

Oxford City Council

Playing Pitch 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.

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Summary of Assessments – Key Findings

- 2.1 Summary of key issues for football
- 2.2 Summary of key issues for cricket
- 2.3 Summary of key issues for rugby
- 2.4 Summary of key issues for hockey
- 2.5 Summary of key issues for specialist sports
- 2.6 Summary of key issues for Area Committees

3. Strategic Objectives and Proposals

4. Specific recommendations by Site

Appendix 1 – SWOT analyses of Major current sites

Appendix 2 – Funding Opportunities and Issues

Appendix 3 – Current Site Matrix analysis

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The City Council retains a firm commitment to playing a full and proactive role in the development of outdoor leisure facilities, either provided by the Council or by others, with the key aim of ensuring 'affordable leisure facilities' are accessible to as many local residents as possible.

The strategy will set out a series of options for Oxford City Council in its provision of outdoor playing pitches across the city. It will also identify the potential and some options for additional provision by other partners from the public, private or voluntary sectors.

This strategy should be considered in conjunction with the Council's overall "Sports and Leisure Strategy" as it sets out how the City Council sees its role as part of a broader strategy for leisure provision. This strategy is also intended to assist the Council in assessing the current levels of playing pitches provision and evaluate their effectiveness. It will provide a framework for future provision and the development of the Council's own facilities.

The strategy will be used to support external funding applications to the National Lottery, Football Foundation, European funds and other grant giving bodies. It will also inform local planning policies, including the Local Plan and any supplementary planning guidance (SPG) and form a basis for negotiating planning agreements associated with new development.

This document is intended to provide information on the strategy process and key findings, together with some general and sports specific options for policy consideration.

The strategy will take a 10-year view initially in order to run concurrently with the existing Local Plan and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

1.2 The need and scope of the strategy

The rationale for undertaking the study is to identify playing pitches currently provided in Oxford by the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors, and to compare this with current and likely future levels of demand. The supply and demand analysis identifies the need for some new pitch facilities and also suggests where there are too many facilities, or where they are in the wrong location. The analysis helps to underpin future planning policy and allocation, and will help support bids for external funding.

1.3 Specific Issues to be tackled by the Strategy

- 1.3.1 The development of new residential areas, continuing population growth and the changing expectations of the public about leisure activities and opportunities all have implications for future provision of playing pitches. Equally, the plans of other providers will have an influence on the future location, mix and scale of playing pitch provision in the Oxford City boundary.

1.3.2 Increasing concern at national government level over the loss of playing fields has prompted a requirement to develop localised Playing Pitch Assessments and Strategies, which identify current and future requirements for playing fields. Developing a strategic approach to the analysis of playing pitch supply and demand provides a foundation to:

- Protect playing pitches against development pressures, specifically residential proposals on land in and around urban areas
- Identify pitch (natural grass and artificial) supply and demand issues in relation to predicted population changes
- Address 'demand' pressures created as a result of specific sports development pressures e.g. mini soccer, move to use of artificial pitches by hockey
- Identify inequalities in supply and demand across the area committee zones within the City Council Boundaries
- Identify priority sites for development or improvement in relation to external funding opportunities, e.g. the Football Foundation.

1.3.3 The Oxford Playing Pitch Assessment covered the overall City Council boundary area and also considered, where appropriate, the overlap of supply and demand with adjoining areas. This encompassed an assessment of use and quality of sites and whether they are currently "fit for purpose" so that a hierarchy of investment priorities for pitch improvement and development could be identified.

1.4 Benefits of a Playing Pitch Strategy

1.4.1 There are a number of key benefits in undertaking a local assessment and developing a strategy for Oxford City. These can be summarised as:

a. Corporate and Strategic benefits, which include:

- Ensuring a strategic approach to playing pitch provision. During times of change for local authorities, a playing pitch strategy provides direction and set priorities for pitch sports.
- Providing robust evidence for capital funding. As well as proving the need for developer contributions towards pitches and facilities, a playing pitch strategy can provide evidence of need for a range of capital grants. Current funding examples include the Sport England Lottery Fund, the Football Foundation and New Opportunities Fund.
- Demonstrating the value of leisure related services during times of increasing scrutiny and non-statutory services
- Demonstrating commitment to Best Value. The assessment methodology has included considerable consultation with local sports clubs, schools and stakeholders, challenges the current pitch supply arrangements, compares some aspects (e.g. Hire fees) of pitch provision with those of neighbouring authorities and as a result can encourage competitiveness.
- Providing valuable links to other strategies and local plans and can support and inform such plans e.g. the Community Plan, Local Cultural Strategy, Sports and Leisure Strategy, Sport and Health development Plan.

b. Planning related benefits, which include:

