

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Built Sports Facilities Strategy

Final Report Summary

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STRATEGY PURPOSE

1. Harborough District Council and its partners have a clear stated objective of improving the health and wellbeing of the communities across the district. The network of sports facilities will be an essential element in the delivery of these objectives and the purpose of this Built Sports Facilities Strategy (BSFS) is to identify the needs, and guide the investment, which will be required from now up to 2031.
2. It should be noted that the facility proposals identified in the strategy are not all intended to be provided or funded directly by the District Council and it should not be assumed that the Council will automatically make additional funds available to assist other bodies to provide new or improved facilities. It also does not mean that the Council will take on responsibility for providing or managing more facilities.
3. Delivery of the recommendations associated with the District Council or other stakeholders are subject to capacity and resources being available to realise them. Inclusion in this strategy does not guarantee delivery of all recommendations in the lifetime of the Strategy.
4. The responsibility for provision of sport and recreation facilities is shared between the District, Town and Parish Councils, schools, sports clubs and associations and commercial providers. The District Council's direct role in the provision of sport and leisure facilities is twofold; firstly, via its ownership of Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre, and secondly via the provision and application of planning policy to secure new or improved facilities from new developments.
5. The strategy is intended to inform not only planning documents and development management decisions by the Council, but also recreation infrastructure planning by its partners, and to support funding bids by both the Council and other providers.
6. Harborough District Council will support clubs and external providers with guidance on the strategic requirements, external funding and the planning process where there is an identified need for new or improved sport and recreation facilities. The main sports and recreation facility investment priorities are given in Figure 3, but in addition there are a number of local investment needs for village halls and community centres.
7. The investment priorities in Figure 3 do not preclude smaller specific investment projects which may come forwards through local clubs and organisations, particularly in future years. If the promoters of these projects wish to seek external funding, the request will need to be fully justified, including with reference to the strategy, and the facility shown to be sustainable into the long term.
8. The geographical scope of the strategy is Harborough district. However, it takes into account the influence of facilities in adjacent local authority areas where appropriate, and the assessment has identified high levels of cross-boundary movement for some sports, particularly around the Market Harborough and Great Glen areas.

9. The strategy has been developed using the best practice approach advocated in the Sport England Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance (ANOG), which has included: site visits to all sports facilities and meetings with the managers of the strategically important ones; consultation with local clubs, national governing bodies of sport, local facility providers, Town and Parish councils and Harborough District Council; and modelling future needs based on population projections. It also takes account of previous relevant community consultations undertaken by the Council. It is intended that the strategy's priorities will be revisited annually to track progress, and that a full review will be undertaken in around 2024.

THE SPORTS FACILITY NETWORK

10. The two public leisure centres, Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre are supplemented by sports facilities on school sites, both Academies and the independent Leicester Grammar. Most of these school sports facilities have no long-term agreements which will ensure their community use, with the exceptions being where public funding (Harborough DC, lottery or other) has been used to support improvements. However, since there are no known threats to existing community use on any of the school sites, it is assumed that public access will continue.
11. Where schools have indicated that they are keen to encourage or expand community use, then this has been a factor in devising the recommendations, such as at Robert Smyth Academy in Market Harborough.
12. The commercial sector is important for health and fitness gym provision in the district, but otherwise has a low impact on other sports provision locally.
13. There are a small number of sites owned/operated by sports clubs in the district, such as the Bowmen of Glen and the Saddington Sailing Club.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sports halls

14. The current demand for sports hall space (3-badminton courts or larger halls) is approximately in balance with the available supply in the west and east of the district. The area around Market Harborough attracts users from outside the district, but there is still a slight surplus of supply. Almost all residents of the district have access to a sports hall within 20 minutes' drive, either within or outside of the authority.
15. The quality of the halls available for community use varies, from excellent at Leicester Grammar, The Kibworth School and Meadowdale Primary School, to poor quality at Robert Smyth Academy and Lutterworth College. The sports halls at the two leisure centres are

standard quality. No major user issues were identified in relation to sports halls from the consultation.

16. The strategy identifies that the existing network of sports halls is adequate to meet all projected needs up to 2031 assuming that there is a new 4-court hall at the proposed replacement leisure centre in Market Harborough and that the existing 2 netball/3 tennis indoor courts at Harborough Leisure Centre's dome are retained or re-provided. A replacement facility for the dome would need to be suitable for both netball leagues and indoor tennis, and ideally be available during the school day as well as evenings and weekends.
17. There is also a need to improve the existing sports hall space at Robert Smyth Academy.
18. If the dome is not retained or re-provided, then there will be a need for an 8-badminton court hall at the proposed replacement leisure centre, plus investment in Robert Smyth Academy, to meet the long term sports hall demand of the Market Harborough area.

Strategy recommendations for sports halls

Protect

19. It is recommended that the existing network of sports halls across the district is generally protected and maintained and that the facilities should remain affordable to clubs and individuals.
20. It is recommended that where possible, formalised community use agreements are established with schools to protect community use.

