

Committee:	Planning Policy Working Group	Date:	Tuesday, 5 November 2019
Title:	Sports Facilities & Recreation Strategy Assessment		
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Summary

1. In May 2018, Uttlesford District Council commissioned:
 - A detailed assessment of existing sports and recreation facilities and spaces, and the sport and recreational needs of future residents of Uttlesford up to 2033 and beyond in relation to the proposed Garden Communities.
 - A comprehensive strategy for the provision of sport and recreational facilities and spaces.
2. This evidence base is intended to inform future planning policies, priorities, infrastructure delivery and investment. It consists of three key strands of work, each with an assessment report and associated strategy and recommendations:
 - i. Playing pitch strategy – Assessment report and Strategy & Action Plan
 - ii. Open Space – Assessment Report and Standards Paper
 - iii. Indoor and built facilities strategy – Assessment Report and Strategy

Recommendations

3. That PPWG recommend Cabinet endorse the three strategies: the Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy and the Open Space Standards as material considerations for development planning applications.

Financial Implications

4. This evidence base was completed as within the Local Plan budget.
5. Endorsing this as a material consideration will support securing development contributions towards sport facilities and open space.
6. Monitoring the provision and recommended actions will be part of the Planning policy team workload and be supported from existing budgets.
7. There are implications relating to the actions that are outside of the scope of planning.

Background Papers

8. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection on the Uttlesford Council website.
- [Uttlesford Open Space Assessment Report, February 2019](#)
 - [Uttlesford Open Space Study Standards Paper, February 2019](#)
 - [Uttlesford Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report, May 2019](#)
 - [Uttlesford Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan, May 2019](#)
 - [Uttlesford Sports Facilities & Recreation Indoor Needs Assessment Report, December 2018](#)
 - [Uttlesford Indoor & Built facilities Strategy, February 2019](#)

Impact

9.

Communication/Consultation	The assessment process has involved consultation with key stakeholders in accordance with Sport England guidance, including Sport England, games associations, clubs, parish/town councils, schools, facility providers and users.
Community Safety	N/a
Equalities	The assessment and recommendations have been developed in the context of resolving community priorities and challenges, and addressing health and wellbeing priorities.
Health and Safety	N/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/a
Sustainability	The purpose of this evidence base is to support sustainable development.
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	This would involve councillors, officers from planning and other departments and others where necessary.

Situation

10. This evidence base was developed in order to understand existing and future demand of sports and recreation facilities in Uttlesford, to inform the emerging

Local Plan. It has been developed in consultation with Sport England, games associations, clubs, parish/town councils, schools, facility providers and users.

11. It should be noted that the scope of these documents goes beyond the Council's plans and functions as the local planning authority, there are elements of the strategies that will need to be delivered by the Council in other ways and through partnership working with other stakeholders. This report tries to highlight where specific actions are beyond what it can achieve through its planning functions, however actions not highlighted may also require inputs and / or strong corporate leadership to deliver.
12. The overall vision is "to provide accessible high-quality leisure and sports facilities in Uttlesford that encourage active lifestyles, increases levels of participation and helps improve health and wellbeing – now and in the future".

Playing Pitch strategy & recommendations:

13. The Playing Pitch Assessment evaluated quantity, accessibility and quality of pitches and gathered demand information and views with clubs, schools and parish/town councils through consultation and online survey. It covers football, rugby union, cricket, hockey, bowls, tennis, netball and athletics.
14. Eight strategic recommendations were made against three objectives:

Protect existing supply of outdoor sports facilities to meet current and future needs:

- i. Ensure, through the use of the Playing Pitch Strategy, that outdoor sports facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.
- ii. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- iii. Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).

Enhance outdoor sports provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites:

- iv. Improve quality.
- v. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- vi. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- vii. Secure developer contributions.

Provide new outdoor sports facilities where feasible and there is current or future demand to do so:

- viii. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.
 - ix. Rectify quantitative shortfall through the current stock.
15. An Uttlesford Playing Pitch Developer Contributions Toolkit outlining the procedure to secure developer contributions to sports & recreation facilities, for developments over 10 units and which have a maximum combined gross floor space of more than 1,000 square metres (gross internal area).

Open Space strategy & recommendations:

16. The Open Space assessment involved an audit of sites (desk based and site visits to 30% / around 90 sites); assessment of quality and value (based on context of the site, level and type of use, and wider benefits for people, biodiversity and wider environment; an online community survey hosted on the Council website (304 responses).
17. Open Space covers Parks & gardens (7 sites/9 hectares), Natural and semi-natural greenspace (67 sites/509 hectares), Amenity greenspace (110 sites/140 hectares), Provision for children & young people (73 sites/9 hectares), Allotments (27 sites/17 hectares). Assessment Summary:
- i. 284 sites are identified as open space provision. This is equivalent to over 684 hectares.
 - ii. Of assessed sites, nearly three quarters (74%) rate above the quality threshold.
 - iii. All but 12 sites are assessed as above the value threshold; reflecting the importance of provision and its role offering social, environmental and health benefits.

