

Report of:	Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health - Councillor Dorothy Davison Director of Regeneration and Culture - Richard Horniman
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Submitted to:	Executive - 22 December 2020
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Subject:	Middlesbrough Playing Pitch Strategy
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)
That Executive approves the adoption of the Middlesbrough Playing Pitch Strategy for use as a source of reference in decisions pertaining to Middlesbrough’s playing pitches.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?¹
Decision	Yes	No	No

Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan		
People	Place	Business
The protection, provision and enhancement of Middlesbrough’s playing pitches provides an environment that contributes significantly to the health, happiness and well-being of the town’s residents.	The protection, provision and enhancement of Middlesbrough’s playing contributes to providing a physical infrastructure that enables sports clubs/organisations to prosper for the benefit of Middlesbrough residents whilst engendering a collective sense of pride in Middlesbrough.	The protection, provision and enhancement of Middlesbrough’s playing pitches enables Middlesbrough to continue to attract sport and leisure events of local, regional and national significance that raise positively the profile of Middlesbrough and create positive economic impact.

Ward(s) affected
All Wards are affected by this proposal.

¹ Remove for non-Executive reports

What is the purpose of this report?

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Middlesbrough's Playing Pitch Strategy with a view to its adoption by the Council for use as a point of reference for decisions pertaining to Middlesbrough's playing pitches.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. The proposals would potentially affect all wards and are likely to inform funding bids over £150,000.

Report Background

3. The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is a document that provides an evidence base to enable the Council to maximise the amount of high quality playing pitch surfaces and playing pitch ancillary facilities for its residents while understanding the need to meet planning and housing requirements.
4. Central to the PPS is Sport England's directive that local authorities should seek to protect, provide and enhance its playing pitches.

Overview of the Playing Pitch Strategy

5. Middlesbrough Council commissioned 4global Consulting to prepare a PPS to provide the Council with a clear evidence base and set of recommendations for future outdoor sports facility development across Middlesbrough.
6. In line with Sport England's recommendations, Middlesbrough's PPS was delivered through consultation with a steering group comprising of internal, local, regional and national partners.
7. The PPS focussed on outdoor facilities used by the following sports: football, cricket, rugby union, hockey, tennis, golf and rugby league.
8. The aim of the PPS is to deliver against the following drivers:
 - a. providing a critical piece of the evidence base required for the preparation of the Middlesbrough Council Local Plan through the provision of a clear strategy and action plan with owners and defined timescales for completion;
 - b. recognition of the importance of outdoor physical activity and sport and the clear demonstration of how these should be prioritised within any development or regeneration project;
 - c. provision of an evidenced based approach and the management of a clear sign-off and governance structure for key stakeholders; and,
 - d. evidence to support a wider review into sport and physical activity provision, including housing and population growth projected in neighbouring local authorities.

Planning and Playing Pitch Provision

9. The PPS recognises the relationship between the provision of playing pitches and the delivery of the Council's housebuilding programme and provides a mechanism for ensuring the interest of both are recognised.

10. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the requirement of local authorities to establish and provide adequate and proper leisure facilities to meet local needs. The NPPF notes:

“Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.”

11. The NPPF further notes that *“Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

- *An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”*

12. The provision of new or enhancement of existing playing pitch sites will require capital investment. In addition to, where appropriate, working alongside funding partners such as national governing bodies of sport and Sport England the PPS recommends that funding should also be secured from:

- a. Where new developments, either commercial, residential or for other uses, takes place on land owned by the Council and generate capital receipts that the Council use the PPS to identify where these capital receipts may be invested; and.
- b. Where new development takes place on land not owned by Middlesbrough MBC, planning obligations under Section 106 should be used to ensure that investment into local playing pitch infrastructure is invested in, to meet the growing need driven through development

PPS Strategic Recommendations

13. The PPS has identified a number of issues or opportunities to address. Alongside each of these issues or opportunities the PPS has made a strategic recommendations to guide the Council. An outline of the issues or opportunities identified by the PPS and their accompanying strategic recommendations can be found in appendix 1.

