

**Background Paper – Needs Assessment – Leisure and play facilities
(including indoor facilities such as sports halls as well as outdoor facilities)**

Last updated: 6 September 2013

SUMMARY OF NEEDS:

Outdoor facilities:

- There is a need for improvements to existing football facilities such as better pavilions, floodlighting (mainly for training areas) and additional artificial surfaces.
- The need for a further “3G” floodlit artificial turf pitch has been identified with a priority being the Richmond / Ham / Sheen / Barnes.
- Parts of Mortlake/Sheen, West Twickenham, Hampton and Whitton are outside the 1.2 km catchment for rugby pitches. As demand is likely to increase, upgrade of existing facilities and floodlit facilities to allow for evening training is a priority.
- The need is for improvements to the quality of existing pitches and to ancillary facilities such as pavilions, particularly those in some parks.
- There appears to be adequate provision for tennis in quantitative terms, so the main need is for improvements to existing courts and associated facilities, including floodlighting.
- There are no tennis club facilities in Hampton Hill/Hampton.
- Retention of existing bowls facilities.
- Need for artificial turf hockey turf pitches, including floodlighting, as parts of the borough are outside the 1.2km catchment.
- Although no area is outside of the 1.2 km catchment for multi-purpose floodlit courts, such as for netball use, there is a demand for a further club in the east of the borough (e.g. a floodlit centre in Richmond/Sheen, possibly on the Old Deer Park site).
- Need to provide better quality indoor net facilities within sports centres / sports halls.
- Barn Elms should be retained and upgraded as recreational non-competitive athletics facility.
- Need for improving existing golf facilities.
- Retain water-sport facilities and provision in the borough as demand is likely to increase; clubs need close to the waterside and on-site facilities, e.g. for loading of boats. Need for upgrade of ancillary facilities including improving access to the water.

Indoor facilities:

- A shortfall of one public sport centre in the borough; evidence suggests there is a need for one in the Ham and Petersham area.
- Grey Court School is seen as a priority for further dual use sports hall provision.
- Provision of a new sports hall to serve Waldegrave School.
- Provision of a specialist centre for volleyball, possibly on the Richmond College site.
- There is an under provision of one indoor pool in the borough (indoor pools are currently located in Teddington and Richmond; outdoor pools in Richmond and Hampton); identified need for one pool possibly in the Ham and Petersham area or through installing retractable roof on the Pools on the Park Outdoor Pool.
- Retain specialist centres in the borough for individual sports; there is demand for a specialist Volleyball centre (see also above).

Play facilities:

- Play provision is needed for the older age range (i.e. 12-18 years); this could include more adventurous equipment such as climbing walls, skate parks, natural play areas

incorporating den building, trees to climb etc. Such facilities could be installed in existing open spaces and parks.

1. Policy Background

1.1 National

Key policies guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), relevant to leisure, recreation and play facilities are:

- Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, which also includes improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure (para 9).
- In drawing up Local Plans, LPAs should allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres (para 23).
- When assessing applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres, LPAs should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500 sq m) (para 26).
- Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities (para 37).
- Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required (para 73).
- 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 needs for which clearly outweigh the loss (para 74).
- LPAs should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include, amongst other things, strategic policies to deliver the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development (para 156).
- LPAs should have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across their area by preparing and maintaining a robust evidence base (para 160). This evidence based should also be used to assess the quantitative and qualitative needs leisure development (para 161).

