

A Playing Pitch Strategy for Spelthorne

Executive Summary

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Scope
- 3.0 Vision
- 4.0 Aims
- 5.0 National Context
- 6.0 National Planning Policy Framework, Spelthorne's Planning Policy and Local Plan
- 7.0 Local Context
 - 7.1 Corporate Plan
 - 7.2 Health and Wellbeing Strategy
 - 7.3 Community Asset Policy
- 8.0 Headline Findings
- 9.0 Sport Specific recommendations
 - 9.1 Football
 - 9.2 Cricket
 - 9.3 Rugby
 - 9.4 Hockey
- 10.0 Delivering the strategy
- 11.0 Conclusion

1.0 Introduction

Spelthorne's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is a strategic assessment of all outdoor playing pitch provision in the borough, including those owned and maintained by Spelthorne Borough Council. It evidences the need for any additional outdoor sports pitches and provides a valuable framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing provision. The Strategy will allow the Borough, local clubs and organisations to plan, prioritise and schedule future outdoor sports pitch projects as well as assisting with evidence to support new funding applications.

The Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment Report were produced by Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Ltd in late 2019 in accordance with Sport England Guidance. They have achieved sign off from the specific National Governing Bodies as well as from Sport England. The strategy covers the period 2020 up to 2035.

Partner organisations such as local sports clubs, national governing bodies for sport, schools and those promoting physical activity and health have a vested interest in ensuring that our existing playing pitch facilities are protected and enhanced as time passes. The recommendations contained in the PPS will be explored and delivered independently by sports organisations and local educational establishments and are not always going to include Spelthorne Borough Council as a key partner. The strategy is therefore a document for all partner organisations and stakeholders involved with pitch sports in the borough to act upon rather than just Spelthorne Borough Council.

It should be noted that since Spelthorne's previous playing pitch strategy was completed in 2013 there have been several successful outcomes delivered in the Borough which were identified in the 2013 Action Plan and Playing Pitch Strategy. These include:

- The Council, in partnership with Colne Valley Girls and Ladies Football Club, received funding from the Football Foundation to refurbish the pavilion at Kenyngton Manor creating a new club room/social space in addition to the changing areas and kitchen.
- Colne Valley Girls and Ladies FC now lease the pavilion from the Council and have security of tenure.
- London Irish opened their new facilities in 2014 providing fantastic facilities for rugby locally.
- Football pitches have been re-instated at the Lammas Recreation Ground.
- A 2nd football pitch is now available at Littleton Recreation Ground

- The Council's grounds maintenance has been brought back in house providing greater control to the Council in ensuring high standards of provision.
- The length of the season was extended on Council owned pitches following feedback from clubs and now finishes 3rd week of April.
- The Hockey pitches at Staines Hockey Club and St Paul's School (home of Sunbury and Walton Hawks Hockey Club) were both refurbished.

2.0 Scope

The scope of the strategy includes condition and quality assessments of provision and documents how much pitches are used by the local community. It also calculates and predicts future demand based on the borough's predicted population changes. The PPS covers the following sports pitches:

- Football pitches
- Rugby union pitches
- Cricket pitches
- Third generation artificial turf (3G) pitches
- Artificial grass pitches (for hockey)

3.0 Vision

The vision for Spelthorne is that there is a good supply of high-quality playing pitches and playing fields to meet the sporting needs of local communities. These in turn will help to ensure the provision of local opportunities for a healthy and active lifestyle for the borough's residents.

4.0 Aims

To achieve this vision, the PPS has a number of overall aims

- To present an overview of the existing provision.
- Assess current and future demand as a result of population and housing growth and identify local needs.
- Provide an evidence base for the Spelthorne Local Plan.
- Ensure that information is available to enable the Council to make the best use of all available resources and effectively manage Council owned facilities.
- To support local sports clubs, schools, and community organisations to maintain, manage and improve outdoor sports pitch provision across the Borough.
- Provide the evidence base needed to secure funds for capital investment to develop new provision and improve existing facilities.

- Develop an action plan to ensure the continued provision of accessible and high-quality sports pitches across the Borough

5.0 National Context

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports pitches at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the national targets set out in the Government strategy 'Sporting Future' and Sport England's strategy 'Towards an Active Nation'. Sport England's strategy will deliver against the 5 outcomes of the Governments strategy

- Physical Wellbeing
- Mental Wellbeing
- Individual development
- Social and community development
- Economic development

The recommendations and actions in the PPS will assist those organisations in the Borough in working towards achieving these outcomes locally.

6.0 The National Planning Policy Framework & Spelthorne's Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England. This provides the framework which must be taken into account in the preparation of local plans and is a material consideration in determining planning decisions.

The NPPF sets out the requirement of local authorities to establish and provide adequate and proper leisure facilities to meet local needs. It acknowledges that "Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities".

The Spelthorne PPS provides a robust assessment and evidence of the need for open space, sports and recreation facilities and outlines opportunities for new provision. It also identifies specific needs and whether there are deficits or surpluses of facilities in the local area. It will be used ongoing to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is needed to meet the requirements of the NFFP and the Spelthorne Local Plan 2020-2035.

7.0 Local context

The recommendations and resulting actions contained in the PPS have been developed through consultation with local stakeholders, site visits and analysis of the information available. They reflect the key areas which need to be addressed. Both national and local targets, priorities and plans have been considered when developing the strategy.

It should also be noted that the actions identified should be considered in the context of financial implications, local policies and the need for some proposals to meet Planning considerations.