- Providing a basis for establishing new pitch requirements arising from new housing developments
- It is one of the best “tools” for the protection of pitches threatened by development
- It links closely with work being undertaken on open spaces (through PPG17) to provide an holistic approach to open space improvement and protection

c. Operational benefits, which include:

- Improving the local authority’s asset management by providing detailed audit information and facility user views. This should result in more efficient use of resources and reduced overheads
- It highlights locations and specific sites where quality can be enhanced

d. Sports and Health Development benefits, which include:

- Helping to identify where community use of school pitches is most needed
- Providing better information to residents and other users of sports pitches
- Helping to promote sports development by helping to unlock latent demand through identifying where facilities are lacking and might be suppressing the formation and further development of teams

1.5 The Assessment process

1.5.1 In August 2002 Oxford City Council appointed an external consultant to provide an independent assessment of the adequacy of the City’s playing pitches and associated facilities, from which a new Playing Pitch Strategy could be drafted. The overall aim of the assessment was to determine the number of pitches required for each specific sport, such as Football, Cricket, Rugby Union & Hockey, to meet the City’s current demand and future population projections and to make an assessment of the quality of those facilities.

1.5.2 The Sport England and CCPR methodology for assessing playing pitches, contained within the report “Toward a Level Playing Field”, does not provide specific standards for pitch provision that can be universally applied. Instead it guides local authorities on how they should derive local standards, by using local information and developing policy to meet local circumstances.

1.5.3 Ascertaining accurate supply and demand information is critical in producing a robust, accurate strategy, which is ‘owned’ by all stakeholders. The current supply of pitches was established through undertaking a series of data review, research and consultation exercises. These consisted of:

- Review of information held by Oxford City Council
- Audit of pitches owned and managed by Oxford City Council, and other providers at local level with identified community use
- Consultation with key stakeholders (e.g. Governing Bodies of Sport)
- A postal survey of all schools within the authority
- A postal survey to all identified Sports Clubs as agreed with Oxford City Council
- Consultation with neighbouring authorities

1.5.5 The current demand for pitches was then established by a series of research and consultation exercises:

- An initial sports club questionnaire sent to identified clubs within the authority area (and a number located just outside of the boundary) Overall 197 questionnaires were sent out with a return of 62 (31%)
- Additional telephone consultation with key sports clubs
- Booking information from pitch sites within the authority area
- Analysis of local League handbooks
- Consultation with governing bodies of sport

2 – Summary of Assessment – Key Findings

The Playing Pitch Assessment identified the following key issues:

- Deficits or over-supplies of pitches borough wide.
- Pitches that were of poor quality.
- Facilities associated with playing pitches that were in poor condition.

The following sections analyse supply, demand and quality of facilities by individual sports and also on an area committee basis.

2.1 Summary of key issues for football

- Overall quality of pitches is rated as “Good” with only 4 pitches being rated as “Poor”
- The quality of pitches equates to pitches available being capable, should demand warrant, to facilitate significantly more games
- Peak demand for football is Sunday morning with little demand being placed on pitches Sunday afternoon. The potential to stagger games is therefore an option for the Council should senior football demand increase.
- The assessment shows a surplus of pitches at all times with the exception of junior boys on Sunday when there is a deficit of pitch provision.
- The majority of Junior boys teams are affiliated to the Oxford Mail boys league
- Saturday is peak time for mini soccer
- There are a number of pitches on school sites currently not available for Community use that could be utilised through partnership working to meet potential issues with supply and demand.
- Changing Facilities need to be improved to cater for the further development of Junior, Girls and Women’s football.
- A key concern is the lack of Council run floodlit training facilities. The majority of floodlit facilities are mainly provided on schools, college sites. There is an over reliance upon schools and colleges to provide such facilities.

2.2 Summary of key issues for cricket

- Even with the small sample of quality assessments undertaken it is clear that there is over provision. However provision is not in any structured form, with most provision being in private ownership. This does not support good club development and is a City wide picture.
- It is important to note that the College provision could change and it is not good practice to be reliant upon private provision to meet demand.
- The majority of Cricket development appears to be undertaken by one club Oxford & Horspath, where the majority of juniors play and they have a clear need for improved facilities and access to good training. The Horspath Road is an essential site for multi sport development and although it has not been included in the calculations for this study (as it is outside the City Council Boundaries) it plays a major part in the provision of sport for the people of Oxford.
- Future growth will be through such development as proposed by the larger clubs such as Oxford and Horspath C.C
- The practise of playing “friendlies” by teams does not lead to wider opportunities for the development of cricket within Oxford.
- Due to most of the pitches being in the ownership or management of private clubs there may be issues over access to facilities for newly forming teams
- The lack of Sports development officers available to work with clubs and teams means Oxford is missing an opportunity to secure potentially available external funding.
- Concern has been expressed by clubs with regards to College facilities being withdrawn, and the fact that a number of teams have an almost over reliance on these sites being available in the future.
- Clubs are developing youth cricket in isolation to the City Council’s Sports development
- Clubs are working closely with the E.C.B and the City Council would appear to have limited involvement
- Women’s Cricket is slow to develop
- Clubs are developing links with Universities in isolation of the City Council
- The clubs have an aspiration to develop a ‘Centre of Excellence for Cricket within the City Boundaries, this aspiration could tie into wider social agendas currently being developed by the council in tackling issues of youth disorder, social inclusion and health improvement.
- The City Council needs to develop a Cricket development plan.

