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# Playing Pitches Strategy 2011-2021



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# 1 Introduction

1.1 Development of new residential areas, population growth and leisure facility users' changing expectations, all have consequences for the future provision of playing pitches. Specifically for us (Belfast City Council), there is increasing pressure on existing pitch resources. A number of sports clubs need better facilities to meet criteria so that they can participate in local, regional and national leagues. At the same time, a number of planning applications are pending for the sale of land used for sports pitches at the moment, or for the release of land used for sports pitches, so that the land can be used for other purposes.

1.2 This strategy is based on an assessment carried out by independent consultants, Strategic Leisure in late 2008. Strategic Leisure assessed supply and demand for:

- association football (soccer)
- camogie
- cricket
- Gaelic games (football and hurling)
- hockey, and
- rugby union.

The consultants took account of the quantity, quality and access to facilities using an eight-stage assessment method developed by Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation. The assessment method was endorsed by Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI). This first section of this document outlines the background and context for the Playing Pitches Strategy, as defined for us by Strategic Leisure. In the second section, we use their findings to set out the new Playing Pitches Strategy and how we are going to deliver the strategy for the people of Belfast and its surrounding areas.

1.3 Making sure that we take a strategic approach to providing high quality, accessible pitches is important in meeting the aims and objectives of several regional and local strategies, particularly Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8), see section 7.2.

1.4 The Playing Pitches Strategy provides a framework for:

- making informed planning decisions and measuring impact
- targeting financial support and investment in facilities, and
- planning the delivery of sports development programmes.

1.5 The strategy is necessary to:

- protect facilities against development pressures, and specifically residential proposals for land in and around urban areas
- identify an appropriate mix of facilities to best meet predicted population growth and changes to demand levels
- provide enough information to inform planning decisions, for sites where applications have been made for changes in land use
- provide a framework for identifying priorities for investment and prioritising support for funding applications
- address demand created because of specific sports development pressures, for example mini association football, or hockey's increased use of artificial pitches, and
- inform future policies on our role in providing and enabling pitch provision, and in particular provide a steer on leasing sites to established sports clubs. A number of our pitch sites in Belfast are under facility management arrangements involving key sports clubs.

1.6 In developing the strategy, we consulted elected representatives, governing bodies of sport and a range of interested parties. Strategic Leisure surveyed local sports clubs and schools as part of their research, to collect views about quantity, quality and access to facilities. The consultants also visited all of our playing pitch sites and rated facilities for quality and access.

## **Part 1: Background and context for a new Playing Pitches Strategy**

### **2 Local, legal and strategic context**

#### **City context**

- 2.1 Within the Belfast City Council area there are 268,400 people, which is about 15% of the total population in Northern Ireland. 19.4% of the population of Belfast is under 16 and 17.5% are seniors (male over 65 and female over 60).
- 2.2 Belfast has a poor health record compared to the rest of Northern Ireland. The death rate in the city from heart disease, strokes and cancer is one of the highest in Europe. The worst six wards in Northern Ireland in terms of health deprivation are in Belfast<sup>1</sup>. There are also wide pockets of health inequalities across the city and the gap in life expectancy is not reducing between the most affluent areas and the most deprived. About one in five people have an inactive lifestyle, and there has been an increase in the number of people drinking alcohol above sensible limits.
- 2.3 Whilst there has been a lot of change within the city over the past 10 years, certain physical and psychological barriers remain that make travel around parts of the city difficult. This results in people avoiding certain facilities because they think the facilities are unsafe. This makes creating shared spaces more difficult and limits the options available in providing services such as playing pitches. We accept that this is the case in the short term, but we hope to use the Playing Pitches Strategy to encourage and enable people to access facilities and opportunities across the city. Improved transport and connectivity between sites is important to help and many people as possible access playing pitches.

#### **Boundary Commission review of the city boundaries**

- 2.4 Although the recommendations of the Boundary Commission review have not yet been enacted, there are some things we've considered in the new strategy to help make sure that it will also be relevant in the future. In the review of the boundaries for Belfast, the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland recognised that it has been some time since the Belfast area boundaries were set. As such, the boundaries do not reflect the true growth of the city.
- 2.5 The Commissioner who completed the review decided that the city's boundaries need to be changed to include parts of neighbouring Castlereagh, Lisburn and North Down Districts within the Belfast area. The Commissioner's recommendations are still being reviewed by the Northern Ireland Executive, but it is highly likely that there will be some changes to our boundary and so the strategy must be flexible to respond to such changes.
- 2.6 Including these new areas within the city boundary will mean that other outdoor sports facilities, such as pitches or changing rooms, will become available. An initial investigation suggests that this change will result in around 33 extra sites within the Belfast area. About 21 of these will have some outdoor provision including pitches or changing facilities. There will also be a bigger population in the city and an increased demand for facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010

## Legal context

- 2.7 Under Article 10 of the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986, it states:  
“Each District Council shall secure provision for its area of **adequate** facilities for recreational, social, physical and cultural activities and for that purpose may, either alone or together with another District Council or any other person -
- a) establish, maintain and manage any such facilities
  - b) organise any such activities
  - c) assist, by financial contributions or otherwise, any person to establish, maintain and manage any such facilities or to organise any such activities;
  - d) provide, or assist by financial contribution or otherwise in the provision of, leaders for such activities, and
  - e) defray or contribute towards the expenses of any persons taking part in any such activities.

*A District Council shall, in carrying out its functions under paragraph 1 have regard to the facilities provided by other District Councils or by other persons.”*

- 2.8 Legal advice we received from Mervyn A Morrow QC highlighted that ‘adequate’ must mean enough to meet the reasonable requirements or wishes of the population that we serve. He considered that these are the requirements of the public at large and not one particular section of it. Similarly, any decisions about provision must not be carried out in a piecemeal way, but should be based on the entire provision of facilities for recreation. And we must take into consideration the patterns of division in the city.

## Strategic context

- 2.9 A number of regional and local strategies and policies influence how playing pitches are provided, such as through the overall objectives for sport and physical activity. The key strategies and policies we considered when developing the Playing Pitches Strategy are summarised below. During the life of this strategy we will take in to account other relevant strategies as they are developed, such as the new Programme for Government. The strategies considered include:

- **Sport Matters - The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation (2009-2019)** which has an overarching vision to promote ‘a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport’. It outlines how the Government’s targets for sport and physical activity are to be delivered under three areas – Participation, Performance and Place. The relevant targets are:

PA4	By 2013 to have stopped the decline in adult participation in sport and physical recreation
PA4	By 2014 to have increased the number of people in Northern Ireland in membership of at least one sport club
PA7	By 2019 to deliver at least a 3% increase in adult participation rates in sport and physical recreation
PA8	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6% increase in women’s participation rates in sports and physical recreation
PA9	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6% increase in participation rates among socio-economically disadvantaged groups
PA10	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6% increase in participation rates in sport and physical recreation among people with a disability
PA11	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6% increase in participation rates in sport and physical recreation among older people

PL24	By 2015 to have amended public policy frameworks to protect and promote access to and sustainable use of publicly-owned land in Northern Ireland for sport and physical recreation
PL25	By 2019 to ensure that 90% of the population have quality accredited, multi-sports facilities, that have the capacity to meet demand, within 20 minutes travel time, and
PL26	By 2019 to ensure that all planning decisions follow Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation in relation to the provision of spaces for sport and physical recreation.

- **Sport NI Active Places Research Report (2009)** which highlights a shortfall of 290 acres of pitches in Belfast – equivalent to around 116 pitches. This shortfall was calculated using a different method to the one we used.
- **Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation** which provides guidance on protecting and developing facilities, including intensive sports facility complexes and floodlighting.
- **Sport NI's Quality Framework for Sports Clubs (consultation document)** which seeks to create a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport by creating a network of quality clubs. District Councils have a key role in this, and providing quality facilities to allow clubs to develop is important.

- 2.10 A number of other strategies, plans and research have been considered. These include health-driven strategies to tackle rising obesity levels and specific strategies to develop sports coaching. Collectively, these could result in more demand for pitch sports as well as more and higher quality pitch facilities to provide safe environments.
- 2.11 The **Northern Ireland Sport & Physical Activity Survey 2010 (SAPAS)** which was published in November 2011 provides an overview of adult participation in sports and physical activity across Northern Ireland. It found that 37% of Northern Ireland's adult population participated in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport in the last seven days and that football is by far the most popular sport among young people aged 16-29. It also found that people with disabilities also participate less (both in terms of frequency and duration) than average; however this is mainly due to an older age profile.
- 2.12 The **Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP)** is a development plan prepared under Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the Northern Ireland Planning Service. The BMAP uses the National Playing Fields Association's Six Acre Standard to measure outdoor sports provision at ward level across the plan area. The BMAP assessment identified that the majority of wards across the city do not have enough areas for outdoor sport. In 2004 the BMAP recorded 274.42 hectares of outdoor sport provision within the city boundary<sup>2</sup>. Within this was a total shortage of 169.52 hectares of outdoor sports pitches. These findings were updated by Sport NI's Active Places Research Report (2009).
- 2.13 Our **Corporate Plan** outlines the elected Members' vision for the city. It is a commitment to improving quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in and visits Belfast. It defines the clear direction of the organisation as one which is working to provide quality services which will help make citizens healthier, more active and happy in a city which is environmentally appealing and in which they feel safe and welcome. Within the 'Better support for people and communities' theme, we've identified among our priorities: 'People are healthier and more active' and 'People have, and avail of, opportunities to improve their wellbeing'. Providing quality sports facilities, including sports pitches is an important element of this.

<sup>2</sup> Equates to the Belfast City Council boundary

2.14 The Playing Pitches Strategy will sit under the emerging **Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy** which has identified 4 key objectives:

**Promoting participation** – there are multiple opportunities to encourage people to be active:

- by increasing community engagement with facilities through planning and appropriate management arrangements
- by using non-traditional leisure venues, such as community centres
- by using our resources, including grant-aid, to promote activity, improve health and wellbeing and deliver our core objectives, and
- through marketing and communications.

**Building partnerships** – given the economic environment, it is critical that we build collaborations with:

- other statutory providers, such as education and health, to develop joint programmes, open up existing assets and plan for the future
- the community, on effective management agreements and access
- existing sports clubs on sports development
- potentially the private sector, in planning and as a management option, and
- with the Planning Service to protect open spaces, to integrate leisure provision and potentially promote planning gain clauses (when a developer includes things that are beneficial to a community within a development proposal, such as including a playground in a new residential area).

**Resources and facilities for delivery** – to develop a multi-layered, cost-effective approach to delivering leisure at:

- a neighbourhood or district level, and
- a citywide level.

