



**Executive**  
15<sup>th</sup> January 2007

**Report from the Director of  
Environment and Culture**

For Action

Wards Affected:  
Sudbury

**Review of Vale Farm Sports Ground**

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-06/07-023

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out for Members the main findings of a recent review of the Vale Farm Sports Ground and its key recommendations for future management arrangements.

**2.0 Recommendations**

That Members:

- 2.1 Note the main findings of the review of the Vale Farm Sports Ground.
- 2.2 Instruct Officers to implement the recommendations within the action plan in appendix 1, subject to funding being identified where appropriate.
- 2.3 Instruct officers to develop a sports centre strategy for sports centres across the borough.

**3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Vale Farm Sports Ground provides facilities for a range of different formal and informal sports and recreation activities and, as such, is a strategically important sports ground within the borough. The site provides pitches for football, gaelic football and hurling, rugby and cricket, as well as Vale Farm Sports Centre, which includes one of only two swimming pools in the borough. It also provides a 'home' to a number of important and successful sports clubs in the borough, some of whom lease facilities from the Council. In total, it

provides facilities for nearly all eight of Brent's priority sports in the one location. In addition, a health facility is currently being built on the site.

- 3.2 Whilst it is a well-used and popular site, development has happened in a piecemeal way and there is no single management plan for the site as a whole. In addition, parts of the site need refurbishment to bring them up to a good quality facility standard. The review was undertaken during the Autumn 2006 by leisure consultants Ploszajski Lynch, who were asked to consider the future of the site within the context of user feedback, future demands and relevant strategic documents. Completion of this review is a key action identified within the Brent Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity 2004 – 2009.
- 3.3 A wide range of stakeholders were consulted as part of the review including, sports clubs with leased facilities at the site, the Brent Sports Council, sports clubs using the Vale Farm Sports Centre, the Football Association, the PCT, Leisure Connection, local schools. A consultation event for local residents and users was held one evening at Vale Farm Sports Centre and an article was published in the local press asking for views and comments on the sports ground. In addition, the consultant met with officers from the Sports Service, Parks Service, Property and Asset Management and Planning.
- 3.4 This consultation resulted in a considerable amount of feedback. Whilst this varied between different groups of consultees, there was a common consent that the sports ground is a valued and valuable asset for the borough. There was also an agreement that it has the potential to play a greater role in local sporting life, particularly in relation to football. Improved facilities and activities for young people was a common response to questions around improvements, as was better security at the site. All organisations involved in the site felt there should be better co-operation between themselves and to this end the review report recommends the creation of a consultative forum. It was felt that better security was needed around the Sports Centre and Wembley FC areas and that this was something that could be progressed via the forum. A number of suggestions were made about increasing general usage of the sports ground by improving signage, pathways and general information about what is available at the site.
- 3.5 The review also considered the 'disused athletics track' to the rear of the sports centre and what use could be made of this, in the context of the future life of the sports centre itself. It identifies that the sports centre has a remaining life of five to ten years before it has to be replaced and recommends that any replacement facility is built on the site of the disused track so that the current centre could remain open while a replacement is being built. It suggests that any future use of the disused track is such that it does not hamper any future plans to redevelop the main sports centre. However, it is recommended that the future provision of a new sports centre at Vale Farm should be considered within the context of the strategic development and refurbishment of sports and leisure centres across the borough as a whole.

