

Report to CABINET

Oldham's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Decent Homes; Councillor Peter Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture; and Councillor Chris Goodwin, Cabinet Member for Don't Trash Oldham

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Report Author: Lauren Hargreaves, Senior Planning Policy Officer
Ext. 3843

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Reason for Decision

To note the findings and recommendations set out within the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and to agree their publication on the council website (the documents attached at Appendix 1); and

To delegate the approval of future updates of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy documents to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.

Executive Summary

In 2023 Oldham Council commissioned Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to carry out a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS). The PPOSS updates the previous (2015) PPOSS and will build on the assessment of outdoor sports facilities undertaken within the Council's Open Space Study (2022).

The PPOSS provides a more in-depth assessment of the borough's pitches and outdoor sports sites, identifies the current and future needs for particular sports and sets out an Action Plan for future investment and improvement. The PPOSS provides evidence to support the implementation of existing local planning policies, will inform planning policy

within the new Local Plan and will be a material consideration for planning decisions. The PPOSS will also inform how and where S106 developer contributions are secured and spent.

In terms of investment, it is often a requirement that an area/ local authority has an up-to-date PPOSS to access funding from Sport England, National Governing Bodies (e.g. the Football Association, England and Wales Cricket Board, England Netball, Rugby Football Union etc), and other organisations. As such the PPOSS can be used to help sports clubs and the council gain access to funding and investment.

In particular, the PPOSS provides:

- Evidence of supply and demand of playing pitch and outdoor sports provision;
- A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities;
- A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions;
- A series of strategic recommendations which provide a framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock;
- A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision; and
- A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.

The PPOSS was completed in February 2025. The main findings and actions are summarised in the background section below.

In terms of next steps, it is important that the PPOSS is publicly available on the council's website. This will enable the council, local sports clubs and organisations to utilise the information to deliver improvements in sports provision across the borough.

Following publication of the PPOSS, a PPOSS Steering Group of council officers (and partners where necessary) will lead on supporting and implementing the Action Plan. It is important to ensure that the Action Plan is kept up-to-date and functions as a 'live document'. As such, updates to the Action Plan (and possible other PPOSS documents) will need to be published over the lifetime of the PPOSS. It is considered that approval for the publication of these updates should be delegated to the relevant Cabinet Member, as per the report recommendations.

In summary, this report seeks approval to publish the PPOSS documents and to agree that future updates of the PPOSS documents will be delegated for approval to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.

Recommendations

To note the findings and recommendations set out within the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and to agree publication of the strategy on the council website (the documents attached at Appendix 1); and

To delegate the approval of future updates of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy documents to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.

Oldham Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025)**1 Background**

- 1.1 In 2023 Oldham Council commissioned Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to carry out a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS). The Council has led on the commission via a steering group of officers from Strategic Planning (Planning Policy), Sport and Leisure, Health and Wellbeing and Parks and Greenspaces. The PPOSS updates the previous (2015) PPOSS and will build on the assessment of outdoor sports facilities undertaken within the Council's Open Space Study (2022).
- 1.2 The PPOSS provides a more in-depth assessment of the borough's pitches and outdoor sports sites, identifies the current and future needs for particular sports and sets out an Action Plan for future investment and improvement.
- 1.3 The PPOSS provides evidence to support the implementation of existing local planning policies, will inform planning policy within the new Local Plan and will be a material consideration for planning decisions. The PPOSS will also inform S106 developer contributions.
- 1.4 In terms of investment, it is often a requirement that an area/ local authority has an up-to-date PPOSS to access funding from Sport England, National Governing Bodies (e.g. the Football Association, England and Wales Cricket Board, England Netball, Rugby Football Union etc), and other organisations. As such the PPOSS can be used to help sports clubs and the council gain access to funding and investment.
- 1.5 The PPOSS will also help to deliver the council's key goals of Healthier and Happier Lives, A Great Place to Live and Green and Growing, as set out within The Corporate Plan (2024) and The Oldham Plan (2024).

