

BURY COUNCIL
Department for Communities and Wellbeing

Bury playing pitch and outdoor sport strategy

Executive summary



July 2019

BURY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the executive summary for the Bury Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS). 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 of Sport (NGBs). The study covers the period up to 2037, in line with the emerging Bury Local Plan.

Scope

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

- ◀ Football pitches
- ◀ Rugby union pitches
- ◀ Rugby league pitches
- ◀ Cricket pitches
- ◀ Third generation artificial grass (3G) pitches
- ◀ Artificial grass pitches (AGPs - including use for hockey)
- ◀ Outdoor bowling greens
- ◀ Outdoor tennis courts
- ◀ Athletics tracks
- ◀ Outdoor netball courts
- ◀ Croquet
- ◀ Rounders
- ◀ Golf

Vision

A vision has been set out to provide a focus for the desired outcomes for the PPOSS as follows:

“Bury Council and its partners will work to provide quality sports pitches with a high level of customer satisfaction. As a partnership we have a desire to provide first class sports pitch facilities that will contribute towards making Bury a great place to live, work and visit whilst supporting the health and wellbeing of residents”

Headline findings

The existing position for all pitch sports is either that demand is currently being met or there is a shortfall. For football, all analysis areas evidence shortfalls at one or more pitch formats, with these shortfalls increasing and including new shortfalls at some formats through future demand increases. There are also key present and future shortfalls for full sized 3G pitches for football team training and cricket, as well as for rugby union and rugby league in the analysis areas in which these sports are played at community level within the Borough.

As there are existing shortfalls in provision all playing pitches need protecting. Some shortfalls can be reduced through changes to the present mode of play, for example, certification and use of required 3G pitches for competitive football, rugby union or rugby league match play would create new capacity to reduce future grass pitch shortfalls as well as the shortfalls evidenced for 3G pitches for football team training.

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Creation of and increased use of 3G pitches should be a key priority, maximising use of this future 3G pitch stock to reduce existing grass pitch shortfalls. These shortfalls can be further reduced by increasing capacity through qualitative improvements to grass pitch stock as a twinned approach.

Overarching key issues

There are overarching key issues evident in Bury which affect or have the potential to affect a number of sports. This is the case for football especially, which is the most popular outdoor sport in terms of affiliated participation and has the greatest dependency on Council owned assets.

- ◀ The Borough has a key deficiency in full sized 3G pitches to service floodlit training, predominantly for football. There are, however, several second generation artificial surfaces which are not preferred by The FA for football but are used by many teams and now old and deteriorated, offering prime potential for conversion to 3G for school and community use.
- ◀ Most municipal football pitch provision is maintained and managed by local clubs through self-management agreements with the Council. The majority of clubs have little money to reinvest into pitch maintenance and in some cases may lack the knowledge or equipment to do so without relatively costly subcontracted works. With poor quality accompanying ancillary stock, there is little potential for clubs to generate revenue.
- ◀ Furthermore, most municipal football pitches are located at sites which have a wider function such as public parks and are designated public open spaces. Consequently, they are unable to be secured by perimeter fencing to stop misuse and damage to the pitches, further impacting on quality.
- ◀ The current nature of self-management agreements with local sports clubs and organisations across a portfolio of Council owned sites does not meet large scale capital partnership funding criteria. Consequently, without granting full tenure by leasehold for a period of 25 years or more, the likes of Football Foundation funding is not accessible to local clubs in Bury unless the application were to be led and submitted by the Council as landowner.
- ◀ However, there is critical lack of sports development resource within the Council thus this level of support required is not available, meaning that there has been little if any partnership investment into facilities over recent years. The result is inertia as the stock deteriorates in quality over time.

Sport-by-sport recommendations

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

Football

- ◀ Existing quantity of football pitches to be protected, except for where low value/single pitch sites are considered suitable to be rationalised on the condition that re-provision of playing field land elsewhere represents a preferable and greater benefit to sport.
- ◀ Seek to develop sustainable, multi-pitch football hubs which include 3G and grass pitches servicing team training, short-formats and non-traditional participation and match play.
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and rated as standard or poor quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality.