2.3 Summary of key issues for rugby

- Access to facilities for new teams may be an issue
- Access to structured provision is required
- Clubs feel they are not being supported by the City Council
- An over reliance on colleges could lead to potential future problems.
- The larger clubs within Oxford are predicting a significant increase in numbers(Oxford Harlequins 50+,Oxford Rugby Club 40+).
- Oxford Harlequins are key partners with Oxford & Horspath C.C to develop a Centre of excellence for the future development of the sport at all levels.
- Teams have a difficulty in retaining players due to lack of facilities.
- The site at Horspath suffers from over use.

- The larger clubs recognise the value their sport can contribute to the social inclusion agenda, out of hours games and floodlighting for training are key to developing this initiative further.
- The Sports governing body are keen to develop a centre of excellence and to contribute to the wider agendas of health, access to good facilities, social inclusion.
- Access to floodlit pitches for training is an issue identified by the R.F.U and is seen as a Countywide issue.
- The RFU believe teams have problems accessing pitches.
- It appears that there is no provision made for casual users
- Teams travel out of the City boundaries to make use of facilities e.g. floodlit training venues, pitches in the Vale of White Horse.
- Maintenance of pitches is an issue with the R.F.U as they believe pitches can deteriorate quickly.
- The Horspath Road site is a very important site for the future development of Rugby for the teams in Oxford.

2.4 Summary of key issues for hockey

- Demand is currently met through a combination of low team generation and a high number of pitches
- There are “fit for purpose” and quality issues with some of the current sites
- The STPs are unevenly distributed across the City
- Clubs using East Oxford Astro-turf have expressed concern over the surface being worn.
- The East Oxford Astro-turf’s future is questionable as the school, are considering options for the future of the site
- The city council need to develop a Hockey development plan
- Teams are travelling out of the Borough for training facilities in neighbouring authorities.
- The Council is reliant on other bodies to provide pitches and as such could fail to be meeting demand if facilities are withdrawn for whatever reason from Community use.

2.5 Summary of key issues for specialist sports

The specialist sports included in the playing pitch assessment were tennis, athletics and bowling greens. The Sport England methodology for playing pitch provision does not apply to these sports. The assessment highlighted the following as key issues:

a. Tennis

- Oxford City Council has a number of tennis courts which include both hard courts and grass courts.
- The standard of these facilities is high especially the large number of grass courts. The supply of courts exceeds the demand

b. Athletics

- There are two athletic tracks in the Oxford City boundary (Iffley Rd and Horspath Rd).
- The facility at Horspath has one athletics club attached to it.

- There is also another athletics track in the Vale of White Horse.

c. Bowling Greens

- There are seven bowling greens in the ownership of Oxford City Council and there are also private bowling greens in the Oxford City area.
- The supply of these greens exceeds the demand with a number of clubs struggling for members. For example Barton Bowling Club which currently has seven members.

2.5 The playing pitch assessment also analysed playing pitch provision in relation to area committee boundaries and the key findings of this assessment are outlined below:

2.5.1 Summary of key issues for the Central Area

- There is a surplus of pitches of all types in Central South and West Area Committee, other than STPs of which there is none. However, there are no hockey teams in this area.
- A large amount of pitches in this area are owned by University Colleges, therefore are likely to be of very high quality.
- High numbers of the population are students. This will impact by increasing the population in the 18-25 age bracket, however it is unlikely that these people will be members of local sports clubs. The impact this will have on the figures must be considered.
- Cricket pitches were difficult to obtain ratings for as they were not marked out at the time of year of the site surveys.
- Ancillary facilities were also difficult to gain access to in the Colleges, however these are usually of a very high quality.

2.5.2 Summary of key issues for the Cowley Area

- There is a surplus of senior and mini pitches in Cowley, there is a deficit of 1 junior football pitch.
- The deficiency of cricket pitches is largely due to the existence of one club, Oxford and Horspath C.C. Whilst 2 of their teams play In Lye Valley ward, the remainder of the teams were listed only as playing at “various venues”, therefore for the purposes of analysis it was assumed that all other teams play in this ward. It is this assumption that has created the deficiency, and this must be taken into consideration.

2.5.3 Summary of key issues for the East Area

- Many of the residents are likely to be University Students who will participate in University Sport as opposed to local club sport.
- It is likely that the hockey clubs will travel outside the area committee to play.
- The East ward is primarily the city centre and as such has little provision of outdoor sports facilities.

