

Oxford City Council

Sports and Leisure Strategy Draft for Consultation

May 2005

**This document forms part of Oxford City Council's
Cultural Development Framework**

"Culture ... is about improving the quality of life for all, allowing people both to derive pleasure and to fulfil their own potential and broaden their horizons."

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce to you this draft strategic document on Oxford City Council's role in the future provision of Leisure. The purpose of this document is to outline our thinking on how the City Council is seeking to develop a strategic framework for Leisure.

Oxford City Council is committed to being both a provider and enabler of high quality indoor sports and leisure facilities across the City. In developing this draft Strategy the Council has undertaken a major review of what it provides, when it provides it and how it is provided.

As a result of this work a series of sub-strategies is being developed in relation to Indoor Leisure Facilities, Playing Pitches and Sports and Health development and these too will be made available to the public.

The purpose of this consultation document is to inform you of our thinking and approach and to give you the opportunity to express your views, which are important in addressing the challenges of the provision for leisure in the future. We really want to hear your views about what you believe we should concentrate on in terms of Leisure and what you think should be the Council's priorities in this area of work.

The results of this consultation will enable the City Council to firm up its thoughts on how to best plan and fund its own future leisure provision as well as identify strategies for improving provision by other partners.

As part of this process we will formulate robust strategies covering Leisure Facilities, Playing Pitches and Sport and Health development. This will identify the current and future needs for facilities and where these should be located in order to ensure reasonable access to a range of high quality community sports facilities.

Please let me have your comments by the xxxxxxxxxxxxxx 2005. I look forward to hearing from you.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Strategy sets out a framework for Oxford City Council (OCC) to develop provision for Leisure across the City, whether provided by the Council itself or by other partners from the public, private or voluntary sectors. In developing the strategy we have assessed how we currently provide leisure services and the effectiveness of delivery to local residents.
- 1.2 This strategic framework will provide leverage to support external funding applications from such sources as the National Lottery, European funds and other grant giving bodies. It will also inform local planning policies, including the Local Plan and any supplementary planning guidance (SPG) as well as form a basis for planning agreements arising from new developments.
- 1.3 The strategy takes a 10-year view initially in order to run concurrently with the existing Local Plan and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

2. Local Strategic Context

- 2.1 OCC is one of the five districts in Oxfordshire. It is located centrally in the county, about 50 miles north west of London. Oxford is the main urban centre of Oxfordshire, a historic city with a modern service economy as well as a major manufacturing and academic centre. Over 7 million people come to the City per year, primarily to visit the University, and bring in the region of £250m to the City's economy. The City has experienced rapid change over the past 30 years, moving from a university and manufacturing town to a new role as one of the largest employment centres in the South East.
- 2.2 The 2001 census identifies a population of 134,248 for Oxford City, however, it is understood that due to some omissions in the census data, the final population figure has been calculated as 138,597. With an area of 4560 hectares, the population density is 30.39 persons per hectare.
- 2.3 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) profile of the Oxford City population shows that the distribution across key age groups generally matches that of the national average. It is important to consider key differences in profile as some age or cultural / ethnic groups may have a higher propensity to participate in sport and active recreation than others. Key differences within Oxford City are:
 - a) The age structure for the City is different from regional and national patterns in that it has a much higher population of 19-29 year olds who are predominantly the student population within the City. Approximately 23% of the population are registered as students. The city has the highest number of economically active students and the second highest number of economically inactive students in England and Wales. This is important because young people are proportionately more active in sports than other age groups, which may impact not only on the number and type of facilities but also the most appropriate location for them.

