

10 BOWLS GREEN NEEDS

10.1 Organisational context

- **Bowls England:** Bowls England is the governing body of the sport and along with Bowls Leicestershire it supports the development of the game in Harborough.
- **Affiliated Clubs:** There are eight Bowls England-affiliated clubs in Harborough and two unaffiliated clubs.

10.2 Strategic context

10.2.1 Bowls England Strategic Plan

Bowls England's strategic plan '*Fit for the Future: Bowls England Strategy 2021 - 2026*' (2021) contains the following material of relevance:

<p>Target: The target is to create a million more 'bowls experiences' by 2026.</p> <p>Mission: The mission is 'to promote and develop the sport of bowls across England so it enriches the lives of its participants, connects communities and is in good health for future generations'.</p> <p>Making bowls accessible: The actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Developing and marketing new, introductory forms of the game to service identified target markets of new bowlers'.• 'Modernising our digital platforms and experiences so new bowlers can easily locate opportunities to get involved in our sport'.• 'Working with clubs and facility owners to break down barriers and ensure every new bowler's first time is uncomplicated and compelling'.• 'Developing and implementing a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to ensure our sport is more representative of society'.• 'Building new partnerships with like-minded organisations to engage groups of people from outside our sport'. <p>Support our communities: The actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Delivering and expanding our range of club services to support club management teams, increase their capability and empower them to thrive'.• 'Working at a local and national level to arrest the decline in facilities to ensure places to play bowls are accessible, inclusive and sustainable'.
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10.2.2 Neighbouring local authorities

Outdoor sports facilities strategies in neighbouring districts identify cross-boundary issues:

Rugby

The '*Rugby Playing Pitch Strategy*' (2013) does not include an assessment of outdoor bowls needs.

Blaby

The '*Blaby Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment*' (2020) identifies that 'there is a sufficient supply of bowling greens to accommodate current and future demand in the Blaby District'.

Oadby and Wigston:

The '*Oadby and Wigston Playing Pitch Strategy*' (2018) does not include an assessment of outdoor bowls needs.

Leicester

The '*Leicester City Council Playing Pitch Strategy*' (2017) identifies that 'there is no evidence of demand for additional facilities. There is spare capacity at all greens and most are actively seeking to retain new members - retention of existing members and recruitment of new is highlighted as a key priority for clubs'.

Charnwood

The '*Charnwood Playing Pitch Strategy*' (2018) identifies that 'most of the outdoor bowls greens in Charnwood are operating under capacity, and most with good reserves of capacity to accommodate new members'.

Melton

Melton Borough Council is working on an updated Playing Pitch Strategy for the borough in 2022. The current '*Melton Playing Pitch Strategy*' (2014) does not include an assessment of outdoor bowls needs.

Rutland

Rutland County Council is working on an updated Playing Pitch Strategy for the county in 2022. The '*Rutland Sports and Recreation Strategy*' (2015) identifies that 'there is a need to protect and improve the bowling greens in Rutland, but the requirements of specific bowling greens, and the potential benefits of investing in them further, will need to be assessed on a site by site basis'.

Corby

The '*Corby Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan*' (2017) identifies that 'current demand is being met and future demand can also be met'.

Kettering

The 'Kettering Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy Needs Assessment Report' (2020) identifies that 'overall, there is sufficient supply to meet current and future demand'.

Daventry

The 'Daventry Playing Pitch Strategy' (2018) does not include an assessment of outdoor bowls needs.

10.3 Stakeholder consultation

10.3.1 Bowls Leicestershire

Consultation with Bowls Leicestershire highlighted the following issues:

- There are ten affiliated outdoor bowls clubs in the district and two non-affiliated clubs. There used to be another club at Welland Park, but it closed in 2021.
- The key issue for clubs is the recruitment of participants, volunteers and women. Bowls England is encouraging clubs to provide 'pay-and-play' opportunities with rinks made available at specific times, to attract non-members. It is also promoting a short game format for beginners.
- The average age of bowls participants in Leicestershire is approximately 65.