2.5.4 Summary of key issues for the North Area

- There is a surplus of football and cricket pitches and an over reliance on non council provision of STPs.
- Of the hockey teams in the area, the vast majority of them are from the North Oxford Hockey Club.
- Pitch quality is generally very high.

2.5.5 Summary of key issues for the North East Area

- There is a deficiency of Junior Pitches, but this could be addressed by re-assigning some of the surplus senior and mini pitches.
- There is a deficiency of rugby pitches this could be met through the surplus provision of senior football pitches.
- Whilst there is a deficiency of hockey pitches it is worth noting that there are only 2 clubs, therefore arrangements to accommodate all the teams over these 2 pitches are probably done easier internally, or some teams travel outside the borough.

2.5.6 Summary of key issues for the South East Area

- There is a surplus of adult and mini football pitches in the South East.
- There is a deficiency of Junior pitches to meet demand, there is the option to convert the surplus senior pitches into Junior Pitches to meet demand or alternatively seek community usage from the schools in the area that do not provide community use of their facilities.
- There is no provision of Cricket or Hockey in the area
- One Rugby club exists and plays on the single pitch within the area boundary this pitch is provided by a local school.

2.6 Supply side issues – Operational

A number of general issues were also highlighted in the assessment and these are summarised below :

- 2.6.1 A review of the Council's pitch booking records revealed that there is significant use of some sites and relatively little or no demand for other facilities. Whilst this is due in part to local teams demanding local facilities, there are some sites that attract teams from further a field. Over demand for some sites is also as a result of many pitches not being served by adequate changing room facilities.
- 2.6.2 The assessment results revealed that there were a number of sites not served by adequate changing rooms. For example many are not fit for purpose and are not capable of meeting expected provision for men's and women's, adult and Junior dual use. This limits their value and in some cases raises access issues, either through lack of segregation (preventing male and female teams from using at the same time) or through wider issues such as failure to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. Examples of poor changing room facilities include Cutteslowe Park, Quarry Road Recreation Ground, Blackbird Leys Recreation Ground, Barton Recreation Ground and Rosehill Recreation Ground.

- 2.6.3 There was a low response from the consultation with local football league secretaries and this suggested that the low initial response to the football club questionnaire was partly down to clubs not believing that any improvements to facilities would result out of participating in the study.
- 2.6.4 The majority of playing pitches are in publicly accessible parks or on open access recreation grounds. This in essence means that a playing pitch is not just a sports facility, but part of the fabric of the open space environment. As a result, a playing pitch will receive a range of use in addition to formal matches. Informal games, dog walking and in some cases special events will impact in the quality of facilities.

3 – Strategic Objectives and Proposals

- 3.1 From the assessment undertaken and taking account of the key issues as described there are a number of Strategic principles that need to be considered if the City Council is to provide and /or enable the appropriate level of quality playing pitches in the right locations across the City.

These can broadly be described as:

3.1.1 Strategic Objective 1 Changing the use of existing pitches

Where playing pitches are presently provided but are of the wrong type (e.g. senior rather than junior pitches) it is possible, in some locations , to change the provision. This will enable demand to be met where it is most appropriate for different types of use.

3.1.2 Strategic Objective 2 Enhancing dual – use of schools facilities

At present three key factors impinge on this area. First some schools have facilities that could be made available for public use through joint use agreements provided appropriate negotiations could be entered into. Secondly, some schools are actively seeking to provide community facilities as part of their drive for 'extended schools'. This may present timely opportunities to review provision in some geographical areas. Finally, some junior schools are unable to meet their national curriculum requirements due to lack of recreational space and negotiations with county have begun on how the City can assist some schools to overcome this problem.

This is therefore a timely moment to enter into meaningful discussions with the County Council on the potential for additional dual use arrangements.

3.1.3 Strategic Objective 3 Enhancing capacity through quality improvement

Rationalisation of pitch allocations across the City will enable the present budget allocation to be better focused on a smaller number of sites. This in turn can facilitate improved maintenance regimes on those sites which in turn will facilitate extra usage. Such a move will enable the

Leisure and Parks service, responsible for maintenance of the pitches, to consider a policy of allowing some sites to 'lie fallow' for short or long periods

This will, in the medium to longer term, enable pitches to be rotated and rested according to demand and will benefit the long term quality of playing pitch provision.

3.1.4 Strategic Objective 4 Consider alternative management options

Due to historical provision and operational custom and practice some of the presently provided sites operate at a higher level of subsidy than others. Particular problems occur around single pitch site, used by a single user group perhaps once a week, but requiring the same level of staffing and maintenance (particularly building maintenance) as multi-pitch sites.

