



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Planning Committee**

Directorate:  
**Planning, Policy and Regeneration**

Corporate Manager:  
**Chris Cavanagh**

Date: **22 November 2006**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>SURPLUS SCHOOL SITES PLANNING STATEMENT</b>
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**Recommendations:**

That the report be:

1. used as a basis for considering applications for surplus school sites involving development on playing fields that come forward to Planning Committee for determination, or for consultation from WNDC; and
2. sent to WNDC as the Council's position statement on the surplus school sites.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 As a consequence of the reorganisation of education provision within Northampton, a number of sites have become surplus to school requirements. The County Council have now submitted planning applications on the majority of these surplus school sites.
- 1.2 The key planning policy issue in relation to these sites arises where development would involve the loss of playing pitches. Ten of the surplus school sites fall into this category (see plans 1 & 2). Apart from St Luke's Lower School, all these sites are the subject of current applications awaiting determination by West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC).
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide a strategic planning policy context in relation to these sites. Individual applications that come forward to Planning Committee for determination, in the case of St Luke's Lower School, or for consultation from WNDC can then be considered in the light of the approach set out in this report. The report has been prepared in consultation with the Borough Council's Street Scene and Environment Team.

## **2.0 Planning Policy**

### ***Local Plan***

- 2.1 The Local Plan identifies the sites as 'school sites', which under policy L2, permission will not be granted for development for non-educational purposes, provided the land or facilities lost are not needed for recreational purposes, or the scheme retains all open space of significant amenity/landscape value and retains/provides adequate outdoor/indoor public recreational facilities, or the existing recreational facilities can best be retained through redevelopment of part of the site.

### ***Interim Planning Policy***

- 2.2 The Council published an Interim Planning Policy on Surplus School Sites in September 2003. However, since that time there has been a number of changes in circumstances. In particular, the Council has adopted, at its 14 March 2005 meeting of Executive, a revised Playing Pitch Strategy, which has identified an increased deficit in pitch provision. The Council has also completed an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (September 2006) in accordance with "PPG17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation".

### ***Playing Pitch Strategy***

- 2.3 The Playing Pitch Strategy establishes the need for playing pitches within Northampton, both existing at 2004 and projected at 2021. Only pitches that are available to the community are included in the analysis. Therefore, school pitches that do not have a formal community use agreement are not included.
- 2.4 Policy PPR7 of the Playing Pitch Strategy states that "Where appropriate, playing pitches at surplus school sites under the Northampton Schools Review should remain as playing fields to help reduce the projected Borough-wide pitch deficit. Northampton Borough Council will only agree to the loss of

pitches to development where the proposal includes guaranteed community access to other sites in the Borough, at convenient times and affordable rates, which will ensure that there is no current or projected (during the period covered by the strategy) local or borough wide deficit in provision.”

- 2.5 The reorganisation of the education system is being funded and project managed through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The County Council are providing enhanced and additional school sports facilities as part of the PFI, both on surplus sites and existing school sites. If these facilities were to be made available for community use, then there would be justification for allowing some of the playing pitches to be put to alternative use. However, the suitability of those pitches for alternative open space use would need to be assessed, and planning permission would need to be tied to a legal agreement ensuring community access to school facilities.
- 2.6 **All permissions granted for development on the surplus school sites should be subject to a legal agreement which ensures guaranteed access to community facilities on all school sites that are subject of the PFI, at convenient times and affordable rates.**
- 2.7 The Playing Pitch Strategy, in line with PPG17 and Sport England policy, states that the Council may allow the loss of playing fields as the result of proposed development where they would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity and quality and in a suitable location. This would be a matter for negotiation at the planning application stage, and would need to ensure that there was no net loss of open space as a result.
- 2.8 **Notwithstanding the requirements for playing pitch provision on individual sites, it may be acceptable to make provision off-site if the replacement pitches are of equivalent or better quantity and quality. Replacement pitches should be within the local area and should not involve the loss of land within other open space typologies unless compensatory provision is made.**

#### ***Open Space, Sports and Recreation Assessment***

- 2.9 PPG17 (para 10) states that “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements. For open space, 'surplus to requirements' should include consideration of all the functions that open space can perform. Not all open space, sport and recreational land and buildings are of equal merit and some may be available for alternative uses.”
- 2.10 The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Assessment (“Open Space Assessment”) establishes standards for open space provision in terms of different typologies (e.g. parks and garden, provision for children and young people etc). In accordance with PPG17, the need for the open space within the surplus school sites has been assessed, firstly, in relation to the ‘outdoor sports facilities’ typology and then, in relation to all other open space typologies.
- 2.11 Recommendation OSF1 of the Open Space Assessment states that ‘consideration should be given to the need for outdoor sports facilities and the need to address deficiencies in other typologies through the application of

local standards and the playing pitch methodology prior to the disposal of middle school sites. Any capital raised from disposal should be reinvested in the sporting infrastructure of Northampton.’