10.3.2 Local bowls clubs

A questionnaire survey was circulated to all affiliated clubs in Harborough district. Nine of the ten clubs responded.

- Collectively the bowls clubs in the district have 495 members.
- Demand for bowls locally shows a slight decrease over the past three years, with Welland Park BC closing in 2021 due to declining membership. No clubs have a waiting list.
- Wycliffe BC was not prepared to participate in the survey. The club had been waiting for a grant from the council for a petanque terrain for some two years but was told this money was now being channelled into football.

10.3.3 Houghton Bowls Club

The club made the following comments:

- 'We did receive grants for the extending and relaying of our green over the past two years, but we receive no regular external funding to help with green maintenance which is our main expense'.
- 'We have difficulty recruiting new members. We get little or no response to leaflets posted through doors of the entire village. An annual open day occasionally brings in new members. We also have had stands at a number of village fetes'.

10.3.4 Kibworth Bowls Club

The club commented that 'the Indoor Bowling Club at the Leisure Centre in Harborough is a great asset to some of our Members during the Winter months'.

10.3.5 Lutterworth Town Bowls Club

The club made the following comments:

- 'We're generally good at retaining members but not always. Recruiting new members is the most challenging problem'.
- 'We carry out work on our facilities as needed but the lack of finance prevents us from making longer term plans'.
- 'We don't have separate male/female changing rooms, but we have a reasonably sized changing room for the number of players involved in each match'.
- 'We have a 10 year lease with Lutterworth Town council, expiring March 2022. We pay £500 per annum, maintain the Green and currently receive a £3,000 contribution towards the cost from the Town Council'.

10.3.6 Medbourne Bowls Club

The club made the following comments:

- 'Our main problem is recruiting new members. Bowls has a worldwide image problem and needs to attract younger players not just the more mature/retired'.
- 'We plan to increase our membership with more local advertising, arranging visits from local schools and offering free use of equipment and the green with free coaching'.
- 'We have a small green in centre of village, with no land to expand, owned by the Parish Council which has the final say on alterations/upgrades to the pavilion and green'.

10.3.7 North Kilworth Bowls Club

The club commented that 'we would like to provide better disabled access if funding is available'.

10.3.6 South Kilworth Bowls Club

The club made the following comments:

- 'We do not have separate changing rooms for male and female members'.
- 'We have benefited with money from the Community Grant Scheme and would welcome the continuation of this potential source of external funds'.

10.4 Bowls Green Demand

10.4.1 Introduction

This section summarises the demand for bowls in Harborough district and includes:

- Expressed demand.
- Displaced demand.
- Latent and unmet demand.
- Future demand.

10.4.2 Expressed demand

Bowls clubs in Harborough district, their playing membership, the greens where they play and their membership trends between 2017 and 2021 are as follows.

<i>Club</i>	<i>Home green</i>	<i>No. members 2017</i>	<i>No. members 2021</i>	<i>Change</i>
Hart of Fleckney BC	Fleckney Sports Centre	69	79	+10
Houghton BC	Houghton BC	35	28	-7
Kibworth BC	Kibworth BC	73	57	-16
Little Bowden BC	Little Bowden BC	56	91	+35
Lutterworth Town BC	Lutterworth Recreation Ground	41	44	+3
Market Harborough Conservative BC*	Market Harborough CBC	68	57	-11
Medbourne BC*	Medbourne BC	48	27	-21
North Kilworth BC	North Kilworth BC	25	26	+1
South Kilworth BC	South Kilworth BC	32	37	+5
Welland Park BC	Welland Park, Market Harborough	38	0**	-38
Wycliffe BC	Hall Lane, Lutterworth	60	49	-11
TOTAL	-	545	495	-50

* Not affiliated to Bowls England.

