

Taunton Deane Borough PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

2016-2028

Produced by: **Stuart Todd Associates**
planning | policy | strategy | partnership

For:  **TAUNTON
DEANE** BOROUGH
COUNCIL

June 2017

Version record

1st draft (Steering Group)	17th March 2017
Consultation draft	27th April 2017
Final	27th June, 2017

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Executive Summary

This Taunton Deane Borough Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) replaces the last strategy produced in 2010 and covers the period between 2016 and 2028. The strategy, which is compliant with Sport England guidance, focuses on football, rugby union, cricket and hockey pitches (both grass and artificial) and also provides a brief assessment of the needs of other, less played sports of rounders, American football and baseball. Its development has been shaped and overseen by a steering group formed of the Borough Council, sports governing bodies, the Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) and Sport England, and consultation with clubs and providers / owners of pitches has also been a core part of the process.

The Strategy's Vision

To secure the protection and enhancement of current and the future provision of good quality outdoor sports pitches and associated facilities of the appropriate standard, right type, right amount and in the right place for the community of Taunton Deane in recognition of the key contribution they make to sports participation and physical activity.

The PPS plays a number of important roles in sport, leisure and planning terms. At its basic level, the PPS provides an audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of playing pitches, establishes the current levels of demand (and therefore whether pitches are being over or under used) and projects forward demand likely to arise by the end of the strategy period so that the appropriate level of pitch provision can be planned for the future. The strategy:

- Can be used as robust evidence to protect existing playing pitches and playing fields;
- Can help to improve the quality of offer and provision by identifying and quantifying issues relating to the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities;
- Can be used by clubs and teams and pitch providers to support applications for funding for the improvement of the quality, quantity and accessibility of provision;
- Helps to defend against inappropriate development or loss of pitches;
- Informs planning policy development;
- Provides a strategic view and options for the provision of pitches during the strategy period; and,
- Can provide data to outline provision standards to help secure additional provision which arises as a result of new development, where used alongside the strategy as a whole.

What the strategy cannot do is provide a precise blueprint for change to 2028. Instead, it sets out a “direction of travel” with a number of detailed actions, recommendations and options for pitches which will need to be planned for, delivered, monitored and their impact on demand managed during the strategy period. The strategy cannot do the work necessary (for example, logistical, feasibility and viability work) required to confirm actions with 100% certainty and make things happen “on the ground”, which is the task of the many stakeholders (such as clubs, providers, owners and managers of pitches) and bodies (such as TDBC, sports governing bodies and Sport England) responsible for delivery of pitches and facilities following the strategy’s adoption.

While there are numerous recommendations for each sport and pitch type, the strategy’s main headlines are set out below to provide a “snapshot” of the strategy’s findings for pitch provision in the Borough.

Football:

- Some improvements will be needed in the quality of some pitches to maximise use
- Growth is most likely to be in junior football and at larger clubs
- There is sufficient grass pitch capacity for current levels of demand
- Additional pitch capacity is required to 2028 to accommodate housing, population and participation growth
- There is a shortage of 3G pitch capacity now with additional provision needed (of 3 x full size floodlit pitches, including a refurbished 3G pitch at the Castle School) to 2028 to provide teams with the opportunity for evening training and additional reliable quality capacity for matches at weekends.

Hockey:

- Quality of sand based (and shock pad) pitches is good overall
- Most growth is likely to be in informal hockey formats such as Back to Hockey and Pay & Play based at clubs, although some team growth is expected at each club in the Borough
- Sufficient capacity now and in future (on sand based artificial pitches)
- Sand based pitches are currently heavily used by football, which could change as new 3G pitches are introduced for football
- Most supply is on “unsecured community use” pitches. Those used by clubs should be formally secured for their use if possible, otherwise additional new secure community use capacity may be required in the long-term.

Cricket:

- Quality is good overall, with most squares maintained by clubs
- Growth is expected at the larger clubs in Taunton and Wellington, and in juniors and ladies in particular
- Second / satellite grounds should be secured for growing clubs
- There is sufficient capacity for current demand
- Additional pitch capacity will be required to 2028, both in grass and artificial pitches

Rugby Union:

- Quality of pitches is relatively good, considering the high levels of use
- Some improvements to quality are therefore needed to extend capacity and reduce overplay
- Growth has been challenging for clubs given the lack of pitch capacity
- There is currently under-provision, with most pitches heavily used and some significantly over-used
- Additional pitch capacity is required to 2028

Other Sports:

- Provision for rounders is sufficient for demand
- There are good opportunities to provide a home ground for the established (and successful) Taunton based baseball club
- There are good opportunities to provide a home ground for the recently formed American football club and provision seems likely to be made for the club at Victoria Park in Taunton.

Introduction

(What is a Playing Pitch Strategy and why has it been developed?)

In autumn 2015, we (Stuart Todd Associates Ltd.) were commissioned by Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) to develop a new playing pitch strategy for the Borough, compliant with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) guidance. The strategy is to replace the last PPS published by TDBC in 2010. The timing is particularly significant given that Sport England published new guidance on how to undertake a PPS in October 2013¹, replacing the methodology in the former 2003 guidance ("Towards a Level Playing Field"). Development of the strategy necessitates a lengthy process to gather and analyse data across different sports' seasons, consult with key stakeholders and ensure agreement of the strategy's content by sports governing bodies and Sport England. The strategy covers the period between 2016 and 2028, which is in alignment with the period of the Borough's adopted planning strategy (the Core Strategy).

A PPS plays a number of important roles in sport, leisure and planning terms. At its basic level, the PPS provides an audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of playing pitches, establishes the current levels of demand (and therefore whether pitches are being over or under used) and projects forward demand likely to arise by the end of the strategy period so that the appropriate level of pitch provision can be planned for the future.

The PPS:

- Can be used as robust evidence to protect existing playing pitches and playing fields;
- Can help to improve the quality of offer and provision by identifying and quantifying issues relating to the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities;
- Can be used by clubs and teams and pitch providers to support applications for funding for the improvement of the quality, quantity and accessibility of provision;
- Helps to defend against inappropriate development or loss of pitches;
- Informs planning policy development;
- Provides a strategic view and options for the provision of pitches during the strategy period; and,
- Can provide data to outline provision standards² to help secure additional provision which arises as a result of new development, where used alongside the strategy as a whole.

It is for these reasons, and to ensure that the Borough has an up-to-date PPS guidance compliant strategy, that it was commissioned.

What the strategy does not and cannot do is provide a blueprint for change to 2028. The strategy can present options based on evidence and assessment of it (and indeed recommendations) but cannot do the work necessary (for example, logistical, feasibility and viability work) required to confirm actions with 100% certainty and make things happen "on the ground", which is the task of the many stakeholders (such as clubs, providers, owners and managers of pitches) and bodies (such as TDBC, sports governing bodies and Sport England) responsible for delivery of pitches and facilities following the strategy's adoption.

¹ See <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/playing-pitch-strategy-guidance/>

² Although these standards are not a requirement of the PPS guidance and are usually requested by the client

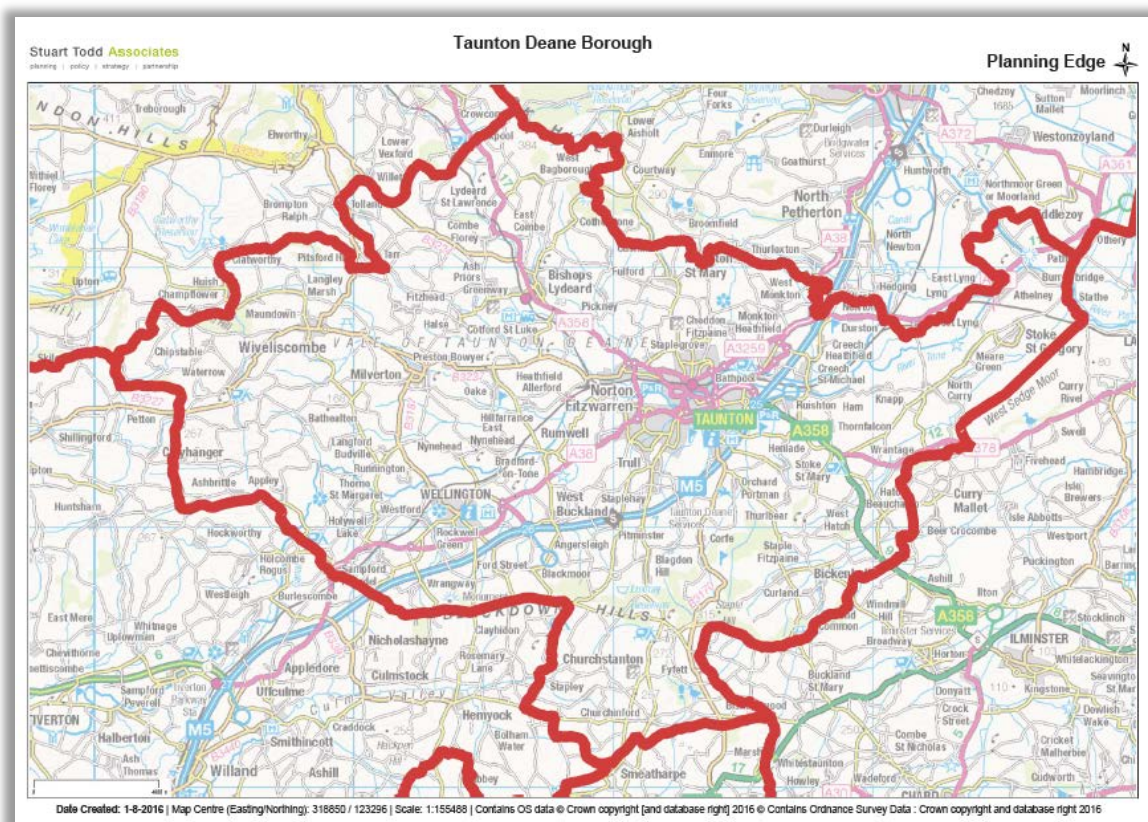
The Study Area

(What is the extent of the study area?)

The study area for the Taunton Deane PPS is the whole of the Borough, as shown on the map below.

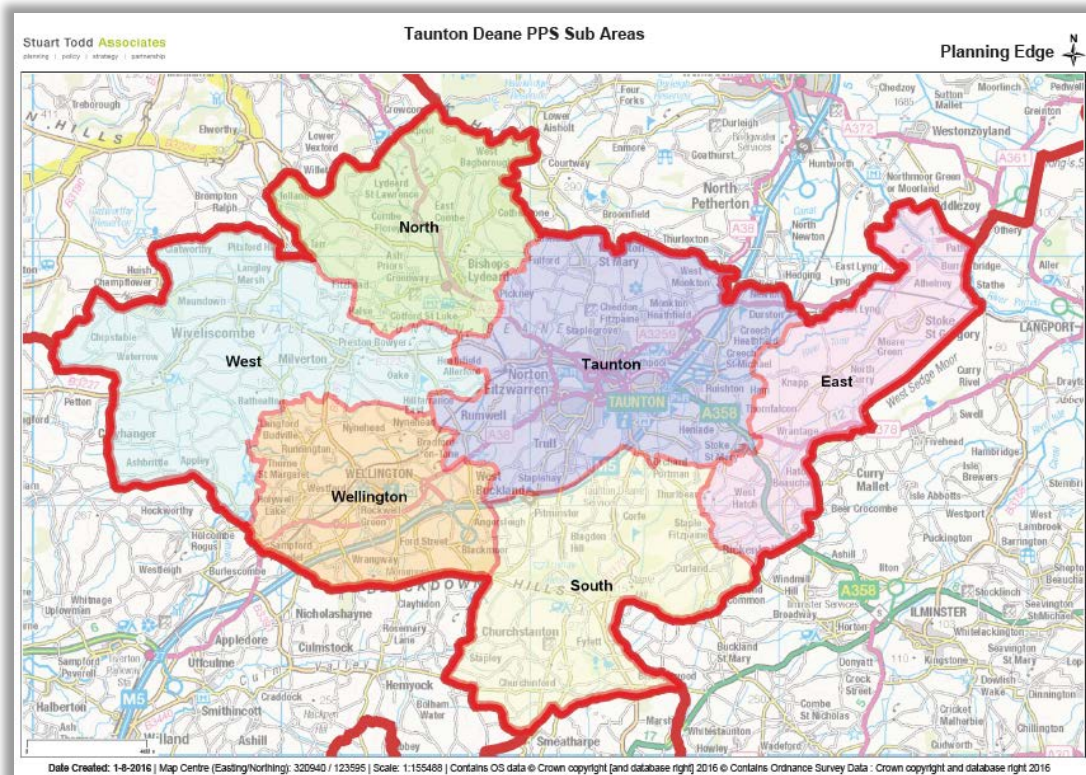
It is important to note that the PPS strategy was commissioned before the application to Government to form a new single local authority from the two Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council local authorities.

Figure 1: Study Area



Much of the data on pitches is listed and broken down into sub-areas within the Borough. This has been done to help provide more localised assessment than that which can be provided at a Borough-wide scale. The sub areas comprise aggregations of parished and unparished areas as shown on the following map. These sub areas were agreed by TDBC and the Steering Group overseeing the work.

Figure 2: Sub-Areas



Typology

(What sports and types of pitches does the strategy cover?)

The strategy does not consider all sports which use pitches. The typology for the playing pitch assessment is as follows:

- Outdoor grass pitches used for football, rugby union and cricket;
- Outdoor full size artificial grass pitches (AGPs) used predominantly for hockey and / or football (which can be partitioned to make a number of smaller pitches for smaller sided games or training); and,
- Outdoor smaller, dedicated or “formal” AGPs (where booking is required, i.e. not open multi-use games areas) used predominantly for small sided football (games e.g. 5, 6 or 7-a-side).

We were also asked to undertake a brief assessment for baseball, American football and rounders to understand better the current and future pitch needs of these other, less played, sports (compared to the main pitch sports) but which have good potential to grow in the strategy period.

The strategy does not consider use of indoor sports halls, “kick-about” areas or, as indicated above multi-use games areas (MUGAs), although it is recognised that these play important roles in the provision of space for informal / casual play and many different sports. The demand and need for MUGAs and sports halls and other indoor facilities is typically covered by a study of built sports facilities for which there is separate Sport England

guidance to that provided for pitches³. Notwithstanding this, demand for indoor sports hall use from clubs and teams for winter training is recorded where such use has been indicated.

While all pitches meeting the above criteria are identified for the purposes of establishing the quantity of pitches available, only those pitches with some “community use” during the “peak period”⁴ are taken forward in the assessment of provision. This is because the PPS is concerned with understanding and planning for public or wider use (for example by one or more clubs or teams) and accessibility, than that provided for a single user. Pitches without community use will tend to be used only by one group of users and will typically include mainly school sites. These are important to school pupils and students and will often not be available for wider community use to protect the quality of provision, for reasons of security and child safeguarding, or for logistical reasons such as not being able to open a school site up at a weekend or evening. However, an understanding of pitches not currently available for community use or access are noted to be able to understand the role they could potentially play in supporting provision in the future.

“Community use” does extend to those sites which are provided on a commercial basis and those which require a membership fee for use (where those fees are not exorbitant and where membership is not unduly restrictive, for example, not unreasonably high or not require specific qualifying criteria such as working for a particular employer, which could restrict open public access).

Analysis of the supply of and demand for community use pitches is also split into developing an understanding of those pitches which have some security of community use (for example a long term lease, covenant and / or community use agreement) and those which have unsecure community use (for example, where such agreements are absent and reliance is on a verbal or other form of informal arrangement). This distinction is important, as those pitches which are used by the community or clubs on unsecure sites are at risk of being taken away from supply (for example if the provided decides that they no longer wish to host clubs or other community use), sometimes at short notice, placing additional pressure on those sites with secure community use. During the assessment, consideration has been given to the degree of risk that reliance on use of unsecure sites is placing on supply overall.

Methodology

(How has the strategy been developed?)

It has been important that the development of the PPS has followed the guidance published by Sport England and which has been agreed by the national governing bodies (NGBs) for the sports considered by the strategy. Use of the guidance, and data verification and checks on the quality of the various outputs during the strategy’s development by these bodies ensures that the final strategy is robust, fits with their priorities and their own strategies and benefits from those bodies’ support as its options are explored and actions delivered. Sport England’s PPS guidance sets out a ten-step process to be followed to ensure that the PPS is robust.

