

Chelmsford Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study 2016-2036



Executive Summary

Chelmsford Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study

Executive Summary

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out policies to help enable communities' access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies must be based on a thorough understanding of the local needs for such facilities and opportunities available for new provision.

1.2 In view of this, Chelmsford City Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning and Leisure and the Environment to produce a new open space, indoor & outdoor sports and recreational facilities audit and assessment- a needs assessment and strategy to inform the decision making process up to 2036 (the Study) to replace that published by the Council in 2005.

1.3 The aims of the Study are to:

- Provide an audit of existing open space, indoor and outdoor leisure facilities within the City's administrative area and immediate boundaries;
- Provide an assessment of these facilities in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility;
- Provide a community and stakeholder needs assessment;
- Identify gaps in provision, over provision and priority guidelines for future investment;
- Develop and provide a strategy determining the actions and resources required to guide the City Council's decision making up until 2031.

1.4 The Study consists of six reports as follows:

- Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (Local Needs Assessment);
- Open Space Study (comprising a main report and six area profiles);
- Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (part A, B and C);
- Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and Action Plan (part D of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment);
- Indoor/Built Sports Facility Sport Needs Assessment; and
- Indoor/Built Sports Facility Sport Strategy and Action Plan.

1.5 The following sets out what each report achieves (rather than the findings of each report) and how they sit together and should be used going forward.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report

1.6 This report provides consultation findings from various stakeholders e.g. questionnaire surveys of households, Town/Parish Councils, local groups and organisations, sports National Governing Bodies; league secretaries and local clubs and stakeholder interviews.

1.7 The report makes a "cross cutting" contribution to the overall study providing evidence that is used in all of the main study reports (where it is combined with, for example, other evidence, findings and assessments completed in the audit and analysis process). Key findings from this report are summarised where relevant in each of the main study reports, but this report should be consulted where detailed results and information are required.

Open Space Study

1.8 This study provides an assessment of the local need for publicly accessible open space, based on the Community and Stakeholder Consultation and an audit of existing provision. Based on this information, the study sets and applies standards for open space provision (quantity, accessibility and quality) in order to meet existing and future need. This allows deficiencies/gaps in provision or areas of over provision to be identified, and forms the basis of a number of policy recommendations.

1.9 The study provides a robust and comprehensive evidence base to underpin the development and implementation of detailed planning policies, and facilitate the future management of open space and recreational assets. It provides information to justify the collection of developer contributions towards open space and to help to inform the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy.

1.10 As part of the study, playing pitches and non-pitch outdoor sports provision have been mapped, and are included within the analysis for parks and recreation grounds (as they form part of the multi-functional space within a park and recreation ground). The recommended quantity standard for parks and recreation grounds is intended to provide sufficient space, and the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy deals with the detail i.e. current and future supply of pitches.

1.11 Outdoor sports space with limited public access (e.g. private sports grounds), have also been recorded and mapped. The private sports spaces have been mapped separately to publicly accessible sites, to determine exact provision of the different types of provision. The recommended standard for parks and recreation grounds is combined with private provision, as private sports makes up an important part of outdoor sports provision across the City Council area and forms an important part of the community facilities.

1.12 Area Profiles have been developed for six areas, based on groupings of parishes by their population density. The area profiles include a description of the area, maps showing the provision of open space, quantitative analysis of current provision of open space, analysis of access, a summary of quality issues and opportunities, analysis of future need for open space, and priorities for the area. The area profiles are intended to be a starting point to inform other strategies and plans, including neighbourhood plans, planning policies, development control policies, parks and open spaces service and action plans.

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment

1.13 This assessment considers all accessible outdoor sports pitches/courts including football, rugby, cricket, hockey and other outdoor sports such as bowls, tennis and netball.

1.14 It evaluates current trends in participation and needs of different users, as well as the profile of the local population. It provides an audit of all existing pitches and support facilities (e.g. changing rooms), including an evaluation of the quality of pitches and access to existing facilities. Current and potential users of pitches in the local authority are identified and the adequacy of provision to meet both current and projected need is analysed. Following from this, key priorities and actions, including timeframes and responsibilities are identified along with areas for creating new pitches, pitches that need improving and pitches that may be surplus to requirements. This information helps to prove the need for developer contributions towards facilities.

1.15 Part D of this assessment (see below) identifies clear recommendations and an action plan to address specific surpluses, deficiencies, quality issues and priority areas for improvements.

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and Action Plan

1.16 This report is Part D of the Chelmsford Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment. It is a strategy and action plan for playing pitches and other outdoor sport for Chelmsford City Council. It is based on the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment and Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report.

1.17 The Strategy and Action Plan will be used to inform the preparation of statutory planning policy, and supplementary planning documents. It can be used in the applying the Community Infrastructure Levy and developing Section 106 agreements. The detailed information can also be used to inform other investment decisions on the part of both the Council, and its partners; and, developing bids for external funding.

Indoor/Built Sports Facility Sport Needs Assessment

1.18 This assessment looks at the provision of indoor sport facilities (in terms of quantity, quality and access) and identifies the demand for these facilities by local people, and predicted deficiencies/surpluses (including potential demand for indoor extreme sports). Results from the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report feed into this assessment.

1.19 Based on these findings, recommendations are identified for future areas of investment and delivering improvements. Where appropriate, outline standards of provision are suggested to, in particular, help guide provision in relation to new housing with respect to Section 106 contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Indoor/Built Sports Facility Sport Strategy and Action Plan

1.20 This report is a strategy and action plan for indoor and built sports facilities. It is based on the Indoor/Built Sports Facility Sport Needs Assessment and Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report.

1.21 The Strategy and Action Plan will be used to inform the preparation of statutory planning policy, and supplementary planning documents. It can be used in the applying the Community Infrastructure Levy and developing Section 106 agreements. The detailed information can also be used to inform other investment decisions on the part of both the Council, and its partners; and, developing bids for external funding.