

Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Pitch Strategy

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Quality control

Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Pitch Strategy

for

Uttlesford District Council

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1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Landscape Partnership and Ploszajski Lynch Consulting were appointed by Uttlesford District Council to produce an Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Pitch Strategy for the district in May 2011. The brief for the study indicated that Uttlesford District Council required a PPG17 (Planning Policy Guidance Note 17) compliant open space strategy to inform the delivery of:
- Networks of accessible, high quality open spaces, sports and recreation provision for existing and future needs
 - New provision and the enhancement of existing provision
 - Clarity for developers in terms of the requirements for open space provision
- 1.2 Uttlesford District Council carried out an in-house green space audit in 2006 which looked at provision in 15 parishes. The following types of sites were identified and assessed:
- Allotments
 - Amenity green spaces
 - Natural and semi natural green spaces
 - Outdoor sports provision
 - Parks and gardens
 - Provision for children and young people
- 1.3 In total 136 sites (588.07ha) were identified. The NPFA Six Acre standard was used to identify deficits/surplus open space. In all but two of the parishes deficits were identified.
- 1.4 In May 2010 parish councils and local sports clubs were sent questionnaires regarding local open spaces and sports facilities. A questionnaire was also sent by Uttlesford District Council to Uttlesford citizen panel in 2010 to get their views on local open space and sports facilities.
- 1.5 The objectives of this current study, as set out in the project brief, are:
- To identify options and mechanisms for dealing with deficiencies in provision
 - To update and build upon the 2006 green space audit
 - To use the updated audit and assessment to set locally derived open space and recreation provision standards addressing accessibility, quality and quantity
 - To provide a robust and comprehensive evidence base to enable the council to develop planning policies for future development plans
 - To provide information to enable the council to justify collecting developer contributions
 - To inform future decisions regarding the provision and funding of recreational facilities

Scope of the study

- 1.6 The brief for the study requires the study to cover the following open space typologies:
- Parks and gardens
 - Natural and semi-natural greenspaces
 - Green corridors
 - Outdoor sports facilities
 - Amenity greenspace
 - Provision for children and young people
 - Allotments, community gardens

- Churchyards and cemeteries
- Civic spaces
- Indoor built facilities:
 - Village halls and Community centres
 - Indoor sports halls, health and leisure centres
 - Swimming pools (including school facilities for community use)
 - Specialist provision e.g. indoor bowls, indoor adventurous activities etc

1.7 In relation to the Playing Pitch Strategy element of the study, the brief requires the following issues and requirements to be addressed:

- Providing a comprehensive assessment of the supply of and demand for outdoor playing pitches (senior, intermediate, junior and mini) in Uttlesford, through the application of the Sport England Playing Pitch Model;
- An analysis of the quantity and quality of other outdoor sports facilities in the district;
- Advising on local standards of provision for planning purposes, for outdoor sports facilities;
- Considering the adequacy of existing provision against these standards;
- Making recommendations on appropriate strategy and policy responses;
- Establishment of an approach for developer contributions.

1.8 The Strategy is presented in three separate sections: firstly the Green Space Audit and Strategy, secondly the Playing Pitch Strategy and finally the Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Audit. Each section provides an outline of the methodology employed along with the results of the audit of sites and recommended standards for future provision.

Uttlesford Profile

1.9 The district of Uttlesford comprises 64,118 ha and is located in the north west corner of Essex County. It is one of the largest Districts in Essex in terms of area covered, although it has one of the smallest populations. The district is located adjacent to Cambridgeshire (located to the north) and Hertfordshire (located to the west). Within Essex, Braintree District is located to the east of Uttlesford District, with Chelmsford Borough, Epping Forest District and Harlow all located to the south.

1.10 The District is largely rural, with the two market towns of Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden the largest settlements. The population of the District is spread between these towns and a number of smaller villages, including the key villages of Great Chesterford, Newport, Stansted Mountfitchet, Thaxted and Takeley. Stansted Airport with its regional transport interchange is in the south west of the district.

1.11 The 2008 mid-year estimate of population¹ in Uttlesford was 74,600, of which 37,100 were male and 37,500 were female. Based on these estimates, the current population is indicated to be around 76,800.

1.12 In Uttlesford's Sustainable Community Strategy², it is indicated that the District has a relatively low proportion of 20-29 year olds in comparison to England as a whole. It also indicates that Uttlesford has a "very small representation of black and minority ethnic groups at 2%, though there are growing migrant worker communities living or working in the district", based on the 2001 census.