Enhance and Provide

21. It is recommended that the following sports hall facilities are improved or provided to enable them to meet future sports hall demand:
 - 21.1. Re-provision of a 4-badminton court hall (at minimum) plus a dome or equivalent with a minimum of 2 netball courts if Harborough Leisure Centre is replaced.
 - 21.2. Robert Smyth Academy: refurbishment of the existing 4-court and 3-court halls and their ancillary facilities.
22. It is recommended that all new or improved facilities supported by capital monies from public sources or grant aid should be secured for community use via a binding legal agreement. The length of the agreement to reflect the size of the public support/grant involved.
23. It is recommended that schools which offer block bookings for evenings and weekends should be encouraged to consider whether they are also able to offer some casual use time,

particularly for badminton.

Swimming pools

24. There are currently two swimming pool sites available for casual swimming as well as club use, at Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre. The Leicester Grammar School pool, which is owned and managed by the independent school, is open to club use during evenings and weekends.
25. Harborough District Council commissioned bespoke supply and demand modelling to assess in detail the swimming pool needs up to 2031, using the Sport England Facilities Planning Model. The findings from that study confirmed the findings from the strategy assessment.
26. The main findings for swimming pools are:
 - 26.1. There is insufficient swimming pool space in Market Harborough to meet the needs of residents and the pool also attracts users from Northamptonshire. This means that the pool is running at full capacity at some peak times and swimming has to be restricted. There will be more demand for swimming up to 2031 and a larger pool complex is recommended.
 - 26.2. There is almost sufficient water space at Lutterworth Sports Centre up to 2031 to cater for the needs of the area. At most there may be need for an additional teaching/learner pool, but this requirement should be kept under review when the strategy is refreshed in the future. The existing Sports Centre site is well located within the town, but if long term relocation is required, then this should be to a site within the existing town area to maximise the sustainable transport options for users.
 - 26.3. Most swimmers living in the east of the district are able to use pools in the adjacent authority areas. The scale of the new housing in the area is insufficiently large to justify new pool provision in this part of the district, and the new demand from Scraftoft is most likely to be met in Leicester.

Strategy recommendations for swimming pools

Protect

27. It is recommended that:
 - 27.1. Lutterworth Sports Centre's pool is retained and maintained at good quality. If the facility is replaced after 2031, this should be to a site within the existing town area of Lutterworth, in order to maximise sustainable transport options for users.
 - 27.2. Leicester Grammar School's pool is retained and maintained at good quality and that the current levels of community use remains long term. If possible, an agreement should be put in place to secure this long-term community use.

Provide

28. It is recommended that the following swimming pool provision is sought in Market Harborough on a single site, subject to feasibility assessments including site availability for a replacement leisure centre: 25 m x 8 lane main pool (425 sq m) together with a 10m x 8 m leisure pool (80 sq m), and a 5m x 4m learner/teaching/training pool (20 sq m).

Health and fitness

29. The two leisure centres and the new Broughton Astley Leisure Centre all provide fitness gyms with equipment and studio space. However, about 63% of the fitness provision in the district is delivered via the commercial sector. There is wide variety in the nature of the sites, for example the specialist cross fit gym in Lutterworth, and the Curves women's gym in Harborough.

30. The fitness market is volatile, with gyms opening or closing, or changing their offer and target market fairly frequently. The public leisure centre facilities need to compete effectively in this commercial world.

31. At the same time, the leisure centres at Market Harborough and Lutterworth rely heavily on the income generated by the fitness gyms and studios to subsidise the high costs of provision of their swimming pools. The proposed replacement leisure centre in Market Harborough will therefore need a large fitness facility and a number of studio spaces to help generate the revenue to support the swimming pools. Improvement/expansion of the Lutterworth Sports Centre fitness provision is also justified on this basis.

Strategy recommendations for health and fitness

Protect

32. It is recommended that the existing network of health and fitness sites, which have 50 stations or more, are generally protected and maintained.

Enhance

33. It is recommended that the health and fitness facilities at Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre are refurbished, improved, expanded or replaced.

Provide

34. It is recommended that the priority for new delivery (which needs to be confirmed through detailed feasibility work) is the proposed replacement leisure centre for Market Harborough. This should include a large fitness gym and a number of studio spaces. Site and details to be confirmed.

Indoor netball and tennis (the dome)

