



**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

**INTERIM REPORT**

**APRIL 2017**

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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# STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

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### INTRODUCTION

This document is an interim summary to outline key issues identified for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council emerging thus far from consultation with national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), sports clubs, schools, and other agencies as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

As such, this report is not a comprehensive analysis of all the issues that will be covered in the Assessment Report and is not to be mistaken for the forthcoming Stage B Report. Rather, it is an indicative summary of the key issues emerging from the local needs assessment to date, broken down by:

- ◀ Facilities
- ◀ Tenure
- ◀ Pitches
- ◀ Education sites
- ◀ Next steps

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### SECTION 1: FACILITIES

#### 1.1 Football

Ancillary facility provision takes into account the condition of clubhouses, changing accommodation, toilets, showers, car parking and boundary fencing. Through consultation, football clubs operating in the Staffordshire Moorlands District have identified the following issues.

Leek Town FC highlights the need to improve its clubhouse facility at Harrison Park Stadium. Currently, the clubhouse (which is accessed for match day activity and functions) is particularly dated and as such the Club has aspirations to develop this into a more modern social space that would allow it to be further utilised for functions allowing additional income to be generated. Additionally, as part of the upgrade, the Club aspires to develop two supplementary changing rooms to allow it to be able to host competitive ladies football. At present the stadium has two good quality changing rooms but the Club reports that this is not an adequate number.

Ball Haye Green FC, located at Ball Haye Road (behind Ball Haye Working Men's Club), is identified as having poor ancillary provision. The Club has access to two changing rooms that regularly have issues with leaking roofs (consequently causing mould problems) and are inadequately sized. In addition to this, the Club has access to a small social space which is of an overall poor quality.

Potters Bar FC, situated in Caverswall Parish Council playing fields, highlights the need for significant investment towards its changing room provision. The Club states that it has no access to running water and consequently cannot use the toilet or shower facilities at the site. Furthermore, the Club states that if facilities were improved it would look at developing junior teams with the aspiration of expanding.

Both Breaks FC and Cheddleton Saints FC highlight issues with ancillary provision at Birchall Playing Fields. Breaks FC states that there is a demand for additional changing rooms to be created and that car parking problems are constantly reoccurring due to the limited size of the provision. Similarly, Cheddleton Saints FC highlights the requirement for additional parking on site.

#### 1.2 Hockey

Leek Hockey Club currently owns its clubhouse and accompanying football playing pitches on Macclesfield Road (although plays its fixtures on the AGP at Leek High School). The pavilion on the Macclesfield Road site is utilised after midweek training and fixtures for post training/match activity and is considered by both the Club and England Hockey to be of an overall poor quality. The roof of the pavilion is flat and is prone to frequent leaking. Additionally, the structure is narrow and dated.

#### 1.3 Rugby union

Leek RUFC highlights that on the whole its ancillary provision is of an overall good quality. It did, however, state that it requires remedial work on its car park and that it has aspirations to extend it to increase capacity. In addition, the Club also has aspirations to increase the capacity of its changing rooms to allow its developing girls and ladies section to continue growing.

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### SECTION 2: TENURE

#### 2.1 Football

Ball Haye Green FC previously had a long-term lease agreement for its playing pitch and ancillary facilities from a private landowner based in Wales; however the lease agreement came to an end in 2015 and the owner has since sent the Club a notification informing it to vacate the site. For the past two playing seasons the owner has allowed the Club additional use of the pitch on one-year arrangements with an increased rental fee but the Club expects the 2017/2018 season to be its last on the site. The Club currently plays at Step 7 on the football pyramid and therefore needs specific ground requirements to compete at this level, such as a secure rail around the pitch and a hard-standing area for supporters, which would be difficult to find in the surrounding area. It is expected the landowner has future aspirations to develop the land for potential housing.

Leek Town Juniors FC currently has a five-year lease arrangement with Leek Hockey Club for the full use of its grass playing pitches on its Macclesfield Road site. The Club has aspirations to develop the site in partnership with Leek Hockey Club to make it the base for the majority of its playing demand. A strong partnership between the clubs exists and it is expected that in the future the lease agreement will be renewed and extended to allow funding opportunities to be created.

Moorville Fields is the former home site of Longton Harriers FC. The site was funded in 2007 by the Football Foundation for drainage improvements but since then the pitches have begun to sink in places and the Club has folded. Longton RUFC owns the site but it is the ambition of Werrington Parish Council to purchase the land and utilise its potential for local football clubs in the area, such as Werrington Tigers FC.

It should be noted that the majority of teams playing in the Staffordshire Moorlands District have a reliance on Council operated facilities such as Birchall Playing Fields.

#### 2.2 Hockey

Leek Hockey Club has around 18 years remaining on a 30-year lease agreement with Leek High School for a section of land in which it funded its own AGP. Since the School converted into an academy in April 2016 the Club has not reported any issues in its relationship.