Pilot arrangements have been introduced with some clubs being given 'quasi-management' responsibilities for key holding, security etc;

Where there is a need to retain single site pitches as part of the city-wide network of allocation, it is proposed that these arrangements be formalised and extended as appropriate.

3.1.5 Strategic Objective 5 Development of new pitch sites and locations

There are two key elements to be considered. First, in demographic terms continuous research and measurement of demand needs to be undertaken in order to assess any changes in demand. Such changes may result from a range of sources such as:

- Increased interest in key sports through changes in trends and fashion
- Increased sports development activity in key sports or for key target groups
- Demographic changes resulting in new residents stimulating new types of activity
- Local cultural changes in leisure expectations
- Increased public awareness of related issues e.g. health and physical activity
- External investment as a stimulator of local demand.
- New developments increasing total demand

Secondly, analysis of pitch provision has raised some key questions in terms of location and quality vis-à-vis ground conditions. It may therefore be appropriate to consider re-location of some sites to achieve quality improvement with commensurate provision of informal open space being provided as part of any such arrangements.

This policy should also be considered as part of a proposed development gain through proposed Section 106 agreements.

3.2 Specific Strategic Proposals

3.2.1 The following proposals are made in consideration of the above strategic policy objectives. The proposals have been categorised as relating to City-wide strategic planning and facility development. In terms of specific proposals the City council will:

3.2.2 Strategic Proposal 1. Consider the development of a hierarchy of provision.

At the top level, major sites should be developed to cater for all the sporting needs of clubs and teams in terms of adequate and appropriate changing, floodlit all weather training and multi sports provision.

Sites that would lend themselves to this level of provision are Cutteslowe Park(North), Court Place Farm(North East), Cowley Marsh(Cowley) Horspath(East) and Rose Hill (South East).Central area would be served by Court Place Farm, Horspath or any of the other key sites dependent upon where teams are located.

Sites of middle order significance would be a combination of existing Council Sites or School/College sites. Sites of lower order significance are the sites used for informal kick about, have no changing facilities and are primarily used by local teams.

3.2.3 Strategic Proposal 2 Seek to use the planning policy process to resource and implement strategic objectives

Reference to the playing pitch assessment and this strategy document will inform and prioritise future facility development and will form part of any developing supplementary planning guidance (SPG). Such a proposal will include the use of identified priorities for investment identified as an indicator for Section 106 funding

3.2.4 Strategic Proposal 3 Review current charging policy

Such a review will include the consideration of the introduction of variable pitch hire charges that reflect the quality of overall provision including pitches, changing facilities and accessibility. It will also include a fully costed review of subsidy levels across all sites, sports and individual clubs. The findings of the review will form part of any changes to pricing policy proposed as part of the 2006/07 budget setting process.

3.2.5 Strategic Proposal 4 Protect open space development

The current surplus and deficiencies highlighted in the study should be treated with some caution and they should not be seen as an opportunity to dispose of pitches. They should be seen as an opportunity and a need to generate greater interest in sport at all levels through proactive sports development, supporting existing clubs, developing networks to create opportunity for participation across the city area and providing the proposed hierarchy of quality provision.

Implementation of the Strategic objectives above indicates that the City Council should provide more junior pitches at the expense of senior pitches based on current demand as there is a deficit in junior provision at present.

It is recognised that this may change in future years and as, at this moment in time, no such disposal of open space will be proposed as part of this strategy.

3.2.6 Strategic Proposal 5 Develop specific facility standards for sites

We will seek to improve the overall quality and quantity of existing and new ancillary accommodation with particular emphasis on the need to provide adequately for juniors and women, girls and disabled users.

This needs to be done in accordance with the identification of priorities for investment and improvement. In line with Child Protection Guidance, it is important to ensure that facilities can also be segregated to accommodate male and female, junior and senior sports teams.

We will also prioritise investment in ancillary facilities on key multi pitch sites as a more economical use of resources, particularly in relation to ancillary facilities

We will ensure that where provided, informal kick about areas e.g. street sports sites are maintained and adequately provide for informal play – this is to ensure that informal use of formal pitches is kept to a minimum in order to sustain quality

We will seek to ensure that there is adequate access to floodlit training facilities to support the overall development of pitch sports at local level. This will include a more targeted level of investment in pitch renovation and improvements to ancillary facilities and seek to address the current over reliance on other providers of Synthetic turf pitches (STP's).

4 – Specific Recommendations by Site

4.0. Site Recommendations

The following site recommendations have been made based on the research produced from the Playing Pitch Assessment.

It is recommended that a 'hierarchy of provision' be developed to serve the differing communities of the six committee Areas but retaining a 'city-wide' distribution focus.

It is also similarly recommended that four specific sites be developed which would be major sites catering for city wide needs including the sporting needs of clubs and teams in terms of adequate and appropriate changing, floodlit all weather training and multi sports provision.

