

Meeting of the Cabinet - 28th June 2023

Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise

Dudley Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) and Dudley Strategy and Action Plan and Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework

Purpose of report

1. This report informs Cabinet of the work included in the following documents and asks that they be adopted by the Council to inform decision making:
 - Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for Dudley
 - Dudley Strategy and Action Plan
 - Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework

The resulting recommendation is required to ensure that the Council has an adopted up-to-date assessment and strategy to improve, invest in and protect playing pitches and outdoor sports sites.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet adopts the following documents that will be used to make decisions and target investment in Dudley in relation to Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports:
 - Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for Dudley
 - Dudley Strategy and Action Plan
 - Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework

Background

3. In March 2021 Dudley along with the other Black Country authorities (Wolverhampton, Walsall and Sandwell) commissioned Consultants KKP to carry out a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) and Strategy and Action Plan for each of the four boroughs, as well as a Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework. The work was commissioned as evidence base for the Black Country Plan. This work will now be used to support the Dudley Local Plan 2041.

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for Dudley

4. This document presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance.
5. A wide range of playing pitch and outdoor sports and associated facilities were agreed for inclusion in the PPOSS in Dudley and across all four Black Country authorities. In full, the study covers:

- Athletics
- Cricket
- Football (including 3G pitches)
- Hockey (sand/water based AGPs)
- Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
- Tennis
- Bowls
- Cycling
- Golf
- Netball
- Rugby league (including 3G pitches)
- Water sports (e.g., sailing and water skiing)

6. The Dudley PPOSS sets out the key issues for all of the sports set out in the above section. Some key issues to take from the report are:

-Football - The PPOSS highlights that there is a shortfall in Grass Pitch provision for football, and likely to increase with future demand. There is also limited spare capacity present in the supply of 3G pitches when teams require access for football training purposes.

-Cricket – Some cricket squares have potential spare capacity however none have capacity for senior cricket on a Saturday. There is overall spare capacity during midweek for junior cricket, for senior cricket senior cricket, both current and future shortfalls are evidenced at weekends.

-Rugby Union – There is currently sufficient provision in the borough, due to no affiliated rugby union demand taking place. Often clubs outside the borough draw players from Dudley, their capacity issues and development aspirations, these can likely be resolved at their existing sites.

-Hockey – Focus should be placed on ensuring at least one suitable venue for hockey is provided within Dudley.

-Tennis - no non-club courts are identified as have any capacity issues, precedence should be placed on improving quality to an adequate standard for informal play, particularly at publicly available sites hosting multiple courts.

-Netball - Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Dudley, the majority serve no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and being unavailable for community use. Dudley Netball League has expressed an interest in being able to play in the borough

-Cycling - High demand for cycling is identified within Dudley, both currently and taking into account latent demand. As such, the track at Manor Abbey Stadium requires protection, with some level of improvement required to ensure that the provision remains adequate. Furthermore, it is imperative that other cycling activity is supported given the on and off-road cycling taking place.

-Athletics - There is high demand for athletics and running in Dudley, as evidenced by the numerous clubs in existence and the variety of events held. However, there is also a good level of supply, with two purpose-built tracks provided that are well located to accommodate demand from across the Borough. Priority should be placed on protecting the tracks at the Dell Stadium and Manor Abbey Stadium, rather than developing additional provision, and ensuring that they remain of a sufficient quality to accommodate the levels of demand received.

Dudley Strategy and Action Plan

7. This document builds upon the preceding Assessment Report providing a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2039 (the previous BCP plan period). The Strategy and Action Plan recommends several priority projects for Dudley which should be realised over this period. It provides a framework for improvement and, although resources may not currently be in place to implement it, potential partners and possible sources of external funding which can assist are suggested.
8. From a quantitative perspective, the existing position for each sport is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the creation of shortfalls for

some pitch types and in some areas where demand is currently being met, alongside the exacerbation of existing shortfalls. Some level of shortfall is identified for all football pitch types, 3G pitches, cricket squares, hockey suitable artificial grass pitches (AGPs), tennis courts and netball courts.

9. Where demand is being met, this does not necessarily equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered to be a solution to overcoming current or future shortfalls. There is a resultant need to protect all existing outdoor sport provision until all demand is met, or there is a requirement to replace provision in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.
10. For the most part, the shortfalls identified can be met by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, re-configuration, installing additional floodlighting, improving ancillary facilities and enabling access to existing unused provision, such as at unavailable school sites. However, there is a shortfall of 3G pitch and hockey suitable AGPs that can likely only be met through increased provision. With resources to improve the quality of grass pitches being limited, particularly at sites managed by the Council, an increase in such provision could also help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, which in turn can reduce overplay and aid pitch quality improvements.
11. The document sets out sport and pitch specific recommendations for all of the sports set out in the Assessment Report. Alongside this it sets series of aims and strategic recommendations reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch facilities and may not be specific to just one sport. A site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the assessment report. The report also includes a scenario to demonstrate how development would generate demand for provision and the potential costs associated with this. The scenario is based on – Development of Ketley Quarry/Ketley Farm, Dudley Road, Kingswinford - 612 dwellings.
12. An artificial (sand based) pitch was identified at the Coseley Leisure Centre suitable for playing Hockey. Due to the level of exported demand from Dudley, there is a need for at least one suitable venue for hockey within Dudley. Shireland Academy have committed to retaining this provision and developing community outreach. A suitable alternative location would need to be identified if the pitch was re-developed in the future at this site.

