



## EXETER LIVE BETTER & MOVE MORE



BUILT FACILITIES, PLAYING FIELDS,  
PITCHES, PLAY AREAS,  
PARKS & GREEN SPACES STRATEGY  
JULY 2019



# Foreword

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Our leisure centres, playing pitches, community play areas and parks run by the Council are a significant asset that promote health and wellbeing and provide great spaces for people to come together and enjoy the fantastic environment we have in our city. How these facilities are maintained and developed for the benefit of residents and visitors alike really matters to us. This is why we are pleased that so many people took the time and effort to tell us what they think and we hope that the changes we have made to our original proposals and priorities reflect the things you told us.

We are delighted that so many individuals and groups, passionate about sport and leisure, and those who play in our parks and green spaces, are willing to work with us. We are committed to working with communities to develop better strategies to safeguard these assets for the future. We look forward to seeing the impacts of the priority actions set out in this strategy and will keep both groups and individuals informed and engaged as plans unfold.



Cllr Ollie Pearson

Portfolio Holder  
Leisure & Physical Activity



Cllr David Harvey

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Environment & City Management

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# 1. The purpose of this strategy

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This document sets out how our built facilities, playing fields, play areas and parks could be developed in future so that they can contribute to the strategic vision of Exeter becoming the most physically active city in England and encouraging those most at risk of inactivity to become active in everyday life.

The Council recognises and actively encourages the sporting excellence achieved by local clubs and individuals, not only is this good for the City in economic terms, but sporting excellence motivates people to take up sport and continue to participate at all levels.

Increasing physical activity of all kinds, sustaining participation, and achieving wider health and social outcomes are the challenges we face locally and nationally and this is what the Physical Activity Strategy sets out to address.

The Council, along with the wider public sector, is facing continued challenges of austerity alongside growing demand, expectation and a widening inequality gap. Sport, leisure and recreation provision are discretionary areas for local authorities and it is a measure of the significance

that this Council places on the health and wellbeing of citizens that there continues to be a range of sport, leisure and recreation provision from the Council.

Informal play provides the building blocks for families to be active, with our youngest residents expected to be active for 3 hours a day to realise the wide health, social and developmental benefits of physical activity. Community play areas and parks are pivotal in providing the places for families to meet, be active together, learn new skills and receive the wider wellbeing benefits of being outdoors.

This document supports the Council's 2018-2021 corporate plan ([Exeter Corporate Plan 2018-2021](#)) which describes the key priorities for the City Council and its three strategic programmes:



**Tackling  
congestion &  
accessibility**



**Promoting  
active & healthy  
lifestyles**



**Building great  
neighbourhoods**

The strategic aims of this report are aligned to those of the Physical Activity Strategy which aim to:



Improve population health & wellbeing



Reduce health inequalities







Promote community resourcefulness



Increase active travel

The supporting pillars:

## Physical Activity

-  Improving population health & wellbeing
-  Reducing health inequalities
-  Promoting community resourcefulness
-  Increasing active travel

Sport England  
Local Delivery Pilot

Built Sports and  
Leisure Facilities

Playing Fields  
and Pitches

Parks, Play Areas  
and Green Spaces

## Asset Based Community Development Community Sport & Physical Activity

Traditionally these resources have all been considered separately and this document is a first attempt to draw them together as part of the Whole System Change Approach advocated by Sport England and proposed within the Physical

Activity Strategy. There is a clear need for the Council to set out an integrated strategy for the future of built sports facilities, playing fields, pitches, play areas, parks and green spaces.

The main reasons for this are:

1. Delivery of sport and leisure facilities is a discretionary area for the Council however it is important that the Physical Activity Strategy is underpinned by a sustainable approach that provides good quality, accessible, community based built sports and leisure facilities as well as protecting and enhancing play areas, parks and open spaces.
2. With on-going funding cuts to councils, we need to balance residents' expectations with the funding and resources available to the Council and to consult as openly as possible with the compromises and choices we have to make.
3. With the exception of the planned new build St Sidwell's Point Leisure Complex, we have an ageing and poor quality built estate. This needs a strategic approach to determine areas for future investment that will best meet the needs of residents in the context of the overall resources available to the Council.
4. We need to plan for and invest in our local facilities in the context of developments within the Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership (GESP)

### **National Planning Policy Framework (paras 96 & 97)**

*“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. 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. 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.*”

5. The growth in Play Areas across the city has largely been development-led as opposed to needs led resulting in an uneven distribution and increasing unsustainable repair and maintenance costs to the Council.
6. We have statutory duties as a local planning authority in line with National Planning Policy Framework, updated by the Government in February 2019 (chapters 8, 9 and 12 are particularly relevant to this report) for the provision and protection of sport, green spaces and recreation facilities. We are also required to publish an assessment of current and future needs for playing fields and pitches to inform, provide evidence for and make recommendations in relation to planning policies and delivery models.
7. In planning terms, there are no specific requirements within legislation for the provision of play areas as part of a development, but guidance within the Exeter Local Plan (1995-2011 Section DG5), states:  
*“Family housing proposals should provide 10% of the gross development area as a level open space including equipped children's play space, unless there is open space and play provisions in the area which is well located and of sufficient size and quality to service the development”.*

**Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:**

- **An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space,**
- **Buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or**
- **The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or**
- **The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits**
- **Of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.**

As we embark on this exciting journey we have a lot to build on; important foundations are the sports and leisure facilities, playing fields and pitches, parks, play areas and green spaces that are owned and run by the Council as well as those that are provided by schools, clubs, colleges, university and private sector partners.

Strategic needs assessments and analysis of current facilities, future needs and demands have been undertaken by independent consultants to inform consultation with key communities, stakeholders, Sport England and National Governing Bodies.

1. Exeter Built Indoor Sports and Leisure Facilities Review, October 2018, Max Associates
2. Exeter City Council Playing Pitch Strategy 2017 to 2026 Final Draft February 2018 Continuum Sport and Leisure Ltd
3. Exeter Draft Play Report 2017

(These reports can be found on the Council website)

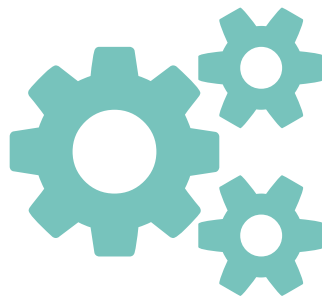
The purpose of this document is to set the framework for how the Council will develop its existing resources, in partnership with others, to contribute to improving physical activity levels in the population. It describes high level proposals for making the best use of the existing council assets taking into account future aspirations for the city.

