

4 STRATEGIC INFLUENCES

Key findings:

- **Corporate Plan 2022 to 2031:** As part of the vision the Corporate Plan seeks to 'shape our district to be an outstanding destination for both business and leisure'. KA.01.04 seeks an outcome that 'Residents will be able to access local community facilities for sport, physical and community activity to complement the district's leisure centres. CO8 seeks to achieve that 'Activity will be increased, through the use of active travel routes and the provision of a varied leisure offer throughout the district
- **Planning policy:** A robust, evidence-based assessment of playing pitch needs in the district will inform planning policy and the PPS will provide this to help ensure good future provision.
- **Government planning policy:** Policy emphasises the need to 'enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs; for example through the provision of sports facilities'.
- **Sport England strategy:** Sport England's strategy broadens the traditional definition of sports facilities from formal specialist provision, to include other 'Active Environments' that provide opportunities for informal and non-specialist activities for 'Movement'. The Harborough PPS focuses on formal outdoor sports facilities needs as an important sub-set within the wider definition of 'Active Environments'.

4.1 Introduction

This section examines the influence of relevant policies and priorities on pitches and outdoor sports facilities provision in Harborough district, including the impact of national strategies.

4.2 Harborough District Council Corporate Plan

4.2.1 Corporate vision

Working with our communities, we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities through:

- Community leadership to create a sense of pride in our place
- Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices
- Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations
- Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy.
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4.3 Harborough Local Plan

4.3.1 Introduction

Harborough District Council's current adopted plan is the '*Harborough Local Plan 2011 - 2031*' (2019). It contains the following material of relevance:

4.3.2 Vision

The Local Plan vision includes a statement that 'communities will have access to improved social, recreational, sports, health and educational facilities'.

4.3.3 Policy G12: Open Space, Sport and Recreation

The policy states that:

- 'The district's open space, sport and recreation facilities (as shown on the Policies Map) and any future additional facilities provided as part of new development will be safeguarded and enhanced through improvements to their quality and use.
- Development resulting in the loss of or reduction in defined open space, sport and recreation facilities will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:
 - A robust assessment clearly demonstrates that the space or recreational facility is surplus to local requirements and will not be needed in the-long term in accordance with local standards; or
 - Replacement areas will be at least equivalent in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility, and there will be no overall negative impact on the provision of open space in accordance with local standards; or
 - The proposal is for alternative recreational provision which meets evidence of local need in such a way as to outweigh the loss.
- Developments of more than 10 dwellings which would result in deficiencies in the quantity, accessibility and/or quality of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities should contribute towards:
 - The provision of specific new open space, sport and recreation facilities in accordance with local standards; and/or
 - The enhancement of identified existing facilities to meet the relevant local standards.
- New open space, sport and recreation facilities should be provided within residential development sites (unless otherwise agreed by the Council) and should:
 - Be accessible, usable, of high quality and good design, visible and safe and include facilities for a range of ages;
 - Enable links to be created between new development and surrounding recreational networks and facilities (including Public Rights of Way);

- Provide an appropriate landscaping and landscape maintenance scheme; and
- Specify, prior to the commencement of development, the responsibilities for management and maintenance in-perpetuity of the open space, sport and recreation facility.

4.4 The Government's Planning Policies

4.4.1 Introduction

In July 2021, the Government published revisions to the '*National Planning Policy Framework*' (2018), setting out its economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally to meet local aspirations.

4.4.2 Sustainable development

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' and there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

4.4.3 Promoting healthy and safe communities

'Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- 'Promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other - for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages.
- Are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion - for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high-quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.
- Enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs - for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

4.4.4 Sport and leisure facilities

To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- 'Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural

buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

- Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.
- Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.
- Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community.
- Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services'.

4.4.5 Open space and recreation

'Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate'.

'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use'.

4.4.6 Planning Practice Guidance

The Government also issued '*Planning Practice Guidance*' in 2014 and the following is relevant:

- **Open space, sport and recreation provision:** 'Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby. Authorities and developers may refer to [Sport England's guidance](#) on how to assess the need for sports and recreation facilities. Local planning authorities are [required](#) to consult [Sport England](#) in certain cases where development affects the use of land as [playing fields](#). Where there is no

requirement to consult, local planning authorities are advised to consult Sport England in cases where development might lead to loss of, or loss of use for sport, of any major sports facility, the creation of a site for one or more playing pitches, artificial lighting of a major outdoor sports facility or a residential development of 300 dwellings or more’.

- **Healthy and safe communities:** ‘The design and use of the built and natural environments, including [green infrastructure](#) are major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system (taking into account the changing needs of the population)’.

4.5 **The Government’s Sports Strategy**

The Government’s sports strategy ‘*Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*’ (2015) sets the context for a national policy shift. It contains the following material of relevance to playing pitch provision in Harborough:

- The Strategy seeks to ‘redefine what success looks like in sport’ by concentrating on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.
- The benefit of engaging those groups that typically do little or no activity is immense. Future funding will focus on those people who tend not to take part in sport, including women and girls, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people.

