

OUTLINE RECREATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CRINGLEFORD

Aims and objectives

Cringleford has a rapidly expanding population with several hundred new homes scheduled to be completed within the next few years. The Parish Council wants to ensure that sufficient and appropriate recreational opportunities are provided alongside the housing developments. The overall objective of the strategy is to support widespread participation in sporting and outdoor activities by the community at large.

Within this overall objective, specific activities are defined which will need the parish council to work with the Local Community, South Norfolk Council (SNC) planning and the Developers during the early stages of the development programme to guarantee that adequate access is made available as the community expands. The core activities considered include:

- **Formal team sports:** field sports: - cricket, tennis, football etc; court sports: - netball, basketball etc.
- **Individual competitive sports:** competition and club cycling and running
- **Individual outdoor activities:** walking, recreational cycling, horse riding, skateboarding
- **Adventure activities:** orienteering, nature walks, scouting/guiding
- **Indoor activities for all ages:** to include dancing, self-defence and indoor ball and racquet sports.

There is some overlap between the categories. SNC are developing a demand analysis for recreation around Cringleford but currently the data is not available. We know that the population of the parish will grow over the next 5 to 10 years, from four new developments within the parish, 350 homes St Giles Park, 650 Newfound Farm and 300 houses on the two Kier sites, Roundhouse Gate and Colney Lane. Potentially this could mean an additional 5000 residents looking for recreational activities.

Existing sporting facilities

Formal outdoor team sports

The village currently has enthusiastic, and well run, clubs for football, cricket, and tennis. These sports are facilitated on the recreational ground off Oakfield Road which is managed by Cringleford Parish Council. The football club has reported to have outgrown the current facilities and need to organise training and matches at other venues e.g. UEA, Eaton Park and Easton College. A full-size adult football pitch is now operational adjacent to the Willow Centre on Roundhouse Park, but sports such as netball, basketball are not catered for locally.

An additional dedicated sports area has been allocated in the plans for the St Giles Park development, however, no provision for formal team sports has been made for the other three developments. A new primary school is being planned within the Newfound Farm development, which may have a sports facility suitable for young children, however, the possibility of this being a viable option for use as a community sports facility is doubtful

On the completion of the senior football pitch at the Willow Centre, in 2018, a two-year trial was set by the parish council to determine the demand. The review of the trial will be subject to the cessation of the 2020 Corona Virus restrictions. Currently football on this pitch can only be played during daylight hours, and generally over the weekends. This limits the use of the pitch to one or two games a week over the football season.

Other football facilities have been developed and available within the area at Wymondham and prospectively at the new Sports Complex at the UEA, albeit the current proposals for the redevelopment of the UEA playing fields is in collaboration with Norwich Rugby Club. Provision for other outdoor team sports, such as netball and hockey, is not sufficiently documented at this stage but advice is being sought from NCC.

Formal indoor team sports

There is poor provision locally for indoor team sports such as indoor netball and badminton. The Willow Centre is unsuitable and UEA facilities are already heavily used, making them difficult to access on a routine basis by clubs, groups or individuals.

Individual competitive sports

The roads and lanes in the area are extensively used for both competition and club cycling and, especially since the lock down period, for recreational cycling, running, and walking. Traffic is not normally controlled for these activities and participants have to share road use with others, which can be dangerous. Good facilities for swimming, rock-climbing, and other sports, exist at UEA.

Individual outdoor and adventure activities

These range from dog walking through recreational cycling/running to horse riding. Although the new developments have provision for cycle paths, these do not create “joined up” routes for safe road use by inexperienced participants. Increasing levels of traffic make the use of the lanes around Cringleford dangerous. There are plans to make some provision within the new green areas in the village, but these are unlikely to be sufficient in either quality or quantity to meet needs. The Newfound Farm development has poor provision overall.

Scouts are well provided for at the recreation site off Oakfield Road and Girl Guides have some provision at the church hall. There is no availability of sites for other such groups or to allow for expansion of the existing ones.

A particular absence is the lack of individual outdoor activity provision for young people, for example skateboarding and free running/parkour. Skateboard parks have proved a valuable tool for attracting young people away from hanging about in potentially ill-disciplined groups; parkour is cheap to provide, simpler to maintain than traditional play equipment, and can be attractive across a wide range of age groups.

Recommended proposals for enhanced sporting facilities in Cringleford

Formal outdoor team sports

During the trial period for the new adult football pitch at the Willow Centre, the users and the groundsmen have commented unfavourably on the quality of the pitch and playing experience. With the pitch only being used at weekends, the parish council is not realising the full potential of this site. Although there is outline planning permission for flood lighting and fencing, which would enable more frequent use, this would be intrusive to neighbouring properties, and fencing would impact on the availability of the open space when senior football is not being played, and will be most certainly controversial and likely to be opposed by the neighbouring residents.