1.2 Regional

London Plan:

- Policy 2.7 Outer London economy: reference is made in this policy to the need for identifying and bringing forward capacity in and around town centres with good public transport accessibility to accommodate leisure, retail and other needs. In addition, leisure, arts, culture and tourism should be supported due to its contribution to the outer London economy.
- Policy 2.15 Town Centres: Development proposals should support and enhance the competitiveness, quality and diversity of town centre retail, leisure, arts and cultural, other consumer services and public services.
- Table 2.1 Potential strategic outer London development centres: Richmond is listed as a “Potential outer London development centre” for leisure, tourism, arts, culture and sports.
- Policy 4.6 Support for enhancement of arts, culture, sport and entertainment provision: In preparing LDFs, boroughs should designate and develop cultural quarters to accommodate new arts, cultural and leisure activities, enabling them to contribute more effectively to regeneration.
- Policy 4.7 Retail and town centre development: The Mayor supports a strong, partnership approach to assessing need and bringing forward capacity for retail, commercial, culture and leisure development in town centres. In taking planning decisions on proposed retail and town centre development, the scale of retail, commercial, culture and leisure development should be related to the size, role and function of a town centre and its catchment; retail, commercial, culture and leisure development should be focused on sites within town centres.
- Policy 7.1 Building London’s neighbourhoods and communities: Places of work and leisure, streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces should be designed to meet the needs of the community at all stages of people’s lives, and should meet the principles of lifetime neighbourhoods.
- Policy 7.27 Blue Ribbon Network – supporting infrastructure and recreational use: Development proposals that result in the loss of existing facilities for waterborne sport and leisure should be refused, unless suitable replacement facilities are provided.

1.3 Local Policy

Core Strategy:

- CP9 Twickenham Town Centre – this also refers to “Promoting the town centre as a centre for sports, leisure, arts and cultural activities.
- CP10 Open Land and Parks – requires the protection and enhance of designated open land for biodiversity, sport and recreation and heritage, and for visual reasons.
- CP17 Health and Well-being – this policy promotes a pattern of land use and facilities to encourage walking, cycling, and leisure and recreation and play facilities to provide for a healthy lifestyle for all, including provisions for open and play space within new development as appropriate. In addition, the policy requires the retention of existing

health, social care, leisure and recreation provision where these continue to meet or can be adapted to meet residents' needs.

Development Management Plan:

- Policy DM OS 2 Metropolitan Open Land – requires the protection and retention of designated MOL in predominately open use. Appropriate uses include public and private open spaces and playing fields, open recreation and sport, biodiversity including rivers and bodies of water and open community uses including allotments and cemeteries.
- Policy DM OS 7 Children's and Young People's Play Facilities – policy focuses on protection and improvement of children's and young people's play facilities, including provision of new facilities.
- Policy DM OS 8 Sport and Recreation Facilities – Public and private sports grounds including playing fields and recreational areas, courts and greens as well as private open space in recreational use will be protected and enhanced. Owners of private facilities will be encouraged to make them available for public access and use.
- Policy DM HO 4 Housing Mix and Standards – This policy sets out requirements for amenity space for all new dwellings, which should be:
 - private, usable functional and safe;
 - easily accessible from living areas;
 - orientated to take account of need for sunlight and shading;
 - of a sufficient size to meet the needs of the likely number of occupiers;
 - accommodation likely to be occupied by families with young children should have direct and easy access to adequate private amenity space

Corporate Plan:

One of the themes in the Corporate Plan is 'Place', which identifies 'A Green Borough' as one of the main service priority areas. The Uplift programme will continue to revitalise areas of the borough through a range of improvements including enhancements to visual appearance, retail areas, open spaces and civic areas. In addition, a new multi-million pound Parks Improvement Programme is being delivered. This will directly and indirectly support the protection, provision and enhancement of leisure facilities in the borough.

In addition, within the priority of 'Supporting local business, reviving local high street and arts', there is a commitment to support competitive sports and work with locally based clubs.

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents, including site briefs

All adopted SPGs and SPDs will be applied with respect to any development proposal coming forward in the Site Allocations Plan. There are no specific SPGs/SPDs that deal with leisure and play facilities; however, some requirements in this regard are included in SPD offering design guidance, Conservation Area Studies and in relevant site briefs.

