

**Exeter City Council**  
**Draft Built Facilities, Playing Fields, Pitches, Play Areas,**  
**Parks and Open Spaces**  
**Report January 2019**

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 draft 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:

1. Tackling congestion and accessibility
2. Promoting active & healthy lifestyles
3. Building great neighbourhoods

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

- Improve population health and wellbeing
- Reduce health inequalities
- Promote community resourcefulness
- Increase active travel

The supporting pillars are set out below:



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 draft 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 open 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 draft Physical Activity Strategy and the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot are underpinned by a sustainable approach that provides good quality, accessible, community based built sports and leisure facilities and preservation and improvements in the city's pitches, playing fields, play areas, parks and open spaces.
2. With on-going funding cuts to Councils we need to balance resident's expectations with the funding and resources available to the Council and to consult as openly as possible with the compromises and choices we have.
3. With the exception of the planned new build St Sidwell's Point Leisure Complex, we have an aging and poor quality built estate which 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).
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 increased and 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 (paras73 & 74)*; 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.

**National Planning Policy Framework (paras73 & 74)**

*"Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required. 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 needs for which clearly outweigh the loss."*

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".*

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 open 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 and future needs and demands have been undertaken by independent consultants to inform consultation with key communities, stakeholders; Sport England and Sporting 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 consultation with residents and key stakeholders on initial proposals, based on the recommendations in these reports, 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.

It will form the basis of discussions with communities, and other stakeholders between February and April 2019 and the feedback will be reflected back in a clear strategy and delivery plan to be considered by the Council in July 2019.

## 2. Built Sports and Leisure Facilities

Proposals for the Council's future built sport and leisure facilities take into account the facilities we own and lease to others and are based on an independent report commissioned in 2018. 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 of leisure sites in the context of:

- 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.

### 2.1 Built Sports and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment Summary

The Max Associates report concludes that 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 the needs analysis, the authors have concluded 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, potentially financed by the strategic development of the current sport and leisure estate.

- 2.2 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 Exeter Strategic Sports Board and other stakeholders, including local communities themselves, to collaborate to enhance our offer even further. There is a need to now consult with communities on these outline proposals and undertake a detailed financial assessment of the options.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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. Other sites may need to close and be sold to generate capital receipts for investment into Council priorities including leisure. A comprehensive investment strategy to support the proposals outlined will need to be developed and put in place.
- 2.5 The following table sets out the Max Associates recommendations for each site.

Site	Max Associates Recommendations
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Exeter Arena and ISCA Centre	<p>Redevelopment into a <b>Community Sports Village</b> to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leisure centre with sprung sports hall and group exercise studios</li> <li>• 25m swimming pool (replacement for Northbrook pool)</li> <li>• Martial arts and boxing facilities (replacement for Northbrook gym),</li> <li>• Gymnastics centre and potential new home for Exeter Gymnastics Club.</li> <li>• Ski simulator/training centre and potential new home for Exeter Ski Club</li> <li>• Off road cycling track – for example this could be a free to use outdoor pump track that would attract young families and children to the site,</li> </ul>
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in an area with considerable housing development and identified unmet need for community leisure facilities.</li> <li>• Capacity of the site and multi-sport approach including existing Athletics Arena playing pitches, Skateboard Park and existing indoor bowling centre.</li> <li>• Attached car parking for improved accessibility to walking and cycling</li> <li>• Within current catchment for Northbrook Swimming Pool an ideal location for a replacement community pool.</li> <li>• Located in an area accessible to those priority groups and communities identified in the Draft Physical Activity Strategy</li> </ul>
Wonford Sports Centre	<p>An innovative, new build integrated <b>Community Health and Wellbeing Centre</b> to replace the existing Wonford sports and community centres. This should be designed with the local community building on the aspirational proposals put forward in 2016 for an “Inclusive Hub”. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leisure centre with sprung sports hall and group exercise studios and outdoor facilities.</li> <li>• Primary care centre in partnership with the local NHS.</li> <li>• Flexible community spaces linking indoor and outdoor spaces to promote healthy active lifestyles such as community kitchen, gardens and allotments.</li> <li>• Potentially part of a housing-led mixed use estates based development.</li> </ul>
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wonford is a priority area for the Council with regards to health inequalities</li> <li>• Communities within Wonford are priority groups for the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot where efforts are needed to drive up physical activity and participation levels.</li> <li>• Strong community leadership and resourcefulness within the area.</li> <li>• Local GP involvement in Wellbeing Exeter (social prescribing and community building programme).</li> <li>• Capacity of the site and multi-sport approach including existing green space and playing pitches.</li> </ul>
Riverside Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool	<p>This community swimming pool and leisure facility needs to be maintained to provide access on this side of the river. A rolling programme of refurbishment needs to be in place with a long term building replacement plan to ensure sustainability</p>
Rationale	<p>Considerable investment into the building infrastructure including new roofing is being undertaken as part of the refurbishment following the fire in 2017. Further investment is being made into areas such as the wet side changing village and with the introduction of virtual technology and additional studio/spin facilities to modernise the overall offer.</p>
Northbrook Pool	<p>Closure and removal from restrictive lease</p>
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dated and poor provision overall.</li> <li>• Pool facilities to be re-provided at Exeter Arena Community Sports Village</li> <li>• Boxing Club facilities to be incorporated in proposed new centre.</li> <li>• Removal from site would extract ECC from current restrictive lease and</li> </ul>

