

London Borough of Ealing

Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facility Strategy 2022-2031

Executive Summary



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1. Introduction – Brief, Scope, Vision and Aims

1.1 Background

The new Ealing Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facility Strategy 2022 – 31 produced in line with Sport England's latest guidance, is the follow-on document to the Ealing Sports Facility Strategy 2012-21.

Continuum Sport and Leisure were commissioned by the Council to lead on the production of the new strategy, following national guidance published by Sport England. Each local authority in the country is encouraged to produce this type of document to inform future decisions regarding the demand and supply of existing and new indoor and outdoor sports facilities in a given area. The strategy document also informs action plans which detail potential facility developments based on the demand and supply analysis, these will be reviewed and adjusted where necessary on an annual basis.

The resulting action plans are a guide to how enhanced and new facilities might be developed, pending funding confirmation and planning permission where necessary, where they might be developed and the lead organisation to meet identified demand, exploit opportunities that may arise and provide sustainable management and operational models. Often projects are delivered through the Council or the sport's governing body engaging with voluntary, education or commercial partners. Each potential project identified in the action plan will be reviewed and re-evaluated considering the situation at the time as factors on both the demand and supply side may have changed as well as the cost and viability of the project at the point when an individual project is being considered.

When applying for funding to develop new facilities, Sport England, National Governing Bodies of Sport and most other funding organisations, require evidence of the demand and supply of facilities in an area to justify the proposed project. This strategy, developed and agreed in partnership with these same organisations, is the document that provides this information and is vital to the success of any funding bid.

Through the implementation of this strategy, the Council has an important role to play in providing access to sporting opportunities at a cost that is acceptable to the wider community. The Council has a role to play as a direct provider of entry level facilities such as free to use casual football pitches, outdoor gym equipment, distance marker routes, outdoor table tennis tables, etc. as well as pay and play summer and winter sports pitches with changing and toilet facilities to allow clubs to play competitively.

The Council also plays an enabling role in developing better quality facilities by engaging and enabling community organisations through the asset transfer process to independently manage and operate existing and new facilities. At the very top level, professional sports clubs based in the borough provide facilities catering for elite sport.

The strategy document comprises two parts each with an action plan for implementation.

- Part 1: Playing Pitch Strategy covering natural turf and artificial turf pitches for cricket, hockey, football and rugby and
- Part 2: Built Sports Facilities Strategy covering Indoor and Outdoor Built Sports Facilities plus other grass pitch sports.

1.2 Why the Strategy Has Been Developed

The purpose of the strategy is to support the Council's corporate priorities and manifesto pledges, in shaping the future of Ealing and most importantly contribute to the achievement of outcomes relating to improved health and increased physical activity levels of Ealing residents, establishing how to best meet their current and future health and wellbeing needs and encourage and support the continued independence of Ealing residents, contributing to the priority of making Ealing a better place to live and work.

Ealing Council's main reasons for producing this follow-on facility strategy and associated action plans are detailed below:

- To assess and measure the impact of the Ealing Sports Facility Strategy 2012 – 21 and the London 2012 Games legacy programme.
- To develop an accurate and robust evidence base to provide the leisure and sport content for the Local Plan refresh and to help inform Planning policy decisions regarding the protection, enhancement and provision of existing and future indoor and outdoor sports facilities providing an understanding of the best location(s) for any new facilities.
- To use the evidence base to help calculate and secure developer contributions (Section 106 Agreements) as part of the planning process where sport and leisure is a consultee on all future housing developments to ensure the impact on the sport and leisure infrastructure is considered and to provide funding to enable the development of sports facilities to benefit residents.
- To create an agreed list of priority projects which will help to meet any existing deficiencies, meet future demand and feed into wider infrastructure planning (including periodic updates to the borough's Infrastructure Delivery Plan) as well as helping to secure internal capital and revenue investment as well as grants from external agencies.
- To identify and help meet the growing need of Ealing's strong network of voluntary sports clubs, for better quality sport appropriate facilities, including improvements to existing or the building of new facilities.

1.3 Improvement Projects Achieved

Ealing has made a significant investment in sport and leisure facilities over the last 10 years or so, creating a real legacy from the London 2012 Games for Ealing, whilst improving accessibility to key sports facilities and encouraging people to start and stay active.