Details of all adopted SPGs/SPDs can be found on the Council's webpage:

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/supplementary_planning_documents_and_guidance.htm

2. Research and Evidence

An assessment of sports halls and indoor as well as outdoor leisure facilities has been carried out as part of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment (2008): http://www.richmond.gov.uk/needs_assessmentfinalupdatemar08.pdf. Although this assessment has been carried out in 2008, it is still largely relevant and only some of the details may have changed. The open space, sport and recreation needs have been reviewed and updated as part of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/infrastructure_delivery_plan.htm.

The above assessments identified the following in relation to **Outdoor Leisure Facilities**:

There are various types of facilities within the borough, including Council owned and run facilities, land or facilities owned by others such as the Royal Parks, which are publicly available free or at low cost, private facilities, which are available to non-members at concessionary rates, Council owned facilities exclusively let to one club and completely private facilities. Educational facilities may be public or private, with or without dual or shared use. Where public money has been given to private clubs (such as from the Lottery or Sport England) there is often a requirement to open up the club to a wider group.

Different sports and activities have different traditions of provision, for example there are few public rugby pitches but a number of rugby clubs in the borough where members are welcome at relatively low cost, whereas for football most facilities are public, and clubs do not generally own their own grounds.

The Borough has over 2,000 ha of open space, about one quarter of this is managed by the Council. Within the Borough is Richmond Park (1,000 ha), Bushy Park (450ha) the largest and second largest open spaces in London and the Old Deer Park (147 ha) which provides a regional recreational function, as does the River Thames with its 27km of towpath. Overall the Borough is very well provided with public open space in relation to its population having 13 ha per 1000 compared to the generally recommended 2.48 ha (6 acres) per 1000. As an Outer London Borough, open land and sport facilities are also used by residents from inner London where there is less open space. Such open land is protected by planning designations and the focus is therefore on making the best use of the space for recreation and sport, rather than extensive new provision.

Note that for most categories, the availability of public or private facilities where there is a level of public access have been compared to the standard, but where there is a shortfall the availability of alternative provision is considered – this could be private or dual use, more details are given below under each category.

- There are a large number of football pitches in the borough, which means that there are no areas of the borough outside the 1.2 km catchment for such pitches. Demand is likely to rise with an increasing younger population and the increased interest in women's and girls football. As there appears to be adequate provision for football in quantitative terms, with the option of bringing under-used areas back into use, e.g. Murray Park and Buckingham Field, the main need is for improvements to existing facilities in some areas, e.g. better pavilions, floodlighting (mainly for training areas), and additional artificial surfaces. The need for a further "3G" floodlit artificial turf pitch has been identified with a priority being the Richmond / Ham / Sheen / Barnes.
- There are areas outside the 1.2 km catchment for rugby pitches in this borough, including parts of Mortlake/Sheen, West Twickenham, Hampton and Whitton. At the moment demand for rugby is high, particularly for younger age groups. Demand is likely to rise with an increasing younger population. Surveys show a desire from clubs to upgrade existing facilities such as pavilions and floodlit facilities in places to allow for evening training.

