

CHAPTER SIXTEEN - SPORTS

Each chapter in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan is under constant review and refinement. Not all of the Appendices are yet available but they will be posted on the website as and when they are ready. The text in the chapters should be sufficient, however, to enable you to respond to the questions which are in the leaflet and repeated at the end of the section for your convenience.

Objective

- To encourage an active lifestyle by broadening the range of sports available and the availability of outdoor exercise and play equipment.

The current position

- *There are a number of sports facilities in the village (see Appendix ** for location map)*
 - Stansted Tennis Club has two hard courts and is leased from the Parish Council. It is run by volunteers and has 188 members.
 - Stansted Football Club plays in the Essex Senior League and has ambitions to move up the league pyramid but is restricted by the location of its ground on Hargrave Park, part of which it shares with Stansted Cricket Club.
 - Stansted Cricket Club is long-established and plays at Hargrave Park. The Club runs 14 teams, which include include three junior teams and a softball and a kwick team both aimed for youngsters.
 - Stansted Hall and Elsenham Cricket Club plays on a private cricket ground located on the edge of the village towards Elsenham. The club has 12 teams and encourages junior players with your teams right down to the U9 level.
 - The Romeera Leisure Centre which opened in 2003 provides a gym and a four court Sports Hall offering badminton, Cricket, 5-a-side football, basketball and netball.
 - Forest Hall School has three full size pitch equivalents with new changing facilities. However, the School is constrained by the Romeera Leisure Centre PFI contract with Uttlesford District Council which limits development of facilities within the school campus. Use of the pitches is not available for community use.
- *Other casual physical activities are catered for in the following areas (see Appendix ** for map)*
 - *Stansted Skatepark* is located on the Lower Street car park and is a facility developed by the Parish Council which opened in 2004 and was rebuilt in 2015. It is well supported by a wide range of young people.
 - *Mountfitchet Green* is situated in the middle of the Mountfitchet Estate and has a Multi Use Games Area which was provided by Uttlesford District Council. In addition there is an equipped play area managed by the Parish Council and refurbished in 2012 with further equipment being added in 2021.
 - *The Recreation Ground* is in the centre of the village and has two play areas which were refurbished in 2012. Goalposts on the site allow for casual kickarounds or games of football.
 - *Bentfield Play Area* meets the needs of younger children and was refurbished in 2012.
 - *Foresthall Park* has two equipped play areas and a number of smaller areas of play for toddlers.
 - *Walpole Meadows* – A recent development which has a play area, allotments, an orchard, a kickabout area and public open space.
 - *Elms Farm*, a new development, has provided a large area of public open space and allotments of varying sizes which are now all fully leased, together with a network of Permissive Paths across Stansted Park.
- Apart from these facilities and activities walking is popular and is encouraged by the network of Public Rights of Way (see p. XX) and the new Permissive Paths at Stansted Park.

The issues that need to be addressed

- The area, particularly in Stansted South, has the highest child poverty rates in Uttlesford. In its health and wellbeing strategy, UDC states that 18% of the children in reception classes and 26% of those in year six were classified as either overweight or obese in 2016/17 and the position since then is unlikely to have improved. Rising levels of obesity increases the risk of further conditions, including diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Without action this data could mean that today's children will have a lower life of expectancy than their parents.
- Stansted Mountfitchet and the surrounding area have had minimal investment in community sports facilities over the past two decades, despite population growth of more than 70% over the period. Consequently, rising need and demand across a range of sport and leisure facilities remain unfulfilled.

Research on future needs is being pursued by two groups:

- Uttlesford District Council commissioned a study into the supply and demand for sports playing pitches in the District based on four geographical areas of which Stansted Mountfitchet was one. A fund of £450,000 has been established by UDC to support three major sports project over the period to 2023.
- SMPC has set up a Sports Strategy Working Group to work with local sports clubs and the wider community in Stansted and surrounding villages.