** The club disbanded in 2021.

10.4.3 Displaced demand

Displaced demand relates to play by teams from within the study area which takes place outside of the area, or vice versa. Based upon the results of the clubs' survey, there is no evidence of any displaced demand for bowls.

10.4.4 Unmet demand

Unmet demand takes a number of forms:

- Clubs may have access to a facility for matches but nowhere to train or vice versa.
- Some facilities may be unavailable to the community.
- The poor quality and limited capacity of facilities and/or a lack of provision and ancillary facilities which meet a certain standard of play/league requirement.

There is no evidence of unmet demand for outdoor bowls greens in Harborough district at present, with all clubs reporting spare capacity to accommodate additional members. In addition to coaching and matches for members, all clubs allow prospective members to have a number of free introductory sessions and Hart of Fleckney BC keeps two rinks available for public hire at all times.

10.4.5 Latent demand

Whereas unmet demand is known to currently exist latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision. There is no evidence of latent demand for bowls in Harborough district at present with no clubs operating waiting lists. A Bowls England report in 2016 identified that a club aiming to remain sustainable over the medium to long term should aim for a minimum membership of 15-20 members per rink. On this basis Little Bowden BC with 100 members the only club in the area in that meets this criterion, having recently gained members from Welland Park BC, Kibworth BC and Market Harborough BC.

10.4.6 Future demand

This has been assessed as follows:

- **Participation rates:** Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey has recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for bowls at national level since 2015:

Nov 2015- Nov 2016	May 2016- May 2017	Nov 2016- Nov 2017	May 2017- May 2018	Nov 2017- Nov 2018	May 2018- May 2019	Nov 2018- Nov 2019	May 2019- May 2020	% Change
0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	-0.3%

- **Population growth:** The ONS 2018 sub-national population projections forecast a population of 104,839 by 2031, an increase of 9,302 (or 9.7%). This will create a requirement for equivalent additional capacity by 2031.

10.4.7 Key findings on demand

The key findings on demand are as follows:

- There are ten local clubs serving Harborough district, a reduction of one club since 2018. Collective club membership has decreased by 9.2% in the same period.
- There is no evidence of any displaced or unmet demand, other than some bowlers moving between clubs to access better facilities and a higher standard of bowling.
- Future demand patterns are likely to be similar to current levels, based on participation trends and population projections.

10.5 Bowls Green Supply

10.5.1 Introduction

This section summarises the detail of bowls green supply in Harborough district. The greens included in the analysis are defined as grassed permanently laid out greens.

10.5.2 Greens with community use and used

Site	Address	No. rinks
Hart of Fleckney BC	Leicester Road, Fleckney LE8 8BG	6
Houghton BC	Main Street, Houghton-on-the-Hill LE7 9GE	4*
Kibworth BC	Smeeton Road, Kibworth Beauchamp LE8 0LF	6
Little Bowden BC	Kettering Road, Market Harborough LE16 8AN	6/7
Lutterworth Town BC	Coventry Road, Lutterworth LE17 4RB	6
Market Harborough CBC	Fairfield Road, Market Harborough LE16 9QQ	6
Medbourne BC	Main Street, Medbourne LE16 8EB	4*
North Kilworth BC	Back Street, North Kilworth LE17 6HG	6*
South Kilworth BC	North Road, South Kilworth LE17 6DS	6
Wycliffe BC	Hall Lane, Lutterworth LE17 4LN	6

* These greens are played in a single direction only which impacts on capacity and surface quality.

10.5.3 Greens by sub-area

The number of greens by sub-area are as follows. It shows that there is a geographically equitable distribution of provision across the district:

Sub-area	Population	No. Greens	Greens per capita
West	28,963	4	1: 7,241
Middle	35,494	3	1: 11,831
East	28,197	3	1: 9,399
HARBOROUGH	95,537	10	1: 9,554

10.5.4 Greens where use was recently discontinued

These are as follows:

Site	Address	Sub-area	Use discontinued
Welland Park	Welland Park Road, Market Harborough LE16 9DN	Middle	2021

10.6 Quality

10.6.1 The criteria assessed for bowls greens

The quality of bowls greens was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities during the playing season. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- **The green:** The quality of the grass, flatness and regulation ditches.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- **General access:** Parking, signage and proximity to public transport.