- Most of the borough falls within the 1.2 km catchment of a cricket pitch. There has been a strong increase in junior cricket, including girls cricket, throughout the borough and this is likely to feed through to a general increase in participation. However, at the moment there does not appear to be a need for additional cricket facilities in the borough, although this could change over time. The need is for improvements to the quality of existing pitches and to ancillary facilities such as pavilions, particularly hose in some parks.
- There is a need to provide better quality indoor net facilities within sports centres / sports halls.
- There is a good distribution of both public and private tennis facilities across the borough with nowhere outside the 1.2 km catchment, but there are no club facilities in Hampton Hill/Hampton. There are high levels of usage of Council facilities during peak summer months. Clubs are at capacity and generally require more court time. Demand is likely to rise slightly with an increasing younger population; lack of floodlighting at many venues severely limits use in winter. Whilst there appears to be adequate provision for tennis in quantitative terms, there is the option of bringing other areas back into use, should the demand rise. The main need is for improvements to existing courts and associated facilities, including floodlighting.
- Whilst there is currently no under provision of bowls facilities, as the proportion of older people in the population grows, existing facilities should be retained and invested in as well as promoted to ensure that they are retained as viable clubs.
- In relation to hockey, there is likely to be a future demand for access to artificial turf pitches, particularly where floodlit, as demand already exceeds supply. Compared to other pitch sports there are relatively few hockey pitches, so parts of the borough are outside the 1.2 km catchment, although out of borough facilities help to make up the shortfall.
- In terms of multi-purpose floodlit courts, such as for netball use, there is clear evidence of unmet demand. However, due to the large number of schools offering netball, facilities are widespread and there are no areas of the borough outside the 1.2 km catchment. There is demand to further develop a club in the east of the borough and it is suggested that a floodlit centre should be developed in Richmond / Sheen, with a possible site being Old Deer Park.
- Demand is likely to continue to rise for athletics facilities. St Mary's is a nationally recognised performance centre, where the needs of local performance athletes will be provided for. Barn Elms should be retained and upgraded as a recreational non-competitive facility.
- There are high levels of demand for public golf facilities. Most of the borough is within the 1.2 km catchment of a publicly accessible golf club. It is considered that there are sufficient golf facilities in the borough, and that priority should be given to improving existing facilities where necessary and encouraging wider access, particularly clubs developing their junior sections and linking with schools.
- Demand is likely to continue in the future for water sport provision. There may be pressure particularly for development on riverside sites, so there is a need to ensure protection for these activities, which have to be based close to the waterside. Most clubs need on-site facilities for the loading and unloading of boats, when they are taken for competitions elsewhere, and there is a need for some clubs to upgrade ancillary facilities including improving access to the water.

The Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan identified the following in relation to **Indoor Leisure Facilities**:

- The Council's Sport & Fitness Service directly manages five dual use sports & fitness centres in the borough. In addition, of the eight secondary schools in the borough, all have sports halls with the exception of Waldegrave School. With the projected growth in population, there should be approximately six public facilities in the borough, using the standard of 1 public sports centre per 30,000 population, which would suggest there is a shortfall of one public sport centre in the borough. There is also a geographical gap in provision in the Ham and Petersham area and Grey Court School is therefore seen as the priority for further dual use sports hall provision. Providing a new sports hall to serve Waldegrave School is a priority.
- The commercial sector provision of sport & fitness in Richmond has been a major growth area in the last 15 years. There are now eleven commercially operated health & fitness clubs based in the borough. It is estimated that there are over 32,000 members of commercial sports, health and fitness clubs in Richmond.
- Most health and fitness clubs have vacancies for membership and there is some evidence of members moving to low cost gyms and a trend to overall falls in fitness club membership levels.
- The two main public indoor pools are in Teddington and Richmond; outdoor pools are in Richmond and Hampton. 13 pools are attached to schools; there are three indoor pools attached to private clubs. Compared to a standard of one indoor pool per 60,000 population, there is an under provision of 1 indoor pool in the borough.
- There are a number of specialist centres in the borough catering for individual sports including Richmond Gymnastics Centre, Busen Martial Arts & Fitness Centre, Anglo'-Japanese Judo Club. Busen Martial Arts Centre is currently under threat of redevelopment. Volleyball has been identified as a sport where there is demand for but no current provision of a specialist centre.

The Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Council's Play Strategy Review 2011-2014 (<http://www.richmond.gov.uk/play>) identified the following in relation to **play facilities**:

- There has been an intensive programme of Council investment in children's play facilities, which brought the majority of the playgrounds up to Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) standard. There are currently 45 children's play areas in the borough, all of which are open to the public. In addition, as part of the previous Play Strategy (2007-2011), a basic audit and mapping of local play space provision was carried out.
- Overall the borough is fairly well provided with good quality children's play facilities and there are only very few residential areas which are more than 400m from a play facility. There is good access to open space, with a few small pockets where this is not the case. There is good provision of fixed playgrounds in most areas, following substantial recent investment. This provides for the 0 to 8 age range primarily. Most are physically accessible and include some dual use/inclusive play equipment. The age range of the playgrounds is somewhat limited – mainly to under 8s. More provision is needed to expand to the older age range. There is limited provision of adventurous – risky play and provision of accessible play equipment could be improved.

