

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2026



Title of Report	NEW LOCAL PLAN – OPEN SPACE, PLAYING PITCHES AND BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGIES AND POLICY IF4: OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES	
Presented by	Joanne Althorpe Principal Planning Policy Officer	
Background Papers	<u>Report to Local Plan Committee 18 October 2023</u> <u>Local Plan Proposed Policies for Consultation (Regulation 18) (January 2024)</u> <u>Draft Sustainability Appraisal of Policies (May 2025)</u> <u>National Planning Policy Framework</u> <u>Item 9 Report to Cabinet 16 December 2025</u>	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	The cost of the Local Plan is met through existing budgets which are monitored on an ongoing basis. The cost of the three evidence base studies referenced in this report is being met by existing budgets.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The Local Plan must be based on robust and up to date evidence.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	No staffing implications are associated with the specific content of this report. Links with the Council's Priorities are set out at the end of the report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	(1) To note the findings of the draft Open Space Study; the draft Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy; and the draft Indoor Built Facilities (Sports and Communities) Needs Assessment. (2) To approve the proposed changes to draft Local Plan	

	<p>Policy IF4: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities for the Regulation 19 Plan; and note the recommendations for the Local Plan supporting text.</p>
Recommendations	<p>THAT THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTES THE CONTENTS OF THE DRAFT OPEN SPACE STUDY AT APPENDIX A; THE DRAFT PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY AT APPENDIX B; AND THE DRAFT INDOOR BUILT FACILITIES (SPORTS AND COMMUNITIES) NEEDS ASSESSMENT AT APPENDIX C. 2. NOTES THE PROGRAMME FOR SIGNING OFF THE ABOVE STUDIES, SET OUT AT TABLE 2 OF THIS REPORT. 3. NOTES THE COMMENTS RECEIVED IN RESPECT OF POLICY IF4: OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES, AS SUMMARISED AT APPENDIX D. 4. SUBJECT TO THE FINDINGS OF THE WHOLE PLAN VIABILITY ASSESSMENT, AGREES TO POLICY IF4: OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES, AS AMENDED AT APPENDIX E, FOR INCLUSION IN THE REGULATION 19 VERSION OF THE LOCAL PLAN.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on [18 October 2023](#), the Local Plan Committee agreed a set of draft Local Plan policies for 'Regulation 18' consultation. The public consultation ran between 5 February and 17 March 2024. Over the subsequent months members have considered a series of reports on the majority of these policies.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to consider *Policy IF4: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities* together with the following key pieces of evidence which will underpin the Local Plan:
 - Open Space Study (**Appendix A** to this report)
 - Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (**Appendix B**)
 - Indoor Built Facilities (Sports and Communities) Needs Assessment (**Appendix C**)
- 1.3 As with previous reports to this Committee, Regulation 18 consultation responses (**Appendix D**), the [draft Sustainability Appraisal](#) and any changes to the National

Planning Policy Framework since January 2024 have been considered in the update to Policy IF4 (**Appendix E**). Whilst the new [National Planning Policy Framework \(Plan-making and national decision-making policies\)](#) was published for consultation on 16 December 2025, the implementation arrangements at Annex A of that (draft) document confirms this Council's Local Plan would be examined against the December 2024 NPPF (assuming it is submitted for examination by 31 December 2026).

- 1.4 The above three evidence base documents (which are currently in draft) will help inform the Local Plan and will feed into the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, identify the onsite/offsite requirements for the proposed Local Plan housing allocations and feed into the Local Plan Viability Assessment. This could result in the need for further changes to the plan when the Regulation 19 plan is presented to Council later this year.
- 1.5 For completeness, listed below are the remaining policies which will be reported to future meetings of the Committee.

