

Vale of the White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report Conclusions

FOOTBALL

January, 2024

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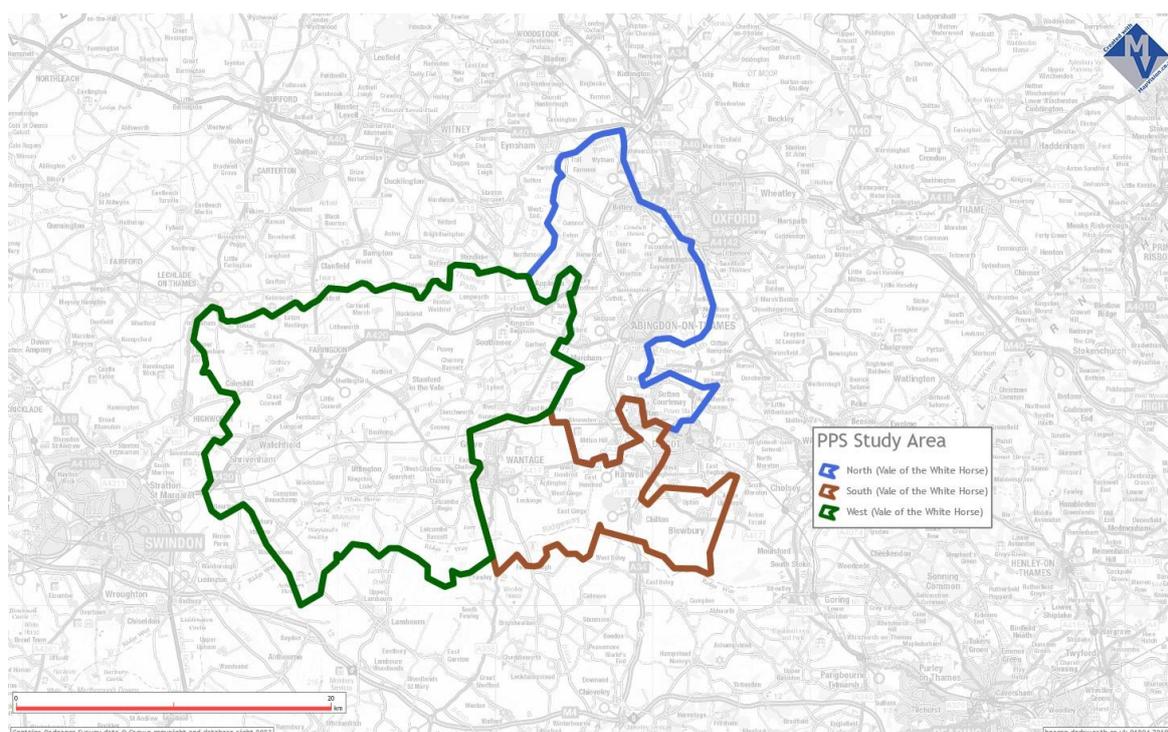
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FOOTBALL ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

1. This assessment uses data set out at length in the Assessment Tables, most of which are not repeated here. This is to make this report easily digestible and easy to understand. By necessity, this report summarises data as necessary and relates to as little detail as possible while still conveying the key points and issues required to arrive at conclusions and recommendations. Much of the place-specific data is set out in this report by sub-area. For clarity, the map below shows the areas covered by the sub-areas.

Figure 1: Vale of the White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy Sub-areas



Assessment Summary

2. Football has traditionally been played on grass pitches and the majority of matches seem likely to continue to do so in the short to medium term of the strategy period at least. The presence of grass pitches which can be protected where their use is justified by demand also helps to protect open space. However, grass pitches carry an on-going maintenance cost and there are other pressures such as provision of posts and nets, lack of available storage, and ensuring their quality in public areas, for example, keeping them free of litter, 'dog mess' and vandalism. Particularly poor, wet weather in recent winters has also led to cancellation of many matches and as a result of this and improving technology, the Football Association (FA) supports competitive play for affiliated football leagues on compliant artificial surface 3G pitches

which are on the FA 3G register¹. While these are reasonably costly to provide, capital funding support remains available from the Football Foundation and ongoing maintenance is typically provided for through receipts from hire kept in a “sinking fund”, which also typically covers the costs for replacement carpets / surfaces in the longer-term. While some clubs do have concerns about the cost of hiring pitch time, 3G pitches play a significant and important role in supporting all-weather play on a reliable surface, reducing impact on grass pitches, providing many more hours of playing time than grass pitches and avoiding the need for a greater number of grass pitches which would, in turn, also have to be sports-lit. Enabling good access to play also contributes positively to people’s health and wellbeing. and the need for a sinking fund to set aside funding for future refurbishment, as well as the potential resistance to play certain types of game on them and the cost for their use for clubs/ players. There remains a significant role for grass pitches in accommodating the large number of teams and age groups wanting to play and will likely remain the key supply for play for the foreseeable future.