- b) A lower than average population of people in the 0-4, 5-7, 8-9, 10-14 and 45-59 age brackets.
- c) 87% of the population are white, the next largest ethnic group is Asian or Asian British and comprises 4.8% of the local population. 3% of the population are of Chinese origins and the remaining groups are Afro Caribbean, African or other Black or mixed origin. The ethnic profile of the population may have an impact on both the level of physical activity undertaken (and therefore demand of facilities and services) and also on the type of activity preferred.
- d) The City also has a higher than regional or national average population from Black and Minority Communities making up 12.9% of the population compared to 8.7% in England and Wales. The City now has the third highest population of black minority ethnic groups in the South East region, outside London, after Slough and Reading. The largest sub group is the South Asian community who make up 4.82% of the population.
- e) The City has a much higher proportion of people living in the rented sector and a lower number of owner-occupiers than the national and regional average. There is nearly double the national average of people renting in the private sector. In addition there are relatively high number of shared households, including houses in multiple occupation. These are mainly located in the more central wards and those to the east of the City centre, where the majority of the private rented stock is located. The majority of Council and social housing tenants are located in the larger peripheral estates namely Blackbird Leys, Barton and Rose Hill. This may reflect levels of disposable income and therefore may influence the affordability of facilities and consequently levels of participation.
- f) Approximately 16% of the population of Oxford live in Council owned accommodation; the National average for England and Wales is 13.2%. Blackbird Leys has 42% of the total Council tenants living on the estate.
- g) Blackbird Leys falls within the worst 10% in England in terms of multiple deprivation according to the 2000 Index of Deprivation. Deprivation is directly linked to ill health so the provision of accessible facilities and services in areas of multiple deprivation may be of greater importance here than other areas which have fewer factors contributing to health inequalities.
- h) Data from the 2000 index of Local Deprivation shows that the City is especially deprived in terms of housing. The index shows that there are 14 city wards in the worst twenty five percent in England and 7 in the worst ten percent.
- i) The City is generally prosperous however; there are pockets of poverty especially in the east and south of the City. Annual earnings in the city on average are similar to the County figures, although they are less than the regional average. The average income in Blackbird Leys is below the regional figure, whilst the higher incomes are concentrated in the central, west and north of the City. This variation in earnings may affect levels and patterns of both affordability and use of leisure facilities and activities.

- j) There is generally a low unemployment rate for the City (the figure of 1.9%, June 2003, is above the regional, but below the national average). However, parts of the City, notably those in the South and East show above average levels at 4%, the differences in the two areas illustrate diverging levels of employment and unemployment. This may indicate areas of opportunity for the development of new services and facilities as a means of creating additional employment opportunities as well as addressing potential need.

3. Strategic Links – The Community Strategy and the Oxford Plan

3.1 Leisure facilities and services have the potential to deliver, contribute or support, a range of the Council's strategic objectives. This section outlines how this and associated strategies relates to other corporate documents, for example the Oxford Plan, the Community Strategy and the Council's Vision.

3.2 The Community Strategy has been developed by the Oxford Strategic Partnership, which consists of a range of organisations based within the City who share a vision for the future of Oxford. Partners include Thames Valley Police, the Primary Care Trust, the City Council and the universities, among others. The Community Strategy outlines the shared concerns of the partners across a range of issues facing the city, from the environment to the economy, as well as the objectives that the partners have agreed as a means of addressing those concerns.

3.3 The Community Strategy has informed the City Council's own Vision and objectives as outlined in the Oxford Plan (the Council's Corporate Plan). The Council's objectives therefore reflect the Partnership's objectives, as illustrated in the boxes below.

Oxford Strategic Partnership Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vibrant and inclusive economy • Safer communities • A better living environment • Opportunities for life • Active and healthy communities

Council Vision The goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the environments where we live and work • Making Oxford a safer city • Providing more affordable housing • Creating local prosperity and sustaining full employment • Improving transport and mobility • Improving dialogue and consultation • Providing more and improved affordable leisure activities

3.4 Sport and leisure have a key role to play in achieving many of these aspirations. As well as the obvious links between levels of physical activity and healthy lifestyles, sport and leisure activities:

- a) Can contribute to creating a safer city through their use as diversionary activities, for example for young offenders or for those at risk of antisocial behaviour.

- b) Help maintain strong economy, whether through employment in order to staff facilities and run programmes, or through the investment necessary to maintain facilities to a high standard.
 - c) Help preserve some of the green spaces in the city because of their value as recreational areas, helping to maintain a good living environment.
- 3.5 In striving to achieve these objectives, the City Council is mindful that other factors are also important. Providing facilities is one strand, but the diversity of communities within Oxford has already been highlighted, and this diversity results in the needs and demands for leisure services varying across the city. Accessibility to facilities varies, not just in relation to available transport routes but also in relation to the cost of using the facilities and the available finances of individual residents. In providing leisure services, the City Council must therefore ensure that this provision reflects the needs of the whole community of Oxford, and that it takes account of local diversity. In so doing sport and leisure activities can promote inclusiveness and can bring much wider reaching benefits.
- 3.6 The links between sport and other cultural activities are increasingly evident, and cultural developments within Oxford are key drivers in the development of leisure services. Over the past decade the role of sport and leisure in the wider cultural life of a local area has also been increasingly recognised within local government. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local authorities will, from 2006, specifically assess how cultural and leisure related services link to an authority's corporate aims and objectives.
- 3.7 It is therefore important that wider cultural issues, as well as sport and leisure in particular, are integrated with and reflect the objectives of the City Council and the Strategic Partnership. This strategy and its sub-strategies will feed directly into a reviewed Cultural Strategy, ensuring that sport, leisure and health are included within the overall vision of culture in Oxford.
- 3.8 The sports and leisure strategies form one branch of a suite of strategies under the emerging umbrella "Cultural Strategy". The other branches are: Tourism and Heritage; Green Spaces; and Arts Development. The strategic framework is outlined in the chart overleaf, and will put cultural development, in its fullest sense, at the heart of the Oxford Strategic Partnership.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Cultural Strategy