#### 2.3 Rugby union

Leek RFC owns its site and as such did not highlight any issues regarding tenure.

It is unclear as to what impact Werrington Parish Council's aforementioned aspiration to purchase Moorville Fields will have on Longton RUFC.

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### SECTION 3: PITCHES

#### 3.1 Football

This report does not yet account for the supply of football pitches available at both middle schools and primary schools, nor does it provide quality scores for pitches already identified. A full supply list and quality scores will later be provided at Stage B of the PPS.

At present, a total of 31 unique sites have been identified across the Staffordshire Moorlands District providing football provision totalling 76 pitches. Of the sites, four are recognised as not allowing community use, which equates to eight football pitches not being available. It should therefore be noted that all eight unavailable pitches are located at education sites as they wish to protect the quality of the pitches for curricular use. For example, Leek High School does not allow community use of its pitches at present as it is deemed additional use would create too much surface damage.

Through consultation the following issues were identified with football pitch provision throughout the Stafford Moorlands District:

Staffordshire FA identifies two adult pitches located at Thorley Drive as being particularly poor quality due to regular drainage issues. One of the main users of the site, Cheadle United FC, highlights that the quality of the pitches has got significantly worse over the past three years and that the pitches are inadequately maintained. Similarly, Cheadle Town Juniors FC states that the overall quality of pitches on the site is poor. In addition, Staffordshire FA also highlight that two adult pitches located at Moorville Fields are sinking in places and as such are unused.

Leek CSOB FC highlights that its adult pitch situated at Pointon Park has particularly poor drainage which causes the pitch to be unusable for large parts of the football season. The Club reports that its U21s team lost 12 weeks of consecutive fixtures in the 2016/2017 season which has caused a significant backlog of fixtures.

Ball Haye Green FC also indicates that its pitch (Ball Haye Road) suffers regular drainage problems and that despite a high-quality maintenance package it still loses too many fixtures over the football season.

In contrast, it should be noted that several clubs in the Staffordshire Moorlands District highlight that football pitches at Birchall Playing Field are of good quality and that recent drainage improvements have made a significant improvement.

#### 3.2 Hockey

Leek Hockey Club indicates that the carpet on its AGP at Leek High School is 12 years old and as such is two years over its ten-year life expectancy. The Club has initial plans to resurface the carpet in 2018 and will replicate its sand filled surface for a like for like replacement.

The Club also utilises a secondary AGP situated at Excel Academy, in Stoke, but does have aspirations to move this demand closer to Leek as the AGP is a 25-minute drive from the Clubs clubhouse facility.

### 3.3 Rugby union

Leek RUFC highlights that, although three out of its four available senior rugby pitches are adequate, one pitch has inadequate drainage and does require investment to improve the overall quality.

### SECTION 4: EDUCATION SITES

There are eight secondary education sites in the Staffordshire Moorlands District of which seven have been consulted with. Cheadle Academy is the only school which could not accommodate a consultation during KKP's visits to the area. Consultation with each education provider did not raise many key issues as each school is considered to have adequate playing field to accommodate curricular demand. Detailed below are the issues highlighted by schools:

Both Moorside High School and Biddulph High School highlight through consultation that football pitches on each respective site have particularly bad drainage and, during winter months, become practically unusable for curricular use.

Leek High School converted to academy status in April 2016. During the conversion, the School was required to renegotiate its former lease agreement with Staffordshire County Council regarding the School's footprint and in doing so the School lost access to a field situated on Mount Road. The field itself is extremely uneven and unsafe in places for any form of school based activity as well as being inadequate to accommodate any form of playing pitch (and historically has not accommodated any form of playing pitch).

Through consultation with the School, it was identified that there is little requirement for the field with it only previously being utilised for cross-country running, which is now restricted to its other playing field land due to a perimeter fence causing segregation. The School suggests that whilst there is possible land available to be utilised for any potential first school (as part of the development of Mount Road), this would have to be negotiated with its governing board.

The School currently has use of one sand-filled AGP, one senior rugby union pitch and two adult football pitches in addition to a disused red-gra. It previously had a non-turf cricket wicket but this has been removed due to quality issues. At present, all grass playing pitches are reported to suffer from poor drainage and are consequently not currently available for community use; however, through consultation, it was reported that School Letting Solutions (SLS) will be begin to operate community bookings starting in September 2017. This primarily relates to letting the sports hall but it is expected that SLS will in time want to expand the community offering available to the grass pitches.

All remaining schools that responded to consultation report no major issues.

### **SECTION 5: NEXT STEPS**

KKP now will begin to prepare a stage B update to deliver to the full PPS steering group with a more comprehensive view of the Staffordshire Moorlands District which will include a more detailed pitch analysis and response rates from consultation with winter sports clubs and schools.