**Planning and performance management** – there is a critical need to:

- begin planning for the services and facilities we need to deliver the strategy in the short, medium and long terms
- determine appropriate benchmarks against which we can measure value for money and return on investment, and
- monitor and manage our performance.

2.15 Our **Parks and Leisure Departmental Plan** (2011-12) identified a number of themes directly related to our corporate themes. One of the departmental themes is improving participation and people's lifestyles. We will do this through increasing use of our sites and facilities, and by helping people become healthier by making more active use of their leisure time. Developing this Playing Pitches Strategy will enable us: 'to provide strategic direction in the development and use of leisure and open space provision in the city, and so provide a vehicle for local place-shaping'.

2.16 Our **Strategy for Open Spaces 'Your City, Your Space'** (November 2005) outlines a vision which is: 'to make good quality open space part of living in, working in and visiting Belfast'. This vision is underpinned by four strategic themes. One of these themes is: Healthier Places – providing a network of open spaces that can be enjoyed and that will help to improve people's quality of life. Under this theme, we aim to: 'increase the number of people who use open spaces as a form of leisure and recreation'. This theme has several actions relating to pitches and multi-sports facilities and we will include these in the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy.

2.17 We developed the **Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy** for the City of Belfast (March 2007) along with Sport NI and other partner organisations from the statutory and voluntary sector. The vision is: 'together, putting sport and physical recreation at the heart of Belfast'. Five goals have been identified, one of which is: 'Facilities - developing

effective use of the right facilities in the right places’.

- 2.18 Our **Belfast Good Relations Plan** (2010) is underpinned by the values of: ‘a shared city, a peaceful city, a welcoming city and an open city’. One of the core ideas within the plan is ‘the sustaining and expansion of public spaces, accessible to all, from which no citizen feels excluded and through which all citizens can travel freely’. One of the broad goals of the Good Relations Plan is ‘securing shared city space’ and a key element of success would be open access to all parts of the city.
- 2.19 We have also developed a comprehensive set of **Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) Action Plans**. Many of these have identified actions relating to sports provision and playing pitch sites. We did a review of these in May 2009 and identified issues, funding challenges and partners. A number of actions, if pursued, will have implications for the quantity, quality and accessibility of pitch supply and wider ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, car parking or storage facilities.
- 2.20 In June 2006, the Department for Social Development launched its Renewing Communities programme. This included a commitment to developing **Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs)** for each of the five areas of Belfast covered by Area Partnership Boards (East, North, South, West Belfast and Greater Shankill).
- 2.21 The SRFs aim to:
- provide a strategic vision and context for guiding regeneration, planning and development
  - identify a portfolio of strategic regeneration activities, which could be delivered by the public or private sectors
  - set investment priorities for the area and influence planning decisions
  - provide a clear comprehensive plan for action, and
  - link with existing and emerging policies, projects and initiatives.
- 2.22 All the SRFs refer to leisure and recreation facilities or physical assets. They are valuable documents in highlighting local priorities and are key to informing the city’s regeneration priorities.
- 2.23 The Department of Education is currently finalising its strategy on the **Community Use of the School Site**. In this, they recognise that the school estate represents a significant public resource, which could be more effectively used for the benefit of the community. This includes sports facilities and proposals on how the education sector might facilitate increased community access to these facilities, now and in the future.
- 2.24 The **NI Community Schools** initiative is a partnership arrangement between schools, communities and the public and private sectors. It helps to build community capacity and develop individuals, families and groups within these communities. There are five schools involved in this initiative, all based in Belfast. These are Ashfield Girls’ High School, Girls’ Model School, Boys’ Model School, Grosvenor Grammar School and Orangefield Primary School. The sporting facilities, including pitches, at these schools all have secured community access. They need to be considered within future assessments of the numbers of pitches and other neighbourhood facilities.



### **3 Baseline assessment by Strategic Leisure**

- 3.1 This strategy is based on an assessment of supply and demand for association football, Gaelic football and hurling, camogie, cricket, rugby union, and hockey. It was carried out by independent consultants, Strategic Leisure in late 2008. The full Strategic Leisure research report is available at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/sportspitches](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/sportspitches). A summary of their methodology and key findings is outlined below.
- 3.2 The consultants highlighted that the quality assessment of pitches is a snapshot in time and is a visual assessment. As such, pitch ratings may differ from what may be expected depending on when they were last used, weather conditions and the extent of informal use they are subjected to. Only pitches that we own were assessed as part of the report.
- 3.3 Likewise, they note that the assessment of the number of pitches is changeable as it is an assessment of the city's pitches at one point in time. It is also dependent on variables such as pitches being 'rested', new secured community access arrangements emerging, and new playing surfaces being opened. The number of pitches at a given site can fluctuate over short periods of time for reasons relating to management and maintenance. This means that the findings of a count done in one season may differ from results of similar exercise done previously or in future seasons.
- 3.4 However, this is true of all assessments carried out for these purposes and so this Sport England methodology is considered to be the most reliable. It produced a robust evidence base for the Playing Pitches Strategy. Sport NI endorsed the methodology used by Strategic Leisure.
- 3.5 For the methodology to be robust, a high response rate was required and the consultants carried out additional work to encourage sports clubs to respond. The final response rates were:
- Gaelic games (football and hurling) – 88%
  - rugby union – 83%
  - association football – 62%
  - camogie – 56%
  - cricket – 53%
  - hockey – a response on behalf of all clubs was submitted by the Ulster Hockey Union.

The consultants were satisfied that this was a high enough response rate and that it was in line with the standards needed for the methodology to be effective.

#### **Methodology**

- 3.6 Sport NI and the Planning Service have traditionally used the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA, now Fields in Trust) recommended standards of provision to assess how adequate provision is at a local level. Sport NI uses the Fields in Trust '6 Acre' standard, which does not recognise demand or quality.
- 3.7 In developing this strategy, we used a different method that complements the Sport NI model and the facilities research presented in the 'Bridging the Gap' research report (2009). We used the guidance developed by Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) detailed in 'Towards a Level Playing Field'. This moves away from applying general provision standards. Instead, it encourages focused research to identify local supply and demand, to include qualitative factors and to assess how adequate provision is in relation to quantity, quality and access for individual sports. This gives a more detailed citywide understanding of provision.
- 3.8 In line with this assessment method, we have restricted the scope of the strategy to pitch-

based sports, where a team is the ‘demand unit’. The consultants’ assessment is based on pitches needed to meet regular demand from teams playing in organised competitive leagues.

3.9 The consultants’ assessment of provision, and our strategy, cover:

- association football
- camogie
- cricket
- Gaelic games (football and hurling)
- hockey, and
- rugby union.

We left out other facility-based outdoor sports such as tennis, bowls and athletics on the basis of the varying types of demand for these sports, for example individual or casual.

### The eight-stage playing pitch model

3.10 Strategic Leisure applied the model to show how adequate facilities are in meeting existing demand for these sports. The model can also be used to assess provision against a predicted set of circumstances, for example future population estimates. For this strategy, we’ve used the model to assess future demand across the next five years. Having accurate supply and demand information is critical in producing a robust and accurate strategy, which is owned by all interested parties.

3.11 Strategic Leisure used an eight-stage approach, summarised in figure 1. This involved a number of research tasks so that the audit was comprehensive. They used a series of toolkits to analyse the data collected, and we interpreted the results within the local context and the results of consultation with interested parties.

**Figure 1 - Playing pitch assessment methodology**

Stage	Description and key output
Stage 1	<b>Identifying the number of teams</b> Demand is confirmed by counting the number of teams for each sport using a variety of information sources, including pitch booking records, league handbooks, and a club survey. Latent demand (demand that is not satisfied at the moment or that hasn’t arisen yet) and the impact of future changes in population are also considered.
Stage 2	<b>Calculating home games per team per week</b> In a ‘normal’ situation for all sports, the number of home games is calculated as half of the total number of teams, representing weekly ‘home’ and ‘away’ fixtures.
Stage 3	<b>Assessing total number of home games per week</b> This is the product of stages 1 and 2 (they are multiplied together), and so is not independent. The result tells us how many games have to be accommodated in the study area in an average week.
Stage 4	<b>Establishing temporal demand for games (demand levels at different times)</b> This stage assesses the proportion of total home games played on each day. The data is expressed as a percentage of total weekly demand. This stage determines what percentage of all games are played on a Saturday for example.

Stage	Description and key output
<b>Stage 5</b>	<b>Defining pitches used or needed on each day</b> This is the product of stages 3 and 4, and so is not independent. The result tells us how many pitches are used or needed on each day and at what time, for example Saturday afternoon.
<b>Stage 6</b>	<b>Establishing how many pitches are available</b> An accurate assessment of supply is produced. It distinguishes between pitches for each sport and between ownership (public, private, voluntary and educational sites). For the purposes of this model, only pitches available now, at the appropriate days and times, are relevant.
<b>Stage 7</b>	<b>Assessing the findings</b> The need to accommodate the demand assessed at stage 5 is then compared with the facilities available at stage 6. If the existing situation has been assessed correctly, there should either be a good fit between the number of facilities needed and the demand, or even extra provision on some days.
<b>Stage 8</b>	<b>Identifying policy options and solutions</b> A range of policy options can be developed, such as new provision, or pitch improvements to help any problems identified at stage 7. The same method can then be used again to find out the impact of policy options, and to contribute to selecting the most cost-effective solution.

Adapted from Towards a Level Playing Field – Sport England and CCPR (Page 11)

- 3.12 Strategic Leisure also used a number of data analysis tools as well as the eight-stage playing pitch model. These included a Future Demand Estimator spreadsheet which they developed to use a number of sources of information and primary research results.

## 4 Overview of current supply and demand

- 4.1 Strategic Leisure completed a detailed assessment of supply and demand. A summary of the key findings is included below and the full detail is available in the Strategic Leisure report at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/sportspitches](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/sportspitches). This includes peak demand times by each sport, the teams' preference for home venues and demand from women's and junior teams.
- 4.2 The current supply of pitches was confirmed through data review, research and consultation exercises. This included a review of the information we hold, site visits to pitches owned and managed by us, consultation with interested parties, a postal survey of all schools within the city boundary, and a postal survey to most sports clubs. For the assessment of demand, the consultants completed a series of research and consultation exercises, including a questionnaire sent to sports clubs within the city boundary and additional consultation focusing on non-respondents, a review of booking information, analysis of local league data (where this was publicly available), consultation with governing bodies of sport, and assigning teams to their preferred home venue.
- 4.3 Taking into account all types of ownership (that is council, private and educational) there are a total of 276 playing pitches (on 97 sites) in the city. Most of these have secured community use. Facilities are provided by us through direct management and via long term facility management leases, by the education sector and privately – almost half of all pitches are in club ownership or management.
- 4.4 Playing pitch supply within our administrative boundary is through a number of providers as summarised in figure 2 below. This table includes all pitches that were identified.