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- ◀ Lancashire FA to work with the Institute of Groundsmanship through the FA Pitch Improvement Programme and in partnership with the Council to support and upskill self-managing clubs to drive improvements in pitch quality at self-managed sites.
- ◀ Look to utilise actual spare capacity expressed on sites in order to cater for current and future demand. This may require improvements to pitch quality.
- ◀ With future development of new full sized 3G pitches, secure and maximise community use for match play in order to accommodate future shortfalls.
- ◀ Improve, provide and increase access to changing facilities which serve football pitches and ensure any works are suitable for female and disabled participation where identified as a specific focus/need.
- ◀ At sites where a self-management agreement with the Council is in place, the Council should work in partnership with resident clubs to develop schemes for improvement of facilities and as landowner act as the lead applicant in order to access opportunities for external grant funding. The Council is working with a number of clubs presently in regard to obtaining grant funding.
- ◀ Should new football pitch provision be developed, secure community use through formal agreement and establish a sustainable operating and maintenance model for the site.
- ◀ The County FAs and local football clubs to explore opportunities to partner with other local sports clubs to form a localised pitch maintenance network. This may include the likes of cricket, rugby and golf clubs which have a high fine turf maintenance requirement, may have paid employees and downtime during the day midweek to support with maintenance across local community football sites.
- ◀ Ensure suitable and non-hazardous line marking paint is the Borough wide standard for instatement of pitches and that no pitches are marked by burning lines into the surface using chemicals, negatively impacting on playability increasing potential to cause injury.
- ◀ Ensure adequate provision for increased demand generated by housing developments, secured through appropriately calculated developer contributions.
- ◀ The Football Foundation and County FAs to work closely with the Bolton & Bury Junior Football League and the Council in the short-term to manage the impact of summer football on grass pitches and develop a planned approach to summer use and remediation of football provision.

3G pitches

- ◀ Develop full sized 3G pitches with floodlighting to reduce evidenced shortfalls.
- ◀ Development of full sized 3G provision at Goshen Sports Centre, Broad Oak Sports College and Elton High School is considered a priority by the Football Foundation as initial measures to reduce existing shortfalls.
- ◀ In the medium to longer term, second generation artificial grass pitches (AGPs) at Parrenthorn High School and Woodhey High School should also be pursued for conversion to 3G surfaces.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to create multi-pitch football hub sites where 3G provision is able to support grass pitches as a sustainable community offer.
- ◀ Ensure new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA recommendations, so to maximise opportunities for use for all formats of competitive play.
- ◀ Certify and register all future 3G pitches and ensure they are maintained regularly as required to ensure they are of sufficient quality to meet performance standard testing for FA certification.
- ◀ With future development of new full sized 3G pitches, secure and maximise community use for match play in order to accommodate future shortfalls. For example, as a condition of partnership investment or planning conditions.

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- ◀ Transfer as much football match play as possible onto 3G pitches, focusing on mini and youth 9v9 football.
- ◀ Encourage providers to have a mechanism in place which ensures the long-term sustainability of provision, such as an adequate sinking fund for repairs or resurfacing.
- ◀ Through the creation of new full sized 3G pitches, consider options to deliver a wide variety of opportunities, for example, central venue, midweek flexi and vets leagues, as well as walking football and female development centres.
- ◀ Link the Bolton & Bury District Junior Football League to future use of 3G pitches during the off-peak summer months to alleviate year-round impact on grass pitches and allow for required remedial works to be undertaken.