35. The dome at Harborough Leisure Centre was built in 2004 and is marked out for 2 netball and 3 tennis courts, plus football. It is an ageing facility which is relatively expensive to maintain, but it is well supported by its netball and tennis users. Increasing participation in sport by women and girls is a key priority for Harborough District Council. One of the Harborough netball league youth teams came 4th at the national netball finals in 2019.
36. Almost all of the dome's use is for netball and tennis. The annual community usage is estimated to be about 40,120 visits a year, the large majority of which are during the winter months. This is because netball is more of a 'winter' sport, and tennis partially relocates to outside courts during the summer. There is only one booking per week for community football, for one hour.
37. During the winter months the dome is largely in use from 17.00 to 21.00 Monday-Thursday, with more space on Friday evenings. At the weekends the dome is largely in use from 08.00 to 19.00. During the winter the daytime weekday bookings are predominantly for adult casual tennis or coaching, but Brook House College use the whole dome for 3 hours per week, and the Freedom Club use one court for one hour per week.
38. The dome is the home of the Harborough Netball League and there are over 400 women and girls using the dome for the adult and junior leagues during the winter months, with a typical week in December having about 335 visits for netball. There is no other indoor facility within the district which is large enough for 2 netball courts at league standards, and there are no alternative facilities which are accessible and available to host the leagues outside of the district.
39. Tennis use is primarily by block bookings for coaching, though casual tennis takes place almost every day during the winter months. In early December 2019, which could be considered to be a typical week in winter, there were around 670 visits for tennis. The Market Harborough Tennis Club used the facility for some sessions from Monday to Thursday evenings, particularly for the delivery of its junior tennis coaching.
40. There are no other indoor tennis facilities currently in the district. Lutterworth Tennis Club was awarded grant aid in 2019 by Harborough District Council to cover 2 of its courts. The location of the Lutterworth site means that it is not accessible from Market Harborough or the eastern half of the district. The size of the existing Lutterworth club means that that the courts are expected to be close to full capacity during peak periods.
41. The nearest indoor tennis facility to Market Harborough is at Corby which the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) advises is a private facility and is already operating at high levels of use.
42. Both the tennis clubs and the netball leagues would like to book more facility time during the weekday evenings across the winter months but the only slots available are Friday evenings or after 21.00 Monday-Thursday. The national governing bodies, England Netball and the LTA, strongly support the retention of the existing dome or an appropriate

replacement facility which is suitable for both league netball and for club tennis.

43. The strategy assessment concludes that there is sufficient sports justification to retain the existing dome facility or to replace it with a facility suitable for both the current netball leagues and tennis club use, along with markings for other appropriate sports. The minimum size should be 2 netball/3 tennis courts, ideally with 2 outside netball/3 tennis courts adjacent.
44. If the dome is not replaced (or retained) on the leisure centre site in Market Harborough, then detailed feasibility work is required to consider whether daytime community access is continued, or whether the facility should be joint use with a school.

Strategy recommendations for indoor netball and tennis

Protect

45. It is recommended that the existing dome facility with 3 tennis/2 netball courts is retained and maintained at high quality, or else replaced with a suitable and accessible alternative of at least the same size. If replaced, the site should have secure long-term community use.

Enhance

46. It is recommended that 2 outdoor floodlit netball courts (also marked out for 2-3 tennis courts) are provided immediately adjacent to any replacement dome facility.

Provide

47. It is recommended that the priority for delivery is the replacement dome facility, together with changing facilities and car parking, if the Harborough Leisure Centre including the dome is relocated. This should have a minimum of 2 covered netball/3 tennis courts and be designed to be suitable for a range of sports, including netball leagues and community club tennis.
48. If the dome is proposed to be replaced, it is recommended that the costs/benefits of alternative site options are considered, including the potential accessibility or otherwise for community use during the school day.
49. It is recommended that the 2 tennis courts are covered at Lutterworth Tennis Club in accordance with the offer of grant aid from Harborough District Council.

Indoor bowls

50. This section of the report considers indoor bowls, primarily specialist indoor bowls centres such as the one at Harborough Leisure Centre.
51. Short mat bowls, which is usually played in non-specialist venues such as village halls and community centres, is considered by Sport England to be a separate bowls discipline, and as such has a different national governing body of sport. Short mat bowls uses roll-down mats and there are a number of informal short mat bowls clubs across Harborough district. As these opportunities are not expected to change significantly, the focus of the strategy is on the future of the specialist indoor bowls provision.
52. The Harborough Leisure Centre indoor bowls facility was opened in 1999 and its management is via the leisure centre operator. The indoor bowls centre was built with the support of a Sports Lottery award and was a largely self-contained facility, with its own lounge, bar, basic kitchen, changing rooms and toilets. The time elapsing since the grant award means that there are no remaining grant restrictions relating to it.
53. The current membership of MHIBC as at December 2019 was 148 and almost all are veterans. The club membership reflects the national trend of higher numbers of men playing indoor bowls than women, and the club has moved from 56% men in 2014 to 76% men in 2019.
54. The Market Harborough Indoor Bowls Club (MHIBC) recorded use for a typical week during the winter months on 25th November – 1st December 2019. This showed a total of 434 visits, mostly from Monday to Friday. There were 23 visits on Saturday and the bowls centre was not used (closed) on Sunday. This gives monthly throughput during the winter months of approximately 1,736 visits, or winter play over 30 weeks (mid Sept-end April) of around 13,020 visits. Use during the summer months is much more limited.
55. Given that the site could provide for between 480-600 members/users, this gives a used capacity of between 35%-56% during the winter months, or a 'member per rink' figure of between 35 and 45 (including non-member visits). This compares to a national average of around 54 members per rink, with the large majority of sites nationally being club member use only. The usage of the Harborough indoor bowls centre during the summer months is much lower, but there is no information available from the club or Everyone Active to confirm the actual levels of use.
56. The Harborough indoor bowls site is unusual in that it offers pay-and-play bowls opportunities for non-members. The next nearest site offering casual non-member bowling is at the Enderby Golf and Leisure Centre, which is also the home site of Carlton Indoor Bowls Club.
57. The operator (Everyone Active) is responsible for the club membership records and for pay-and-play use, whilst the club organises the leagues etc. The club plays a very limited role in sports development or promotion of the activity.