- 2.12 Paragraph 9.35 of the Open Space Assessment states that on the basis of information provided by the County Council there would be a potential loss of 4-6 pitches in Analysis Area 2 (made up of Partnership Areas 3, 4 & 8) and 7 pitches in Analysis Area 4 (made up of Partnership Areas 2, 5 & 7) as a result of the proposals for the middle school sites. Plan 1 shows the surplus school sites in relation to the Open Space Assessment Analysis Areas.
- 2.13 Where housing is proposed, the development will generate a need for open space. Consequently, provision should be made for open space, in line with the Open Space Assessment standards, to meet the needs of the development, either on-site or through a financial contribution to off-site provision. The standards require a total of 8.13 ha per 1000 population of open space. Based on an average household size of 2.5 persons per dwelling, a development of 10 dwellings would require approximately 0.2 ha of open space.
- 2.14 All open space provided should be handed over fully laid out and with a commuted sum to cover maintenance for 40 years. The detailed design and specification of open space should be determined in consultation with the local community, the Council’s Street Scene and Environment Team and local football/rugby leagues (where appropriate).

### **3.0 Proposed Strategy**

- 3.1 In order to ensure that there is an appropriate spread of playing pitch provision across the town, the surplus school sites have been considered at a partnership level. Plan 2 shows the surplus school sites in relation to the partnership areas.

#### ***Partnership Area 1***

- 3.2 There is one surplus school site within this partnership area – Cliftonville Middle School.

#### ***Playing Pitch Provision***

- 3.3 The Playing Pitch Strategy (2005) highlights that Partnership Area 1 has a current deficiency of 12.2 pitches. This deficiency is anticipated to rise to 23.6 pitches by 2021. There is a deficiency in junior football, mini-soccer, adult rugby and junior rugby.
- 3.4 Playing Pitch Strategy states in relation to Cliftonville Middle School that “any redevelopment scheme for the site will be required to provide for three adult sized playing pitches for community use, together with changing facilities and parking area, either on that site or elsewhere within the locality”.

#### ***Cliftonville Middle School***

- 3.5 This site includes two adult football pitches, one rugby pitch, training ground and a hard surface tennis court. The pitches are well maintained.

3.6 The Open Space Assessment identifies that there is a lack of accessible children's play space within the locality. Whilst there is open space available at Midsummers Meadow, and Beckett Park, use of this space would involve crossing of the busy Bedford Road.

3.7 The Interim Planning Policy Statement (September 2003) states that "it is necessary to retain three pitches on this site, and provide changing facilities and car parking area."

### ***Conclusions***

3.8 There is a clear deficiency of playing pitches within the area as evidenced by the Playing Pitch Strategy. Whilst the Playing Pitch Strategy requires three adult-sized playing pitches, the Borough Council's Street Scene and Environment Team have expressed a preference for 2 adult-sized pitches and 4 mini-soccer pitches. The bringing of the pitches into community use, together with the provision of ancillary facilities will compensate for the loss of the training ground and hard surface tennis court.

**3.9 The Cliftonville Middle School site should be redeveloped for mixed use development subject to 2 adult-sized playing pitches and 4 mini-soccer pitches, together with changing facilities and parking area, being provided on the site. If a significant amount of housing is included within the development, then provision should be made for an on-site children's play area.**

### ***Partnership Area 2***

3.10 There are two surplus schools within this partnership area – Blackthorn Middle School and Ecton Brook Middle School.

### ***Playing Pitch Provision***

3.11 The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) identifies a current surplus of 3.6 pitches in this area. There is expected to be a deficit of 3.2 pitches by 2021. The main shortfall is in relation to junior football pitches and mini-soccer.

3.12 The PPS states that land at Ecton Brook Primary School be reassigned to accommodate an adult playing pitch.

### ***Blackthorn Middle School***

3.13 The site has been cleared of school buildings. Part of the site is to be retained as a junior football pitch for Blackthorn Primary School.