In order to capture all of the information and data required by the PPS methodology and its analysis, an Assessment Report has been produced. The report sits alongside this strategy as the evidence for its overall “direction of travel” and specific actions for sports and pitches. It documents, in considerable step-by-step detail (and therefore at considerable length), the data and information which has been gathered and analysis of that done during steps 2 to 7 in the 10-step approach below.

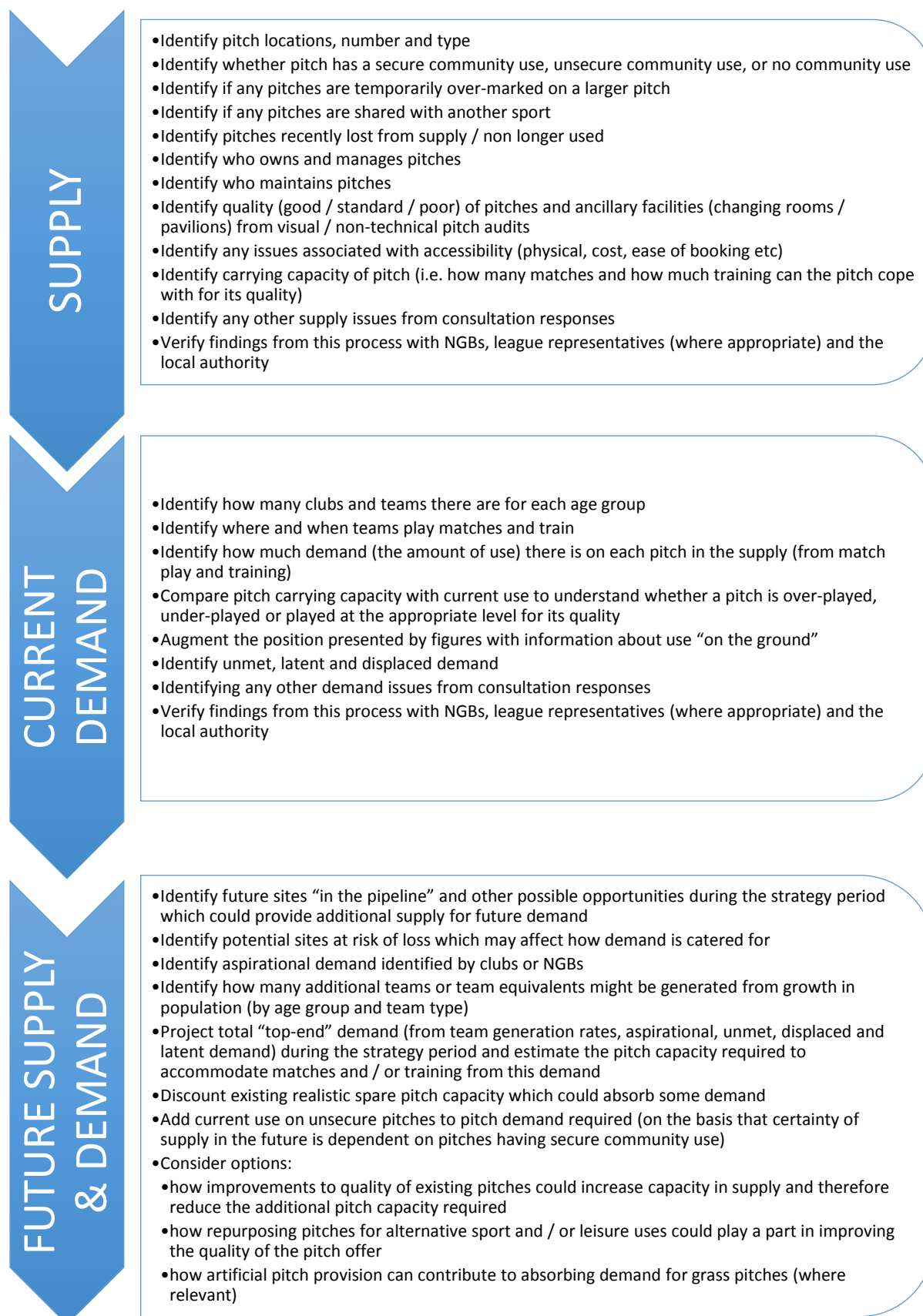
³ See Sport England’s Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports facilities - <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3599/20140722-anog-published.pdf>

⁴ The peak period is Monday – Thursday 5pm – 9pm, Friday 5pm – 7pm and Saturday and Sundays 9am – 5pm.

Figure 3: the Ten-Step Approach

The logical steps that the report takes to address steps 2 to 7 are set out below. For further detail on these tasks, please see the Assessment Report itself.

However, put simply, for each of the major sports (football, cricket, hockey and rugby) and pitch types (grass and artificial) in the typology the report assesses current supply, demand, accessibility, availability, quality, quantity and issues with provision, to set out the position now; and then projects likely future need and demand forward to understand requirements for each sport and pitch type in the future and the changes necessary to ensure provision is adequate to meet these future needs.

Figure 4: Key tasks documented in Assessment Report

The supply and demand information and data used in the assessment was collected over a period of 12 months between October 2015 and September 2016 to ensure that data could be captured for all sports and pitch types in the typology during the season when the sports are played.



For winter sports, data was principally collected between September 2015 and January 2016 and for summer sports between May and September 2016. For winter sports, some (limited) updating was done in October 2016 and again in February 2017 to ensure that data was as up-to-date as possible.

The evidence base for the report is formed by a “folder” of information, much of it set out in a detailed electronic file and which is therefore not reproduced in full on paper. The detailed information and data behind the assessment has been provided in full to the Borough Council.

Consultation and Management

(Who has been involved in the strategy’s development?)

Steering Group

PPS guidance requires the development of the strategy to be steered and managed by a “steering group”. This typically includes (at least) the commissioning local authority, Sport England and sports governing bodies. The involvement of a steering group is particularly important given the importance of its members in the “grounding” and delivery of the strategy. The steering group plays a significant role by:

- considering (through “check and challenge”) information and data during the process;
- verifying and helping to localise data;
- providing a connection with local providers, clubs and teams;
- helping to put locally gathered information into a strategic context;
- commenting on and shaping the outputs of the study at each stage in the process and giving approval required by the PPS guidance prior to the process moving to the next stage.

NGBs have played a key role, in particular, and their role and commitment to the process is set out in the PPS guidance.

Communication with the steering group has not simply been through meetings at key stages of the process. We have kept an ongoing dialogue with all members of the steering group throughout the process, including many face-to-face, online and telephone conversations and meetings. This has been particularly the case with Borough Council officers and the Portfolio Holder for Sport, Parks and Leisure and with NGBs.

The steering group has been chaired by officers from Taunton Deane Borough Council and its members are listed below. Outside of the steering group, other officers from these organisations have supported the study and provided information on clubs, pitches and key issues in the area, also listed below.

Figure 3: Steering Group Members

Organisation	Named Representative(s) on Steering Group	Role / Job Title
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Alison North	Community Leisure Manager (and Chair of the Steering Group)
	Ann Rhodes	Planning Officer (Planning and Environment)
	Debbie Arscott	Community Leisure Officer
	Councillor Catherine Herbert	Portfolio Holder, Sport, Parks & Leisure
Sport England	Gary Parsons	Planning Manager
Rugby Football Union	Jon Bendle	RFU Area Facilities Manager - Area 1
Football Association	Lee Rider	Regional facilities and Investment Manager (South West and West Midlands)
Somerset County Football Association	Brendan Dix	County Development Manager (Somerset County FA)
England Hockey	Barbara Reynolds	Relationship Manager
Somerset Cricket Board	Andy Fairbairn	Somerset Cricket Board Development Manager
	Matt Counsell	League and Club Development Officer
England Cricket Board	Tim Nicholls	Facilities and Investment Manager
SASP	Colin Johnson	Interim Enterprise Director
Stuart Todd Associates Ltd.	Stuart Todd	Director

Figure 4: Other Key Contributing Officers

Organisation	Representative(s)	Role / Job Title
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Darren Hill	Deane DLO, Contracts and Projects Manager
RFU	Jason Luff	North and East Devon and West Somerset Regional Development Officer
SASP	Stacey Vickery	Sports Development Assistant
Somerset County Council	Phil Curd	Service Manager - Specialist Provision & Transport, Schools & Early Years Commissioning

Consultation

Consultation is an integral and crucial part of the PPS' development, as set out above, and has been undertaken in line with the advice given in the PPS guidance. Without extensive consultation, there will be a lack of qualitative information and data collected from the audit of pitches cannot be "grounded in reality". In addition to the role of the steering group members outlined above, consultation has been undertaken, prior to the strategy being produced, in the following ways:

- online and paper surveys early in the process sent to clubs, pitch owners, pitch managers and pitch providers to ascertain baseline information about quality, accessibility, demand for pitches and ancillary facilities and other important issues of concern;

- face-to-face on-site meetings with some of those managing and maintaining sites during the pitch audit process;
- face-to-face meetings with TDBC DLO with regard to their maintenance of local authority and some school pitches in the Borough;
- face-to-face meetings with some of the larger football and cricket clubs (based on a list provided by SCCB and SFA respectively);
- face-to-face meetings with representatives of the non-main pitch sports (for American Football and Baseball clubs and SASP who run the casual rounders league);
- face-to-face meetings with larger schools (independent, state and Academy run) which have a significant role in supply and use of community use pitches;
- dialogue with hockey and rugby clubs through EH and RFU representatives respectively;
- face-to-face meetings with other key stakeholders such as Somerset County Council Education and the Somerset Public Health team;
- wider stakeholder email contact with, for example (i.e. not limited to), neighbouring local authorities and the National Playing Fields Association;
- a TDBC Member (elected Councillors) Briefing to present and discuss the emerging finds of the assessment process; and,
- a Briefing meeting with the Wellington Sports Federation, Wellington Town Council, Wellington Football Club, Wellington Cricket Club, Wellington Rugby Club to present and discuss the emerging finds of the assessment process in relation to the town.

Face-to-face meetings have been supplemented with email dialogue and verification of pitch overviews (which present summary information gathered about pitches on a pitch by pitch basis and are appended to the Assessment Report).

All clubs and providers sent a survey were given the opportunity to contact the lead consultant to discuss issues further if they wished. All views provided during this process have been documented in the Assessment Report and detailed supply, demand and key issues spreadsheet supplied to the Borough Council. A full list of those consulted outside of the survey process is set out in an appendix to the Assessment Report.

The Strategy (and Assessment Report) was published for public consultation between 5th May and 2nd June 2017 and the comments received have helped to inform and confirm the strategy's direction of travel, identify any issues missed and supplement or update information since the data was gathered. It should be noted that the strategy is based on data and information collected over a 16 month period during 2015 and 2016 and therefore only minor updates or changes to data have been made where necessary. The use of pitches and issues of concern can change from season to season and so some flexibility in the interpretation of results at the pitch specific level will be required, something which will need to be acknowledged as the strategy is delivered and as solutions are identified. This is one of the reasons why, as noted above, the strategy cannot provide a blueprint for change but instead focuses on key actions and options for change to improve the quality of provision and respond appropriately to changes in demand to 2028. In this context, the actions which arise from the process are considered to be "live".

Responsibilities

(Who has ownership of the strategy and who will deliver its actions?)

While the development of the strategy has been commissioned by Taunton Deane Borough Council (and therefore ownership of the strategy rests with the local authority⁵), this does not suggest that any additional pitches or facilities proposed to fill identified shortfalls or future provision must be funded and / or delivered and / or maintained by the local authority. The nature of sports facility and pitch provision has been changing over the last decade or so nationally with the role of local authorities now moving away from that of a provider, maintainer and operator of facilities to that of a facilitator and enabler.



New pitches and facilities are most likely to be provided in partnership by local authorities, sports organisations, national sports governing bodies, the education sector / establishments, clubs, businesses and operators, or more commonly by a combination of one or more of these. The local authority is likely to play a key enabling and co-ordination role in planning for and the delivery of new pitches and facilities across the Borough. The same applies to the improvement of existing pitches and facilities, where management and / or ownership of existing facilities is no longer (or never has been) the responsibility of the Council.

The current landscape of pitch provision therefore requires the steering group members each to (continue to) play an important role in helping to deliver the strategy's recommendations and action framework.

Other Strategies and Plans

(What key strategies and plans are relevant to the PPS strategy?)

There are a number of important strategies and plans which are relevant to the PPS strategy, both on the sport and planning side which are briefly summarised below. It is important to note the context that they provide, both for the strategy to be produced and also for the recommendations and actions it presents. There are other strategies and plans with which this strategy has a connection. However, these cannot all be summarised here.

We acknowledge and recommend, however, that important links should be made by appropriate bodies between this strategy for pitches and sport and those produced for issues such as health & wellbeing (including leisure and active lives), green infrastructure, transport, economic development and wider planning programmes such as Taunton town's status as a "garden town" (in addition to those strategies summarised below).

⁵ Particularly in relation to its statutory role as local planning authority and in its role in provision for sport, parks and leisure

National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies which provide, alongside various legislation, the 'rules' of the planning system. It sets out a 'golden thread' for the planning system which should respond positively to help achieve the delivery of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 states that there is "a presumption in favour of sustainable development" and implies that there is a need for local authorities to react positively to other policies in the NPPF. In relation to playing pitches, there is particular importance to respond positively to section 8 of the NPPF "Promoting Healthy Communities" which includes policy relating to playing pitches and their wider context as social, cultural and recreational assets. It states that the "...planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities..." and raises the importance of promoting high quality public space (paragraph 69), of which playing pitches are often a part. It also sets out a need for planning policies and decisions to plan positively for community needs (paragraph 70 – see box) which include sports facilities and venues which, it can be assumed, relate to playing pitches and any ancillary facilities located alongside them.

70. To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:
- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
 - guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
 - ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
 - ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

73. 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.

74. 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.

Paragraphs 73 and 74 (see box) go further in relation to sport specifically and provide the basis of and justification for an up-to-date assessment of playing pitch provision and an associated strategy.

They include important reference to the role of facilities and pitches to health and wellbeing and provide the policy 'hook' on which planning policies, backed up by an up-to-date assessment of need, can be developed.

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) helps the policies in the NPPF to be interpreted and appropriately applied through a series of questions and answers for various topics. The guidance refers to Sport England guidance in relation to assessing needs for sport and offers advice on how open space should be taken into account in planning (Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 37-001-20140306, Revision date 06-03-14 – see box).

Again, this ties in the importance of the consideration of pitches in a wider context including health, recreation and landscape.

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306

How should open space be taken into account in planning?

Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space (see [National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 73-74](#)). Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure (see [National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 114](#)), as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development (see [National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 6-10](#)).

It is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas. In carrying out this work, they should have regard to the [duty to cooperate](#) where open space serves a wider area. Guidance on Local Green Space designation, which may form part of the overall open space network within an area, can be found [here](#).

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Taunton Deane Borough Council Planning Policies

The most relevant planning policies relating to the protection and provision of playing fields and pitches are contained within the Core Strategy and Site Allocations & Development Management Plan (SADMP). Core Strategy policy CP5 “Inclusive communities” and SADMP policies C2 “Provision of recreational space”, C3 “Protection of recreational space” and TAU12 “Blackbrook recreational open space” are reproduced below and are the most relevant to playing pitches.

Policy CP 5

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Development proposals will promote sustainable development that creates social cohesive and inclusive communities; reduce inequalities, promote personal well-being and address accessibility to health, inclusive housing, training, education, places of worship, leisure and other community facilities ensuring a better quality of life for everyone both now and for future generations.

An assessment will be made of the likely effects of implementing the proposal on:

- the elderly;
- young people;
- disabled people; and
- those in the most deprived rural and urban areas of the Borough.

Development proposals will make provision and access for all to:

- Training and Employment Opportunities – raising the skill and wage level as well as diversifying the range of jobs;
- Inclusive Housing – providing a range of accommodation for the settled and travelling community; complying with legislation on adaptability, inclusivity and energy efficiency;
- Services, Community and Social Facilities – providing a range of education, health, indoor sports, retail and meeting spaces as well as access to sustainable transport and high speed broadband; and
- Recreational Space – improving health and interaction through provision of formal and informal green space such as play spaces, allotments, playing pitches, sports facilities as well as promoting walking and cycling.