	liabilities on Northbrook Pool Site. Potential Closure Issues: Significantly outweighed by proposed new pool at the Arena site. As a Learn to Swim Centre the proximity of the Arena site and better access would be seen as a positive.
Northbrook Golf	Closure and disposal of site
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited value for wider strategic aims of the Council for participation and health given usage numbers and income.</li> <li>The site has potential to generate a very positive capital receipt for the Council given its location that could be invested in council priorities including in other leisure sites.</li> </ul> Potential closure issues would need to be overcome with regard to the loss of green space and the loss of a sports facility.

Table 1: Recommendation for Built Leisure Facilities  
Source Max Associates October 2018

## 2.6 Built Sports and Leisure Facilities Priority Actions

Based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Max Associates report and initial consideration by officers, the following actions have been identified.

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 will close Northbrook Swimming Pool and re-provide at the Exeter Arena/ISCA site. We will dispose of the site in partnership with the trustees and we will consider closure and disposal of the Northbrook Gym and the re-provision of boxing facilities at Exeter Arena and ISCA site.
3. We will continue to refurbish the Riverside Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre, (most of this work is currently being addressed), and develop a long term building replacement plan.
4. We will close Northbrook Approach Golf Course and utilise sale proceeds for Council priorities including for new and improved sport and leisure facilities. We will seek to work with the Exeter Golf and Country Club to promote affordable membership costs for junior golf as part of their expansion plans, given the age profile of users at Northbrook Golf.
5. We will develop the Exeter Arena and ISCA site as a Community Sports Village to include a new community swimming pool with fitness and group exercise facilities alongside the existing athletics track and indoor bowls facility. We will consider additional facilities including:
  - Ski stimulator/training centre
  - Gymnastics centre with a potential lease/partnership with Exeter Gymnastics Club
  - Boxing and martial arts studio – flexible space that could be used by a variety of clubs
  - Off road cycling track – for example this could be a free to use outdoor pump track that would attract young families and children to the centre.
  - Beach volleyball court
  - New sports hall facilities to replace Clifton Hill Sports Centre sports hall.

- Commercial Leisure – possible options to include soft play, Junior Tag/Tag Active and tenpin bowling facility.

This mix of facilities, including both traditional and innovative facilities would make Exeter Arena a destination facility, with a focus on young people and family participation. There is 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 would be sufficient for this proposed facility mix.

We will 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.

6. We will hold discussions with Exeter Ski Club to identify the type of skiing facilities required for skiing and a business case will need to be provided to ascertain sustainability of any new facility. Facilities for example could include a ski simulator to aid teaching for beginners based at Exeter Arena.
7. We will work with the local community and other stakeholders to create a flagship new build Community Health and Wellbeing Centre to replace the Wonford Sports and Community Centres. Wonford Green GP Practice are interested in working with the community and the Council and the facility could include a new primary care centre as part of a housing led mixed use development. The centre could also re-provide space for a community kitchen, gardens and café amongst a range of other community facilities.