- 3.6 The schools consulted with would like to see the disused track bought back into use as an athletics track as they believe the new track at Willesden Sports Centre are too far away to use on a regular basis. However, it is unlikely that schools would make significant use of a synthetic track throughout the year to justify the capital cost of providing a second synthetic track in the borough. Therefore, the review report recommends the Parks Service marks out a track on the grass for use during the summer term. It also suggests the Council considers the provision of a 'j track' (ie reinstate 150m of the track for use by schools). Whilst this may be worth considering it may not prove to be cost-effective if eventually a new sports centre is built on the area.
- 3.7 Netball is a priority sport for the council, however there are no public courts within the borough. The review suggests that the old track would be a good location to develop a centre for netball as the site already has floodlights and changing rooms are available within the sports centre. This was a popular option with schools in the north of the borough. A further feasibility plan would be needed for this proposal which should also consider location of the courts within the context of any future redevelopment of the sports centre.
- 3.8 There are a number of comments within the report about the standard of changing provision/pavilions on the site and the need to ensure they are able to accommodate women and girls teams and are fully accessible to disabled people. In the short term it recommends minor refurbishments to address this. However, officers believe long term consideration should be given to consolidating the various different changing facilities within any new sports centre.
- 3.9 The report also discusses the practice rugby pitch given to Wasps as part of the agreement for the development of the 'Wasps' site. This pitch is fenced (and so free from dog fouling) and floodlit and consequently has the potential to be important pitch facility within the borough. The community use element of this agreement has not been fully met and it is recommended the Council seeks to regain management of this pitch to bring it back into local sports use.
- 3.10 As mentioned earlier in this report, improving facilities for young people was seen as an important issue by many consultees. The report recognises the use of the site, both formal and informal, currently made by young people but believes increased levels of participation could be achieved if more informal, free of charge facilities were provided. It recommends the installation of a traditional playground for younger children and of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for older young people. It suggests the latter is sited next to the synthetic pitch to allow it to benefit to some extent from the existing floodlighting and to allow a degree of supervision. It suggests a second unlit MUGA should be located at a different position to allow less structured use.
- 3.11 The report recognises the Council has a target of increasing levels of physical activity by adults in Brent by 4% by 2009. (The current level is 18% of adults participate on three occasions per week). This is a significant target to achieve and cannot all be obtained through formal sports activity alone. Sites such as Vale Farm Sports Ground could help achieve this through informal activities such as cycling, jogging and walking. Therefore, the report recommends the

provision of improved footpaths and relevant signage to help achieve higher levels of this type of activity. The new management contract for the Vale Farm Sports Centre requires Leisure Connection to develop a programme of health related activities, including an exercise Referral scheme. Linked to the development of the new health facility opposite the sports centre there is a unique opportunity to develop a range of both formal and informal activity programmes using physical activity to improve health.

- 3.12 The above recommendations have been organised into a single action plan in appendix 1 to this report.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 A number of the recommendations within the review report have capital and/or revenue implications. Estimates are included within the action plan in appendix 1. Officers will secure external funding for these where applicable. Otherwise, they will be subject to the Council's normal budget process.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The Council has power pursuant to section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to provide such recreational facilities as it thinks fit. This power includes the power to provide buildings, equipment and assistance of any kind.

#### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The report highlights the need to improve changing accommodation in order that female teams and disabled people can use them.

#### **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 None specific

#### **Background Papers**

Brent Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity 2004 - 2009  
Review of Vale Farm Sports Ground – Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Limited –  
November 2006

#### **Contact Officers**

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Sue Harper, Assistant Director (Leisure and Registration), 020 8937 5192.

**Richard Saunders**  
**Director of Environment and Culture**

## APPENDIX 1

### Review of Vale Farm Sports Ground: Action Plan

	Action	Timing	Financial Implication	Lead Officer
1.	Create Vale Farm Sports Ground Consultative Forum	Short term	Nil	Shaun Faulkner
2.	Create better information about Vale Farm Sports Ground for the public, including clarifying the planning situation.	Short term	From existing budgets	Shaun Faulker
3.	Improve signage within Vale Farm Sports Ground	Short term	£5K	Shaun Faulkner
4.	Council to re-establish control over 'wasps' rugby pitch.	Medium term		Sue Harper
5.	Ensure pitch changing rooms are DDA compliant.	Short term	From existing budgets	Shaun Faulkner
6.	Ensure all changing pavilions, including Sudbury Court pavilion, meet the needs of junior, female and disabled players.	Medium term	£100K	Shaun Faulkner
7.	Consult with schools on requirements for markings for athletic track during summer terms.	Short term	From existing budgets	Shaun Faulkner

8.	Develop a programme of health related activities for indoor and outdoor facilities, in partnership with Brent PCT and Leisure Connection	Short term	Within existing budgets	Gerry Kiefer
9.	Install signed pathways to support walking, cycling and jogging.	Medium term	Capital - £50K Revenue - £2K (maybe some S106 to support this)	Shaun Faulkner
10.	Install a playground within Vale Farm Sports Ground	Medium term	Capital - £60K Revenue - £5K (maybe some S106 to support this)	Shaun Faulkner
11.	Install a MUGA within Vale Farm Sports Ground	Medium term	Capital - £120K Revenue - £2K	Shaun Faulkner
12.	Explore the potential of developing a netball centre at Vale Farm Sports Ground	Medium	Feasibility - £10K Capital - £200K Revenue - £8K	Gerry Kiefer
13.	Consider future replacement of Vale Farm Sports Centre and provision of Community Football Centre.	Long term	£10 - £15 million	Sue Harper

**Note:**

Short term = within six months

Medium term = within two years

Long term = five – ten years