In context, the PPS works alongside a number of local plans and corporate strategies within Spelthorne Borough Council. These include:

7.1 Spelthorne Council's Corporate Plan

The PPS contributes to Spelthorne Council's Corporate Plan 2016-19' priority for a 'Clean and Safe Environment'. This includes a commitment to provide:

- A clean, attractive borough with good leisure facilities to attract new and repeat visitors, bringing further inward investment.
- 'High quality public spaces to encourage greater community use and an active lifestyle.

7.2 The Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The PPS complements the 'Spelthorne Health and Wellbeing Strategy by contributing to the vision

- 'to improve health and wellbeing of people living in Spelthorne' and
- 'to develop a preventive approach by increasing physical activity and reducing obesity'.

7.3 Spelthorne Community Asset Policy

Spelthorne's Community Asset Policy provides a positive framework that sets out the Council's desired objectives for long-term community asset usage. The policy has the following objectives that will assist in the implementation of the PPS recommendations.

- to maximise the benefit of Council owned assets for local communities
- to maximise the utilisation of community assets through shared usage arrangements
- to provide long-term sustainability for services and assets to ensure due consideration is given to assets that are already highlighted for potential investment by external sources

8.0 Headline Findings from the PPS

Currently in Spelthorne there is a deficit for most types/sizes of football pitches including a clear deficit for 3G pitches. The supply of cricket pitches meets current demand, but there is no spare capacity and there is limited spare capacity for rugby and hockey.

In terms of future provision, it is likely that existing shortfalls will increase, and further shortfalls will develop due to a rising population and increased demand. There is a need therefore to protect all existing outdoor pitch

provision as well as to improve the quality and/or quantity of existing provision in some areas.

While some of the shortfalls seen for pitch sports could be met via pitch quality improvements at existing sites, the extent to which increased capacity is achievable in this way is dependent on available opportunities and funding to deliver and sustain such enhancements. This may not be feasible in all cases.

Further exploration of other opportunities such as greater use of educational sites is therefore required.

The clear shortfall of 3G pitches cannot be alleviated without new provision. The feasibility of additional 3G pitches at 3 identified sites in the borough will therefore need to be explored. Transferring some of the existing demand onto 3G pitches will help overcome some of the current shortfalls for football as well as freeing up space on artificial grass pitches (AGPs) to accommodate the anticipated increased future demand for hockey.

9.0 Sport Specific Recommendations

Based upon the key findings and issues identified for each sport, the following recommendations were made.

9.1 Football

- Protect existing pitch provision unless suitable replacement provision is agreed.
- Provide security of tenure for clubs by pursuing formal community use agreements on public and private educational sites.
- Improve existing sites identified as poor quality including disused sites, utilising the Football Association's (FA's) pitch improvement programme where possible.
- Ensure there is adequate provision to meet increased demand by securing appropriate developer contributions to increase and enhance existing provision.
- Support as a priority the development of 3G pitches in the borough, including those proposed at the new Spelthorne Leisure Centre to address shortfalls.

9.2 Cricket

- Protect existing pitch provision unless suitable replacement provision is agreed.
- Provide security of tenure for clubs by pursuing formal community use agreements on educational sites.
- Improve existing poor-quality provision including non-turf wickets, outfielders, and practice nets.
- Make provision for new indoor practice nets when developing new sports halls such as the new Spelthorne Leisure Centre.

9.3 Rugby Union

- Protect existing pitch provision unless suitable replacement provision is agreed.
- Improve existing pitch capacity by improving pitch drainage and maintenance and with the addition of further floodlighting at both London Irish and Staines Rugby Club.
- Seek an appropriate level of financial contributions from developers to cover the capital and revenue implications of the drainage and floodlighting enhancements.

9.4 Hockey

- Protect existing pitch provision unless suitable replacement provision is agreed.
- Seek security of tenure for Sunbury and Walton Hawks at St Pauls Catholic College.
- Maintain pitch quality by re-surfacing the pitches every 10 years. Pitch providers should be encouraged to contribute annually to a sinking fund to enable this work.
- Seek an appropriate level of financial contributions from developers to cover the capital and revenue implications of improving hockey pitches and ancillary facilities to meet the needs of the additional population arising from housing growth
- Move football users to new 3G provision as it becomes available to free up pitch provision for future hockey demand.

10.0 Delivering the strategy

The PPS seeks to provide information and guidance to aid pitch maintenance and management decisions across Spelthorne as well as to assist the Borough in planning, prioritising, and scheduling future outdoor sports pitch projects. By addressing the issues identified in the assessment report and using the strategic framework presented, the current and future needs for sport and recreation in Spelthorne can be met.

To support the delivery of the actions in the pitch sport-specific chapters, Spelthorne Borough Council, in consultation with a steering group of stakeholders have prepared a short-term action plan identifying priorities and actions for delivering the strategy.

Regular monitoring of the PPS will take place to review how the delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed. Sport England advocates annual monitoring which should be led by the local authority and supported by all members of the steering group. As a guide, Sport England and National Governing Bodies will consider the PPS out of date if no reviews take place within 3 years.

11.0 Conclusion

The Playing Pitch Strategy has highlighted current deficits for certain pitch types in Spelthorne and limited or no spare capacity for other pitch types. It suggests that existing shortfalls are likely to increase in the future and that new shortfalls will develop. Recommendations have been made and an action plan produced to help improve the quantity and quality of pitch provision in the borough and help relieve these deficits. By working together on these recommendations and actions, Spelthorne Borough Council and its partner organisations can help achieve the vision of a good supply of high-quality playing pitches to meet the sporting needs of the local community.