13. The strategy and action plan has been developed in partnership with colleagues in Greencare and representatives of the different sports governing bodies, including Sport England. A number of the priorities and recommendations have been agreed with our partners for both investment and development for the sports facilities on Parks and Open Spaces, which include capital improvements and the ability to fund projects to support the improvement of our playing surfaces going forward.
14. A number of these projects rely on the Council providing a percentage of match funding and the PPOSS takes a holistic approach across all the sporting disciplines within the borough and allows colleagues within Greencare to focus on the priorities of most need.

Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework

15. This document brings the findings of the four Black Country studies together to provide an Overarching Strategic Framework. This can be used to address sub-regional issues, guide relevant planning policy and to ensure cross-boundary and collaborative working. This document and the recommendations within it have been put forward based on the evidence that has been gathered as part of the delivery of each individual PPOSS.
16. However, it is recognised that not everything will be actionable by all of the authorities, at least in the short-term. It should instead be used as a long-term document that can assist, where possible, with guiding future actions when it comes to playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities. The main objectives of the study not limited to but included:

- Identify current supply and demand issues for sport and recreation facilities in the Black Country, based on quality, quantity, and accessibility.

- Enable the Councils to plan appropriately for the protection and/or enhancement of existing sport and recreation facilities and identify sites best suited for development/ new provision or refurbishment in future Local Plan priorities.

- Make strategic proposals for local authority-controlled facilities such as investment in new and enhanced facilities and rationalisation, including cross-boundary co-ordination of local authority provision if appropriate.

- Help inform wider fixed asset/property reviews

- Act as a tool for the four authorities and partner organisations to guide resource allocation and investment and set priorities for sports moving forward

-Assess the continued value of retaining land for playing pitches where the land has high potential development value for other uses, subject to ensuring compliance with relevant planning policy.

17. The study then looked at the number, condition and supply and demand of the sports in previous reports across the Black Country as a whole, this helped to inform where there is cross boundary demand for facilities, and how the councils should look to retain demand through a choice of faculties rather than it being exported outside of the area. For example, Cradley Town FC uses a number of sites in Sandwell due to a lack of availability in Dudley. The study goes on to make individual recommendations on a sport-by-sport basis.
18. A set of strategic recommendations have been developed via a combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis, which culminated in the production of the individual assessment reports and the individual strategies. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed across the Black Country and apply across all outdoor sports facilities, rather than being specific to one sport. They fall under three broad aims based on Sport England themes and then contain a series of recommendations below this to help achieve the aims. They are:
 - **AIM 1 To protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.
 - **AIM 2 To enhance** outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.
 - **AIM 3 To provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.
19. The overarching action plan then sets out options for consideration with regards to improving facilities, improving security of tenure, securing developer contributions, and adding to the existing stock of facilities. These were chosen as they are considered to relate to each local authority, although the extent to which may vary across each area.

Finance

20. The total cost of the work was £62,475. The cost of which was shared between the Black Country Plan Budget, and the four Black Country Parks and Green spaces Departments. Alongside this was an award of £5,000 from Active Black Country and a grant of £15,000 from Sport England. The final part of the grant will be paid when all four authorities adopt the work.

Law

21. This piece of work is a key element for the evidence base of Dudley Local Plan 2041 work. The potential for planning decisions to be challenged increases where it can be shown that Local Plan allocations are based on out-of-date or incomplete information. Ensuring that there is current information relating to the Borough's Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports Facilities, reduces this risk.
22. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 which allows the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or conducive to the discharge of statutory functions. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which provides Councils with the general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to Sections 2 to 4, and Section 105, 117-123 of the Charities Act 2011 which gives power to authorise dealings with charity property.

Risk Management

23. There are not considered to be any material risks from this report.

Equality Impact

24. There are no Equality Impact Implications arising directly from this report. However, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken at all stages of any projects being implemented.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

25. There are no HR/OD impacts resulting from the report as any requirements will be managed from within existing resource in line with the timescales outlined.

Commercial/Procurement

26. There are not considered to be any commercial/procurement implications because of this report. A Procurement exercise took place using Sandwell procurement guidelines to support the Black Country Plan work.

Environment/Climate Change

27. Local playing pitches and outdoor sports sites form an important part of the borough's green infrastructure, and open space network. They encourage physical activity and participation in team sports. Protecting and enhancing

these sites will help the Councils work to address Climate Change and achieve our Net Zero target by 2041.

Council Priorities and Projects

28. The protection and enhancement of playing pitches and sports sites will assist with current wider Council and Borough activity and projects including:

- Climate Change and our Net Zero target by 2041
- Public Health and Wellbeing
- Green spaces and the safety of the community



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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for Dudley

Appendix 2 - Dudley Strategy and Action Plan

Appendix 3 - Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework

List of Background Documents

As per appendices