3. Clubs need suitable training facilities. For youth and adult teams, as most grass pitches do not have or would not be suitable for spots-lights, teams need to use artificial surfaces to train. Teams will use 3G rubber crumb pitches, but also train on sand based artificial grass pitches (AGPs) sometimes due to the lack of supply of 3G pitches or cost / affordability. This can, however, introduce pressures on use of sand-based full size AGPs as it is the main surface used by hockey clubs for training and matches. Clubs also supplement their outdoor training with use of indoor sports halls during winter where available and cost effective.
4. In the Vale of the White Horse District Council area, in the 2022/23 season there were a total of 267 teams of which 60 are adult teams (6 of which are ladies teams), 115 are youth teams (U11-U18) and 115, 92 are mini-Soccer (U5-U10) teams. 2 teams are walking football teams. The majority of these use grass pitches as their home ground for matches and will train, particularly in the winter months on an AGP or indoors in a sports hall. AGPs and sports halls will also cater for casual / informal play and organised small-sided games, like 5-a-side leagues. This assessment and strategy are concerned only with demand arising on AGPs, with demand in sports halls picked up by the Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy (LFAS).
5. The summary picture for the number of clubs, teams and pitches for each sub-area is as follows.

¹ See <http://3g.thefa.me.uk/>

| Clubs and Pitches | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| Sub-area | Number of Clubs | Number of Teams | Number of Grass Pitches | | | | | | | |
| | | | Pitch Size | | | | | Community Use | | Not available |
| | | | 5v5 | 7v7 | 9v9 | 11v11 (youth) | 11v11 (adult) | Secure | Unsecure | |
| North | 26 | 154 | 14 | 27 | 12 | 20 | 52 | 60 | 13 | 52 |
| South | 10 | 57 | 4 | 18 | 6 | 10 | 17 | 31 | 6 | 18 |
| West | 9 | 56 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 17 | 18 | 25 | 5 | 23 |
| District | 45 | 267 | 21 | 56 | 22 | 47 | 87 | 116 | 24 | 93 |

6. In Vale of the White Horse, the largest clubs are Abingdon Youth (30 teams), Wantage Town FC (22) and Cumnor Minors (21). Blewbury Amazons Girls have 11 teams playing in South Oxfordshire and 12 in Vale of the White Horse (a total of 23).
7. In recent years, football has seen significant growth in the girls' and women's game, in particular. Supporting growth of the game for girls and women remains a priority for the FA and Football Foundation. There is a need to ensure that there is equality of access to both new and existing pitches and facilities for girls and women and that the quality of facility provision meets the needs of girls and women. This is somewhat easier for provision of new facilities where design can ensure that provision is made to up-to-date sports and accessibility standards (which also plays across to provision for people who do not recognise their gender as male or female, or may be transitioning) but it will be important for the strategy to consider how existing facilities can be improved or retrofitted to improve quality and accessibility of provision.

Grass Pitches

8. The Assessment Tables Report shows the location of pitches.
9. There are 140 grass pitches in use in the District, 24 of which have unsecure community use in and the remainder (116) have secure community use. There are 93 pitches not available for community use, the majority of which are on education sites.
10. It is important to understand the split between pitches with "unsecure" and "secure" community use. Secure community use gives confidence to clubs and teams that they have certainty of use of pitches in the long-term, whereas unsecure community use introduces a degree of risk where clubs and teams could find that they are moved from a ground or will not always be able to have readily available access to pitches.
11. Pitches were assessed for quality based on a "non-technical" audit undertaken towards the end of 2022. Quality ratings were then verified using club survey returns, Pitch Power records provided by the Football Foundation (FF) and Football Associations (FA) and FA knowledge. These quality ratings were also verified by the steering group members to ensure that the audit matched season-long quality in broad terms. Of the pitches with secure community use, 14 were "poor" quality, 94 were "standard" and 8 were "good". Of the unsecure community use pitches, 4 were rated as "poor" quality, 19 were rated as "standard" quality and 1 as "good". Using these quality ratings, a carrying capacity for each pitch has been assigned with (on an adult size pitch) a "poor" quality pitch usually capable of hosting 1 match per week, a "standard" pitch able to host 2 matches and a "good" pitch 3 matches per week before surface quality is compromised. Secure pitches with a "poor" rating were 1 pitch at Anson Field, 2 at Abingdon United FC, 2 at Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre, 1 at Harwell Recreation Ground, 1 at Tugwell Field, 1 at Tucker Park Recreation Ground, 1 at West Hanney Playing Field, 3 at Grove Recreation Lane, 2 at Boxhill Recreation Ground and 3 at Southern Town

Park. Unsecure pitches with a “poor” rating were 2 at Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground.