Recommendations for outdoor and indoor team sports

The following recommendations are based on the current thinking of Cringleford Parish Council, and will be subject to a public consultation and co-operation for the South Norfolk Council and the developers.

- 1. Outside Team Sports** - Retain the existing football facilities at the recreation ground off Oakfield Road and develop all new football, along with other outdoor sport facilities at the St Giles Park development which has provision for sports pitches alongside the A47/A11 junction, north of Cantley Lane. The exact siting of the pitches will need to be agreed with the developers.

On completion or approval of the additional football facilities at St Giles, a change of use can be sought for the Willow Centre football pitch. This would release space adjacent to the Willow Centre for a multi user games area (MUGA), which is a hard, all-weather surface which allows a range of sporting activities throughout the year, such as netball, basketball, volleyball, and five a side football. The immediate MUGA area would need to be fenced with security gate and be flood lit – although the lighting would be less intrusive and energy demanding than the full size football pitch, and the fenced area much more modest than a full size adult football pitch. The establishment cost for a MUGA incorporating a small spectator area is around £140,000 based on three quotations and on Sport England 2019 estimates.

The full size football pitch would be changed to a junior pitch which can be used more frequently during the week without floodlighting. This preserves the green space outside the Willow Centre (avoiding intrusive floodlighting and fencing). The additional cost of making this change will be small as the area is already laid out. Permanent goal posts could be put in place, but no further significant infrastructure. Costing for this project is to be determined. Additional funding, in addition to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that will become available, may be needed to meet these requirements. The local football club will approach the FA, Premier League, and Football Foundation to request their support in securing the level of funding required for this important community asset. Other sports clubs will be encouraged to cooperate with this initiative.
- 2. A Sports Hall which should include a sprung wooden floor to accommodate the widest range of activities** - With the expected increase in the population of the village and the expanding demographic, indoor sport facilities for playing and enjoying team sports will become not only important but necessary for maintaining a thriving and healthy community. To obtain Football Association (FA) approval and recognition of the St Giles football pitches, suitable changing and shower facilities have to be provided. This will entail the developers building and providing a unit adjacent to football pitches to facilitate this requirement. Our recommendation is to encourage a larger investment and extending the football changing room unit for a sports hall on the St Giles Park site to cater for badminton and other indoor sports activities. This would give Cringleford a dedicated sports hall with good facilities for a range of indoor and outdoor sports at one location and under the management of the Parish Council. The Sport England 2019 estimate for a good quality two court sport hall is £850,000.
- 3. Skateboarding facilities:** Skateboarding is widely popular amongst teenagers. The nearest available facility is Eaton Park which is heavily used at all seasons. The informal activity provided by a skatepark could be a valuable addition to the recreational facilities of Cringleford. To build a skatepark similar to that at Eaton Park would cost around £75,000 based on Sport England estimate for a 40' x 18' park with lighting and fencing.
- 4. Individual competitive sports:** The parish council need not consider providing direct support to individual competitive sports as these can be managed at club level.

Individual outdoor and adventure activities

Adventure and outdoor activities are a central focus of recreational needs for the young people of Cringleford. In this digitally dominated age, there is an important need for children to be given the opportunity to reconnect with nature. People of all ages need the space to exercise and enjoy the open air.

Recommendations for individual and adventure activities

There are a number of important green areas within the Cringleford area which can quite easily be enhanced and improved to provide a range of individual outdoor activities.

1. The area of attractive, old woodland adjacent to the Willow Centre will be enhanced through the creation of a children's adventure area. This will include assets such as rustic climbing frames, stepping stones, and exploration guides. Start up cost could be around £25,000 with funds being raised both by the community and the parish council.
2. The green areas alongside the A47 within the St Giles Park development will be developed to provide facilities for walkers, recreational cycling, and horse riding (walking only). Paths will be laid out by close mowing of the existing grassland rather than hard landscaping (following the practices of Ladybelt Country Park in East Carleton). These paths will be multi use and also cater for recreational cycling and running.
3. Some areas will be set aside to provide nesting sites for ground nesting birds, and the hedges will be managed to provide shelter and nesting sites for wildlife. The grassland area and hedges will be managed to encourage wild flowers and maintain biodiversity.
4. In the longer term, further adventure play and walking/cycling/riding areas will be established around woodland and other green sites within the village.
5. An important area to consider as a green walking and exercise area, is the open space green land between Cringleford Heights and the N&N hospital. The council will continue to liaise with Colney Parish Council and UEA to develop the area south of Cringleford Heights and along the A47 as a community asset, particularly given the lack of green space within the Cringleford Heights development. The enhancements in Cringleford could be coordinated with the proposed development of the UEA playing fields, which has new designated pathways.

Capital costs based on literature review

Sports hall:	£850000
MUGA	£140000
Skatepark	£75000
Woodland area	£25000
TOTAL CAPITAL	£1090000