan. It replaces the previous version delivered in 2011.

Scope

The project provides guidance and support in order to understand and assess the need for playing pitches. It provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing provision and covers the following sports:

- ❖ Football pitches
- ❖ Cricket pitches
- ❖ Rugby union pitches
- ❖ Rugby league pitches
- ❖ Hockey pitches (sand/water-based AGPs)
- ❖ Third generation turf pitches (3G pitches)
- ❖ Lacrosse pitches
- ❖ Other grass sports pitches (i.e. American Football and Kabaddi)
- ❖ Tennis courts

Vision

A vision has been set out to provide a clear focus with desired outcomes for the PPS. It seeks to support the Council and its partners.

'An accessible, high quality and sustainable network of sports facilities that provides and promotes local opportunities for participation by all residents at all levels of play from grassroots to elite'

Headline findings

The table below highlights the quantitative headline findings relating to the main pitch sports from the Playing Pitch Assessment Report.

Sport	Current picture	Future demand (2031)
Football (grass pitches)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Shortfall of 3.5 match sessions on youth 11v11 pitches.❖ Shortfall of 4.5 match sessions on youth 9v9 pitches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Shortfall of 22.5 match sessions on adult pitches.❖ Shortfall of 30.5 match sessions on youth 11v11 pitches.❖ Shortfall of 21.5 match sessions on youth 9v9 pitches.❖ Shortfall of 8.5 match sessions on mini 7v7 pitches.❖ Shortfall of 16 match sessions on mini 5v5 pitches.

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Sport	Current picture	Future demand (2031)
Football (3G pitches)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfall of 5.14 full size 3G pitches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfall of 9.75 full size 3G pitches. Pitch/s will require resurface and FA testing.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overplay totalling 57 match equivalent sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfalls worsen. Three clubs cannot accommodate future demand on current pitch stock.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfall of 13.25 match equivalent sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfall of 17.75 match equivalent sessions.
Hockey (Sand AGPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current demand is being met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand from six clubs cannot be met.

The existing position for all pitch sports is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of shortfalls for some pitches and for some areas where demand is currently being met. As such, there is a need to protect all existing playing pitch provision until demand is met; or there is a requirement to replace any lost provision to an equal or better quantity and quality before it is lost.

Sport-by-sport recommendations

A number of relevant scenarios have been tested against key issues for each sport, resulting the following recommendations.

Football

- Protect existing quantity of pitches (unless replacement provision is agreed upon and provided).
- Ensure all teams are playing on the correct pitch sizes and explore pitch reconfiguration to accommodate more youth 11v11 pitches where possible.
- 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.
- Transfer play from sites which remain overplayed to alternative sites with spare capacity or to sites which are not currently available for community use.
- Work to accommodate displaced, latent and future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity or at sites which are not currently available for community use.
- Provide security of tenure for clubs using unsecure sites through community use agreements.
- Where appropriate, develop partnerships and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own sites.
- Improve ancillary facilities at key sites that are currently serviced by poor provision (e.g. Holders Lane Complex and Yardley Wood Playing Field).
- Explore options to relieve pitches of unofficial use.
- Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- In the longer term, explore opportunities for access to an increased number of 3G pitches to cater for grass pitch shortfalls.

3G pitches

- ✦ Protect current stock of 3G pitches.
- ✦ Encourage all providers to put in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability.
- ✦ Ensure that all pitches currently on the FA register are re-tested every three years to sustain certification.
- ✦ Encourage providers with existing 3G pitches that are not on the FA register to undergo testing.
- ✦ Encourage more match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches, where possible.
- ✦ Identify feasible sites to increase provision of full size 3G pitches to meet training and competitive demand, particularly in areas with identified shortfalls, starting with those already proposed.
- ✦ Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA/RFU recommended dimensions and quality performance standards to meet performance testing criteria.
- ✦ Re-examine feasibility of the FA Parklife Programme.

Cricket

- ✦ Protect existing quantity of cricket squares.
- ✦ Work with clubs and grounds staff to review quality issues on pitches to ensure appropriate quality is achieved at sites assessed as standard and poor and sustained at sites assessed as good.
- ✦ Ensure South Asian league based demand has access to enough provision.
- ✦ Pursue improved security of tenure for Sheldon Marlborough, Harborne, Four Oaks Saints, Moseley Ashfield and Attock (Elmdon Road) cricket clubs.
- ✦ Explore options to provide Handsworth CC and Aston CC with lease arrangements.
- ✦ Improve changing facilities that are assessed as poor quality.
- ✦ Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities.
- ✦ Address overplay via the transfer of play to sites with actual spare capacity or through an increase in NTPs accompanying grass wickets.
- ✦ Explore increase of NTPs on council managed sites in line with the ECB's local authority NTP scheme to relieve financial pressures on maintenance.
- ✦ Ensure Attock, Harborne and Weoley Hill cricket clubs can realise future growth plans through access to alternative sites or through new provision.