12. Of the secure community use pitches, the changing facilities at 6 were rated as “poor” with others “standard” quality and on unsecure community use sites the facilities at 1 pitch were rated as “poor”. The condition and overall quality of ancillary facilities is important not only in order to improve the quality of experience for all players and help to maintain and grow the number of players in the game, but it is of particular importance to support growth in the women’s game. From data and information provided, changing facilities seem to be capable of accommodating people who do not identify as male or female gender or are transitioning, by adapting existing provision as necessary. It is a recognised challenge, financially, to be able to retrofit gender neutral or unisex provision into older facilities (although this does not mean that it should not be addressed), but there will be opportunities in particular, moving forward, for new facilities to be able to accommodate fully provision needed across all gender types.
13. Spatially, there is a good distribution of grass pitches across the sub-areas.
14. The greatest amount of use of the grass pitches is over the weekends for matches, with few being used for weekday evening training due to a lack of sports-lighting (training only becomes viable on most grass pitches at the very start and end of the football season when evenings are lighter). However, the provision of sports-lighting, while increasing the opportunity to use a grass pitch, can lead to the quality of the pitch being compromised and pitches with sports-lighting, usually in place at higher tier football club grounds with teams playing a better standard than most teams, are commonly protected from over-use by clubs. The Football Foundation will not support funding bids for static sports-lighting at grass pitches for teams outside of the National League System (NLS), although FF will fund portable lights where they will not be used on pitches which have received support from Grass Pitch Maintenance Funding. Provision of sports lighting for most grass pitches, to increase carrying capacities and use, is therefore unlikely to be a realistic first option.
15. There is currently a supply (carrying capacity) on secure community use grass pitches in the District of 32 match equivalents on mini (5v5) pitches, 68 match equivalents on mini (7v7) pitches, 28 match equivalents on youth (9v9) pitches, 34 on youth 11v11 and 56 on adult 11v11 pitches.
16. On unsecure community use pitches there is a supply of 8 match equivalents per week on mini (5v5) pitches, 14 on mini (7v7) pitches, 3 match equivalents on youth (9v9) pitches, 2 on youth 11v11 and 15 on adult 11v11 pitches.
17. Comparing the carrying capacity of grass pitches with actual use on pitches with secure community access, 12 pitches are considered as being overplayed for the amount of play that their quality rating suggests is appropriate, while 73 have some capacity for additional play and 4 are being played at the appropriate capacity that their quality can accommodate.
18. 3 unsecure pitches are overplayed, while 10 have some capacity for additional play and 4 are being played at the appropriate capacity that their quality can accommodate.

6. Figures suggest that, on a few sites, there may be an opportunity to rationalise or repurpose pitches formerly or currently marked out to create either pitch space for other sports or return solely to leisure / recreation use where the capacity provided by the pitch is replaced at a better quality site and / or strategic site. However, when considering alongside projections of future demand, any “headroom” capacity will likely be required to accommodate additional demand, particularly if additional 3G provision cannot play a full part in accommodating additional demand (as explored later in the report). In cases where there is an opportunity to consider a change use from former or current football use to other sports or leisure use, these will be highlighted in the action plan.
19. It is important to note that the figures above often mask “real use” on the ground. The figures sum ratings by pitch type and size within sub-areas and so issues at specific sites are hidden by this data. And in relation to individual pitches, a figure suggesting that there is headroom capacity which can be used may not be available in reality, for example, if poor weather renders a pitch unplayable for a period of time, or if the headroom capacity is not available when it is needed, for example, if a club has several teams in the same age group which need to use the pitch at the same time. The table above therefore only paints part of the picture and the reality of available capacity needs to be tested through “sense checking” from other evidence gathered during the process.
20. In summary, there are a number of reasons why any current notionally spare capacity should be retained, as “headroom capacity”, at least until the end of the strategy period:
- i) Not all spare capacity is likely to be available capacity on the days and at the times that might be required for it to be used;
 - ii) Not all spare capacity is capacity available wholly on single sites – i.e. most spare capacity arises from pitches already in use and to lose the capacity on these pitches would mean that teams would have to be moved to alternative pitches or sites to play home matches which could be unacceptable in terms of proximity to the team’s core supply of players, club roots, etc.;
 - iii) There may be unforeseeable issues in delivering 3G provision identified which could lead to a delay in the provision of the capacity as anticipated;
 - iv) To allow for flexibility of when demand changes season to season both within football and between sports and for any growth in demand beyond that contained within the projected demand; and,
 - v) Should all teams calculated in the projections of demand for 3Gs not migrate to a 3G surface to play matches (for example, due to cost, distance away from a 3G pitch, favouring their current home pitch as a preferred ground, teams normally playing on a grass pitch not wanting to play on a 3G surface due to “unfair advantage” for the home team, lack of suitable footwear, etc.).
21. Within the context of supply / demand balance figures, some of the individual pitches and sites which are under particular pressure from overplay are:
- North Sub-area
 - Abingdon United FC
 - Anson Field (11v11 pitch)