58. The facility is expensive to retain and maintain, and there have been issues with the carpet, lighting, heating and the lounge/catering over several years. The carpet and lighting were improved in 2019 with the change of operator, and the heating was improved in January 2020. The carpet and lighting improvements bring the site back up to county standard for play, but the catering facilities remain a significant issue for the club.
59. It is difficult to assess the impact of the quality of facilities on the participation in bowls at Market Harborough, but the club has struggled to retain both the existing members and encourage new members. The membership has fallen since 2002 when it was 250.
60. Although the club recognises that there have been issues associated with the current site, the club members are keen to retain a facility in the Market Harborough area which is relatively easy to access. The English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA), the national governing body for the sport, is keen to ensure that the opportunity for indoor bowling at a specialist centre in the Market Harborough area is retained, ideally including access for non-member casual bowling. The EIBA is of the view that, with improvements to the heating and the support of Everyone Active, the club should be able to increase its membership and activity.
61. The drive time catchment for specialist indoor bowls centres is 20-30 minutes. At 20 minutes' drive, the majority of residents currently have access to a specialist indoor bowls club either within the district or outside, with the exceptions of some rural areas, particularly to the east. At a drive time of 30 minutes, all of the district can currently reach an indoor bowls club.

Future needs

62. Most people who play indoor bowls are aged 60 or over and the sport can also be accessible to people with disabilities. If the demand for indoor bowls was to rise at the same rate as the population across Harborough district ages, then the demand for indoor bowls might be expected to increase by around 150% in the period up to 2031. However, the national trends for the sport show a slowly falling rate of participation which is reflected in the combined memberships of the closest facilities to that at Market Harborough; at Desborough, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough.
63. The long term facility issues with the bowls hall at Harborough Leisure Centre will have impacted upon its usage. It is not possible to judge how quickly the club membership and non-member bowling might now grow if the facility issues are all effectively addressed. This suggests that it is not possible at this time to be certain about the future facility requirements.
64. The EIBA has provided both membership information and some programming information for the Northamptonshire clubs. It appears that, in theory, there is sufficient potential capacity in the Northamptonshire clubs to absorb any members displaced from Harborough Leisure Centre should the bowls hall be closed without replacement. However, the

programming information collated to date by EIBA suggests that there is insufficient capacity at peak times (weekday daytimes and early evenings) to enable the current players to relocate and still play at their preferred times. This suggests that some current players would stop participating if there was no specialist indoor bowls centre in Market Harborough.

65. If future provision can be justified, it seems likely that the demand for indoor bowling at a specialist centre would be met by a 4-rink facility, as this could cater for 320-400 members. A 4-rink facility is the minimum size recommended by the EIBA.

Facility alternatives

66. The operator, Everyone Active, is unable to provide an estimated running cost for the current bowls hall, but the club's own estimate is that it should be able to achieve around £50,200 income per annum, inclusive of membership and affiliation fees, plus new income from short mat bowls (assuming this is introduced).

67. The capital cost of a 4-rink facility is expected to be around £1.5m and the lifecycle costs (based on those for a sports hall) are likely to be around £22,500 per annum. Utilities, operational costs and potentially rent, would be in addition.

68. The potential facility options in summary are:

- Retain the existing facility as part of the current Leisure Centre:
This would give the club and Everyone Active the opportunity to promote indoor bowling and encourage new members to join, plus greater uptake of non-member casual bowling. A stand alone 6 rink facility would need about double the current membership to be sustainable. Short mat bowls could be offered (subject to possible grant aid) to help extend the facility's offer. Due to the above factors, retaining the existing bowls hall should the rest of the Harborough Leisure Centre be relocated, does not at this stage, appear to be a potential long-term option
- Provide a new 4-rink facility at a replacement leisure centre:
This may be justified and would enable non-member bowling to continue. The membership of the bowls club would need to be increased as would the active management of the facility by the bowling club. The cost benefit of such provision would need to be carefully assessed by Harborough District Council for its sustainability in the long term.
- Provide a new 4-rink facility at a community site in/near Market Harborough:
This may be justified but would depend on either developing it at an established and well managed community venue, or would require significant sports development support to the club if it was to take on more facility responsibilities.
- No future provision:
This would require the existing players to travel to elsewhere outside of the

district. There is likely to be some loss of participation.

Planning policy issues

69. Sports facilities are protected by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 97, and by the Harborough Local Plan (G12). The NPPF states:

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- b) 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*
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.*

70. One of the tests (a), (b) or (c) above will be required to be met when considering the future of the specialist bowls provision.

71. Meeting the test of 97(a) would depend on:

- the further information from the nearby specialist indoor bowls sites which confirms that there is sufficient capacity to cater for the current users of the Market Harborough indoor bowls centre and the non-member casual bowlers;
or
- provision of a 4-rink replacement facility which meets the current and anticipated future needs of the existing membership and casual non-member bowlers

72. The test of 97(b) would only be met if any replacement facility was a 6-rink site because of the “quantity” test, and the location would need to be in or close to Market Harborough. As a 6-rink facility seems unlikely to be justified because of the level of use, this test is not relevant.