The Council has invested over £36 million improving the borough's main indoor leisure centres; the new Northolt Leisure Centre opened in 2010 on the site of Northolt Swimarama and Everyone Active Acton Centre opened in 2014 on the site of Acton Swimming Baths. Both new centres provide a better quality and wider range of facilities than the centres they replaced, and both have 25m 8 lane swimming pools and teaching pools with moveable floors to meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities, large gyms and studios. Sport and active recreation facilities at both venues are co located with other Council services, a library and soft play facility at Northolt and a library and adults and children's services in Acton.

Most notably with regard to new playing pitch provision, £18.5 million funding has been invested by a range of partners in two new football hubs at Rectory Park, Northolt (in the north west of the borough) and Gunnersbury Park (closest to Acton and Ealing in the east). Both sites now have 2 floodlit artificial grass pitches, and the latter also includes a sports hall to cater for Handball and Futsal, floodlit tennis courts, a gym, studios and grass pitches.

The Rectory Park Football Hub was funded by Ealing Council, the Football Foundation and London Marathon Charitable Trust; Middlesex FA's new Headquarters is co located in the same building, allowing the MFA to operate the Football Hub as well as administer county football matters on site. The new indoor and outdoor sports facilities at Gunnersbury Park Sports Hub, were funded by both Ealing and Hounslow Council's, the Football Foundation, London Marathon Charitable Trust, Sport England, the Lawn Tennis Association and England Cricket Board, as well as the University of West London, Brentford Football Club and Community Trust and the International School of London.

1.4 Vision and Key Objectives

The vision for the strategy is to facilitate the creation of a sporting infrastructure across Ealing that provides residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds with the opportunity to be active and play sports.

The key objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Provide the Council and its partners with a robust document with an evidence base that can be reliably used to support spatial planning decisions and inform capital investment plans and external funding bids for new and/or enhanced indoor and outdoor sports facilities.
2. Improve public health by encouraging more people in Ealing to be more active by ensuring facilities for indoor and outdoor sports are of the appropriate quality are both available and accessible.
3. Ensure future sustainability of sport and leisure in Ealing through sports and physical activity networks, involving sports clubs and other delivery organisations.

In order to achieve the vision and 3 key objectives of this new 10-year strategy, the Council will explore opportunities to:

- Enable and promote a network of accessible sports facilities across the borough maintaining and enhancing the borough's built and green infrastructure.
- Work with commercial and community partners and national governing bodies to enable and secure the development and long-term management as well as financial viability of indoor and outdoor sport facilities across the borough.
- Seek to maximise opportunities which may arise to develop sports facilities as part of wider regeneration, education or place-based projects.
- Identify and bid for external funding to support the development and delivery of new sports facilities across Ealing.
- Help clubs and organisations to promote the benefits of sport to bring communities together to make them stronger reducing inequality and celebrating diversity.
- Promote sport and active recreation as a key enabler to healthy and active lifestyles.
- Be innovative and creative when investigating possible solutions to facility supply needs in light of the general reduction in funding available to improve and or build new sports facilities.
- Identify opportunities for the possible co-location of facilities including film studios, libraries, health clinics, etc.
- Expand community use of existing education facilities not currently available for community use.
- Investigate the viability of developing indoor facilities at existing outdoor sports venues to create sustainable and self-financing indoor and outdoor sports hubs managed and operated by voluntary sports clubs.

By acting on the recommendations in this strategy and delivering the facility developments included in the action plan the following outcomes will be realised for Ealing residents:

- More opportunities for people to be more active reducing the number of inactive people.
- Increased levels of physical activity and greater participation in sports.
- Better, more accessible facilities for physical activity and sports, of appropriate quality, available across the borough.
- Reduced public subsidy and better long-term sustainability of sports facilities across the borough.
- More community organisations developing and operating facilities for the benefit of local residents.
- More opportunities for people to volunteer in sport and active recreation for the benefit of others.
- New regeneration or education projects will factor in future community use sports facilities enhancing local places and spaces for the enjoyment of residents.
- Stronger and healthier communities, reducing health inequalities.
- Planning policy which supports and encourages people to be more active.

