

Note on supplementary offsite sports provision/improvement in support of sites ES25 & SS01

The forthcoming updated Playing Pitch Strategy, anticipated to be finalised by autumn 2026 will provide a refreshed, robust, comprehensive analysis of the extent and quality of existing sports provision in the city, as well as specific evidence on shortfalls and opportunities for improvement, to form the basis for future projects to ensure that the city's sports provision best meets the needs of residents.

Where a site is disused case law indicates it is reasonable to consider qualitative improvements not solely quantitative reprovision. The following note provides examples of the type of specific schemes where improvement to sports provision is required, and where opportunities could potentially be sought to leverage developer contributions.

Across the city there are lower quality areas of sporting provision that could be returned to full use through compensation arrangements or provision enhanced to provide opportunities for more teams to utilise the facilities. These should be a focus for compensation derived from the loss of former sports pitches at site allocations ES25 and SS01. This note demonstrates that it is feasible to deliver improvements to sports provision to offset the loss of former sports pitches and ensure that the site allocations are realistically deliverable for housing. It should be noted that through ongoing dialogue, Sport England have expressed a preference for specific identified site packages for reprovision to be provided.

The nature of compensation should take account of to the former provision at these sites prior to them becoming disused, as well as health and well-being needs of the surrounding areas. This was set out verbally at the hearing session on 17th October. In summary:

- **ES25**

Taking account of the principle that playing fields incorporate the wider outfield grassed area surrounding actual pitch provision, the scale of former provision at ES25 was in the region of up to 5.60 hectares which is the gross site area of the allocation. The nature of previous provision, although it changed over time, included 2 x cricket pitches and assorted football pitches (covering together an estimated 3.7 hectares of viable grass playing field). There were also 2 x bowling greens, 3 x multi use games areas and associated pavilion buildings and car parking.

- **SS01**

We understand that prior to the school's closure over 20 years ago in 2003, the provision in terms of school playing field at SS01 was assorted football pitches equating to an estimated 1.22 hectares of grass playing field.

The projects / sites listed below provide an indication of the type of schemes that are needed in the city and where compensation to replace those former pitches lost at the two site allocations could be utilised. Please note that these are representative current schemes, and do not necessarily reflect the *actual* schemes where funding would be spent. That would be determined based on the scale of funding available

through development of the site allocations, opportunities for spend taking account of other funding streams/priorities at that time, and project programming considerations. The sites are expected to come forwards on different timeframes, with SS01 anticipated to start delivering from year 6 of the Plan period (2030/31), and it is therefore not appropriate to allocate funding in advance from that site for replacement or qualitative improvement to current schemes already in the pipeline.

The action plan in the current Playing Pitch Strategy (2022) (OS01) lists a large number of opportunities some of which are not yet funded. Opportunities are identified as being low, medium or high priority. The preference would be for investment associated with the two site allocations to be on 'secured' sites, where the Council has a role, to ensure that investment is secured for the long-term. The examples below do not necessarily represent 'secured' sites but reflect the range of options available in the city for delivering improvements to sports provision.

Summarised examples of the types of schemes that funding could be utilised for, in areas close to the site allocations, include but are not limited to:

- Norton Oakes Cricket Club (south area): Refurbish pavilion, provide practice nets or NTP to facilitate training demands and allow the club to grow further.
- Mather Road Recreation Ground (east area): Explore possibility of reconfiguration of pitches to better address current levels and nature of demand.
- Norton Playing Fields (south area): Football/ Rugby – Provide support and information on potential funding opportunities ...[including] development of additional grass provision to address the current issue of overplay.
- Sheffield Park Academy (east area): Football – put in place a more robust maintenance regime in order to improve pitch quality.

Recommendations for specific sports also provide options to address specific needs in the city through targeted funding. Summarised examples, in areas close to the site allocations, include but are not limited to:

- Recommendation F8: Boundary Academy (Jordanthorpe Parkway) (south area), high demand site, ambition to bring back into use for football.
- Recommendation F9: Handsworth WMC Sports Ground. High demand site engage with landowner to bring site back into use for football.
- Recommendation C3: Invest in ancillary facilities to increase the quality of changing and catering provision (including designated changing for Women & Girls) ... utilise the action plan to identify the specific sites where this should be a priority.
- Recommendation C4: Work with clubs that are currently using sites that are over-capacity ... to provide additional provision, through non-turf (artificial) wickets, in order to accommodate junior team demand.

Note that following publication of the updated Playing Pitch Strategy the list of sports pitch actions and sports specific recommendations will be updated.

Current and future projects

In the short-medium term, there are also new, innovative mechanisms that could utilise funding to deliver wider activity. For example, the Council is considering bringing forward 'leisure pods' in areas of high inactivity (such as the neighbourhoods surrounding the two site allocations) to improve physical activity and well-being, with the possibility to match fund projects through developer contributions.

Strategic housing sites could also provide the opportunity to deliver new sports pitch provision as part of a masterplan approach. For example, the former Norton Aerodrome (SS17) is within the vicinity of site SS01 and includes a large area of land not included within the developable area of the site for the purpose of calculating housing capacity.

Condition on development

To enable delivery of projects to replace those former facilities lost through site allocation, we propose an additional condition on development for both site allocations to read:

“The loss of sports pitch provision resulting from the proposed development should be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location taking account of the evidence set out in the Playing Pitch Strategy and priority projects for sports provision in the city.”