The four recommended sites that best lend themselves to this level of provision are Court Place Farm, Cowley Marsh, Horspath and Blackbird Leys (Appendix 3). It is then recommended that sites at a local level be developed to cater for needs of sports clubs in those areas. It is proposed that applications be made to the sources of funding outlined in Appendix 2 to upgrade facilities in these sites.

4.1 Court Place Farm - Facility Information

FACILITIES / PITCHES	SPORTS PROVISION
1 Floodlit football pitch	Football
4 Adult 1 Mini	Football
8 Changing rooms	Changing Rooms

Recommendation: - Court Place Farm - Football/Hockey Centre

It is recommended that a football community centre be developed in Court Place Farm together with provision for hockey development by working in association with regional development officers, national governing bodies (NGBs), local clubs and schools.

The Playing Pitch Assessment highlighted the lack of STPs owned by Oxford City Council. It is proposed that a STP be constructed at Court Place Farm and that a Football Centre of Excellence be considered providing an appropriate partnership can be brokered.

This project includes consideration of the following proposals:

- A new STP facility for football, hockey
- New fencing and floodlighting to the new AWP
- Drainage and pitch upgrade to the existing park area
- Building four new football pitches complete with drainage
- Increasing and improving the changing room provision
- Developing an SLA with OXRAD (or similar organisation) for management
- Increase car parking provision

It would be important for the facility to be efficiently managed and a local partnership, probably involving OXRAD could be considered in order to facilitate this. This SLA would cover pitch bookings, maintenance and establish a marketing/ promotion campaign, as currently, due to the poor condition of the facility, this is non-existent. There would also be a substantial increase in income generation.

Even though hockey is not a major sport of the City in comparison to football, the playing pitch assessment highlighted a lack of hockey facilities within the City. This site could be used for dual use of both hockey and football.

4.2 Horspath Recreation Ground - Facility Information

FACILITIES / PITCHES	SPORTS PROVISION
1 Adult 1 Junior 1 Mini	Football
1 track	Athletics
3 rugby	Rugby
1 cricket	Cricket Squares
1 Pavilion	10 Changing Rooms

This facility is one of the best sites in the borough due to the landscape off the pitches being level. This facility is well used by local clubs and also nearby schools, plus the pavilion is also home to an athletics club and also a rugby club. Whilst there are enough changing rooms, the Playing Pitch Assessment highlighted that they are too small and are in a poor condition. The pitches also need improved drainage work. The assessment also highlighted the need to develop cricket and rugby in the City. The two main clubs for these sports are based at Horspath Recreation Ground. The assessment also highlighted the need to consider the future management of the athletics track.

Recommendation: - Horspath Recreation Ground

It is recommended that consideration is given to the following:

- The existing pavilion be refurbished
- Drainage work is undertaken on all pitches and brought up to a high standard.
- Future management of athletics track is considered. This would have to be in conjunction with rugby due to the proposals of the Harlequins Rugby Club to use the centre pitch of the athletics track as a floodlit pitch.

The existing cricket pitches require improvement and funding could be accessed for this work, possibly through the English Cricket Board (ECB) or through the regional cricket development office.

Should the Cricket and Rugby Centre of Excellence being proposed by a consortia of clubs and involving Oxford Brookes University come to fruition, this could provide an appropriate vehicle to develop this site in accordance with the proposals listed above, but removing direct management from Council responsibility. Similar to Court Place Farm an appropriate SLA would need to be agreed, probably concurrent with a leasehold agreement.

4.3 Blackbird Leys Park Facility Information

FACILITIES / PITCHES	SPORTS PROVISION
4 Adult 3 Mini	Football
1 Bowling Green	Bowling
1 Pavilion	2 Changing Rooms

The playing pitch assessment identified the changing facilities to be very poor and they do not meet the standards required of the Child Protection Act. The assessment also highlighted the lack of STPs in the South East Area.

Proposal: - Blackbird Leys Park

It is recommended that:

- The current pavilion be refurbished for the bowling club
- A new pavilion incorporating changing facilities be developed in association with the Leisure Centre or within for football
- An STP be constructed in association with the Leisure Centre
- Drainage work is undertaken on the pitches to improve their condition.

4.4 Cowley Marsh Facility Information

The playing pitch assessment highlighted the need for a major site to be created to serve the needs of the East, Central and Cowley area of the City. There are currently three adult football pitches at Cowley Marsh and also one mini pitch. There is also one cricket pitch that is used by teams for friendly matches. The cricket pitch is in poor condition because it is located in a public

park and hence suffers from informal play. The football pitches, however, are in good condition. The playing pitch assessment highlighted the lack of STPs in the Central, East and Cowley Area.