2. Major facility development projects of top priority

There are four current strategically significant indoor and outdoor sports facility development projects identified in the strategy, listed alphabetically below; it is proposed that all four projects will be developed and completed within the lifespan of this 10 year strategy and all will have a positive impact on sport and physical activity provision in Ealing.

2.1 Gurnell Leisure Centre

Gurnell Leisure Centre has historically been Ealing's flagship leisure facility with one of London's handful of 50 metre swimming pools; the centre is currently closed pending redevelopment. Replacing this facility with a new, state of the art, energy efficient and climate friendly leisure facility is the number one priority for Ealing. The new build leisure facility will potentially be part of a mixed use development scheme and will cost approximately £45 million. The new facility will include a new 10 lane 50 metre pool, a teaching pool with moveable floor, a recreation pool, a gym, multiple studios, soft play, café and ancillary facilities.

2.2 Dormers Wells Leisure Centre

This facility is currently a core part of the Council's strategic leisure provision, it serves a catchment population of Ealing residents that isn't currently serviced by any other facilities; however, the current building is coming to the end of its life and will need replacing in the next 5 years. The strategy modelled the new facility to include an 8 lane 25 metre swimming pool, a teaching pool with moveable floor, an 8 court sports hall, a gym, multiple studios and ancillary facilities.

2.3 Warren Farm Sports Ground

Warren Farm Sports Ground is a Council owned facility in Southall; considering the assessment work carried out, bringing this sports ground back into use is deemed to be the number one outdoor sports facility development priority to ensure the borough meets the local identified future need for both cricket and football pitches, addressing the identified local deficits and future need for both cricket and football pitches in Ealing and more specifically in the Southall area.

3. Key Findings and actions – Playing Pitch Strategy (Part 1)

Each sport is reviewed in detail within the main strategy where an assessment is made of the existing and potential future supply and demand of facilities for each sport; current and future trends in participation are also considered as well as the views of National Governing Bodies of Sport and local sports clubs.

3.1 Cricket

Population growth across the borough will drive an increase in the number of adult and junior teams wanting to play all forms of cricket including short format cricket. In addition, several of the large traditional Cricket clubs are continuing to experience growth across the board, male, female and junior participants. The larger clubs currently experience unmet demand for juniors, are actively developing new youth/young adult 'transition' teams with support from Middlesex Cricket and have aspirations for growth - particularly women and girl's cricket.

The strategy concludes that there is not enough accessible and secured community use provision in the borough to meet future demand. It is projected that there will be a need for between four and five additional cricket pitches in the borough by 2031, to include both fine-turf and artificial (non-turf) wickets.

Priority projects and actions

A detailed action plan is presented within the full strategy, listed below are the leading priority projects that have been identified.

- Delivery of the major facility improvement project at Warren Farm Sports Ground
- Pitch improvement works at several sites including Spikes Bridge Park, Actonians Sports Ground, Brentham Club, Brentfield Cricket Ground, Club des Sport, North Acton Playing Fields, Popesfield Sports Ground, Perivale Park and SKLPCC
- Pavilion improvement works at several sites including Actonians Sports Ground, Brentfield Cricket Ground, Ealing Central Sports Ground, Ealing Cricket Club, North Acton Playing Fields and Osterley Cricket Ground
- Clubs to agree security of tenure at sites including Drayton Manor High School and Club des Sport
- Carry out a review of existing sports grounds to see where new cricket facilities can be co located with another sport including Elthorne Waterside pitches, Marnhams Field, Norwood Hall Playing Fields

3.2 Football

Future demand for football facilities is likely to grow substantially to 2031 increasing pressure on the existing supply, due to the forecast population growth, as well as the growth plans of the borough-based football clubs; 10 clubs indicated they aspire to increase the number of teams they run over the coming seasons provided the necessary volunteer time and pitches for matches and training can be secured. The significant growth of women and girls football contributes to this increased demand.