Wherever possible and viable, proposals will contribute towards:

- A reduction in crime and the fear of crime;
- A reduction in social inequalities and disadvantage; and
- The protection and enhancement of the supply of community facilities and local services.

Policy C2: Provision of recreational open space

The Council will seek to ensure that increased demand for recreational open space arising from new residential development responds to the relevant standards.

Subject to viability; applications will be expected to demonstrate through a land use budget how they are responding to these.

Policy C3: Protection of recreational open space

Proposals involving the loss of recreational open space facilities - including allotments, children’s play areas, provision for teenagers, parks and recreation grounds, outdoor sports facilities, cemeteries and churchyards, amenity open space, indoor sport and recreation facilities, woodlands, orchards, and semi-natural open space will not be permitted unless:

- A. There is an excess of good quality recreational facilities of the type which would be lost, sufficient to meet local demand; or
- B. The proposed development provides recreational or community benefit greater than the long-term recreational value of the recreational facility that would be lost; or
- C. Equivalent provision in a nearby and accessible location is made to at least an equal standard and with equal community benefit; or
- D. In the case of a school or college playing field only; the land is needed for the development of educational buildings and/or associated facilities, and adequate playing fields to meet statutory requirements would be retained or provided, and
- E. It is not required for other recreational uses.

Appendix E of the SADMP sets out the standards of provision to be considered in relation to policy C2 and are reproduced (for pitches only) below).

Appendix E Recreational Open Space Standards

The Framework recognises the importance of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land and sets some general guidance as to when such facilities could be disposed of. The Council defines recreational facilities as usable areas of formal and informal green space (above 0.4 hectares), and includes: allotments, children's play areas, provision for teenagers, parks and recreation grounds, outdoor sports facilities (i.e. playing pitches, courts and tracks), cemeteries and church yards, amenity open space, indoor and recreation facilities, woodlands, orchards, and semi-natural open space. The Council's Green Space Assessment and Strategies on Allotments, Children's Play Areas, Playing Pitches, Green Spaces and Built Sports Facilities provide the latest local information on shortfalls in quantity and quality and over supply, as well as standards for new provision in the Borough. These documents and their evidence base must be referred to when applying Policies C2 and C3.

At date of the SADMP publication the following standards were relevant to policy C2. As it is a requirement to keep up-to-date assessments of existing and requirements for future provision please refer to the latest documents for the most up-to-date figures.

Playing Pitches

Across the Borough the Council is aiming for 1.8 hectares of equipped playing field space per 1000 persons. For new developments 45 square metres of playing field per dwelling. A functional playing field has two drained and constructed pitches (or in the case of cricket, one pitch and separate practice area) with associated parking and changing pavilion to the relevant national governing body standard (Football Foundation, Rugby Football Union, England Cricket Board). Playing pitches are destination facilities and therefore may be located off-site.

This PPS has considered revised provision standards for application in the Borough (see section later in the strategy). In addition, policy A5 in the SADMP is relevant. The policy sets out the requirement for all new development to be a minimum of 1,000m walking distance (not as the crow flies / straight line) from a playing field. While this is not specific to pitches (as a playing field serves informal functions and use and not necessarily or as well as formal pitches) and is a requirement more so in relation to the provision of accessible open space, it is relevant in relation to any proposals for future additional provision of pitches as a result of this assessment.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood plans are statutory development plans which can be prepared by parish and town councils and neighbourhood plan forums in unparished areas. They provide a layer of local detailed planning policy within the context of national and Borough planning policies. In Taunton Deane, the following parishes are developing a neighbourhood plan. (The stage at which it is understood the plans have reached in March 2017 are stated in brackets.)

1. Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone (adopted / 'made')
2. Creech St Michael (early development)
3. Ruishton & Thornfalcon (early development)
4. Trull & Staplehay (Examination, with possible referendum in June 2017)
5. Wellington (early development)
6. West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine (likely to submit Plan to local authority in June / July))
7. Wiveliscombe (early development)

It is important of the developing playing pitch strategy to be cognisant of the progress and policy content of these plans. Such plans (and any delivery actions related to pitches, sports facilities and greenspace they identify) can play an important role in helping to protect and enhance existing pitches and facilities and in providing local policy support for new pitches and facilities.

Areas with an adopted (or “made”) Neighbourhood Plan can (at the time of drafting this strategy) receive up to 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts paid to the Borough Council arising from new development. It is important that links are made, by the responsible / qualifying bodies producing and delivering these plans and utilising CIL receipts, to any need and demand identified in their area in the assessment and overall strategy for the provision of or improvements to pitches and / or associated facilities and the possible use of funds to contribute to realising these improvements.

Sport England “Towards an Active Nation” 2016-2021

In 2016, Sport England published their latest strategy, “Towards an Active Nation”⁶, which reflects a change from the principal focus of support in previous strategies being on support for competitive sport to the focus now being on people getting more active and growing participation, whether through competitive sport or informal / casual sport.

As the extract from the strategy (see box) shows, the key strands of the strategy are to tackle inactivity, investing more in children and young people, helping to reduce the costs of activity on public spending, helping the sports sector to be more welcoming and inclusive, helping to keep sport up-to-date with regard to digital expectations, encouraging stronger local collaboration, working with a wider range of partners and encouraging behaviour change.

In December 2015 the Government published *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. It sets a bold and ambitious direction for sport policy which has been widely welcomed. It looks beyond simple participation to how sport changes lives and becomes a force for social good. At its heart are five outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

Putting this policy into practice to achieve these outcomes will mean significant change for Sport England and for our partners.

This strategy sets out how we will deliver this task. The key changes we are making are:

- Focusing more money and resources on **tackling inactivity** because this is where the gains for the individual and for society are greatest
- Investing more in **children and young people from the age of five** to build positive attitudes to sport and activity as the foundations of an active life
- **Helping those who are active now to carry on, but at lower cost to the public purse over time.** Sport England will work with those parts of the sector that serve the core market to help them identify ways in which they can become more sustainable and self-sufficient
- Putting **customers at the heart** of what we do, responding to how they organise their lives and helping the sector to be more **welcoming and inclusive, especially of those groups currently under-represented in sport**
- Helping sport to keep pace with the **digital expectations** of customers

- Working nationally where it makes sense to do so (for example on infrastructure and workforce) but **encouraging stronger local collaboration** to deliver a more joined-up experience of sport and activity for customers
- Working with a **wider range of partners**, including the private sector, using our expertise as well as our investment to help others align their resources
- Working with our sector to encourage innovation and share best practice particularly through applying the principles and practical learning of **behaviour change**

The behaviour change model⁶ below was included in our consultation and was widely welcomed. It features five key stages of behaviour that will define the interventions we make and the programmes we fund in future.

NOT ON MY RADAR	PRE-CONTEMPLATION
THINKING ABOUT IT	CONTEMPLATION
PLANNING TO DO SOMETHING SOON	PREPARATION
GETTING STARTED	ACTION
STICKING WITH IT	MAINTENANCE

People can move back and forth through these

The impact of this push towards increased informal participation in sport and for younger ages is likely manifest in slightly different ways for different sports in relation to pitch provision, but for grass pitches it may mean ensuring that there is a focus on good quality provision for younger age groups, ensuring that younger age groups are retained in sports as they move into adulthood by ensuring consistency of that good quality into adult sport and helping to ensure that there is sufficient capacity on artificial pitches to support casual formats of sports.

⁶ See <https://www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf>

England and Wales Cricket Board “Cricket Unleashed” 2016

The ECB’s current 5 year plan, “Cricket Unleashed”⁷ was published in 2016. It seeks to create more play, great teams and inspired fans with a focus following on from the direction of travel set for sport as a whole in Sport England’s strategy. The strategy makes commitments to offer support for those playing cricket to perform better, offer the right opportunities for people to take part and give people great experiences to enjoy the game.

This translates therefore, not only to continuing sport for existing clubs and teams but also through to encouraging greater play on a social and informal basis, with formats such as street / tape ball cricket and last man stands both being examples of how cricket is being played outside of the formal structured part of the game. Amongst the many important actions set out for cricket across the game, specifically in relation to pitch provision, the strategy includes actions such as: promote shorter pitch lengths for younger age groups; Invest in new and existing facilities that will deliver More Play opportunities for men and women; develop new facilities in areas of strategic need to allow more people to play cricket more often; and, create partnerships with local authorities to support the protection and improvement in facilities.



England Hockey “Facilities Strategy” 2017-2021

As is the case with a number of NGBs, EH’s new facilities strategy⁸ reflects the new Sport England strategy, “Towards an Active Nation”. The strategy is based on what it calls a “virtuous circle” which aims to use the success of hockey on the international stage to help create and maintain visibility of the sport and therefore increase participation, both through formal play at clubs and other formats and casual play through offers such as Quicksticks, In2Hockey, Flyerz and Back to Hockey and increasing the number of young players through increasing links with schools. The

There will be 3 key objectives for the facilities strategy to help to retain existing players and attract new players into the game.

1. **Protect:** To safeguard existing hockey provision.
2. **Improve:** To improve the existing facilities stock both at grassroots and elite level.
3. **Develop:** To strategically build new hockey facilities where there is an identified need and ability to deliver and maintain. This might include consolidating hockey provision in a local area where appropriate.

strategy has 3 key objectives: to protect pitches, improve facilities and develop facilities. These translate into the strategy’s focus: to retain current provision where appropriate to ensure that hockey is maintained across the country; with current facilities stock ageing, to see strategic investment into refurbishing pitches and ancillary facilities, and recognising that more support is required for clubs to obtain better agreements with facilities providers and to receive better education about owning and maintaining an asset; and, respond to identified demand for multi pitches in the right places to consolidate hockey and allow clubs to have all of their provision catered for at one site.



⁷ See http://www.cricketunleashed.com/downloadable/Detailed_Plan.pdf

⁸ See <https://www.englandhockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=2075§ionTitle=Facilities+Strategy>

Football Association “Strategic Plan” 2016-2020 and “National Game Strategy for Participation and Development 2015-2019”

The FA’s “Strategic Plan 2016-2020”⁹ is a high level plan which sets out 7 priority aims for the FA. In relation to the amateur game, the focus on female football (to double the player base) and on participation (providing flexible, inclusive and accessible playing opportunities for everyone) are the most relevant to this PPS.

The FA also has a “National Game Strategy for Participation and Development 2015-2019”¹⁰ which sets out, in brief, how the FA will channel £260 million of investment to boost participation and the development of grassroots football in England (see extracts in boxes) with a focus on participation, player development, better training and playing facilities and improvements in the football workforce and improved technology to help run the game more efficiently. The FA is also working with Sport England, the Football Foundation, Premier League and local authorities through the “Parklife” programme¹¹ to deliver £200 million of investment over 5 years to 2021 to provide 120 affordable and sustainable hub sites across England with artificial pitches and improved facilities at the grass roots level.



PARTICIPATION
“MORE PLAYERS PLAYING FOOTBALL MORE OFTEN”
BOOST FEMALE YOUTH PARTICIPATION BY 11%

Retain and support the existing 119,000 affiliated male, female and disability teams.

Increase over 16s playing every week by over 200,000 by offering a variety of formats available.

Innovative programmes and grants to provide a range of playing opportunities in education, clubs, leagues and other community settings.

BETTER TRAINING AND PLAYING FACILITIES
“£48m OF FA INVESTMENT IN NEW AND IMPROVED FACILITIES”
THROUGH THE FOOTBALL FOUNDATION



Create 100 new football turf pitches and improve 2,000 grass pitches.

Invest in and roll out a new sustainable model for grassroots facilities in 30 cities through football hubs owned and operated by local communities.

Ensure half of mini-soccer and youth matches are played on high quality artificial grass pitches.



FOOTBALL WORKFORCE
“RECRUITING AND DEVELOPING VOLUNTEERS AND PAID STAFF WHO SERVICE THE GAME”
IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY TO RUN THE GAME MORE EFFICIENTLY

Communicate directly with all participants.

Each County FA to have Inclusion Advisory Board with targets to diversify coaching and refereeing.

90 per cent of youth and adult matches to be officiated by a qualified referee.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT
“BETTER QUALITY PLAYERS BEING DEVELOPED AND ENTERING THE TALENT PATHWAYS”



WE WILL INVEST £16m INTO COACH EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT, MENTORING AND BURSARY PROGRAMMES

An extra 1,000 top level (FA Youth Award Module 3) grassroots coaches developed at FA Charter Standard clubs.

Create the best competition formats and environment for young players.

Ongoing investment in The FA Skills programme to provide high quality age appropriate coaching for 5-11 years olds.

Rugby Football Union National Facilities Strategy

The RFU National Facilities Strategy¹² is in the process of being revised to reflect the new Sport England strategy “Towards an Active Nation”. However, the focus seems likely to follow the direction of travel set by the Sport England strategy. The main areas of focus for the 2013-2017 strategy are reproduced for context (see box). The strategy’s ten priorities are:

1. Clarity of focus; 2. Overhaul strategy setting and business planning; 3. Develop the quality of leadership; 4. Improve the quality of experience; 5. Maximise the opportunity of RWC 2015; 6. Establish a robust approach to investing RFU money and resources in the sport; 7. Evolve style and effectiveness of communications; 8. Create a culture of collaboration and teamwork across the organisation; 9. Minimise bureaucracy and simplify governance; 10. Develop domestic and international relations

There is a continuing need to invest in community club facilities, in order to:

- Create a platform for growth in club rugby participation and membership, especially with a view to exploiting the opportunities afforded by RWC 2015
- Ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of rugby clubs, through supporting not only their playing activity but also their capacity to generate revenue through a diverse range of activities and partnerships

The priorities for investment which have met the needs of the game for the previous period remain valid:

- Increase the provision of integrated changing facilities that are child-friendly and can sustain concurrent male and female activity at the club
- Improve the quality and quantity of natural turf pitches (this includes support for enhanced pitch maintenance programmes)
- Improve the quality and quantity of floodlighting
- Increase the provision of artificial grass pitches that deliver wider game development outcomes

It is also a high priority for the RFU to target investment in:

- Social, community and catering facilities, which can support diversification and the generation of additional revenues
- Facility upgrades, which result in an increase in energy-efficiency, in order to reduce the running costs of clubs
- Pitch furniture, including quality rugby posts and pads

⁹ See <http://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/what-we-do/strategy>

¹⁰ See <http://www.thefa.com/-/media/files/pdf/the-fa-2015-16/fa-national-game-strategy-2015-19.ashx?la=en>

¹¹ See <https://www.sportengland.org/funding/parklife/>

¹² See

http://www.englandrugby.com/mm/Document/Governance/ClubSupport/01/30/36/31/nationalfacilitiesstrategyeverson_Neutral.pdf

The Vision for Playing Pitches in Taunton Deane

(What should the strategy seek to achieve?)

At the start of the PPS process, the Steering Group overseeing the strategy's development agreed a Vision for the strategy. The Vision, set out below, sets the tone for the treatment of playing pitches in the Borough between 2016 and 2028.

Vision

To secure the protection and enhancement of current and the future provision of good quality outdoor sports pitches and associated facilities of the appropriate standard, right type, right amount and in the right place for the community of Taunton Deane in recognition of the key contribution they make to sports participation and physical activity.

The Objectives of the Playing Pitch Strategy

(How will the strategy meet the aspirations set out in the Vision?)

Accompanying the strategy's Vision, a set of objectives has also been developed which set out what the strategy is seeking to achieve. The objectives reflect the role of the strategy in contributing towards sport, activity, health and wellbeing; and, providing up-to-date evidence and strategy framework to help protect, enhance and provide pitches and demonstrate the demand and need for pitches, with the aim of provision in the right places and at the right time.

Objectives

1. To contribute and support the Borough Council's commitment to the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
 2. Provide an up to date assessment and review of needs and demand for all outdoor pitches across the Borough, now and in the future.
 3. Provide an up to date robust set of data and a clear evidence base to:
 - a) inform the identification of priority projects for enhancement of existing provision or new provision;
 - b) be used in applications and proposals for the funding of pitches and associated facilities through developer contributions and external grants from sports and other bodies;
 - c) inform the plan-making and sports delivery processes at local, parish, Borough, county and national levels; and,
 - d) inform future Borough Council revenue and capital expenditure decisions.
 4. Provide a strategic spatial framework for all users, owners and providers of playing pitches to help protect, enhance and provide pitch provision and associated facilities.
 5. Be a core document to inform and support the Borough Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and future reviews of the Community Infrastructure Levy.
-

Assessment Findings and Recommendations

The Assessment Report concludes with the findings for each sport and pitch type from the data and information gathered and analysed. These, together with the headlines and recommendations which result from analysis are set out below. The detail behind the following sections is set out in the Assessment Report itself. The strategy recommendations for each sport and pitch type are responsive to the requirements set out in the PPS guidance, which suggest that recommendations are set out under the headings of “protect”, “enhance” and “provide”.