As well as space for the re-provision of a four court sports hall as part of the facility mix, there is also the potential for squash court provision to replace those lost at Clifton Hill Sports Centre. 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. If squash is provided here it will not be required at Exeter Arena. The squash courts could also be used to deliver a mix of activities as part of broader health initiatives for target groups.

8. During the consultation phase we will work with stakeholders to produce shadow business plans for the two new centres. Ideally these would include a core mix of facilities plus variant options, for example at Exeter Arena the core facilities would include the pool, fitness and studios, athletics, indoor bowls, gymnastics and martial arts studio, with the pump track, beach volleyball and commercial leisure and community facilities as variant options.

### 3. Playing Fields and Pitches Needs Assessment

- 3.1 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 data collected during 2016/7 from site visits and consultation with sports bodies, education providers and community sports clubs. This now needs updating which we will do during the consultation period.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The playing pitch needs forecast to 2026 based on the 2016/17 assessments are in this table:

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

*\*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.*

*Table 3: Playing Pitch Needs Forecast  
Continuum Leisure Report 2018*

- 3.5 The table below sets out the Continuum Leisure recommendations for capital enhancement works and/or new provision to meet identified needs to 2026
- 3.6 Where sites are not in City Council ownership or leased to third parties, implementation of the recommended actions will be subject to the cooperation of the owner/leaseholder. In addition, the actions will be subject to the necessary planning processes and to securing of the required funding, both for the initial capital development and ongoing cost of maintenance.