Table 1 – Policies which will be reported to future meetings

Policy AP1	Design of New Development
Policy H1	Housing Strategy
Policy H4	Housing Types and Mix
Policy H5	Affordable Housing
Policy H9	Provision for Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
Policy Ec1	Economic Strategy

2.0 THE EVIDENCE BASE

- 2.1 The three evidence base reports were jointly commissioned by the leisure services and planning policy teams. The draft reports were finalised in November 2025 and presented to the Council's Cabinet meeting on 16 December 2025. At that meeting, the programme outlined in **Table 2** was approved:

Table 2 – Internal governance timetable

Date	Body	Reason
6 January to 25 January 2026	Parish/Town Councils	To sense check the strategies following previous engagement and consultation during their development.
28 January 2026	Local Plan Committee	To present the findings from the strategies and to highlight any implications for the new Local Plan.
26 February 2026	Community Scrutiny Committee	To highlight the key points within the strategies and to invite comments for consideration by Cabinet at their meeting on 28 April.
28 April 2026	Cabinet	To seek approval to adopt the final strategies and to include them as Local Plan evidence base documents.
Date to be confirmed	Full Council	To agree the Regulation 19 Local Plan for consultation.

2.2 An invitation to ‘sense check’ the reports was sent to parish and town councils on 18 December 2025. As the deadline for feedback falls after the publication date for this report, further information on this stage will be provided to members as an update note to this Committee.

Open Space Study

2.3 The Open Space Study (**Appendix A**) provides an up-to-date audit of c. 200 open spaces in the district’s Principal Town, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres. It covers the following open space typologies:

- Parks and gardens
- Natural and semi-natural greenspace
- Amenity greenspace
- Provision for children and young people
- Allotments
- Cemeteries

2.4 The Study assesses the quantity, quality and accessibility of these open space typologies. **Table 3** provides an explanation of these three elements.

Table 3: Open Spaces - Quantity, Quality and Accessibility

Quantity	Are there enough spaces in the right places? Aimed at helping to establish areas of surplus and deficiency.
Quality	Used to identify those sites which should be given the highest level of protection, those which require enhancement and those which may no longer be needed for their present purpose.
Accessibility	Used to identify communities not currently served by existing facilities within walking distance.

2.5 Section 2 of the Open Space Study sets out the methodology in greater detail and Sections 3 to 9 provide the findings of the audit by typology.

2.6 Section 10 makes recommendations and sets standards for the future provision of open spaces in the district. The standards, which have been amalgamated in **Table 4**, are set for quantity, quality and accessibility.

Table 4: Recommended Open Space Standards

Typology	Recommended quantity standard (hectares per 1,000 population)	Recommended accessibility standard (walking distance) (metres)	Recommended quality standard score	
			Quality	Value
Parks and gardens	0.8	710	60%	20%
Natural / semi-natural greenspace	1.8	720	45%	20%
Amenity greenspace	0.6	480	45%	20%
Provision for children and young people	0.25	100 to 1,000*	50%	20%
Allotments	0.25	No standard	No standard	
Cemeteries	No standard	No standard	No standard	

*Local Area for Play (LAP) = 100m; Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) = 400m; Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) /Skate Park = 700m; Neighbourhood Area for Play (NEAP) = 1,000m

2.7 Open space will be expected to be provided as part of the proposed Local Plan housing allocations. However, in most instances, it would *not* be appropriate to provide all the typologies on each housing allocation. The Open Space Study advises the following steps:

1. Calculate the population likely to be generated by the proposed development;
2. Calculate the open space requirement for each typology using the recommended quantity standards (i.e. in **Table 4** above);
3. Determine if provision should be on or off-site;

4. Calculate a financial off-site contribution;
5. Identify which site should benefit from an off-site contribution.

2.8 Changes to part (1) of Policy IF4 and recommendations for the redrafting of the supporting text to reflect the content of the Open Space Study are set out in more detail in **Section 3** of this report.