FOOTBALL

Summary

Football has traditionally been played on grass pitches and the majority of matches seem likely to continue to do so into the 2020s at least. Grass pitches carry an on-going maintenance cost and there are other pressures such as ensuring their quality in public areas, for example, keeping them free of litter, ‘dog mess’ and vandalism. Particularly poor, wet weather in recent winters has also led to cancellation of many matches and as a result of this and improving technology, the Football Association now sanctions competitive play for amateur leagues on 3G artificial pitches although these have their own pressures such as the capital investment needed to construct them, ongoing maintenance and the need for a sinking fund to set aside funding for future refurbishment. There remains a significant role for grass pitches in accommodating the large number of teams and age groups wanting to play and will likely remain the key supply for play for the foreseeable future. The presence of grass pitches which can be protected where their use is justified by demand also helps to protect open space. Teams also train on sand based AGPs due to the lack of supply of 3G pitches. This does, however, introduce pressures on use of sand-based AGPs as it is the most common surface for hockey clubs to train and play matches on. Clubs also supplement their outdoor training with use of indoor sports halls during winter where available and cost effective.



There are 45 competitive clubs in the Borough (44 of which are affiliated to the FA) accommodating 172 teams, with the main areas of growth for football in younger age groups and adult social and small-sided game format playing on AGPs. Of this total number of teams, 108 (63%) come from the 6 biggest clubs: Bishops Lydeard FC, Wellington AFC, Tone Youth FC, Galmington Dragons FC, Staplegrove Youth FC and Staplegrove FC. Two of these teams (Galmington Youth FC and Tone Youth FC) are nomadic clubs with their teams having no permanent club base. 41% of teams are youth teams (U11 – U18) and 33% are mini soccer teams (U5 – U10). The growth area of younger age group football should be supported through continued improvement to facilities where needed.

The Borough has 112 grass football pitches, some of which are temporarily over marked with smaller pitches to accommodate younger age groups. Of this total, 34 are in private or provider only use, with many of these pitches being located on school sites where pitches are protected for pupil / student use and where opening them up to community use could compromise security of the site and safeguarding of children. Of the remaining 78 pitches with community use, 21 of these are on unsecured sites, that is, sites with no formal agreement in place to retain the sites for community or club access in the long-term and where their current usage by the community could be stopped at any time. While these sites do offer flexibility for the users, they offer no certainty or guarantee of use. Of the 57 with secure community use 25 are in Borough Council control, and with regard to the size of pitch, 32 are 11v11 pitches, 13 are 9v9 and 12 are 7v7.



All pitches with community use were assessed as being of “standard” or “good” quality according to the FA / Sport England assessment template, although some were close to a “poor” rating due to their score or could be classed as requiring improvement to make them consistently “standard” because of a high number of cancellations due to flooding. These were as follows.

Figure 90: Pitches with a low standard rating where remedial action is required to improve quality or reliability of use

Pitch ID	Pitch Name	Size
TAUNTON		
F17	Galmington Playing Field Pitch 1	Adult 11v11
F18	Galmington Playing Field Pitch 2	Adult 11v11
F19	Galmington Playing Field Pitch 3	Youth 9v9
F20	Gordon Hawkins Playing Field Pitch 1	Adult 11v11
F24	Hamilton Gault Playing Field Pitch 1	Adult 11v11
F37	Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council Playing Fields Pitch 2	Adult 11v11
F41	Priorswood Pitch 1	Adult 11v11
F45	Richard Huish Playing Field	Adult 11v11
F51	Bridgwater and Taunton College (formerly SCAT) Pitch 1	Adult 11v11
F52	Bridgwater and Taunton College (formerly SCAT) Pitch 2	Mini 7v7
F49	Bridgwater and Taunton College (formerly SCAT) Pitch 3	Mini 7v7
F50	Bridgwater and Taunton College (formerly SCAT) Pitch 4	Mini 7v7
F64	Taunton Green Pitch 1	Adult 11v11
WELLINGTON		
F73	Wellington Playing Field Pitch 2	Adult 11v11
F74	Wellington Playing Field Pitch 3	Mini 7v7
F75	Wellington Recreation Ground Pitch 1 (Park)	Adult 11v11
F76	Wellington Recreation Ground Pitch 2 (Park)	Youth 9v9
F116	West Buckland Recreation Ground	Youth 9v9
WEST		
F35	Milverton Recreation Ground	Adult 11v11
SOUTH		
F40	Pitminster Recreation Ground	Adult 11v11
F88	Pitminster Recreation Ground	Mini 7v7
F89	Pitminster Recreation Ground	Mini 7v7

Many public park pitches suffer from a high number of cancellations due to wet weather / waterlogging of the pitch and improved drainage could increase reliability. The vast majority of grass pitches have no floodlighting and the greatest amount of use is over the weekends for matches, with few being used for weekday evening training due to a lack of floodlighting. However, the provision of floodlighting, while increasing the opportunity to use a grass pitch, can lead to the quality of the pitch being compromised and pitches with floodlighting, usually in place at higher tier football club grounds with teams playing a better standard than most teams, are commonly protected from over-use by clubs. Comparing the carrying capacity of grass pitches with actual use on pitches with community access, 2 pitches are over-used (1 pitch at Wellington Recreation ground and 1 at Richard Huish College), 21 are being used at a level appropriate to their quality and 53 have some spare capacity to increase use. Of those 53 with capacity, 22 are on unsecure sites and to increase capacity at these locations would carry risk in relation to certainty of use in the future. If temporary pitches were not marked out at Staplegrove Sports Club for Staplegrove Youth FC use when needed, the pitches on the Youth FC site would be overplayed.

A number of clubs which play in Taunton have expressed that they do not favour playing younger age group teams on public park pitches due to litter / glass and dog fouling issues although it is noted that the Borough Council is seeking to address this on a number of its sites through fencing around pitches. Should this approach not work, the local authority will need to reconsider how best to deal with the issue and options are set out below.

Nomadic clubs such as Tone Youth and Galmington Dragons should have an opportunity to have a fixed home ground as a base to aid their growth and ambition. The biggest constraints and issues these nomadic clubs face are the logistics of using multiple pitch sites across the Borough (not solely in Taunton sub area) and a lack of pitches with good facilities. They also have no certainty year on year of where their teams will have their home pitch base.

Current levels of use suggest there *may* be opportunities to rationalise pitch provision across parks in Taunton to create either pitch space for other sports, such as baseball or American football or return solely to leisure use. However, this action would depend upon the balance of provision likely to be provided by 3G and potential capacity it may release from grass pitches. This will be considered as the strategy is developed following consideration of the scenarios by the PPS Steering Group.



The quality and availability (capacity) of pitches in Wellington is preventing the football club from growing with latent demand for additional teams. There are a number of linked issues with the use of grass pitches by both cricket and rugby and use of the sand based AGP at Wellington School by hockey in the town, solutions for which will be explored as the strategy is developed.

There are 4 pitches which are no longer used but which could play an important role in future supply, all of which are in the Taunton sub area at the former St Augustine school site, Ash Meadows (x2) adjacent to Richard Huish College and a pitch at Canonsgrove (the current Bridgwater and Taunton College (formerly Somerset College for Arts & Technology, or SCAT) halls of residence site). The pitches which have fallen out of use at Ash Meadows present a gap in supply to teams on the southern side of the town and also for Ricard Huish College. Improvements to the pitches and to the surrounding public space to improve security and mis-

use of the area (anti-social behaviour) linking the college to the pitches could bring the pitches back into use and better link the fringes of this side of Taunton and improve the green infrastructure public realm.

Projecting demand forward, an equivalent of an additional 15 11v11 senior pitches could be needed by 2028 to accommodate growth in team numbers in the Borough (9 of which would be in Taunton sub-area, 1 in the Wellington, 2 in the North and 3 in the East sub areas), *if existing spare capacity can be maximised on secure sites* (without compromising pitch quality), there is a desire to move use of unsecure sites to secure sites and if growth in matches is only to be accommodated on grass pitches. This figure is for match play only and does not take account of the potential provision that 3Gs could provide.

AGPs can provide a secure and high quality surface on which to play football (and hockey and rugby (where they meet the World Cup 22 standard¹³). Hockey is played on sand and water filled pitches with a 25mm pile and the AGPs are used for both matches and training. For football, in recent years, the popularity of AGPs has increased with most informal play (5 and 7-a-side in particular) and some training taking place on AGPs. Some teams will train on sand based AGPs. However, the preference for football use is for 3G pitches which meet the performance standard of FIFA Quality 132 accreditation, which cannot be used for hockey, whereas such surfaces can be shared with rugby where the 3G is sufficiently sprung and meet the World Cup 22 standard. 3G pitches can now host competitive matches given recent advances in surface improvement and the obvious advantages in quality and reliability, and therefore playing capacity, over traditional grass pitches which require much more maintenance and where bad weather can result in high numbers of match cancellations during a season and fixture congestion in the latter part of the season.



There are 11 full sized AGPs in the Borough, of which only 1 is a 3G surface. Of those, 13 have community use with only 4 having secured community use. Of the 11 AGPs, football is played on the 3G at Castle school and on the sand based surfaces at Heathfield school, Wellington school, Bishop Fox's school and Queens College, with the latter 3 having no secure community use agreements in place. All sand based pitches apart from the pitch at Bishop Fox's school are also used by hockey clubs and so there are competing demands at these sites. There are 3 3G small pitches which are used by clubs for training and by social teams (at YMCA, North Taunton Youth Club and Taunton Vale Sports Club).

There is a predominance of full size AGP pitches on education sites. AGPs on shared education sites (at schools, colleges and Academies) play an important role in terms of the supply of AGPs given the low number of pitches available (particularly those of full size) outside of school sites and being run purely on a commercial basis. However, AGPs on school sites, particularly those on independent and Academy school sites present a risk to supply where one or more clubs rely on them during the winter months for training. Community use agreements secured for these AGPs could provide a degree of certainty in terms of community use, where these are adhered to by the school. For Academies (and for some state schools) community access to a pitch (which can generate an income) can be a critical factor in enabling the pitch to be maintained and resurfaced in the long-term. While an important part of the supply, availability at school based sites will normally be restricted to peak time use during weekday evenings and often weekends only outside of school terms (unless there are no security, management or student use issues). AGPs used for football were rated as being either of good or standard quality, with the pitch at Castle school (already noted as not being considered by the FA to be fit for competitive play) being close to a poor quality rating. This pitch is due for refurbishment and resurfacing in 2017 in time for the 2017 / 18 season, however. 44 teams use AGPs for training instead of or to supplement grass pitch use and many consulted stated a lack of AGP time to accommodate their required

¹³ World Cup 22 relates to the standard required of artificial turf for rugby. See http://www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs/regulations/04/21/57/42157_pdf.pdf for the full regulation.

demand. This was also noted by the provider of Castle school 3G surface and Bishop Fox's school where demand is very high. Both of these pitches are also booked by small-sided game leagues for a total of 5 hours each week during the peak period. Further work should be done to better understand the likely unmet demand for the (anecdotally) growing social and small-sided game so that the implications for 3G pitches can be better understood.

Taunton league cup competitions have been displaced to pitches in Bridgwater because of the lack of a competitive play approved 3G surface. There is a desire to see most of the matches return to the Taunton area, which the refurbishment of the Castle school pitch could remedy for the 2017 / 18 season. This would result, however, in the displacement of other users from the pitch, creating an unmet demand or further demand on sand based AGPs, with potential impact on hockey use. It is estimated that, in addition to the refurbished 3G pitch at Castle school, a further full size 3G pitch is needed to accommodate existing unmet, latent and displaced demand. Scenarios considering different levels of demand for 3G pitches have been tested and the preferred scenario identifies a demand for up to 4 full size 3G pitches in the Borough (each with secure community use during a 34 hour peak period) if all teams are to have 3G capacity to train. Provision made on this basis will also create some capacity at weekends for matches to be played. A measured approach to the delivery of 3G provision will be required to ensure that demand meets supply and ensure that the transition does not adversely affect use of secure use sand based pitches which are currently used predominantly for football. It is therefore suggested that the refurbished pitch at the Castle school plus 2 additional full size floodlit 3G pitches will provide this measured approach with a fourth 3G only being provided, later in the strategy period, should demand "on the ground" demonstrate a need.

In order to maximise opportunity for capacity from existing AGPs, opportunities should be explored to open up commercial and school sites with AGPs to an increased amount of time for secure community use. It should also be noted that discussion will need to be had about the relationship between 3Gs proposed for football and the potential need for 'future proofing' of surfaces to ensure that they are capable of accommodating rugby training (i.e. that they meet the World Cup 22 standard¹⁴).



For any new additional AGPs delivered, location of such facilities are likely to be partially dependent upon the ability on or close to the site to administer them (for example, through which bookings can be taken, and through which the pitch can be opened and locked if fenced to maintain quality and so on). With regard to potential sites for future pitch development, there are 7 sites (some of which could accommodate more than one pitch) linked to major development which could provide opportunities for new additional pitches, either for grass and / or AGP surfaces. A number of clubs, schools and colleges expressed a desire to host or develop their own AGP during consultation. Almost all existing pitch sites are too physically constrained to see provision of additional grass or AGP pitches on-site.

Levels of actual and short-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand increases during the lifetime of the strategy, particularly after the initial 6 years of the strategy period. As projections of demand and need are based on assumptions around increasing growth and participation, which may or may not come to fruition, additional provision after the first 6 years of the strategy period should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand prior to going ahead.

¹⁴ World Cup 22 relates to the standard required of artificial turf for rugby. See http://www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs/regulations/04/21/57/42157_pdf.pdf for the full regulation.

Strategy Headlines

The main headlines for football from the strategy are:

- Some improvements will be needed in the quality of some pitches to maximise use
- Growth is most likely to be in junior football and at larger clubs
- There is sufficient grass pitch capacity for current levels of demand
- Additional pitch capacity is required to 2028 to accommodate housing, population and participation growth
- There is a shortage of 3G pitch capacity now with additional provision needed (of 3 x full size floodlit pitches, including a refurbished 3G pitch at the Castle School) to 2028 to provide teams with the opportunity for evening training and additional reliable quality capacity for matches at weekends.

Strategy Recommendations

The above assessment conclusions suggest that the approach to the PPS strategy in Taunton Deane should be as follows.

Grass Pitches

PROTECT

- FR1 Protect the existing supply of pitches identified in the assessment.
- FR2 Protect “mothballed” pitches previously used for any pitch sport to form a strategic reserve which can be brought back into use to quickly respond to identified local demand.
- FR3 Ensure that relevant planning policies and designations are in place to protect the greenspace on which grass playing pitches are located to ensure continued policy protection whether or not the sites continue in the long term for sports pitch use.

ENHANCE

- FR4 Enhance capacity on existing pitches by improving quality and improve maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term.
- FR5 Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where necessary and possible to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced.
- FR6 Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure use through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce the need for additional new pitches.
- FR7 Improve the current use of existing pitches, where physically and logistically possible, by considering flexibility of when matches take place.
- FR8 Enhance the quality of existing pitches where flooding is known to be an issue preventing consistency and certainty of play by improving drainage.
- FR9 Enhance the quality of existing pitches where they are subject to dog fouling. This can be done through the introduction of fencing and is being trialled by the Borough Council on other sites. If this proves to be a successful deterrent, fencing could also be introduced at other public park sites. If the problems cannot be remedied, the long-term position in relation to specific sites may need to be reconsidered and the pitches re-purposed for recreational only use and sports pitches replaced at an alternative site or sites (for example one or more hub sites) which can be protected from dog fouling.