**Figure 2 - Supply overview (community use pitches)**

Provider	Number of sites	Number of pitches	% of overall stock (based on pitch numbers)
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	28 sites	128 pitches	46%
<b>Private or leased or education</b>	69 sites	148 pitches	54%
<b>Total</b>	97 sites	276 pitches	100%

- 4.5 We directly let a number of pitch sites to local clubs. A number of these include sites let to clubs for self-management. It is likely that some of the public sites are also used as informal recreational space, and are available for any member of the public to use, including informal sports use and dog walking. Letting pitches to individual clubs is an important issue, as in some cases this will prevent improvements or development on the site. (The figures above do not include synthetic or shale pitches provided by us, as they no longer comply with governing body guidelines).
- 4.6 The audit shows there is some community use of school sites across the city and these pitches are included in the audit figures above.
- 4.7 The consultants also produced a separate report summarising the results of site visits and non-technical visual inspections of our current pitches. This included an appraisal of our changing room accommodation. It is important to note that the quality assessment of pitches is a snapshot in time and is a visual assessment. As such, pitch ratings may differ from what

may be expected dependent upon when they were last used, weather conditions and the level and extent of informal use they are subjected to.

- 4.8 Approximately 200 sports clubs were identified through consultation with governing bodies and from our current users. Collectively these clubs generate over 900 sports teams that need pitch facilities to service league fixtures, cup games and training. Pitch sport participation is dominated by male teams – female teams make up only 19% of the total number identified.
- 4.9 Gaelic football and association football are the most popular sports in the city, particularly for boys. Together they account for around 74% of the teams identified. For every thousand 10-15 year olds, around 18 junior boys' association football teams are generated. In contrast, rugby union, hockey and camogie experience significantly lower levels of demand.
- 4.10 We provide 107 grass association football pitches, 16 Gaelic football or hurling pitches, two cricket pitches, one rugby union pitch, two camogie pitches, two synthetic pitches and five shale pitches. These are serviced by 24 built changing room facilities.
- 4.11 Hockey is now played on full-size synthetic turf pitches (STPs). Traditional grass or gravel pitches do not comply with the needs of the sport. Our five shale pitches on which hockey could potentially be played, fall short of the required playing standards. Several of these pitches are currently not in use and the consultants felt they would need to be upgraded to make them suitable for hockey.
- 4.12 Youth association football (11-18 year olds) in Belfast is played in most cases on adult pitches. The rules from the governing body do not allow for adult and youth teams to play their games at the same time and so peak playing times for youth games is Saturday morning and adult games' peak time is Saturday afternoon. This places pressure on the pitches as the season progresses.
- 4.13 Strategic Leisure attempted to assess levels of latent demand in the city (see 4.15). This was done mainly through consultation with sports clubs, who were asked to identify issues with provision. A number of clubs expressed concern that the city needs a greater number of quality pitches and training facilities, including multi-use synthetic pitches with floodlighting and ancillary facilities, such as changing rooms, car parking or storage facilities.
- 4.14 In the consultants' discussions with various stakeholders, it became clear that in some of those places where no demand has been identified in the assessment, a latent demand was reported. However, this was reported as difficult to measure, despite considerable effort during the consultation process.
- 4.15 Latent demand can be described as demand for a pitch that is not obvious or is not met, due to a range of factors including:
- No pitch facilities in the local area
  - The team is unable to afford to rent a pitch or participate in leagues that involve significant travel for away fixtures
  - There is a shortage of officials, or
  - Schools are restricting community use.
- 4.16 The demand audit also showed that demand for pitches is spread across the whole week – Saturdays are the most popular day for weekend fixtures although peak demand for pitches is midweek for Gaelic sports.

## **Estimating future demand**

- 4.17 Estimating future changes to demand is not an exact science. It involves considering changes in population and the likely impact of any local plans or initiatives to increase participation and club membership. At the same time, arriving at a realistic estimate of future demand is critical in assessing how adequate current and planned provision is to be able to meet any growth or other changes to people participating in sport.
- 4.18 Team Generation Rates (TGRs) were also considered by Strategic Leisure when assessing future needs for playing pitches. A TGR is the ratio of the number of teams within a given area to the total population within a given age group from that same area. The groups which were used reflect age groups participating in the different sub-groups of each of the sports (for example 6-9 year olds for mini association football).
- 4.19 By identifying TGRs we can:
- compare participation in the assessed sports between the study area and other parts of the country where TGRs have formed part of Playing Pitches Strategy developments, and
  - help with modelling future demand for pitches.
- 4.20 Because we are among the first to complete a Playing Pitches Strategy, Strategic Leisure was only able to compare the levels of demand with Strabane District Council and against the average TGR for England taken from the Sport England database. On the basis of similar assessments for authorities in England, the TGRs suggest high levels of demand for junior boys' association football and Gaelic football.
- 4.21 For this study, TGRs were used for each sport and specific age groups within them. Future population estimates were used alongside these to estimate the future number of teams. This assumes no growth in sports, so Strategic Leisure also modelled a number of additional scenarios to reflect how adequate pitch provision would be if demand grew by 5% and 10%.
- 4.22 Mid-term estimates published in 2007 for current population figures were used to calculate TGRs. Some assumptions were made for the population for some age sub-groups. For population growth, the figures that were used were the latest estimates available from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) website for the 2014 population. Some assumptions have been made regarding growth within individual age groups.
- 4.23 The use of TGRs needs to be treated with caution. It is important to use them as a guide only and not at the expense of using qualitative evidence gathered as part of the study. Essentially, TGRs reflect the current situation and are based on current demand information. They may not include potential or latent demand where teams may not be able to develop due to the lack of a suitable facility. There is more detail in the full research report on the TGR methodology.

## **Conclusions**

- 4.24 Strategic Leisure defined some limitations to the research, but it is a recognised methodology used by other local authorities and so provides a reliable starting point for future planning. We intend to re-assess the audit within 2 years of the strategy being put in place, rather than the recommended 5 years.

## 5 Assessing the findings

- 5.1 Strategic Leisure collected a range of data that was analysed and interpreted for each sport and took account of quality, quantity and access, to provide a number of conclusions. These drew on an assessment of how adequate provision is across the city, taking account of estimated levels of current demand and existing pitch supply. Strategic Leisure used the results to make recommendations for local standards of provision and to prioritise future actions.
- 5.2 Overall, the consultants highlighted that our approach to the supply of outdoor sports pitch provision on large, multi-use, multi-sport sites (such as the City of Belfast Playing Fields) is to be commended. Many local authorities in England are striving to provide similar large, multi-purpose sites and to reduce the need for the number of single pitch sites that have limited sports development opportunities.
- 5.3 The research found that there are enough playing pitches across the city if all the different types of pitches and ownership are considered. However, there is a mismatch between the type and location of extra pitches and what and where the demand is for. In some sports where there is enough or extra provision when all types of ownership are considered, this changes to an inadequate provision if only our (council) provision is considered.
- 5.4 Elected Members agreed that final assessment of the levels of provision would be done on a citywide basis. This is due in part to different perceptions of the geographical boundaries within the city as well as the recommended catchment radius of 5 miles, or 20 minute travel time (by motor vehicle) for synthetic turf pitches. This is recommended by the Fields in Trust good practice guide: 'Planning and design for outdoor sport and play'. This is considered to be the leading authority on issues related to outdoor leisure provision.
- 5.5 The assessment did look at geographical access (that is proximity to quality facilities and average travel distances). The clubs Strategic Leisure consulted with did not agree consistently on acceptable travel distances, or on whether facilities being close by was more important than facilities being high quality. However, in total 79 clubs responded to the question as to whether they would be prepared to travel further for good facilities. Of these, 36 football clubs (86% of the total football clubs that responded) stated they are prepared to travel further.
- 5.6 The table below outlines the main findings from the assessment, on a sport by sport basis. Further detail is contained in the Strategic Leisure research report. We recognise that this assessment is based on the situation at a point in time and that the factors on which it is based will change over time.

**Figure 3 - Sport by sport main findings**

Sport	Headlines
<b>Association football</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A surplus of <b>+43</b> association football pitches against peak demand, based on the assumption that youth association football is played on adult pitches across the city and taking into account all pitches across the city under all types of management.</li> <li>• If only council-owned pitches are considered there is a deficiency of <b>-1</b> pitch.</li> <li>• There are some quality issues across the city – several sites are not served by changing facilities and mini association football pitches are</li> </ul>

Sport	Headlines
	<p>generally of poorer quality than adult association football.</p>
<b>Gaelic sports (football and hurling)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shortfall across the city of <b>-38</b> pitches to meet demand. This is eased through matches being played across several week days.</li> <li>• If only council-owned pitches are considered, the shortfall is significant at <b>-64</b> pitches, highlighting a reliance on private facilities to meet demand.</li> <li>• There were fewer quality issues across the city for Gaelic football than for some other sports assessed, however longer playing seasons and midweek games can impact on pitch quality.</li> </ul>
<b>Camogie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shortfall in dedicated camogie pitches to meet demand. Only two dedicated pitches were identified through the audit.</li> <li>• 20% of the current demand is met by the current provision.</li> <li>• Clubs consulted rated the provision positively, although some facilities were rated as below average through the quality assessments.</li> </ul>
<b>Cricket</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shortfall of <b>-4</b> cricket pitches against overall demand.</li> <li>• If only council-owned pitches are considered, the supply shortfall increases to <b>-14</b> pitches, highlighting a reliance on private facilities to meet demand.</li> <li>• Clubs perceive existing provision to be high quality – however, there is some indication that high-quality provision is not necessarily in close proximity to club membership.</li> </ul>
<b>Rugby union</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly all provision is privately owned and there is a slight shortfall against demand of <b>-1</b> pitch.</li> <li>• If only council-owned pitches are considered, the supply shortfall increases to <b>-24</b> pitches, highlighting a reliance on private facilities to meet demand.</li> <li>• There are few quality issues but most clubs rate the facilities they use positively.</li> </ul>
<b>Hockey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There appears to be insufficient STP provision to meet the demands of hockey that equates to a shortfall of <b>-2</b> full-sized STPs.</li> <li>• Choice and access to suitable facilities for hockey are limited. It is clear from the consultation that there is too much demand for a small number of key facilities.</li> <li>• An additional two full sized STPs would help reduce demand issues, but it is important to recognise that existing pitches will need to be refurbished as they become worn.</li> </ul>



## **Under-represented groups**

- 5.7 In 2007, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) screened its 'Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation in Northern Ireland, 2007-2017' and it presented the following data in relation to under-represented groups:
- a 13% gap between the number of men and women participating in sport on a regular basis
  - an almost 50% gap between the number of people without a disability and those with a disability participating in sport on a regular basis
  - a 32% gap between the number of people under 60 years of age and over 60 years of age participating in sport on a regular basis, and
  - an almost 30% gap between the number of people from higher and lower socio-economic groups participating in sport on a regular basis.
- 5.8 In line with DCAL's findings, sports clubs were asked in the consultation questionnaire to identify how many members they had in each of the following categories:
- Junior boys (under 16)
  - Junior girls (under 16)
  - Senior men (16-45 years)
  - Senior women (16-45 years)
  - Veteran men (45 years+)
  - Veteran women (45 years+)
  - Non playing or associate, and
  - Coaches.
- 5.9 Within each category they were asked to identify how many of these members were from an ethnic minority and how many had a disability. Some clubs did not provide this information, in particular Gaelic football and hurling and hockey. The findings are outlined below, along with some strategic context for under-represented groups in sport.

