

CHICHESTER PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY: ADDITIONAL PLANNING MATTERS: REPORT ON POLICE PLAYING FIELD, CHICHESTER

1.1 The 2018 Chichester Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) stated the following:

“The Southern Gateway Development Area is described as ‘a large, mainly undeveloped site which could offer significant opportunity for large scale, residential development within the City.’ (CDC website). It includes several parcels of land, including, in its western section, part of the former Chichester Police Station playing field which is described as ‘a now unused playing field that is surplus to requirements’. The eastern half of the site is owned by West Sussex CC and is leased to the academy. It is now vacant and underused other than the aforesaid Kingsham (artificial turf pitch) pitch which is to be relocated to an identified alternative site within the Development Area.

The former police station playing field should be replaced by equivalent, appropriate provision when the site is redeveloped.”

1.2 The aim of the review of the 2018 Chichester PPS was to establish whether it was robust enough to underpin the emerging new Local Plan. The Review was required within a restricted timeframe (i.e. by early 2024) in order to accord with the timetable for the new Local Plan. This meant that a full update encompassing all pitch sports throughout the year (winter and summer seasons) was not possible. The Review was carried out as far as possible with reference to the process for a Stage E Review as set out in Sport England’s Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance (October 2013). The PPS analysed the provision and demand for each of the pitch sports according to three Sub Areas which were: the ‘East West Corridor’ (encompassing Chichester and immediate surrounding area); the ‘Manhood Peninsula’, and ‘North of Plan Area’ (north of the South Downs National Park, which was not included).

1.3 There have been a number of developments and changes since the 2018 Chichester PPS was prepared. There has been considerable progress on providing grass pitches within the West of Chichester Development (with a new 3G Football Turf Pitch (FTP) planned for Phase 2 there) and a new 3G FTP now operational at Oaklands Park (for Chichester City FC). However a number of recommendations for new pitch provision made within the 2018 Chichester PPS are still being progressed; these are also listed within the new Local Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

1.4 The Review comprised an internet search of leagues and club websites for the Chichester area for the 2023/24 season. In football there appeared to have been a reduction in adult teams (a decline from 36 to 25 teams), but an increase in junior and mini teams (at least amongst affiliated clubs and teams: an increase from 66 to 76 teams). This would accord with national trends which suggest a burgeoning

growth in junior activity, whilst recognising that the situation for the full sided (11v11) game is more challenging, with some areas recording a decline. However, the decline in full sided (11v11) adult football has also been offset by considerable growth in the small sided game, which is becoming more marked as more 3G FTPs are provided. This is a trend which may become apparent in Chichester as the 3G FTPs are installed and populated with a range of training, coaching, matchplay and small sided games.

- 1.5 Although no new affiliated clubs or teams have been identified through a study of leagues operating within the Chichester area, it is also probable that non-affiliated teams and other more casual groupings will also have formed, such as walking football and sessions based around football for health and fitness, for example. Consultation with NGBs and individual clubs and teams, which would be done under a full refresh of the Playing Pitch Strategy, would be likely to reveal the full extent of activity plus challenges around the provision of facilities of appropriate quality and where facilities cannot support the required standard of play.
- 1.6 On the basis of a predicted population in 2036 (at the end of the then Local Plan Review period) of 147,336, the 2018 Chichester PPS predicted growth in the number of football teams (including an allowance for a modest percentage increase in participation rates of 5%) to 2036 to be in the order of 11 men's, 3 women's, 19 junior and 12 mini teams.
- 1.7 This gave rise to recommendations for new grass football pitch provision of up to four adult, seven junior and four mini pitches across the Chichester PPS Study area. To date (February 2024), two adult, two junior and three junior/mini pitches have either been provided, have planning permission or are well advanced as proposals. Any additional pitches required to meet local or strategic demand as set out in the 2018 Chichester PPS are listed within the new Local Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The original report explained that there were a number of pitches with spare capacity to accommodate more teams, although most of these were outside Chichester itself.
- 1.8 All existing grass and artificial pitches within the Chichester PPS Study area were to be protected in order to ensure that there was sufficient provision to meet the expected growth in demand.
- 1.9 The 2018 Chichester PPS also recommended the provision of three full size 3G FTPs. One of these has been installed at Oaklands Park for Chichester City FC and another has been granted planning permission as part of Phase 2 for the West of Chichester development. A third full size 3G FTP was recommended to address city wide needs for football in Chichester and the Southern Gateway area was suggested as a possible location.

