

**Report to** Sustainable development panel

**Item**

28 January 2015

**Report of** Head of planning service

**6**

**Subject** Greater Norwich sports facilities strategies

---

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is firstly to inform Sustainable Development Panel members of the completion and availability of the sports facilities strategies for Greater Norwich and of plans for their implementation. Secondly, the report highlights the main findings of the strategy for Norwich.

### **Recommendation**

To note that the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) Infrastructure Delivery Board has:

1. Signed off the Greater Norwich Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plans and the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plans and their supporting Needs Assessments as material considerations in making planning decisions and as part of the evidence base for local plan making;
2. Agreed to ongoing monitoring, managing, updating and implementation of the strategies, action plans and needs assessments, to be coordinated through the existing stakeholder group.

### **Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priority A prosperous city and the service plan priorities to provide well maintained parks and open spaces and to develop the local economy, promote inward investment and regeneration activities.

### **Financial implications**

None

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard – Environment and transport

### **Contact officers**

Mike Burrell, planning team leader (policy)

01603 212525

### **Background documents**

None

# Report

## The sports facilities strategies for Greater Norwich

1. The Greater Norwich Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Facilities Strategies, produced by consultants naa, have been completed. These documents will guide future provision and management of sports facilities to serve existing and new communities in Greater Norwich to 2026.
2. The strategies will help to implement planning and health strategy priorities to promote healthy lifestyles.
3. Sport England, which has part funded the work on the strategy and has committed to ongoing involvement in its implementation, has praised the quality of the work.
4. Based on extensive local evidence, both strategies promote making best use of current facilities in existing areas by improving their quality and management, while ensuring new facilities are provided in new growth areas and in areas where there is currently poor provision.
5. The strategies therefore prioritise improvements to the quality of existing sports facilities, particularly at schools, tied in with increased community use. This will enable cost effective access to high quality local facilities. If this approach does not prove successful, increased spending on additional new facilities will be likely to be necessary in the long term.
6. The strategies and action plans will now be used as part of the evidence base for plan making and planning application decisions. They will also be used to inform decision making by sports development officers at the three district councils.
7. Implementation of the strategies will be coordinated by the existing stakeholder group, which will ensure that the evidence is kept up to date.
8. Costs for the improvement of existing or the provision of new facilities are included in the documents. These figures are indicative only and do not represent worked up projects or a funding commitment. While CIL money may play a part in funding implementation, an important aspect of having a completed strategy is that it will assist in making applications for funding from Sport England, for example to assist in the combined management of school facilities. It will also assist sports bodies such as the Football Association and individual clubs and parish and town councils to apply for various sources of funding where their proposals help to address evidence based strategic priorities. It is anticipated that these organisations, along with developers in the new communities, will play a key role in providing improved and new facilities.
9. Further detail on the background, overall findings for Greater Norwich, and implementation of the strategies is in appendix 1, the report to the GNGB Infrastructure Deliver Board. The final paragraph of that report includes a link to all of the assessment, strategy and action plan documents.
10. The remainder of this report covers the action plan priorities for Norwich itself.

## **Indoor sports facilities in Norwich**

11. The strategy recommends that existing swimming pools, sports halls and indoor bowls centres need to be retained, and enhanced where necessary, and there is a need to provide an indoor tennis centre.
12. Specifically in relation to sports halls, the conclusion is that the existing supply of halls will meet current and projected demand up to 2026, but their quality will need to be improved. Community use agreements for school facilities will be important, which are recommended to be coordinated through a professional leisure management organisation.
13. The action plan highlights that, partly due to relatively low levels of car ownership in Norwich, there is a need to retain the quantity and improve the quality of facilities in the city centre. It specifically highlights the potential to provide improved facilities, with community access, at Notre Dame School. It also identifies the possibility that new facilities, also potentially with community access, will be provided by Jane Austin College. In relation to Wensum Sports Centre, it states that its facilities are important, and, if lost, should be replaced locally. Outside the city centre, the need for improved facilities with public access at the City of Norwich School (CNS) is identified.
14. Overall, the main priority identified for investment in indoor sports for Norwich is modernisation of the Hewett school swimming pool. This would enable this pool, which is very important to local swimming clubs, to continue to play an important role. Without such investment, it is highly likely that far greater expense would be required on additional facilities in the longer term to cater for anticipated growth in demand for swimming.
15. The consultants were asked to consider whether the evidence showed that there was the need or potential for development of regional/national scale sports facilities in the area. The study concluded that there was not such a need as the UEA Sportspark is of such high quality that it already provides facilities to train elite athletes and host competitions at the regional level and above for swimming and indoor hall sports, with facilities for gymnastics on a par with those at Lilleshall National Sports Centre.