Playing Pitch and Outside Sport Strategy

2.9 The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy is at **Appendix B**. It assesses the current and future supply/demand for football, 3G, cricket, rugby union and hockey pitches; tennis and netball courts and outdoor bowls and athletics facilities. The headline findings are set out in detail at Part 3 of the Strategy and are summarised below. Future demand is based upon the end of the new Local Plan period (2042).

Football Pitches

- There is a current shortfall of youth football pitches across the district.
- There is expected to be a future shortfall of youth and mini football pitches across the district.

3G Pitches

- There is a current shortfall of five full-sized 3G pitches district-wide.
- There is expected to be a future shortfall of just over six pitches.
- Future demand is expected to be in the Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Ibstock and Measham areas.
- There is a need for a 3G pitch to support rugby union.

Cricket

- There is a current shortfall of natural turf squares at peak times on Saturdays
- Demand across the district as a whole at other times is met, despite there being localised shortfalls in provision in the Castle Donington/Kegworth, Coalville, and Ibstock areas.
- Future demands and club development aspirations would lead to further shortfalls in provision.
- Shortfalls in provision could be mitigated against by improving pitch quality, considering hybrid or non-turf wickets, or bringing unused provision back into use.

Rugby Union

- There is a demand for pitches in Coalville and Ashby.
- Whilst there is a current shortfall of nine and an anticipated future shortfall of 13 rugby union pitches, demand can be met by improving the quality of existing provision/providing a rugby compliant 3G pitch.

Hockey

- Existing provision is expected to meet current and future demand.

Tennis

- Existing provision of tennis courts is expected to meet current and future demand.
- There is a shortfall of seven Padel courts across the district.

Netball

- There is no current or future demand for new courts; however, the provision of lit facilities should be increased.

Outdoor Bowls

- Existing provision is expected to meet current and future demand.

Athletics

- Whilst there is demand for athletics provision, it is deemed that a 400m track would be unsustainable.
- Consideration should be given to a NewGen Track, which could be a compact facility, a mini track, or an active track in a natural environment.

2.10 Part 6 of the Strategy Action Plan provides an overview of the current status of each outdoor sports facility, alongside recommended actions and if the facility should be protected, enhanced or provide new facilities. This can be used as evidence to support offsite planning obligations.

2.11 Of particular interest to the Local Plan is Part 7 of the Study which looks at housing growth scenarios. This sets out the likely demand for playing pitches resulting from all housing allocations over 1,000 dwellings. This is dealt with in further detail of **Section 4** of this report.

Indoor Built Facilities (Sports and Communities) Needs Assessment

2.12 The Indoor Built Facilities (Sports and Communities) Needs Assessment is at **Appendix C**. The Assessment covers sports halls, swimming pools, health and fitness suites, gymnastics, squash, indoor tennis and indoor bowls.

Sports Halls

- There is an existing unmet demand for sports hall provision in the Castle Donington area.
- Whilst modelling suggests that there is a current provision surplus and no shortfall, consultation indicates there is unmet demand in Ashby. However, this demand would be met with additional sports hall provision in the Isley Woodhouse and Castle Donington areas.
- Future demand creates a shortfall in provision across the district of ten badminton courts, the majority of which would be met with additional sports hall provision in the Isley Woodhouse and Castle Donington areas, subject to these facilities having adequate community access arrangements in place

Swimming Pools

- There is a current surplus of pool space in the district as a whole, and this

- surplus is expected to meet future demand.
- There is localised unmet demand in the Castle Donington/Kegworth area, but not enough to justify additional pool demand.

Health and Fitness Suites

- Current and future demand is expected to be met by the current supply.

Gymnastics

- There is one dedicated gymnastics facility located in Coalville, and anecdotal evidence to support additional facilities in the Ashby and Castle Donington/Kegworth areas.

Squash

- Applying the England Squash benchmark, there is estimated to be a current shortfall of six courts, which is expected to increase to eight courts over the plan period. However, the audit of existing facilities identified there is currently spare capacity.
- The assessment recommends considering the need for squash courts as part of future facility planning if club demand increases or waiting lists develop.