The proposals in the draft document were widely consulted upon during March to May 2019.

Having listened to stakeholders, communities and residents we have made changes to our original proposals and these are reflected in this final strategy.



**Exeter Built Indoor Sports and Leisure Facilities Review**



**Exeter City Council Playing Pitch Strategy 2017-2026**



**Exeter Draft Play Report 2017**





ROL'S

Tennis Club

SIGNATURE



# 2

## 2. Built Sport and Leisure Facilities

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Proposals for the Council's future built sport and leisure facilities take into account the facilities we own and lease to others and were published in February 2019 for a wide ranging public consultation.

With the construction of the new flagship St Sidwell's Point Leisure Complex underway, the Council needs to set out sustainable plans for the development of other leisure sites in the context of:

- making best use of existing sites at Exeter Arena, Wonford and Riverside;
- understanding the key facility needs and demands within Exeter;
- planning for the replacement of ageing and in some cases poor quality leisure buildings;
- looking to the most effective ways to deliver future facilities;
- ensuring affordability and sustainability by maximising the income of future sites, and
- meeting the changing needs of Exeter's growing population.

Through the consultation stakeholders told us that they want to help the Council in developing its plans and the majority support the approach that the Council is taking.

Whilst people generally understand the financial constraints the Council faces they would like to see continued investment in built leisure facilities.

Protecting open green spaces was a major theme in the feedback as is the promotion of active travel.

The need to promote water sports in the city and the use of the quay and canal side were highlighted.

Our idea for a virtual ski facility as part of the Exeter Arena developments is not supported.

A specific idea for the creation of a strategic cycling hub in the city was highlighted and this is being taken forward.

# Built Sports and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment Summary

The ability of the Council to provide quality leisure and sport facilities for communities in and across the city, in the face ongoing budgetary pressures, is a significant challenge.

Based on an objective needs analysis, the conclusion is that, alongside the development of the St Sidwell's Point Leisure Complex to replace Pyramids, there is an opportunity to develop improved quality facilities across key sites in the city.

These outline proposals provide a framework to enable Members to explore a strategy for the future which has the delivery of the new leisure complex at St Sidwell's Point at its centre. Whilst this reduces the number of sites, it enables the Council to improve the overall quality and offer of facilities and creates opportunities for the Greater Exeter Strategic Sports Board and other stakeholders, including local communities themselves, to collaborate to enhance our offer even further.

It is clear that consumer choice and opportunities continue to widen as the supply of private sector provision of fitness facilities continues to grow, with the expectation that this will continue until the market is saturated. The Council's facilities

offering operates within this context, and whilst suitable financial performance is essential in obtaining best value, it is clear that health and wellbeing, physical activity, social inclusion and sport as specific drivers all have a place in shaping our city-wide facility provision over the next decade.

The Council will need to replace outdated facilities and modernise and refurbish some sites to improve quality, accessibility and variety to support and encourage increasing participation, particularly amongst inactive groups. Comprehensive business cases, detailed feasibility and investment strategies to support the proposals will now need to be developed.

EXETER ARENA



# Built Sports and Leisure Facilities Priority Actions

Following feedback on our draft proposals, the following priority actions will be taken forward:

- 1.** We will provide St Sidwell's Point Leisure Complex as a replacement for Pyramids Swimming and Leisure Centre. Construction work has now commenced and opening is planned for winter 2020/21.
- 2.** We recognise the importance of the Riverside Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool and the Council is committed to ensuring it fully re-opens. Once re-opened with a new roof, health spa and pool we will ensure a rolling programme of refurbishment with a long term building replacement plan developed to ensure sustainability.
- 3.** We will no longer provide pitch and putt facilities at the Northbrook Approach Golf Course, however the Council is not taking forward plans to sell or build on this site. We will work with Exeter Golf & Country Club to promote affordable membership costs for junior golf as part of their expansion plans.
- 4.** We will prioritise plans to provide for a new and improved community swimming pool to replace the ageing Northbrook Pool. This will be taken forward as part of the developments on the Exeter Arena site.
- 5.** We will bring forward an outline business case for the redevelopment of the Exeter Arena and ISCA Centre into a Community Sports Village. This will include retention of the existing athletics track, playing pitches, skate park, indoor bowls and fitness facilities alongside new core indoor facilities of a new community swimming pool and community leisure centre with a sprung sports hall and group exercise studios.

We will also consider the potential inclusion of:

- A strategic cycling hub in partnership with British Cycling, national stakeholders and local clubs. This could include an off road cycling track, local club provision and a free to use outdoor pump track attracting families and children to the village.
- Commercial leisure, with possible options to include soft play, Junior Tag/Tag Active and tenpin bowling facility.
- Gymnastics centre with a potential lease/ partnership with local clubs.
- Boxing and martial arts studio with flexible space that could be used by a variety of clubs.
- An artificial grass pitch
- Multi-use changing pavilion/club house

The aim is that this mix of facilities, including both traditional and innovative facilities will make Exeter Arena a destination facility, with a focus on young people and family participation.

There will be activity to suit all age groups and abilities, from babies and toddlers using the pool or soft play to older people playing bowls. The space available on site and level of parking is deemed sufficient for this proposed facility mix.

- 6.** We will continue to work with Devon County Council to improve access to the site through walking and cycling and connecting new housing developments to the E4 Strategic Cycling route.

- 7. We will continue to work with local residents, community groups, Sport England and other stakeholders to co-design a blue print and outline business case for a flagship Community Health and Wellbeing Centre to replace the Wonford Sports and Community Centres.

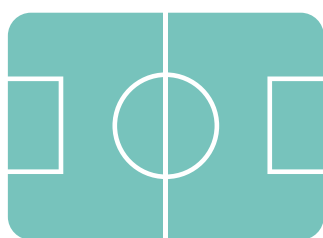
The co-design process now underway with local residents, community groups, elected members and other stakeholders will define the exact purpose and facility mix. This has the potential to include:

- Enhanced, flexible & inclusive community spaces designed by, and meeting the needs of, local residents (this could include space for a community kitchen, gardens and café amongst a range of other community facilities.)
- Re-provision of a sports hall, group exercise space and fitness. These could be built as flexible spaces with a moveable wall to allow different activities and classes to be delivered in the space, including health related programmes.