- The play survey identified that the age group least well catered for are the 12-18s and that teenagers need free play and recreation facilities as much as the younger age range; there may therefore be a need for more adventurous equipment such as climbing walls and skate parks, as well as natural play areas incorporating den building, trees to climb and natural features such as boulders and mounds.
- Demand is predicted to increase slightly for children's play facilities over the next years. Some of the areas at a distance from play facilities are close to other open areas such as the Royal Parks or other open spaces where, with funding, play facilities could be installed. There also might be opportunities to secure dual use of school playing facilities in areas of particular deficiency. Even where a full scale play ground is not possible incidental open spaces could be designed as "pocket parks" or "door step" play areas.
- A creative approach to incidental playable space within a community should be incorporated utilising the general public space as a shared space for playful activity across the generations. An ethos of mutual respect across generations and age groups for their right to use public space appropriately needs to be developed, removing the "Do not play on the grass" & "no ball games" culture, including an understanding that children's play is not just about standard play facilities with fixed equipment.
- The Play Strategy identified a need to find a way to provide safe play sites with minimal formal supervision, but some form of safety net for the middle ages – 8 to 15, when children should be able to go start going out to play with friends. Provision for older children and young people also needs improvement. Furthermore, basic accessibility needs to be improved for children with special needs; accessible toilet facilities and parking are important. Children living in areas of relative disadvantage are less likely to be able to afford paid for play facilities (such as adventure playgrounds, sports clubs) and are unlikely to travel to other areas for free play opportunities.
- In areas where new housing is being developed, the following approach should be considered to meet increased demand:
 - Provide new play space as required by policy DM OS 7 and London Plan SPG;
 - Meet minimum standards for amenity spaces (in line with policy DM HO 4);
 - Assess access to play spaces, taking into account existing provision;
 - Enhance existing provision and improve access to it;
- In addition, possibilities should be explored to make use of alternative facilities, e.g. community use of school facilities, creating play facilities in other civic spaces or open areas as well as temporary or permanent 'Play Streets' (see below) and temporary or permanent play schemes in public or private areas.
- There has been recent interest in developing Play Streets – through existing legislation such as The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 part 3 – street Playgrounds or a temporary play street order. This could be developed by supporting community groups and volunteers to set up schemes in their locality (subject to the suitability of the street and a consensus of agreement from the residents) as has already been implemented in Bristol. Formal play streets, where appropriate, could supplement play space provision in new developments.

3. Consultation

The Council's All in One survey (http://www.richmond.gov.uk/all_in_one) has asked every resident in the borough about their priorities for the local area. 'Parks and open spaces' was the category that people best liked about the local area (chosen by 73% of respondents).

The All in One survey was followed with a series of village planning events across the borough during the summer of 2011. These events gave residents the chance to discuss local issues in more detail and find potential solutions, including how the Council and community could take things forward together.

There are now 14 Village Plans covering the whole borough, of which parks and open spaces, including associated sport and recreation as well as leisure facilities feature within some of them. Further information can be found at:

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/community_and_living/village_plans.htm

In addition, over the past years, the Council has carried out a number of consultations in relation to play and sports facilities, examples of which are set out below:

- Parks Improvement Programme (Holly Road Gardens, Garfield Road Open Space, Champions Wharf): http://www.richmond.gov.uk/consultation_details.htm?id=C01211
- Playground refurbishments: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/consultation_details.htm?id=C00913
- Play Strategy survey: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/consultation_details.htm?id=C00716
- Holly Road Garden of Rest Improvement: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/consultation_details.htm?id=C01321
- Champions Wharf Play Beach Consultation: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/consultation_details.htm?id=C01292
- Playground Upgrade, Ham Village Green: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/consultation_details.htm?id=C01180
- Tangier Green and Craneford Way Playground Improvements: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/council_consultations/consultation_details.htm?id=C01179