## **Playing pitches in Norwich**

16. The strategy identifies priorities and recommends implementation timescales for its actions. Its primary focus is on football, cricket, rugby and hockey, but it also covers tennis, bowls, American football, korfball, skateboard / BMX tracks and multi-use games areas. There are a large number of actions recommended, and the relative importance of these could change over time as circumstances change. The strategy recommends that the vast majority of existing pitches should be retained and prioritises making better use of existing facilities, specifying a number of locations. In addition, it recommends improvements to a number of sites. The Playing Pitch Strategy Norwich Action Plan, available from the link at the end of appendix 1, sets out actions and priorities for the city.

## **Appendix 1- Greater Norwich Growth Board Infrastructure Delivery Board**

### **Greater Norwich Growth Board Directors**

#### **Greater Norwich Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Facilities strategies and action plans - Approval and ongoing implementation**

#### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Directors:

1. Sign off the *Greater Norwich Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plans* and the *Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plans* and their supporting *Needs Assessments* as material considerations in making planning decisions and as part of the evidence base for local plan making;
2. Agree to ongoing monitoring, managing, updating and implementation of the strategies, action plans and needs assessments, to be coordinated through the existing stakeholder group.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is firstly to request that Directors approve the *Greater Norwich Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Facilities Strategies and Action Plans*, along with their supporting *Needs Assessments*, for development management and local plan making purposes.

Its second purpose is to request that Directors agree to ongoing implementation being coordinated through the existing stakeholder group.

#### **Introduction**

1. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership appointed consultants (naa) to produce a Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan and an Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan for Greater Norwich in summer 2013.
2. This work has now been completed in line with the project brief, to budget and broadly to timetable.
3. The Indoor Sport Facilities documents consist of:
  - The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan for Greater Norwich as a whole;
  - Actions Plans for each district by facility type (sports halls, swimming pools, indoor bowls and indoor tennis);
  - Needs Assessments for each of the facility types. These assessments provide a robust evidence base for the strategies and action plans, covering the quality, quantity, accessibility, location and management of facilities. They cover both current needs and those required by 2026, based on identified population growth and demographic changes both at the Greater Norwich and

at the individual district level. They also take account of accessible facilities in neighbouring districts.

4. The Playing Pitch documents consist of :

- The Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan for Greater Norwich;
- An Action Plan for each district. These primarily focus on sites for outdoor football, cricket, rugby and hockey, but also cover tennis, bowls, American football, korfball, skateboard / BMX tracks and multi-use games areas;
- The supporting evidence in the Needs Assessment.