## **Disability**

- 5.10 Sport NI recognises that people with disabilities are often under-represented in terms of access to and participation in sporting activities. Northern Ireland experiences the highest occurrence of disability in the UK, with 20% of the population experiencing some form of disability.
- 5.11 Disability Sports NI (DSNI) estimates that only 10-15% of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland regularly participate in sport or physical activity, a figure well below the participation levels for the population as a whole. Yet there is an increasing demand from people with disabilities to take part in sport.
- 5.12 A report by the British Heart Foundation (2009) 'Couch kids: the nation's future - four years on from our first report into childhood obesity and children still aren't getting the diet or exercise they need' found that: "Children and young people with a disability take part in physical activity and sport less frequently and their experiences are less positive than their non-disabled peers and the proportion of those with a disability or severe illness participating in sport and exercise tends to be lower than for young people generally." (p12)
- 5.13 Within the consultation, of the 65 association football clubs that responded, nine (14%) had members with a disability. Six clubs have junior boys with a disability and these make up 2.15% of the total junior boys membership of these particular clubs. Three clubs have senior men with a disability and these make up 2.16% of the total senior men membership of these particular clubs. One club has junior girls with a disability and these make up 16.67% of the total junior girls' membership of these clubs. Two clubs have non playing or associate

members with a disability and these make up 3.64% of the total membership of this category within these clubs.

- 5.14 One of the three camogie clubs that responded has a senior woman member with a disability, which is 5% of their total membership in this category. None of the ladies' Gaelic football teams that responded had a member with a disability.
- 5.15 Of the ten rugby union clubs that responded, two have members with a disability. One club has a senior men member with a disability which is 1.25% of their total membership in this category. Another club has a junior boys and junior girls tag rugby union team and all their members have a learning disability.
- 5.16 Of the eight cricket clubs that responded, two have members with a disability. In one club 8.33% of their veteran men members have a disability, while in the other club, 2.22% of their senior men members and 2.50% of their junior boys members have a disability.
- 5.17 The evidence gathered through the club consultation process confirms the evidence presented by Sport NI, DSNI and the British Heart Foundation that people with disabilities are underrepresented in terms of access to sport and physical activity.

### **Females**

- 5.18 Research undertaken by Sport England in January 2006, entitled 'Understanding participation in sport: What determines sports participation among 15-19 year old women?' found that:

"There are increasing concerns to drive up young people's participation in sport and physical activity. The concern about levels of physical activity or inactivity among young people is noted in a recent review of adolescence (Coleman and Schofield, 2005). Two key findings are reported. Firstly, among young people of secondary school age, boys are more likely to participate in sports and physical activity compared to girls. Secondly, the gap between the genders becomes more pronounced with advanced age within the teenage years."
- 5.19 These findings are supported by a report by the British Heart Foundation entitled 'Couch kids: the nation's future - four years on from our first report into childhood obesity and children still aren't getting the diet or exercise they need' (2009). This found that:

"A consistent finding across all studies, both those using surveys and those using objective measurements, is that boys are more active than girls across the 2-15 years age range. The differences in activity levels between boys and girls are apparent even at an early age but the gap between the sexes is greatest in adolescence."
- 5.20 It also found that:

"Studies using objective measurements have similarly found boys to be more physically active than girls, with differences observed both in the percentage of boys and girls meeting the 60 minute a day guideline and the time spent participating in physical activity. One study found that 42% of boys met the 60 minutes a day guideline as compared to only 11% of girls. Girls also spent 27% less time than boys participating in physical activity (45 minutes a day versus 57 minutes a day. Young people's perceptions of their own levels of physical activity mirror these gender differences: 42% of boys and 29% of girls aged 11-15 years saw themselves as 'very physically active' compared to others and 10% of boys and 16% of girls said they were 'not very' or 'not at all' physically active. Physical activity levels of girls decrease with age, with a particular drop-off after the age of about 10 years."
- 5.21 Strategic Leisure's assessment of the supply and demand of playing pitches identified that participation in pitch sports is dominated by male teams and female teams make up only 19%

of the total number identified. Gaelic football and association football are the most popular sports in the city, particularly for boys. For every thousand 10 to 15 year olds around 18 junior boys' association football teams are generated. In contrast, rugby union, hockey and camogie experience significantly lower levels of demand.

- 5.22 Specific points raised by the various governing bodies through the consultation were:
- The Irish Football Association (IFA) stated that it would prefer availability of better quality pitches for women's senior leagues and that women's leagues may soon play on a Sunday as availability of facilities are limited on a Saturday. The IFA highlighted an issue with the poor quality of changing facilities across the city and issues around child protection due to the sharing of facilities.
  - Antrim Ladies' Gaelic Football Association said that access to facilities for women's Gaelic football is dependent on club affiliation and varies across the clubs.
  - Antrim Camogie Board said that it depends on the GAA to book pitches and that it believes that camogie is not a key priority for GAA, and so a difficulty exists in finding pitches to play on.

### **Minority ethnic groups**

- 5.23 The findings from the club consultation were that a growing number of teams across all sports have members from a minority ethnic background. This is particularly true of cricket where all clubs that responded to the questionnaire have members from a minority ethnic background. One club is made up entirely of members from a minority ethnic background, while in another club, all its senior men members and over half its non-playing members are from a minority ethnic background.
- 5.24 Two rugby union clubs and two ladies' Gaelic football clubs also had members from a minority ethnic background as did 17 of the association football clubs.

### **Conclusions**

- 5.25 Following these consultation responses, and in line with our Equality Scheme, further work to improve participation rates will be included in the objectives and the action plan in the final strategy.

## **6 Recommended standards of provision**

- 6.1 Standards were set on the basis of the number of pitches needed to meet both current needs and, where estimations have been possible, future demand and growth expected within specific sports. Standards were set in relation to quantity and quality and are based on:
- assessment results and how adequate current provision is to meet known and estimated demand
  - anticipated changes to demand based on current participation rates, and
  - the current and desired quality of facilities.

### **Quantity standards**

- 6.2 Quantity standards have been set on the basis of the assessment results and estimated future demand. The standards also reflect the findings of local consultation. Standards reflect pitch needs to meet peak demand and are proposed for all types of natural turf pitches assessed. For the purposes of setting standards, a consultants' assessment was done for each pitch sport and appropriate sub-categories where different types or specification of pitch are required. This specifically concerns association football, where mini teams need smaller pitches.
- 6.3 The standards recommended were based on the actual number of pitches needed to meet estimated future demand. It is also realistic to make sure that there is enough of a surplus to enable pitches to be taken out of use at regular intervals for major renovation works. Advice from Sport and Landscape Development (a specialist natural turf consultancy) was that it would be prudent to allow spare supply of 10% of the total number of pitches needed. This effectively allows every pitch to be taken out of use for a season once every ten years. This allows time for any essential renovation and re-instatement of drainage works. A number of recommendations are made later in the report in relation to meeting standards of provision.

### **Quality standards**

- 6.4 Quality standards have been set on the basis of the assessment results and categorising scored pitches using the electronic toolkit that goes with 'Towards a Level Playing Field'. The quality standard is based on all pitches being rated within the 'Good' classification. In simple terms, the standard for playing pitch provision is "all pitches available for the community to use will be of a good standard".
- 6.5 Provision standards should be set and applied to identify lack of provision. This has been done through the quality assessments on pitches. For the purposes of this strategy, the consultants' quality assessments were only completed for pitches that we own.

### **Applying the standards**

- 6.6 In line with good practice, the standards of provision are based on the number of pitches required to accommodate an increase of 5% on current demand. In summary, the consultants outlined below the recommended standard provision for each sport, the implications of applying this standard in Belfast and possible solutions to the gaps identified:

**Figure 4 – Recommended standard provision by sport**

Sport	Recommended Provision Standard	Applying this standard	Potential solutions
<b>Association football</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 104 association football pitches</li> <li>• 8 mini association football pitches</li> <li>• All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surplus in association football and mini association football provision</li> <li>• It must be recognised that youth association football is played on adult pitches across the city</li> <li>• In addition to the traditional winter leagues the city also has a women's summer league</li> <li>• 44% of council pitches rated (44 of 99 pitches) do not meet quality standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the quality issues identified</li> <li>• Upgrade of existing grass association football pitches to 3G pitches would allow year round play as 3G pitches do not require a 'resting' period which for grass association football pitches is traditionally during the summer when the women's league takes place</li> <li>• Install or improve changing facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Gaelic sports (football and hurling)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 pitches</li> <li>• All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortfall of 38 pitches (all provision)</li> <li>• 14% of council pitches rated (2 of 14 pitches) do not meet quality standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide new pitches and upgrade current grass pitches to 3G pitches, which have greater playability than grass pitches and will assist in addressing the shortfall</li> <li>• Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the quality issues identified</li> <li>• Install or improve changing facilities</li> <li>• Increase secured community access</li> </ul>
<b>Camogie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 pitches</li> <li>• All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortfall of 10 pitches (all provision)</li> <li>• Only one camogie pitch was assessed – this was rated as 'below average'. The other pitch was not marked out or was</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide new pitches and upgrade current grass pitches to 3G pitches, which have greater playability than grass pitches and will assist in addressing the shortfall</li> </ul>

Sport	Recommended Provision Standard	Applying this standard	Potential solutions
		under renovation at the time of audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install or improve changing facilities</li> <li>• Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the quality issues identified</li> </ul>
<b>Cricket</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 pitches</li> <li>• All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortfall of 4 pitches (all provision)</li> <li>• 50% of council pitches rated (1 of 2 pitches) do not meet quality standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide new pitches</li> <li>• Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the quality issues identified</li> </ul>
<b>Rugby union</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 pitches</li> <li>• All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply and demand are at capacity with any increase or closure of pitches leading to a shortfall. Any resting of pitches would also lead to a shortfall</li> <li>• Only one rugby union pitch quality assessed – this was rated as 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule to ensure that the quality of the pitches remains high</li> <li>• Install or improve changing facilities</li> <li>• Increase secured community access</li> </ul>
<b>Hockey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 STPs with access for hockey at peak times</li> <li>• All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortfall of 2 STPs suitable for league standard hockey (all provision)</li> <li>• Only one sand-based STP was quality assessed – this was rated as 'average'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide STPs suitable for league standard hockey to help address the shortfall</li> <li>• Increase secured community access</li> </ul>

- 6.7 The consultants advise that in order for us to meet the recommended standards, the following additional provision or improvements are required:
- improvements to 44 of our association football pitches rated
  - access to 38 additional Gaelic football pitches and improvement to two of our pitches rated
  - access to four additional cricket pitches and improvement to one of our two pitches rated
  - access to two additional STPs for hockey (sand or water based) and improvement to existing facilities (note also that our existing STP will need to be upgraded in the near future)
  - access to 10 additional pitches for camogie – some demand could be met through existing Gaelic football and hurling facilities, and
  - access to an additional rugby union pitch.