Cricket

- ◀ Existing quantity of cricket pitches to be protected or be fully mitigated to meet National Planning Policy.
- ◀ Assist Tottington St John CC in ensuring scheduled pitch improvements at its home ground are undertaken in order for the square to be available for the start of the 2019 season. Once the square can be accessed ensure all exported and displaced demand from the Club returns to the site. If there are delays in this project it would directly impact the square being ready for 2019 which will impact the levels of demand across the Borough.
- ◀ Work in partnership with clubs to secure long-term use of the respective sites of East Lancs Paper Mill CC and Brooksbottom CC.
- ◀ Encourage clubs to seek opportunities for funding to improving poor quality ancillary facilities.
- ◀ Mitigate any potential loss of cricket provision at East Lancs Paper Mill Cricket Club or Brooksbottom Cricket Club to equal or better quantity and quality.
- ◀ Look to sustain minimal levels of overplay at Unsworth Cricket Club and Woodbank Cricket Club through dedicated levels of enhanced maintenance and monitor future levels of demand.
- ◀ Examine the feasibility of installing a non-turf pitch (NTP) at Walshaw Sports Club in order to alleviate overplay.
- ◀ Explore greater utilisation of the NTP in-situ by Greenmount CC or accessing additional pitches to alleviate overplay such as Tottington St Johns if demand is not at peak time.
- ◀ Maintain and improve pitch quality through rigorous and regular maintenance, remedial and preparatory work, ensuring that clubs have sufficient access to the required equipment in order to do so.
- ◀ Deliver the All Stars Cricket and women & girls programmes and seek to increase junior and female participation as a result.
- ◀ Consider opportunities to increase NTP provision in parks and public spaces should recreational and short format demand be identified.
- ◀ Continue to deliver and develop talent development pathways, including the Lancashire Cricket Foundation South Asian Talent Search.
- ◀ Quality Assessment Ratings and Carrying Capacity will need to be reviewed specifically as there are a number of pitches rated as standard and these carry different ratings from a carry capacity perspective.

Rugby union

- ◀ Existing quantity of rugby union pitches to be protected or be fully mitigated to meet National Planning Policy.
- ◀ Assist Bury RUFC in improving the maintenance regime on the pitches at Bury Sports Club in order to alleviate levels of identified overplay.

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- ◀ In addition, look to secure formal community use of the pitches at The Derby High School for Bury RUFC and improve their quality in order for the Club to transfer demand off Bury Sports Club and alleviate levels of overplay.
- ◀ Explore the feasibility of installing floodlights on one or more rugby union pitches at both Bury Sports Club and Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 2) in order to assist with each clubs training demand.
- ◀ Explore the feasibility of upgrading the current quality of floodlighting at Bury Sports Club and Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 1).
- ◀ Improve pitch quality through improved and more regular maintenance and remedial, particularly at Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 1) and Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 2) where maintenance level improvements are able to eliminate all or the majority of overplay.
- ◀ Explore the feasibility of improving primary and secondary drainage on the natural turf pitches at Bury Sports Club, Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 1) and Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 2) in order to increase pitch capacity and alleviate levels of overplay.
- ◀ Seek to improve changing provision at Bury Sports Club where quality is reported to be poor.
- ◀ As part of potential development of full size floodlit 3G pitches, consider if appropriate any opportunities for cross-sport 3G pitch certification, including World Rugby certification for training use or mini match play.
- ◀ Begin to utilise the newly established junior pitch at Sedgley Park Rugby Club (Site 2) in order to alleviate demand from onsite senior pitches after.
- ◀ Assist Bury RUFC and Sedgley Park RUFC in the development of their respective women and girls' participation.
- ◀ Continue to develop strong relationships between rugby clubs, in particular Bury RUFC and schools through curricular and extracurricular programmes in order to increase levels of mini and junior participation.

Rugby league

- ◀ Protect quality of existing rugby league pitch provision.
- ◀ Seek to improve pitch quality at Philips High School through improved and more regular maintenance and remediation.
- ◀ Support the development of new rugby league pitch provision, for example a second senior pitch Philips High School.
- ◀ Support Bury Broncos RLFC in regard to membership retention and potential growth.
- ◀ Assist Bury Broncos RLFC in improving the quality of ancillary facilities at Philips High School.

Hockey

- ◀ Retain at least one full sized hockey suitable AGP, identified to be Castlebrook High School.
- ◀ Explore funding opportunities to resurface the AGP at Castlebrook High School as a key priority, in order that it is retained as a hockey suitable surface.
- ◀ Work to formally secure community use of the AGP at Castlebrook High School for hockey through usage agreement as a condition of funding.
- ◀ In the short term a secondary hockey suitable AGP should be retained in the Borough until the pitch at Castlebrook High School is resurfaced. This has been identified as Woodhey High School through consultation with both The FA and England Hockey.
- ◀ In the long-term there is potential to convert all other AGPs (apart from Castlebrook High School) to 3G as long as it does not impact of hockey participation or growth.
- ◀ Prioritise relocating football training demand from Castlebrook High School to new 3G provision to help release capacity for growth in hockey demand at peak training times.