The strategy concludes that additional facilities will be needed to meet demand. A minimum of 2 additional full size or equivalent FA compliant football Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) and a minimum of 16 full size pitches or equivalent additional natural turf pitches will be required for match play by 2031 if the scale of forecast population growth and the limits on the potential for increasing the capacity in the peak period of the existing secured supply by improvements to quality remain as detailed in the full strategy. Note: AGP and grass pitch

supply can be offset due to the greater carrying capacity of AGPs over grass pitches, the FA estimates that a floodlit full size AGP has the potential to offer up to 20 times more capacity than a grass full size non floodlit pitch.

Priority projects and actions

A detailed action plan is presented within the full strategy, listed below are the leading priority projects that have been identified.

- Delivery of the major facility improvement project at Warren Farm Sports Ground
- Pitch improvement works at several sites including Acton Ealing Whistlers FC, Actonians Sports Ground, Blondin Park, Brentham Club, Hanwell Town FC, London Playing Fields Greenford - Avenue Park, Lord Halsbury Sports Ground, Osterley Cricket Ground
- Pavilion improvement works at several sites including Acton Ealing Whistlers FC, Actonians Sports Ground, Blondin Park, Ealing Central Sports Ground, North Acton Playing Fields, Southfield Recreation Ground, Spikes Bridge Park and West Ealing Bowls Club
- Development of new facilities Ada Lovelace HS, Alwyn Gardens, Brentfield Cricket Ground, King George V Playing Fields, Marnhams Field, Norwood Hall Playing Fields, Spikes Bridge Park
- Clubs to agree security of tenure at sites including Osterley Sports Ground

3.3 Rugby

To meet rugby demand from borough residents and assuming current levels of rugby demand by age group for matches and training in the peak period, the equivalent capacity of +2.71 additional natural turf full size equivalent rugby pitches for matches will be needed.

Priority projects and actions

A detailed action plan is presented within the full strategy, listed below are the leading priority projects that have been identified.

- Northolt RFC - Improvements to kitchen and toilets in clubhouse.
- Wasps FC Twyford Avenue Sports Ground - Match quality floodlights to a second grass pitch, installation of a second rugby compliant AGP and major refurbishment or replacement of pavilion to facilitate development of club and women and girls' rugby.

3.4 Hockey

Future growth in demand is likely to continue to be driven primarily by the growth plans of the leading hockey clubs in Ealing alongside the overall population increases within the borough. The strategy concludes that the current accessible and secured supply of hockey facilities in Ealing will not be enough to meet future demand.

When the clubs' aspirations for growth and the impact of hockey development initiatives with regard to social pay and play (including walking hockey) are added to the pressure of new demand resulting from housing-led population growth, it is estimated that there will be a need to provide a minimum of one additional England Hockey compliant pitch with secured access by 2031, in addition to maintaining access to the existing pitches. If any sand based pitch is lost to Hockey, consideration of further hockey compliant pitches would need to be assessed in order to meet the identified demand.

Priority projects and actions

A detailed action plan is presented within the full strategy, listed below are the leading priority projects that have been identified.

- Actonians Boddington Gardens – Investigate the provision of a second pitch alongside the existing hockey AGP
- Perivale Park - Complete review of current sports and recreation use to include consideration of a floodlit AGP for hockey
- St Augustines Priory School - Upgrade of playing surface and ancillary facilities
- St Benedict's School - Club to seek to secure a long-term access agreement with the school, potentially through partnership investment in the pitch (resurfacing) and/or coaching support

3. Key Findings and actions – Built facilities and other outdoor sports (Part 2)

The same assessment and identification of key projects and actions for sports facilities has also been completed for sports facilities detailed in Part 2 of the strategy.

Each sports facility type has been reviewed in detail within the main strategy where an assessment is made of the existing and potential future supply and demand of facilities for each sport; current and future trends in participation are also considered as well as the views of National Governing Bodies of Sport and local sports clubs.

A detailed action plan is presented within the full strategy across all of the leading built sports facilities including the ones listed below, with timescales and partners identified.

Swimming

Ealing has a current and future need for more water space, the level of which supports the need for new and enhanced swimming pool facilities at both Gurnell and Dormers Wells Leisure Centres; even with these 2 new facilities Ealing may still have demand for more water space.