1.13 The Sustainable Community Strategy also indicates that Uttlesford is one of the most affluent areas of the country and is the least deprived District in Essex. However, the District's rural nature

¹ 2008-based Subnational Population Projections, ONS (2011)

² Uttlesford Futures - Sustainable Community Strategy: A vision for our future – 2018 (2008)

means that some areas fall within the 25% most 'access deprived' wards in England, based on 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation data.

1.14 There are 57 Parish or Town councils within Uttlesford District. Their locations are shown below.

Figure 1.1: Town and Parish Councils in Uttlesford



Environmental Context

Topography, river patterns and flood zones

1.15 Uttlesford can be divided into three separate river catchment areas, as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the District³: the Cam tributaries catchment area in the north, the River

³ Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)

Chelmer and Pant catchments in the east and the River Stort and Roding catchments in the west. This document indicates that the District is prone to localised flooding in Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet, Great Hallingbury, Great Canfield, Berden, Manuden, Great Chesterford, Newport and Hatfield Broad Oak. The large number of river valleys within the District, create an intricate network and are an important part of the topography and landscape of the District. In the north west of the District, the landform reaches heights of 130m AOD where chalk is the underlying geology.

Geology and Soils

- 1.16 A broadly flat, but undulating plateau covered by glacial till dominates much of the District. The upper reaches of the River Stour and its tributaries are particularly deeply incised. The chalky boulder clay gives way in the north west of the District to a narrow band of chalk that forms an extension to the Chilterns. Much of the District is classified as Grade 2 Agricultural Land of relatively high quality. This quality is generally reduced to Grade 3 within river valleys.

Landscape Character

- 1.17 At a national level there are two main National Character Areas within the District as defined under the Countryside Agency/English Nature/English Heritage 'Character Map of England'. Landscape character should be used to inform enhancements to the greenspace network, particularly in Natural and Semi-natural greenspaces. These are:

South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland: the area is a broadly flat, chalky boulder clay plateau dissected by undulating river valley topography. It is predominantly arable with irregular field patterns and a wooded appearance. There is some pasture in the valley floors. The area is scattered with impressive churches. There are also several large villages and frequent towns, most with medieval street plans and elaborate timber frame houses.

East Anglian Chalk: this character area is formed of large scale, mainly arable, rolling downland. The landscape is largely open and its chalk geology is distinctive. There are few large towns and many villages have become commuter villages whilst retaining their rural character. The area contains distinctive linear ancient or Roman earthworks.

Designations

- 1.18 Biodiversity - There are no European or international wildlife sites in Uttlesford. There are 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 7 National Nature Reserves and 281 Local Wildlife Sites. In addition Within Uttlesford District the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan lists:
- Two plant Species (native Black Polar and Oxlip)
 - Five Mammal Species (Brown Hare, Dormouse, European Otter, Pipistrelle bats and Water Vole)
 - Four Bird Species (Grey Partridge, Skylark, Song Thrush and Stone Curlew)
 - One Invertebrate Species (Desmoulins Whorl Snail)
 - Great Crested Newts and
 - Six Habitats (Ancient and/or Species Rich Hedgerows and Green Lanes, Ancient Woodland, Cereal Field Margins, Heathland, Old Orchards and Urban Areas)
- 1.19 Landscape – There are no nationally designated landscapes within Uttlesford. Local designations currently include Special Landscape Areas, Ancient Woodlands, Historic Parks and Gardens, Protected Lanes and Special Verges.

Policy Context

National Strategic Policy and Guidance

The Localism Bill, CLG, 2010

- 1.20 The Localism Bill currently before Parliament proposes a major transition of power from central and regional government to the local level. It is a very wide ranging Bill which when linked with the reductions in public sector spending will see major changes in how services and facilities are provided. This will inevitably impact on how open space is provided and maintained in the future. With most major new open space provision provided in conjunction with new home provision, changes proposed to the planning system will be important in this regard. Notably, the Local Development Framework Core Strategies will effectively be given enhanced status, sitting as they will between national policy guidance and new neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood Plans will be required to be in accordance with the Core Strategies i.e. they cannot propose less, but could provide more housing than set out in the relevant Core Strategy.
- 1.21 The Localism Bill also includes provision for a number of other measures which are of relevance to this study: -
- Abolition of Local Area Agreements – helped set targets at a local level which could include targets in relation to green space or wildlife sites.
 - Introduction of Community Right to Buy. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, community groups will have time to develop a bid and raise money to buy the asset. This could include greenspace assets.
 - Introduction of Neighbourhood Plans. Provides a route to identifying, protecting or enhancing green space and green infrastructure at the local level.