- Appleford Recreation Ground (9v9 pitch)
- Southern Town Park (1 x 11v11, 2 x 9v9)
- The Heights, Milton Utd. (1 x 11v11 pitch)
- Closes Field (1 x 11v11)
- Fogwell Road Recreation Ground (1 x 7v7)
- Southern Bypass Ground (1 x 11v11)
- South Sub-area
 - Harwell Labs (1 X 11v11)
 - East Hendred Sports Ground (1 x 11v11)
 - Grove Recreation Lane, Grove Challengers FC (1 x 11v11)
- West
 - Shrivenham FC (1 x 11v11)
 - Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground (1 x 11v11)

22. Outside of the supply / demand balance figures, there are also sites where clubs and the FA have suggested demand cannot be accommodated on grass pitches (some of which correlate with the figures above):

- North Sub-area
 - St Edmunds FC (Boxhill Recreation Ground, Wootton and Dry Community Centre and Appleford Recreation Ground)
 - Abingdon Youth FC (Southern Town Park)
 - Steventon FC
- South Sub-area
 - Ardington & Lockinge Youth FC
 - Blewbury Amazons Girls FC
 - East Hendred AFC
 - Grove Challengers FC (Grove Recreation Lane)
 - Wantage Town FC
- West
 - Kingston Colts FC

23. Across the area, other types of demand (unmet or latent) have been identified by several clubs. In addition, the BBFA has identified, based on its records, that clubs in Didcot and Abingdon have waiting lists of players wanting to join and that clubs' ability to accommodate them is affected by the availability of grass and artificial pitches. This issue relates also to South Oxfordshire district. The amount of unmet and latent demand has not always been quantified by clubs. Clubs have, however, identified the following issues which would help them accommodate unmet and latent demand and accommodate a greater number of teams in the future:

| Sub-area and Club | Designated home ground | Additional grass pitches for matches | Additional grass pitches for training | Sports-lighting at current grass pitch | Access to an artificial grass pitch for training | Artificial pitches at an affordable price | Additional / better changing facilities | Additional coaches | Additional volunteers | Additional parking |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| North Sub-area | | | | | | | | | | |
| Botley Boys and Girls FC | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Abingdon Youth FC | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| St Edmunds FC | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Steventon FC | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| South Sub-area | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ardington & Lockinge Youth FC | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Blewbury Amazons Girls FC | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| East Hendred AFC | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Grove Challengers FC | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| Wantage Town FC | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| West Sub-area | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hanney Youth FC | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Kingston Colts FC | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| Letcombe FC | | | | | ✓ | | | | | |
| Shrivenham FC | | | | | ✓ | | | | | |

24. Some exported demand was identified from FA records and club survey responses by: Vale of the White Horse Schools FA (often having to play in Oxford); Botley FC Boys & Girls U11 (2 teams) and U12s (having to play in Oxford); Faringdon Town Vets (having to play in Radcot, West Oxfordshire) and Abingdon Town Vets Exiles (having to play in Thame, South Oxfordshire). Provision should be made in the strategy for these teams to return to the district to play. There is a small amount of imported demand from Harwell and Hendred Youth U15 (South Oxfordshire) which play at East Hendred. While not strictly imported or exported demand, there is likely to be a lot of cross-boundary movement of players between where they live and play football, particularly in Didcot (between Vale of the White Horse and South Oxfordshire), but also other large settlements such as Abingdon and Oxford.
25. There are also a number of pitches which are no longer used (i.e. closed, "mothballed" or lapsed) but which could play a role in future supply, depending on the solution developed for accommodating demand in the strategy.
26. One way of reducing the need for additional pitches to cater for existing overplay and additional demand is to improve existing pitches which are poor quality and cannot host many matches before they become unplayable. Quality improvements also provide a significant benefit to the experience of players. However, this is not always feasible to achieve, for example, if a pitch is in a high flood risk area, or where improvements are not always a practical solution because there might simply be too many teams needing to play matches at the same time, in which case no amount of pitch quality improvements will result in the pitch hosting an increased number of matches (unless kick-off times can be changed (which is not always possible)). We have therefore explored scenarios where "poor" quality pitches are improved to a "standard" quality and one where both "poor" and "standard" pitches are improved to a "good" quality. Such improvements improve carrying capacity and therefore the number of matches which can be hosted. The scenarios have provided figures for both unsecure and secure community pitches together and any practical quality improvements at unsecure pitches would need to be done following commitment from the provider or owner of the pitches to guarantee community use through agreement to secure use.
27. These scenarios suggest the following:

| “Poor” and “Standard” Grass Pitches Improved to “Good” Quality | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--|--|
| Sub Area | Pitch size | Agreed current Carrying Capacity for Community Use | Additional capacity introduced from improving to “good” quality (match equivalents) | Equates to the following number of pitches of capacity introduced from improvements (rounded) |
| North | 11v11 | 47 | 35 | 11 |
| | 9v9 | 19 | 21 | 4-5 |
| | 7v7 and 5v5 | 68 | 52 | 8 |
| South | 11v11 | 30 | 23 | 7 |
| | 9v9 | 6 | 6 | 1-2 |
| | 7v7 and 5v5 | 36 | 18 | 3 |
| West | 11v11 | 31 | 20 | 6 |
| | 9v9 | 5 | 7 | 1-2 |
| | 7v7 and 5v5 | 18 | 12 | 4 |

| “Poor” Grass Pitches Improved to “Standard” Quality | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|--|--|
| Sub Area | Pitch size | Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use | Additional capacity introduced from improving to “standard” quality (match equivalents) | Equates to the following number of pitches of capacity introduced from improvements (rounded) |
| North | 11v11 | 47 | 4 | 2 |
| | 9v9 | 19 | 3 | 1-2 |
| | 7v7 and 5v5 | 68 | 12 | 3 |
| South | 11v11 | 30 | 3 | 1 |
| | 9v9 | 6 | - | - |

| “Poor” Grass Pitches Improved to “Standard” Quality | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|--|--|
| Sub Area | Pitch size | Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use | Additional capacity introduced from improving to “standard” quality (match equivalents) | Equates to the following number of pitches of capacity introduced from improvements (rounded) |
| | 7v7 and 5v5 | 36 | 2 | 1 |
| West | 11v11 | 31 | 2 | 1 |
| | 9v9 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| | 7v7 and 5v5 | 18 | 2 | 1 |

28. In our experience, while seeking to improve all pitches which are “poor” and “standard” quality to “good” results in a greater amount of capacity which can be accommodated, this is not always practical or affordable to achieve, or the right solution for clubs. It is usually more appropriate to plan for improvements from “poor” to “standard”. If, then, some pitches require further improvement to “good”, perhaps due to high demand on a particular site, this should be considered as a next step on that site. If improvements are achievable on-site and they necessitate improvements from “poor” to “good”, this should, of course, be done (i.e. stepped or phased improvements from one quality rating to the next do not have to be done first).
29. There are additional grass pitches “in the pipeline” which are likely to be delivered in the near future. We consider “pipeline” pitches to be those with a reasonable degree of certainty that they can be delivered, for example, if they have planning permission or funding or are in the process of gaining either. Other proposals can be considered as “aspirations” which might come forward in the future, and will be subject to consideration as options in the strategy and against the strategy’s recommendations. Proposals considered as pipeline pitches for the purposes of the assessment are as follows. Should any of these pipeline commitments not come forward, this will result in the capacity they provide needing to be provided in addition to the capacity recommended in this assessment.

| Sub-area | Site | Pitch Size and Surface |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| South | Valley Park, Didcot (Alma Park) | 2 x grass 9v9 |
| | Valley Park, Didcot (Common Park) | 2 x grass 11v11 |
| | Valley Park, Didcot (Common Park) | 2 x grass 9v9 |
| | Alfredian Park (Wantage FC) | 1 x sports-lit full-size 3G |
| | Crab Hill, Wantage | 3 x grass 11v11 (2 adult, 1 youth) |
| | Grove Airfield | 4 x grass 11v11 (+1 pitch as replacement for existing FC 11v11 pitches being given over to RFC) |
| | Grove Airfield | 4 x grass 9v9 |
| | Grove Airfield | 2 x grass 7v7 |
| | Grove Airfield | 2 x grass 5v5 |
| North | Forest Side (Kennington FC) | 1 x grass 9v9 (quality improvement) |
| | Forest Side (Kennington FC) | 2 x grass 7v7 (quality improvements) |
| | Playfield Road (Kennington FC) | 2 x 11v11 (quality improvements) |
| | Playfield Road (Kennington FC) | 1 x grass 5v5 (quality improvements) |
| | Playfield Road (Kennington FC) | 1 x grass 7v7 (quality improvements) |

| Sub-area | Site | Pitch Size and Surface |
|----------|--|---|
| | Land North of Dunmore Road / North of Abingdon, Abingdon | 1 x grass 11v11 (additional) |
| | Land North of Dunmore Road / North of Abingdon, Abingdon | 2 x grass 7v7 (additional, in cricket outfield) |
| West | Faringdon Community College | 1 x full-size sports-lit 3G |

30. Provision of capacity during the strategy period needs to address overplay at the current time, latent, unmet, aspirational or displaced demand (if identified) and the additional demand projected to arise from population growth and participation rate change.

31. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (endorsed by the FA) has been used to project potential additional demand to 2041 based on population projections and estimates of change in participation rates agreed with the FA. Results have suggested that the following additional capacities are required (numbers of grass pitches). The calculator presents results for “adult”, “youth” and “mini soccer” pitches. For the purposes of analysis we equate these terms to “adult” being all 11v11 pitches, “youth” being U11-U18 age groups and “mini soccer” being U10 and below (5v5 and 7v7). The projection figures do not include demand for small-sided 5, 6 and 7-a-side teams in informal, social or small-sided leagues, which are considered in the section below dealing with artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

| Sub-area | Adult football 11v11 | Youth football | Mini soccer |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| North | 7.2 | 8.66 | 7.29 |
| South | 2.53 | 6.49 | 5.91 |
| West | 2.94 | 2.4 | 3.81 |
| Total (rounded) | 13 | 18 | 17 |

32. Following further consideration of this assessment report, compared to their experience of team growth over the previous 8 years (36% in the Vale of White Horse) the FA and Football Foundation have indicated that the increase in team numbers to 2041 seen “on the ground” could be higher than that projected from previously agreed participation rate increases and projections of population growth. It is unclear whether recent increases in participation will continue at the current rate, or whether they will plateau / slow, and therefore, the Stage E “delivery” process, following adoption of the PPS, becomes particularly important and should be utilised to allow for regular reviews of team numbers / demand (to enable the PPS to be updated accordingly).

33. The numeric summary picture for supply and demand in sub-areas, now and in the future follows. These figures need to be read alongside the picture “on the ground” and any “headroom” capacity indicated is a) not “spare” or “surplus” to needs and demand, but simply means that there is numeric capacity. Figures summed at this level will mask the detail of individual sites and in some occasions there may be very little capacity (or time slots) to accommodate

any more play on a pitch, for example, additional players or teams, or no additional coaching or volunteer time to extend training time for teams.

| Football Supply / Demand Grass Pitches Snapshot (unsecure and secure community use combined) | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--|---|--|---|------------------|-----------|
| Sub-area | Pitch Type | Supply | Demand | Supply / demand balance | Additional capacity generated improving “poor” quality pitches to “standard” | Projected additional future demand (calculator) | Pipeline pitches being delivered (based on “good” quality provision) | Total demand required to 2041 ^ | | |
| | | (match equivalents) | | | | | | | (no. of pitches) | |
| | | ^^ | ^^^ | | | | | | | |
| North | 11v11 | 47 | 34.75 | +12.25 | +4 | 21.6 | 3 | 13.35 | 7 | 4 |
| | 9v9 | 19 | 14 | +5 | +3 | 34.64 | | 26.64 | 13 | 7* |
| | 7v7 | 42 | 14.75 | +27.25 | +12 | 43.74 | 12 | 0 (25 match equiv. headroom) | | |
| | 5v5 | 26 | 8.5 | +17.5 | | | | | | |
| South | 11v11 | 30 | 21.75 | +8.25 | +3 | 7.68 | 18 | 14.4 | 7 | 5 |
| | 9v9 | 6 | 3.75 | +2.25 | - | 27.4 | 36 | 0 (10.85 match equiv. headroom capacity) | | |
| | 7v7 | 28 | 12 | +16 | +2 | 37.2 | 36 | 0 (22.55 match equiv. headroom capacity) | | |
| | 5v5 | 8 | 2.25 | +5.75 | | | | | | |
| West | 11v11 | 31 | 19.25 | +11.75 | +2 | 8.82 | | 0 (4.93 match equiv. headroom) | | |
| | 9v9 | 5 | 4 | +1 | +1 | 9.6 | | 7.6 | 4 | 2* |
| | 7v7 | 10 | 5.25 | +14.75 | +2 | 22.86 | | 1.16 | 1 | 1 |
| | 5v5 | 8 | 3.5 | +4.5 | | | | | | |
| District | 11v11 | 108 | 75.75 | +32.25 | +9 | 38.1 | | 22.82 | 14 | 8 |
| | 9v9 | 30 | 21.75 | +8.25 | +4 | 71.64 | | 23.39 | 17 | 9* |
| | 7v7 | 80 | 32 | +58 | +16 | 103.8 | | 46.39 | 0 | 0 |
| | 5v5 | 42 | 14.25 | +27.75 | | | match equiv. headroom | | | |

Notes: District totals may not sum equally to summing sub-areas due to rounding.