PROVIDE

- FR10 Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, provide replacement pitch capacity to good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.
- FR11 Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England.
- FR12 Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations (Part M) and the Equality Act 2010¹⁵, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- FR13 Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability.
- FR14 Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements.
- FR15 New pitches should be secure and be resistant to dog fouling and vandalism.
- FR16 Consider provision of additional pitches on hub sites, to include multi-sports if necessary to ensure that pitches are financially sustainable in the long-term and to help ensure economies of scale can be achieved. The provision of new playing pitches should not be made in isolation on single pitch sites to help ensure viability and secure long-term use. Changing facilities, parking and storage should be provided within close proximity to pitches.
- FR17 Enable the supply of pitches to accommodate existing and future demand to a total equivalent of 15 good quality full size pitches across the Borough broadly across the following phases during the strategy period.

	2017-2019	2020-2022	2023-2025	2026-2028	Total 2017-2028
Taunton	3	4	1	1	9
Wellington*	1	0	0	0	1
North	1	1	0	0	2
South	0	0	0	0	0
East	1	1	0	1	3
West	0	0	0	0	0
Borough Total	6	6	1	2	15

Notes: Figures may not sum due to rounding. * this is the figure for Wellington sub area including Sampford Arundel and West Buckland. If these two pitches are excluded, the figure for Wellington town including Rockwell Green would equate to 2.5 additional full size pitches to 2028 for matches. However, this would have implications for the potential available capacity at Sampford Arundel and West Buckland.

This total amount of supply should come from a variety of sources, i.e. the projected demand is unlikely to need to be delivered solely through additional, new, grass pitches. Increased capacity to the projected amount of demand will come from a combination of:

- Increasing reliability of pitches through improved drainage and maintenance;
- Considering reconfiguration of pitches on multi-pitch sites where this can introduce an additional pitch;
- Provision of the proposed 3G pitches which can accommodate some match play at weekends; and,

¹⁵ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download> and the NHBC guidance note here <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/Builders/ProductsandServices/BuildingControl/documents/filedownload,40529,en.pdf> for further information on the accessibility and Building Regulations (Part M).

d) Provision of new additional pitches in appropriate locations.

Provision of new additional pitches will need to respond to demonstrable demand “on the ground”. This is particularly important in the latter part of the strategy period to ensure that projected demand has actually come forward. A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.

FR18 The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGB, clubs, leagues, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).

Spatially within the Borough, within the context of the Borough-wide recommendations, the following **specific actions for pitches and sites** are recommended. Those in italics are options which may not bring forward the additional capacity set out if they are not deliverable or if other solutions in the area provide an alternative or replacement capacity.

TAUNTON

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
F20 Gordon Hawkins (pitch 1) – improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F17a Galmington playing Field (pitch 1) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F18 Galmington playing Field (pitch 2) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F19 Galmington playing Field (pitch 3) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F24 Hamilton Gault (pitch 1) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F25 Hamilton Gault (pitch 2) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
Hamilton Gault – improve changing facilities	2017-19		
Hamilton Gault – introduce fencing around the pitches to achieve greater security against dog fouling (should fencing introduced at other pitches prove successful – if not, consider whether alternative provision is a solution)	2017-19		
F37 Norton Fitzwarren Parish Playing Field - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F38 Norton Fitzwarren Parish Playing Field - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F69 Victoria Park (pitch 1) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F70 Victoria Park (pitch 2) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and	2017-19	1	0.3

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
capacity			
Victoria Park – introduce fencing around the pitches to achieve greater security against dog fouling (should fencing introduced at other pitches prove successful – if not, consider whether alternative provision is a solution)	2017-19		
Taunton Green – improve changing facilities	2020-22		
Taunton Green – introduce fencing around the pitches to achieve greater security against dog fouling (should fencing introduced at other pitches prove successful – if not, consider whether alternative provision is a solution)	2020-22		
Staplegrave Youth FC – improve changing facilities	2017-19		

Actions (which require further discussion with regards to their deliverability)	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
<i>F91 Ash Meadows (pitch 1) - Local authority and NGBs to work with pitch owner to find solutions to bring back into use or replace provision on alternative site. Until resolution, protect the pitch for potential future use during the strategy period to accommodate future demand.</i>	2017-19	0.5	0.15
<i>F92 Ash Meadows (pitch 2) - Local authority and NGBs to work with pitch owner to find solutions to bring back into use or replace provision on alternative site. Until resolution, protect the pitch for potential future use during the strategy period to accommodate future demand.</i>	2017-19	0.5	0.15
<i>F90 St Augustine School - Local authority and NGBs to work with pitch owner to find solutions to bring back into use or replace provision on alternative site. Would require opening up or creation of changing facilities on-site. Until resolution, protect the pitch for potential future use during the strategy period to accommodate future demand. Consider options to use playing field for other sports use (for example, baseball)</i>	2017-19	2	0.6
<i>F88 Canonsgrove - - Local authority and NGBs to work with pitch owner to find solutions to bring back into use or replace provision on alternative site (may include renegotiating s106 agreement on Bridgwater and Taunton College campus site). Until resolution, protect the pitch for potential future use during the strategy period to accommodate future demand.</i>	2017-19	2	0.6
<i>Sub-Total</i>		5	1.5
Sub-Total		10	3

If the above quality enhancements can be undertaken (not including those in italics where question marks remain over delivery), the additional capacity they would provide would reduce the need for additional new pitches in Taunton sub-area from 9 to 6.

Within the context of the above recommendations and those for 3G pitches below, home grounds should be found or secured for the Borough's nomadic teams which currently have to use a variety of pitches across the Borough with changes to home grounds for teams season to season. The local authority and County FA should

work with the relevant clubs and league representatives to deliver permanent home grounds for these clubs as soon as the delivery of appropriate solutions allows (preferably early in the strategy period).

WELLINGTON

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
<i>F75 Wellington Recreation Ground (pitch 1) - improve drainage* to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity (only if football to continue to use pitch, even if in the short term – see options below)</i>	2017-19	1	0.3
<i>F76 Wellington Recreation Ground (pitch 2) - improve drainage* to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity (only if football to continue to use pitch, even if in the short term – see options below)</i>	2017-19	1	0.3
Wellington Recreation Ground – improve changing facilities (in conjunction with other changes on site if taken forward)	2017-2022		
<i>Sub-Total</i>		2	0.6

Notes: * it is understood that, since the draft strategy was produced, this action has been carried out.

SOUTH

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
F40 Pitminster (Blagdon Hill) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	1	0.3
F88 Pitminster (Blagdon Hill) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	0.5	0.15
F89 Pitminster (Blagdon Hill) - improve drainage to reduce cancellations, increase reliability of use, quality and capacity	2017-19	0.5	0.15
Pitminster (Blagdon Hill) – improve changing facilities	2017-22		
<i>Sub-Total</i>		2	0.6

EAST

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
F46 Ruishton Recreation Ground – consider improving / extending changing facilities to provide additional capacity if the number and / or age groups / sex of teams playing consecutively or simultaneously on the pitch warrants	2017-19		

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
more room and if match times cannot be adjusted to fit changing room capacity.			

WEST

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
F32 Kingsmead School – seek secure community use or other formal agreement to de-risk use of pitch by Wiveliscombe U16 football team.*	2017-19		

Notes: * at the time of the assessment, Kingsmead school pitches were not being used by any clubs and so the assessment report lists the pitch as not being available for community use. This has recently changed but it is understood that the school has hired out its pitch in the past.

OPTIONS

In addition, there are a number of **options** which the assessment suggests should be considered to **help further resolve issues and accommodate growth and change** in the sport to 2028. Each of the following options should be considered with regard to:

- short-term deliverability (viability and feasibility);
- project lifetime capital and revenue costs including maintenance (and therefore the long-term financial sustainability of the proposal);
- managing the impact of additional provision on other supply;
- appropriate timing of the intervention; and,
- in the latter half of the strategy period be a response to an understood need and demand “on the ground” (i.e. that a reality check is made against the proposal prior to delivery) given that the PPS assessment is based on projecting an estimated demand which can therefore be less accurate further into the strategy period.

TAUNTON

Action	When
As an alternative to improving quality of existing pitches, to provide additional capacity and ensure better quality, existing public park pitches could be re-purposed for leisure and recreational use as part of Taunton’s green infrastructure network and perform a key role in enhancing Taunton as a “garden town” location. Re-purposing existing sites in this way could be enabled by the provision of new good quality pitches and facilities on urban extension sites. Further work would be required to better quantify replacement and additional delivery in accordance with this strategy approach. In effect, the provision of the total number of 9 pitches in the Taunton sub-area would be needed on new sites together with replacement capacity of sites being repurposed, less capacity being introduced for matches on 3G pitches.	2017-22
Staplegrave (Sports Club) – discuss with Sports Club (including football and cricket club)	2017-19

Action	When
and Staplegrove Youth FC opportunities for additional or replacement pitches in phases 1 and 2 of Staplegrove development, within context of improving capacity and quality of provision for football (particularly youth), and the future for growth of cricket and provision of artificial pitch capacity on north and west side of Taunton. Consider opportunities to overcome difficulties of sharing the cricket and football pitches on the Sports Club site and opportunities for a sports hub or cluster to be considered in the Staplegrove area.	

WELLINGTON

Some of the following options for Wellington include options for other sports, given the linked issues between sports with regard to available sites. They have been developed based on demand in Wellington town and so options will need to be cognisant of potential impact on the wider sub-area. Details of the options are set out in an appendix to the Assessment Report. Detailed feasibility discussions and further work will be needed to deliver any of these options. Other options may be appropriate or a hybrid of those presented (i.e. the list below is not definitive). The identification of these initial options does not demonstrate viability, feasibility nor agreement by any stakeholder, interested organisation, NGB, club, Sport England, local authority, land owner, pitch provider or the consultant authoring this report that any option is deliverable.

Options to accommodate demand to 2028 (subject to further feasibility assessment)	Challenges and comments
<p>A – Baseline +</p> <p>Provision for football and cricket remains as it is. Provide an additional 2.5 full size equivalent grass pitches for football to provide additional capacity for growth (or 0.5 if spare capacity elsewhere in sub-area can be utilised (West Buckland and Sampford Arundel). Support rugby in reconfiguration of Beech Grove to provide additional pitch and provide additional 1.5 pitches at location to be determined.</p>	<p>Continued sharing challenges on Playing Field sites. Football club continues to be dispersed. Rugby club additional provision likely to be away from club home ground. New pitch sites would each need a set of changing facilities.</p>
<p>B – Central (hub)</p> <p>Consolidate cricket (and tennis) on Playing Field site. Retain small 3rd pitch for use by primary school. Secure certainty of long-term agreement for rugby on Beech Grove site. Fill ditch between club and Beech Grove and rotate existing Beech Grove pitch to enable additional pitch space on site. As football solutions introduced, enable rugby use to be formalised on Recreation Ground site with additional full size pitch and training pitch. Courtfields school host 3G and 2x adult pitches provided for community use on combination of school site and possibly field to north west adjacent to allotments and Local Nature Reserve. Potential space on site for junior pitch too.</p>	<p>Capital cost of 3G. Floodlighting –impact of / on bats? Access / parking for expanded rugby and football club sites. Impact on Local Nature Reserve. Need to level at least part of site between school and allotments – cost implication. Cost of levelling and drainage improvements at Recreation Ground site. Would need to reconfigure provision for school – e.g. athletics track. Dependent on agreement of school / landowner. Would need to keep Dobree in reserve or re-purposed.</p>
<p>C – Central + Dobree</p> <p>As option B but without additional junior pitch on hub site and instead retaining Dobree pitch.</p>	<p>As option B but retaining Dobree pitch.</p>
<p>D – Central (small) + Dobree + Longforth</p>	<p>As option B but without need to use field</p>

Options to accommodate demand to 2028 (subject to further feasibility assessment)	Challenges and comments
As option C but with reduced capacity on hub site (probably not requiring field site), providing a 3G and 1 adult pitch only with additional new adult pitch at Longforth Farm site and retaining Dobree.	and levelling it to accommodate pitch(es).
E – Football hub on new site (3G + grass) Football club moves to alternative hub site elsewhere (for example, on outskirts of town) with site providing 3G plus 2-3 adult pitches (or equivalent capacity to suit age groups).	Cost of purchasing land and developing 3G and grass pitches. Planning acceptability in relation to location. Would need to re-purpose Dobree.
F - Football hub on new site (grass only) Football club moves to alternative hub site elsewhere (for example, on outskirts of town) with site providing 5-6 adult pitches (or equivalent capacity to suit age groups). Could work in combination with use of some of existing pitch supply to reduce number of new grass pitches required - e.g. retain Dobree.	As option E. Provision does not resolve midweek evening training demand in Wellington – more than one grass pitch unlikely to be supported by FA for floodlighting?

3G Pitches

PROTECT

FR19 Protect the existing supply of 3G pitches identified in the assessment.

ENHANCE

FR20 Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where necessary and possible to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced.

FR21 Enhance the quality of provision at the Borough's existing 3G pitch (Castle School).

PROVIDE

FR22 Provide an additional 2 full size floodlit 3G pitches across the Borough in the strategy period (in addition to the 3G pitch at Castle School which is due to be refurbished) to ensure that teams have access to evening and reliable surface training. Following delivery of these additional pitches, should demand be identified later during the strategy period "on the ground", an additional full size 3G pitch could be provided. If this proves to be the case, the supply / capacity of grass pitches may need to be re-adjusted and potential displaced demand from sand-based AGPs will need to be understood prior to delivery. In addition to capacity for training, the pitches will provide capacity for around 4-5 weekend match equivalents (or around 2 full size standard to good quality grass pitches) and can therefore reduce the number of additional grass pitches needed for matches identified above by 6 full size grass pitches if the location of a new 3G is not replacing an existing grass pitch. However, if the new 3G is replacing a grass pitch (for example, constructed on top of / over the grass pitch) the match capacity which would be added (net) would be closer to 1 full size pitch equivalent per 3G.

FR23 3G pitches should only be located in locations outside areas of flood risk.

FR24 Ensure that this provision is introduced in a phased and managed way to ensure that provision is made to reflect actual need and demand "on the ground". A "plan, deliver, monitor, manage" approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.

- FR25 Ensure that delivery of additional 3G pitch capacity takes into account use of non 3G based pitches by teams for training and is introduced in-step with demand required by hockey teams for additional sand based pitches.
- FR26 Ensure that delivery of 3G capacity does not compromise the continued use of existing grass pitches for weekend matches unless provision is intended to replace capacity on one or more grass pitches with the replaced pitches being re-purposed for other sport or recreational use.
- FR27 Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England.
- FR28 Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations (Part M) and the Equality Act 2010¹⁶, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- FR29 Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability. This includes the need for a sink fund to retain funds during use for refurbishment or replacement of the surface, a maintenance programme agreed between the provider, local authority and the FA, and the provider must report to the local authority, Sport England and the FA on an annual basis on the state of the sink fund and statement of availability and use during the agreed peak period hours.
- FR30 Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) for 34 peak period hours and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements. Providers should ensure that provision is made for different user groups during the peak period including clubs, pay and play, informal use and casual leagues.
- FR31 The provision and use by teams of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGB, clubs, leagues, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).
- FR32 The provision of additional 3G pitches should be based on the above recommendations and also spatial gaps, demand and need in relation to existing provision and demand from sub areas. In order to ensure long-term viability, it is most likely that locations in Taunton will be the most favourable. Provision of one 3G pitch in Wellington is an option, if viable, with regard to extending the catchment and provision of 3G surfaces across the Borough and where it can improve provision in the town to help resolve the demand for an increase in capacity for football and help consolidate and grow capacity for the cricket and rugby clubs.
- FR33 The deliverability of new 3Gs in a timely manner on secure and managed sites hosted by providers which will adhere to the recommendations for 3Gs above and in line with the other recommendations in this strategy are critical to the successful delivery and community use of pitches.
- FR34 The above recommendations relate to full size 3Gs. Consideration should be given by appropriate bodies to local needs for provision of small or half size artificial surfaces to support a number of outdoor sports which can share similar surfaces for training and informal use where viable in the long-term. This may be 3G or sand based surfaces. Such provision, typically provided by open access or bookable multi-use games areas (MUGAs) have been outside the scope of this strategy. However, if they are proposed (for example in the Borough's rural towns where access to such a surface is only available in larger towns or at schools where grass pitches are regularly too wet to use during winter months) proposals would need to demonstrate not only that demand exists to supplement local needs identified in this strategy where they are to be formally used by pitch sports, but that the initial capital cost is in place to deliver such facilities, that a business plan is in place and that a sinking fund will be put in place to ensure refurbishment or replacement of the surface at the end of its "safe life".