Sustainable Communities: Building for the future, CLG, 2004

- 1.22 The Communities and Local Government (CLG) plan 'Sustainable Communities: Building for the future' sets out the government's proposed locations for major growth (Growth areas). The Sustainable Communities Agenda has since been expanded to incorporate growth points, including the Haven Gateway. The objectives for Green Infrastructure in the growth areas and growth points are:
- To raise the quality and accessibility of greenbelt land by improving accessibility, biodiversity and utility value;
 - To promote more and better publicly accessible green space in and around communities; and
 - To protect green wedges and green corridors through the planning system.

PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, DCLG, 2002

- 1.23 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 indicates the importance of open space, sport and recreation and requires local authorities to undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities. It provides a sound basis for undertaking the local assessment of open space, sport and recreation needs.
- a) Assessments of needs and opportunities:
- Local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities.
 - Assessments of need should cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population.
 - Local authorities should also undertake audits of existing provision that consider qualitative and quantitative elements.

- Assessments and audits will form the starting point for a clear strategy and effective planning policies.
 - Good quality assessments and audits, clear strategies and effective planning policies will provide the means to resolve the conflicts that arise between different uses and users.
 - The Government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of need and audits of open space.
- b) Setting local standards: Facility standards are best set locally. Local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set robust local standards. These should form the basis for redressing accessibility, quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process. Standards should include quantitative, qualitative and accessibility components.
- c) Maintaining an adequate supply of facilities: Existing land should not be built upon unless an assessment has clearly shown it to be surplus to requirements.
- Sites of high quality and those of particular value to a local community should be recognised and protected through appropriate policies in plans.
 - Developments may provide opportunities to meet deficits.
 - Developments may provide opportunities to exchange sites, but in such cases, the new site should be at least as accessible to users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality.
- d) Planning for new facilities: In identifying where to locate new provision, local authorities should:
- Promote accessibility by non-vehicular means and ensure that facilities are accessible for people with disabilities.
 - Locate more intensive uses in sites where they can contribute to town centre vitality and viability.
 - Provide open space in commercial and industrial areas.
 - Enhance the range and quality of existing facilities.
 - Consider security and personal safety.
 - Meet the regeneration needs of areas, using brownfield in preference to greenfield sites.
 - Assess the impact of new facilities on social inclusion.
 - Consider the recreational needs of visitors and tourists.
- e) Planning obligations: Planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the vicinity of a new development, where that development increases local needs.

PPS7: Sustainable development in rural areas, DCLG, 2006

- 1.24 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.
- 1.25 PPS7 places a duty on local authorities to ensure the improvement of the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods, continuing protection of valued landscapes, natural resources and of the open countryside for the benefit of all.

PPS9 Biodiversity and geological conservation, DCLG, 2004

- 1.26 PPS9 is an extension of the government's biodiversity strategy 'Working with the grain of nature: A biodiversity strategy for England'. PPS9 identifies that biological and geological diversity should be sustained and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework, CLG, 2011

- 1.27 In July 2011 the Government published a draft National Planning Policy Framework for consultation. Its stated aim is to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, and to promote sustainable growth. The National Planning Policy Framework will replace existing Planning Policy Statements and Guidance.
- 1.28 Within the draft National Planning Policy Framework the section on Sustainable Communities identifies an objective "to create strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by creating a good quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect community needs and support well-being". One of the factors to help achieve this is to "ensure access to open spaces and recreational facilities that promote the health and well-being of the community". This would be achieved by identifying specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in a local area and setting locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities. This is in keeping with the thinking behind PPG17.

Green Infrastructure Guidance, Natural England, 2009

- 1.29 This guidance document provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of green infrastructure and signposts to other relevant information such as Natural England's green infrastructure definition, policy statement and track record in driving delivery. It also maps out wider policy priorities and drivers for green infrastructure. It sets out what constitutes Green Infrastructure (GI), the value of planning for GI and processes for delivering GI effectively.

'Nature Nearby': Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance, Natural England, 2010

- 1.30 This document identifies key standards for use by greenspace professionals that will deliver high quality and inspiring visitor experiences in green spaces close to where people live, and connect people with the natural environment. These standards include Access to Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt), which has the underlying principles of:
- Improving access to green spaces.
 - Improving naturalness of green spaces.
 - Improving connectivity with green spaces.
- 1.31 ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace:
- of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
 - at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;
 - one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
 - one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
 - a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.

Biodiversity by Design: A guide for sustainable communities, Town and Country Planning Association, 2004

- 1.32 The Town and Country Planning Association document provides guidance on how to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity in the planning and design of sustainable communities. It offers exemplars from international projects on successful design and management of environmental infrastructure, benefiting communities, to demonstrate new approaches which have the potential

for replication in the UK. The document considers core design principles which relate well to biodiversity, examines methods of analysing a site and its context, advises on how new Green Infrastructure can be created that links to existing networks, and considers detailed design and long term management.

Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base, CABESpace, 2010

1.33 This study investigated over 70 major data sources and assembled an inventory of more than 16,000 individual green spaces. It analysed the data to discover what it says about publicly owned and managed urban green space. The analysis considered the following core themes, which were selected to represent a multi-faceted view of green space:

- 1) quantity: by type and amount of green space available in urban areas
- 2) quality: including subjective assessments, such as resident satisfaction, and objective measures such as biodiversity
- 3) use: how people use green space
- 4) proximity: the physical location of green space in relation to where people live, and how far people have to travel to access different types of green space
- 5) management and maintenance: spending, staffing and how well a space is looked after
- 6) value: capturing how important green space is to people.

1.34 The key findings of the study were:

- 1) Almost nine out of 10 people use parks and green spaces, and they value them
- 2) If people are satisfied with local parks, they tend to be satisfied with their council
- 3) The provision of parks in deprived areas is worse than in affluent areas
- 4) People from minority ethnic groups tend to have less local green space and it is of a poorer quality
- 5) The higher the quality of the green space, the more likely it is to be used.

Open Space Strategies: Best Practice Guidance, CABESpace, 2009

1.35 This document offers guidance to local authorities and their stakeholders on how to prepare an open space strategy. It outlines reasons for preparing a strategy, as well as recommending the scope. It provides case study examples to illustrate the stages of an open space strategy identified in PPG17.

Public Space Lessons: Designing and Planning for Play, CABESpace, 2008

1.36 This document identifies one golden rule for designing play areas: a successful play space is a place in its own right, specially designed for its location, in such a way as to provide as much play value as possible. This should be achieved through following 10 principles, to create a play space that is:

- designed to enhance its setting
- located in the best possible place
- close to nature
- designed so that children can play in different ways
- geared towards encouraging disabled and able-bodied children to play together
- loved by the community
- where children of all ages play together
- designed to enable children to stretch and challenge themselves in every way

- maintained for play value and environmental sustainability
- flexible and able to evolve as the children grow

The value of public space: how high quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value, CABEspace, 2004

- 1.37 CABE identifies that there are many benefits to high quality parks and public spaces. These benefits can include; a significant impact on the economic life of urban environments; stimulating increased house prices; improvement to our physical and mental health by encouraging us to walk more, to play sport, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment; providing children with opportunities for fun, exercise and learning; helping to allay fear of crime; shaping the cultural identity of an area; providing a safer and more welcoming environment, encouraging walking and cycling; redress the imbalance known as the 'heat island effect'; vegetation also has benefits to mental well being.

The Sport England Strategy 2008 - 2011, Sport England, 2008

- 1.38 Sport England's overarching aim, as set out in 'The Sport England Strategy 2008 - 2011' is to build the foundations of sporting success through the creation of a world leading community sport system in England. Sport England's approach is to operate at a strategic level, working with and through national sports governing bodies, and drawing in other partners such as Local Authorities who drive local provision and are key to delivering world-leading community sport infrastructure. Sport England's strategy is based on the delivery of the following key outcomes and will ensure that:

- Grow: A substantial and growing number of people from across the community play sport.
- Sustain: Everyone who plays sport has a quality experience and is able to fulfil their potential.
- Excel: Talented people from all backgrounds are identified early, nurtured and have the opportunity to progress to the elite level.

- 1.39 Through the strategy and the creation of a world leading community sport system Sport England is committed to delivering:

- 1 million more people doing sport.
- A reduction in post-16 drop-off in at least 5 sports by 25% by 2012-13.
- A quantifiable increase in satisfaction with sports provision.
- Improved talent development systems in at least 25 sports.
- A major contribution to the delivery of the Five Hour Sport Offer engaging more 5-19 year olds in sport.

- 1.40 Implications for open space, sport and recreation: Sport England's strategy provides a focus for the delivery and development of sport in England. The strategy highlights the key role of Local Authorities in helping to deliver the overarching aim of delivering a world leading community sport system and in particular the infrastructure to support such a system.

A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England / Playing Fields for Sport Revisited, Sport England, 2000

- 1.41 These documents provide Sport England's planning policy statement on playing fields. It acknowledges that playing fields are one of the most important resources for sport in England as they provide the space which is required for the playing of team sports on outdoor pitches, that open space is becoming an increasingly scarce resource and that it can provide an important landscape function, perform the function of a strategic gap or provide a resource for other community activities and informal recreation.