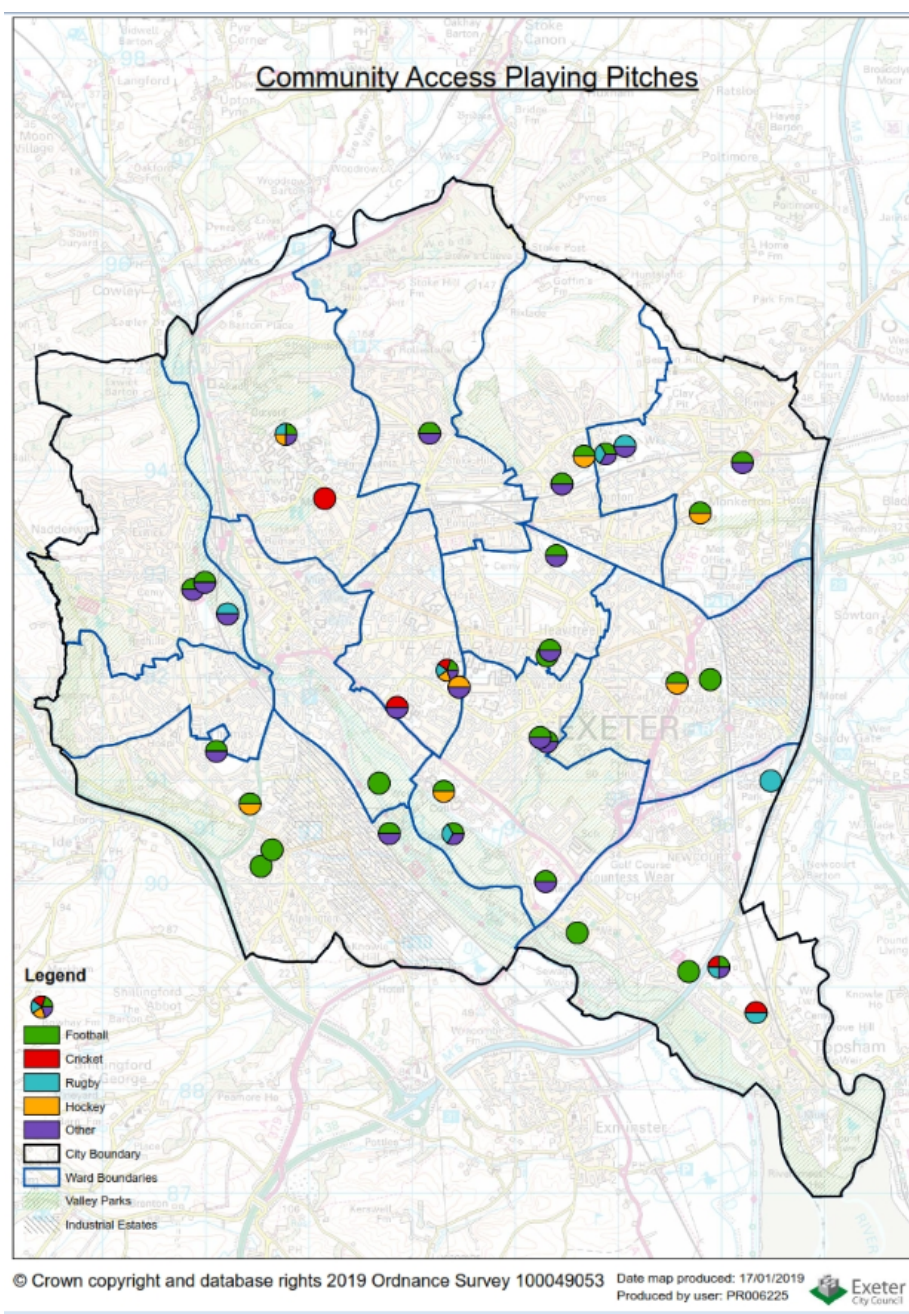


Sport	Site	Project	Lead Organisation
Cricket	Exwick Sports Hub: Exwick Playing Field	Complete reinstatement of Exwick CC pitch for 2019 season	Exeter College
Cricket	Cowick Barton, Bettysmead, KGV, & Bromhams Farm	Commission a study to assess which is suitable/the optimum for development as a Community Cricket Hub (football share)	ECB/Devon Cricket Board
Football		Enhance pitches and pavilions at these four key football sites as resources allow (to include reinstatement by EA of Bromhams Farm Playing Field as good youth pitches) and informed by the findings of the Community Cricket Hub options study (above) ECC to explore potential s106 funding support	Exeter City Council
Football	Exwick Sports Hub: former Civil Service Club	Complete provision of new 3G AGP to FA Register standard with secured community use from 2018 Reinstate youth pitch with secured community use (EA works)	Exeter College  Exeter City Council
	New school - SW Exeter (in Teigbridge Borough)	Ensure provision of new 3G AGP is to FA Register standard with secured community use for Exeter-based football clubs	Devon County Council
	Wonford*	Reconfigure and enhance pitches as part of wider development plans for this area, including the leisure centre/sports village. Develop a master plan for the site which harmonises pitch provision with the preferred development option for Wonford Sports Centre within the Sports Facilities Strategy	Exeter City Council
	Station Road, Pinhoe	Reconfigure and enhance pitches and replace pavilion as part of wider development plans for this area	Exeter City Council
	Coronation Field, Topsham	Provide floodlights to stadium pitch (FA Step 6 standard)	Topsham FC
	Alphington Chronicles	Upgrade pavilion changing and toilet facilities	Sports & Social Club
Hockey	St Peter's; St Luke's; St James's; ISCA schools	Resurface the sand based AGP playing surfaces and replace goals as necessary	Devon County Council
Rugby	Bonfire Field Topsham	Provide additional training lights	Topsham RFC
	Exhibition Field**	Review asset transfer options, provide additional training lights	ECC/ Saracens RFC
	Topsham Sports Ground	Install floodlighting and provide new changing facilities. Subject to feasibility assessment, provide a 3G AGP to WR Register standard with community use	Exeter University/ RFU

		(potentially secured through RFU 'rugby share' investment)	
Other Pitch Sports	Grace Road	Reinstate playing field to good standard for community use for informal/unlicensed outdoor sport and recreation (EA works)	Exeter City Council
	Exwick Sports Hub: Flower Pot Playing Field	Assess feasibility of options to enhance pavilion and pitch quality for community rugby (including growth of Wessex RFC, TAG, Exeter Touch Rugby) and other sports (e.g. Ultimate)	Exeter College/ECC

\* The pitches at Wonford may be impacted by options within the Sports Facilities Strategy site

\*\*The Exhibition Field site may be impacted by the Sport Facilities Strategy, pitches could be displaced. Asset transfer could limit the ability of ECC to take up certain development options regarding a sports village



### 3.7 Play Pitch Priority Actions

Based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Continuum Leisure Report and initial consideration by officers, the following actions have been identified.