3.14 The Interim Planning Policy expected that this site would be retained for education purposes.

3.15 The Open Space Assessment has identified a lack of accessible open space for children and young people in the area.

### ***Ecton Brook Middle School***

3.16 The existing school buildings and part of the playing fields are to be retained for the new Lower School. The remaining playing fields are not required by

the school.

3.15 The Interim Planning Policy Statement requires that additional playing pitch provision is made in the surplus area, although it does suggest that there may be scope for some housing development.

3.17 The Open Space Assessment has identified that there is a lack of accessible open space for children and young people, and a deficit in 'natural and semi-natural open space' and 'parks and gardens'.

### ***Conclusions***

3.18 Sufficient playing pitch provision can be provided in Partnership Area 2 through community access to Blackthorn and Ecton Brook Primary Schools, and through provision of an adult pitch on the surplus school land at Ecton Brook.

3.19 The Playing Pitch Strategy specifically recommends that an adult playing pitch be provided on the Ecton Brook site. This is because one of the existing adult pitches on the adjoining recreation area is subject to flooding. This pitch would be reconfigured to provide mini-soccer pitches. Notwithstanding the need to make provision for playing pitches identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy, the site also has the potential to meet an open space need for 'parks and gardens', or 'natural and semi-natural open space'.

**3.20 The Blackthorn Middle School site should be redeveloped for residential development subject to on-site provision of open space for children and young people.**

**3.21 The northern part of the Ecton Brook Middle School site should be redeveloped for residential development subject to the provision of an adult-sized football pitch and changing facilities, and off-site provision for open space for children and young people.**

### ***Partnership Area 3***

3.22 There are two surplus schools within this partnership area – Green Oaks Lower School, and Kingsthorpe Middle School.

### ***Playing Pitch Provision***

3.23 The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) identifies a current deficiency of 9.0 pitches in this area. This deficiency is anticipated to rise to 21.2 pitches by 2021. The main shortfall is in relation to junior football pitches (currently -11.4) and mini-soccer (currently -4.0).

3.24 When considering Area 3, the PPS recommends that some adult pitches be reassigned. However, this can only be considered a short-term solution as by 2021 there is projected to be a shortfall in adult pitches.

### ***Green Oaks Lower School***

3.25 Site has been split into four: (i) the existing school building and playground; (ii) remnant playing fields; (iii) playing fields to be retained for Kingsthorpe Community College; (iv) new school (Green Oaks Primary) under

construction.

- 3.26 The Open Space Assessment backs up the Interim Planning Policy view that the area is deficient in small scale play space.

### ***Kingsthorpe Middle School***

- 3.27 The site includes the school buildings and hard courts, and an area of playing fields. The pitches are well maintained.
- 3.28 This site was not considered as part of the Interim Planning Policy on Surplus school Sites.
- 3.29 The Open Space Assessment identifies a lack of accessible open space for children and young people, and a deficit of 'parks and gardens' within the area.

### ***Conclusions***

- 3.30 The area has shortfalls of junior football and mini-soccer pitches. Pitches will be retained at the Green Oaks Lower School site for school use. Provided these pitches are made available for community use, development of the remainder of the site would be acceptable.
- 3.31 At the Kingsthorpe Middle School site it is considered that the existing playing fields should be retained. There is potential to create a consolidated area with the adjoining Recreation Ground which could link through to Harborough Road. On the Recreation Ground, as a result of the strong demand for pitches, existing pitches are overused. The bringing into community use of the school pitches would enable pitches on the Recreation Ground to be given time to recover.
- 3.32 Residential development of the built part of the site should include open space provision for children and young people, either within the site or on the adjoining recreation ground. Notwithstanding the need to make provision for playing pitches identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy, the site also has the potential to meet an open space need for 'parks and gardens'.
- 3.33 The existing school building and remnant playing field at Green Oaks Lower School should be redeveloped for residential development subject to provision of an on-site local equipped area for play (LEAP).**
- 3.34 The built part of the Kingsthorpe Middle School site should be redeveloped for residential development subject to provision of facilities for children and young people, either on-site or within adjacent recreation ground. The playing fields should be retained for playing pitch provision for 2 adult-sized and 8 mini-soccer pitches.**

### ***Partnership Area 5***

- 3.35 There are surplus school sites within this partnership area – St Mary's Middle School, and Cherry Orchard Middle School.

### ***Playing Pitch Provision***

- 3.36 The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) identifies a current deficit of 13.5 pitches in the area, which will increase to 26.1 in 2021. Shortfalls are greatest in junior football (currently -3.2), junior rugby (currently -5.5) and mini-soccer (currently -5.2).