73. The test 97(c) could be met if the existing bowls hall was converted to other uses which better meet the needs of older people and those with disabilities. However, it would not be met if the existing leisure centre site, including the bowls hall, was to be used for housing or other non-sport development.

74. Harborough District Councils will continue to discuss with the National Governing Body and Sport England the options for indoor bowling should specialist bowls hall provision not be made as part of a new or renovated leisure centre. If there is shown to be insufficient capacity in the nearby alternative specialist bowls centres (in Northamptonshire) then a case based on planning balance would need to be demonstrated.

75. The strategy recommendations include further steps which will confirm the bowling needs and options concerning the future of an independently provided specialist indoor bowling

centre in Harborough.

Strategy recommendations for indoor bowls

76. Based on information provided in this report if an Indoor Bowls facility is not provided as part of a new or replacement Leisure Centre, the Council will discuss with the National Governing Body and Sport England to determine whether an alternative, independently managed facility can be provided elsewhere in the district, or whether indoor bowling venues outside the district can provide for the needs of indoor bowling..
77. To support the Council's policies on health and well-being, as well as supporting sports participation, it is recommended that the Council continues to support community access to indoor bowls provision through alternative venues such as village halls.
78. It is recommended that the Council and partner organisations seek to utilise a range of funding sources to enable the independent delivery of identified projects, taking into account: what monies are already available, the opportunities for funding via S106, and current funding opportunities from a range of external agencies.

Protect and enhance

79. It is recommended that the long-term future of indoor bowls in the district should be reviewed by the National Governing Body and Indoor Bowls Club as a matter of urgency, whether or not the leisure centre as a whole is replaced.
80. It is recommended that the National Governing Body and Indoor Bowls Club undertake feasibility studies to assess the viability of options for a 4-rink specialist indoor bowls centre, at an alternative community sports site. This should include working with Everyone Active to better understand the current membership of the Market Harborough Indoor Bowls Club, the reasonable projections about future membership of a club at a new/alternative independently provided venue and to confirm the current income and costs of the Indoor Bowls facility. There should also be detailed discussions within the club to identify its strengths and weaknesses, and what support would be required if the club was to take on greater responsibility for a future facility.
81. It is recommended that the existing indoor short mat bowls provision at village halls and community centres is protected and maintained.
82. It is recommended that additional storage should be provided where justified for additional storage at village halls, community centres and similar facilities.
83. It is recommended that short mat bowling sports development is supported across the district to establish a more formal organisational structure including leagues, plus the establishment of more local clubs.

Other sports facilities

84. There are a number of other sports and recreation facility types covered by the strategy and the key recommendations are:

Sport	Recommendation
Athletics	Improvements to routes, particularly traffic-free routes for running, walking and cycling. Should include measured routes through the provision of distance marker posts.
Squash	Retain and support the Market Harborough Cricket and Squash Club and explore ways of extending community activities on their site. Ensure long term community use of the site is retained.
Gymnastics	Support continued use by gymnastics clubs of the leisure centres, Meadowdale Primary, Welland Park Academy and Robert Smyth Academy. Improve storage at community and village halls to enable new gymnastics activity, where there is a need.
Cycling and Walking	Improvements to routes, particularly traffic-free routes. Improve links within the network of existing routes. Support facilities such as surfaced tracks in local parks, open spaces and village recreation grounds which will help encourage people to learn to cycle in traffic-free environments. Provide a closed-road cycle training facility and trail routes, subject to feasibility studies and locations being available.
Table tennis	Support improvements at club venues where justified.
Archery	Bowmen of Glen – improve clubhouse facilities.
Equestrian	Bridleway and traffic free routes should be provided, and links improved. The Council should have positive planning policies which support the provision of all-weather surfaces for both training and competition, including where justified, indoor riding centres.
Gliding	Protect Husbands Bosworth Airfield as a Sport England recognised nationally important site for gliding. Provision of facility improvement support, if justified, at The Gliding Centre to prepare for the Women’s World Gliding Championship in 2021. The Gliding Centre should explore opportunities to become more of a multi-sport hub with compatible sports, in order to strengthen the financial sustainability of the site and increase wider sports

	participation.
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Village halls and community centres

85. Village, church and community halls and similar venues provide essential space for many locally-organised activities such as pilates, martial arts, short mat bowls and circuit training. This level of facility is particularly important for those people without a car or who do not wish to travel to a main sports centre to participate, where there are limited services or higher levels of deprivation. They are also an important community resource for wider uses such as community celebrations, dance and drama, and consultation events.
86. The nature of the village halls and community centres varies significantly, from new and relatively large multi-room complexes such as the Community Hub at Scraftoft (once it is fully constructed), to smaller ageing halls usually in the smaller villages. The size of a facility will normally reflect its location. These venues all have halls which are smaller than 3 badminton courts in size, as this is the cut-off used by Sport England for their modelling of “sports hall” provision. Halls with less than 3 badminton courts are much more restricted in relation to the range of sports which can be hosted. Therefore, both Fleckney Sports Centre and the Coplow Centre at Billesdon with their 1-badminton court halls are included in this section of the strategy.
87. The ownership and management arrangements of the facilities are variable, with several being dedicated village hall charities, whilst others are church halls used by the community on a regular basis. However only those facilities which are used as a venue for active recreation have been included in this study i.e. the size of the rooms allows activities such as yoga or pilates, and the nature of the site encourages such bookings.
88. The geographical spread of village halls and community centres, together with their quality, accessibility and attractiveness, is more important than quantitative rates of provision. At the present time, almost all residents have access to at least one hall within 10 minutes’ drive time, and many people have access within 10 minutes’ walking time (800m).
89. Schools are not included in this section of the report because: community sport and recreation use of secondary schools plus Meadowdale Primary School are addressed elsewhere in the strategy, and; other sports use of primary schools is usually limited to fitness type classes, with no long term security of use.

