

APPENDIX 2 – NATIONAL SPORTING CONTEXT

Sports Specific Context

A Sporting Future for All – The Government's Plan for Sport

Sport in Education

- 2.1 School playing fields are identified as one key area for action with regard to Sport in Education. The Plan for Sport emphasises the need to improve the planning and use of sports facilities (including playing pitches) and ensure that all new facilities are well managed, both in school and for community use.
- 2.2 The Plan for Sport contains two actions specific to school playing fields, namely:
- The DfES is consulting about new, stricter measures to protect school playing fields and a proposal that where school playing fields are sold, the first call on any proceeds is to enhance PE and sport in schools
 - The DfES has set up a School Playing Fields Advisory Panel to advise Ministers on applications from Local Authorities and schools to dispose of school playing fields.

Sport in the Community

- 2.3 A number of key areas for action are identified which encompass playing pitch provision. These include:
- 'In developing strategies over the next 5 years, Local Authorities should consult with relevant agencies to ensure that new and enhanced indoor and outdoor facilities provide equal opportunity for participation based on different needs in terms of gender, age, ethnic diversity and disability.'¹
- 2.4 The Plan for Sport identifies an aspiration that 'by the end of the decade (2010), each Local Authority should have a comprehensive audit of all outdoor playing field facilities, to include public (education and leisure), private and voluntary provision'. The Plan (Page 22) also encourages:
- Establishment of local databases of playing pitch provision
 - Setting targets for per capita provision, based on their knowledge of existing provision and needs in their own and neighbouring areas, which can be used to measure against practice in Best Value Reviews.
- 2.5 The Plan outlines the following key actions to be taken in respect of Playing Pitch Provision²:
- Within the next five years (by 2005) Sport England, in consultation with DCMS, DfEE (now DfES) and DETR (now DTLR) will produce guidance to enable Local Authorities to complete playing fields audits and to develop local playing

¹ Taken from 'A Sporting Future for All – The Government's Plan for Sport' Pg 22

² Taken from 'A Sporting Future for All – The Government's Plan for Sport' Pg 25

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field strategies linked to specific local Sports Development Objectives. Sport England has started this work which forms part of the NOF Green Spaces initiative

- DCMS will encourage organisations funding green spaces to prioritise their funding allocations in line with local playing fields strategies where they are available
- New PPG17 has been issued by the DETR, which includes updated guidance which will direct Local Planning Authorities to produce playing field and open space strategies as an integral part of Local Development Plans.

2.6 In addition, as with school playing fields, the Government is determined to protect existing community playing fields and create more wherever possible⁶:

- Existing protection of playing fields will be further reinforced and the NOF Green Spaces initiative under delegated powers to Sport England will provide extra resources (£31.5 million in England) for the development of more playing spaces. New developments will be based on strategic need and locally agreed objectives
- DCMS, DTLR, DfES and Sport England will maintain their common approach to playing fields, working alongside CCPR and NPFA

Realising the Potential of Cultural Services – The Case for Sport

2.7 Sport has a key role to play in the cross cutting agenda, with a valuable contribution to improving health, reducing crime, improving educational attainment and learning new skills, community development and enhancing the environment.

2.8 Playing Pitches and Outdoor sports provision, are key elements to sporting provision within communities. The research findings reported in the Realising the Potential of Cultural Services include the following conclusions:³

- *'Sports facilities can make an important contribution to the physical infrastructure of communities, providing a social focus for a community and positively impacting on people's perception of their neighbourhood.'*
- *'...the maintenance of otherwise under-used community facilities and wider environmental recreation-related improvements (parks, playing fields, pathways) have a significant role to play in the development of the quality of life in communities'*

³ Taken from 'Realising the Potential of Cultural Services: The Case for Sport' p.45

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General Household Survey Participation in Sport – Past trends and future prospects (2001 publication)

General Trends

- 2.9 The latest GHS Survey reports on data for sports participation using data from the General Household Survey (1996) and the National Survey of Young People and Sport in England undertaken by Sport England in 1999. This data, reviewed with known local trends can be used to assess the implications for future supply of and demand for playing pitches and outdoor courts.