- 6.8 The analysis showed that latent demand, or more simply the unmet demand that occurs at peak times in several of the sports outlined above will require significant additional provision or the change of use from one sport type to another. This is not a straightforward replenish or replace scenario, as it needs to consider the accessibility factors in Belfast. It also needs to be realistic in considering the actual cost and availability of land to create extra pitches and additional changing facilities.
- 6.9 It was apparent from the consultation with clubs that many have to travel to other areas to access the pitch type they need and so this impacts on the potential for club and team development. It may be that a fresh approach to provision is needed in upgrading the current synthetic turf or shale pitches to a higher 3G standard.

## 7 Implications for planning applications

- 7.1 A key focus of the new strategy is protecting facilities against development pressures, and specifically against residential proposals on land in and around urban areas. We also seek to provide enough information to inform planning decisions for sites where there are applications pending for changes of land use.
- 7.2 Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8): Planning for open space, sport and recreation (DOE, February 2004) advises on planning policies for the protection and provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development. It is also concerned with the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, and advises on addressing these issues in the development of local plans. And so the preparation of a Playing Pitches Strategy is an important part of informing local land use policies.
- 7.3 Strategic Leisure's assessment represents a robust approach to identifying need at a city level. The assessment shows there is a shortfall in pitch provision for most sports. Even if the total 'area' of playing field land (existing provision included in the assessment) is considered, there is an estimated modest surplus of pitches of around 20-25 adult football pitches. The findings therefore support the PPS8 aims (Policy OS1) of not permitting any loss of playing pitches across the city. If planning proposals will result in the loss of pitches on a specific site, this can be permitted providing that the community benefits relate directly to the priorities identified within this Playing Pitches Strategy. That is, if the community benefits relate to improvements in the quality and accessibility of existing provision and these improvements will improve the carrying capacity of the existing pitches.
- 7.4 No pitches should be disposed of, except in exceptional circumstances, and only when based on sound, robust evidence. This should be developed as planning policy even if there are more than enough pitches to meet demand. The exception to this should be where the planning gain to upgrade other existing pitch-based sport facilities will benefit the local community. The consultants recommended that we consider an audit of all recreational space in order to quantify the amount, type, quality and accessibility of open space and to explore the opportunities for improving access to sport pitch facilities.
- 7.5 Also, PPS8 (p.12) acknowledges the role of Development Plans and local assessments of open space requirements in making informed decisions. PPS8 states:
- “Accordingly, in assessing open space provision and considering future land needs the Department (of the Environment) will seek to work closely with district councils and take account of any local recreational strategies they may have. Where appropriate, the Department will also liaise with other interested bodies such as the Sports Council<sup>3</sup>”.
- 7.6 This assessment represented a robust local assessment and foundation for a strategy for sports pitch provision.
- 7.7 The independent consultants stated that their baseline assessment complements any assessment results using the NPFA provision standards and provides the evidence to inform the assessment of all future planning decisions. This is in accordance with the statement in PPS8 (p.15) that: “The provisions of these policies (those stated in PPS8 and detailed below) will prevail unless there are other overriding or material considerations that outweigh them or justify a contrary decision”. The findings of the assessment represent overriding and material considerations.

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<sup>3</sup> Now Sport NI



## **Policy OS1 – Protection of open space**

7.8 Policy O1 (p.16) states that:

“The Department will not permit development that would result in the loss of existing open space or land zoned for the provision of open space. The presumption against the loss of existing open space will apply irrespective of its physical condition and appearance.”

7.9 An exception will be allowed where it is clear that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that outweigh the loss of the open space.

7.10 An exception will also be allowed where it is clear that the loss of the open space will have no significant detrimental impact on the type, character or biodiversity of an area, and where the following circumstances occur:

- In the case of open space of 2 hectares or less, alternative provision is made by the developer which is at least as accessible to current users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness, safety and quality.

7.11 Our Playing Pitches Strategy supports these exceptions – alternative provision must be located at least within the sub-analysis area and must not result in additional accessibility problems. It must provide either equivalent provision, or specifically address the shortfalls highlighted in the numbers of pitches. And it must meet the quality standards set and adhere to all relevant national governing body and Sport NI guidance for new sports facilities, such as the need to keep junior and senior association football to separate kick off times.

- In the case of playing fields and sports pitches within settlement limits, it is demonstrated by the developer that the retention and enhancement of the facility can only be achieved by the development of a small part of the existing open space – limited to a maximum of 10% of the overall area – and this will have no adverse effect on the sporting potential of the facility. This exception will be exercised only once.

7.12 Our Playing Pitches Strategy supports this exception where there is no adverse impact on the number of pitch units accommodated on site; that is if 10% of an overall area is not more than an area large enough to accommodate one mini association football pitch with appropriate run-offs. There must be a definite increase in quality and no negative impact on access.

7.13 The area-based assessment highlighted an overall shortfall in playing pitch provision, which varies across certain sports and pitch types. It supports the aims of Policy OS1 of not permitting loss of playing pitches across the city. The consultants recommended adopting a policy of protecting all playing pitch sites, subject to the exceptions outlined in 7.9 and 7.10. In the case of development proposals relating to playing pitch sites, community benefits should relate directly to the priorities identified within the Playing Pitches Strategy (section 9).

7.14 Where existing ‘disused’ sports pitch sites of two hectares or less exist – that is sites defined as playing field land in planning terms, but without formal use for more than five years – the consultants recommended that a detailed site feasibility study be done to assess how viable it would be to bring them back into use. This should include a cost benefit analysis into improving the site, offset against the cost of developing alternative new provision. The area analysis results within the analysis for each sport should also be used to test how appropriate it is to bring non-community use sites, such as school sites, into use. Or whether it is more appropriate to dispose of surplus provision once all sports demand is met, and use the capital gained to upgrade provision elsewhere.

7.15 In relation to implementing the strategy, including the issues outlined above, we are working with the Planning Service to identify opportunities to work together to implement this strategy and protect key city assets.

## 8 Addressing the findings

- 8.1 The findings present a major challenge in terms of providing playing pitches in the city, which the consultants acknowledged cannot be met fully in the short term or by the council alone. We are also acutely aware of the difficult economic circumstances which we and many of our partners are now facing. Added to this, availability of open space suitable for purchase is limited, and there is a considerable time-lag in delivering new or improved pitches, even once authority to proceed is granted. This is due to factors including:

**Design** – completing a full site analysis and consulting with local residents and users can take up to three months, depending on factors such as contamination

**Planning approval** – the process for planning permission is currently taking between six and eight months, and

**Construction phase** – constrained by seasonal factors, such as temperature and rain. This is true also for grass pitches which take up to a year to be match-ready.

- 8.2 However, all stakeholders acknowledged the value of outdoor leisure provision in delivering a number of our corporate objectives, including improved health and wellbeing.

### Final recommendations by Strategic Leisure

- 8.3 In conclusion, and after consideration of the various policy options, the independent consultants made recommendations for us and our partners to consider:
- 8.3.1 Given the findings of the assessment and the reliance on non-council facilities, strengthen and develop partnership working with private providers, governing bodies and neighbouring authorities. Addressing the shortfalls recorded cannot be the sole responsibility of any one agency or organisation.
  - 8.3.2 Explore and develop closer partnership working with Belfast Education and Library Board and explore the role of school facilities to support mini and junior sport and potentially provide additional community-accessible facilities.
  - 8.3.3 Explore and develop closer partnership working with private providers of sports fields to gain access for community use, such as the initiative to develop the Soccer Dome 5-a-side 3G facility.
  - 8.3.4 Update the supply and demand information collated as part of the study every year, as part of evaluating action and delivery. A full playing pitch assessment should be repeated every five years, or as near as possible, to fit in with area planning process and any proposed boundary changes for the city.
  - 8.3.5 Try to influence Belfast Education and Library Board and the Planning Service to make sure that community use agreements, to an agreed specification, are needed from future school redevelopment schemes.
  - 8.3.6 Develop regular consultation with pitch users to gather trend data about satisfaction, quality ratings and common pitch issues. This is partially done via the Council's pitch booking forms to users of public football pitches, and through the development of a sports forum.
  - 8.3.7 Explore, with the relevant governing bodies and clubs, the potential to play some fixtures on synthetic turf pitches (STP) – particularly mini and youth association

football. The consultation identified a willingness from sports such as rugby union and Gaelic sports to use 3G (third generation) pitches. This recommendation depends on securing appropriate access to STP facilities, but priority should be for new 3G facilities to allow out of season training. Greater use of 3G could facilitate association football and so release association football pitches to be re-designated to other sports. It is important to recognise that demand for Gaelic pitches may not be in the area where there is an excess of association football pitches. This option would need to be further explored and would require consultation with local users. (Since completion of the research the governing bodies for association football, Gaelic games and rugby union have approved a pitch specification and standards for 3G pitches).

- 8.3.8 Develop as a minimum at least one full-sized, multi-purpose floodlit 3G pitch with links to appropriate changing facilities in each of the four areas of the city. Consider developing floodlit, full-sized, sand-based STPs over time. This will enable more games to be played on peak days and allow for the facilities to be used throughout the year for multi-sport training. It will also accommodate latent demand for both Gaelic sports and hockey.
- 8.3.9 Develop sites that provide multi-use facilities that cater for a range of sports and allow for adult and junior and male and female sports to take place at the same time. This will need investment in changing facilities that cater for different age groups and genders.
- 8.3.10 Condition surveys on changing facilities should be done at regular intervals to identify any remedial work that may be required, identify any additional disability access needs and provide an estimated lifespan for the building.
- 8.3.11 Use the findings of the assessment together with the quality findings to prioritise investment in facilities such as grass pitches and changing facilities.
- 8.3.12 Review fees and charges levied for pitches – consider increases to charges for higher-quality facilities.