Locally identified needs for investment

90. Given the comprehensive network of existing village halls and community centres, in principle they should be protected and enhanced or, where they are not suitable for retention, replaced within the locality by improved facilities (Local Plan Policy HC2).

91. Many of the village halls and community centres are of at least a reasonable condition, but some require significant investment. Some of the Neighbourhood Plans identified specific improvements for their halls or community centres, but this information has been supplemented by feedback from an extensive consultation exercise with the town and parish councils across the district during 2019. Of the local councils, 77 returns were received, representing 72% of the parishes and 77% of village and community halls.
92. Harborough District Council has collated a database of all of the returns, and the main strategy document lists 45 projects across the district where the estimated project costs are over £10,000. These include such things as roof replacement, new kitchen, disabled access, storage, and total renovation. Some of the returns have also suggested that certain facilities require demolition and replacement.
93. Fleckney Parish Council is currently considering the options for Fleckney Sports Centre and will be developing proposals in 2020. Fleckney Parish Council will further inform the proposals through consultation and a detailed business case; this will allow the new Fleckney Centre to provide the facilities required by the community.

Standards for provision

94. The current standard for accessibility is 1,000 m but the findings of the strategy suggest that this should be decreased. The recommended new standard is 800m, representing 10 minutes' walk.
95. There is a current adopted standard for the amount of provision per person (0.3 sq m), and it is recommended that this should be retained.
96. In relation to quality, the community centres, village halls and similar facilities should be able to offer a wide range of activities as well as meet modern standards for health and safety, the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, energy efficiency, etc. It is important that the design of any new facilities should be highly flexible, to enable the local management of the sites to both provide a community facility and also generate income where possible to ensure the viability of their provision.
97. Where an existing community centre/village hall lacks storage space, parking, or does not meet modern requirements, including in relation to the kitchen and disability access, these should be improved as a priority. New facilities and improvements should reflect the current best practice guidance from the relevant agencies.

Community halls and new housing

98. The East of Lutterworth SDA and the North West of Market Harborough SDA are both outside the recommended 800m walking catchment of an existing community centre or village hall. New provision will therefore be needed in these housing developments.

99. By contrast, almost all of the Scraftoft SDA is within an 800m walking catchment of either or both the new Scraftoft Community Hub and Scraftoft Village Hall. These two facilities are complementary in nature, so each has a different “offer” for the community. Both currently have spare capacity but are constrained sites. The Community Hub is not yet fully constructed, but as it is a new facility, it is good quality. The Village Hall is an old building requiring major refurbishment including improved disabled access and kitchen.
100. Local Plan Policy SC1 allows for a community facility to be constructed as part of the SDA development and agreement will be sought with the developer of the SDA whether this is feasible or sustainable as a standalone facility or in conjunction with the school site. If neither feasible or sustainable an off site contribution should be sought for facilities in Scraftoft, Thurnby or Bushby.

Strategy recommendations for village halls and community centres

Protect

101. It is recommended that existing village halls and community centres are protected and improved.

Enhance

102. It is recommended that proposals for all new facilities and enhancement of existing community facilities are confirmed as justified and sustainable by feasibility plans, including business plans which demonstrate sustainability.

102.1. Replacement facilities may be required at: Fleckney Sports Centre, Great Glen, Kibworth, Houghton on the Hill, Market Harborough and Thurnby.

102.2. Improvements may be required at: Ashby Magna, Billesdon, Broughton Astley, Bruntingthorpe, Burton Overy, Church Langton, Claybrooke Magna, Dunton Bassett, Fleckney, Gilmorton, Glooston, Great Glen, Gumley, Hallaton, Houghton on the Hill, Husbands Bosworth, Kibworth Beauchamp, Lutterworth, Market Harborough, Medbourne, Newton Harcourt, North Kilworth, Scraftoft, Shawell, Slawston, Smeeton Westerby, South Kilworth, Tugby and Keythorpe, Thurnby, Tur Langton, Willoughby Waterleys and Walton.

Provide

103. It is recommended that the other delivery priorities should be:

103.1. New community centres delivered in accordance with the Local Plan policies at North West Market Harborough and Lutterworth SDAs.

103.2. Improvements/enhancements of the Scraftoft Village Hall and Scraftoft

Community Hub to meet the needs of Scraftoft SDA.