1. Update the Continuum Leisure Playing Pitch Report with Sport England, National Governing Bodies and local stakeholders. Convene a Playing Pitch Steering Group to 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. Ensure that the subsequent 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.
3. 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).
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Enhance the quality of playing of pitches by developing an annual investment plan, as resources allow, for the conversion of existing pitches into All Weather Pitches to increase community physical activity in priority target areas identified through the draft Physical Activity Strategy.
7. 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).
8. 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.
9. Develop a masterplan for key strategic sites at Wonford and Exeter Arena to ensure the formal playing pitch offer fits with the wider active environment of built leisure facility, parks & open space.

#### 4. Community Play Areas

4.1 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.

4.2 In 2017 the Council commissioned an independent consultant, Bill Buckley to undertake a review to ensure that play areas can be managed effectively and are inclusive, safe and accessible for children, young people and families to enjoy playing and learning together

#### 4.3 Community Play Areas Needs Assessment Summary

The Bill Buckley report explains 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.

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

<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 5 types of play equipment, of which at least 2 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 5 items should encourage more adventurous play e.g. climbing, swinging, balancing, rotating or gliding (cableway), and at least 3 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.
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- 4.5 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.

<b>Exeter City Play Areas</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
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
MUGA's	10	11	11	11
Skate Parks	5	5	5	5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>94</b>

*Table 3 – Breakdown of Play facilities within Exeter  
Source Pay Area Report 2017*

- 4.6 The report proposed a new model based on a clear methodology for rationalisation and enhancement of play areas. Essentially this model proposes 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:

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

- 4.7 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 closure and enhancements each piece of equipment has been assessed against criteria including Agility, Balancing, Climbing, Dynamic Play, Educational Play, Imaginative Play, Sitting/Shelter, or Swinging etc. and each item of equipment is given a score per activity. This assessment has produced a relative score used to compare all Council play areas.

- 4.8 The report recommends introducing Destination Play Parks in the City. These provide for families with children of all age groups, encouraging family based visits, and a facility that will be more diverse in its provision of enjoyment and physical challenges. It would be suitably equipped to encourage regular usage throughout the year and offer outdoor activities which can last hours per visit. This can be further encouraged by providing facilities for parents / adults which cater for modern needs.

- 4.9 The provision of new Destination Play Parks would offer substantially improved play facilities for all ages and needs. By positioning these in locations as close as possible to the known areas of deprivation and ensuring good levels of cycle and walking



access these could act as a significant factor in changing activity behaviour patterns in the target communities set out in the draft Physical Activity Strategy.

- 4.10 Destination Play Parks also offer scope to introduce interests not normally associated with play in the traditional sense. Such as a focus on activities to help tackle childhood obesity, team sports, and springboard activities that lead into groups and team involvement and all-ability access.