National participation trends for males

Football

- The most popular sport for young males (age 6-16) is football in which 67% take part on a regular basis. Pitch based sports cease to be the most popular sport for males after the age of 30 where swimming and cycling become more favoured pass times.

Cricket

- There is a significant decrease in participation after the age of 16. 28.6% of the male population between the ages of 6 and 16 participate on a regular basis as opposed to only 1.7% over men over the age of 17.

Rugby

- Rugby participation rates for 6-16 year olds are recorded at 12.7% compared with 0.9% for over 17's.

Hockey

- Hockey participation rates for 6-16 year olds are 6.9% compared to participation by 0.4% of men over the age of 17 who participate on a regular basis.

National participation trends for Females

Football

- 18.1% of girls aged 6-16 play football on a regular basis. This figure decreases to 0.8% of over 17's who participate on a regular basis. However, Women's Football is experiencing huge growth with an estimated growth in participation of 88% between 1999 and 2001. There is now an estimated 55,000 regular players (FA data)

Cricket

- 8.3% of 6-16 year olds participate on a regular basis. This participation rate reduces to 0.1% for women over 17.

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Hockey

- 4.7% of 6-16 year olds participate in hockey on a regular basis. This rate decreases to 0.2% for over 17 year olds.

Rugby

- 2.2% of girls aged 6-16 participate on a regular basis compared to 0% of women.

National Governing Bodies for Sport – Facilities Strategies

- 2.10 It is important to review the aims and objectives of National Governing Bodies for facility development as detailed within their Facilities Strategies. Many Governing Bodies identify aspirations and requirements for sporting facilities at all levels.

Football – FA National Facilities Plan

Objectives of National Facilities Plan – Establishing Mini-Soccer Pitches

- 2.11 A number of objectives detailed in the plan have relevance for provision of pitches at a local level, including:
- To develop mini-soccer grass pitches at football clubs, schools, local authorities and other sites across the country. Every junior school/football club (under 10 years of age) to have access to dedicated mini-soccer pitches within 30 minutes travel time
 - To raise the quality of existing grass pitches, changing facilities and support services at football clubs, schools, local authorities and other sites; County FA's and Sport England to provide support and advice to football clubs, schools, local authorities seeking to enhance pitches/changing and support facilities with Lottery Sports Fund support
 - To establish a national network of licensed Football Academies and Centres of Excellence which satisfy the requirements of the Charter for Quality. At least one Football Academy should be established in the following areas; All Metropolitan areas, Lancashire, East Midlands, East Anglia, Tyne and Wear/Teesside, Greater London Boroughs, Hampshire and Bristol. 'In populations of a minimum of 250,000 and within travelling time of one hour, children under 16 years of age should have access to a Football Academy or a Centre of Excellence'
 - To ensure there is an adequate supply of accessible, floodlit, full-size synthetic turf pitches across the country. In populations of at least 60,000 and within a 30-minute travel time there should be access to a full size, floodlit synthetic turf pitch. Sport England has assessed the current level of provision across the country to identify areas of deficiency
 - To develop floodlit Multi Use Games Areas. Where there is limited access to adequate grass playing fields, children under 10 years of age should have access to a Multi-use Games Area. Sport England to provide advice and

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guidance to local authorities seeking to establish Multi-use Games Areas through the Lottery Sports Fund.

Cricket - ECB National Facilities Strategy

- 2.12 The strategy is based upon a survey of existing facilities at 2,700 clubs. A number of key aims are detailed which have an impact on current and future facility provision in Walsall, including:
- Outdoor Facilities: *'A key priority, from schools to First Class and International level is to improve the quality of match and practise grass pitches.'*
 - All CCB's need a County Development Plan which should include:
 - a facility section that identifies strategically located facilities to deliver their development activity programmes and which are prioritised and costed for investment purposes.'
 - 'Local Authorities, Local Education Authorities, Private Contractors, Clubs, Schools, all have a key role to play in sharing in the ownership of County Development Plans.
- 2.13 The Strategy also identifies:
- The intention of the ECB to start up a Capital Development Fund, which it will seek to address the priority needs.
 - The ECB to provide a series of Technical Specifications to ensure safety and quality of performance.
- 2.14 Other key considerations are evident in the 7 broad aims for cricket facilities identified in the strategy which include the need for:
- Grass Match and/or Practice Playing Surfaces
 - Artificial Match and/or Practice Playing Surfaces
 - Security of tenure for cricket clubs (Priority given to safeguarding facilities under threat by sale of grounds or non renewal of leases.)
 - Improve the standards of pavilions and support facilities.