¹⁶ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download> and the NHBC guidance note here <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/Builders/ProductsandServices/BuildingControl/documents/filedownload,40529,en.pdf> for further information on the accessibility and Building Regulations (Part M).

OPTIONS

There are a number of **site options** which the assessment suggests should be considered **to accommodate 3G pitches identified to help accommodate growth and change** alongside grass pitch improvements and provision to 2028. Each of the following site options should be considered with regard to:

- All above recommendations for full size artificial pitches;
 - short-term deliverability (viability and feasibility);
 - project lifetime capital and revenue costs including maintenance (and therefore the long-term financial sustainability of the proposal);
 - managing the impact of additional provision on other supply;
 - appropriate timing of the intervention; and,
 - in the latter half of the strategy period be a response to an understood need and demand “on the ground” (i.e. that a reality check is made against the proposal prior to delivery) given that the PPS assessment is based on projecting an estimated demand which can therefore be less accurate further into the strategy period.
- The possible site locations that should be considered by the local authority and key stakeholders for the required number of new additional full size 3G pitches are listed below. There may be other options / sites which present themselves during the strategy period and the local authority and partners will need to consider these in light of the recommendations of this strategy, including, but not limited to, ease of delivery, timing of delivery, appropriate phasing so as not to introduce more capacity than required in a short period, viability and certainty of security of community use. The identification of options below does not indicate that any or all of them will come forward – they are options for consideration within the context of the assessment and requirements for 3G provision identified. The sites listed are not in any preferential or priority order.

Option Sites
TAUNTON
Monkton Heathfield Development (Phase 2) urban extension
Comeytrove urban extension
Staplegrove area
Richard Huish College, Taunton on an existing football pitch
Land allocated in the SADMP in policy TAU12 "Blackbrook recreational open space" (amounting to 8 hectares of open space recreational land)
Hamilton Park next to Taunton Town FC, on an existing grass football pitch
Heathfield School, subject to the school confirming future plans for the school's extension onto the Primary School site
King's College site, subject to school agreement, with potential as shared surface with rugby
WELLINGTON
Courtfields School, which has indicated interest in hosting an AGP in the long-term
Alternative hub multi-pitch site, should this be a deliverable option

Notes: Where a new 3G is provided on an existing grass pitch, the net capacity is the difference provided between the grass pitch and new 3G. With regard to spatial distribution, of the (up to) 4 3Gs recommended for the Borough, 3 should be located in Taunton sub area and 1 in Wellington, if this is deliverable. Should the refurbished pitch at the Castle School come forward as planned, this will reduce the need by 1 pitch.

- Proposals for full size 3Gs in areas outside of those identified above may be appropriate if it can be demonstrated that they are viable in the long-term and will not place at risk the viability of agreed peak time use or capacity at existing community use 3Gs. In such cases, reduced peak time community use hours may be appropriate to help ensure that the viability of other sites are not put at risk.

HOCKEY

Summary

AGPs can provide a secure and high quality surface on which to play hockey, football and rugby where they meet the World Cup 22 standard¹⁷. Hockey is played on sand and water filled pitches with a 25mm pile and the AGPs are used for both matches and training. Hockey matches are typically played over a weekend with adult teams playing on Saturdays and junior teams on Sundays. Training usually takes place on weekday evenings. For football, in recent years, the popularity of AGPs has increased with most informal play (5 and 7-a-side in particular) and some training taking place on AGPs. The preference for football use is for 3G pitches which meet the performance standard of FIFA Quality 132 accreditation, which cannot be used for hockey, whereas such surfaces can be shared with rugby where the AGP meets the World Cup 22 standard. In Taunton there is a shortfall of 3G provision and so football teams are using sand based AGPs to train, as are small sided leagues. This places some pressure on supply available to hockey clubs for training on weekday evenings in particular.

Hockey needs are reasonably well-provided for in the Borough with supply currently meeting demand, albeit through much reliance on the use of unsecure community use pitches which present some risk in certainty of supply. There are three clubs in the Borough, Taunton Vale Hockey Club which use the pitch at the Taunton Vale Sports Club, Taunton Civil Service Hockey Club which use King's College's 2 pitches for training and Bishop Fox's School's AGP for matches at the weekend and the newly established Wellington Foxes Hockey Club which is using Wellington School's AGP. Until recently, Taunton Civil Service Hockey Club used Heathfield School's secure community use pitch for senior matches at the weekend.

There are 4 full size hockey pitches with secure use in the Borough. Of these, two are not usually available for regular community or club use on a match day (Saturday) (at King's College). The Taunton Vale Sports Club pitch is used principally (and to capacity) by the club and Heathfield school pitch has around 15 hours per week free capacity. There are 5 other full size AGPs used for hockey although these are all for unsecured use. 3 of these are on independent school sites and are often restricted to clubs who are unable to use them at weekends with the schools protecting their use for school clubs and teams. This reduces capacity for matches for clubs. The pitch at Bishop Fox's School is mainly used for football although the Taunton Civil Service Hockey Club has started to use it in 2017 for matches, moving from use at Heathfield School. 3 other pitches also hire time out for football.

The quality rating for all hockey pitches was either good or standard. Of those which rated as standard, 3 providers confirmed that their pitch was due for refurbishment in the coming years (Heathfield School, Taunton School (uppers pitch) and Wellington School and it is understood that the type of surface is unlikely to change at all three with a focus remaining on a sand based pitch. Between the two Taunton clubs, there are 18 adult men's and ladies' teams and 13 junior teams between the ages of U8 and U18.

Wellington Foxes Hockey Club has only recently been established and although it does not have competitive teams, it has around 40 adults and 60 juniors signed-up to play. This may or may not manifest itself into competitive teams in due course.

¹⁷ World Cup 22 relates to the standard required of artificial turf for rugby. See http://www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs/regulations/04/21/57/42157_pdf.pdf for the full regulation.

On secure community use sites, there is capacity for additional play at Heathfield School and at King's College. However, as noted above, the capacity at King's College is not available on Saturdays due to school use. Taunton Vale Hockey Club has indicated that it needs additional capacity, although there have been suggestions through consultation that the club could alter some of the training sessions and space used for training to accommodate additional numbers and so reconfiguration of use may be a first option to consider for the club before considering additional pitch space. The club is also adjacent to Taunton School which has (albeit unsecure community use) pitches which could be used for matches or training subject to the school's agreement.

From consultation and projections of potential team generation, figures suggest a demand by 2028 for an additional 20 hours of time for matches in Taunton assuming spare capacity at secure sites can be utilised and 6.5 hours for matches in Wellington, assuming that the new club in Wellington requires match time. With regards to training, 12.5 additional hours are required in Taunton and 4 in Wellington. However, there may be solutions to cater for this demand on existing pitches, for example through capacity being released by football teams moving to 3G provision, or by securing additional time for match play at weekends on current unsecure community use sites.



In Taunton, future certainty of provision might best be achieved by replacing Heathfield School's pitch football use with hockey following replacement / refurbishment of the surface in the early part of the strategy period (the pitch was, until recently, used by hockey by the Taunton Civil Service Hockey Club for some matches) and replacing the main football use of Bishop Fox's School sand based pitch with hockey (gradually, if necessary, to ensure continued viability and subject to the school's agreement) and seeking to secure community use through a formal agreement. An additional full size sand based pitch with secure community use would help to provide the longer-term certainty of supply, should the level of projected growth be realised during the strategy period and should security of community use not be achievable on Bishop Fox's School pitch and additional capacity cannot be provided on that pitch if football demand cannot be migrated to 3G pitches.

Levels of actual and short-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand increases during the lifetime of the strategy, particularly after the initial 6 years of the strategy period. As projections of demand and need are based on assumptions around increasing growth and participation, which may or may not come to fruition, additional provision after the first 6 years of the strategy period should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand prior to going ahead.

Strategy Headlines

The main headlines for hockey from the strategy are:

- Quality of sand based and shock pad pitches is good overall
- Most growth likely to be in informal hockey formats such as Back to Hockey and Pay & Play based at clubs, although some team growth is expected at each club in the Borough
- Sufficient capacity now and in future (on sand based artificial pitches)
- Sand based pitches currently heavily used by football, which could change as new 3G pitches are introduced for football
- Most supply is on "unsecured community use" pitches. Those used by clubs should be formally secured for their use if possible, otherwise additional new secure community use capacity may be required in the long-term.

Strategy Recommendations

The above assessment conclusions suggest that the approach to the PPS strategy in the Borough should be as follows.

PROTECT

- HR1 Protect the existing supply of sand based pitches identified in the assessment.
- HR2 Protect the current number of hours used by hockey in the peak period as a minimum (i.e. seek to prevent use by additional football training on pitches used for hockey) for both formal competitive hockey and informal and social formats of the game.

ENHANCE

- HR3 Support the refurbishment / resurfacing of the AGPs at Wellington School and Heathfield School in the early part of the strategy period (likely to be necessary in the next 2-3 years) to ensure that the surface is of the appropriate quality and standard for hockey play.
- HR4 Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure use through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce the need for additional new pitches.
- HR5 Improve the current use of existing pitches, where physically and logistically possible, by considering flexibility of when matches take place and also the amount of a full size AGP used for training (e.g. if a full size pitch is used for one or two teams, considered splitting sessions into halves).

PROVIDE

- HR6 Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, provide replacement pitch capacity to good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.
- HR7 Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England.
- HR8 Any new pitches provided should be floodlit to ensure evening peak period capacity throughout the year.
- HR9 Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations (Part M) and the Equality Act 2010¹⁸, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- HR10 Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability.
- HR11 Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements. Agreements should ensure that community use is available during the whole 34 peak period (Monday-Thursday 5pm-9pm, Friday 5pm-7pm and Saturday and Sunday both 9am-5pm).
- HR12 The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGB, clubs, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).

¹⁸ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download> and the NHBC guidance note here <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/Builders/ProductsandServices/BuildingControl/documents/filedownload,40529,en.pdf> for further information on the accessibility and Building Regulations (Part M).

- HR13 Seek a graduated approach to increased use of pitches currently used by football for training and informal play as 3G provision is developed. Monitor closely the change in demand to map against projected demand and understand the real demand on the ground for additional match and training time. Look to secure a new floodlit sand based AGP for hockey use in the latter part of the strategy period should demand not be effectively catered for on secure sites. A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.
- HR14 Any new AGP pitches should only be located in locations outside areas of flood risk.
- HR15 The provision of additional pitches should be based on the above recommendations and also spatial gaps, demand and need in relation to existing provision and demand from sub areas. In order to ensure long-term viability, it is most likely that locations in Taunton will be the most favourable.
- HR16 There are a number of locations (options) that should be considered by the local authority and key stakeholders for a new additional full size AGP if it is required during the strategy period. These are listed below. There may be other options which present themselves during the strategy period and the local authority and partners will need to consider these in light of the recommendations of this strategy, including, but not limited to, ease of delivery, timing of delivery, appropriate phasing so as not to introduce more capacity than required in a short period, viability and certainty of security of community use. The identification of options below does not indicate that any or all of them will come forward – they are options for consideration within the context of the assessment and requirements for hockey AGP provision identified. The sites listed are not in any preferential or priority order.

Option Sites
TAUNTON
Monkton Heathfield Development (Phase 2) urban extension
Comeytrove urban extension
Land allocated in the SADMP in policy TAU12 "Blackbrook recreational open space" (amounting to 8 hectares of open space recreational land)
Heathfield School, subject to the school confirming future plans for the school's extension onto the Primary School site
WELLINGTON
Courtfields School, which has indicated interest in hosting an AGP in the long-term

- HR17 The deliverability of a new AGP in a timely manner on a secure and managed site hosted by a provider which will adhere to the recommendations for pitches above and in line with the other recommendations in this strategy are critical to the successful delivery and community use of the pitch.
- HR18 The above recommendations relate to full size sand based AGPs. Consideration should be given by appropriate bodies to local needs for provision of small or half size artificial surfaces to support a number of outdoor sports which can share similar surfaces for training and informal use where viable in the long-term. This may be 3G or sand based surfaces. Such provision, typically provided by open access or bookable multi-use games areas (MUGAs) have been outside the scope of this strategy. However, if they are proposed (for example in the Borough's rural towns where access to such a surface is only available in larger towns, or at schools where grass pitches are regularly too wet to use during winter months) proposals would need to demonstrate not only that demand exists to supplement local needs identified in this strategy where they are to be formally used by pitch sports, but that the initial capital cost is in place to deliver such facilities, that a business plan is in place and that a sinking fund will be put in place to ensure refurbishment or replacement of the surface at the end of its “safe life”.

CRICKET

Summary

There are 53 cricket grounds with grass pitches in the Borough, 23 of which have secure community use, 23 which have unsecured community use and 7 not available for community use. The vast majority of grounds without secure use are on independent school sites and while these are notionally available for community use, in reality they are often not or only available occasionally due to the demand on them for school use and maintaining quality for their pupils / students. On secure sites, there are a total of 18 pitches in the East sub area, 19 in the North, 13 in the South, 23 in the West, 35 in Wellington and 78 in Taunton. On secure sites there are 8 artificial pitches in total across the Borough, 21 grass surface practice nets and 4 artificial surface practice nets.

The Borough has 102 club based and last man stands social teams, only one of which is not affiliated to the ECB. In the 2016 season, of this total, 35 were U11 – U19 teams, 3 were adult ladies' teams, 3 were adult mixed, 53 were adult men's teams and 8 were last man stands. 3 clubs have their main home ground in the West sub area, 3 (including one social side) in the North, 8 in Taunton, 1 in South, 4 in East and 3 in Wellington.

In recent years, several grounds have been lost from cricket use or are no longer maintained as a cricket ground which is due, in part to clubs folding and lack of demand on publicly owned pitches. The majority of club sites / grounds have secure use. The notable exception is the Wyvern Club ground used by Taunton St Andrews Cricket Club which is owned by Somerset County Council but subject to a one year rolling lease, which puts the ground at risk for the club as it seeks a longer term agreement.

Most pitches assessed using the ECB and Sport England approved visual assessment template were either of a good or standard quality, as was the case with artificial pitches. Only one, at Taunton Green received a poor quality rating. When set alongside pitches' carrying capacity and the amount of play they accommodate during a season, only two pitches (at Staplegrove and Fitzhead) were calculated as having overplay on them which may likely require some action to mitigate potential impact, although it could be argued that they are being maintained to an appropriate quality. Their scores, nonetheless, indicate that some minor improvements, for example, to capacity through provision of an artificial pitch or practice nets, to remove pressure from the main square could help to remedy overplay. Recommendations for these individual pitches (and others) will be made in the strategy and action plan.

14 pitches with secure community use were assessed as being played at the capacity appropriate to their quality and 8 at secure sites were considered to have spare capacity to accommodate additional matches. The assessment reveals that there is a significant amount of spare capacity at independent school sites, but it could be difficult to formally secure time for play at these sites for the reasons outlined above. There are only a few secure club grounds where there is genuine spare capacity to accommodate additional play, which tend to be in more rural locations where the club only has one or two teams paying matches on a Saturday.

Figures for unmet, displaced and latent demand suggest that there is demand for up to 3 additional good quality pitches in the West sub area (to accommodate latent demand at Wiveliscombe CC) arising from these types of demand identified during consultation.

The clubs with aspirations for growth in their number of teams (commonly subject to pitch availability and volunteers to manage and coach teams) were identified as Taunton Deane CC, Taunton St Andrews CC, Taunton CC, Wellington CC, Staplegrove CC and West Monkton CC.

In Wellington, there are a number of sharing issues, with the cricket ground being shared with the football club as its main football ground and also linked issues to the provision of football and rugby grass pitches and AGP provision for hockey and for football training in the town, solutions for which will be explored as the strategy is developed. The tennis club also has ambitions to expand its facilities on the edge of the cricket and football ground site (currently subject to a planning application at the time of this report's publication).

Projecting potential demand forward arising from club aspirations to grow and growth in the population, suggests that up to 78 grass pitches (i.e. wickets / strips) could be required to accommodate the number of teams likely to be generated by 2028 and if clubs are to move away from or secure use at unsecure sites. 3 artificial pitches are needed across the Borough to cater for additional demand for junior play and training. However, figures should be treated as a "top end" figure and provision and actual supply of additional pitches will need to be monitored to understand realistic demand on the ground to ensure supply accurately reflects demand. The aggregate figures for the Borough and for individual sub areas in some cases can mask specific needs at individual sites and the recommendations below seek to ensure that these issues are addressed within the context of the overall strategy approach.