- A new primary care centre in partnership with Wonford Green GP Practice.
- A new design which connects the centre to the adjacent green space including playing pitches, play areas, walking & cycling networks and Ludwell Valley Park
- Enhancement of the playing pitch provision through existing specific Section 106 funding for Wonford Playing Fields
- 8. We will continue to help Exeter Ski Club to identify potential future alternative sites for relocation from the Clifton Hill site. There is no appetite from the club for a ski simulator at the Exeter Arena site.
- 9. We will continue to provide engagement opportunities for residents, communities and stakeholders to input into future built facility development plans. We will communicate regularly to ensure the public are well informed and have the opportunity to contribute to any future consultation regarding specific sites and plans as they emerge.



**Better swimming pools**



**New four court sports hall**



**Group Exercise Studios**



**New community health and wellbeing centre**



**Cycling Hub**





# 3. Playing Fields & Pitches Needs Assessment

The Council commissioned a detailed needs assessment from Continuum Leisure, which was completed in 2018. This used the ten step approach recommended in the Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance (October 2013).

It is based on historic data collected between 2014 and 2017 from site visits and consultation with sports bodies, education providers and community sports clubs.

During the consultation period council officers held discussions with Sport England, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and local stakeholders with a significant interest in the future provision of playing pitches

The needs assessment:

- Identifies to what extent there is a need to continue to protect the city’s overall supply of playing fields suitable for playing pitch-based outdoor sports.

- Highlights where there is a need to enhance the quality at several playing field sites as resources allow.
- Sets out an emerging need for increased provision to meet future demand as a result of planned housing growth.

The recommendations take into account council owned facilities, leases to others and those owned privately and by schools, colleges, university, clubs and Devon County Council.

The playing pitch needs forecast to 2026 based on the historic assessments are in this table:

**Table 3: Playing Pitch Needs Forecast**

Pitch Sport*	No. of Secured Pitches	No. Required by 2026	Difference
Cricket	11	13	+2
Adult Football	25	27	+2
Youth Football	6	13 (mix of 9v9, 11v11)	+7
Mini Soccer	12	14 (mix of 5v5, 7v7)	+2
Adult/Youth Rugby	6	7/8	+1/2
Midi/Mini Rugby	3	6	+3
Hockey	8	8	0

Source: Continuum Leisure Report 2018

\*All hockey play takes place on Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs). There is sufficient supply of hockey AGPs in the City (8 full size pitches) to meet forecast needs to 2026.

Although NGBs highlighted there has not been a significant shift in data and priorities in recent years, there was a clear consensus that more recent data should be used for analysis.

The following themes were also identified through the feedback:

- A shortage of both grass and artificial grass pitches to meet current demand and expanding population growth.
- Joint work needed with neighbouring councils in regard to sports where there is significant boundary crossover.

- Significant potential to improve community access on education sites and further work could be done to unlock this capacity.

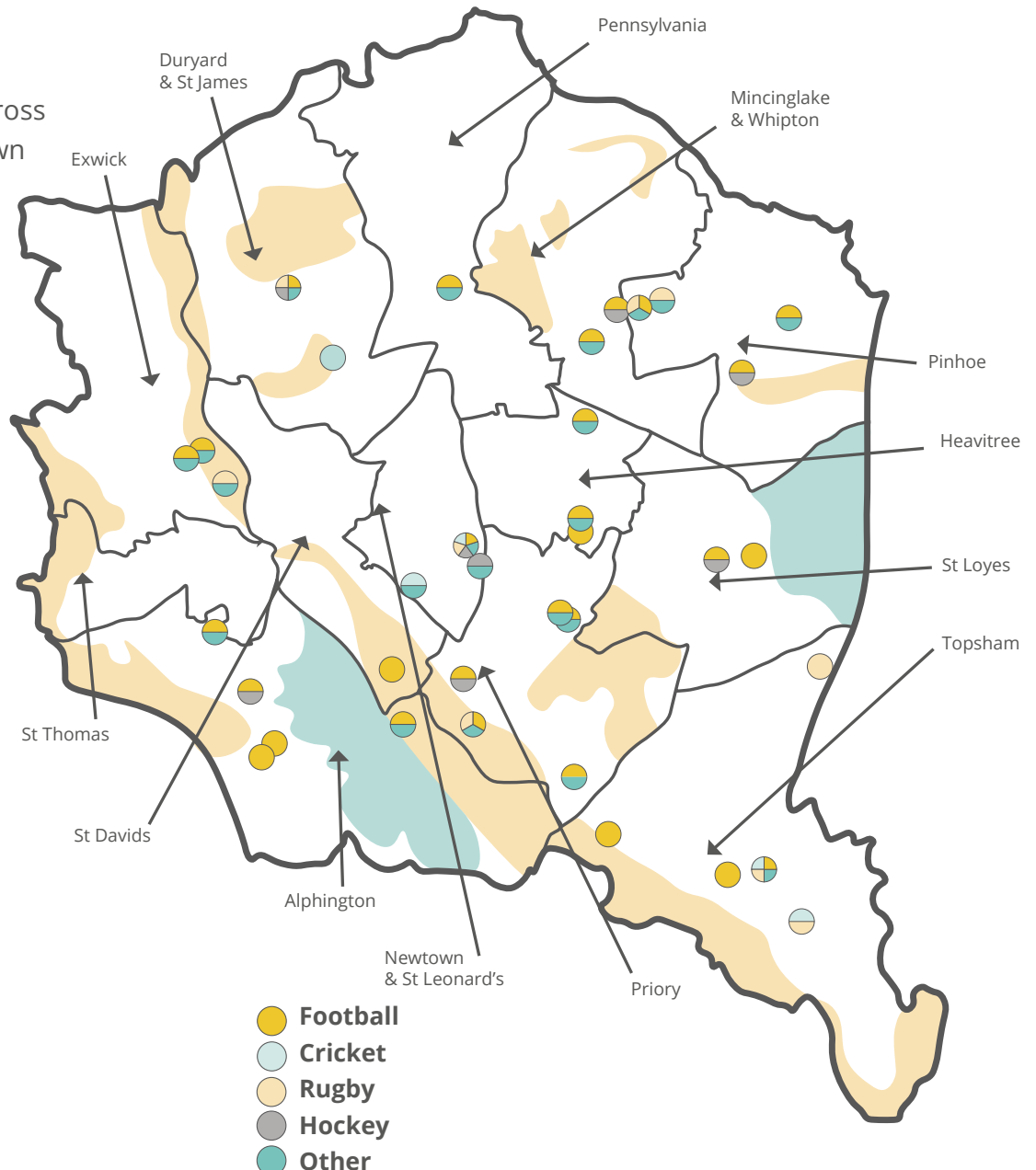
- An interest in exploring alternative community management models or community asset transfer for specific sites.