Planning for Open Space, Sport England, 2002

- 1.42 Sport England draws together the large body of research and good practice on the subject of open space and focuses on the revised PPG 17 and its companion guide. The main messages from Sport England within this document are:
- Sport England's policy on planning applications for development of playing fields (A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England) provides 5 exceptions to its normal stance of opposing any loss of all or part of such facilities and are reflected in PPG 17 (paragraphs 10-15).
 - Sport England must be consulted on development proposals affecting land that has been used as playing fields at any time in the previous 5 years, or that is identified as a playing field in a development plan.
 - It is highly likely that planning inspectors will no longer accept a Six Acre Standard approach in emerging development plans and it therefore increases the importance of setting local standards.
 - In undertaking a playing pitch assessment as part of an overall open space assessment, local authorities will need to consider the revised advice and methodology 'Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the production of Playing Pitch Strategies' produced by Sport England and available on their website⁴.

*Regional Strategic Policy and Guidance*East of England Plan: The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, Government Office For The East Of England, 2008

- 1.43 The East of England Plan (amongst other regional strategies) provides regional planning policy context to the year 2021 but with a longer-term vision. It includes issues covering economic development, housing, the environment, transport, waste management, culture, sport and recreation and mineral extraction.
- 1.44 Its vision is that by 2021 the East of England will be realising its economic potential and providing a high quality of life for its people, including by meeting their housing needs in sustainable inclusive communities. At the same time it will reduce its impact on climate change and the environment, including through savings in energy and water use and by strengthening its stock of environmental assets.
- 1.45 The Plan's objectives include to improve and conserve the region's environment. There is a specific policy for green infrastructure, POLICY ENV1: Green Infrastructure, which states that areas and networks of green infrastructure should be identified, created, protected, enhanced and managed to ensure an improved and healthy environment is available for present and future communities.
- 1.46 It specifically identifies that Local Development Documents (LDDs) should define a multiple hierarchy of green infrastructure, in terms of location, function, size and levels of use, based on analysis of natural, historic, cultural and landscape assets, and the identification of areas where additional green infrastructure is required.
- 1.47 It further identifies assets of regional significance for the retention, provision and enhancement of green infrastructure, and that these include Hatfield Forest.
- 1.48 The Localism Bill re-confirms the Government's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). The RSS would therefore no longer form part of the development plan. However, evidence used in the preparation of the revoked Regional Spatial Strategies still counts as a 'material consideration' for development control purposes depending on the actual case.

⁴ www.sportengland.org

Building a Winning Future Together in Essex - A Strategy for Sport in Essex 2008 – 2012, Sport Essex, 2008

- 1.49 'Building a Winning Future Together in Essex - A Strategy for Sport in Essex 2008 - 2012' was produced by Sport Essex, the County Sports Partnership. It sets the general direction of travel for sport in the county in the period to 2012
- a) Purpose: The document provides a framework for partnership between all agencies involved in sport in Essex, so that action across a whole range of sport can be properly coordinated and to increase participation in sport and physical activity.
 - b) Strategic themes for action:
 - Identifying, brokering and strengthening strategic links.
 - Increasing quality opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity in a range of settings.
 - Improving and expanding the sport and physical activity infrastructure.
 - Increasing and improving the workforce capacity.
 - Improving the methods and effectiveness of marketing and communications.
 - Providing an effective method of impact measurement.
- 1.50 Implications for open space, sport and recreation: The county sports strategy highlights a number of key issues that should be taken into account in this study, in particular:
- a) Research shows that traditional locations may not offer the most attractive environments for non-participants to become involved in sports and physical activity. Much activity takes place in informal settings such as open spaces and planning standards should take account of such demand.
 - b) Clubs and the voluntary sports sector play a key role in the provision and development of sport and further support should be offered to them to improve the quantity and quality of the opportunities they provide.

Essex Sports Facilities Strategy, Sport Essex, 2008

- 1.51 'Essex Sports Facilities Strategy 2007 - 2020' was produced by Sport Essex. It identifies sports facilities needs in the county:
- a) Purpose: The Strategy should be 'used by local authorities and key partners to help inform the level and nature of provision that is required. Critically, it should also assist in planning for provision cross boundary'.
 - b) Facilities hierarchy: A hierarchy of provision is proposed:
 - Sub-regional facilities: Facilities that serve the whole county.
 - District facilities: Facilities that serve a whole district, but whose catchment may also cover part of another district.
 - Local/neighbourhood facilities: Facilities that serve the rural areas and specific urban areas. As a minimum, all villages should have access to an indoor facility within the village that can cater for recreational activities in which different age groups can participate. All persons living in rural areas should be no further than 20 minutes drive time from a larger leisure facility and swimming pool open to the community. In urban areas, all persons should be within 20 minutes walking time of a larger leisure centre and a swimming pool open to the community.
 - c) Community access: Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) estimates that the supply of sports halls, swimming pools and health and fitness facilities exceeds demand in the county, although around half of the facilities have limited access for community 'pay and play' usage.