What will be needed in the next fifteen years

The following facilities, if available, would be well used and deliver health benefits:

- **Youth Football:** Stansted FC is seeking to develop youth football teams as feeders for the senior team, which would bolster the links between the club and the community. At the same time, Elsenham YFC, the largest youth football club in this part of Uttlesford, has grown eight-fold to around 400 registered players since it was established in 2000. Neither club has sufficient pitch provision to develop and grow in order to cater for long-term demand. Indeed, the number of pitches is likely to shrink due to the lack of long-term security of Elsenham YFC's tenure at Stansted Airport Playing Fields, which provides four of the 10 pitches it uses for matches and training. Additional football pitches will, therefore, be needed.
- **Football is a major sport for all age groups:** The Essex FA's Uttlesford Local Football Facility Plan notes that "Mountfitchet Romeera Leisure Centre (Forest Hall School) is a dual use site that has potential to provide a full size 3G pitch. A pitch here could service both the Stansted Mountfitchet Analysis Area, as well as servicing parts of the Rural Analysis area. A feasibility study should be undertaken and an understanding developed of cross boundary migration of training demand and play from East Hertfordshire. Should a full size 3G FTP not be feasible, there could be consideration to a 9v9 3G pitch due to this area having the least identified football demand in the District.
- **Swimming:** The facility most popularly requested by parishioners is a swimming pool. Support for this project has been consistent over a long period – evidenced in the responses to the SMPC Community Plan. The nearest swimming pools are in Bishop's Stortford and Saffron Walden while the Helena Romanes School in Great Dunmow has a pool which is shared with the community. Therefore, Stansted Mountfitchet is the only large settlement in the district without a pool. Although such an asset would be desirable, it is not evident how this would be funded or the likely revenue deficit covered.
- **Hargrave Sports Ground** could be reorganised to meet more community needs. Stansted's football and cricket clubs share the ground. With seasons for both sports overlapping in August and football pitch quality in need of improvement, any increase in capacity and quality is difficult if not impossible at the present venue and the clubs are examining reconfiguring the grounds to enable growth of community sports, dependent on growth in pitch provision elsewhere in the parish.
- **Tennis is growing rapidly in popularity.** The tennis club has been growing at 5-10% annually and junior coaching has risen from three to 50 within the space of two years, having established links with all four schools in Stansted. Growth is now restricted due to a lack of space to expand at the current site and the

capacity constraints of just two courts. If Hargrave Sports Ground can be reorganised then this may provide the club with the opportunity to expand, either on that site or elsewhere.

- **A multi-use community and sports facility would be a medium term objective.** Population growth in the Stansted and Elsenham area continues to be strong and housing developments are likely to emerge in coming years. To support those needs, a permanent solution is required in the form of a new major facility in the area. Potential sites include land adjacent next to the Mountfitchet Romeera Leisure Centre/Forest Hall Campus, which could help expand pitch provision with the potential for a 3G pitch in the area. An alternative could be a multi-use campus that would accommodate a range of competitive sports and cultural activities, including football, tennis, netball, basketball, etc, possibly located between Stansted and Elsenham, which could provide a green buffer to prevent coalescence between the two communities. A Pavilion/Community Centre could also provide a medium-size venue for other leisure and cultural activities, including yoga, martial arts, music and the performing arts.
- The Parish Council has given serious consideration to re-siting the skatepark which is not well placed in the centre of the Lower Street car park. Finding a suitable alternative site has, so far, not proved possible.
- **Funding** – There are a range of sources of funding to achieve facility improvements (see Appendix **)
- The National Lottery supports a Strategic Facilities Fund run by Sport England
- The Football Foundation provides funding for local football facilities which have the support of the Essex County Football Association
- Uttlesford District Council has set up a three-year Sports Facility Grant Scheme starting in 2021
- Active Essex supports physical and mental health activities and projects in the community
- Fund raising in and from the community
- Section 106 contributions

Policies

SMSL1	To safeguard existing sports and leisure assets and prevent disposal unless they are replaced with the same, or better.
SMSL2	To provide additional football pitches at all levels.
SMSL3	To provide a full-sized floodlit 3G pitch.
SMSL4	To investigate the possibility of providing a swimming pool.
SMSL5	To seek an alternative site for the skatepark.
SMSL6	To find and fund a greenfield site for a multipurpose community and sports facility
SMSL7	To find a site to enable the Tennis Club to double the number of courts.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS – AS PER LEAFLET DELIVERED TO HOUSEHOLDS

- 1 **Which sports facility in Stansted do you use?**
- 2 **Do you use sports facilities elsewhere? If so, what and where?**
- 3 **What other sports should be provided in Stansted?**
- 4 **Do you use the Romeera Centre? If not, are there any changes to its facilities which would change your decision?**

Relevant policies in the ULP and UDLP

- UDLP Policy C4 New Community Facilities within the Countryside

- UDLP Policy INF2 Protection, Enhancement and Provision of Open Spaces, Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches

Relevant Evidence Base Documents

- UDC Open Space, Sports Facility and Play Pitch Strategy, The Landscape Partnership, 2012
- Uttlesford Local Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Troy Planning, June 2018

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