



**ROSSENDALE**

**PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**APRIL 2016**

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

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# ROSSENDALE PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This is the Executive Summary of Rossendale Borough Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), and whilst Rossendale has been the key driver in developing it, it is expected that plans and actions emanating from it can only be delivered in partnership with other key stakeholders. The document should be used alongside the Pennine Lancashire PPS, particularly for the site by site action plan.

#### Purpose

The document provides guidance and support to the local authority in order to understand and assess the need for playing pitches. It provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between 2016 and 2026, in line with population projections. The PPS covers the following playing pitches and outdoor sports:

- ◀ Football pitches
- ◀ Cricket pitches
- ◀ Rugby pitches
- ◀ Hockey/Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)
- ◀ Tennis
- ◀ Bowls

The Strategy is capable of:

- ◀ Providing a sound evidence base for any future planning decisions around playing pitches.
- ◀ Providing a sound evidence base for and contributing to future planning policy
- ◀ Providing evidence for any internal and external funding, including developer contributions from new development.
- ◀ Managing and enabling decision making around leases for sports clubs.
- ◀ Understanding of potential shortfalls in provision across the defined analysis areas.
- ◀ Supporting external funding bids and maximising support for outdoor sports facilities

#### Key Drivers

The key drivers for the Playing Pitch Strategy are:

- ◀ To inform the review of emerging planning policy within the Local Development Frameworks of the participating authorities
- ◀ To provide adequate planning guidance to assess development proposals affecting playing fields.
- ◀ To inform land use decisions in respect of future use of existing outdoor sports areas and playing pitches within the Study Area.
- ◀ To provide a strategic framework for the provision and management of playing pitches within the Study Area
- ◀ Support external funding bids and maximise support for playing pitches.
- ◀ To provide the basis for ongoing monitoring and review of the use, distribution, function, quality and accessibility of playing pitches.

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## Vision

This study has been developed on the basis of the above strategic drivers in order to ensure that it reflects the Council's wider ambitions:

*'To provide an accessible, high quality and sustainable network of sport pitches and other associated outdoor sports facilities, which provide opportunities for participation by all residents at all levels of play from grassroots to elite and maximises opportunities for realising health benefits'*

## Methodology

The Strategy is predicated on an in-depth needs assessment which used the Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance. This guide provides a recommended methodology to undertaking a robust assessment. The approach comprises of 10 steps which can be seen in the figure below:



(Source: Sport England 2016)

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## Headline findings

The table below highlights the quantitative headline findings from the Rossendale Playing Pitch Assessment Report:

Sport	Analysis area	Current demand shortfall	Future demand shortfall (2026) <sup>1</sup>
Football (grass pitches) <sup>2</sup>	Rossendale	Shortfall of 3 adult matches Shortfall of 0.5 youth 11v11 matches Demand is being met for youth 9v9 Demand is being met for mini 7v7 Demand is being met for mini 5v5	Shortfall of 3.5 adult matches Shortfall of 3.5 youth 11v11 matches Shortfall of 2.5 youth 9v9 matches Demand is being met for mini 7v7 Demand is being met for mini 5v5
Football (3G AGPs)	Rossendale	Shortfall of 1 full size 3G pitch <sup>3</sup>	Demand could be met to accommodate all competitive mini football on AGPs
Cricket	Rossendale	Demand is being met	Demand is being met
Rugby union	Rossendale	Shortfall of 2.5 match sessions	Shortfall of 5.5 match sessions
Rugby league	Rossendale	No rugby league demand	No rugby league demand
Hockey (Sand AGPs)	Rossendale	No hockey demand	No hockey demand

<sup>1</sup> Please note that this is demand that will exist in 2026 if the current demand is not met and also includes latent and displaced demand identified.

<sup>2</sup> Quantified in match equivalent sessions

<sup>3</sup> To service current training needs. On the basis that there are 81 teams playing within Rossendale, there is a recommended need for two (rounded up from 1.35) full size 3G pitches, of which there is currently one (discounting Alder Grange School) and therefore a need for a further one AGP.

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## Objectives and recommendations

The three main themes of the strategy reflect Rossendale's priorities emanating from Sport England's planning objectives for sport; **protect**, **enhance** and **provide**:

### AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future needs

#### Recommendations:

- a. Protect playing field sites through local planning policy
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs/organisations, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so.

### AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities through improving quality and management of sites

#### Recommendation:

- d. Improve quality
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) for the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding

### AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so

#### Recommendations:

- g. Rectify quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock.
- h. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

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### Sport specific recommendations

#### **Recommendations – grass football pitches**

- ◀ Existing quantity of football pitches to be protected, unless equivalent alternative provision is provided.
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as standard or poor quality, prioritise investment for pitch improvements and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality.
- ◀ Remark adult pitches exclusively used by youth teams (u13s-u16s) in order to better accommodate demand and where possible transfer remaining youth teams to utilise spare capacity on other existing sites.
- ◀ Work with schools to maximise and secure access to pitches on school sites which are currently unavailable for community use and have sufficient capacity to accommodate community use in addition to school use.
- ◀ Where appropriate, develop partnership and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own 'home' sites.
- ◀ Explore opportunities for other bodies such as parish councils to take on more management/responsibility for playing field sites.

#### **Recommendations – 3G pitches**

- ◀ Increase provision of 3G pitches and as a priority explore options to provide double pitch sites.
- ◀ Ensure that sinking funds (formed by periodically setting aside money over time ready for surface replacement when required) are in place to maintain 3G pitch quality in the long term.
- ◀ Carry out consultation with leagues/clubs to gauge acceptance/buy in of moving all youth/mini competitive play to 3G pitches in the future.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches meet FA requirements and are subsequently tested and FA registered. In addition, ensure that existing and future 3G pitches are used to maximum potential to allow for future back to back programming of mini/youth matches at peak times.

#### **World rugby compliant AGPs**

- ◀ Given large amounts of over play on rugby sites consider world rugby compliant AGPs in the Area whether at club sites or shared sites.

#### **Recommendations – cricket**

- ◀ Existing quantity of grass wicket cricket pitches to be protected.
- ◀ Lancashire County Cricket Groundsmen Association and LCCB to work with clubs to review quality issues on those pitches assessed as standard quality.
- ◀ Work with clubs to establish potential future demand to establish women and girls cricket.
- ◀ Work with clubs to ensure appropriate access to ancillary facilities supports provision of pitches/sites.
- ◀ Work with clubs to improve access to indoor training facilities during the winter months.

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### **Recommendations – rugby union**

- ◀ Existing quantity of rugby pitches to be protected, unless equivalent alternative provision is provided.
- ◀ Work to address overplay at Burnley Rugby Club via improvements to pitch quality (maintenance schedules).
- ◀ Work to address overplay at Colne & Nelson Rugby Club via improvements to pitch quality (both maintenance schedules and drainage works). Also consider installing floodlights in order to help address capacity issues to provide both training and evening match play opportunities.
- ◀ Work to address overplay and build future capacity at Rossendale Rugby Club via improvements to either the maintenance schedule or drainage system. Also consider installing more floodlights in order to help address capacity issues to provide both training and evening match play opportunities.
- ◀ Work with Pendle RUFC to develop a long term plan for the sustainability of the Club.
- ◀ If opportunities arise, explore options to provide a full size 3G pitch either directly through the RFU or in partnership with the FA which is World Rugby compliant to help address shortfalls.
- ◀ Explore options for improving on site ancillary facilities on all of the club sites.

### **World rugby compliant AGPs**

- ◀ Consider additional rugby world rugby compliant AGPs in the Area to address levels of overplay, whether at club sites or shared sites.

### **Recommendations – hockey**

- ◀ Retain a sufficient level of sand based pitch provision to accommodate current and future demand.
- ◀ Work with England Hockey to establish the strategic need to retain sand AGPs in Rossendale.
- ◀ Lancashire FA and England Hockey to work together to further assess feasibility of converting potential surplus sand AGPs to 3G pitches.
- ◀ Ensure that sinking funds (formed by periodically setting aside money over time ready for surface replacement when required) are in place to maintain AGP pitch quality in the long term.

### **Recommendations – tennis**

- ◀ Support the LTA in working to improve accessibility to tennis in order to help deliver its Strategy. The LTA is keen to encourage parks and clubs to make use of technology solutions, which includes online court booking and fob access to courts and facilities.
- ◀ Ensure clubs can access the appropriate standard of courts to allow LTA competitions to be played.

### **Recommendations – bowling greens**

- ◀ Ensure local authority greens are not being overused and ensure that quality is sustained or improved.
- ◀ Address spare capacity and maximise the availability of bowling greens for pay and play in order to raise the profile of the game, increase levels of membership and the revenue generated by sites.
- ◀ Support clubs which plan to attract younger people through hosting events such as family days as well as establishing links with local primary schools.
- ◀ Investigate further the need for two greens to be accommodated at one site. Explore opportunities to combine play on to one green.