Priority projects and actions

- A new replacement facility at Gurnell Leisure Centre, including a new 10 lane 50 metre pool, teaching pool with moveable floor and recreation pool
- A new replacement facility at Dormers Wells Leisure Centre including an 8 lane 25 metre swimming pool, a teaching pool with moveable floor
- Review impact of both projects on demand and supply of water space in Ealing to ascertain if another pool facility is needed to meet demand
- Support Notting Hill & Ealing High School with any application to expand the times of use for the school pool to include extra-curricular and community use

Although not included in the formal Sport England facility strategy swimming pool assessment process, Ealing is also investigating the opportunities that may exist to build a new outdoor swimming facility in the borough.

Sports Halls

Ealing has a current and future need for more sports hall space, the level of which supports the need for new and enhanced sports hall facilities at Dormers Wells Leisure Centres as well as increased access to existing sports hall space and new build sports hall space because even with the proposed new 8 court facility at Dormers Wells Leisure Centre facilities Ealing will still have more demand than supply for sports hall space.

Priority projects and actions

- A new replacement facility at Dormers Wells Leisure Centre including an 8 court hall
- Support any opportunity to enhance community access to existing and new sports halls
- Support community access to any new sports hall particularly in Southall and other areas of the borough lacking access to facilities

Squash

England squash considers Ealing to have well below the appropriate number of accessible squash courts, with just 3 courts, the overall supply does not meet the England Squash benchmark quantitative guidance standard of 1 court per 10,000 people.

Priority projects and actions

- Working with the sports club and the NGB the Council should consider the refurbishment needs for the squash courts at Actonians Sports Club
- Through Planning ensure two squash courts are provided as part of the housing development on the former Ealing Squash Club site or funding is provided to reprovided the courts elsewhere in Ealing
- Consider options for providing moveable squash courts as part of the new Gurnell Leisure Centre and/or Dormers Wells Leisure Centre developments

Gymnastics and Trampolining

Ealing does not currently have a dedicated gymnastics and trampolining facility for voluntary sports clubs to use, activities are currently being delivered in multi purpose sports halls and community centres.

Priority projects and actions

- Refurbish the Perivale Community Centre space used by West London Gymnastics, pending the club securing the necessary funding
- Subject to feasibility, funding and planning, support the development of a purpose-built gymnastics/trampolining facility in the borough

Athletics

Ealing has Perivale Park Athletics Track a floodlit 8 lane facility catering for all track and field disciplines as well as some smaller athletics facilities based on school sites, some of which are available to hire whilst some are school use only.

Priority projects and actions

- Investigate the feasibility to provide community access to the athletics facilities on school sites at The Japanese School and West Twyford Primary School
- Promote the facilities available for community use at King Fahad Academy in Acton
- Refurbish the track at Perivale Park Athletics Track when needed

Tennis

Ealing has a mix of tennis court providers, including the Council, private members clubs, voluntary sports clubs, schools and multi sport clubs. At present there seems to be a balance between demand and supply of community accessible courts. The new increasingly popular format of the sport known as Padel tennis is sweeping the country and may well increase demand in the future for Padel tennis courts in Ealing, something the borough currently doesn't have available.

Priority projects and actions

- Support court improvement, floodlighting and playing surface conversion works at sites across the borough including Council owned park sites, West Middlesex Lawn Tennis Club and the Brentham Club
- Explore opportunities to partner with a Padel operator to provide new facilities and opportunities in Ealing
- The Council to consider introducing a pay and play policy for park tennis courts to fund maintenance and improvements in line with any LTA grant funding criteria
- Assess the feasibility of providing indoor tennis facilities in Ealing

Golf

There is a good distribution of golf facilities that are accessible for Ealing residents either within the borough itself or within a short journey time, including driving range and pitch and putt facilities, 9 and 18 hole courses and other forms of golf such as family fun mini golf.