**Policy context**

5. In support of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (JCS), and in compliance with Duty to Cooperate requirements for districts to coordinate their approach to strategic issues, the documents will guide future provision and management of sports pitches and indoor sports facilities to serve existing and new communities in Greater Norwich.
6. Implementation will help to ensure that the spatial vision in the JCS can be achieved. The vision identifies firstly that “people will enjoy healthy, safe and fulfilling lifestyles”, secondly that “there will be excellent public open space, sport and recreational facilities” and thirdly “people will need to use their cars less as ..... recreational facilities will be in areas accessible by public transport, cycling and pedestrian routes”.
7. In addition, the spatial planning objectives of the JCS require sports and recreational facilities to be improved in existing and new communities. Policy 8 of the plan covers culture, leisure and entertainment. It states that "Development will be expected to provide for local cultural and leisure activities, including new or improved built facilities, provide for a range of activities including .....access to green space, including formal recreation....." .
8. The Adopted JCS also includes an Implementation Strategy, and these two documents will help identify priority projects which deliver the Strategy and assist in production of the annual GNGB Business Plan(s)
9. Over recent years Local Authorities have been given an increased role in terms of public health and these Strategies, which help guide how provision could help maximise activity in sport based recreation, will assist in fulfilling that role. Implementation will also assist in achieving the priorities of the local clinical commissioning groups by promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles, reducing the need for costly medical care, and making health and wellbeing a key consideration in urban planning.
10. As well as assisting in the implementation of the JCS through planning decisions and future plan making, the evidence and the findings of the strategy are already playing a key role in decision making for sports development professionals at the three councils.

11. The approval of the strategies as material considerations in making planning decisions, and as part of the evidence base for local plan making, is essential if Sport England is to support bids for funding towards delivery.

### **Main findings**

12. Overall, both strategies promote firstly making best use of current facilities in existing areas by maintaining and improving their quality, and secondly ensuring new facilities are provided in new growth areas and in areas where there is currently poor provision. Improvements to the quality of existing sports facilities, particularly at schools, tied in with increased community use, will enable cost effective access to high quality local facilities. If this approach does not prove successful, increased spending on additional new facilities will be likely to be necessary in the long term.
13. The high quality of facilities at UEA mean that no demand was identified for additional regional scale sports facilities in the area.

### **Indoor sports facilities**

14. The strategic approach proposed is to:

- **Improve the quality of facilities as well as the amount of provision** – the strategy promotes the protection of existing indoor sports facilities, but also recognises the need to improve their quality and identifies some instances where remedial work/improvements are pressing.
- **Deliver sports facilities in partnership** – the strategy concludes that for the Greater Norwich area management change is as important as increases in the physical stock. More cohesive management will enable better use to be made of existing facilities. This requires the collective engagement of all the Greater Norwich local authorities, Norfolk County Council and partners, especially secondary schools, all working together.  
This will involve changing roles and responsibilities to bring together key partners in the delivery of opportunities for sport, promote and share good practice and to maximise the value of assets to the community and avoid duplication of facilities.

The proposed focus is on secondary school based sports facilities, which will involve changing the day to day management of the school based sports facilities. Collective management, possibly with external coordination, of school indoor sports outside school hours will be maximised for community use.

- **Focus investment on interventions that will have the greatest impact** – the strategy seeks to prioritise investment on sites where the highest impact will be felt and where high numbers of users will benefit. It will seek to increase participation in sport and physical activity by increasing and efficiently managing community access across school sites, particularly in Broadland and Norwich City, as well as plugging identified 'gaps' in provision at locations such as Diss and Acle..
- **Maximise sustainability** by focusing on providing accessible, local facilities which offer the best value for money and long-term financial viability.

### **Prioritisation**

As a result of this, the following policy approaches and site specific projects are recommended in the strategy for prioritisation:

Priority	Policy approach
1	Improve coordination of facility planning, delivery and management of community based sports facilities
2	Develop joint sport and healthy/active lifestyle rationale for investment in sports facilities
3	Establish a dedicated CIL fund for the modernisation and provision of sports facilities
4	Agree policy to protect and enhance community use of sports facilities on educational sites
	<b>Project</b>
5	Modernisation of Hewett School swimming pool
6	Modernisation of Thorpe St Andrew School swimming pool
7	Modernisation of Hellesdon High School and Sprowston School sports halls
8	New strategic sports facilities in areas where there are gaps in provision (the priority is a new sports hall and swimming pool in Diss)
9	A new sports hall in a growth area (such as Rackheath) co-located with a new secondary school
10	A new sports hall in Acle

15. These priorities could be subject to change, particularly as projects are implemented, and will need to be revisited over time as evidence is updated. Further clarification on indicative costs included in the action plans would be a consideration.