- Special consideration given to the feasibility of playing field sites with more than 3 pitches and multiple changing room/pavilion buildings.

- The need to include bowls and tennis in our plans given the number of council owned sites and well established community & club provision.

## Community Access Playing Pitches

This map shows the locations of community access playing pitches across the city and the breakdown by sport



# Playing Pitch Priority Actions

Following the consultation feedback our priority actions have been revised.

- 1.** Create a new Playing Pitch Strategy in partnership with Sport England, National Governing Bodies and local stakeholders. We will commission an updated needs assessment and establish a Playing Pitch Steering Group to review the needs assessment, adopt the strategy and set priority projects for development. Longer term they will meet annually to review progress and update the prioritisation of projects to reflect material changes in the picture of supply and demand and changing scenarios for playing pitches during the preceding 12 months
- 2.** Alongside the development of the Playing Pitch Strategy, we will continue working with local stakeholders, leagues, clubs and football providers to identify key priorities for future investment in partnership with the FA and Football Foundation to produce a Local Football Facility Plan. This has the potential to unlock significant investment to improve football facilities. This will create a short, focussed investment plan that will set a vision to improve Exeter's grass roots football facilities. It will prioritise on 4 key areas:
  - New 3G Artificial grass pitches for football
  - Improved changing pavilions/clubhouses
  - Improved grass pitches
  - Better small sided facilities
- 3.** Ensure that the new evidence base is used to inform planning applications that affect the use of playing fields and formal sports pitches and influence future planning policy through the developing Exeter Local Plan and Greater Exeter Strategic Plan.
- 4.** Ensure that the subsequent evidence base is used to inform the priorities for investment from external funding agencies, and local authority budgets via Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 5.** Enhance the quality of playing fields as resources allow by supporting the improvement of, and investment into, outdoor pitch facilities and clubhouses/pavilions to promote multi-sport community use for a wide range of participation in activities, meetings and social events.
- 6.** Take a Whole System Change approach to improve provision of playing pitch facilities for inactive populations in Exeter by identifying the potential for extended community use at stakeholder led sites, in particular facilities managed by schools and colleges.
- 7.** Enhance the quality of playing pitches by developing an annual investment plan, as resources allow, for the conversion of existing pitches into artificial grass pitches to increase community physical activity in priority target areas identified through the Physical Activity Strategy.
- 8.** Review current asset management, maintenance regimes and pricing structures of all council owned and leased pitches to promote community use and ensure alignment with other outdoor sports facilities in existing playing field sites, particularly bowls, tennis, cycling and street sports (e.g. skateboarding).
- 9.** Develop a Community Asset Transfer policy and toolkit to support community organisations and groups to take ownership and responsibility for facilities where it makes sense to do so.
- 10.** Develop a masterplan for key strategic sites at Wonford and Exeter Arena, and establish development plans for all sites with 3 or more playing pitches. Ensure the formal playing pitch offer fits with the wider active environment of built leisure facility, parks & open spaces in the local area.

*Destination Play Park  
Victoria Park, Bath*



# 4. Community Play Areas

The Council is committed to ensuring its community play areas contribute to helping build a culture of families being active together and support children to lead happy, healthy lives.

However with on-going austerity measures and reducing council budgets we need to ensure there is a balanced portfolio of good quality play areas across the city.

In 2019, the Council consulted with residents, communities and stakeholders on the future of play areas based on these proposals made in an independent report commissioned in 2017.

## Community Play Areas Needs Assessment Summary

The draft report explained that local play areas have almost doubled in the last 30 years with further increases forecast over the next 2 years and beyond.

Whilst the drivers for increasing play provision in this way has some merit, most often this has been connected to new housing developments and not against any broader needs basis. In the context of council budget pressures, an increasingly ageing stock, and escalating maintenance costs, the current and continuing increase in numbers is unsustainable. The increasing requirement to safely manage and maintain such equipment, compounded by the

recent move towards wood-based equipment which, particularly when mounted in the ground, has a shorter life span than that of steel equipment, places great strain on council annual revenue budgets.

The national play categories used in Planning Guidance are based upon the Fields in Trust definitions. These are:

### The National Play Categories

<b>Local Areas for Play</b>	Aimed at very young children (not necessarily with equipment).
<b>Locally Equipped Areas for Play</b>	Aimed at children who can go out to play independently.
<b>Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play</b>	Aimed at older children.

## The Council uses a simplified categorisation tool:

<b>Local Play Areas</b> Equipment should be provided to cater for children of up to 6-7 years of age.	There should usually be an area up to 400m <sup>2</sup> activity area, however, larger areas with limited play equipment provision can still be categorised as a Local Play Area. These areas will almost always be fenced off, a litter bin should always be provided, and in most cases seating as well.
<b>Neighbourhood Play Areas</b> Equipment should be provided to cater for children of up to at least 8 years old.	A minimum of 400m <sup>2</sup> activity area must be provided. These areas must contain at least five types of play equipment, of which at least two items are individual pieces rather than part of a combined multi play unit.
<b>Major Play Areas</b> Equipment should be provided to cater for children of up to at least 12 years of age.	A minimum 1000m <sup>2</sup> activity area must be provided. At least five items should encourage more adventurous play e.g. climbing, swinging, balancing, rotating or gliding (cableway), and at least three of these should be individual items and not part of combined multi play unit.
<b>Strategic Play Areas</b>	Strategic Play Areas will be sites within the 'Major' category that are of particular importance to a specific ward, an area, or the city as a whole. These sites will often have multi use games area facilities for ball games, and perhaps skate provision or other facilities for older children and teenagers.

The Council currently maintains 83 equipped play areas, including other play related facilities such as water play, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), basketball hoops, kick-about goals and skate

parks. These vary in size, age of equipment, and targeted age groups. The table below shows the breakdown of existing play areas in the city and those currently in the planning stages.