- d) Deficiencies in Uttlesford: Consultation with the governing bodies of sport identified the following facilities needs in Uttlesford and/or north Essex:

<i>Governing body</i>	<i>I identified deficiency</i>
UK Athletics	A need for athletics facilities in Uttlesford, possible a 150m 'J' track, rather than a full 400m facility.
Badminton England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A permanent training/competition venue in north Essex • All new community centres/village halls should include 1-2 badminton courts with correct hall height, lighting and court dimensions.
Amateur Rowing Association	Rowing facilities are required in the Uttlesford to Thurrock corridor.

- 1.52 ***Recommendations:*** The strategy contains the following general recommendations:

- Invest in the existing facilities stock, to maintain current levels of provision.
- Develop new facilities provision.
- Address unmet demand.
- Negotiate increased accessibility/availability to existing facilities.
- Work in partnership.
- Utilise the planning framework.
- Retain performance sport and performance athletes in the county.
- Harness the benefits of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Improve sports club's security of tenure.
- Facilitate major sports events.

- 1.53 ***Implications for open space, sport and recreation:*** The findings of the county sports facilities strategy will be taken into account in the wider assessment of need undertaken as part of this study.

Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision for Essex, including Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Unitary Authorities, Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England, 2009

- 1.54 This study analysed the provision of Accessible Natural Greenspace within Essex, based on a national methodology and using datasets of different types of greenspaces provided by Local Authorities. The study identified that 1% of Uttlesford District is comprised of accessible natural greenspace. The analysis also indicated that 54% of households within Uttlesford do not meet any of the ANGSt criteria, compared with 16% in Essex as a whole. 8% of households were considered to be within 300m of a 2ha+ site, 28% within 2km of a 20ha+ site and 39% within 5km of a 100ha+ site.

Local Policy and Guidance

Sustainable Communities Strategy, Uttlesford Futures, 2008

- 1.55 'A Sustainable Community Strategy: A Vision for the Future 2018' is a draft document produced by Uttlesford Futures, to provide overall policy direction for organisations in the area. The main content relevant to sport and recreation is set out below.
- 1.56 The strategic vision for Uttlesford is 'to sustain a high quality of life in which the benefits of the unique character of the district are available to all residents, workers or visitors'.
- 1.57 Strategic themes: The themes are:
- a) Children and young people matter.

- b) Staying healthy.
- c) Developing business.
- d) Feeling safe.
- e) Protecting the environment.
- f) Getting around.

1.58 Strategic priorities: The strategic priorities relevant to sport and recreation are as follows:

- a) To promote healthy lifestyles amongst young people.
- b) To reduce rural deprivation by increasing access to services.
- c) To provide support to reduce adult obesity.
- d) To increase participation in sport, culture and volunteering.

1.59 *Implications for sport and recreation:* The Strategy illustrates how sport and physical activity, can play a core role in delivering some of the key local priorities.

The adopted Uttlesford Local Plan, UDC, 2005

1.60 'The Uttlesford Local Plan' provides a frame of reference for development control in the district. The main policies of relevance to open space, sport and recreation are set out below.

1.61 The policies on Environment, Built and Natural have the following objectives:

- a) To safeguard the character of Uttlesford's historic settlements.
- b) To conserve and enhance the historic buildings in Uttlesford and their setting.
- c) To protect the natural environment for its own sake, particularly for its biodiversity, and agricultural, cultural and visual qualities.
- d) To limit sensitive development in areas subject to high levels of noise from aircraft or other sources, and avoid deterioration in the noise environment.
- e) To protect ground and surface water resources from contamination and over abstraction.
- f) To protect users of residential properties in particular from long term exposure to poor ground level air quality.
- g) To improve the health of the community.

1.62 Policy ENV3- Open Spaces and Trees: 'The loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value'.

1.63 Policy ENV7 - The Protection of the Natural Environment - Designated Sites: 'Development proposals that adversely affect areas of nationally important nature conservation concern, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the particular importance of the nature conservation value of site or reserve.

Development proposals likely to affect local areas of nature conservation significance, such as County Wildlife sites, ancient woodlands, wildlife habitats, sites of ecological interest and Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological Sites, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the local significance of the site to the biodiversity of the District. Where development is permitted the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's conservation interest.'

1.64 Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation: 'Development that may adversely affect these landscape elements:

- Hedgerows

- Linear tree belts
- Larger semi natural or ancient woodlands
- Semi-natural grasslands
- Green lanes and special verges
- Orchards
- Plantations
- Ponds reservoirs
- River corridors
- Linear wetland features
- Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats.

will only be permitted if the following criteria apply:

- a) The need for the development outweighs the need to retain the elements for their importance to wild fauna and flora;
- b) Mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.