*Destination Play Park Victoria Park Bath*

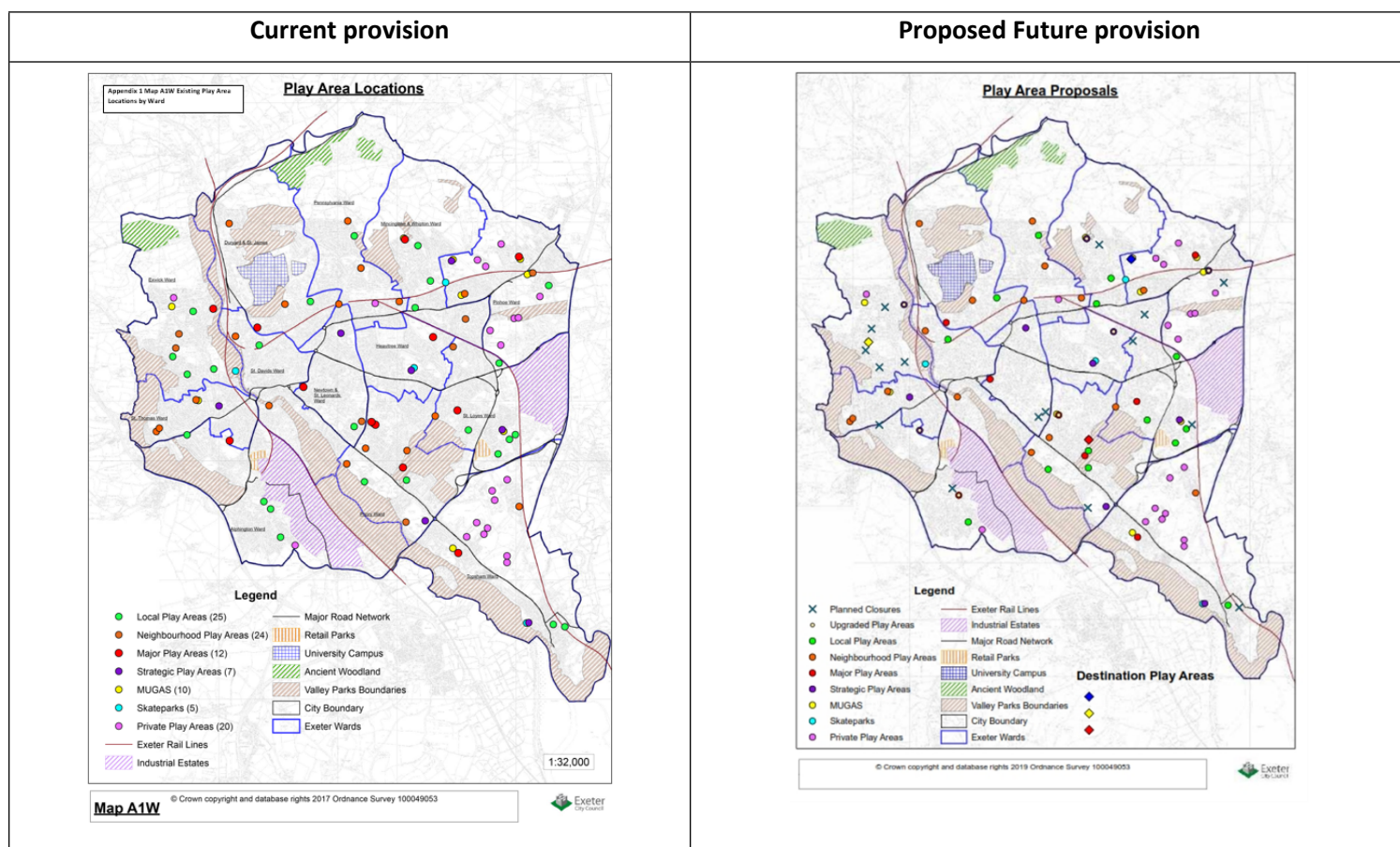
- 4.11 The following table shows the proposed rationalisation of play areas over 5 years.

<b>Exeter City Play Areas</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
Local Play Areas	25	16	17	20	20
Neighbourhood Play Areas	24	19	20	21	21
Major Play Areas	12	8	8	8	8
Strategic Play Areas	7	13	13	12	11
MUGA's	10	11	11	12	12
Skate Parks	5	5	5	5	5
Destination Parks			1	2	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>

*Table 4 – Proposed Rationalisation of Play Areas*

*This takes into account additional new play areas due to be transferred to the council under existing S106 agreements*

*Source Play Area Report 2017*



## 4.12 Play Area Priority Actions

Based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Bill Buckley Report and initial consideration by officers, the following actions have been identified.

1. 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 children, young people and families, with full consideration on access, location, design and sustainability within the designated development area.
2. Provide the evidence base to support future policy and practice to so that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts are appropriately allocated to support the improvement and inclusivity of existing play areas, and the development of Destination Parks in priority areas across the city.
3. Protect and enhance the city's overall supply of community play areas suitable for play and social networking by promoting Active Design principles through the revised Exeter Local Plan and Greater Exeter Strategic Plan and subsidiary plans to promote the development of built environments that support and encourage active lifestyles.
4. Enhance the quality of community play areas as resources allow, ensuring effective and sustainable asset management programmes are in place by ensuring an evenly distributed model of play areas across the city.

