

## **Implications of Sefton Council Playing Pitch Strategy**

**-Land South Of Formby Industrial Estate  
(Sefton Local Plan reference- MN2.49)**

**December 2015**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This paper sets out the Council's statement on the implications of the Sefton Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) with regard to Land South of Formby Industrial Estate (Sefton Local Plan reference MN2.49) and the proposed provision of 3G pitches.

## **2. Background**

2.1 The Sefton Playing Pitch Strategy was begun in December 2014 and completed in November 2015; it provides a robust and up to date assessment of the need for playing pitches in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 73. The PPS covers the following playing pitches and outdoor sports:

- Football pitches
- Cricket pitches
- Rugby union pitches
- Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) (Hockey)
- Bowling greens
- Tennis courts

## **3. Playing Pitch Strategy- 3G pitches**

3.1 There are currently no full Size 3G pitches in Sefton. Based on the number of teams playing competitive fixtures in Sefton there is a recommended need for 11 full size 3G pitches to be provided in Sefton to service current demand for training based on the Football Association model.

*"On the basis that there are 587 teams playing competitive home fixtures on grass pitches within Sefton, there is a recommended need for at least 11 full size 3G pitches using the FA model to service current demand for training." (Sefton PPS Page 15)*

3.2 As a result one of the key recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy is the recommendation for 11 3G pitches to be provided in Sefton. The recommendation recognises that the provision of 11 3G pitches is not immediately feasible or deliverable and therefore that the recommendation is to increase the number of 3G pitches in Sefton incrementally as opportunities arise.

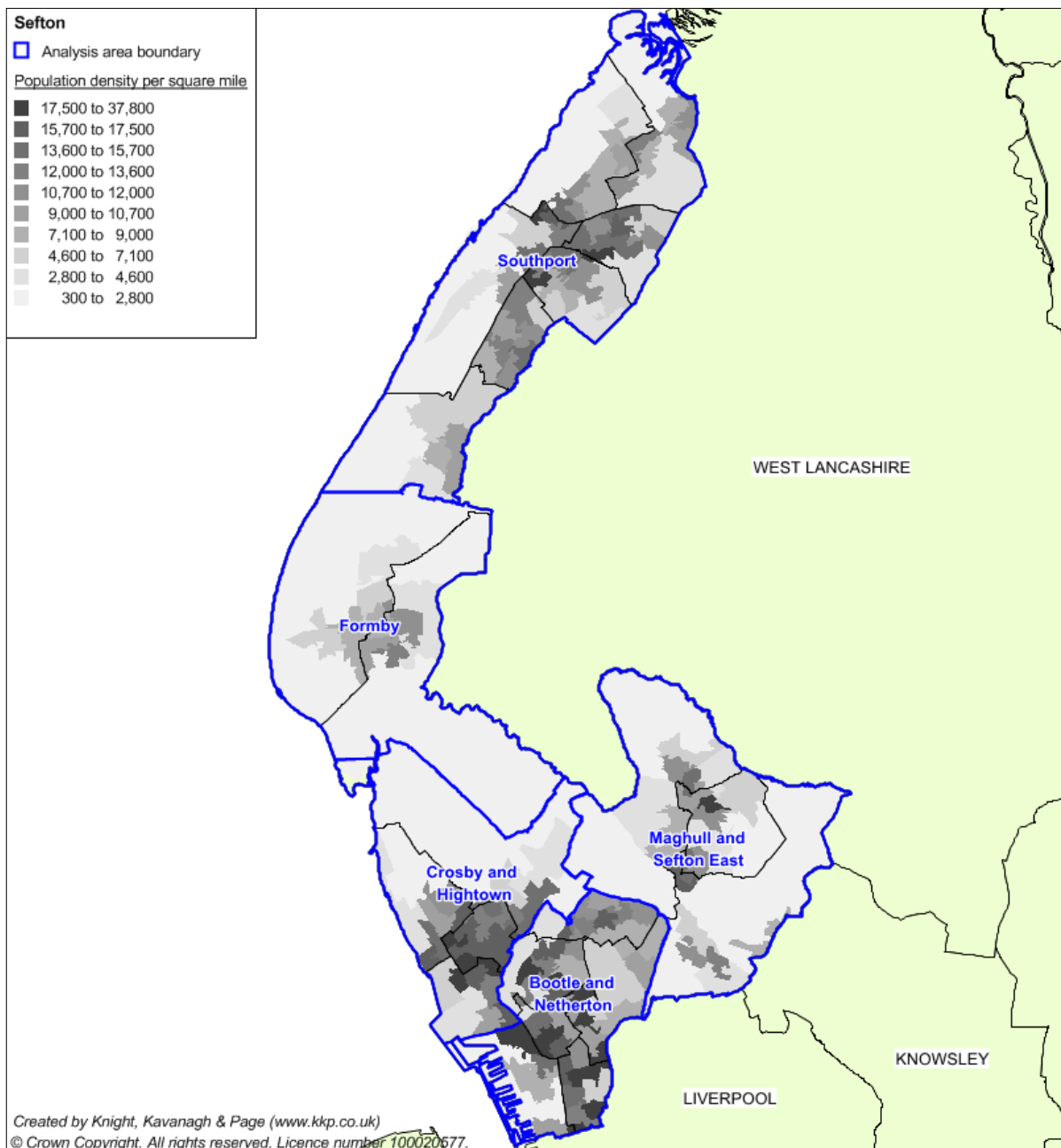
*"Increase provision of 3G pitches in Sefton (current shortfall of up to 11 full size). As a priority explore options to provide double pitch sites in three locations to service North, Central and South Sefton."(Sefton PPS Page 16)*