## **Conclusion**

- 8.4 For a number of months, elected Members and officers considered the findings of the independent consultants' report and discussed the implications for the future. The following strategy is based on those discussions.
- 8.5 It is commonly agreed that good partnerships across a number of sectors and a shared vision for the future of outdoor leisure provision, are critical to the success of a Playing Pitches Strategy for Belfast.

## 9 A Playing Pitches Strategy for Belfast

- 9.1 We are committed to making sure that future pitch provision meets the needs of the city and is protected for future generations. We believe it is absolutely vital that all partners work together to address the issues highlighted in this strategy and, in our role as city leaders, we will engage proactively in discussions with our partners in the statutory, private and community sectors. This will enable us to help as many people as possible participate in physical activity, including under-represented groups such as females and those with disabilities.
- 9.2 In the context of the baseline assessment and following careful consideration of the policy options recommended, we propose a multi-layered approach which will ensure that we provide and support the provision of high-quality, accessible, well-planned outdoor facilities. The baseline assessment was robust enough to base the strategy on and we intend to further substantiate the figures in years to come through an improved performance management framework.
- 9.3 Given the scale of investment and the timescales for design, permissions and delivery, we propose that this strategy covers a 10-year period.
- 9.4 Given the short to medium-term financial constraints and the move towards increased partnership working, this strategy looks at total provision with secured community access rather than just council-owned. We will work with our partners across different sectors to protect and enhance playing pitches in the city, and within agreed travelling distances, beyond our current city boundaries.
- 9.5 We therefore propose that in phase 1 (years 1-3), we will prioritise capital works in our own facilities, but will be proactive in securing feasible partnership opportunities for medium and longer-term investments. Critical to this are also early discussions with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland so as to minimise delays in implementing the capital aspects of this strategy.
- 9.6 Working with the education sector in particular is in line with the spirit of the Belfast City Council motion of 1 September 2010:
- “This Council: welcomes the debate at the NI Assembly on 11 May concerning access to schools; supports the Assembly resolution to bring forward a strategy to make the facilities of schools more available for community use; recognises that this provides the Council with an opportunity to enhance the future delivery of its own services; and to this end, agrees to liaise with the Assembly Working Group tasked with the development of the strategy.”*
- 9.7 We also recognise the important role that the further and higher education sector plays in promoting team sports and providing playing pitches. It is our intention to work alongside them too.
- 9.8 In line with our corporate vision, the vision for the strategy is to improve the quality of life for now and future generations through the provision and programming of outdoor leisure venues. The Playing Pitches Strategy will be an element of any future city wide approach for an Active Belfast.
- 9.9 **The aim of the Playing Pitches Strategy is to contribute to improved health and wellbeing in Belfast by enabling adequate outdoor sports facilities and, working with partners, seek to maximise the provision and use of safe, accessible and quality outdoor leisure facilities.**
- 9.10 The primary objectives for the Playing Pitches Strategy are:

### **Objective 1 – Capital investment**

To deliver and, working in partnership, enable a programme of capital development, enhancement and maintenance investments to address the shortfalls identified and protect existing playing pitches.

### **Objective 2 – Management**

To implement and monitor a range of management options with community and statutory partners, so as to maximise people's participation in team sports activity.

### **Objective 3 – Sports development**

Working in partnership, to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise people's participation in team sports activity. This will include under-represented groups, such as females and those with disabilities.

- 9.11 A number of sub-objectives have been identified, based on the commissioned research and consultation. These will enable us to direct resources to those activities producing the greatest benefits for the city.
- 9.12 The sub-objectives for **Objective 1 – Capital Investment** are:
- 9.12.1 To invest in additional outdoor leisure facilities, addressing the shortage in the city and increasing their use
  - 9.12.2 To invest in improving existing provision to increase use and improve the quality of outdoor leisure provision
  - 9.12.3 To invest in the quality of changing facilities at outdoor leisure provision and to increase the provision for women and children
  - 9.12.4 To begin discussions with Sport NI to develop partnership arrangements for planning, management and community access
  - 9.12.5 To work with education partners (schools, higher and further education) to deliver more access to their outdoor leisure facilities, through secured community access agreements and investing in extra facilities such as floodlighting
  - 9.12.6 To work with sports governing bodies, partners and other interested parties (including sports clubs and the private sector) to explore potential partnerships and to increase access to outdoor leisure facilities
  - 9.12.7 To promote opportunities for shared space through multi-sport facilities
  - 9.12.8 To create a repairs and renewals fund for the refurbishment of playing pitches and a rolling maintenance programme based on regular conditions surveys
  - 9.12.9 To start talks with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland
  - 9.12.10 To examine the potential to convert underused full sized pitches into junior sized pitches
- 9.13 The sub-objectives for **Objective 2 – Management** are:
- 9.13.1 To complete the review of existing Facility Management Agreements (FMAs)
  - 9.13.2 To develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches which includes regular consultation with pitch users to gather trend data around satisfaction, quality rating and common pitch issues

- 9.13.3 To undertake a review of the current fees and charges
  - 9.13.4 To roll out a programme of 'shared space' training to all sports clubs across Belfast, firstly targeting clubs that we fund and use our pitches
  - 9.13.5 To update the supply and demand information gathered in the first two years of the strategy to fit in with the area planning process and any proposed boundary changes for the city and every five years thereafter
  - 9.13.6 To work with transport providers and Department for Regional Development to maximise transport connections between pitches sites including cycle and pedestrian paths
- 9.14 The sub-objectives for **Objective 3 – Sports Development** are:
- 9.14.1 To work with Sport NI and community-based partners, including the Active Communities programme, to develop and deliver a sports development programme that will maximise participation in team sports activity particularly amongst those from under-represented groups
  - 9.14.2 To match up the funding provided through Support for Sport for pitch sports to any future priorities identified around pitches such as increased participation from under-represented groups
  - 9.14.3 To make sure the leisure development programme is matched up to the Playing Pitches Strategy including the Clubmark programme and annual sports conference
  - 9.14.4 To work with Sport NI and community-based partners, including the Active Communities programme, to deliver increased access to and improved transport connections between outdoor leisure facilities
  - 9.14.5 To deliver a programme of high-profile events to promote outdoor leisure venues as accessible, safe and welcoming
  - 9.14.6 To provide programmes at outdoor facilities which improve access for people from those neighbourhoods with poor health levels
  - 9.14.7 To develop a programme of joint working for small sided (or junior) games around junior association football, with the Irish Football Association based on best practice
- 9.15 We have developed action plans to deliver these sub-objectives. These are attached as appendix 1.

## 10 Steps to delivery

### Financial considerations

- 10.1 As already stated, the findings present a major challenge in terms of providing playing pitches in the city, which the consultants acknowledged cannot be met fully in the short term or by the council alone. We are also acutely aware of the difficult economic circumstances which we and many of our partners are now facing.
- 10.2 In relation to the delivery of Objective 2 – Management and Objective 3 – Sports Development, the costs for these programmes are relatively less significant and could largely be accommodated within existing revenue budgets and by aligning our business plans with the objectives of the Playing Pitches Strategy. These two objectives will be integrated into our business planning.
- 10.3 Installing a hybrid 3G pitch, cross-marked for different sporting codes, costs approximately £1,000,000. Standard changing facilities cost an additional £600,000. Installing floodlighting costs in the region of £80,000 to £100,000, depending on the standard required and the installation costs. These figures are based on standard construction costs; more accurate costings will only be available at the scheme design stage, when any construction complications would be identified.
- 10.4 Given the potential scale of investment to deliver Objective 1 – Capital Investment, the options available to us are outlined below:

Option	
1.	<b>Do nothing beyond protecting existing resources</b> – includes refurbishment of grass pitches and maintenance of existing 3G surfaces
2.	<b>Lower cost, high impact investments</b> – such as upgrading existing changing facilities, installing cricket squares, partnership opportunities or providing floodlighting
3.	<b>Upgrade existing council-owned grass pitches to 3G surfaces</b> – single use or multi-sports (depending on site dimensions)
4.	<b>Develop new 3G pitches</b> – multi-sports use preferred, which allows for intensified use
5.	<b>Combination of above</b> – a series of investments in existing and new provision across all sporting codes, with initial focus on council-owned facilities.

Option	Benefits	Risk	Costs per unit
<p><b>1. Do nothing beyond protecting existing resources</b> – includes refurbishing grass pitches and maintaining existing 3G surfaces</p>	<p>Zero capital cost</p> <p>Additional time to collect robust data and build engagement across sporting codes for future investment decisions</p> <p>Improved and sustainable facilities for future use</p>	<p>Does not address historical shortfalls in city provision and identified social need at a city and neighbourhood level</p> <p>Significant reputational risk</p> <p>Significant risk of non-compliance with statutory obligations (Section 75 and Recreation Order)</p> <p>Diminished opportunity to deliver corporate 'quality of life' agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Current funding and partnership opportunities missed (for example SEUPB)</p> <p>No potential to intensify use or significantly increase revenue</p> <p>Limited playing season or requires 'rest' periods</p>	<p>£0 capital</p> <p>Annual revenue budget for grounds maintenance</p> <p>On average 3G carpets have to be replaced every 7-10 years, this depends on the level of use</p>
<p><b>2. Lower cost, high impact investments</b> – such as upgrading existing changing facilities, installing cricket squares, partnership opportunities, providing floodlighting</p>	<p>Reduced net capital cost to council</p> <p>Good strategic fit with corporate 'quality of life' agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Improvement activity in each area of city, addressing social need at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Improves playing experience and improved facilities for females and children</p>	<p>Degree of reputational risk in that council not taking the lead in additional provision for some sporting codes</p> <p>May require a long term lease to a sporting club or governing body</p> <p>Partner may not want to allow wider community use of the facility</p> <p>Some sporting codes do not have potential to enter into partnership arrangements, that</p>	<p>Less than £10,000 per 3G cricket square</p> <p>£300,000 per changing facility</p> <p>£80-100,000 floodlighting</p> <p>Partnership opportunities -</p>