### **Playing Pitch Strategy**

16. The overall strategic objectives are to:

**Protect** - The assessment has indicated that there is currently a good supply of accessible pitches in community use to meet present demand. Where there is an apparent surplus, in principle, sites should be protected to meet future need resulting from growth or used for other forms of green infrastructure. A very limited number of single pitch sites have been identified as possibly being surplus to requirements.

**Enhance** - The strategy looks to make the best use of existing provision ensuring better quality, access and management. This will help to meet both current and future demand instead of and alongside some new provision. Enhancements include improvements to:

- pitch quality and capacity e.g. drainage;
- ancillary facilities such as changing rooms;
- management to enable more effective use of existing sites e.g. shared use of larger sites for both junior and senior pitches.

**Provide** - Alongside the enhancement of existing provision, some new natural and/or artificial grass pitches are required to meet current and/or future demand.

The strategy shows the need for new pitches and supporting facilities to be provided, on a pro rata basis, to meet the needs of the new housing growth areas:

- Football +25 pitches (5 senior, 16 youth/junior/9v9, 5 mini)
- Cricket +5 pitches (2 adult, 3 junior)
- Rugby +4 pitches (1 adult, 1 junior, 2 mini)
- Hockey +2 pitches
- Plus additional tennis, bowls and netball facilities
- Plus essential changing and ancillary facilities

Some of this provision has already been secured thorough planning permissions which are delivering the JCS growth.

17. New provision should also include working with sports clubs and providers to consider development of “multi sports hubs”. The strategy promotes economies of scale in outdoor sports provision, so that clubs can benefit from shared and jointly provided and managed facilities, and that facility provision can be coordinated with other associated services such as sports medicine. Such hubs should be at named strategic locations with space for a number of pitches, a clubhouse, a 3G pitch and other built facilities.

### **Implementation**

18. For this evidence based strategic approach to be implemented effectively, it will be essential that it is well coordinated. There will be a need for ongoing monitoring, managing and updating of evidence to support implementation. This will enable evidence to be kept up-to-date, so that it can continue to be used as a material consideration in making decisions on planning applications, plan making and in decision making for sports development professionals.
19. The existing stakeholder group, which contains representatives of the three authorities, Active Norfolk, Public Health, sporting bodies and Sport England, can play a key role in ensuring implementation. However, given the importance the strategy proposes for schools, it is also essential that both Norfolk County Council education and individual schools are involved. This could be particularly challenging given the current deregulation of schooling. However, the potential for accessing external funding sources to improve existing sports facilities could be a powerful incentive for schools to work cooperatively and allow greater community use.
20. The role of the stakeholder group, which could be detailed through Memorandum of Understanding, would be to:
- Use the current evidence to confirm the strategic policy approaches and projects to be taken forward;
  - Ensure data is kept up-to-date. This is essential in the rapidly changing context of sports provision;
  - Input to elected members on possible CIL prioritisation;
  - Apply for funds from Sport England, possibly to assist in the combined management of school facilities, and/or assist professional sports bodies or



individual clubs where their proposals help to address evidence based strategic priorities to apply for sources of funding.

21. While different calls on available CIL funding may mean that it may not play a significant role in implementing the strategy, the existence of the strategy itself and of a stakeholder group will assist professional bodies and individual clubs/parishes in seeking funding which will assist in implementation, including identifying projects which parishes may wish to fund using their element of CIL.
22. The stakeholder group will also be in a position to assist in ensuring that appropriate facilities being provided through new development.
23. It is anticipated that the group would meet every six months. The resource input would therefore be limited, confined largely to some staff time. Continuation of the project management expertise and administrative support provided by the GNGB in formulating the strategy would greatly assist in its implementation.

### **Supporting Documents:**

The full strategy documents and action plans for each district are available to view at:

<http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/delivery/greater-norwich-sports-facilities-strategies>