10.6.2 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to 'very good' (highlighted in green below), 4 to 'good' (also highlighted in green below), 3 to 'average' (highlighted in yellow below), 2 to 'poor' (highlighted in red below) and 1 to 'very poor' (also highlighted in red below).

10.6.3 Bowls greens assessment

The ratings for bowls in Harborough are shown in the table below.

Facility	Green	Changin g	Disabilit y Access	General access
Hart of Fleckney BC	5	5	5	5
Houghton BC	4	3	4	3
Kibworth BC	5	5	4	5
Little Bowden BC	5	5	5	5

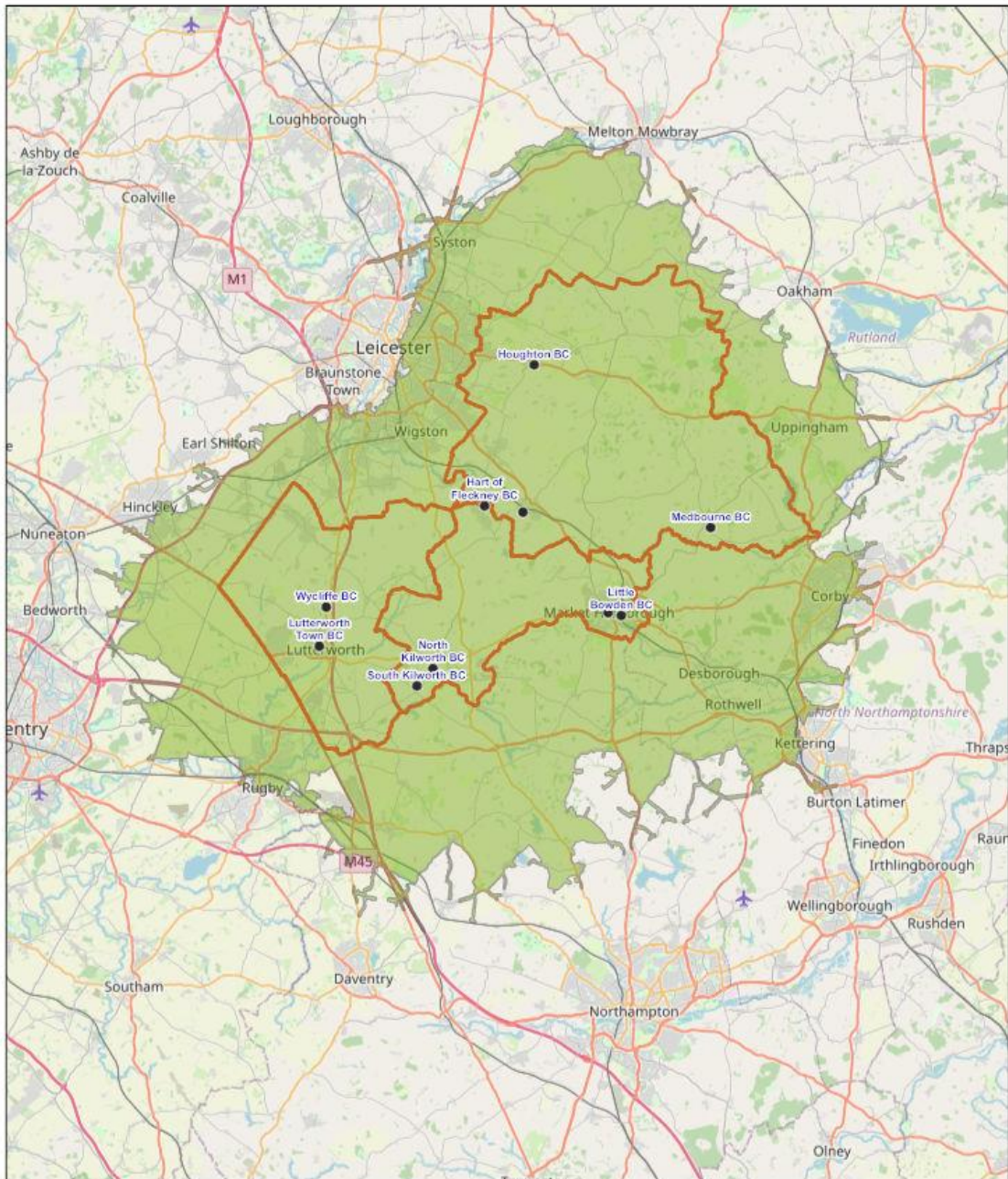
Lutterworth Town BC	3	4	5	5
Market Harborough Cons. BC	4	3	2	3
Medbourne BC	2*	1	3	3
North Kilworth BC	3	3	2	3
South Kilworth BC	4	5	3	5
Wycliffe BC	5	5	4	5

