

# **APPENDIX 1C- HARROW FOCUS GROUPS – BRIEFING NOTES**

## **Harrow Focus Groups – Briefing Notes**

Harrow Council has commissioned Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) to undertake an assessment of open space, sport and recreation in the Borough.

Harrow Council has identified you as a representative user/non-user of sport/leisure or open space. Your opinion is considered valuable to this consultation process and this is why we would like to invite you to a focus group meeting.

There are a number of key issues for future provision, and through discussion, we would like you to help us identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing provision and priorities for future improvement.

### **The Value of Open Space, Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Provision**

To inform the discussion, the following paragraphs explain what the assessment of open space, sport and recreation aims to achieve:

A strategic approach to open space provision is increasingly being recognised as an essential way forward in ensuring open space meets the needs and aspirations of the people who use and live near them.

The importance of Open Space is also being recognised by Central Government through such guidance as that recently issued by the office of the Deputy Prime Minister in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17).

*'Local Authorities are recommended to undertake a robust assessment of the need, use, accessibility, number and quality of existing open space. This will guide and support Local Authorities in their planning policy and decision making with regards to future provision, development and disposal of land.*

Local needs vary considerably not only from area to area, but within local authorities. The methodology we employ recognises this and gives a comprehensive overview that will generally focus on ways to improve and enhance the accessibility and quality of existing provision, as well as considering the need for new provision. Where additional provision is required, we ensure it is to enhance the existing network rather than detract from it.

Green spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. In order to deliver the council's broader objectives, through well designed and implemented planning policy, Harrow Council requires a robust assessment of local need for green space, civic spaces, sport and recreation provision, covering issues of location, quality, management and accessibility.

The assessment will be integral to the development of future policies for open space, sport and recreation, as part of the ongoing review of the Council's Local Plan, and development of additional planning guidance.

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## PPG 17

Planning Policy Guidance for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation (PPG 17), requires all local authorities to undertake needs assessments, and audits of provision (qualitative and quantitative), for all existing open space, sport and recreation facilities (indoor and outdoor) in their area.

PPG17 is about planning for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation because they underpin peoples' quality of life, and are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives of social inclusion, urban renewal, community regeneration and capacity building, health and well-being, and sustainability.

Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) has been appointed by Harrow Council to undertake this work in the Borough, on behalf of the Council.

### Undertaking the Assessment

The stages of work involved in a PPG 17 Assessment are as follows:

For the open space assessment, the Companion Guide to PPG17 identifies five key steps to undertaking an assessment of the playing pitches, indoor facilities and open space. These are broadly:

- **Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs**
- **Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision**
- **Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards**
- **Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards**
- **Step 5 – Policy Options**

The desirable outcomes from undertaking a PPG 17 Assessment are to provide local people with networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sports and recreation facilities in both rural and urban areas, which will meet the needs of **LOCAL** people and visitors.

The recommended methodologies (PPG17 and Playing Pitch Assessment) are concerned with Quantity, Quality and Accessibility and are very much community focussed in terms of identifying needs and aspirations through extensive and comprehensive consultation. It is also important to look at the "value" of facilities.

1. Give introduction to study (all invitees have had an outline of PPG17), what we are doing, and why.

Explain we are looking at all leisure provision in Harrow – indoor and outdoor sport, open space, parks, etc

2. We are interested in establishing peoples' views on existing provision and facilities – quality, access, price, programme and what is needed in the future – facility type, activities, programme, provision for young people, and location of provision.
3. We are particularly interested in finding out **WHY** people do not use existing facilities/provision e.g. location, cost, access, programme, view of facilities

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4. We need to find out suggestions for improvement to provision e.g. type of facility, location, women only, times, activities etc.

It is suggested that the following form the basis of the Focus Group Discussions:

### **Key Questions**

Key questions, which will be discussed in the focus group, are:

- How important is sport and recreation (indoor and outdoor facilities) in Harrow, and what do you think are the priorities for new facility development?
- What is your view of the quality of current indoor facility provision?
- How important is open space in Harrow, and what are your views on the current quality of this in the Borough?
- How important is it to retain the Green Belt for the Borough? Are there any types of development, which should be considered for this area?
- Do you think that open space, sport and recreation provision is evenly distributed across the Borough?
- Is open space, sport and recreation provision in Harrow accessible? e.g. transport links to the facilities.
- How important is it to ensure that all residents have access to provision, and how can Council or other partners facilitate access for deprived/underprivileged groups?
- Are there any other issues you would like to raise?