

2 ASSESSING PLAYING PITCH NEEDS

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the basis on which playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities needs in Harborough district were assessed. Two different methodologies were applied:

- Sport England's '*Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance*' (2013) for football, cricket, rugby and hockey pitches.
- Sport England's '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance*' (2014) for tennis courts, bowling greens, netball courts and rounders pitches.

2.2 Playing Pitch Methodology

2.2.1 Introduction

The methodology for the pitches follows the '*Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance*' (2013) developed by Sport England. The process involves five stages and ten steps as follows:

- **Stage A** Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1).
- **Stage B** Gather information on the supply of and demand for provision (Steps 2 and 3).
- **Stage C** Assess the supply and demand information and views (Steps 4, 5 and 6).
- **Stage D** Develop the strategy (Steps 7 and 8).
- **Stage E** Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up-to-date (Steps 9 and 10).

2.2.2 Preparing and tailoring the approach

HDC convened a project steering group led by officers from Strategic Planning, Environmental Services and Community Partnerships and involving advice from Sport England and the relevant governing bodies of sport to devise:

- The vision and objectives of the review of playing pitches in the district.
- The scope of the exercise, including the types of facilities to include, the geographical scope and the overall timeframe for the assessment.
- The local and wider strategic context.
- The project management arrangements for the study, including the decision to engage assistance from external consultants.

A project brief was produced, approved and signed-off to complete Stage A of the process.

2.2.3 Assessing current needs

To assess whether the current provision is adequate to meet existing demand an understanding of the situation at all sites available to the community needs to be developed. This is achieved by providing a brief overview for each site, which comprises:

- A comparison between the carrying capacity of a site and how much demand currently takes place there. The carrying capacity of a site is defined as the amount of play it can regularly accommodate over an appropriate period of time without adversely affecting its quality and use. Demand is defined in terms of the number of 'match equivalent sessions' at each site.
- An indication of the extent to which pitches and related facilities are being used during their respective peak periods.
- The key issues with and views on the provision at a site and its use.
- The site overviews identify the extent to which pitches are:
 - Being overplayed where use exceeds the carrying capacity.
 - Being played to the level the site can sustain where use matches the carrying capacity.
 - Potentially able to accommodate some additional play where use falls below the carrying capacity.

The situation at individual sites can then be aggregated to identify the position at a wider geographical area, to identify the potential for excess demand at some sites to be accommodated by excess supply at others in the locality. Other factors can also be assessed such as:

- Any demand being accommodated on sites with unsecured community access.
- The impact of latent or displaced demand.
- The situation at priority sites.

This analysis then enables an assessment to be made of the adequacy of existing pitch and related facility provision.

2.2.4 Assessing future needs

The methodology applied to assess the additional future needs for pitches and related facilities arising from population growth also involves the approach advocated in Sport England's PPS guidance, namely:

- Establishing projected population change.
- Analysing sports development proposals and participation trends.
- Considering existing deficiencies or spare capacity.
- Taking account of any forthcoming changes to facility supply.

2.2.5 Assessed demand parameters

Analysis of the above factors influencing the future supply and demand for playing pitches in the district has led to the following conclusions, which are reflected in the subsequent assessment of future needs:

- **Population change:** The ONS 2018 sub-national population projections forecast a population of 104,839 by 2031, an increase of 9,302 (or 9.7%). Comparison of the projections for 2020 and 2031 shows that the percentage of people aged under 50 falls from 55.6% to 53.2%, with proportionate population increases amongst the over 50s.
- **Participation trends:** According to Sport England's 'Active People' and 'Active Lives' surveys, participation at a national level in all the pitch sports has remained static or fallen in the period since 2005, in some cases by quite significant margins. This means that future increases in participation in the pitch sports cannot be assumed based upon historic trends and have therefore not been factored into projected needs.
- **Sports development initiatives:** A number of sports development initiatives are delivered in Harborough district by the governing bodies of the pitch sports and their member clubs (full details are in the individual sports sections). The impact on sustained increases in participation directly attributable to these activities is unproven has therefore not been factored in to projected future needs.
- **Changes in supply:** Any known proposed gains or losses in pitches and related facilities provision will influence the ability to accommodate the additional demand arising from the increased population and this has been included in the capacity assessments (full details are in the individual sports sections).

2.2.6 Delivering future needs

To identify the most appropriate way to meet the additional pitch and related facilities needs arising from population growth, four sequential questions were addressed:

- **Existing deficiency or spare capacity:** To what extent do existing pitches and related facilities have any current shortfalls or any over-supply?
- **Additional needs:** What additional needs will arise from population growth?

- **Accommodating needs:** Which needs can be met in whole or part by spare capacity in existing pitches and related facilities and which will need to be met in whole or part by new provision?
- **Extra pitches:** What extra pitches and related facilities of each type are required to provide for the residual unmet demand?

2.2.7 Outputs

The methodology provides quantified answers to the above questions as follows:

- **Current provision:** The adequacy of current provision and any existing spare capacity was assessed using Sport England's approved methodology, adapted where appropriate to assess informal demand and facilities.
- **Additional needs:** Additional needs were calculated by identifying the existing Team Generation Rates in the district, to identify the number of people that are currently required to form a team of various types in each of the pitch sports. These figures have then been applied to the ONS mid-2018 population projections, to calculate the gross additional team and related pitch needs arising from the additional population.
- **Net requirements:** The net requirement for additional provision was calculated by comparing the extra required capacity to the current spare capacity where appropriate, to identify the difference.
- **Location of provision:** The location of additional pitch and related facilities needs was established by comparing the respective levels of projected population growth in each part of the district.