Additional capacity is not likely to be required in full on additional new grounds and some additional capacity required could be accommodated on existing grounds where there is the opportunity to set a new pitch at an existing square, but only where time slots are available to accommodate new teams playing matches on Saturdays and Sundays depending on the age group and format of the game played (and subject to the ability of the club to maintain the additional pitch). School grounds and other unsecure sites may also be able to play a role if community use can be secured through formal agreements.

The ability to cater for this level of increase may be beyond the volunteer capacity of many clubs and this may constrain "on the ground" emergence of teams. Specific recommendations, in terms of actions to accommodate this level of growth in the long term, are made below and in the strategy and action plan and it is likely that it will not simply require physical provision of the number of pitches indicated. Part of the solution to providing sufficient capacity for growing teams will be to seek to formally secure current unsecure sites used regularly by teams, minimise risk to quality on shared sites and ensure that clubs with aspirations to grow have the playing and training capacity to do so, on second grounds if this is not achievable on their current home ground. Discussion should be had with independent schools and Academies used by clubs to determine if there are any opportunities to provide more certainty of provision of grounds for matches and training.

The strategy for cricket will need to be cognisant that clubs will tend to use grounds which are publicly owned or a ground that they own. School grounds and those operated on a commercial basis form an important part of supply but it can be more difficult for clubs to access them over the long term and for match play (although a number of teams occasionally use these indoor facilities and nets for training / practice). However, it should be acknowledged that school and commercial grounds could play a role in future if supply becomes narrow in future years.



Levels of actual and short-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand increases during the lifetime of the strategy, particularly after the initial 6 years of the strategy period. As projections of demand and need are based on assumptions around increasing growth and participation, which may or may not come to fruition, additional provision after the first 6 years of the strategy period should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand prior to going ahead.

Strategy Headlines

The main headlines for cricket from the strategy are:

- Quality is good overall, with most squares maintained by clubs
- Growth is expected at the larger clubs in Taunton and Wellington, and in juniors and ladies in particular
- Second / satellite grounds should be secured for growing clubs
- There is sufficient capacity for current demand
- Additional pitch capacity will be required to 2028, both grass and artificial pitches

Strategy Recommendations

The above assessment conclusions suggest that the approach to the PPS strategy in Taunton Deane should be as follows.

PROTECT

- CR1 Protect existing pitches used from loss. This also extends to where a club folds, as additional capacity on a lost ground may be required by other clubs and this should be explored in relation to potential demand where this scenario happens.
- CR2 Protect pitch sites in local authority control no longer used for cricket (typically on sites shared with football pitches) should this reserve capacity be needed to respond to demand to 2028.
- CR3 Ensure that relevant planning policies and designations are in place to protect the greenspace on which grass playing pitches are located to ensure continued policy protection whether or not the sites continue in the long term for sports pitch use.

ENHANCE

- CR4 Support larger clubs' growth by helping establish links and playing time at second / satellite (smaller) clubs in rural parts of the Borough where there is likely to be less growth in team numbers. Support this by improving the quality of facilities at these sites where necessary to do so.
- CR5 Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure use through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce the need for additional new pitches.
- CR6 Improve the current use of existing pitches where spare capacity notionally exists, where physically and logistically possible, including by considering flexibility of when matches take place.
- CR7 Support projected growth in the women's and junior games by ensuring that the quality of ancillary facilities meets their needs (i.e. that they are fit for purpose) where junior and women's teams play and train.
- CR8 Support the future of rural clubs by providing small amounts of investment, where needed, to make significant improvements to the quality of ancillary facilities. Good quality facilities can help to attract and help retain players.

PROVIDE

- CR9 Consider providing additional capacity (where demand and / or overplay requires it) on existing grounds where feasible and spare capacity equates to real availability on the days demand requires.
- CR10 Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, provide replacement pitches to good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.
- CR11 Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England.
- CR12 Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations (Part M) and the Equality Act 2010¹⁹, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- CR13 Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability.
- CR14 Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements.
- CR15 Enable the supply of pitches to accommodate existing and future demand to a total equivalent of 78 good quality grass pitches and 3 artificial pitches across the Borough broadly across the following phases during the strategy period.

GRASS	2017-2019	2020-2022	2023-2025	2026-2028	Total 2017-2028
Taunton	31	17	16	17	81
Wellington	5	0	0	0	5
North	0	0	0	0	-1
South	0	0	0	0	-9
East	0	0	0	0	-3
West	0	5	0	0	5
Borough Total	36	22	16	17	78

ARTIFICIAL	2017-2019	2020-2022	2023-2025	2026-2028	Total 2017-2028
Taunton	1	1	0	0	2
Wellington	1	0	0	0	1
North	0	0	0	0	-0.5
South	0	0	0	0	0
East	0	0	0	0	0
West	0	0	0	0	-0.5
Borough Total	2	1	0	0	3

This total amount of supply should come from a variety of sources, i.e. the projected demand is unlikely to need to be delivered solely through additional, new, grass pitches. Increased capacity to the projected amount of demand will come from a combination of:

- Increasing capacity of standard / poor rated quality pitches where improvements will achieve real time availability of pitch time;
- Securing formal community use agreements for play taking place on unsecure sites;

¹⁹ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download> and the NHBC guidance note here <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/Builders/ProductsandServices/BuildingControl/documents/filedownload,40529,en.pdf> for further information on the accessibility and Building Regulations (Part M).

- c) Providing additional capacity on sites where grass pitches are being overplayed through provision of additional practice nets away from the square or provision of an artificial pitch; and,
- d) Provision of new additional grass pitches on existing grounds where feasible to do so;
- e) Provision of new additional grass pitches at new grounds in appropriate locations.

Provision of new additional pitches will need to respond to demonstrable demand “on the ground”. This is particularly important in the latter part of the strategy period to ensure that projected demand has actually come forward. A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.

- CR16 The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGB, club, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).

Spatially within the Borough, within the context of the Borough-wide recommendations, the following **specific actions for pitches and sites** are recommended.

TAUNTON

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided or secured	
		Match equivalents	Pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 5 for grass and by 60 for artificial)
C57 Staplegrove CC (Sports Club) – support the club in provision of cricket practice nets and artificial pitch to provide additional capacity to accommodate current overplay and growth in first half of strategy period.	2017-19	60	1 artificial
C18 Wyvern Sports Club (Taunton St Andrews CC) – work with the sports club including cricket and rugby clubs to secure formal community use in the long-term with the landowner or find alternative provision if risk cannot be mitigated or resolved (see options below)	2017-19	103	1 artificial + 15 grass
C30 Bishop Fox – build on the Taunton St Andrews CC good relationship with the school, working with both to help secure formal community use of the school’s pitches or find alternative provision if the risk cannot be mitigated or resolved (see options below)	2017-19	57	11 grass
C55 West Monkton CC – support the demand for artificial grass practice nets and an artificial pitch to help relieve pressure on the slightly overplayed grass pitches and help accommodate aspirational growth.	2017-19	60	1 artificial
C62 Trull CC – explore opportunities with the club for the spare pitch capacity on Sundays to host other clubs’ teams if Trull CC is not going to develop a junior section (particularly given its proximity to Taunton’s larger clubs).	2017-19	29	6 grass
C58 Stoke St Gregory CC - explore opportunities with the club for the spare pitch capacity on Sundays to host other clubs’ teams if it is not going to develop a junior section. This dialogue may extend to discussions with closer clubs in adjacent local authorities	2017-19	22	4 grass

If the above measures are put into place, this would reduce the total number of additional pitches required in Taunton sub area to 45 additional new grass pitches.

WELLINGTON

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided or secured	
		Match equivalents	Pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 5)
Wellington CC – consider options to help enable the club to consolidate on one site to overcome sharing issues with football and provide additional capacity to allow for growth to 2028 (see options below and football recommendations for further details).	2017-19 (consolidation) 2019-2022 (additional capacity if required)	51	10 grass

If the above measures are put into place, this would reduce the total number of additional pitches required in Wellington sub area to 0 additional new grass pitches.

NORTH

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Match equivalents	Pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 5)
C38 Bishop's Lydeard CC ground (Wombats CC) – Support improvements to the pavilion to improve the quality of provision and help secure the long-term future of the ground for cricket	2017-19		
C54 West Bagborough CC – Support the provision of artificial grass practice nets to provide additional required capacity for training	2017-19		
C54 West Bagborough CC – Support improvements to the pavilion and changing facilities to provide appropriate good quality facilities for women's teams using the ground	2017-19		
C31 Lydeard St Lawrence CC - explore opportunities with the club for another club to use the ground's spare capacity on a Sunday (if required).	2017-19	11	2

WEST

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Match equivalents	Pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 5)
C43 Fitzhead CC - explore with the club whether improved maintenance can be secured to improve quality and therefore capacity of pitches (or alternatively an additional pitch if desired)	2017-19	5+	1+
C46 Milverton Rec - explore opportunities with the pitch owners for the spare pitch capacity to be used by a club if there are local opportunities to do so.	2017-22	25	5

SOUTH

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Match equivalents	Pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 5)
C49 Pitminster (Blagdon Hill) – explore opportunities with the pitch owners for a club to use the ground’s spare capacity on a Sunday (if required).	2017-22	32	6
C39 Churchinford CC - explore opportunities with the club for another club to use the ground’s spare capacity on a Sunday (if required).	2017-22	16	3

If the above measures are put into place, this would reduce the total number of additional pitches required in West sub area to 0 additional new grass pitches.

OPTIONS

In addition, there are a number of **options** which the assessment suggests should be considered **to help further resolve issues and accommodate growth and change** in the sport to 2028. Each of the following options should be considered with regard to:

- short-term deliverability (viability and feasibility);
- project lifetime capital and revenue costs including maintenance (and therefore the long-term financial sustainability of the proposal);
- managing the impact of additional provision on other supply;
- appropriate timing of the intervention; and,
- in the latter half of the strategy period be a response to an understood need and demand “on the ground” (i.e. that a reality check is made against the proposal prior to delivery) given that the PPS assessment is based on projecting an estimated demand which can therefore be less accurate further into the strategy period.

TAUNTON

Action	When
Consider losing artificial pitch at Taunton Green (which is in a poor condition and unused) and replacing as part of Staplegrove development if cricket forms part of the pitch provision. This could also enable fencing to be introduced to prevent dog fouling on the football pitches at Taunton Green.	2017-19
Staplegrove CC (Sports Club) – discuss with Sports Club (including football and cricket club) opportunities for additional pitches in phases 1 and 2 of Staplegrove development, within context of future for growth of cricket and provision of artificial pitch capacity on north and west side of Taunton. Consider opportunities to overcome difficulties of sharing the cricket and football pitches on the Sports Club site and opportunities for a sports hub or cluster to be considered in the Staplegrove area..	2017-19
Should long-term secure future of Taunton St Andrews Cricket Club at Wyvern sports club not be achievable, consider relocating the club to a new facility (subject to discussion with the club) as part of one of the urban extensions, providing a new hub which can support future growth.	2017-19

WELLINGTON

Action	When
Consider consolidating use of the Playing Field for cricket (and tennis) whilst retaining use of the 3 rd junior pitch for Beech Grove Primary School and informal play.	2017-19
Consider providing additional capacity for cricket during the strategy period, if required at Courtfields School or Longforth Farm where junior play (at least) could be accommodated, including provision of an artificial pitch.	2017-19

RUGBY

Summary

Rugby has a tradition of playing on grass pitches which tend to be subjected to significant wear and tear and therefore have additional pressure to maintain quality to a 'standard' condition. More recently, technology has moved sufficiently forward to enable training to take place on artificial grass surfaces where adequately sprung (where a pitch meets the World Cup 22 standard²⁰) and such surfaces can be shared with football. Club rugby tends to be played on pitches dedicated to a club as a home ground and the supply of pitches at schools tends only to feature in terms of club use if a club's pitches are overplayed or waterlogged, therefore requiring additional capacity to train. While there is a reasonably good supply of school pitches across the Borough, most are not used by clubs or available for community use with any regularity or at all. Clubs also prefer to retain play (matches and training) at their home ground to retain any spend in the club's social facilities.

Between the Borough's four clubs (Wellington RFC, Taunton RFC, Wyvern RFC and Wiveliscombe RFC), there are a total of 12 adult men's teams, 3 U18s / Colts and 1 veteran team, 18 youth teams (U13-U17) and 12 mini / midi teams (U7 – U12). The Borough has 21 mini or junior pitches, all of which are on school sites and none of which are used by clubs. There are 26 senior pitches, 7 of which are not available for community use, with 8 having secure community use and 11 with unsecured use. The sites with secure community use are those used by clubs as their main pitches at Wiveliscombe Rugby Club (Plain Pond) and Recreation Ground, Wellington Rugby Club and three pitches at Taunton Rugby Club's home ground. The pitches used by Wellington Rugby Club at Beech Grove has some security of tenure, but requires further certainty of long-term use. The pitch at Courtfields School is used by Wellington Rugby Club but has no security of tenure and can only be used for part of the season. The Wyvern Rugby Club's pitch at the Wyvern Club has no security of tenure in the long-term. In addition to training, where necessary, on school sites (as referenced above) consultation responses suggested that some teams training at indoor equestrian centres when wet weather has had an impact on grass pitches and to avoid overplay.



Taking into account the pitches' quality (based on an assessment of drainage and maintenance regimes), carrying capacity in relation to their quality and how much play (both matches and training) is taking place, most club pitches are being significantly over-used.

Of the secure and unsecure community use pitches used by clubs, 7 pitches are overplayed (5 significantly so at Wellington Rugby Club, Beech Grove, Wiveliscombe Rugby Club (Plain Pond) and Taunton Rugby Club (second and training pitches)) and only 5 being played to a level appropriate for their quality. There is no realistic spare capacity on any pitches currently used by the clubs. This lack of capacity is constraining the clubs which have ambitions to grow. The pitch at Richard Huish College, used mainly by college teams, is also significantly overplayed. Unmet, displaced and latent demand identified by clubs during consultation suggests that fulfilling this demand would equate to a need for 2 full size pitches in Taunton and 1 in Wellington if provided to a standard maintenance quality and pipe and slit drained (i.e. M1/D3).

²⁰ World Cup 22 relates to the standard required of artificial turf for rugby. Pitches need to be tested every 3 years to remain World Cup 22 compliant. See http://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/content/getfile.php?h=363a53bd2243e43b6a56a54cad04b996&p=pdfs/World_Rugby_Regulation_22_EN.pdf for the full regulation.

It is clear that the existing stock and supply of rugby pitches available to club teams should be protected. Improving capacity at club pitches might be possible on some pitches (but not all) by making improvements to drainage and maintenance regimes (where this is possible), to relieve pressure on overplayed pitches by making other pitches more accessible (for example by introducing floodlighting where the additional play will not compromise quality) and securing additional pitch capacity if possible.

There may be opportunities to secure additional capacity at independent school sites (particularly for mini / midi training) although these schools may continue to want to protect their use for pupils / students. King's College has identified an opportunity to host a new full size 3G pitch for dual football and rugby use.

It is clear that additional sites will need to be identified to accommodate existing needs in the first instance. However, at the same time, the provision of additional capacity will help to future proof and provide supply for club growth to 2028. Sites should be close to club grounds if possible to maintain and enhance the financial viability and security of the clubs and minimise need for additional changing or clubhouse facilities. Disused other sport pitches could help to provide additional supply if in the right location for use with the right facilities and secured community use and options will be explored as the strategy options are developed.

The possibility of a rugby focused 3G pitch to serve all four clubs in the Borough should be considered to help accommodate a significant part of demand now and in the future. The impact of this type of provision on the supply of 3Gs to be provided for football will need to be understood and further work on feasibility of a rugby focused 3G will need to be done once a 3G scenario for football has been agreed. As noted above, Kings College has highlighted an opportunity for the college to host a new 3G pitch with dual football and rugby use.



Projecting demand forward as a result of population change and growth aspirations of clubs, and adding in the current under-supply of capacity (where future provision is made purely on grass pitches) and a desire to move use of unsecure sites to secure sites, the pitch requirement (for pitches of M1/D3 standard) by 2028 and based on secure sites could equate to around 9 full size pitches in Taunton, 7 in Wellington, 3 in the West sub area and no additional pitches in the other sub areas. These do not take account of a role that a 3G surface could play in adding significant capacity and represent a “top end” figure for supply which would need to be carefully monitored to understand the realistic need for this number of pitches in the coming 12 years with a review after 6 years to ascertain any continuing demand after existing deficiencies have been met. The figures also do not take into account improvements to the quality and capacity of existing pitches which could increase the amount of play that pitches can sustain and reduce the need for additional new pitches.