Rugby Union - The National Facilities for Rugby Union in England

- 2.15 The strategy identifies the popularity of Rugby Union with 634,000 people currently playing Rugby Union in England, more than any other country. This figure includes 264,000 youngsters involved in junior participation in England.
- 2.16 The strategy identifies a number of issues with local provision around the country including the fact that local authority parks are often hired by clubs on a match by match basis or block booking basis. These facilities tend to be less well maintained due to limited resources.

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- 2.17 The strategy identifies a number of recommendations relating to usage on pitches according to 'type'. These are detailed as:

Pitch Type	Recommended potential adult weekly Usage
Undrained	< 2 hours usage
Pipe drained	2-3 hours usage
Slit drained	3-6 hours usage
Suspended water table	4-6 hours usage

(Recommended usage increases by 50% for player's 15 years old and under.)

- 2.18 The strategy identifies 'Four Model Venues' within its design framework. Local Authorities facilities can be classed as 'Model Venue One' where facilities are used for 'recreational, introductory and lower level competition rugby.' The specifications for a 'Model Venue One' are attached.
- 2.19 Local authorities are identified as key partners in delivering the strategy, with their role focussing on:

'To assist, advice and support clubs, schools and other rugby providers, develop sports and playing pitch strategies assist County Board's with County Development Plans and identify opportunities through the planning process such as funding projects through Section 106 agreements.'

Hockey - People and Places: A National Facilities Strategy for Hockey 1999-2004

- 2.20 The Facilities Strategy identifies that over half a million people participate in Hockey annually and there are approximately 100,000 regular players.
- There are 18 Non-Filled Water based synthetic pitches in England.

Other Considerations

- 2.21 Playing pitches, (especially where they are in public parks) can be used for casual play (kick-about), walking dogs, scenic short cuts and a myriad of other activities that do not in themselves comprise formal organised sport. They can also provide for open views, natural habitats and green corridors. However, whilst the importance of these functions is acknowledged, they have no direct bearing on the value of a given site to sport itself.
- 2.22 It is important to isolate the 'sporting' reasons for protecting and managing playing fields from these wider considerations because the needs of sport change. Sometimes a playing field may no longer sufficiently meet the needs of sport. Examples of this are many fold but can include circumstances where:
- There has been technological innovation in the sport such as to render a facility obsolete. The prime example is the advent of artificial turf pitches, which have supplanted grass and shale pitches as the standard surface for competitive hockey.

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- Clubs grow to the extent that their 'home' facility cannot accommodate the number of teams and pitches required and ancillary facilities (changing, parking, floodlighting) are required to allow the club to progress, but cannot reasonably be provided on a given site.

2.23 There are other reasons why a playing field may no longer be used for sport. For example, where school rolls fall, education authority pitches may be sold.

2.24 Similarly, the decline in manufacturing industry has meant the closure or rationalisation of many company sports/social club facilities.

Tackling Social Exclusion

2.25 Tackling social exclusion is one of the Government's highest priorities, evidenced by the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit. National programmes to encourage social inclusion include New Deal for Communities, Sure Start Employment, Sport, Education and Health Action Zones. Policy Action Team (PAT) 10 on Arts and Sport collated best practice in using arts, sport and leisure to engage people in deprived communities. The PAT 10 report highlighted one vital role that sport can play in tackling social exclusion and concluded the following:

- Sport has a beneficial social impact and builds confidence
- Sport contributes to neighbourhood renewal
- Benefits should be widely spread
- Sport and regeneration can work together and are fundamental to community involvement
- Sporting bodies acknowledge social inclusion
- Sporting excellence should be a priority.

2.26 There is clearly a growing vision on how sport and leisure can be used to address social inclusion, contribute to improved health indicators and help a culture of lifelong learning and support.