Option	Benefits	Risk	Costs per unit
	<p>Some impact on shortfalls in sporting codes through new provision (cricket) and increased community access to existing provision (for example school sites)</p> <p>Guaranteed usage through governing bodies and community organisations, including sports development activities</p> <p>Improved compliance in terms of Section 75 considerations</p>	<p>is dependent on funding availability</p> <p>Risks associated with working in partnership</p>	<p>£variable</p>
<p><b>3. Upgrade grass pitches to 3G surfaces</b> – single use or multi-sports (depending on site dimensions)</p>	<p>Potential to intensify use and provide new opportunities for play</p> <p>Good strategic fit with corporate ‘quality of life’ agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Improved compliance with statutory equality and Recreation Order obligations</p>	<p>Limited impact on historical shortfalls in city and therefore remaining reputational and statutory non-compliance risks</p> <p>Capital funding to be sourced and provision made for whole life cycle costs through revenue</p> <p>Displacement of current users during build period</p>	<p>From £500,000 to £1.6m</p>
<p><b>4. Develop new 3G pitches</b> – multi sports use as preference</p>	<p>Potential to significantly intensify use and provide new opportunities across sporting codes</p> <p>Increased strategic fit with corporate ‘quality of life’ agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Increased compliance with statutory equality and Recreation Order obligations</p> <p>Partnership and funding opportunities increased (for example Sport NI, SEUPB)</p>	<p>Capital funding to be sourced</p> <p>Land availability limited and planning considerations</p> <p>Considerable time-lag to delivery</p>	<p>From £1m to £1.6m + land acquisition costs on non-BCC sites</p>

Option	Benefits	Risk	Costs per unit
<p><b>5. Combination of above</b></p>	<p>Potential to significantly intensify use and provide new opportunities across sporting codes</p> <p>Phased improvement activity in each area of city, addressing social need</p> <p>Considerable strategic fit with corporate 'quality of life' agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Significant compliance with statutory equality and Recreation Order obligations</p> <p>Partnership and funding opportunities maximised (for example Sport NI, SEUPB)</p> <p>Improves playing experience and improved facilities for females and children</p> <p>Improved and sustainable facilities for future use</p> <p>Reduced deficiencies in sporting codes through new provision (cricket) and increased community access to existing provision (for example school sites)</p> <p>Reduced displacement for current users and increased playing times or locations</p>	<p>Capital funding to be sourced</p> <p>Risks associated with working in partnership</p>	<p>Level of funding to be determined by council</p>

- 10.5 Through ongoing consultation with various interested parties, and consideration by elected representatives, it is agreed that no one clear policy option will provide the solutions to addressing pitch shortfalls and the issues highlighted. It is clear that a combination of some of the traditional options, together with more innovative solutions is required.
- 10.6 In appraising the above options in line with the sub-objectives under Objective 1 – Capital Investment, option 5 will deliver the maximum results against the sub-objectives.

<b>Objective 1 – Capital Investment sub-objectives</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Option 5</b>
1.1 To invest in additional outdoor leisure facilities, addressing the shortage in the city and increasing their use		√	√	√	√
1.2 To invest in improving existing provision to increase use and improve the quality of outdoor leisure provision			√	√	√
1.3 To invest in the quality of changing facilities at outdoor leisure provision and to increase the provision for women and children				√	√
1.4 To begin discussions with Sport NI to develop partnership arrangements for planning, management and community access		√	√	√	√
1.5 To work with education partners (schools, higher and further education) to deliver more access to their outdoor leisure facilities, through secured community access agreements and investing in extra facilities such as floodlighting		√	√	√	√
1.6 To work with sports governing bodies, partners and other interested parties (including sports clubs and the private sector) to explore potential partnerships and to deliver increased access to outdoor leisure facilities	√	√	√	√	√
1.7 To promote opportunities for shared space through multi-sport facilities		√	√		√
1.8 To create a repairs and renewals fund for refurbishing playing pitches and a rolling maintenance programme based on regular conditions surveys	√	√	√	√	√
1.9 To start talks with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland		√	√	√	√
1.10 To examine the potential to convert underused full sized pitches into junior sized pitches		√	√	√	√
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

- 10.7 Therefore, the proposal for years 1-3 is option 5, that is, a combination of delivering two new pitches with ancillary facilities (part-funded), a series of upgrades (pitches and changing) and lower cost options (floodlighting and cricket squares). This option presents the maximum benefit to us and our partners, and reduces a number of the risks.
- 10.8 As well as continuing to investigate the potential for purchasing new sites, we also advise making immediate provision for lower-cost, high impact investments at partner-owned locations, such as installing floodlighting, which would secure increased community access. Requests from external partners could be assessed on a regular basis against the criteria set out in the strategy.
- 10.9 The approximate cost for this combination approach is:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Cost to BCC</b>
New pitch and ancillary facilities	2	Up to £3,200,000 <i>Level of partner funding tbd</i>
Pitch upgrades to 3G hybrid	3	Up to £4,800,000 <i>Level of partner funding tbd</i>
Changing facilities upgrade	4	£1,200,000
Floodlighting (to secure or increase community access at educational sites)	4	£750,000
Cricket square installations or upgrade ( <i>revenue costs</i> )	2	£20,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£9,950,000 Capital</b> <b>£20,000 Revenue</b>

- 10.10 On the basis of affordability, in the current indicative capital programme, an uncommitted allowance up to £10,000,000 has been included for the Playing Pitches Strategy. In preliminary discussions, we identified a number of external funding sources and these need to be confirmed.
- 10.11 The current pricing policy for hiring pitches will also need to be reviewed in order to maximise the income generated from new pitches, as well as to ensure that repairs and renewal costs are covered over the lifetime of the new pitches.
- 10.12 It is therefore recommended that a full funding strategy is developed outlining a number of options, including partnership with the private sector.

### **Prioritisation framework**

- 10.13 Given the likely availability of funding, it is clear that a prioritisation framework needs to be developed in order to determine the priority for investment options outlined above.
- 10.14 A list of available council-owned locations was considered and a shortlist developed, based on the how likely is likelihood of deliverability and known planning restrictions. This shortlist of 31 sites will now be prioritised on the basis of the matrix below. The full list of sites considered is attached as appendix 2.
- 10.15 The matrix has been developed in line with the sub-objectives under Objective 1 and our existing capital prioritisation framework. It uses a numerical assessment based on a number of criteria which are subsequently weighted. Each investment decision – both council-owned and partner opportunities – will be assessed using the assessment criteria.

10.16 A weighted score has also been included, outlining our priority for each criteria.

Assessment criteria	Description	Score
<b>Need (30)</b>	High – addresses shortfall identified in baseline assessment	3
	Medium – addresses quality issues identified in baseline assessment in council-owned facilities	2
	Low – addresses quality issues identified in baseline assessment in other facilities	1
	None	0
<b>Proximity (10)</b>	High – no facilities, within 1.2km radius or 10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access	3
	Medium – single-sport or no 3G facilities within 1.2km radius or 10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access	2
	Low – within 1.2km radius or 10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access but limited access in the evenings or at weekends	1
	None – facilities within 1.2km radius or 10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access and availability	0
<b>External Funding (20)</b>	60% - 100% external funding	3
	31% - 59% external funding	2
	1% - 30% external funding	1
	0%	0
<b>Partnership (10)</b>	Partnership with additional resources and secured community access	3
	Partnership with additional resources and limited community access	2
	Partnership with no additional resources and community access	1
	No partner identified	0
<b>Intensification of use (20)</b>	Site supports multi-purpose pitch facility – more than two sporting codes	3
	Site supports dual-purpose pitch facility – up to two sporting codes	2
	Installation of floodlighting or improved changing facilities	1
	Site supports single sport pitch facility	0
<b>Reputational Risk (10)</b>	High – if not progressed immediately it could have a severe impact (on more than one of) time-bound funding, detrimental press coverage, service provision.	3
	Medium – could impact on one of the above.	2
	Low – minor manageable impact or no real significance	1
	None	0

- 10.17 Following this prioritisation, a narrative on the risks, costs and benefits on each site will be developed. Each narrative will also include detail on the equality and good relations impacts of each investment location and actions required to address any adverse impacts.
- 10.18 This prioritisation process is in line with our standards, as well as the Green Book standard. It has initially identified risks and benefits and will proceed to determine whole life-cycle costs for each shortlisted location. All of this is essential information for our internal Gates Process that we use for monitoring capital projects and will speed up any further external economic appraisal processes.
- 10.19 Finally, we will present this as a programme of activity and will develop a strategic business case, based on the information gathered in these earlier stages.

## 11 Equality Statement

- 11.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires us, in carrying out all our functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.
- 11.2 The Act also requires us, in carrying out our functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 11.3 Our Equality Scheme, which details how we will fulfil our duties, was approved in April 2001. A part of that Equality Scheme was the production of a Good Relations Strategy. Our Good Relations Strategy was prepared and adopted in February 2003. It was commended as a model of good practice in the Shared Future document by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The Good Relations Plan was updated in 2010.
- 11.4 Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 (DDO), from 1 January 2007 public authorities, when carrying out their functions must have due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and
  - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 11.5 These duties are referred to as the 'disability duties'. Our Equality Toolkit and Reference Guide provide details on accessibility to services through event management, travel and accessibility, amongst others.
- 11.6 We took the decision that a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the draft strategy would be carried out in compliance with our responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in accordance with Equality Commission guidelines. The EQIA primarily addresses the following needs:
- the need to identify an audit trail in terms of the criteria used to determine the options which will be submitted to the Parks and Leisure Committee, showing that each option has been developed on the basis of clear, objective criteria
  - the need to demonstrate that the different needs of people in the various Section 75 categories have been taken into account in the development of options and that the options represent the best means of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations
  - the need to demonstrate that best practice has been followed in terms of the EQIA process, with particular attention to the quality of data and research used and a robust approach to consultation, and
  - the need to identify equality impacts as accurately as possible and ensure that all potential actions have been considered to reduce any adverse impacts on any of the Section 75 categories, particularly in relation to the programming aspect of the strategy.
- 11.7 Policy Arc Limited was appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy. A copy of the EQIA is available to download from the council's website.

## **12 The way forward**

- 12.1 We have produced this Playing Pitches Strategy to make sure there is a strategic approach to providing high-quality and accessible pitches. We will use the prioritisation framework to identify sites for potential development and will develop an action plan for implementing this work over a ten year period.
- 12.2 Monitoring and evaluation is a crucial part of delivering this Playing Pitches Strategy and we will build a monitoring and evaluation schedule into the action plan. As part of this process we will reassess the baseline audit within two years of implementing the strategy as opposed to the recommended five years.