Levels of actual and short-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand increases during the lifetime of the strategy, particularly after the initial 6 years of the strategy period. As projections of demand and need are based on assumptions around increasing growth and participation, which may or may not come to fruition, additional provision after the first 6 years of the strategy period should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand prior to going ahead.

Strategy Headlines

The main headlines for rugby from the strategy are:

- Quality of pitches is relatively good, considering the high level of use
- Some improvements to quality therefore needed to extend capacity and reduce overplay
- Growth has been challenging for clubs given the lack of pitch capacity
- There is currently under-provision, with most pitches heavily used and some significantly over-used
- Additional pitch capacity is required to 2028

Strategy Recommendations

The above assessment conclusions suggest that the approach to the PPS strategy for **rugby** in the **Borough** should be as follows.

PROTECT

- RR1 Protect the existing supply of pitches identified in the assessment.
- RR2 Protect “mothballed” pitches previously used for any pitch sport to form a strategic reserve which can be brought back into use to quickly respond to identified local demand.
- RR3 Ensure that relevant planning policies and designations are in place to protect the greenspace on which grass playing pitches are located to ensure continued policy protection whether or not the sites continue in the long term for sports pitch use.

ENHANCE

- RR4 Enhance capacity on existing pitches by improving quality, introducing floodlights where necessary and feasible and improve maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term.
- RR5 Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where necessary and possible to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced.
- RR6 Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure use through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce the need for additional new pitches.
- RR7 Improve the current use of existing pitches, where physically and logistically possible, by considering flexibility of when matches take place.

PROVIDE

- RR8 Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, provide replacement pitches to good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.
- RR9 Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England.

- RR10 Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations (Part M) and the Equality Act 2010²¹, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- RR11 Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability.
- RR12 Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements.
- RR13 Seek to provide additional capacity at (or, if this is not possible, within close proximity to) existing club home grounds as a preference over sites far from home grounds, where physical, ownership and planning constraints do not prevent such change. This will help to ensure the long-term financial stability of clubs given the social tradition and culture of the sport.
- RR14 Enable the supply of pitches to accommodate existing and future demand to a total equivalent of 19 good quality full size pitches across the Borough broadly across the following phases during the strategy period.

	2017-2019	2020-2022	2023-2025	2026-2028	Total 2017-2028
Taunton	4	3	1	1	9
Wellington	4	1	1	1	7
West	0	1	0	2	3
South	0	0	0	0	0
East	0	0	0	0	0
North	0	0	0	0	0
Borough Total	4	5	2	4	19

This total amount of supply should come from a variety of sources, i.e. the projected demand is unlikely to need to be delivered solely through additional, new, grass pitches. Increased capacity to the projected amount of demand will come from a combination of:

- Increasing reliability of pitches through improved drainage and maintenance;
- Increasing training time available by floodlighting pitches where appropriate where the maintenance programme is enhanced to maintain quality accordingly;
- Considering reconfiguration of pitches on multi-pitch sites where this can introduce an additional pitch;
- Provision of new additional pitches in appropriate locations;
- Consideration of a sole use rugby 3G; and,
- Consideration of a shared use 3G with football.

Provision of new additional pitches will need to respond to demonstrable demand “on the ground”. This is particularly important in the latter part of the strategy period to ensure that projected demand has actually come forward. A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.

- RR15 The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGB, club, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).

²¹ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download> and the NHBC guidance note here <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/Builders/ProductsandServices/BuildingControl/documents/filedownload,40529,en.pdf> for further information on the accessibility and Building Regulations (Part M).

Spatially within the Borough, within the context of the Borough-wide recommendations, the following **specific actions for pitches and sites** are recommended:

TAUNTON

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 3)
R17 Taunton Rugby Club (motorway pitch) - improve drainage and introduce floodlighting to motorway pitch to increase capacity and reduce flooding - increased maintenance also required to ensure quality maintained	2017-19	1	2.8
R28 Wyvern Club – work with landowner to secure long-term lease of site or alternative secure use provision / site for both rugby and cricket clubs. If Wyvern site can be secured, improve quality of pitch to enhance carrying capacity	2017-19	3.5	
R46 Bishop Fox's School – work with school to secure community use in long-term for Wyvern rugby club if club remain at current Wyvern club site	2017-19	1	
Work with Taunton Rugby Club and Taunton School and King's Hall School to secure formal community use of School pitches for rugby training if necessary	2017-19	2.5 (Taunton School) 0.5 (King's Hall School)	

If the above measures are put into place, this would reduce the total number of additional pitches required in Taunton sub area to 6 additional new pitches by 2028.

WELLINGTON

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 3)
R32 Wellington Rugby Club - improve drainage (pipe and slit) and maintenance programme to reduce number of cancellations per season and improve capacity and quality	2017-19	1.5	2.7
R36 Beech Grove - improve drainage (slit) and introduce floodlighting to increase capacity for training during midweek evenings - also requires significant changes to maintenance programme - to reduce number of cancellations per season and improve capacity and quality. Also explore possibility of weekend pitch inspections to reduce Friday cancellations.	2017-19	1.75	
R36 Beech Grove – seek long-term certainty of tenure with pitch owners (SCC)	2017-19	-	
R36 Beech Grove - if long-term certainty of tenure can be secured, undertake works to fill boundary ditch between	2017-19	3	

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 3)
club pitch and Beech Grove, rotate existing Beech Grove pitch and create new additional pitch (possibly not full size) alongside to D3/M2 standard, floodlighting one of two Beech Grove pitches (read in conjunction with other Beech Grove actions)			
R49 Courtfields School – secure use September to December through formal agreement	2017-19	1.7	
R20-R26 Wellington School - secure use January to May through formal agreement	2017-19		

If the above measures are put into place, this would reduce the total number of additional pitches required in Wellington sub area to 4 additional new pitches.

WEST

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent (match equivalents / 3)
R30 Wiveliscombe Rec – support improvements to changing facilities to improve quality.	2017-2019	-	-
R29 Plain Pond - improve drainage (pipe and slit) and significant changes to maintenance programme to reduce number of cancellations per season and improve capacity and quality	2017-19	2	1
R30 Wiveliscombe Rec - improve drainage (slit) and significant changes to maintenance programme to reduce number of cancellations per season and improve capacity and quality	2017-19	1	

If the above measures are put into place, this would reduce the total number of additional pitches required in West sub area to 2 additional new pitches.

OPTIONS

In addition, there are a number of **options** which the assessment suggests should be considered **to help further resolve issues and accommodate growth and change** in the sport to 2028. Each of the following options should be considered with regard to:

- short-term deliverability (viability and feasibility);
- project lifetime capital and revenue costs including maintenance (and therefore the long-term financial sustainability of the proposal);
- managing the impact of additional provision on other supply;
- appropriate timing of the intervention; and,

- in the latter half of the strategy period be a response to an understood need and demand “on the ground” (i.e. that a reality check is made against the proposal prior to delivery) given that the PPS assessment is based on projecting an estimated demand which can therefore be less accurate further into the strategy period.

Action	When	Estimated additional capacity provided	
		Full size match equivalents	Full size pitch equivalent
Consider changing the use of the Wellington Recreation Ground pitches from football to rugby use to allow the rugby club to expand if necessary post 2020. Possible capacity for 1 full size + 1 training pitch. Would probably require improvements to drainage and levelling to ensure good quality pitches. Option only “live” if existing football capacity / sites can be replaced elsewhere assuming cricket consolidated on Playing Field site.	2020-22	7	2
Consider opportunity to deliver strategic 3G for rugby only use (location would have to be at a club site to make it viable but would also require clubs (and possibly some schools) to commit to use to ensure long-term sustainability). Additional capacity depends on whether pitch is on an existing grass pitch or additional.	2020-2028	7-12	2-4
Consider sharing use of a new 3G pitch with football to introduce additional capacity for training, particularly if sole rugby use pitch is not feasible	2017-2028	3-12	1-4
If long-term security of tenure cannot be secured at Wyvern club for rugby club, consider alternative site for club home ground (subject to discussion with the club).	2017-19		

OTHER PITCH SPORTS

In addition to undertaking a fully compliant PPS guidance assessment for the main pitch sports, we were asked by the Borough Council to undertake a short assessment of rounders. During consultation we also identified that there are two other minor sports recently established with new teams in Taunton – baseball and American football and so we have also undertaken a short assessment of their demands and needs.

Rounders

An informal rounders league for social teams is run by SASP in the summer months. The league plays on weekday evenings and marks out the number of pitches it needs on the playing fields at Bishop Fox's school. The league has been growing in numbers year on year and seems likely to continue to be popular. Discussion with SASP has suggested that while the agreement with the school to use the playing fields for rounders pitches is only an informal one arranged each year, this suits both parties and there are sufficient pitches / playing fields on other schools sites to host rounders should Bishop Fox's site not be available in the future. As a social sport, played informally, the current arrangements appear to be satisfactory and it is not considered that there is a need to establish a permanent set of summer pitches at park or recreation grounds or on alternative school sites. At least one other school has suggested it would be willing to host informal rounders league matches if need be and there are numerous open spaces that SASP could seek to use if the current arrangement ceases to be put in place.

Strategy Recommendation: ENHANCE

RoR1 While it is not considered that there is a need to establish a permanent set of summer pitches at park or recreation grounds or on alternative school sites, formal security of use for the site currently used could be sought if provision is considered by organisers to be at risk in the wider Taunton sub area.

American Football

We conducted an interview with the Club Captain of the newly established American football team in Taunton, Somerset Wyverns. This is a newly established team, different to the team which used to be active in Taunton some years ago. The club is only just establishing itself but is ambitious and only needs a little support to establish itself to play friendlies, initially with an ambition to play in a national league. The club has seen significant interest in junior age groups and in a women's team. The club has been looking for a pitch to train and play on for some time and during development of the strategy had various discussions with potential hosts for a home ground. We understand that they are currently in the process of agreeing use of a pitch in Victoria Park and TDBC has approved use of some section 106 funding to purchase goalposts for the pitch. If this positive arrangement is agreed, one pitch at the site could be lost to football use. The possible impact of the loss of use of a pitch will need to be considered further as the strategy moves into the delivery phase.

Strategy Recommendation: PROVIDE and / or ENHANCE

AFR1 Should the arrangement under discussion at the time this strategy has been produced materialises, consider replacement of lost capacity for football or ensure that the quality of the pitch is not reduced if the pitch is shared for use by both sports.

Baseball

We conducted an interview with the Taunton Muskets and Musketoons Baseball Club. The club has been established for a few years and have already won regional league titles. The baseball season in the UK runs from mid-April to mid-August. They have been playing at the Taunton Academy but have found it difficult to secure the use of the playing field at the Academy in the long term and have had issues with kit storage facilities being vandalised in the past. The club has also tried to secure use of pitches at a few venues only to find that initial interest has waned. Some of those venues are sites which have no secure community use and so would likely only be a temporary solution or at least carry some risk for the long-term. A temporary option has been offered to the club to use a park pitch area but only outside of the football season which would mean that the baseball season would have to start later to allow the teams that use the park football pitches to complete their fixtures.

The sport is traditionally social in nature as well as competitive and attracts families as well as individual players. The club has found it frustrating to find a location that they can call their “home” ground and recognise that there will be limitations on playing fields they can use which are not shared with other users or sports. The club would need some support but has to date found funding from subscriptions to hire pitches and with a good membership base looks likely to be able to continue into the future. Clearly, having a home ground would enable the club to continue to establish a firm foothold and attract more players.

The assessment for football would seem to suggest that there may be some opportunity to explore and identify a public park area, new ground as part of a new development or an existing mothballed site (even if only a temporary measure) within the Borough to accommodate baseball permanently and as a sole sports use. Some investment would be required to establish a permanent pitch (diamond) but a plan of work could be drawn-up which introduces changes from basic grass pitch to a permanent baseball ground over a number of years if investment cannot be found to make the changes in the short term. No estimates of the required investment have been compiled for this assessment but could be through further discussion with the club, TDBC and UK Baseball (NGB). There are examples of baseball pitches being installed on park sites nationally and the club provided such examples during consultation (for example, Plymouth Mariners’ ground at Wilson Field in Central Park, Plymouth).

Any changes to an existing pitch site used for football would be subject to the football capacity being replaced elsewhere either at a new 3G or on grass pitches where there is already spare capacity.

Strategy Recommendation: PROVIDE

BR1 Potential options to provide baseball with a new home ground include the following, which should be explored with the club and landowner. Some limited consideration of the suitability of sites has been given but further work on feasibility would be needed to understand whether any of the following options are deliverable:

- Land allocated in the SADMP in policy TAU12 “Blackbrook recreational open space” (amounting to 8 hectares of open space recreational land);
- Ash Meadows, formerly football pitches (F91 and F92), subject to securing community use and the work necessary being undertaken to reinstate the site and safe access to it / them and football (or alternative college) use not being required;
- St Augustine School site, formerly a football pitch (F90), subject to securing community use and the work necessary being undertaken to reinstate the site and ancillary facilities and football or rugby use not being required;
- West Monkton – as part of phase 2 development of urban extension; or,
- Wellington – at Longforth Farm.

Provision Standards

(What quantitative provision standards might be appropriate to use in relation to new development?)

While not supported by Sport England and not part of the PPS guidance methodology, provision standards can be helpful for planning officers to understand the quantity of provision (in terms of playing pitches or land area) that is available for the resident population and can also be used to establish approximate provision that should be made available to address deficits in supply and for adequate pitch supply to be provided for the growing population. The figures provide an approximate measure of how much land area will be needed for new pitches across the study area (often as part of a wider green infrastructure requirement) and can help to determine the appropriate developer contributions for on-site sports provision (where they apply) or appropriate contributions from community infrastructure levy (CIL) funds where relevant. Such figures do not replace requirements for a wider open space requirement but can be a component part where the strategy demonstrates that pitches are needed in the location or area in question.

The figures provide estimated quantification of playing pitch provision for the population as a whole. However, provision standards have been relied on too much in the past as figures which can be taken to give a definitive answer to demand for a given population for pitches. As a result, PPS guidance does not include them as part of the methodology for strategy development. It is appropriate to steer users of the strategy away from reliance simply on standards alone and more towards a focus on utilising them as part of an overall strategy. Use of provision standards on their own are likely to mask the real picture of supply and demand and need for provision in a given area. Therefore, provision standards should not be used in isolation. The strategy and assessments as a whole should take precedence over the use of provision standards when identifying needs. The detail of the provision standards arising from the evidence considered in the assessments are presented in Appendix 3 to the Assessment Report and a model that can be used to calculate quantitative provision standards has been provided to the Borough Council which can be adapted to test different scenarios as demand changes during the strategy period. In brief, the current provision standard is 1.26 ha per 1,000 population and the standard reflecting growth and change to 2028 is 1.6 ha per 1,000 population.

Action Plan Framework

(What needs to be done to implement the strategy?)

, The recommendations and actions set out in this strategy which relate to specific sites or options are also set out in a “live” action plan framework which members of the steering group have a responsibility to implement. As noted earlier implementing the actions will also depend on steering group members co-ordinating and working closely with clubs, teams, league organisers, providers, owners of current pitches and owners of potential sites for additional pitches. The action plan framework will periodically be updated by the Borough Council to confirm options presented in this strategy as further work during implementation is done on feasibility and viability, and the implications of other actions is fully understood.



Monitoring and Review

(How will the implementation of the strategy and action framework be monitored and reviewed?)

As referred to in the strategy recommendations, it is important that the strategy and impact of its actions are monitored to ensure that supply matches demand “on the ground”. This is particularly important later during the strategy period given that future demand in the longer-term is less accurate given that it is based on projections. As actions are implemented, a “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should be employed.

It is recommended that the strategy is reviewed after a period of 5 years or before this time should substantive changes be made to supply, demand or implications of change likely to take place during the strategy period (such as significant confirmed or adopted changes in levels of housing or population growth). Equally, other triggers for a review before this time could be changes to planning or sports policy or the methodology used to assess playing pitches and / or facilities.

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