Indoor Tennis

- There is a demand for indoor tennis from the Lawn Tennis Association and Ashby Tennis Club.

Indoor Bowls

- There is no existing or future demand for additional indoor bowls facilities in the district.

Community Centres / Halls

- 2.13 The Indoor Built Facilities Needs Assessment identified a total of 45 community facilities across the district.
- 2.14 In quantitative terms, there is no national guidance on what constitutes an appropriate level of provision for community centres. The Needs Assessment concluded that a minimum of one hireable facility should be present in each of the Sustainable Villages, Local Service Centres, Key Service Centres and the Principal Town.
- 2.15 The audit carried out as part of the Needs Assessment identified that the Sustainable Villages of Albert Village, Ellistown and Worthington do not have a minimum of one hireable facility. Whilst it is desirable to provide a community hall in these villages to plug this gap in provision, members are advised that Section 106 funding is unlikely to contribute to any new facilities in these locations.
- 2.16 As the Local Plan is proposing to create a new settlement, there is a requirement for the provision of a community centre as part of the Isley Woodhouse allocation, so that it provides at least one hireable facility (also see **Section 4** below).

2.17 As part of consultation during the preparation of the Needs Assessment, Ashby Town Council identified the need for a new community centre facility on the basis that the town does not currently have a large, dedicated facility with a sufficient layout, capacity and car parking to cater to the demands of the population. Ashby Town Council is currently preparing a business plan / feasibility study to justify the need for such a facility. The Needs Assessment states that *“based on the size of the town and future population growth projections, it would be unusual for [the town] not to have a (sufficiently) large, multi-functional community building to service local need.”*

Ashby Sports Hub

2.18 As part of developing the strategies, KKP was asked to consider the potential feasibility of developing a Sports Village or Hub in Ashby-de-la Zouch. Further information on this is at section 4.11 of **Appendix B** and summarised in Section 5 of the [16 December 2024 report to Cabinet](#).

2.19 Whilst the various studies identify current / future shortfalls of various pitches, outdoor sports and indoor sports types in the Ashby area, further work on the feasibility of the hub site is required, particularly in the context of the fact that existing sports clubs (e.g. football, rugby, cricket and bowls) have not expressed a desire to relocate. This feasibility work can be done outside of the Local Plan process.

2.20 For the purposes of the Local Plan, should a hub site be feasible and a suitable site identified, the general principle of development in either the limits to development or the countryside would be acceptable and S106 monies could be sought to contribute towards new facilities where they accord with the relevant legal tests set out in Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations (i.e. they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development).

3.0 POLICY IF4: OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

3.1 Policy IF4 was consulted on in January 2024 as part of the [Local Plan Proposed Policies for Consultation \(Regulation 18\) \(January 2024\)](#).

3.2 There were 14 responses, predominantly from landowners/developers/ agents (five) and statutory consultees (five, including Sport England) as well as parish/town councils (three) and one local resident.

3.3 The responses received can be summarised as follows:

- General support for the policy in terms of creating new spaces/facilities.
- The need for an up-to-date evidence base to underpin the Local Plan.
- The policy does not go far enough in creating new spaces.
- The policy should be clearer about its expectations for creating new spaces/facilities.
- The need for a flexible policy.
- In dealing with the loss of existing open space, the policy should *not* differentiate between the countryside and limits to development as that would

be contrary to the 2024 NPPF.

- 3.4 A more detailed summary of the comments, alongside officers' responses and suggested changes, is set out at **Appendix D**. The amended policy is at **Appendix E** and addresses the concerns raised during the consultation.
- 3.5 Officers also propose to rewrite the supporting text for Policy IF4 at Regulation 19 stage, so that it:
 - References the evidence base documents;
 - Includes the open space standards (shown at **Table 4** of this report);
 - Confirms how the Council would expect applicants to calculate the anticipated population from a proposed housing development;
 - Defines the different types of open space;
 - Provides commentary on how the Council will be flexible in its approach to applying the standards (for example taking into account the presence of existing facilities in the local area);
 - Provides commentary on minimum site sizes;
 - References the Sport England Sports Facilities Calculator, the Playing Pitch Calculator and the evidence base documents as a way of securing offsite planning obligations.