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- ◀ Increase participation driven through community clubs and schools.
- ◀ Encourage providers to put in place a mechanism for sustainability such as a sinking fund, (formed by periodically setting aside money over time ready for surface repair or replacement when required) in place to maintain AGP pitch quality in the long-term.

Bowls

- ◀ Retain existing quantity of greens.
- ◀ Improve standard green quality to good at Clarence Park, Hollinhurst Playing Fields, Nuttall Park, Huntley Unionist Club (Duck Club) and Waggon and Horses Bowling Green though assisting the clubs in their maintenance regimes.
- ◀ Support self-managed clubs to improve quality of ancillary facilities servicing bowling greens.
- ◀ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.
- ◀ Determine the future use of Grant Arms Bowling Green.
- ◀ Look to re-provide the lapsed bowling green as part of the East Lancashire Paper Mill housing development on or off site.

Tennis

- ◀ Pursue the strategic development of tennis facilities and participation in Bury through a holistic approach including the five tennis clubs, the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) Transforming British Tennis Together funding initiative and Council.
- ◀ Develop a network of sustainable, fit for purpose and accessible community courts across the Borough.
- ◀ Seek to sustain the good quality courts in the authority, whilst concurrently seeking to increase the quality of standard and poor courts via improved maintenance and/or resurfacing.
- ◀ Seek to improve accessibility to Council courts through strategic investment into floodlighting and implementation of the LTA Clubspark system to increase and record usage.
- ◀ Support Prestwich Sports TC in the development of ancillary facilities at Prestwich Cricket Tennis & Bowling Club.
- ◀ Support community clubs in the refurbishment of courts once they begin to deteriorate in quality.

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Athletics

- ◀ As a priority, assist Bury Athletics Club in securing long-term secure tenure at Market Street Athletics Track.
- ◀ Once security of tenure is in place (and in the medium term), identify funding opportunities to resurface the track at Market Street Athletics Track and develop appropriate ancillary facilities.
- ◀ Support Bury Athletics Club with plans to increase membership and community engagement.
- ◀ Explore establishing a senior Parkrun event within the Borough based on a specific assessment of Great Run Local demand and capacity.
- ◀ Explore establishing a second junior Parkrun event at Close Park.
- ◀ Consider future options for the track at Cams Lane Sports Ground based on current and future levels of demand and poor quality.
- ◀ Ensure the limited amount of demand for the track at Cams Lane Sports Ground can be accommodated for at Market Street Athletics Track.
- ◀ Support the running clubs and running events taking place as well as exploring the implementation of initiatives not currently serviced to increase participation in recreational running.

Netball

- ◀ Protect courts and seek to improve poor court quality through resurfacing or improved maintenance.
- ◀ Ensure any future development of Council tennis courts takes into consideration demand for outdoor netball.
- ◀ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for I Will If You Will and England Netball initiatives.
- ◀ Explore the feasibility of refurbishing the courts at Philips High School.

Rounders

- ◀ Support the Bury Rounders League in regard to team retention and potential growth.
- ◀ Ensure the Bury Rounders League continues to access suitable formal and non-formal sport or playing field sites across Bury to satisfy its demand.
- ◀ Explore improvements to Ainsworth Hall Road, Close Park and King George V Playing Fields (Outwood) so that these sites are able to drain better.

Croquet

- ◀ Support Bury Croquet Club in regard to membership retention and potential growth.
- ◀ Retain existing quantity of lawns.
- ◀ Sustain standard quality greens at Coronation Park and explore improvements on lawns assessed as poor quality at Whitehead Park.

Golf

- ◀ Retain all current golf courses and associated facilities.
- ◀ Sustain course quality and seek improvements where necessary through implementation of appropriate maintenance regimes.
- ◀ Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth.
- ◀ Encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for existing and new players.

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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 outdoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs;
 - ◀ Ensure, through use of the PPS, that outdoor sports facilities 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** outdoor sports facilities 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.
- ◀ To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities 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 PPOSS seeks to provide guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across Bury, including by but not limited to the Council. 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 the Borough 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.