PPS Moving Forward

14. To facilitate the development of sport and physical activity across Middlesbrough, the PPS advises that the Steering Group, set up as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy project, continues to work together to deliver the recommendations defined as part of this strategy.

15. Through a detailed supply and demand analysis of the sports included in the scope of the PPS, as well as stakeholder consultations across the study area, the PPS has provided an action plan to guide the steering group in their delivery of sports provision and facility decisions over the next 10 years.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

16. That Executive approves the adoption of the Middlesbrough Playing Pitch Strategy for use as a source of reference in decisions pertaining to Middlesbrough's playing pitches.

Why is this being recommended?

17. This is being recommended so that the Council has a strategic foundation upon which to make decisions relating to the protection, provision and enhancement of Middlesbrough's playing pitches. The same strategic basis will also increase the council's capacity to work with partners to attract investment in projects that protect, provide and enhance the town's playing pitches.

18. The PPS has been delivered through consultation with all relevant stakeholders following the guidelines set out by Sport England.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

19. The Council could choose not to adopt the PPS, however, this approach is not recommended for the following reasons:

- a. It would undermine the strategic rationale for decisions pertaining to playing pitches and frustrate the Council's development aspirations and priorities. This may lead to decisions taken by the Council being challenged by Sport England which may then have further implications for the planning process, the delivery of the Local Plan, and achieving the Council's housing targets; and,
- b. The lack of a strategic rationale for decisions pertaining to playing pitches will significantly hamper the capability of the Council to work with partners to attract external investment in projects.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

20. The impacts of the recommended decisions are as follows:

Legal

21. The adoption by the Council of the PPS will provide the Council with a strategic underpinning upon which to make decisions. These decisions will generate their own legal implications in relations to areas such as funding agreements, governance and contractual arrangements relating to the management of sites or building; and lease arrangements.

Financial

22. The adoption by the Council of the PPS will provide the Council with a strategic underpinning upon which to make decisions that may have financial implications, however, the adoption of the PPS in of itself does not. The exact requirements and associated costs differ depending upon the Council sites brought for sale. Therefore, each will be assessed on a site by site basis and the value of top-slicing of receipts and the reasoning for will be recommended to Executive at the appropriate juncture.

23. The non-adoption of the PPS would remove the strategic underpinning for decisions by the Council to mitigate the loss of playing fields to development. This could see Sport England challenge the Council's decision and in so doing hamper proposed developments and with it potential capital receipts, new council tax and rates income to the Council.

24. The adoption by the Council of the PPS will provide the Council with a strategic foundation to look to implement at its discretion some of the proposed projects to protect, provide and an enhance Middlesbrough's playing pitches. Through the PPS the Council will possess the evidence base to work in partnership with national partners to access funding for projects though this will almost certainly require the Council to provide at least 50% of project cost and consider full on-cost implications.

Policy Framework

25. The decision will not amend the Council's policy framework.

Equality and Diversity

26. An Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and has concluded that the decisions requested would not have any disproportionately negative impacts.

Risk

27. The adoption by the Council of the PPS will provide the strategic understanding and foundation for proposed decisions, that may incur a level of risk, to be considered. These risks will be counter balanced by the wider benefits to Middlesbrough's residents of the provision, protection and enhancement of the town's playing pitches.

28. The non-adoption of the PPS would remove the strategic underpinning for decisions by the Council to mitigate the loss of playing fields to development. This could see Sport England challenge the Council's decision and in so doing hamper proposed developments and with it potential new council tax and rates income to the Council.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

29. The steering group that contributed to the delivery of the PPS will continue to contribute to the delivery of the recommendations of the PPS subject, where appropriate, to the approval of the Council.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Strategic Recommendations

Appendix 2 – Middlesbrough Council Playing Pitch Strategy – Needs Assessment

Appendix 3 – Middlesbrough Council Playing Pitch Strategy – Strategy Document

Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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