#### ***St Mary's Middle School***

- 3.37 The site includes the redundant former school and part of the playing fields. The remaining part of the playing fields has been developed for the St Gregory's Lower School which has been relocated from its site to the north of Grange Road. There is a junior all weather pitch associated with the new primary school.
- 3.38 The Open Space Assessment identifies a lack of accessible open space for children's play.

#### ***Cherry Orchard Middle School***

- 3.39 The site includes school buildings and playing fields. Part of the surplus school site has been developed as courts for the tennis club, and for the Weston Favell Primary School.
- 3.40 The Open Space Assessment identifies a lack of accessible open space for children and young people.

#### ***Conclusions***

- 3.41 This partnership area has the highest shortfall of pitch provision in the Borough, particularly in relation to junior/mini sports pitches. Community access to the St Gregory's Lower School and Weston Favell Primary School pitches would assist in meeting this deficit. However, given the significant shortfalls in this partnership area, it is considered that additional provision should be made within the area. There is potential to make better use of Eastfield Park by incorporating junior and mini-soccer pitches within the park to create a multi-functional open space. In addition a junior pitch on the surplus land at Cherry Orchard Middle School should be provided.

- 3.42 The St Mary's Middle School site should be redeveloped for residential development subject to provision of 1 junior football/rugby and 4 mini soccer pitches on Eastfield Park, together with changing facilities and car parking and contribution to off-site children's play at Eastfield Park.**

- 3.43 The Cherry Orchard Middle School site should be redeveloped for residential development subject to provision of junior football pitch and on-site provision of open space for children and young people.**

#### ***Partnership Area 7***

- 3.44 There is one surplus school within this partnership area – Parklands Middle School.

#### ***Playing Pitch Provision***

- 3.45 The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) identifies a current surplus of 6.3 pitches,

which will decrease to 0.8 in 2021. Shortfalls in this area are anticipated to decrease to 0.5 pitches by 2021. A surplus of cricket pitches masks a shortfall in junior football (currently –5.1) and mini soccer (currently – 2.4) pitches.

- 3.46 The PPS identifies the need to improve changing facilities at Parklands.

### ***Parklands Middle School***

- 3.47 The site includes existing school buildings, an area of woodland and school playing fields.
- 3.48 The Interim Planning Statement only considers the site of the existing school buildings which is considered suitable for housing. The County Council are now looking to dispose of the whole site, including the school playing fields.
- 3.49 The Open Space Assessment identifies that there is a deficit in ‘parks and gardens’ and natural / semi-natural open space.

### ***Conclusions***

- 3.50 The area has shortfalls in junior football and mini-soccer pitches. Retention of the school playing fields would also assist in addressing shortfalls in the adjoining Partnership Area 3. The Playing Pitch Strategy identifies a need to improve changing facilities. There is only a single portakabin serving all of the pitches on Parklands Park. Notwithstanding the need to make provision for playing pitches, the site also has the potential to meet an open space need for ‘parks and gardens’.
- 3.51 The existing built part of the site should be redeveloped for residential development subject to: (i) provision of 1 adult-sized football and 6-8 mini-soccer pitches on the existing playing fields; (ii) provision of improved changing facilities at Parklands; and (iii) retention of woodland as amenity open space.**

### ***Partnership Area 8***

- 3.52 There are two surplus school sites within this partnership area – Millway Middle School, and St Lukes Lower School.

### ***Playing Pitch Provision***

- 3.53 The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) identifies a current deficiency of 3.4 pitches in this area. This deficiency is anticipated to rise to 6.0 pitches by 2021. The main shortfall is in relation to junior football pitches and mini-soccer.
- 3.54 The PPS states that any loss of playing pitches in Area 8 should be resisted and that the deficit should be reduced by seeking formal community use.

### ***Millway Middle School***

- 3.55 The existing school buildings and part of the playing fields are to be retained for the new Millway Primary School. The remaining part of the playing fields are to be disposed of by the County Council.

3.56 The Interim Planning Statement states that the playing pitches should be retained.

**St Lukes Lower School**

3.57 The Interim Planning Statement states that the site is suitable for housing. This is because the school and playing fields are being reprovided at the St Crispin development.

**Conclusions**

3.58 The Open Space Assessment identifies that there is a lack of children's play space in the area.

3.59 Both the Playing Pitch Strategy and the Interim Planning Statement require that existing playing fields on the Millway Middle School site should be retained.