103.3. Should it not prove possible to increase capacity at existing sites or as part of a new facility at the Scraftoft SDA, a new community building to be constructed to meet the needs of Scraftoft, Thurnby and Bushby

104. It is recommended that the existing planning standards are updated relating to accessibility and quality, and that the existing standard for quantity of provision should remain.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Securing provision of sport through development

105. A key output from the strategy is the securing of new and improved sports provision through development. This can include on-site provision through master-planning and planning obligations, and by securing developers' contributions to off-site provision. Any shortfalls in funding for specific facilities will need to be met by other funding sources, for example grant aid from the national governing bodies of sport, lottery funding, private funding, and housing infrastructure funds.
106. The authority seeks developers' contributions via S106, but it will still be necessary to meet the three Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) tests set out in the Government's regulations which can be summarised as:
- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
 - Directly related to the development
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
107. In addressing these CIL tests, it is first necessary to have a robust and up-to-date evidence base for sporting provision need. This strategy provides the framework to determine the nature, location and level of sports facility needs that may be generated from new developments. The Provision Guide (Figure 1) is a summary of the proposals which have been derived from the strategy's assessment process. It is a quick reference guide to help calculate the amount of expected demand being generated by a development, the relevant catchment area, and relevant quality standards. Note: "fully available at peak time" means open to community use in the evenings and at weekends.

Figure 1: Provision Guide for new housing developments

Facility type	Quantity per 1,000 population	Accessibility	Quality
Sports Halls	0.27 badminton courts fully available at peak time	20 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body guidance
Swimming pools	9.6 sq m water space fully available at peak time	20 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body guidance
Fitness facilities (stations)	5.84 stations fully available at peak time	15 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England guidance
Fitness facilities (studios)	0.08 studios fully available at peak time	15 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England guidance
Indoor netball courts and associated floodlit outdoor courts	0.02 indoor courts fully available at peak time 0.02 floodlit outdoor courts fully available at peak time	District wide	Design and quality to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body guidance
Indoor tennis	0.04 indoor tennis courts fully available at peak time	30 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body guidance
Squash courts	0.04 courts fully available at peak time	20 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body guidance
Village and community halls	Additional and improved facilities including storage to enable more sports activities to be offered, such as gymnastics and short mat indoor bowls	800m walk 10 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet local needs, and to meet Harborough District Council requirements.
Walking, cycling and horse riding routes	Towards improvements in the network of walking, cycling and horse riding routes; on-site to connect the development to the wider network, and off-site to identified projects	20 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet local needs, and to meet Harborough District Council requirements.

Planning for sport and recreation

108. The table in Figure 2 relates to the planning functions of Harborough District Council, and identifies the actions and priorities relating to planning policy and development control which will be needed to implement the strategy.

109. Where land is required for a sports facility, such as any replacement leisure centre, it is recommended that appropriate land with the necessary access, should be identified through the planning process and made available free of charge.

Figure 2: Actions for forward and development planning

Proposal / Facility	Action required	Lead organisation	Key partners	Date for action
Major new housing developments	Ensure that major new housing sites have policies for sports provision, on-site or off site as appropriate.	HDC	Sport England Leicester- Shire & Rutland Sport	On-going
Planning policies on sport and recreation	Update planning policies on sport and recreation to reflect updated standards of provision, including in relation to village and community halls.	HDC		Year 1
Developer Contributions	Update the policy guidance on the delivery of sport and recreation facilities and playing pitches for new developments.	HDC	Sport England Leicester- Shire & Rutland Sport	Year 1
Replacement leisure centre for Harborough	Complete feasibility studies to confirm the preferred option for the location of the proposed replacement leisure centre for Harborough, and the build and funding options.	HDC	Sport England	Year 1

Proposal / Facility	Action required	Lead organisation	Key partners	Date for action
Indoor bowls provision	Undertake a feasibility study to determine the requirements for indoor bowls, so as to inform the options for a possible replacement facility in the District If provision required, identify preferred site, management, costs etc.	NGB/HDC	Market Harborough Indoor Bowls Club Everyone Active English Indoor Bowling Assn Sport England	Year 1
Lutterworth Sports Centre	Identify long term site options for Lutterworth Sports Centre (from 2031) within existing town area. Include within future planning policies.	HDC		Year 3
Planning applications	Respond to planning applications for development to ensure that the necessary sports provision is achieved. If a sport and recreation site has become disused, consideration should be given to other sport, recreation or open space use, having regard to deficiencies identified in the assessments and strategies.	HDC	Sport England	On-going
Community use agreements on school sites	Ensure that any public investment and where relevant, planning permission for sports facilities on school sites, is linked to formal community use agreements, the terms of which should reflect the size of the investment.	HDC	Schools Sport England Funding bodies	Linked to specific projects. On-going

Proposal / Facility	Action required	Lead organisation	Key partners	Date for action
Traffic free walking, and cycling routes	Ensure that planning policy requires the provision of linked traffic-free walking and cycling routes as part of new developments.	HDC	Developers	On-going
	Development of traffic-free running and cycling routes linking existing green spaces as an integral part of sustainable transport networks.	HDC	Leicester- Shire & Rutland Sport	On-going
Horse riding routes	Development of traffic free or lightly trafficked links to enhance the existing bridleway routes.	HDC		On-going
	Positive planning policies to enable development of all-weather surfaces for training and competition, including where justified, indoor riding centres.	HDC		On-going
Golf	Ensure that Scraftoft Golf Course is replaced as proposed.	HDC	Developer	On-going