^ zero (o) means that there is no additional need for new pitches, with demand able to be accommodated by supply. Figures all rounded up to nearest match equivalent or whole pitch. ^^ based upon pitch demand being fulfilled by “standard quality” pitches accommodating 2 match equivalents for 11v11 pitches, 2 match equivalents for 9v9 pitches and 4 match equivalents for 7v7 and 5v5 mini soccer pitches. ^^ based upon pitch demand being fulfilled by “good quality” pitches accommodating 3 match equivalents for 11v11 pitches, 4 match equivalents for 9v9 pitches and 6 match equivalents for 7v7 and 5v5 mini soccer pitches. * It should be noted that because the calculator only gives an output for “youth” and does not split pitch type between 9v9 and 11v11, some of this additional demand is likely to be provided as youth 11v11 pitches and not solely 9v9 pitches. For the purposes of planning, sufficient land should be made available for youth 11v11 pitches to be marked out, within which 9v9 pitches can be marked out as necessary depending on specific local demand.

33. Figures should be treated with caution, as explained above, they do not always give the real picture at individual sites and figures are summed across whole sub-areas. They should be treated as a “top end” figure and the demand for and provision of additional pitches will need to be monitored to understand realistic demand on the ground to ensure supply accurately reflects demand prior to any new pitches being provided (particularly on new grounds). The combination of provision between grass and artificial pitches will also need to be provided to fit with real demand².
34. This additional demand may not require new additional grass pitches, as if the “headroom” capacity in unsecure and secure grass pitches could be maximised (and if unsecure pitches could be made secure), the capacity required for demand to be accommodated on new pitches could fall. This is without any of this additional demand being accommodated on 3G full size pitches at weekends for matches, and assumes “good” quality pitches are provided and that unsecure community use pitches gain security of community use. A 3G strategy (see the next section) could also reduce the number of grass pitches required as they would provide some weekend match capacity. If these assumptions do not come to fruition, a higher number of additional new grass pitches would be required and the key caveat to apply is that practical use of pitches can mean that figures showing headroom capacity may not present the real situation on the ground, and this is why these figures must be sense checked against dialogue held with clubs and taking into account their actual type of demand on the pitches they use and real impact of other things such as poor weather. Equally, some quantified headroom capacity may not be available in the right place to meet demand.

Artificial Grass Pitches

35. 3G (third generation) artificial grass pitches (AGPs) can provide a secure and high-quality surface on which to play football where it meets FIFA Quality and is on the FA 3G Register (and rugby (where they meet the World Cup 22 standard³)⁴.
36. For the avoidance of doubt, the following table defines pitch sizes, teams and age groups used in the Playing Pitch Strategy.

² while projections have made assumptions about use, should these assumptions not fit actual demand needs “on the ground”, the balance between grass pitch and artificial pitch provision may need to change.

³ World Cup 22 relates to the standard required of artificial turf for rugby. See http://www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs/regulations/04/21/57/42157_pdf.pdf for the full regulation.

⁴ Hockey is played on sand based / filled and water filled pitches with a 25mm pile.

| Age group | Type | 3G Size (and % area) | Rec. size without run-off | | Rec. size with run off | |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|
| | | | Length (m) | Width (m) | Length (m) | Width (m) |
| Mini soccer U7/U8 | 5v5 | Compact (16%) | 37 | 27 | 43 | 33 |
| Mini soccer U9/U10 | 7v7 | Third (32%) | 55 | 37 | 61 | 43 |
| Youth U11/U12 | 9v9 | Half (53%) | 73 | 46 | 79 | 52 |
| Youth U13/U14 | 11v11 | Two-thirds (66%) | 82 | 50 | 88 | 56 |
| Youth U15/U16 | 11v11 | Four-fifths (79%) | 91 | 55 | 97 | 61 |
| Youth U17/U18 | 11v11 | Full (100%) | 100 | 64 | 106 | 70 |
| Over 18 (adult / senior ages) | 11v11 | Full (100%) | 100 | 64 | 106 | 70 |

