



STANFORDS

ESTABLISHED 1879

**Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan  
Regulation 18 Consultation 2025**

Draft Planning Policy Comments For and on Behalf of Stanfords Colchester LLP

**Section: 10**

**Policy CS4: Sports Provision**

Policy CS4 seeks to protect existing outdoor sports facilities and ensure new provision where required, guided by the Playing Pitch Strategy. While the principle of safeguarding facilities is supported, the policy lacks ambition in addressing emerging trends and spatial gaps in provision.

**Issues Identified**

**1. Evidence Base Does Not Reflect Emerging Sports and Fitness Trends**

The Playing Pitch Strategy focuses on traditional sports such as football and cricket but does not account for the growing popularity of activities like padel, yoga, Pilates, and CrossFit, which are increasingly important for promoting active lifestyles. This omission risks failing to meet evolving community needs and identify other spaces which provide these sports creating a false image of the sporting geography of Colchester. The evidence base is also clear that there is no consideration in the data collection about the housing land which is to come forward in this Plan period and the impact of this level of resident increase on sports provision which is clearly flawed to inform the emerging Local Plan.

**2. Policy Focuses on Protection Rather Than Proactive Delivery**

CS4 emphasises avoiding the loss of existing facilities but does not sufficiently encourage new sites to come forward in a positive and proactive manner. The language is largely protective rather than aspirational, which may result in stagnation rather than growth.

### 3. Geographic Imbalance – Lack of Provision in South Colchester

The policy does not address the need to improve sports facilities in southern Colchester, where provision is limited. The closest major assets are the University of Essex and the Northern Gateway development, both of which are not easily accessible for all residents in the south. The former is expected to support the 7,500 houses proposed adjacent to and the latter over 3,000 homes in north Colchester. This creates a spatial imbalance and risks excluding communities from opportunities for physical activity and oversubscribing existing provision.

#### Recommendations for Improvement

- **Update Evidence Base**

Expand the Playing Pitch Strategy or supporting documents to include emerging sports and fitness trends such as padel, yoga, Pilates, and CrossFit, ensuring provision reflects modern participation patterns and make sure increasing housing numbers are included in the metric of unmet need.

- **Proactively Encourage New Facilities**

Include policy wording that actively supports the identification and delivery of new sports and leisure sites, particularly where there is evidence of unmet demand or geographic gaps.

- **Targeted Provision in South Colchester**

Commit to addressing the spatial imbalance by identifying potential sites for new facilities in southern Colchester. Suggested locations could include:

- Expansion of community hubs or schools to incorporate multi-use sports spaces.
- Partnerships with private operators to deliver padel courts or fitness studios.
- Utilisation of underused green spaces for outdoor gyms or flexible activity areas.
- Integration with housing growth areas south of the town to ensure sports provision is embedded in new development.