FACILITIES / PITCHES	SPORTS PROVISION
3 Adult	Football
1 Mini	Football
1 Cricket	Cricket
1 Pavilion	8 Changing Rooms

Recommendation: - Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground

It is recommended that::

- The cricket pitch be replaced by an artificial wicket which would be used by teams for friendlies and would not suffer from informal use
- A STP be constructed on site
- The car park area be increased

If an STP be were to developed on Cowley Marsh there would be a number of issues which would need to be addressed including planning issues, housing issues and also management issues associated with the facility. There is also the issue that Oxford City Council from Oxfordshire County Council leases a proportion of the site. An alternative location for such a facility could be the Oxford Community School whom has intimated that they would like to develop an STP on site. Provision could then be made for a joint use agreement between the Oxford Community School and the City Council for this facility. The existing football pitches at Cowley Marsh could be removed and provision be made at the Oxford Community School. Cowley Marsh could then be designated open recreational space.

4.5 Other Improvements proposed at smaller locations.

In addition to the improvement recommendations listed at the major sites it is recommended that the following improvements be made at local sites:

4.5.1 Recommendation: - Rosehill Recreation Ground

It is recommended that:

- Drainage work is carried out on all pitches to improve pitch quality.
- The pavilion be refurbished

4.5.2 Recommendation: - Cutteslowe Park

It is recommended that:

- Drainage work is carried out on all pitches to improve pitch quality.
- The pavilion be refurbished

4.5.3 Recommendation: - Barton Recreation Ground

It is recommended that:

- Drainage work is carried out on all pitches to improve pitch quality.
- The pavilion be refurbished

4.5.4 Recommendation: - Quarry Recreation Ground

It is recommended that:

- Drainage work is carried out on all pitches to improve pitch quality.
- The pavilion be refurbished

4.5.5 Recommendation: - Sandy Lane

It is recommended that the pavilion be refurbished.

4.6 Other recommendations

4.6.1 The playing pitch assessment highlighted that there was a surplus of adult pitches therefore the future of Croft Rd Recreation Ground as a site for football should be considered and also Botley Park.

4.6.2 The future of the Union Street MUGA should be considered because of the recommendations to construct full size STPs and the current facility at Union Street does not cater for formal adult football.

4.6.2 The playing pitch assessment highlighted that there was a surplus of bowling greens in relation to demand. The rationalisation of these greens to meet demand should be considered.

4.6.3 The assessment highlighted the need for management of tennis courts in the City. The City Council should consider the future management of these facilities.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 - SWOT Analysis Court Place Farm

STRENGTHS

1. Existing provision of floodlights, therefore planning permission should be granted
2. Location with existing OXRAD
3. Adequate car parking
4. Good changing rooms
5. Good transport links, easily accessible
6. Oxford City stadium on site

WEAKNESSESS

1. Feasibility study required for additional football pitches on site
2. Planning permission probably required as a result of this
3. Management and maintenance issues need to be negotiated and resolved with OXRAD
4. Drainage required if location approved
5. Resident aggravation
6. Traffic congestion issue

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Opportunities for an excellent multi sport site – flagship scheme
2. Enhance relationship with OXRAD
3. Combine marketing and promotion – cost effective
4. Increase financial income from proper management of pitch bookings including STP
5. Play host to/become regional centers of excellence/national training academies

THREATS

1. Management agreement required with OXRAD, beneficial to both parties
2. Cost of overall project

Appendix 1 - SWOT Analysis Horspath Recreation Ground

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Good range of football provision for adults and little/mini league2. Good level of provision for cricket and rugby3. Car parking available4. Accessible transport links5. Athletics track in place6. Active rugby and cricket clubs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Condition and appearance of Pavilion2. Lack of Changing rooms in comparison with size/number of pitches3. Car parking capacity needs to be increased
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Political opportunity due to friends group, although needs careful handling.2. Opportunity for pitch upgrades3. Opportunity for refurbishment of pavilion and increased number of changing rooms4. Could lead to opportunity of commercial income due to hire of facility for parties, nursery, school use5. Possible partnership with Neighbourhood wardens / Police6. Rugby/cricket club enthusiasm	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Not really suitable for an AWP2. Planning permission would be required for AWP – unlikely.3. Cost of overall project4. Security

Appendix 1 - SWOT Analysis Blackbird Leys Park

STRENGTHS

1. Can be managed through Leisure Centre
2. Area of social deprivation
2. Existing club usage
3. Sufficient car parking
4. Accessible /Good public transport
5. Level landscape

WEAKNESSESS

1. Close to housing to allow floodlights
2. Condition of pavilion
3. Appearance of pavilion
4. Size of changing rooms

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Opportunity for new pavilion
2. Drainage to all pitches
3. Increased income from pavilion/bookings
4. Increased school / club usage

THREATS

1. Planning Permission
2. Political
3. Increased car park

Appendix 1 - SWOT Analysis Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground

STRENGTHS

1. Excellent changing rooms
2. Location (Cowley) in terms of other borough facilities
3. Level Landscape
4. High level of usage

WEAKNESSESS

1. Serious lack of car parking
2. Not suitable for AWP
3. Cricket restrictive

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Pitch upgrade to elite standard
2. Drainage improvements to all pitches
3. Future Centre of Excellence

THREATS

1. Not suitable for AWP or floodlights
2. Planning permission required in any case

APPENDIX 2

Based on the Playing Pitch Strategy the options for external funding that are suitable to the strategy have been identified and are listed below.