5. When making changes invest in sustainable, equipment with optimal lifespan based on local community need: utilising the principles of good play design within an Exeter Play Design Guide, ensure that equipped play areas provide a significant play, social interaction and physical development outlook through the age ranges.
6. Rationalise existing provision by closing the 16 at risk play areas based on the criteria of health & safety condition and residual life expectancy recommended in the Play Area Report. These are:

<b>Play Areas proposed for closure on</b>	<b>LIFE EXPECTANCY OF EQUIPMENT</b>
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
Haccombe Close Play Area	3-5 YEARS
Gras Lawn Play Area	5-10 YEARS
Hylton Gardens Play Area	5-10 YEARS

7. Revitalise and/or upgrade 8 Local Play Areas to Strategic Play Area status based on local need. These are:
  1. Cemetery Field Play Area
  2. Cowick Barton Playing Field Play Area
  3. Exwick Station Road Play Area
  4. Georges Close Play Area
  5. Pendragon Road Play Area
  6. Pinhoe Station Road Play Area
  7. Powlesland Road Play Area
  8. Wyvern Park Play Area
8. In order to provide a balanced approach in term of:

- Equitable distribution across the city
- Close alignment to priority areas articulated in the Draft Physical Activity Strategy
- Land already owned by the council
- A suitable size for developing flagship play areas
- Strong existing and potential future walking and cycling links to enable accessibility

We propose to introduce 3 strategically located Destination Play Parks based on proximity and accessibility for communities with the greatest health needs in the following locations:

1. Arena Park (Pinhoe),
2. Wonford Playing Field (Priory),
3. Exwick/Cowick area: precise location to be determined.

*When rationalising the exact number and location of play areas consideration will need to be given to matching public expectations and demands with future budgetary constraints. Where disused sites exist or evolve there is a potential for additional general public open space, which*



*could be offered as potential sites for development or new models of community managed use such as allotments, or community orchards.*

## **5. Parks and Greenspaces**

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 greenspaces. The Council's recreational greenspace 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.

5.1 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;

5.2 In that context we wish to ensure our parks and greenspaces 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 & greenspaces 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 greenspace. Our parks and greenspaces 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.

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

- 12 formal parks,
- 9 playing fields,
- 26 allotment sites (1500 plots),
- 39 Hectares of woodland
- Play Areas (see above and other local greenspace)

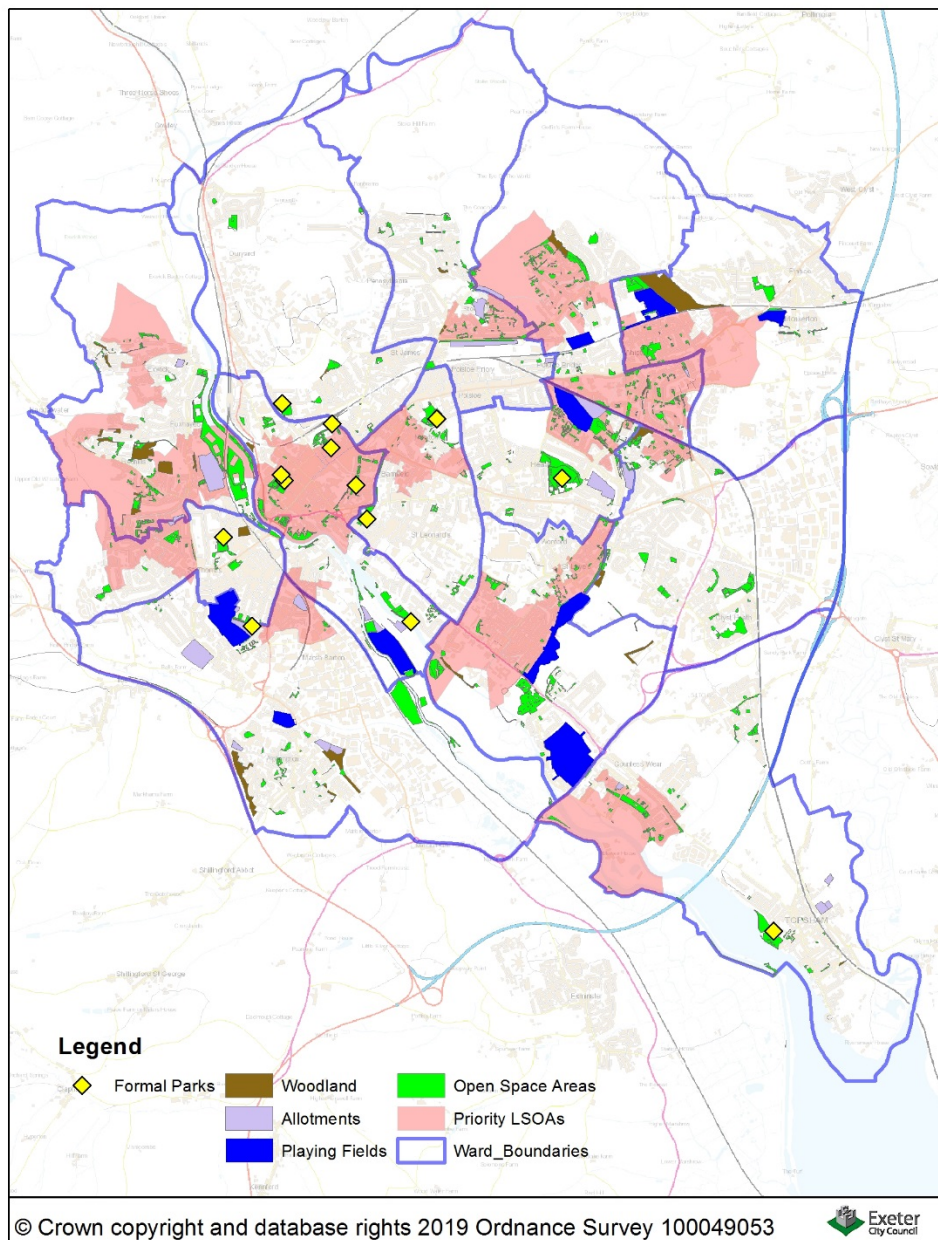
### **5.4 Parks and Green spaces Priority Actions**