[See pages 8-9 of Open Space Standards Paper for detailed summary of each typology]

18. The table below sets out the recommended open space standards for Uttlesford:

Recommended quantity standards

Typology	Recommended Quantity Standard (hectares per 1,000 population)
Parks & gardens	0.10
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	5.81
Amenity greenspace	1.60
Provision for children & young people	0.10
Allotment / community food growing	0.20

[Source: Uttlesford Open Space Standards Paper. February 2019. Page 18]

19. Three strategic recommendations are made for the application of quantity, quality and accessibility standards:

- Ensure low quality sites are prioritised for enhancement.
- Sites helping or with the potential to serve areas identified as having gaps in catchment mapping should be recognised through opportunities for enhancement.
- Recognise areas with sufficient provision in open space and how they may be able to meet other areas of need.

Indoor and built facilities strategy:

20. The Indoor facilities assessment evaluated quality, quantity, accessibility and availability through site visits to sports facilities, community centres and village halls, and in-situ discussion. A computerised Facilities Planning Model was developed to assess requirements, level of provision and test 'what if' scenarios. The assessment covered sports halls, community centres and village halls, swimming pools, health and fitness suites, squash, indoor bowls.

21. Detailed recommendations and action plan are outlined against strategic objective to protect, enhance and provide new facilities. In summary, thirteen recommendations are made:

- i. Ensure that UDC owned facilities make a progressively greater (and measured) contribution to the needs of all residents and are fully available to all District communities through targeted initiatives, facilities, programming and training (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- ii. Continue to improve cross-agency strategic work across the District (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- iii. Consider developing additional gymnastics provision to meet the high level of demand.
- iv. Explore the opportunity to modify the building layout of Turpin's Indoor Bowls Club to enhance the quality of the offer and build footfall at the centre.
- v. Consider whether development at the former Walden School could provide additional swimming and indoor sports hall space. This should encompass looking to ensure that programming complements that at the Lord Butler Centre - rather than competing with it.
- vi. (With specific reference to swimming) consider the impact of the garden communities in the south of the District and the potential mix of facilities which would provide financially viable and sustainable facilities to meet the needs of the local population in these areas.
- vii. Consider whether an athletics facility located at Carver Barracks Carver could be brought into the public domain, given the potential decommissioning of the site by 2030.
- viii. Challenge present PFI contract delivery to enable Lord Butler Centre to accommodate increases in participation, coordinate community access

to, and the programming and pricing of, facilities (including schools) across the District within the public estate (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).

- ix. Improve the breadth, depth and quality and analysis of performance management data collected (and shared) to inform future marketing, promotion, programming and pricing (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- x. Ensure that all school sports facilities continue to accommodate for community use (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- xi. Support other developments (via planning, developer contributions and officer expertise) which may assist in increasing sport and physical activity within the wider community.
- xii. Continue to work with local sports clubs to ensure that facilities and workforce development programmes meet their needs (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).
- xiii. Identify and plan to meet ongoing investment, maintenance and refurbishment requirements to protect and improve existing sports facilities (n.b this is beyond the scope of planning to deliver).

22. **Next steps** will include working with Development Management (DM) to interpret the three strategies for Playing Pitches, Indoor Facilities and Open Space and secure development contributions. The recommendations are extensive and complex and guidance will be required. Support could include a workshop to communicate key implications, toolkit and guidance to secure development contributions. The Council will consult appropriate agencies when determining planning applications, for example Sport England will be able to support with skills and knowledge in relation to contributions towards sporting facilities.

23. As mentioned above, the scope of these documents goes beyond what the Council can achieve through its planning function.

24. For example, they raise issues that relate to the management of the Council's PFI contract regarding the three leisure centres, and how the operation of these leisure centres can help address the issues raised in these reports. The Council's communities team and officers in the Council who manage the PFI contract were involved in the study.

Risk Analysis

25.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Inadequate provision of sports and recreation facilities and open	2 – Action may be required to improve provision and	2 – Development without adequate sports and	Adopt the Sports & Recreation and Open Space strategies as material consideration.

space to meet existing and future demand.	participation for health and wellbeing.	recreation facilities and open spaces will have a negative impact on health and wellbeing.	
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- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.