Preparation of the PPOSS

- 1.6 Work on the PPOSS began in Autumn 2023 and has been developed by KKP with support from Sport England, the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), schools, further education providers, community clubs and private landowners.
- 1.7 The preparation of the PPOSS has followed five stages, as recommended by Sport England, as follows:
 - Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1)
 - Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (Steps 2 & 3)
 - Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views (Steps 4, 5 & 6)
 - Stage D: Develop the strategy (Steps 7 & 8)
 - Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (Steps 9 & 10)
- 1.8 The assessment of supply and demand (stage B) was undertaken over 2023-2024. A variety of consultation methods, including surveys, site visits, desktop assessments, and face-to-face meetings, have been used to collate supply and demand information about leagues, clubs, county associations and national/regional governing bodies of sport.
- 1.9 Where possible, sports were assessed in the season in which they are played (i.e. Summer/ Winter). The Assessment Report (Appendix 1 – document A) provides further

detail on the context/ background to the PPOSS, the supply and demand assessment process and the sport-by-sport supply and demand findings.

1.10 The main findings from the supply and demand assessment are that:

- There are shortfalls for sports played on natural turf grass pitches (football, rugby, cricket).
- There is a clear need to protect all existing playing pitch provision, in line with planning policy.
- Demand is being met in the main for non-turf/ pitch sports (e.g. tennis, bowls, netball, athletics). However, this does not equate to a surplus of provision - any spare capacity should be considered as a solution to overcome identified shortfalls.
- Most of the identified grass pitch shortfalls can be met by better utilising current provision - improving quality, additional sports lighting, improving ancillary facilities, increasing match play on 3G pitches, and enabling access to existing unused provision (e.g. unavailable school sites).
- This means that new grass pitches are not generally required, although such a need will increase if other methods of reducing deficits are not possible.
- Despite this, there is a clear quantified shortfall of 3G pitches (mainly for training) that can only be rectified through the installation of new facilities. This could also alleviate turf pitch issues.

1.11 The Assessment findings underpin the Strategy and Action Plan documents. The Strategy and Action Plan provide a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2041 (in line with the Local Plan review). It has been developed to provide:

- Evidence of supply and demand of playing pitch and outdoor sports provision;
- A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities;
- A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions;
- A series of strategic recommendations which provide a framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock;
- A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision; and
- A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.

1.12 The strategic recommendations set out in the Strategy reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities and may not be specific to just one sport:

Aim 1 - To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

Recommendations:

- a. Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy. There can be rationalisation of facilities to create better facilities, including hubs (that can include other uses), however there should be no net loss of pitches.

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- b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
 - c. Maximise community use of education facilities where needed, through increased partnership working between the Council, education sites, Sport England and NGBs.

Aim 2 - To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities and ancillary facilities through improving the quality and management of sites.

Recommendations:

- d. Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary, utilising available support programmes and tools to access funding opportunities to contribute to required improvements (or sustain quality).
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites, ensuring sites most in need are prioritised.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding for new and existing provision.
- g. Secure developer contributions from new development for outdoor sports provision informed by the PPOSS. Use the PPOSS Steering Group to ensure partnership working in regard to new sports developments.

Aim 3 - To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

- h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock, such as through improving quality and security of tenure/ use agreements.
- i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand, through new development and funding opportunities.

- 1.13 The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the Supply and Demand Assessment and Strategy. It provides actions based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is organised by Analysis Area (North, South, East, West and Central) and includes information on expected timescales, costs, partners, priority etc. Each action is linked to one or more of the aims (protect, enhance, provide) set out above in relation to delivering the Strategic Recommendations.
- 1.14 The Action Plan will be regularly monitored and updated by the Steering Group, acting as a 'live document'. However, it should be noted that the council will not be responsible for the delivery of all actions – as highlighted by the 'partners' column in the Action Plan, sports clubs (and their members), sport leagues, NGBs, education providers and landowners can also be responsible. As such, fostering regular engagement with these stakeholders will be important in the delivery of the Action Plan. Whilst delivering actions within the council's remit, the council (via the Steering Group) will monitor the overall delivery of actions and will support other partners to deliver their actions, where appropriate.