Facility investment priorities

110. The table in Figure 3 provides a summary of the investment priorities identified via the strategy, including estimated costs where known. The assessment of the deliverability of the projects, including the achievement of planning permission, will need to be kept under regular review and alternative options identified if the preferred site/location is not possible to deliver. It is recommended that this updating is undertaken on an annual basis.
111. The recommended priorities for the specific projects are identified as High, Medium and Low. These are defined as:

High priority	Facility or project essential for meeting the current and future projected needs of the community across Harborough, particularly for the sports/facilities with high levels of participation, for example swimming. High priority is also given to projects which will attract those people who are less active or where the project is an area of deprivation.
Medium priority	Facility or project which will help to meet the current and future projected needs of the community across Harborough for the sports/facilities with moderate levels of participation, for example tennis.
Low priority	Facility or project which will help to meet the current and future projected needs of the community across Harborough but where the sport/facilities have lower levels of participation, for example archery, or where the project's aims are already partially addressed by other projects in the area identified at higher levels of priority.

Figure 3: Recommended site specific proposals

Project name	Main aim	Priority H = High M = Medium L = Low	Phasing St 2019-2022 Mt 2022-2027 Lt 2027-2031	Estimated capital cost (£000's)	Main delivery partners	Comment
Leisure Centres						
Harborough Leisure Centre replacement	<p>Replace leisure centre with sports facility elements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 badminton court sports hall • 25m x 8 lane pool with spectator accommodation • 10m x 8m leisure pool • 5m x 4m learner/teaching/training pool • Large fitness gym (number of stations tbc) • Studios /multi-activity rooms (number and size tbc) • 2 indoor netball courts/3 indoor tennis courts • 2 floodlit outdoor netball/tennis courts adjacent to indoor. <p>Consider provision of 4 rink indoor bowls facility either a part of existing facility or as part of a separate facility.</p>	H	<p>St</p> <p>Feasibility assessment including bowls hall options.</p> <p>Construction and opening</p>	£15.1m plus up to £5m for commercial opportunities	HDC Sport England Operator/ construction partner	<p>Facility mix to be confirmed.</p> <p>If netball/tennis provision not made via replacement dome type facility, then will require 8 badminton court sports hall plus investment off site to improve sports halls at Robert Smyth Academy.</p> <p>Detailed further assessment required in relation to provision of indoor bowling. If justified and not provided as part of a replacement leisure centre, identify alternative deliverable sites.</p>

Project name	Main aim	Priority H = High M = Medium L = Low	Phasing St 2019-2022 Mt 2022-2027 Lt 2027-2031	Estimated capital cost (£000's)	Main delivery partners	Comment
Lutterworth Sports Centre	Retain and maintain. Potentially expand health and fitness provision, subject to local justification.	H M	On-going	tbc	Operator	For longer term, need to confirm future of site. If Sports Centre requires relocation, alternative town centre site will be required to be identified.
Broughton Astley	Maintain and retain newly opened sports centre.	H	Lt	n/a	Broughton Astley Parish Council	Indoor facility opened December 2019. Completion of '3G' AGP expected April 2020.
Schools						
Robert Smyth Academy	Refurbishment of existing sports halls (4-court and 3-court) together with changing provision.	M	Mt	tbc	Academy	Halls too small to provide for netball leagues and extension/replacement with larger size halls is not viable.
Other						
Market Harborough Cricket and Squash Club	More intensive use of site as sports hub and for wider community activity. Review of buildings and their uses on site. Requires detailed feasibility study.	M	St	tbc	Club	Site lease needs to be extended to secure long-term community use. Also home to cricket club.
	Retain and maintain squash courts.	H	On-going	n/a	Club	
Bowman of Glen	Improve clubhouse facilities.	L	St	tbc	Club	

Project name	Main aim	Priority H = High M = Medium L = Low	Phasing St 2019-2022 Mt 2022-2027 Lt 2027-2031	Estimated capital cost (£000's)	Main delivery partners	Comment
Lutterworth Tennis Club	Cover 2 existing courts.	H	St	tbc	Club LTA	Grant aid offered in 2019 to club for covering 2 courts by HDC.
Indoor bowls centre 4-rink	Undertake feasibility study into provision of 4-rink specialist indoor bowls facility within or close to Market Harborough.	H	St	£5,000	HDC EIBA Club Potential sites	Feasibility study into provision of 4-rink specialist facility, either at leisure centre or alternative site.
Village halls and community centres	Retain, replace or improve where justified. Ensure provision of new community centre facilities to serve North West Market Harborough and Lutterworth SDA.	H	On-going	tbc	Hall trusts Parish and Town Councils	Needs and costs will need to be justified locally.
Walking, running and cycling routes	Improvements to existing routes and development of new links to extend network, particularly of traffic free routes. Improved linking of open spaces. Provision of distance markers on routes.	H	On-going	tbc	HDC Developers	Routes within and linking developments to wider network. Improvements to existing network of routes.