1 The Football Foundation

The main source of funding is the Football Foundation, which is dedicated to revitalising the grass roots of the game. Applications are on a project basis and the maximum grant available for capital projects is £1million. However, the average grant for London Borough's is 57%. This therefore means that LBS would have to match fund the remaining 43% if we were to receive the average. The Football Foundation has stated that it is looking to target the top 25% most deprived areas in the England, however if an application area is not in the top 25% then it will still be considered.

2 Sport England Lottery Fund (SELF)

SELF provides grants to all pitch sports with the exception of football. The maximum grant for a capital project varies considerably. The percentage level of support is now typically no more than 50%, although it can be up to 65% and in priority areas up to 90%.

3 New Opportunities Fund (NOF)

Through the Playing Fields strand of the New Opportunities Fund, funding is available for the purchase or improvement of playing pitches (not clubhouses). There is no limit to the maximum grant that can be applied for, but the percentage level of support is typically no more than 65% (although it can be up to 95% in the most deprived wards). This programme started in May 2001 and will run for four years. However, the aim was to award the bulk of the funding in the first three years and to use the fourth year for monitoring, so the potential for securing funding from this is limited.

The following is an outline of the application process Oxford City Council would have to follow in order to submit a credible application:

- Security of tenure (Site selection)
- Planning Permission (where applicable)
- Design and Specification Requirements
- Acceptable Fee and Cost Levels

- Funding Support
- Alternative Sources of Partnership Funding
- Procurement
- Business Plan (Job Descriptions, Budget planning, income/expenditure analysis, Pricing Policy)

There are a number of issues which need to be considered when applying for Football Foundation Funding:

- a. The average grant for an authority applying to the Football Foundation is 57%, therefore Oxford City Council could potentially have to fund 43%.
- b. To access funding the Football Foundation requires the applicant to have a Football Development Plan (FDP) in place. Oxford City Council needs to develop such a plan in order that funding can be accessed.
- c. Evidence of a Local Football Partnership (LFP) with local clubs, schools and other groups in relation to the new facility is essential to access funding.
- d. To apply for external funding there are initial costs that have to be met by the applicant. These include costs to employ external consultants, architects, quantity surveyors and specialist companies to provide advice, tenders and plans. These costs have to be met by the applicant before an application can be made and there is a risk that the application may not be accepted. The Football Foundation does however, offer advice throughout the whole process to enable the proposals to be successful and if an application is successful these initial project costs can be refunded.
- e. The Oxfordshire Football Association has offered Oxford City Council support throughout this process including support for application management, project management and support for developing the Football Development Plan. They have allocated Roger Davis to assist in this process, however this will involve a lot of officer time.
- f. The timescale for such applications can be up to two years. The Football Foundation aims to inform applicants whether they have been successful within twenty-six weeks of receipt of the application.
- g. The Football Foundation is very keen to support projects that involve a combination of sports other than football, e.g. hockey, rugby and cricket.

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3: Site Matrix Analyses

	Court Place Farm	Horspath	Blackbird Leys Park	Cowley Marsh
	3 Adult Football pitches 1 floodlit pitch 4/5 Mini Soccer pitches	1 Athletics track 2 Cricket Squares (unused) 3 Rugby pitches	3 Adult Football pitches 1 Mini Soccer pitch	2 Adult Football pitches 1 cricket
Sport				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football • Hockey • Cricket • Tennis • Rugby • Athletics 	✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓
Drainage	Definitely needed, due to landscape	Needed	Needed	Good, but needed
Pavilion/Changing Facilities	Poor, only 3 changing rooms need at least 6. 300sqm minimum	Small changing rooms - would need more though if development goes ahead	Poor - rebuild needed to meet standards	Good changing facilities, poor location of pavilion
Floodlights	Good	New Floodlights needed	N/a	N/A
Car Parking	Poor but increase needed by 50 spaces	Good but may need increasing	Poor	Very Poor, increase by 100 spaces
Pitch Quality	Upgrade required	Good	Poor	Good, upgrade for 1/2 pitches possible
STP Suitability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Priority	1. STP 2. Pavilion 3. Car Park 4. Pitches	1. Pitches 2. Pavilion 3. Track	1. STP 2. Pavilion 3. Pitches 4. Car parking	1. STP 2. Car Park 3. Pitches