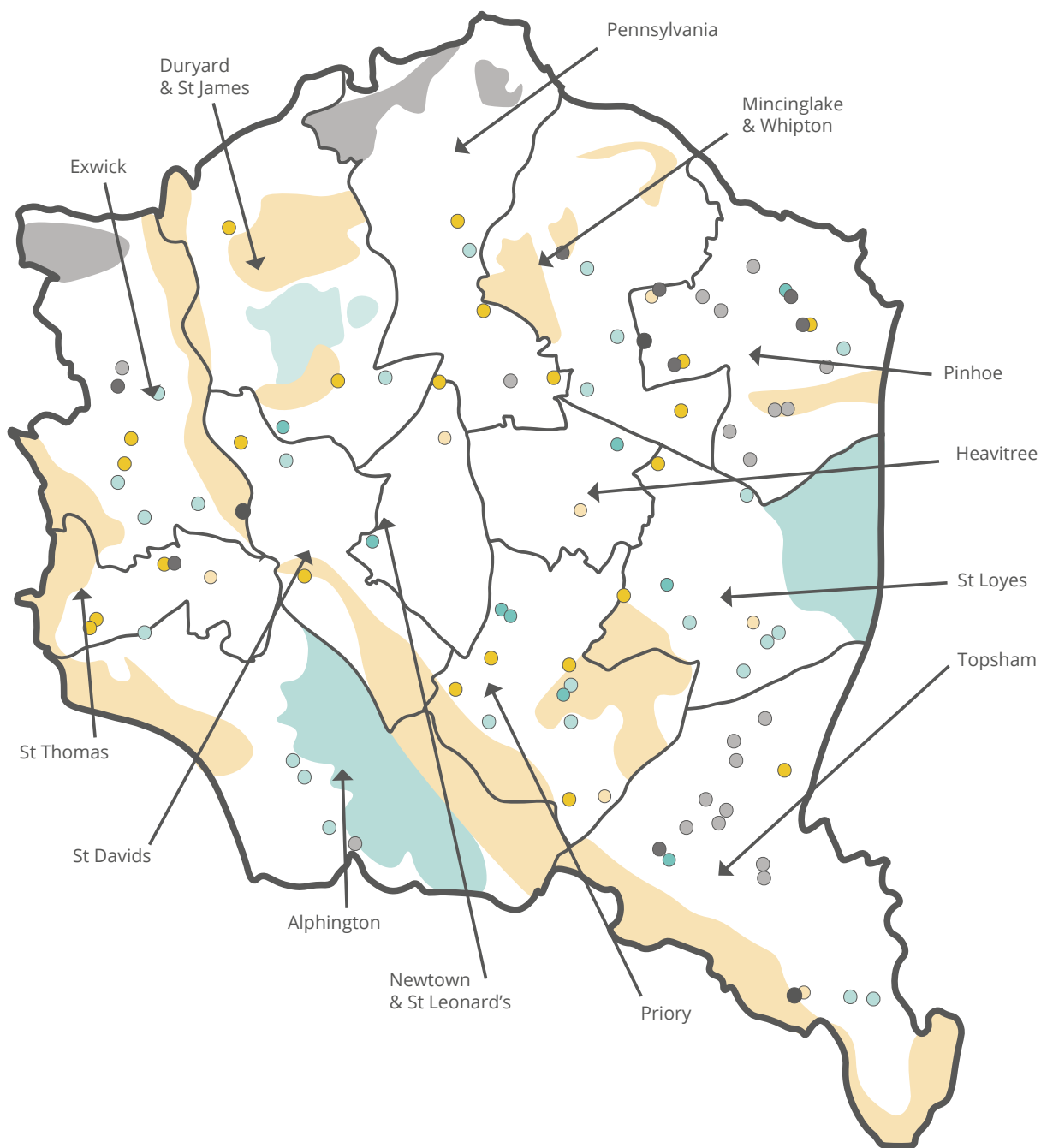
**Table 3: Breakdown of Play facilities within Exeter**

Exeter City Play Areas	2017	2018	2019	2020
Local Play Areas	25	27	29	32
Neighbourhood Play Areas	24	24	24	27
Major Play Areas	12	12	12	12
Strategic Play Areas	7	7	7	7
MUGAs	10	11	11	11
Skate Parks	5	5	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>94</b>

Source: Play Area Report 2017



# Play Area Locations



## Legend: Type

- City Boundary
- Ward Boundaries
- Industrial Estates
- Valley Parks
- Ancient Woodland
- Local Play Areas
- Neighbourhood Play Areas
- Major Play Areas
- Strategic Play Areas
- MUGAs
- Skateparks
- Private Play Areas
- University Campus

The current provision of play areas across the city is shown in the map above.



The report proposed a rationalisation of play areas based on three criteria and the introduction of a new concept of the “Destination Play Park”. The proposed criteria for rationalising Play Areas are:

- Proximity to local community, and to other play areas.
- Play value of the equipment, based on Fields in Trust criteria.
- Designed lifespan & age groups.

Further criteria for evaluating the play value of equipment used in the proposed model have followed guidelines from Fields in Trust and BS EN 1176 as close as reasonably possible. In coming to the recommendations for rationalisation and enhancements each piece of equipment was assessed and this produced a relative score used to compare all council play areas.

Play Areas for priority action	Life expectancy of equipment
Alphington Playing Field Play Area	IMMEDIATE
Greenway Play Area	IMMEDIATE
King George V Playing Field Play Area	IMMEDIATE
Lloyd's Crescent Play Area	IMMEDIATE
Tappers Close Play Area	IMMEDIATE
Addison Close Play Area	1-2 YEARS
Burrator Drive Play Area	1-2 YEARS
Gloucester Road Play Area	1-2 YEARS
Knights Crescent Play Area	1-2 YEARS
Monkerton Play Area	1-2 YEARS
Mulberry Close Play Area	1-2 YEARS
Fleming Way Play Area	2-3 YEARS
Lancelot Road Play Area	2-3 YEARS
Hacombe Close Play Area	3-5 YEARS
Gras Lawn Play Area	5-10 YEARS
Hylton Gardens Play Area	5-10 YEARS

The consultation in 2019 gathered the views of residents and communities on three key statements.

- The City Council should continue to provide free, inclusive, well equipped play and recreational areas for all ages.
- In certain smaller play areas, old and unsafe play equipment should not be replaced in order to allow other larger play areas to be improved.
- Increasing the number of Strategic Parks and creating new Destination Play Parks will enhance play area provision for everyone.

Whilst the general feedback was overwhelming regarding the need for the Council to continue providing local play areas, there were challenges around the future approach to smaller play areas and establishing new Destination Parks. 53% of survey respondents disagreed with the proposed approach for rationalising smaller play areas in favour of improving larger play areas.

Different survey methods produced conflicting results on a key aspect of the proposal to invest in larger Destination Play Parks and Strategic Play Areas by dis-investing in local play areas. Whilst survey responders supported the concepts of the strategy there was concern about the impacts of larger Destination Parks on congestion and parking.