- 1.10 The Police Field lies within the East West Corridor sub area (encompassing Chichester and immediate surrounding area). The 2018 Chichester PPS found that there was some spare capacity for adult matches on Saturday afternoons in this sub area but that youth pitches were virtually at capacity. There was room for one extra junior team only to play during the peak period (on Sunday mornings – at New Park Road which lacked toilet and changing facilities). At the time there were 36 youth and mini teams playing in the East West Sub Area (all of which except one were playing in Chichester itself).
- 1.11 The Review estimated that this figure had grown to 47 youth and mini teams, all of which were based within Chichester. (The Review found that numbers of adult teams in the East West Corridor Sub Area had declined from 24 to 15 but five of these teams were based outside Chichester itself.) There would thus appear to be continuing high demand for pitches to accommodate junior players (from U7s up to U18s which includes play on the full range of mini, youth, small size adult and full size adult pitches) within Chichester itself.
- 1.12 As noted in the Review, patterns of participation in the pitch sports are constantly evolving – reflecting, for example, wider changes in employment and leisure in society, the growing emphasis on people’s health and wellbeing, initiatives to promote individual sports by the national governing bodies and the provision of, and cost of, using new facilities.
- 1.13 The district of Chichester is on the cusp of a new era, with new grass football, cricket and rugby pitches and 3G FTPs being provided. Whilst it is too early to say what effect the new pitches going in at the West of Chichester Development, Havenstoke Park and the new and proposed 3G FTPs in the city will have, it is likely that there will be some redistribution of demand. Chichester City Colts FC formerly played at Oaklands Park but also at New Park Road in Chichester and in Boxgrove and Fishbourne; their activity may well centre on the new 3G FTP at Oaklands Park. However, there will still be demand for additional grass pitch provision to accommodate the growth in participation other junior teams, such as within Chichester City Youth FC (who have traditionally been based at Chichester High School) and growth generated by the provision of new pitches within areas of new housing.
- 1.14 The 2018 Chichester PPS noted that the ideal situation is for a junior club to have a number of various size pitches, an artificial training surface and a clubhouse on one site. At that time, Chichester City Youth FC playing at Chichester High School was the only club that came close to this aspiration. Its matches were played on grass pitches but it trained on the artificial grass pitches at the University and Chichester College.
- 1.15 It is now considered increasingly important (following Covid and given the general growth in demand and particularly the rise of participation by girls) that junior – and adult - football clubs have access to a range of different size pitches and – if possible – surfaces for both training and matchplay at the same location (‘strategic hub sites’). This is why the 2018 Chichester PPS recommended considering the Southern Gateway

site/Chichester High School area as a whole, given the existing grass and artificial pitches and the potential for further developments. Since 2018, the number of youth teams in Chichester has apparently increased and thus it is still of great importance that existing provision in this area is protected and efforts directed to securing the optimum mix of accessible grass and artificial grass facilities to serve both the school and the new housing growth in the area, as well as addressing city-wide growth in pitch sport participation. These may be for football but could also address the needs of other playing pitch sports (including baseball for example) and more informal or casual playing field based activities.

- 1.16 The Review of the 2018 Chichester PPS concluded:
The recommendations made in the 2018 Chichester PPS are still relevant and, together with the proposals listed in the Updated Action Plan and the Local Plan IDP 2021-2039, are robust enough to underpin and support the new Local Plan and to address the predicted changes in housing numbers.