- 3.6 No changes to Policy IF4 are required as a result of the Sustainability Appraisal.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR SITE ALLOCATIONS / THE INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN

- 4.1 The draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be updated to take account of the three evidence base documents. The largest onsite requirements relate to the proposed new settlement at Isley Woodhouse, which according to the draft assessments, would need to provide:
 - Onsite provision of the following open space typologies:
 - Parks and gardens
 - Natural and semi-natural greenspace
 - Amenity greenspace
 - Provision for children and young people
 - Allotments
 - Provision of a new:gen active running track as part of the open space delivery (this is not a traditional athletics track but a measured track within a natural or open space environment which can be used by runners, bikers, walkers, dog walkers and wheelchair users)
 - Provision of a minimum of one hireable community centre
 - Provision of a three-court sports hall (although a four-court hall would be more desirable, Section 106 planning obligations must be directly related to the development and reasonable in scale and kind) and which allows adequate community access
 - Provision of one tennis court – it is recommended that this is provided at the

- secondary school and is overmarked with a netball court
- Provision of two adult football pitches
- Provision of seven youth football pitches
- Provision of one sports-lit 3G pitch
- Provision of one cricket square
- Potential offsite contributions towards hockey and rugby union pitches

4.2 At the other housing allocations, provision of onsite open space will be required depending upon the size of development / availability of existing open space within walking distance. More guidance on this will be provided in the supporting text of Policy IF4.

4.3 Financial contributions towards sports halls, in line with the Sports England Facilities Calculator will be required, including towards a new sports hall in Castle Donington.

4.4 The pooling of offsite contributions (using the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator) towards the following shortfalls in playing pitches/outdoor sports provision is also recommended:

- Coalville Analysis Area – youth 11v11 football pitches; youth 9v9 football pitches; 3G pitches, rugby union pitches, cricket squares.
- Ashby de la Zouch Analysis Area - youth 11v11 football pitches; youth 9v9 football pitches; 3G pitches, rugby union pitches.
- Castle Donington / Kegworth Analysis Area - youth 11v11 football pitches; youth 9v9 football pitches.
- Ibstock Analysis Area – 3G pitches and cricket squares.
- Measham Analysis Area – adult football pitches; youth 11v11 football pitches; youth 9v9 football pitches; 3G pitches.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

5.1 The evidence base documents will be signed-off in accordance with the timetable at **Table 2** above. If anything significant arises from either the parish/town councils sense check or the Community Scrutiny Committee in February 2026, then this will be covered off with a note to the next Local Plan Committee in March 2026.

5.2 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be updated to take account of the three studies.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing
Policy Considerations:	The Local Plan is required to be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and other government guidance and requirements.
Safeguarding:	None discernible.
Equalities/Diversity:	An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Local Plan review will be undertaken as part of the Sustainability Appraisal.
Customer Impact:	No issues identified
Economic and Social Impact:	The provision of open space, sports and recreation facilities will have a positive social impact on existing and new communities.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	The decision, of itself, will have no specific impact. The new Local Plan as a whole will aim to deliver positive environmental and climate change impacts and these will be recorded through the Sustainability Appraisal.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	The Regulation 18 Local Plan has been subject to consultation. Further consultation will be undertaken at Regulation 19 stage.
Risks:	<p>A risk assessment for the Local Plan Review has been prepared and is kept up to date. As far as possible control measures have been put in place to minimise risks, including regular Project Board meetings where risk is reviewed.</p> <p>The report highlights the potential risks associated with the issues considered as part of the report.</p>
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