## **4. Proposed modifications to Policy MN5- Land south of Formby Industrial Estate**

4.1 In its proposed modifications to Policy MN5- Land south of Formby Industrial Estate Sefton Council has proposed changes to the policy to require the provision of 2 full size 3G pitches. This would ensure that development of this site provides 2 full size 3G pitches.

*“This must include replacement sports pitches, including two full size 3G pitches, and outdoor recreational facilities available for community use” (Sefton Local Plan proposed modifications page 48)*

4.2 This would directly accord with the recommendation in the Strategy for double 3G pitch sites in the North, Centre and South of the borough. As shown in the map below Formby is an excellent location for an initial set of full size 3G pitches as it is centrally located in Sefton. Due to its location Formby is more accessible to a greater percentage of Sefton’s population than locations in the south (Bootle and Netherton) or North (Southport) of the borough. Indeed Formby’s accessibility from the South has been recently enhanced by the completion of the Brooms Cross Link road (completed summer 2015).



## **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The development of Land South of Formby Industrial Estate would provide significant benefits in terms of wider 3G sporting provision in Sefton and would begin to address the significant shortage of 3G pitches in the borough. Its example could also stimulate interest in developing 3G pitches in other parts of Sefton as the development of the site would showcase the benefits of 3G pitches. Therefore it is considered that the development of 2 full size 3G pitches at Land South of Formby Industrial Estate is a significant benefit that should be weighed in the planning balance in favour of allocating the site in the Sefton Local Plan.

# Appendix A- 3G pitches

## What are 3G Pitches?

3<sup>rd</sup> Generation pitches (3G) are artificial pitches that used instead of traditional grass pitches, these are much improved versions of previous artificial pitches used decades ago. 3G pitches are extremely durable and very popular with participants in sport.

## Benefits over grass pitches

3G pitches have a number of additional benefits over traditional grass pitches stated below:

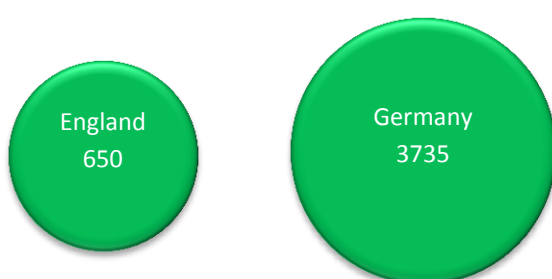
- I. 3G Pitches can be used significantly more than grass pitches, whereas grass pitches tend to be used for four to five hours a week, with matches often cancelled due to bad weather (particularly in winter), 3G pitches can be used for 70 to 80 hours in all weather conditions. *(page 23- The FA Chairman's England Commission Report 2 October 2014)*
- II. This also improves the financial sustainability of football clubs, as the 3G pitches can be used more frequently they generate more revenue for the clubs, helping to make clubs self-financing.
- III. 3G Pitches are also superior for technical development and training particularly amongst younger age groups. *"In 2013, a survey of coaches by the Football foundation into the benefits of artificial pitches found overwhelming agreement that 'player skill levels improved due to artificial grass pitches', and that 62% of players would prefer to train on these surfaces, compared to 7% who preferred grass. "(page 23- The FA Chairman's England Commission Report 2 October 2014)*

## **The FA Chairman's England Commission Report October 2014**

<http://www.thefa.com/news/2014/oct/fa-chairman-england-commission-pt2>

One of the key issues of the report is a lack of 3G pitches in England compared to other nations, one of the recommendations of the report is :*"A 50% increase in the total number of full-size, publicly accessible 3G AGPs in England overall, to over 1000."* (Page 11)

The objective of increasing the number of 3G pitches is also supported by the government: *"I am keen to see what more we can do to help further improve the nation's facility stock, putting 3G pitches in places that need them most, and I am continuing discussions with the football authorities on this front"* (Helen Grant, Sports minister- October 2014 in response to the FA report)



(Number of: Publically available 3G Football pitches (2014)- source: *The FA Chairman's England Commission Report 2 October 2014.*)