Next Steps

- 1.15 This report seeks approval for the publication of the PPOSS documents (Assessment Report, Strategy and Action Plan) on the council's website.
- 1.16 Should the PPOSS be approved for publication, the next steps are as follows:
- Hold regular Steering Group meetings to monitor/ implement delivery of the Action Plan;
 - Implement feedback on Action Plan, making amends if needed and appropriate. This may include re-publishing the Action Plan; and
 - Maintain regular stakeholder engagement.
- 1.17 In order to allow for regular updates to the Action Plan, it is necessary that approval for further updates to the Action Plan (or other PPOSS documents) is delegated to the relevant Cabinet Member (in consultation with other Cabinet Members as appropriate). This report seeks approval for this arrangement.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The PPOSS commission concluded in February 2025. Final documents have been received and now need to be published on the council's website so that they can be used by the council, local sports clubs and other organisations/ stakeholders that they may be relevant to. This could support future funding bids.
- 2.2 The PPOSS Action Plan will act as a live document and will be regularly updated. In the short-term further member engagement will be carried out, however it is important that the documents are available for all to use as soon as possible. As such, whilst further engagement is ongoing on the Action Plan, it is proposed that all documents are published as presented in Appendix 1 and that approval for future updates to the Action Plan is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.
- 2.3 For clarity, the PPOSS does not commit the council to delivering all the actions within the Action Plan. As is set out in section 1.14 above, the 'partners' column in the Action Plan identifies several delivery partners, such as local sports clubs (and their members), sport leagues, NGBs, education providers and landowners, who can also be responsible. Actions may, therefore, also be delivered by external funding initiatives and grants.
- 2.4 As such, the PPOSS is primarily an evidence base document to guide and support improvement and investment in playing pitch and outdoor sports provision.

3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Option 1 - To approve and publish the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) (2025) on the council's website and to delegate approval for future updates of the documents to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.

Advantages – publishing the PPOSS will inform the planning process and the council's maintenance and management of pitches and outdoor sport provision, support local sports development, guide investment and support funding opportunities. The PPOSS (2025) will update the 2015 PPOSS which is now out-of-date. Delegating approval of future updates of the PPOSS will ensure that updates can be undertaken efficiently.

Disadvantages – there are no disadvantages to publishing the updated PPOSS (2025) and delegating approval of future updates to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham. There are opportunities for ongoing engagement with stakeholders through the delivery of the Action Plan (via the council's PPOSS Steering Group).

- 3.2 Option 2 – Not to approve and publish the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) (2025) on the council's website and not to delegate approval for future updates to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.

Advantages – there are no advantages in not publishing the PPOSS. There are no advantages to not agreeing that approval for future updates of the PPOSS are delegated to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham.

Disadvantages – failing to publish the PPOSS could impact the implementation of planning policies, hinder the ability to gather funding and investment (including the gathering of s106 developer contributions), and will not provide important evidence to support effected management and maintenance of the council's playing pitch and outdoor sports provision. Not agreeing that approval for future updates of the PPOSS is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham, could hinder the ability of the Action Plan to function as a 'live' document and will cause unnecessary delays.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option. This option will ensure that the PPOSS is able inform the planning process and the council's maintenance and management of pitches and outdoor sport provision, support local sports development, guide investment and support funding opportunities. Delegating approval of future updates of the PPOSS documents to the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Decent Homes and Don't Trash Oldham, will ensure that updates can be undertaken efficiently.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation was a key element of the preparation of the PPOSS. The technical supply and demand detail within the assessment is primarily informed by local sports clubs, the NGBs and Sport England. These stakeholders have provided detailed feedback on the PPOSS and have helped form the content.
- 5.2 Consultation with the relevant portfolio holders (Decent Homes, Thriving Communities and Culture and Don't Trash Oldham) and council officers has also been carried out. In addition, we are scheduled to attend District Council meetings in February (2025) for consultation on the PPOSS Action Plan.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 **XX**

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that 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 and 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. In accordance with the Council's local planning scheme of delegation, approval and publication of Oldham Council prepared or commissioned evidence base documents relating to the Local Plan are delegated to the relevant Cabinet Member in consultation with the Executive Director. (A Evans)

8 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

- 8.1 An Oldham Impact Assessment has been carried out for the PPOSS report. The PPOSS has scored either moderately positive or strong positive against 'our mission' and the equality characteristics. The Impact Assessment for the PPOSS is available below:



PPOSS IA Tool.pdf

9 Key Decision

- 9.1 Yes

10 Key Decision Reference

- 11.1 ESR-11-25

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 Not applicable – there are no background papers for this report.

13 Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1:

- A. Oldham Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025) – Assessment Report
- B. Oldham Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025) – Strategy
- C. Oldham Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025) – Action Plan