The previous Parks and Open Spaces Strategy dates back to 2005. There is now a need to renew this in consultation with communities and other stakeholders. During 2019/20 officers are recommending the following actions.

1. Through a series of community and stakeholder workshops identify priorities for the future development of Parks and Greenspace strategies and action plans.

2. Undertake a current audit and needs assessment of the City's greenspace, including those in the ownership of other bodies which have existing or potential public access, with a particular focus on the latent activity opportunities that could be developed.
3. Map and develop linkage of parks and greenspace with cycle and footpaths as part of a Green Corridor network across the city, providing safe off-road travel within communities
4. In principle, subject to resources, provide support and opportunity to "start-up" groups wishing to undertake and develop low key but valued activities and social interaction in local parks and greenspaces that promote physical activity.

## Parks and Greenspace



Date: 23/01/2019

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

6.1 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 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.

6.2 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.

### **6.3 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 better 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.

6.4 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 GP's 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.

6.5 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.

6.6 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.

### **6.7 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.

6.8 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.

- 6.9 The County Sports 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.
- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 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.
- 6.12 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 AND 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.

**6.13 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 GP's 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 Get Active Exeter Networks we will provide support, develop and grow community sports and physical 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.

## 7. Investment Strategy

The Draft 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*

7.1 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.

7.2 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:

Funding Route		Recommendations
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	The current Regulation 123 List indicates that CIL may be spent on 'public realm enhancements', and a 'Destination Park' might be considered to be a 'public realm enhancement'. (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 these 'Destination Parks' and thereby communicates more clearly the intention to fund these through CIL.
Section 106 Agreements	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 s 106 agreements particularly in relation to play areas and pitches in context of the revised Local Plan.
Rationalising provision and reducing the number of sites	Reduced burden of outdated play areas and buildings alongside improving procurement and sustainability options will reduce revenue costs of maintenance in real terms	Re-siting of play areas and leisure facilities this may offer the release of land for development and capital receipts. The funds raised may contribute to improved facilities elsewhere in line with priorities

External funding sources-	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
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7.3 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: namely Northbrook Golf Course; Clifton Hill Sports Centre and Pyramids Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre.
- 2 Capital funding directly from residential development opportunities on the sites themselves is channelled directly towards new facilities at Wonford and Exeter Arena.
- 3 Designated funding from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for developments in key communities for destination play parks, play areas and playing pitches.
- 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.

7.4 The following business cases will be drawn up during the consultation process:

- Wonford Integrated Community Health and Wellbeing Centre
- Exeter Arena Sports Village
- All Weather Pitches and Pavilions
- Destination Play Parks