Priority projects and actions

- Review current arrangements with lease holders of current and former golf facilities
- Consider alternative outdoor sports and recreational facility options for the former Northolt Golf Course and buildings in Huxley Close that complement the adjacent outdoor sports and recreation facilities at Rectory Park and Northala Fields
- Review golf course facilities in the borough to achieve wider appeal and improve financial sustainability

4. Planning Policy Context

The Council's overarching policy for outdoor sports and active recreation (including playing pitches) is currently set out at policy 5.6 of the Development (Core) Strategy and provides for the protection and promotion of a network of sports grounds and other active recreation areas in the borough, the development of a multi-sports hub in the Gurnell area along with strategic satellite sites with developer contributions as a key funding source for priority projects in the Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy. The Council policies fully align with national and regional policies to protect facilities for community sport and recreation – i.e. the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 (paragraph 99) and The London Plan (policy S5) detailed in the Facility Strategy document. Work is now underway on preparing a new Local Plan which will eventually replace policy 5.6 and will again be informed by the findings of this strategy.

Protect, Enhance and Provide

The full strategy sets out a number of leading policy recommendation organised under the headings of *Protect, Enhance and Provide*, which have been shaped having regard to national, regional and local policy and guidance. Reflecting the findings of the strategic assessment detailed in the strategy, the need to maintain existing capacity should form a key priority and starting position of this policy framework. A no net loss approach to maintaining current levels of indoor and outdoor sports facility capacity should therefore be adopted, with the implementation of this approach representing the starting point for the consideration of all proposals and a key policy driver for the Council.

Protect

The firm conclusion is that there is an identified need to retain the existing overall quantity of sports facilities in the borough whilst recognising that the distribution of facilities may change (for example through closure of sites or playing pitches of poor quality or of limited value for community sport offset by new provision).

It is therefore recommended that the broad approach and principles established in existing policies in respect of the protection of existing provision be carried forward into the new Local Plan. Specifically, the new Local Plan should establish a policy framework to resist granting planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss, or would prejudice the use, of a sports facility or land last used for sport unless:

- 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.

Further 'protect' policy recommendations include guidance on asset transfers, ensuring education sites have suitable community access, and ensuring the maintenance budget of the existing pitch and sports facilities by the Council is upheld.

Enhance and Provide

The new strategy also sets out clear guidance around the use of developer contributions and the decision making process for determining the choice between off-site contributions to support existing and new facilities versus on-site provision. Guidance is also provided to ensure that new facilities meet national governing body of sport guidance in terms of quality and design.

Ealing also has several multi-sport sites which serve a wide range of sport and activity. The Strategy process of consultation and analysis has highlighted a number of important improvements and potential investment needs and opportunities across these sites. Coordination of these opportunities (alongside the National Governing Bodies and resident sports clubs) will remain a key priority for the Council. Opportunities to provide a more diverse and wider reaching range of facilities for sport and physical activity on current sites will be pursued by the Council.

5. Conclusion

Both the Playing Pitch Strategy and the Built Facilities Strategy that make up the full Ealing Indoor and Outdoor Facilities Strategy 2022 – 2031, highlight a number of priorities for protection, support, investment and intervention to continue to provide these vital facilities for the health and wellbeing of residents of Ealing.

The strategy assessed the demand and supply of a wide range of sports facilities determining what will be needed to meet local grass roots community sports demand in Ealing from 2022 through to 2031. The facility types plus the necessary ancillary facilities identified as being necessary to meet the needs of Ealing's growing population include, but are not restricted to:

- More swimming pools
- More sports halls, particularly for national league level indoor sports teams requiring spectator seating
- More sand dressed hockey pitches
- More 3G artificial grass football pitches
- More grass football pitches of various sizes
- More cricket pitches to include both fine-turf and artificial (non-turf) wickets
- A dedicated Gymnastics and Trampolining facility
- A pay and play indoor tennis facility
- More squash courts
- Padel tennis courts
- More activity spaces equivalent to a traditional small hall or a large studio for group exercise, martial arts, etc.
- More indoor and outdoor urban sports activity spaces
- More informal outdoor recreational spaces/facilities, including outdoor gyms, distance marker routes, rebound walls, table tennis tables, etc.

The Council remains committed to protecting these important existing and potentially new spaces for physical activity and sport. The overall strategy provides a robust evidence base and a clear set of priorities for the Council, and the many partners involved in delivering physical activity and sport, upon which to focus their efforts over the next 10 years of the strategy.

For a copy of the full strategy, related action plans and assessment of need documents for cricket, football, hockey and rugby, please email sports@ealing.gov.uk