However there is no doubt, from the feedback that residents place a very high value on local play areas and their ability to be able to walk to their local play park. For example of the 999 responses to the survey 90% walk to their local play area and 67% travel less than 10 minutes to get to their local play area. 95% of responders said they would like the Council to continue to provide free, inclusive, well equipped, local play areas.

Overall, the feedback has identified key priorities for future action from community groups and play area users proposing for the Council to:

- Improve inclusivity and access.
- Improve usage and broaden diversity of residents and communities accessing play areas.
- Provide a play offer that meets the needs of a wider range of ages.

People told us:

- That they would like the Council to enable local communities to have a greater say in the future of their play area and people are willing to work in partnership with the Council to improve provision.
- Communities are interested in playing a greater role in the future management of their local play area, for example: exploring asset transfer, volunteering and fundraising.
- Further work is required to understand the amount and type of usage of local play areas.
- There is general opposition to closing or not renewing equipment in smaller play areas.

# Play Area Priority Actions

The Council has listened to the consultation feedback from residents and community groups.

- 1.** We will not close any play areas without further engagement with local communities. We will introduce a more fundamental shift towards further engagement with local communities to help inform future developments.
- 2.** In the short term where health and safety risks are identified and repairs cannot be done safely within existing budgets, individual pieces of equipment may need to be removed.
- 3.** We will establish a Task Group to agree a new strategic framework and high level priorities for the future development of play areas across the city.
- 4.** We will focus on developing those play areas in communities at highest risk of inactivity and poor health outcomes. These areas have been identified through our work with the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot and we will work with families in these areas to help them access their local play area.
- 5.** We will engage local residents and grass roots organisations through an Asset Based Community Development approach to understand current usage and help inform future plans for local play areas.
- 6.** We will focus on areas of significant housing development and embed active design principles into planning policy in respect of parks and play areas. We will publish an 'Exeter Design Guide' for play areas that will provide a framework for local communities to take more ownership and involvement in their local play area.
- 7.** We will ensure that the evidence base and needs assessment is used to support future policy and practice to ensure that Local Play Areas secured by developments through Section 106, or other planning arrangements, meet the long term needs of local residents.
- 8.** We will enhance the quality of community play areas as resources allow, ensuring effective and sustainable asset management programmes are in place.



# 5. Parks and Green spaces

Public parks are in the main owned and managed by Local Authorities, providing publicly-accessible green space for recreation for the whole population.

Today, as garden space for modern housing decreases, there is a greater need for recreational space for people to be outdoors and experience the positive mental and physical wellbeing benefits of parks and green spaces. The Council's recreational green space land holdings have increased to around 177 hectares. 13 acres of additional green space have been purchased by the Council in the last 18 months. This comprises of a wide range of land use definition, including formal parks, playing fields, allotments, woodlands and informal green space such as pocket parks.

Current objectives in the Exeter Local Plan (Section 7.0) are to:

- resolve any deficiencies in the quantity, quality and accessibility of sports, green spaces and recreation facilities;
- protect or enhance green space and recreation provision that is, or has the potential to be, of value to the community;
- locate green space, sports and recreation facilities where they are accessible by a choice of modes of transport and especially by foot, bicycle or public transport;

- provide good quality green space and built recreational facilities as an integral part of new or expanding communities.

In that context, we wish to ensure our parks and green spaces continue to provide a place for people to connect, enjoy the environment and lead active lifestyles through the broad range of free, informal and formal activities on offer. However the budget pressures facing the council in the short and medium term require us to look at innovative, collaborative and community led approaches to managing and developing our parks & green spaces in the future.

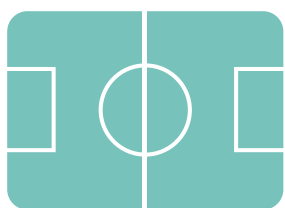
We have a wealth of community expertise, passion and drive within the city and some excellent current practice from which to learn and develop alternative models to improving our green space. Our parks and green spaces provide a fundamental plank of our ambition to be an active city and contribute towards improved health and wellbeing of residents and communities across the city.

Our current intelligence and mapping identifies the following council owned sites:



12

Formal parks & pocket parks



9

Playing fields



39

hectares of woodlands



26

allotment sites (1500 plots)

The consultation in 2019 gathered the views of residents, key local stakeholders and community organisations interested in the future of parks & open spaces. 25 representatives from local groups and organisations provided feedback on key strategic themes, proposed priorities and ideas for how to engage communities and residents in shaping future plans for green space.

Overall the feedback has identified a clear understanding of the need to do things differently in the context of the council's budgetary pressures and some key themes for future development of parks and open spaces:

- Green spaces in the city should be protected and maintained.
- Parks & green spaces should be accessible to all.
- Biodiversity is as important as accessibility: there is need to balance physical activity, horticulture and wildlife.