2.2.8 The criteria assessed

- **Quantity:** The number of pitches and related facilities was established and cross checked against other sources provided by local stakeholders and consultees.
- **Quality:** The quality of playing pitches was assessed by visiting every pitch in the district during the respective playing seasons and assessing quality criteria using the recognised non-technical visual assessment criteria. The ratings for each aspect of each pitch were checked and challenged via the clubs' survey and stakeholder consultation and amended where necessary.
- **Accessibility:** The accessibility of pitches, in particular the extent of secured community use and pricing was assessed, to identify any barriers to use that might impact on the capacity of local provision.
- **Strategic priority:** The assessment of need and priorities for provision was identified by the governing bodies of the respective pitch sports.
- **Used capacity:** The used capacity of existing pitches at each site was assessed using a bespoke supply-demand spreadsheet.

2.3 Outdoor Sports Facilities Methodology

The methodology applied to assess the needs and opportunities for sports facilities follows Sport England's recommended approach, advocated in 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' (2014).

2.3.1 Preparing and tailoring the approach

HDC convened a project steering group led by officers from Strategic Planning, Environmental Services and Community Partnerships and involving advice from Sport England and the relevant governing bodies of sport to devise:

- The vision and objectives of the review of outdoor sports facilities in the district.
- The scope of the exercise, including the types of facilities to include, the geographical scope and the overall timeframe for the assessment.
- The local and wider strategic context.
- The project management arrangements for the study, including the decision to engage assistance from external consultants.

A project brief was produced, approved and signed-off to complete Stage A of the process.

2.3.2 Assessing sports facilities supply

The assessment of sports facilities supply at Stage B of the study involved four main elements:

- **Quantity:** Establishing what facilities there are in the district, with details of their dimensions, technical information like playing surfaces and floodlighting. This included consideration of facilities not currently in use, those not available to the community and significant provision in neighbouring areas that serves some needs of Harborough district residents.
- **Quality:** Auditing the quality of facilities. This involved assessing each facility in terms of its condition (its age, appeal, fabric and ancillary provision like changing and car parking; factors that will influence its attractiveness to users) and fitness for purpose (its technical specifications and ability to accommodate an appropriate standard of play).
- **Accessibility:** Determining spatial distribution of provision in the district by GIS mapping of each facility type, including catchment analysis appropriate to the scale and role of each facility.
- **Availability:** Identifying how much each facility is used, whether there is any existing spare capacity and if there is any scope to increase capacity. This involved consideration of programming and usage data, opening times and pricing

levels, which was secured through consultation with facility providers and operators.

The information was collated and analysed in a facilities supply report, which was evaluated and approved by the project steering group.

2.3.3 Assessing sports facilities demand

The assessment of sports facilities demand at Stage B of the study involved five main elements:

- **Local population profile:** Establishing the local demography, including the size, age profile, affluence/deprivation, health indices and growth projections.
- **Sports participation:** Identifying local sports participation characteristics, through analysing the results of Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey, local facilities usage figures and a survey of local clubs to establish membership patterns and trends.
- **Unmet, displaced and future demand:** In addition to current expressed demand, analysis of unmet (demand which exists but cannot currently be satisfied), displaced (demand from within the district that is satisfied elsewhere) and future demand (based on projected population and participation increases) was identified.
- **Local participation priorities:** Establishing any local priorities for the use of sports facilities, such as those relating to corporate health and well-being policies.
- **Sport-specific priorities:** Determining through consultation with the governing bodies of sport and a local sports clubs survey, whether there are any sport-specific priorities for Harborough district.

The information was collated and analysed in a facilities demand report, which was evaluated and approved by the project steering group.

2.3.4 Assessing the balance between sports facilities supply and demand

To complete Stage B of the process, the supply and demand information was brought together for each type of facility to establish:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs?
- **Quality:** Are the facilities fit for purpose for the users?
- **Accessibility:** Are the facilities in the right physical location for the users?
- **Availability:** Are the facilities available for those who want to use them?

2.3.5 Applying the assessment and Developing the strategy

The results of the assessment were applied to produce an assessment which included:

- **Options for provision:** The options for meeting current and future facilities needs were identified under Sport England's recommended headings of 'Protect', 'Provide' and 'Enhance'.
- **Policy recommendations:** Arranged under the headings of 'Protect', 'Provide' and 'Enhance', planning policy recommendations were developed to ensure that the implementation of the strategy will be supported by the provisions of the Local Plan.

2.4 Stakeholder consultation

Information was gathered from a wide range of consultees including:

- **Sport England:** Guidance on the assessment methodology.
- **Harborough District Council:** Consultation with officers from Strategic Planning, Environmental Services and Community Partnerships on their respective areas of responsibility.
- **Neighbouring local authorities:** Information on their playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities assessments and the impact of any cross-border issues was obtained from Rugby, Blaby, Oadby and Wigston, Leicester, Charnwood, Melton, Rutland, Corby, Kettering and Daventry councils.
- **Active Together:** Information on local and wider strategic priorities.
- **Governing bodies of sport:** Information on local and wider strategic priorities and local supply and demand information.
- **Sports clubs:** Information on sports facilities provision and use, current and future needs and opinions on quality, which was submitted via an on-line survey.
- **Schools:** Information on sports facilities provision and use, plus attitudes towards community use, which was submitted via an on-line survey.

2.5 Summary

Assessing playing pitch needs in Harborough district using the approach advocated by Sport England in its '*Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance*' and outdoor sports facilities using its '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance*' has ensured that the exercise is both robust and evidence-based and as a result complies with the provisions of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.