Appropriate management of these elements will be encouraged through the use of conditions and planning obligations’.

1.65 The policies on leisure and cultural provision have the following objectives:

- a) To safeguard existing open space within towns and villages for either formal or informal recreation.
- b) To enable the provision of community facilities in villages, which would accommodate activities central to village life, even where development would not normally be permitted.
- c) To develop sport and leisure facilities at key sites and enable outdoor recreation in the countryside whilst protecting its character and amenities.
- d) To improve access to leisure and cultural facilities and to ensure that all leisure and cultural provision is accessible for the benefit of the whole community to ensure social inclusion.

1.66 Policy LC1 - Loss of sports fields and recreational facilities: 'Development will not be permitted if it would involve the loss of sports fields or other open space for recreation. Exceptions may be permitted if either of the following applies:

- a) Replacement facilities will be provided that better meet local recreational needs.
- b) The need for the facility no longer exists’.

1.67 As there is already a deficiency in the number of playing pitches, policy LC1 is concerned with total or partial loss of playing fields. It applies whether the facilities are still in active use or whether through ownership, for example, this is now prevented. It also applies to development that would prejudice the use of land as playing fields. It is not intended to prevent the provision of facilities such as changing rooms, pavilions and club houses.

- a) If replacement facilities are proposed they must be at least as good as those lost in terms of location, quantity, quality, and management arrangements.
- b) Replacement facilities must be made available before development of the existing site begins.
- c) An assessment of current and future needs will need to be submitted demonstrating that there is an excess of playing fields in a locality and the catchment of the facility, or that the site has no special significance to sport or recreation, if planning permission is to be granted for development.

- d) The Council intends to work with town and parish councils to provide and/or improve facilities in the District
 - e) Extensions or additional facilities at existing sports and leisure centres or school sites with potential for dual school and community use will be permitted outside as well as within settlements.
- 1.68 Policy LC2 - Access to Leisure and Cultural Facilities: 'All development proposals for leisure and cultural purposes, whether new build, conversion or extension need to be accessible to all, to ensure social inclusion'.
- 1.69 Policy LC3 - Community Facilities: 'Community facilities will be permitted on a site outside settlements if all the following criteria are met:
- a) The need for the facility can be demonstrated.
 - b) The need cannot be met on a site within the boundaries.
 - c) The site is well related to a settlement'.
- 1.70 Policy LC4 - Provision of Outdoor Sport and Recreational Facilities beyond development limits: 'The following developments will be permitted:
- a) Outdoor sports and recreational facilities, including associated buildings such as changing rooms and club-houses.
 - b) Suitable recreational after use of mineral workings'.
- 1.71 Policy LC6 - Land West of Little Walden Road Saffron Walden: 'A site west of Little Walden Road, Saffron Walden has been identified to provide a community centre and playing fields as part of a mixed development scheme'.
- 1.72 The preamble to Policy LC6 indicates that Saffron Walden is the focal point for the northern half of the district yet it is deficient in a number of leisure and cultural amenities. It has a longstanding problem of inadequate provision of playing fields and does not meet the National Playing Fields Association standards (Since the Adoption of the Local Plan these standards have been superseded by Fields in Trust Standards). A site west of Little Walden Road has been identified to provide a mixed development consisting of a community centre, playing fields and associated car parking. A Master Plan will be prepared in consultation with the Town Council, residents, and local sports clubs to identify the juxtaposition of uses and the type of playing fields needed.
- 1.73 The Local Plan comprises policy planning policies that are robust in their defence of sport and recreation facilities, but the development of standards of provision through this study will be key to determining the adequacy of existing provision and future needs.

Green Space Strategy Audit, UDC, 2006

- 1.74 One of the Background Studies to support the emerging Local Development Framework is the Green Space Strategy Audit, which includes an assessment of both existing open space provision and the adequacy of outdoor sports provision based upon the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standard. The main material of relevance is summarised below.
- 1.75 The audit considered accessible green space of 0.15 hectares or more within the 15 largest parishes in the District. All parishes had a population of over 1000. The audit utilised a number of the green space types identified in PPG17, namely allotments, amenity green space, natural and semi-natural green space, outdoor sports provision, parks and gardens, and provision for children and young people. An assessment was made of the value of each green space to users in terms of accessibility, cleanliness and maintenance, safety, biodiversity and attractiveness.
- 1.76 The NPFA Standard: The standard was produced as a general guide to the adequacy of provision of 'space that is safely accessible and available to the general public and of a suitable size and nature, for sport, active recreation or children's play'. It has two components:

- a) Outdoor sport: Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletics tracks and miscellaneous sites such as croquet lawns and training areas. These should be provided at a minimum level of 1.6ha per 1,000 people.
- b) Children's playing space: Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play. These should be provided at a minimum level of 0.8ha per 1,000 people.