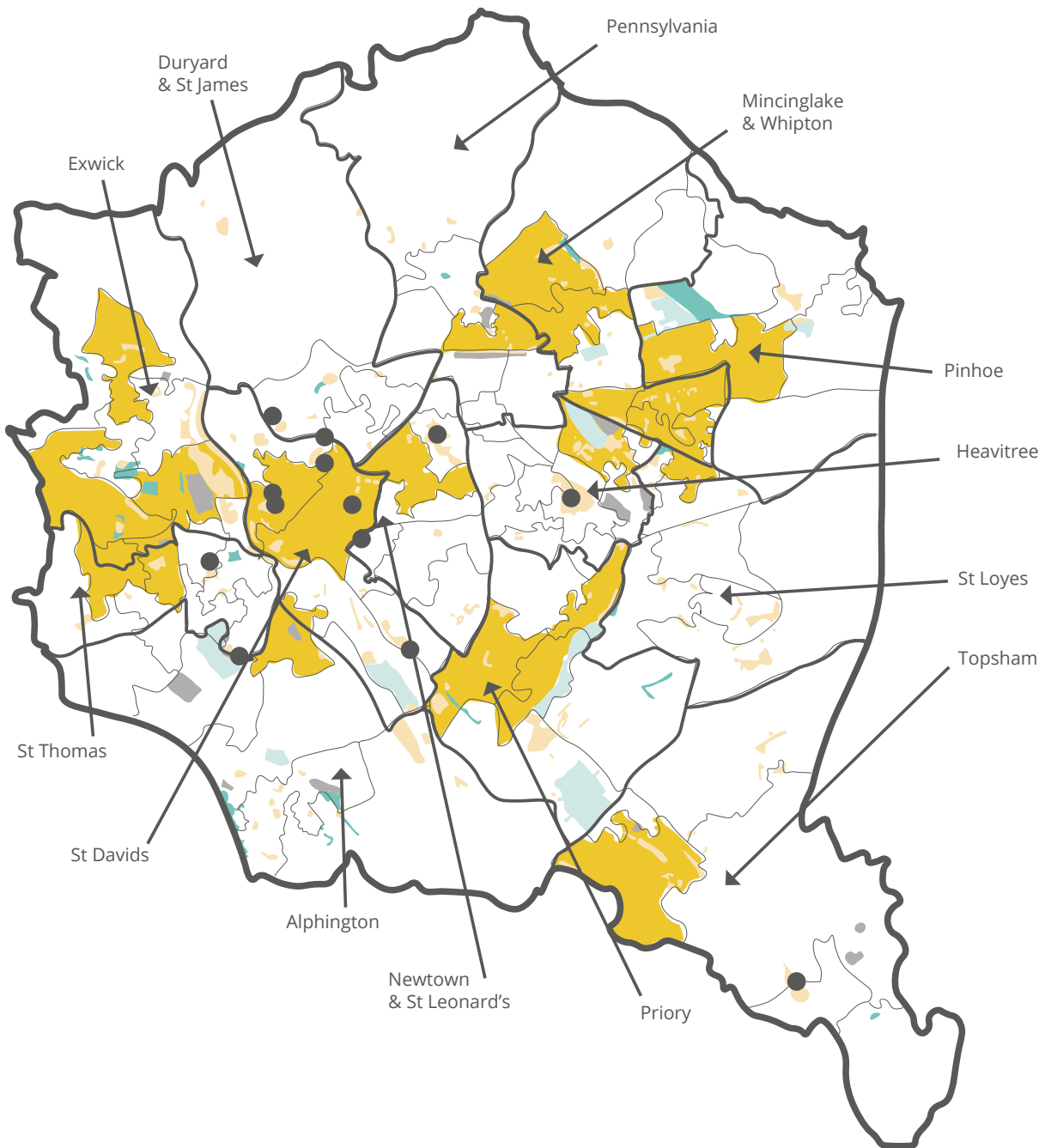
- Community groups and organisations should have a greater say in the future development of parks and green spaces.
- Communities are interested in playing a greater role in the future management of parks and open spaces; a clear asset transfer policy is needed to support them.
- Communication could be improved and ongoing engagement with residents and communities would bring greater benefit.
- Community Builders (as part of the Wellbeing Exeter programme) have an important role to play in engaging communities, in particular young people with their local green space.

## Parks and Green Spaces Priority Actions

The previous Parks and Green Spaces Strategy dates back to 2005. There is now a need to renew this in consultation with communities and other stakeholders. During 2019/20, priority actions are to:

- 1.** Work with existing local community organisations passionate about parks & open spaces to implement a programme of engagement to help shape the future of green space in Exeter.
- 2.** Undertake a current audit and needs assessment of the City's green space, including those in the ownership of other bodies which have existing or potential public access.
- 3.** Map and develop linkage of parks and green space with cycle and footpaths as part of a Green Corridor network across the city, providing safe off-road travel within communities.
- 4.** Develop a plan to improve walking and cycling infrastructure, positive signage and accessibility to local parks and green spaces to enable and encourage more residents to enjoy the benefits of green space.
- 5.** Provide support and opportunity to grass roots community groups wishing to take on more responsibility in managing, maintaining and developing parks & green spaces.

# Parks & Green spaces



## Legend: Type

-  City Boundary
-  Ward Boundaries
-  Priority LSOA's
-  Formal Parks
-  Woodland
-  Allotments
-  Playing Fields
-  Open Space Areas





# 6. Asset Based Community Development and Community Sport & Physical Activity

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The Council is committed to the principles of community-led development in its support for local communities.

These principles are described in the Exeter Community Strategy (<http://exetercommunityforum.net/doing-3/community-strategy>) published by the Exeter Community Forum and adopted by the Council in March 2016. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilises individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths.

An ABCD approach spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community.

The identified assets from an individual are matched with people or groups who have an interest in or need for those strengths. The key is beginning to use what is already in the community. Then to work together to build on the identified assets of all involved.

## Wellbeing Exeter

The Council will continue to lead and develop Wellbeing Exeter as the main mechanism to support communities to do more to help themselves.

Wellbeing Exeter is a partnership of the public, voluntary and community sector working together to help people from dependence on services into increased involvement within their community and provides the foundations for individuals and communities to improve and promote their own health and wellbeing.

Wellbeing Exeter is funded by Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group. It started in 2015 with one GP and now all 139 GPs in the 16 Exeter GP Practices and the NHS Community Rehabilitation Team refer patients who they believe will benefit to one of 17 local Community Connectors.

A Community Connector works with the person to identify what matters to them and plan a way

forward. Together, they start to engage with their local community with a level of support that reflects the individuals' needs and wishes. Simultaneously, 13 Ward-based Community Builders are working with and listening to communities, identifying social resources, stimulating activity, and supporting those communities to do more together.

Wellbeing Exeter has been nationally recognised for its good work and has been featured in recent reports by Public Health England and Office for Civil Society, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as an exemplar. In 2019, through the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot further investment will go into Wellbeing Exeter to support communities and individuals to get more active.

# Community Sport

Exeter has a long and successful tradition of community sport with a vast array of community organisations, charities, local clubs, informal groups offering a range of opportunities for people to access more formal sport and physical activity opportunities.

Sport plays a significant part in people's choice to be active, from participating in a club, attending regularly co-ordinated sessions, playing informally with friends through to becoming an elite athlete in your chosen sport.

In recent history the role of partnerships and networks in the city has helped grass roots community sport grow. Support from the Greater Exeter Strategic Sports Board, the Exeter Health & Wellbeing Board and the Active Exeter network has helped to bring a range of organisations and expertise together to help with the aspiration of Exeter being the most active city.

The Local Active Partnership, Active Devon, our two professional sports club community programmes: Exeter City Football Club, City Community Trust and Exeter Chiefs Community Department, work alongside education, health, community & voluntary sector groups to provide a range of targeted programmes and campaigns to help more people lead active lives.

Recently the Get Active Exeter, Sport England funded community programme sponsored by the Exeter Health and Wellbeing Board, has enabled over 2,000 residents to join a range of physical activity and sport sessions aimed at helping less active adults to move more every week.