Rugby union

- ✦ Protect existing quantity of rugby union pitches.
- ✦ Explore community use aspects at currently unused educational sites to fully determine availability and, as a minimum, protect the pitches for continued curricular and extra-curricular use.
- ✦ Ensure all clubs are provided with adequate training and match play facilities i.e. via full size, floodlit pitches.
- ✦ Support Bournville RUFC in its relocation to Sandon Road and ensure the development caters for the Club's needs (e.g. through adequate car parking and ancillary facilities) to provide an opportunity for it to sustain participation and fulfil its growth potential.
- ✦ Improve security of tenure for Bournville, Birmingham Bulls, Birmingham Barbarians, Dixonians, Yardley & District and Moseley Oak rugby clubs by providing lease arrangements with a minimum term of 25 years.

- ◀ Support aspirations for ancillary facility improvements relating to Aston Old Edwardians, Bournville, Harborne and Yardley & District rugby clubs as well as the University of Birmingham.
- ◀ Explore options to provide Dixonians RUFC with a more suitable training venue, either through an on-site solution after security tenure is provided or via an alternative venue locally.
- ◀ Ensure Old Saltleians RUFC remains provided for if it is relocated due to HS2.
- ◀ Improve pitch quality at all sites used by clubs through improved maintenance and/or the installation of drainage systems, particularly at sites containing overplayed pitches.
- ◀ Increase the floodlit provision available at Aston Old Edwardians Rugby Club, Sutton Coldfield Rugby Club and Yardley & District Rugby Club to alleviate overplay as a result of concentrated training demand.
- ◀ Alternatively, explore options to provide the clubs with access to a greater number of pitches or to a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch.
- ◀ Support the creation of World Rugby compliant 3G pitches at Sandon Road and the University of Birmingham.

Rugby league

- ◀ Support Birmingham Bulldogs RLFC in its merger with South Birmingham Hawks RLFC.
- ◀ Support the University of Birmingham in its ancillary facility development plans and ensure its rugby league needs continue to be met.
- ◀ Ensure continued rugby league use of Moseley Rugby Club and Metchley Lane or ensure alternative venues are accessible.
- ◀ Improve pitch quality, where possible, in line with rugby union recommendations and scenarios.

Hockey

- ◀ As a minimum, protect or mitigate the 11 pitches currently in use by hockey clubs.
- ◀ Seek to accommodate expressed latent, future and displaced demand on the current pitch stock or explore opportunities to add to the pitch stock in suitable locations.
- ◀ Resurface the AGPs that have reached the end of their lifespan and protect those in current use by hockey clubs as a hockey suitable surface.
- ◀ Support the University of Birmingham in its aspiration to redevelop and relocate its two AGPs.
- ◀ Ensure that providers have sinking funds in place at all sites to ensure long-term sustainability.
- ◀ Pursue long-term security of tenure for all clubs, particularly those using education sites, through community use agreements.
- ◀ Improve changing facilities at Hamstead Hall Academy and the University of Birmingham.
- ◀ Seek resolution to displaced demand expressed by King's Heath HC and Birmingham Wasps HC.
- ◀ Ensure that no 3G pitch conversions take place that are detrimental to hockey and revisit hockey demand when and if a conversion is proposed to ensure that the pitch in question is not required.

Lacrosse

- ◀ Improve quality at Lordwood Schools and seek to provide Birmingham Lacrosse Club with secure tenure via a community use agreement.
- ◀ Alternatively, explore the transfer of demand to a 3G pitch.
- ◀ Sustain quality at the University of Birmingham (Metchley Lane) for continued lacrosse use or transfer demand to the onsite 3G pitch to alleviate capacity issues.

Other grass pitch sports

- ◀ Ensure demand continues to be met.
- ◀ Sustain quality and seek improvements, where possible.

Tennis

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of tennis courts, particularly those used by clubs and leagues.
- ◀ Review quality issues relating to poor quality courts and seek improvements, where possible.
- ◀ Support development plans at Summerfield Park, Pype Hayes Park and Gilberstone Recreation Ground and seek to maximise usage.
- ◀ Review membership details at club sites and support those that are above capacity.
- ◀ Improve ancillary provision at council sites to improve the casual tennis offer.
- ◀ Explore feasibility of creating a membership scheme at council courts via an access control system.
- ◀ Provide improved security of tenure to Edgbaston Archery & Lawn Tennis Society.
- ◀ Support the University of Birmingham in its aspiration to develop courts.

Aims

Based on the headline findings and sport by sport recommendations, the following overarching aims and their associated recommendations are considered key. These are based on three Sport England themes:

- ◀ To **protect** the existing supply of playing pitches where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.
 - ◀ Ensure, through use of the PPS, that playing pitches are protected through implementation of local planning policy.
 - ◀ Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
 - ◀ Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.
- ◀ To **enhance** playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.
 - ◀ Improve quality.
 - ◀ Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites).
 - ◀ Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.
 - ◀ Secure development contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- ◀ To **provide** new playing pitches where there is current or future demand to do so.

- ◀ Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate current and future demand.
- ◀ Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current pitch stock.

Delivering the Strategy

The PPS seeks to provide guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across Birmingham. By addressing the issues identified in the Assessment Report and using the strategic framework presented in the Strategy, the current and future sporting and recreational needs of Birmingham can be satisfied.

It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should be led by the local authority and supported by all members of the steering group. As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years, Sport England and the NGBs would consider the PPS and the information on which it is based to be out of date.