A Vibrant and Inclusive Economy
Safer communities
A better Living Environment
Opportunities for Life
Active and Healthy Communities

Sport and Leisure Strategy

Green Spaces Strategy

Tourism & Heritage Strategy

Arts Development Strategy

Leisure Facilities

Playing Pitches

Sport & Health

Allotments

Countryside

Play Areas

Recreation Grounds

Tourism

Events

Heritage

Performing Arts

Music Development

Visual Arts

4. Scope of the Strategy

4.1 Both the definition of 'leisure', and the role of Oxford City Council in the provision of leisure facilities, are open to debate. For example, leisure could be seen to include theatres, cinemas and bowling alleys as well as sports facilities and green spaces. Equally, any local authority has a choice as to whether it provides facilities directly, whether it works in partnership with others, or whether it relies on the private sector to provide sports facilities. Both of these issues are addressed in this section.

4.2 For the purposes of this strategy, current leisure provision can be defined as:

- a) Indoor leisure facilities, including swimming pools, sports halls, fitness facilities, squash courts, ice rinks, indoor tennis centres,
- b) Playing pitch facilities, including football, cricket, rugby, artificial turf pitches.
- c) Outdoor specialist facilities, including athletics tracks, bowls greens, tennis courts, golf courses.

4.3 The City Council's current vision highlights the objective of "providing more and improved affordable leisure activities", and we are currently a direct provider of leisure services. The Council has a role as both a direct provider of facilities and also as an enabler, encouraging use of facilities (both Council and privately-run) through discount schemes such as the Slice card, through promotional activities and through targeted sports development work.

4.4 For the purposes of this strategy, the combination of roles as both provider and enabler is assumed to remain much as it is at present. However, we acknowledge that the role of the Council in leisure provision may be reviewed in the future and that the balance of these roles may subsequently change. In recognition of this, we would encourage anyone wanting to respond to the consultation on this draft strategy, to give particular thought to the some specific issues. The box below highlights some of the key questions that might inform this debate.

The Council's role in leisure provision - Key issues

Q1. Do you think: a) that the Council should be the main provider of leisure and sports facilities, b) that there should be a mix between public and private sector provision, or c) that the Council should not provide any leisure and sports facilities?

Q2. As a general rule do you think the Council should seek to provide facilities – below national standards, equal to national standards or above national standards?

Q3. Are there any specific facilities that you think the Council should provide more or less of?

Q4. Do you support the use of Council financial resources to address the backlog of maintenance and to improve the quality of leisure facilities provided for community use? If the answer is no, how do you think such maintenance should be funded?

Q5. If there are no additional resources to invest would you prefer the City Council to provide fewer facilities of higher quality or to maintain more facilities to a lower standard?

Q6. In your opinion do you think it is important that the City's leisure facilities are managed by Council staff? If alternative management arrangements resulted in lower prices or lower Council tax would your opinion change? What reasons, if any, would you give for supporting management of the facilities being undertaken by an organisation other than the City Council itself?

5 Strategic objectives

5.1 In response to the different roles that the Council plays in the provision of leisure services, this strategy highlights those activities that bring meaningful benefits to the local community through sporting participation and achievement, coupled with opportunities to improve the health of local people through physical activity. This strategy therefore proposes 5 key objectives for delivery which can be linked to objectives of both the Community Plan and the Oxford Plan. These are outlined below, with reference to the specific sub-strategy that deals with them.

5.2 Objective 1.

Development of an appropriate network of indoor and outdoor facilities

Participation is dependent upon a number of factors but most important of all is the ability of residents to access facilities. We must ensure that we have the right number and type of facilities in the right places and provided at the right cost to both the provider and the customer. This is dealt with through the Leisure Facilities Strategy and the Playing Pitch Strategy, and in developing an appropriate network we will take particular account of:

- physical accessibility – location, accessibility and philosophies of use.
- sustainability – revenue costs, provision and management arrangements and building maintenance
- quality – ensuring facilities are ‘fit for purpose’.