3.60 The existing playing fields at St Lukes Lower School are being reprovided at the new school in the St Crispins development. Therefore, provided community access to these facilities is secured, residential development of this site would be acceptable.

**3.61 The surplus playing fields at Millway Middle School should be retained for use as playing pitches.**

**3.62 The St Lukes Lower School site should be redeveloped for residential development, subject to provision of an on-site area of open space for children's play.**

**Background Papers:**

Playing Pitch Strategy (March 2005)

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (September 2006)

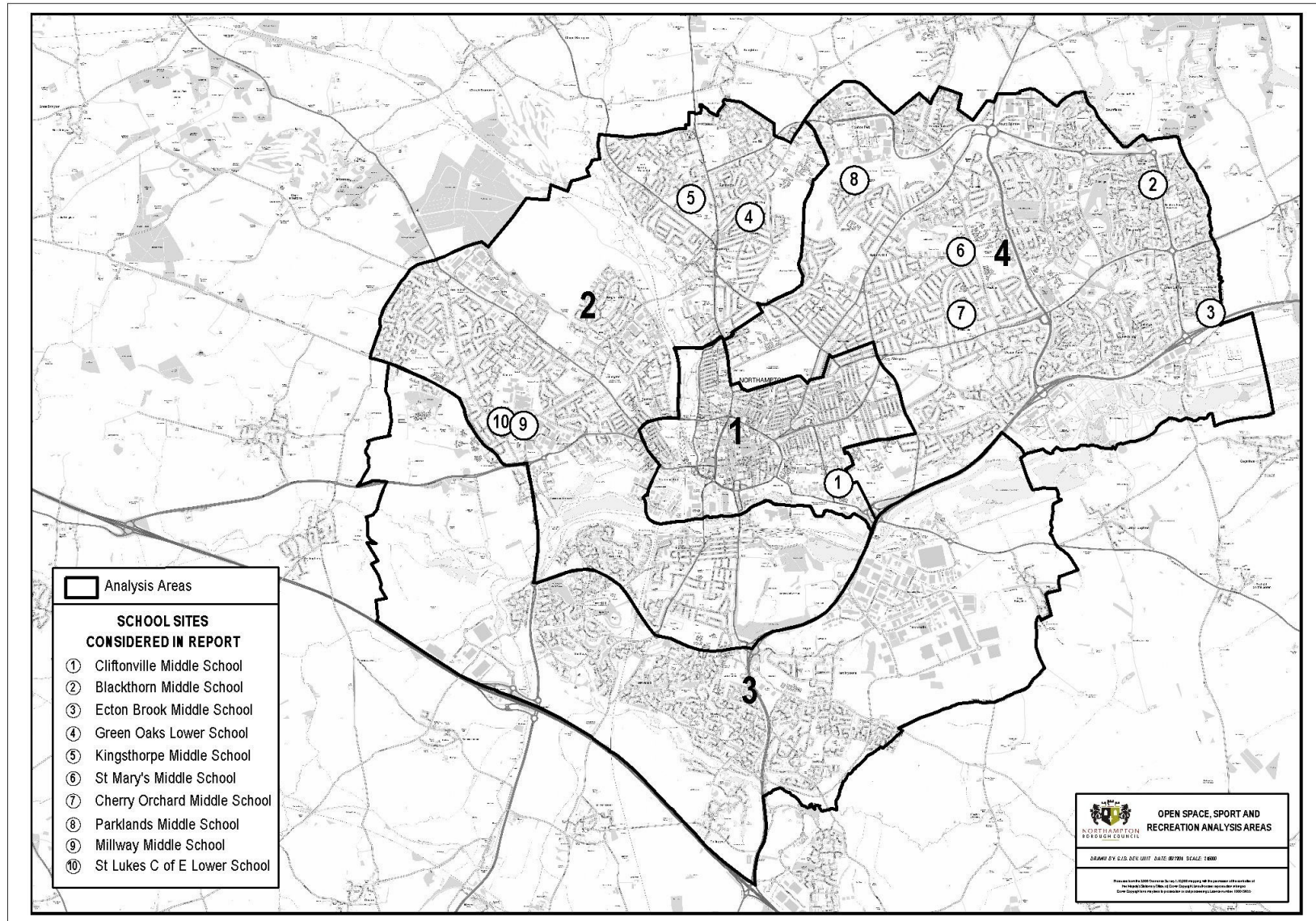
**Summary and Links to Corporate Plan**

In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.

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# Plan 1 - Analysis Areas



# Plan 2 - Partnership Areas