* The green is a non-regulation rhomboid shape but can fit in four rinks at an angle.

10.7 Accessibility

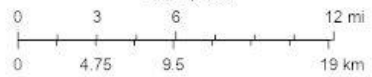
Bowls England applies a 15 minute drivetime catchment to define accessibility. The map overleaf shows that the whole of Harborough district is within 15-minutes' drivetime of a green.

HARBOROUGH - Outdoor Bowls 15 Minutes Drive



2/14/2022

1:577,790



- OUTDOOR BOWLS
- 15.0 Minutes
- ▭ West Sub Area, Middle Sub Area, East Sub Area
- ▭ Harborough District Boundary

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10.8 Availability

The table below identifies the basis of use of bowls greens in Harborough:

Club	Basis of use
Hart of Fleckney BC	Membership and 'pay-and-play' Adult membership £115 per annum New member £55 in year one Associate member £25 per annum plus rink fee (£3 per session) Junior member £7.50 per annum 'Pay-and-play' £3 for two hours
Houghton BC	Membership only Adult membership £60 per annum
Kibworth BC	Membership only Adult membership £90 per annum New members 50% discount in year one Associate Member £35 per annum Social Member £20 per annum
Little Bowden BC	Membership only Adult membership £85 per annum Junior membership £10 per annum
Lutterworth Town BC	Membership only Adult membership £72 per annum New members 50% discount in year one
Market Harborough Conservative BC	Membership only Over 65's £30 per annum Under 65's £43 per annum
Medbourne BC	Membership only Adult Membership £50 per annum Senior Membership £45 per annum Junior Membership £20 per annum
North Kilworth BC	Membership only Adult membership £70 per annum Junior membership £20 per annum New adult members £20 in year one New junior members Free in year one
South Kilworth BC	Membership only Adult membership £50 per annum
Wycliffe BC	Membership only Adult membership £75 per annum New members £30 per annum Junior membership £20 per annum

10.9 Key findings on supply

The key findings are as follows:

- There are ten bowls greens in Harborough district.
- The quality of greens is generally good with one or two exceptions and changing and disability access is 'poor' at several sites.
- Accessibility of greens is good, with the entire population within 15 minutes driving time of the nearest facility.
- There is significant spare capacity at most greens, although Little Bowden is close to capacity.