This objective responds to:

<i>Community Strategy themes</i>	<i>City Council Vision</i>
A better living environment	Improve the local environment
A vibrant and inclusive economy	Creating prosperity and full employment

5.3 Objective 2.

Commission relevant market research in order to differentiate potential participants

One size does not fit all: different individuals and communities have different needs and desires. Historically, uniform provision of leisure services has repeatedly failed to have any major impact on national participation rates - despite the huge investment in sport since the National Lottery Sports Fund (NLSF), participation has only increased by 0.3%. There is a strong need to identify the different needs of relevant sections of the community, and this applies to all the strategies. This work will focus on:

- market research – commissioning research to inform plans for new developments at an early stage
- market analysis – differentiation of the local population to identify participation rates, leisure preferences and latent needs.
- customer consultation – to monitor effectiveness and satisfaction with service provision

This objective responds to:

Community Strategy themes	City Council Vision
Active and healthy communities	Improving dialogue and consultation
A vibrant and inclusive economy	Creating prosperity and full employment
Opportunities for life	

5.4 Objective 3.

Development of relevant sports and health programmes

Research has repeatedly shown that facilities alone cannot ensure increased participation, especially amongst those sectors of the community that have historically low rates of participation. The Sports and Health Development Strategy focuses on this, and work will cover:

- development of targeted programmes at key groups
- development of foundation level programmes for a range of sports
- development of sports specific programmes in a number of key sports in order to support participation at all levels of the sports development continuum
- identification and development of specific health promotional activities.

This objective responds to:

Community Strategy themes	City Council Vision
Active and healthy communities	Providing more and improved affordable leisure activities
Opportunities for life	

5.5 Objective 4.

Development of a well trained and effective workforce

Continuous improvement in the rapidly changing field of sports and leisure provision relies heavily on utilisation of appropriately educated, qualified and experienced staff. It also requires a continuous investment in staff development through relevant professional training and personal development programming. This theme is relevant to all the strategies, and under this objective the City Council will:

- employ staff who are trained and qualified in an appropriate discipline relevant to their role.
- Initiate training and development opportunities at 'entry level'; in order to improve employment opportunities for local people.
- ensure access to professional development opportunities through the identification of annual Learning and Development Plans
- ensure staff are developed through clear and focused personal development plans linked to the performance of the service.

This objective responds to:

Community Strategy themes	City Council Vision
A vibrant and inclusive economy	Creating prosperity and full employment

5.6 Objective 5.

Attraction of external funding to enhance the sports and leisure offering

Streams of external finance are available to local authorities that identify innovative schemes and can link sports and health development to broader policy agendas. In recent years the City Council has improved its ability to attract external funding but there remains scope for more, particularly from development agreements and a broader source of Exchequer and European funding. This theme runs through all the strategies and under this objective the City Council will focus on:

- development of an evidence based policy for Section 106 agreements
- where appropriate, utilise this policy to address deficits in provision in terms of sufficiency, quality and developmental capacity.
- review of current activities and programmes to assess potential for 'value added' amendments in order to attract partnership funding
- identification of new programmes and activities that have the potential to attract external funding.

This objective responds to:

Community Strategy themes	City Council Vision
Active and healthy communities	Providing more and improved affordable leisure activities
A vibrant and inclusive economy	Creating prosperity and full employment

6. Oxford City Council – Principles of provision

6.1 In developing the objectives for this strategy, we have adopted a series of principles, which we believe will help to ensure that the benefits of sports and leisure activities can be maximised, not just for those directly participating but also for wider communities. These principles are outlined below.

6.2 Leisure Planning

Leisure planning and provision needs to take account of a number of factors:

a) Accessibility

Facilities must be accessible for all residents, with good access by public transport and safe access for cyclists and pedestrians. Facilities and activities must also be respectful of cultural and other needs, to ensure that no other barriers to access are unnecessarily established.

Good quality leisure facilities assist in economic development both at a local and city-wide level, and investment in a range of high quality facilities can assist economic regeneration in specific areas of the City (Barton, Blackbird Leys) as well as be of benefit in supporting development within the West End. By integrating leisure facilities into new developments, access issues can be addressed at an early stage.

b) Appropriate programming

Programming that meet the needs of customers across all aspects of leisure provision need to be developed with due reference to local requirements

c) Employment

Employment of staff should be based on a meritocratic selection process. The terms of employment should equip staff to be responsive to customer needs, to develop the skills to enjoy sustainable careers and to be rewarded within their work.