## 13 Appendices

## Appendix 1

Objective 1 - Capital investment	Actions	Timescales
To invest in additional outdoor leisure facilities, addressing the shortage in the city and increasing their use	Currently being delivered as part of the prioritisation process	Phase 1 will be delivered over the period 2011-14
To invest in improving existing provision to increase use and improve the quality of outdoor leisure provision	Currently being delivered as part of the prioritisation process	Phase 1 will be delivered over the period 2011-14
To invest in the quality of changing facilities at outdoor leisure provision and to increase the provision for women and children	Currently being delivered as part of the prioritisation process	Phase 1 will be delivered over the period 2011-14
To begin discussions with Sport NI to develop partnership arrangements for planning, management and community access	Initial talks have taken place and a meeting will be organised with Sport NI to bring this forward	Process has commenced and is ongoing
To work with education partners (schools, higher and further education) to deliver more access to their outdoor leisure facilities, through secured community access agreements and investing in extra facilities such as floodlighting	Initial talks have taken place with representatives from BELB and CCMS regarding wider community use of educational facilities. Further work is being done around this and reports will go to the Chief Officers' Management Team and the Parks and Leisure Committee in the coming months	Process has commenced and is ongoing
To work with sports governing bodies, partners and other interested parties (including sports clubs and the private sector) to explore potential partnerships and to deliver increased access to outdoor leisure facilities	Talks are currently taking place with representatives from a range of sports governing bodies and other partners. Work is also ongoing through the activities of the Leisure Development Unit	Process has commenced and is ongoing
To promote opportunities for shared space through multi-sport facilities	Currently being delivered as part of the prioritisation process	Phase 1 will be delivered over the period 2011-14
To create a repairs and renewals fund for the refurbishment of playing pitches and a rolling maintenance programme based on regular conditions surveys	Process to be developed and put into practice by departmental business support and parks operations staff	To be established by March 2012
To start talks with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland	Initial talks have taken place and a further meeting will be set up to bring this forward	Process has commenced and is ongoing
To examine the potential to convert underused full sized pitches into junior sized pitches	Process to be developed and put into practice by parks operations staff	Process to commence in 2012

<b>Objective 2 – Management</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
To complete the review of existing Facility Management Agreements (FMAs)	A review of FMAs has begun and a report will be brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee in late 2011	To be completed by March 2012
To develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches which includes regular consultation with pitch users to form trend data around satisfaction, quality rating and common pitch issues	A framework will be developed by the Outdoor Leisure Unit alongside the Policy and Business Development Unit	To be completed by March 2012
To undertake a review of the current fees and charges	A review will be undertaken by departmental business support	To be completed by March 2012
To roll out a programme of 'shared space' training to all sports clubs across Belfast, firstly targeting clubs that we fund and use our pitches	A programme of training will be developed and delivered	To be developed by March 2012 with delivery thereafter
To update the supply and demand information gathered in the first two years of the strategy to fit in with the area planning process and any proposed boundary changes for the city and every five years thereafter	The first re-assessment of supply and demand will take place two years from the implementation of the strategy	Anticipated that the review will commence in late 2013
To work with transport providers and Department for Regional Development to maximise transport connections between pitches sites including cycle and pedestrian paths	A meeting will be organised with DRD's Transport Unit to discuss possible options in relation to this issue. Representatives from Parks and Leisure are also currently involved in the development of DRD's Active Travel Plan	Process to commence by September 2011

<b>Objective 3 – Sports development</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
To work with Sport NI and community-based partners, including the Active Communities programme, to develop and deliver a sports development programme that will maximise participation in team sports activity particularly amongst those from under represented groups	This will be delivered through the ongoing work of the Leisure Development Unit	Ongoing
To match up the funding provided through Support for Sport for pitch sports to any future priorities identified around pitches such as increased participation from under represented groups	This will be considered as part of the ongoing review of Support for Sport	Ongoing
To make sure the leisure development programme is matched up to the Playing Pitches Strategy including the Clubmark programme and annual sports conference	This will be delivered through the ongoing work of the Leisure Development Unit	Ongoing
To work with Sport NI and community-based partners, including the Active Communities programme, to deliver increased access to and improved transport connections between outdoor leisure facilities	This will be delivered through the ongoing work of the Leisure Development Unit	Ongoing
To deliver a programme of high-profile events to promote outdoor leisure venues as accessible, safe and welcoming	This will be delivered through the ongoing work of the Active Living and Open Spaces Unit in conjunction with the Leisure Development Unit	Ongoing
To provide programmes at outdoor facilities which improve access for people from those neighbourhoods with poor health levels	This will be delivered through the ongoing work of the Leisure Development Unit	Ongoing
To develop a programme of joint working for small sided (or junior) games around junior association football, with the Irish Football Association based on best practice	This will be delivered through the ongoing work of the Leisure Development Unit in conjunction with the Grassroots Soccer Development Officers	Process to commence in 2012

## Appendix 2

	Department	Site Name	Typology	Potential for 3-G facility 2 = new provision 1 = replacement 0 = no potential
1.	Development	North Foreshore		2
2.	Parks	Botanic Gardens (lower)	City	2
3.	Parks	Alderman Thomas Patton Memorial Park	District	2
4.	Parks	Clement Wilson Park	Local	2
5.	Parks	Glencairn Park	Local	2
6.	Parks	North Link Playing Fields	Local	2
7.	Parks	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	2
8.	Parks	Ballygomartin Road South (Newhill)		2
9.	Development	Hannahstown Road Site		2
10.	Development	Monagh Wood Site		2
11.	Parks	Beechvale Farm		2
12.	Development	Colin Glen Site		2
13.	Parks	Falls Park	District	2 & 1
14.	Parks	Slievegallion Drive Open Space	Local	2
15.	Development	Glen Road Site		2
16.	Parks	City of Belfast Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
17.	Parks	Ormeau Park (shale pitch at Ozone)	City	1
18.	Leisure	Avoniel Leisure Centre	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
19.	Parks	Orangefield Playing Fields	District	1
20.	Parks	Belmont Park	Local	1
21.	Parks	Cherryvale Playing Fields	Local	1
22.	Parks	Marrowbone Millennium Park	Local	1
23.	Parks	Woodlands Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
24.	Parks	Waterworks	District	1
25.	Parks	Cliftonville Playing Fields	Local	1
26.	Parks	Musgrave Park	District	1
27.	Parks	Suffolk Playing Fields	Local	1
28.	Parks	Ulidia Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
29.	Parks	Ballysillan Playing Fields	District	1
30.	Parks	Blanchflower Park	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
31.	Parks	King George V Playing Fields	Local	1
32.	Leisure	Andersontown Leisure Centre	Pitches/Playing Fields	0
33.	Parks	Grove Playing Fields	District	0
34.	Parks	Victoria Park	District	0
35.	Parks	Woodvale Park	District	0
36.	Parks	Alexandra Park	Local	0
37.	Parks	Clarawood Millennium Park	Local	0
38.	Parks	Clarendon Park Playing Fields	Local	0
39.	Parks	Dixon Park Playing Fields	Local	0
40.	Parks	Dunville Park	Local	0

	Department	Site Name	Typology	Potential for 3-G facility 2 = new provision 1 = replacement 0 = no potential
41.	Parks	Greenville Park	Local	0
42.	Parks	Hammer Development Playground	Local	0
43.	Parks	Lenadoon Millennium Park	Local	0
44.	Parks	Loughside Park	Local	0
45.	Parks	Shore Road Playing Fields	Local	0
46.	Parks	Strangford Avenue Playing Fields	Local	0
47.	Parks	Wedderburn Park	Local	0
48.	Parks	Ballygomartin Road North		0
49.	Leisure	Ballysillan Leisure Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
50.	Leisure	Grosvenor Recreation Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
51.	Leisure	Olympia Leisure Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
52.	Leisure	Whiterock Leisure Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
53.	Development	Duncrue Industrial Estate		0
54.	Development	Gasworks Site		0
55.	Leisure	Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre	Playground	0
56.	Leisure	Beechmount Leisure Centre		0
57.	Leisure	Loughside Recreation Centre		0
58.	Leisure	Maysfield Leisure Centre		0
59.	Parks	Barnett Demesne	Countryside	0
60.	Parks	Cavehill Country Park	Countryside	0
61.	Parks	Lagan Lands East	Countryside	0
62.	Parks	Lagan Meadows	Countryside	0
63.	Parks	Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park	Countryside	0
64.	Parks	Crescent Open Space	Local	0
65.	Parks	Drumglass Park	Local	0
66.	Parks	Forthriver Linear Park	Local	0
67.	Parks	Glenbank Park	Local	0
68.	Parks	King William Park	Local	0
69.	Parks	Knocknagoney Linear Park	Local	0
70.	Parks	Ligoniel Park	Local	0
71.	Parks	Loop River	Local	0
72.	Parks	Lyons Park	Local	0
73.	Parks	Northwood Linear Park	Local	0
74.	Parks	Queen Mary's Gardens	Local	0
75.	Parks	Springfield Park	Local	0
76.	Parks	Springhill Millennium Park	Local	0
77.	Parks	Loughside Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	0
78.	Parks	Mary Peters Track	Pitches/Playing Fields	0
79.	Parks	Annadale Embankment		0

	Department	Site Name	Typology	Potential for 3-G facility 2 = new provision 1 = replacement 0 = no potential
80.	Parks	Ballymacarrett Walkway		0
81.	Parks	Ballysillan Road Open Space		0
82.	Parks	Benmore Square Open Space		0
83.	Parks	Blythefield Open Space		0
84.	Parks	Britton's Lane Open Space		0
85.	Parks	Brooke Crescent/Drive		0
86.	Parks	City of Belfast Golf Course		0
87.	Parks	Connswater Walkway		0
88.	Parks	Dromara Street Open Space		0
89.	Parks	Erinvale Drive Open Space		0
90.	Parks	Flora Street Walkway		0
91.	Parks	Garnerville Open Space		0
92.	Parks	Glenarm Square Open Space		0
93.	Parks	Half Moon Lake		0
94.	Parks	Holylands Open Space		0
95.	Parks	Jubilee Gardens		0
96.	Parks	Ladybrook Park		0
97.	Parks	Lower Oldpark Road Grass Area		0
98.	Parks	Lyric Wood		0
99.	Parks	Manderson Street Gardens		0
100.	Parks	Orchardville Crescent		0
101.	Parks	Orlock Square Open Space		0
102.	Parks	Parkgate Gardens Open Space		0
103.	Parks	Pomona Avenue Open Space		0
104.	Parks	River Terrace		0
105.	Parks	Sharman Road Open Space		0
106.	Parks	Shore Road Open Space		0
107.	Parks	St. Michael's Park		0
108.	Parks	Stranmillis Car Park Open Space		0
109.	Parks	Strathmore Open Space		0
110.	Parks	Thornhill Parade Open Space		0
111.	Parks	Wandsworth Road Open Space		0
112.	Parks	West Kirk Open Space		0