It is collaborative programmes such as these that help bring resources, expertise and energy together in the city to engage communities, volunteers and residents to help people lead more active lifestyles.

The community sport landscape is underpinned by local clubs, groups and their army of hard working volunteers that provide countless hours of their time to deliver high quality sports sessions. There are hundreds of these sports clubs and groups in the city affiliated to National Governing Bodies, more informally constituted or simply a connection of people meeting on a regular basis to enjoy their favourite sport.

The challenges of everyday life, changing attitudes of how people choose to be active and a range of barriers to participating in sport continue to make it a tough task for voluntary clubs to administer and deliver their activities. Through the community based programmes within the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot we will identify how to support, develop & grow the community physical activity and sport system by pooling together the resources, intelligence and expertise of all the professional organisations, voluntary clubs, grass roots community groups and volunteers across the city.

# Asset Based Community Development and Community Sport & Physical Activity Priority Actions

During 2019/20 officers are recommending the following actions:

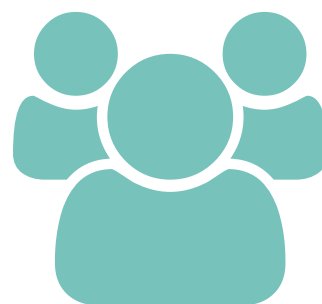
1. In partnership with Sport England and local GPs we will develop a physical activity based social prescribing programme within Wellbeing Exeter.
2. In partnership with Devon County Council and NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group we will secure long term funding for the growth and development of Wellbeing Exeter.
3. In partnership with Active Devon and the Active Exeter Network we will provide support, develop and grow community sports and physical activity groups by;
  - Identifying the workforce development requirements across the sport and physical activity network.
  - Connecting clubs and groups locally with professional support, resources and training and identify collaborative approaches within the community sport network.
  - Helping clubs & groups access existing digital communities of learning and resources to support improvement and sustainability – e.g. <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/club-matters/>
  - Helping clubs reach out to new communities and residents across Exeter, particularly those populations under-represented in community sport (disabled people, BME groups, street attached).
  - Exploring alternative models for clubs and groups to become financially sustainable.



**Develop a physical activity social prescribing programme**



**Secure long term funding for the growth of Wellbeing Exeter**



**Provide support, develop and grow community sports and physical groups**



# 7. Investment Strategy

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The Physical Activity Strategy (2019) sets out the wider societal benefits of living an active lifestyle.

Sport England have also highlighted the economic value of sport for Exeter, the 2017 headlines include:

- Gross Value Added for sports participation in Exeter totals £34.2 million per year, this covers subscription fees, equipment and sportswear
- Gross Value Added for non-participation related sports totals £14.9 million, this includes spectator sport and subscriptions Sports.
- Total value of the industry to Exeter totals £49.1 million employing around 1,467 people.

Source: Sport England Mini Sports Profiles



**£34.2m**

per year for sports participation

**TICKET**

**£14.9m**

per year for non-participation sports



**£49.1m**

in total for the industry



**1,467 people**

employed within the industry

The growth of Exeter provides the Council with the opportunity to generate capital funding from development that can be channelled into meeting the growing needs of the City. An investment strategy will need to be put place to support the proposed actions.

A funding strategy will need to be developed to support the proposed investments, this will need to consider the issues raised in the table below:

### Issues with proposed investments:

Funding Route		Recommendations
<b>Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</b>	The current Regulation 123 List indicates that CIL may be spent on 'public realm enhancements'. (CIL) receipts do not have to be spent in any particular locality, and there is consequently more geographical flexibility around investment decision making.	Amend the Regulation 123 List to refer more specifically to the priorities identified in this report and thereby communicate more clearly the intention to fund these through CIL.
<b>Section 106 Agreements</b>	S106 funding has been geographically linked to the development, resulting in more recent years in an abundance of play areas to the east of the city, but virtually no contributions to new or upgraded play areas to the west.	Review options for improved S106 agreements particularly in relation to play areas and playing pitch enhancements in the context of the revised Local Plan.
<b>Rationalising provision and reducing the number of sites</b>	Reduced burden of outdated leisure facilities and buildings alongside improving procurement and sustainability options will reduce revenue costs of maintenance in real terms.	Re-siting of leisure facilities may offer the release of assets for development and capital receipts. The funds raised may contribute to improved facilities elsewhere in line with priorities.
<b>External funding sources</b>	By refocussing provision to achieve wider aims in terms of a more active and healthy lifestyle, and through partnering with community groups, stakeholders and strategic partners. There is a wealth of good practice emerging in the city with local community groups accessing significant funds through grants, trusts and other external sources.	Adopting alternative models of community ownership & management through a future Council Community Asset Transfer model, local community groups can explore the potential of owning, managing and developing play areas themselves.

There are a number of assumptions in relation to the high level financial strategy that underpin the recommendations and action plan, these are:

1. Capital funding from the sale of identified leisure sites: Clifton Hill Sports Centre and Pyramids Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre.
2. Capital funding directly from residential development opportunities at specific sites is channelled directly towards new facilities at Wonford and Exeter Arena.
3. Designated funding from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be directed at priority built facility, playing pitch, play area and parks & open spaces projects. Specific flagship programmes to be highlighted in the CIL Regulation 123 list.
4. Council funding to be used to attract strategic finance from external stakeholders such as Sport England and Sport National Governing Bodies.
5. Revenue from the provision of services on the leisure sites will need to, at a minimum generate sufficient revenue to cover the cost of capital borrowing for the developments.

**Further detailed feasibility and outline business cases will now be drawn up and presented to Council during 2019/20.**

Area	Timeframe
Exeter Arena Community Sports Village including new Community Swimming Pool	Outline Business case November 2019
Wonford Integrated Community Health and Wellbeing Centre	Blueprint and site master plan December 2019
Community Asset Transfer Policy	Draft for Consultation October 2019
Playing Pitch Strategy and Artificial Grass Pitches' Investment Plan	Strategy and Report October 2019
Local Football Facility Plan and investment Priorities Report	Strategy and Report October 2019
Play Area Strategic Framework	Draft for Consultation 2020
Parks and Green Spaces Strategy	Draft for Consultation 2020



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## EXETER LIVE BETTER & MOVE MORE



BUILT FACILITIES, PLAYING FIELDS,  
PITCHES, PLAY AREAS,  
PARKS & GREEN SPACES STRATEGY  
JULY 2019

**EXETER**  
LIVE BETTER