1.77 Provision of Playing Space assessment: The application of the children's playing space standard produced the following results:

- a) Larger parishes:

Parish	Existing playing space (Ha)	Playing space per 1,000 popn.	NPFA requirement for parish (Ha)	Surplus/(deficit) for parish (Ha)
Clavering	2.8	2.4	2.8	0
Dunmow	11.8	1.7	16.8	(5.0)
Elsenham	3.7	1.5	5.8	(2.1)
Felsted	3.1	1.1	6.8	(3.7)
Great Chesterford	3.2	2.2	3.4	(0.2)
Hatfield Broad Oak	2.0	1.7	2.8	(0.8)
Hatfield Heath	1.6	1.0	4.0	(2.4)
Henham	2.6	2.2	2.8	(0.2)
Little Hallingbury	2.4	1.7	3.4	(1.0)
Newport	4.4	2.2	5.3	(0.9)
Saffron Walden	13.0	0.9	36.2	(23.2)
Stansted	4.8	0.9	13.3	(8.5)
Stebbing	4.5	3.5	3.1	1.4
Takeley	7.2	3.1	5.5	1.7
Thaxted	3.9	1.4	6.2	(2.3)

- b) Urban wards:

Parish	Existing playing space (Ha)	Playing space per 1,000 popn.	NPFA requirement for Ward (Ha)	Surplus/(deficit) for Ward (Ha)
Great Dunmow North	8.2	3.2	6.1	2.1
Great Dunmow South	3.5	0.8	10.8	(7.3)
Saffron Walden Audley	2.0	0.4	11.1	(9.1)
Saffron Walden Castle	4.9	1.0	11.7	(6.8)
Saffron Walden Shire	6.1	1.2	12.2	(6.1)
Stansted North	2.5	0.8	7.6	(5.1)
Stansted South	2.3	0.8	6.6	(4.3)

1.78 Outdoor sports assessment: The application of the outdoor sports standard produced the following results:

a) Larger parishes:

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Existing sports provision (Ha)</i>	<i>Sports provision per 1,000 popn.</i>	<i>NPFA requirement for parish</i>	<i>Surplus/(deficit) for parish (Ha)</i>
Clavering	2.8	2.4	1.8	1.0
Dunmow	8.8	1.3	11.2	(2.4)
Elsenham	3.5	1.5	3.8	(0.3)
Felsted	2.5	0.9	4.5	(2.0)
Great Chesterford	3.0	2.1	2.3	0.7
Hatfield Broad Oak	1.6	1.4	1.9	(0.3)
Hatfield Heath	1.2	0.7	2.7	(1.5)
Henham	1.4	1.2	1.9	(0.5)
Little Hallingbury	1.2	0.9	2.2	(1.0)
Newport	3.6	1.6	3.5	0.1
Saffron Walden	7.4	0.5	24.2	(16.8)
Stansted	2.3	0.4	8.9	(6.6)
Stebbing	3.9	3.1	2.1	1.8
Takeley	6.6	2.9	3.7	2.9
Thaxted	2.7	1.1	4.1	(1.4)

b) Urban wards:

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Existing sports provision (Ha)</i>	<i>Sports provision per 1,000 popn.</i>	<i>NPFA requirement for Ward</i>	<i>Surplus/(deficit) for Ward (Ha)</i>
Great Dunmow North	7.2	2.8	4.1	3.1
Great Dunmow South	1.6	0.4	7.2	(5.6)
Saffron Walden Audley	0.4	0.1	7.4	(7.0)
Saffron Walden Castle	3.5	0.7	7.8	(4.3)
Saffron Walden Shire	3.6	0.7	8.2	(4.6)
Stansted North	2.1	0.7	5.1	(3.0)
Stansted South	1.5	0.5	4.4	(2.9)

1.79 Implications for sport and recreation: The assessment of outdoor sports provision in the Green Space Audit in relation to the NPFA standard provides a helpful preliminary overview of provision, however:

- The standard is only intended to provide an overview and takes no account of variations in local demand levels, the type and quality of provision, nor of the distance that play area users and sports participants, are prepared to travel to access facilities.
- PPG17 states that 'facility standards are best set locally. Local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set robust local standards. These should form the basis for redressing accessibility, quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process. Standards should include quantitative, qualitative and accessibility components'.
- The assessment does not cover the smaller parishes in the district, many of which have additional outdoor sports facilities.