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### Protecting existing supply

There are a number of lapsed and disused sites across the Borough that need to be considered. The PPS Assessment shows that all playing field sites require protection and therefore cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future, this also includes lapsed, underused and poor quality sites.

Sport England's playing field policy only allows for development of lapsed or disused playing fields if a PPS shows a clear excess in the quantity of playing pitch provision at present and in the future across all playing pitch sports, the site concerned has no special significance to sport and the development involves measures to address any deficiencies in terms of quality or accessibility identified by the PPS. All playing fields should be protected up until the point where all demand has been met. Due to shortfalls identified in the PPS the following sites cannot be developed without sufficient mitigation:

Site	Address	Sport	Management	Current Status
Ewood Bridge Football Ground	Blackburn Road	Football	Private	The Site has been disused for approximately eight years. It consists of car park, clubhouse and stand as well as an adult pitch. The Site, which is in a flood risk 2&3 area, would need investment in order to be brought back in to full use.
Leavengrave	Oak Street, Facit	Rugby	Rossendale Council	Senior pitch disused. Negotiations ongoing to lease to Whitworth Sports Council; it is intended to be brought into use for sporting purposes.
Former Rossendale United Ground	Dark Lane	Football	Private	Former ground of Rossendale United, disused for several years. The Site consists of car park, clubhouse and stand as well as an overgrown adult pitch. All facilities are boarded up and the Site would need investment in order to be brought back in to full use.
Waterbarn Recreation Area	Brandwood Road, Stacksteads	Cricket/ Football	Private	Cricket square used within the last five years by Stacksteads CC but currently unavailable and lapsed. Former football pitch also on site. Potential issues with safety and quality of the land. Former Stacksteads Church on site with potential plans to restore.
Cherry Tree Playing Field (Barlow Fold)	Cherry Tree Lane	Football	Rossendale Council	Site previously marked with youth 11v11 and more recently used recreationally with mini goalposts/ pitch size.

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### **Prioritising investment**

Hub sites are of Borough wide importance where users are willing to travel to access the range and high quality of facilities offered and are likely to be multi-sport. These have been identified on the basis of high impact on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

The financial, social and sporting benefits which can be achieved through development of strategic sites (also known as hub sites) are significant. Sport England provides further guidance on the development of community sports hubs at:

[http://www.sportengland.org/facilities\\_planning/planning\\_tools\\_and\\_guidance/sports\\_hubs.aspx](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance/sports_hubs.aspx)

**Where development of Strategic Sites includes provision of 3G pitches for football it is recommended that further modelling/feasibility work is carried out to ensure sustainability of new 3G pitches to accommodate competitive fixtures.** However, as a priority consultation should be carried out with leagues/clubs to gauge acceptance/buy in of moving competitive play to 3G pitches in the future.

Important Hub Sites in Rossendale and sites that should be prioritised for investment are:

- ◀ Marl Pits
- ◀ Haslingden Sports Centre

### ***Development plans***

There are potential plans in place to reconfigure the pitch layout at Haslingden Sports Centre. Currently there are five adult, two youth and two mini pitches, all assessed as poor quality. The adult pitches are particularly underused and evidence suggests that reconfiguring these to accommodate mini and youth football would better service the Area. As the adult pitches are poor quality (capacity of five matches), reconfiguring to three adult pitches, but improving to standard quality would give capacity of six matches and therefore adult capacity would also be increased at the site.

### ***Poor quality pitches***

Poor and standard quality sites that are over played will require investment to alleviate over play. These are located at:

- ◀ Fearn School
- ◀ St Peters Playing Fields
- ◀ Stacksteads Rec
- ◀ South Shore Street

### ***Securing tenure***

Clubs which access sites that do not have security of tenure are potentially at risk of losing usage at the site. In order to protect the pitches for community use, agreements need to be put in place. Sites most at risk at:

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- ◀ Haslingden St Mary's FC (less than 25 years on the lease)

### **Monitoring and updating**

It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should be led by the local authority and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the steering group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. This should form an on-going role of the steering group. It is possible that in the interim between annual reviews the steering group could operate as a 'virtual' group; prepared to comment on suggestions and updates electronically when relevant.

As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPS being signed off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider the PPS and the information on which it is based to be out of date. If the PPS is used as a 'live' document, and kept up to date, the time frame can be extended to five years.