10.10 Developments since the 2018 PPS

The key developments since the assessment of bowls needs in the 2018 PPS are as follows:

- Collectively bowls club membership in the district has decreased by 9.8% since 2018.
- One club (Welland Park BC) has folded in the same period.
- Bowls facility developments since 2018 include:
 - Little Bowden BC has had a new green, with substantial improvements to the car park, surrounds (fencing and paths) and a kitchen refit.
 - The green at Houghton BC has been widened (to add an extra rink)
 - Hart of Fleckney BC has improved the surrounds to the green and storage and the club also now wheelchair access friendly.
 - Wycliffe BC has improved club security, the roof and pump housing and equipment.
- The covid pandemic has had a damaging impact upon bowls clubs. Memberships have decreased through members not renewing or deciding to stop playing the game earlier than would have if Covid had not happened and the inability to properly recruit new bowlers with only limited bowling going on.
- Club incomes have been impacted through the lack of social activity, the inactivity of club bars and the inability to open kitchens to make profit from meals supplied at mid or end of a game.
- Bowls England and Bowls Leicestershire refunded clubs' capitation fees in 2020 which helped out all clubs.

10.11 The balance between bowls green supply and demand

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between bowls green supply and demand in Harborough:

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

10.12 Quantity

10.12.1 Current needs

There is no evidence of a shortfall in current provision for outdoor bowls, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used capacity:** Local clubs have indicated that there is significant spare capacity.
- **Satisfied demand:** There is no evidence of unmet demand in the district.
- **Changes in supply:** There are no known current planned changes to bowls green supply.

10.12.2 Future needs

Future demand patterns are likely to be similar to current levels, based on participation trends but the higher population projections will create a requirement for 9.7% additional capacity by 2031. Spare capacity at the existing bowls facilities will be able to accommodate all additional future demand, based upon falling participation rates and limited population growth.

10.13 Quality

10.13.1 Current quality

The quality of greens is generally good with one or two exceptions and changing and disability access is 'poor' at several sites. Substantial work was carried out on the green at Houghton BC making it wider (to add an extra rink) but work was setback by covid due to restrictions which had a detrimental impact on the quality of the playing surface. This is being addressed and improvements are anticipated in 2022.

10.13.2 Future quality

All bowls facility providers will need to continue to invest in maintaining and improving their facilities, so if this process can be assisted with funding from developer contributions in the future, it seems reasonable to assume that local provision will continue to be upgraded regularly.

10.14 Accessibility

10.14.1 Current accessibility

All of the population is within 15-minutes' drive of the nearest bowls green.

10.14.2 Future accessibility

It is reasonable to assume that the current geographical coverage will be maintained in the future.

10.15 Availability

10.15.1 Current availability

Most greens are available to non-members for free introductory sessions.

10.15.2 Future availability

It is reasonable to assume that similar access arrangements will be offered in the future.

10.16 The options for securing bowls green capacity

The options for securing existing bowls green capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

10.16.1 Protect

Protecting existing bowls greens through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

10.16.2 Provide

There is no need to provide additional facilities based on current and projected future demand patterns.

10.16.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing bowls green capacity by:

- Addressing the issues at the four sites where features are rated as 'poor'.
- Ensuring that the greens and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements.

10.17 Action Plan

10.17.1 Introduction

The tables below set out the action plan for bowls greens to guide the implementation of the strategy. The capital cost estimates are based upon Sport England's 'Facility Costs - Second Quarter of 2021' (2021).

10.17.2 Key strategic actions

Issues	Action	Lead	Partners	Resources	Priority
Protection of existing bowls greens	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing bowls greens.	HDC	-	-	High

10.17.3 Site-specific actions

Site	Issues	Action	Lead	Partners	Resources	Priority
Hart of Fleckney BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Houghton BC	Poor quality green	Improve maintenance	Houghton BC	-	£2,000 p.a.	Medium
Kibworth BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Little Bowden BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Lutterworth Town BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Market Harborough Conservative BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality changing • Poor disabled access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade changing • Improve disabled access 	MHCBC	-	£50,000 for changing £3,000 for disabled access	Medium
Medbourne BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality green • Poor quality changing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve maintenance • Upgrade changing 	Medbourne BC	-	£2,000 p.a. maintenance £50,000 for changing	-
North Kilworth BC	Poor disabled access	Improve disabled access	North Kilworth BC	-	£3,000	-
South Kilworth BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Wycliffe BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-