This principle accords with:

Community Strategy themes	City Council Vision
A vibrant and inclusive economy	Create prosperity and full employment
	Improve transport and mobility

6.3 Service planning

Service provision should focus on two key aspects:

- a) Equipping communities to be self reliant in organising and participating in the leisure activities of their choice.

The provision of sports and leisure should ideally be down to the communities themselves and the City Council should have a clear role as an enabler where communities have the resources to assist themselves in developing opportunities.

- b) Providing diversionary activities for those target groups at greatest risk of offending and engaging in anti-social behaviour.

Targeted activity at those section of the community who are most excluded and/or at risk of offending should be a priority for the allocation of City Council resources, ideally in partnership with other crime prevention agencies.

This principle accords with:

Community Strategy themes	City Council Vision
Safer communities	Making Oxford a safer place

6.4 Leisure facility provision

Leisure provision should be planned to deliver high standards of build and maintenance.

The appropriate level of provision can ensure that quality remains high and that customers enjoy use of facilities, pitches etc;

Refurbishment and new build provision should take account of energy efficiency targets and good practice design.

Implementation of new or improved leisure provision should take place alongside new housing developments and should be concurrent with local planning policy and any supplementary planning guidance that is developed.

This principle accords with:

<i>Community Strategy themes</i>	<i>City Council Vision</i>
A better living environment	Improve the local environment
A vibrant and inclusive economy	Creating prosperity and full employment

6.5 Participation as a lifelong commitment.

Development of school based leisure facilities and activities is an important tool to assist in the delivery of new opportunities for leisure participation. This also supports the extended schools concept and the embedding of schools within communities.

This in turn may contribute to the raising of education attainment within local schools increasing broader life opportunities for local people.

Initiatives such as the Slice card need to be developed and extended to support activities that are relevant to specific target groups.

This principle accords with:

<i>Community Strategy themes</i>	<i>City Council Vision</i>
Opportunities for life	Providing more and improved affordable leisure activities

6.6 Participation for Health

Sport and Leisure provision allows for all citizens to stay healthy and active, both physically and mentally. Working in partnership with other agencies and the communities themselves in the delivery of sports and leisure opportunities ensures maximum community empowerment, delivers the appropriate opportunities to increase participation and ensures realistic development and sustainability.

This principle accords with:

<i>Community Strategy themes</i>	<i>City Council Vision</i>
Active and healthy communities	Improving dialogue and consultation

7. Sports and Leisure Strategy: the Key Priorities for implementation

7.1 Sports and Leisure provision across the City has a key role to play in assisting the wider priorities for developing Oxford as a 21st century city. The City Council therefore proposes to establish the following as it's "Key Priorities for Sport and Leisure" over the next 3-5 years:

- a) The development and implementation of a Leisure Facilities Strategy
- b) The development and implementation of a Playing Pitch Strategy

- c) The development and implementation of a Sport and Health Development Strategy

7.2 Recognising the above as the key priorities the City Council further proposes to translate these into specific objectives with agreed targets for implementation as follows:

Priority	Action for Implementation	Target	Delivered by
Leisure Facilities Strategy	Publication of draft Leisure Facilities Strategy for public consultation	Summer 2005	City Council
	Rationalisation and prioritisation of investment requirements for existing facilities	Priorities evaluated by Autumn 2005	City Council
	Review and amendment of facility programmes to meet local needs	Revised programmed in place by end of 2005/6	City Council PCT Other Agencies
Playing Pitch Strategy	Publication of Playing Pitch Strategy	Summer 2005	City Council
	Rationalisation and adaptation of current provision to meet expressed needs	Winter season 2005-06 and summer season 2006	City Council Sports Leagues Sports Clubs
	Prioritisation of investment requirements to improve quality of provision	Autumn 2005	City Council
	Identification of requirements for new specialist facility development	Facility gaps identified by end of 2005	City Council County Council Local Sports Community Governing bodies of sport
Sports and Health Development Strategy	Publication of draft Sports and Health Development Strategy for consultation	Summer 2005	City Council
	Identification of a "Key target sports" approach to inform resource allocation	Post consultation to end of 2005	City Council NGB's Local sports clubs
	Identification of key target groups for prioritisation as part of specific interventionist activity	Post consultation to end of 2005	City Council Community Safety Partnership Local sports clubs.