In 2022, the Government is working on a replacement Sports Strategy as updating the School Sport and Activity Action Plan and the National Physical Activity Framework.

4.6 **Sport England Strategy**

4.6.1 **Vision**

Sport England’s strategy ‘*Uniting the Movement*’ (2021) contains a vision for ‘a nation of more equal, inclusive and connected communities. A country where people live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives’.

4.6.2 **Context**

The strategy concludes that ‘there are deep-rooted inequalities in sport and physical activity, which mean there are people who feel excluded from being active because the right options and opportunities are not there:

- Disabled people and people with a long-term health condition are twice as likely to be physically inactive than those without a disability or health condition.
- People from a lower socioeconomic group (NS-SEC 6-8) are more likely to be inactive than people in higher social groups.

- Women are less active than men and this gender gap starts with girls being less active from a very young age.
- People from Asian and black backgrounds are far more likely to be physically inactive than people who are white’.

4.6.3 Advocating movement, sport and physical activity

Proposed actions include:

- ‘Continue to build, establish and grow partnerships and a common purpose across both the government and our sector to join up policies, strategies and approaches’.
- ‘Continue to develop and deliver behavioural change campaigns, building on the success of *‘This Girl Can’*, *‘We Are Undefeatable’* and *‘Join the Movement’*, to put movement, sport and physical activity at the forefront of national conversations’.
- ‘Keep building evidence that shows the links between the issues we all care about as a nation and the value of movement, sport and physical activity as part of the solution’.
- ‘Grow the extent to which we communicate, both to people and organisations, the power of getting active to help strengthen public consensus around the importance of being physically active’.

4.6.4 Five key issues

These are identified as:

- ***Recover and reinvent:*** ‘Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people’.
- ***Connecting communities:*** Focusing on sport and physical activity’s ability to make better places to live and bring people together.
- ***Positive experiences for children and young people:*** Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.
- ***Connection with health and wellbeing:*** Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.
- ***Active environments:*** Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

4.6.5 Active Environments

The key proposals for facilities are contained in the 'Active Environments' theme. This identifies three types of provision:

- **Dedicated sport and physical activity facilities:** 'Dedicated sport and leisure facilities like leisure centres need to be co-created, well designed, supported and maintained to benefit the local community and their users'.
- **Other community spaces:** 'Not usually designed exclusively for exercise, and certainly not for specific sports, these places are a vital resource for many and the activity they host provides a useful income to the venue. They may never be perfect competition or training spaces, but they attract people who might never go to a sports club, leisure centre or private gym. The development of community spaces like these is important to people who are regularly or newly active'.
- **The wider built environment:** 'These places and spaces influence how much we move. Good design can help to increase activity levels by encouraging walking and cycling. This means connecting dedicated sport and activity facilities and community spaces, by making it easy for people to walk and cycle, by better design and by using the built and natural environments around us'.

4.7 Sport England Playing Field Policies

Sport England is a statutory consultee on all planning applications involving either the provision, or loss of, playing pitches. It considers proposals affecting playing fields in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (in particular paragraph 98) and against its own playing fields policy which states the following:

'Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development that would lead to the loss, or prejudice the use of:

- All or any part of a playing field, or
- Land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- Land allocated for use as a playing field.

Unless in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets one of more of the following specific exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** A robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.
- **Exception 2:** The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

- **Exception 3:** The proposal affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:
 - Reduce the size of any playing pitch.
 - Result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas).
 - Reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capacity to rotate or reposition pitches to maintain their quality.
 - Result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site.
 - Prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.
- **Exception 4:** The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced prior to the commencement of the development by a new area of playing field:
 - Of equivalent or better quality.
 - Of equivalent or greater quantity.
 - In a suitable location.
 - Subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.
- **Exception 5:** The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field'.

4.8 The implications for playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities provision

The implications of strategic influences on playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities provision in Harborough district are:

- **Corporate Plan:** As part of the vision the Plan seeks to 'shape our district to be an outstanding destination for both business and leisure'. KA.01.04 seeks an outcome that 'Residents will be able to access local community facilities for sport, physical and community activity to complement the district's leisure centres. CO8 seeks to achieve that ' Activity will be increased, through the use of active travel routes and the provision of a varied leisure offer throughout the district
- **Planning policy:** A robust, evidence-based assessment of playing pitch needs in the district will inform planning policy and the PPS will provide this to help ensure good future provision.
- **Government planning policy:** Policy emphasises the need to 'enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local

health and well-being needs - for example through the provision of sports facilities’.

- ***Sport England strategy:*** Sport England’s strategy broadens the traditional definition of sports facilities from formal specialist provision, to include other ‘Active Environments’ that provide opportunities for informal and non-specialist activities for ‘Movement’. The Harborough PPS focuses on formal outdoor sports facilities needs as an important sub-set within the wider definition of ‘Active Environments’. Sport England’s playing field policy and its statutory planning role remain unchanged.