37. For football, in recent years, the popularity of AGPs has increased with most informal play (5, 6 and 7-a-side in particular) and some training taking place on AGPs where cost is not prohibitive. There is a balance to be struck between affordability for users and ensuring sufficient funds are captured to properly run and maintain AGPs (in addition to a desire from commercial operators for any profit to be made). Some teams will train on sand based AGPs (often due to cost / affordability, proximity or availability). However, the preference for football use is for 3G pitches which meet the performance standard of FIFA Quality accreditation, which cannot be used for hockey. These pitches could also accommodate non-contact rugby union activity, however where contact rugby activity is to take place the 3G pitch would need to be constructed to meet WR22 compliance, surfaces can be used for just training or with appropriate line markings could also accommodate rugby union match play. 3G pitches can host competitive football matches (where on the “FA Register”⁵) given advances in surface improvement and the obvious advantages in quality and reliability, and therefore playing capacity, over traditional grass pitches which require much more maintenance and where bad weather can result in high numbers of match cancellations (or postponements) leading to backlog and extra game pressure during a season and fixture congestion in the latter part of the season. Compared to a single grass pitch, an AGPs has a higher cost in terms of maintenance and funds required (sinking fund) for replacement in the long-term, but they provide a reliable all-weather and durable surface enabling many more teams to access a pitch for both training and matches than if grass pitches or indoor venues had to be relied upon (for example, an equivalent of around 15 full-size fenced grass pitches, most of which needing to be sports-lit, would need to be provided). AGPs therefore provide clear

⁵ See <http://3g.thefa.me.uk/>

value for money with regards to the capacity provided. The most significant benefit to clubs using or which have the opportunity to access an AGP is that they provide evening capacity and capacity during wet weather.

38. There are no secure use 3G pitches in the district, representing a risk to supply and club use of existing AGPs. There is one full-sized 3G pitch (Tilsley Park, Abingdon, also WR22 compliant), and 10 small 3G pitches (5 x 5v5 at Brookes Sport, Botley, 3 x 5v5 and 1 x 7v7 at Tilsely Park and 1 x 5v5 at Harwell Primary School). The 3G pitches at Tilsely Park are on the FA Register which enables competitive matches to be played⁶. While the pitches at Tilsely Park are not owned by the education sector, they are operated by a school, meaning that they still remain at some risk to accessibility of the site. The 3G pitches are supplemented (for football training, as well as hockey use at Tilsely Park) by sand based pitches at Radley College, Abingdon (3 x full-size), Tilsely Park (2 x full-size), 1 x 9v9 at St Hugh’s School, Faringdon and a small pitch at UTC Oxfordshire (7v7). There is a sand based AGP at the Defence Academy, Shrivenham, although this site is treated as having no real community of use with it being an MoD education site which is likely to see predominant use for its own sports clubs / teams. All AGPs listed are sports-lit.
39. Appendix 1 shows the location of pitches.
40. The quality of all AGPs with community use was rated either as “standard” or “good”. However, we did receive some comments from football teams in relation to AGPs at Radley College and Tilsely Park that they were not always suitable to play on (e.g. through freezing or too much sand on the surface).
41. Between them, the unsecure community use 3G and sand-based pitches in the district host the equivalent of 329 full-size pitch equivalent hours of capacity / supply during peak hours⁷.

| Summary: UNSECURE AGPs (full-size equivalent hours) | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Sub Area | Surface type | Supply (carrying capacity) (hours in peak period) | Demand (hours used on average per week) | Balance (available capacity) |
| North | 3G | 133 | 68 | 65 |
| | Sand/Water | 175 | 155 | 20 |
| South | 3G | - | - | - |
| | Sand/Water | 12 | 7 | 5 |
| West | 3G | - | - | - |
| | Sand/Water | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| District | 3G | 133 | 68 | 65 |
| | Sand/Water | 196 | 163 | 34 |

Notes: Figures rounded to nearest full hour.

42. The split in supply and demand between pitches is shown below.

⁶ See the FA Football Turf Pitch Register (<http://3g.thefa.me.uk/>)

⁷ Peak hours / peak period for AGPs is considered to be Mon-Thurs 5pm-9pm, Fri 5-7pm and Sat & Sun 9am-5pm. We translate smaller pitch hours to full-size equivalent on a pro-rata basis in order to sum figures.

| Pitch Name | Pitch Type | Pitch Size | Hours open in peak period | Hours used for football weekend | Hours used for football weekday evenings | Hours used for rugby weekend | Hours used for rugby weekday evenings | Hours used for hockey weekend | Hours used for hockey weekday evenings | Hours used for other sports weekend | Hours used for other sports weekday | <i>Hours used <u>full size equivalent</u></i> | <i>Hours unused <u>full size equivalent</u></i> |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| North | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BROOKES SPORT BOTLEY 4 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | 4 | 22 | | | | | | | 6.5 | 3 |
| BROOKES SPORT BOTLEY 5 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | 4 | 22 | | | | | | | 6.5 | 3 |
| BROOKES SPORT BOTLEY 6 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | 4 | 22 | | | | | | | 6.5 | 3 |
| BROOKES SPORT BOTLEY 7 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | 4 | 22 | | | | | | | 6.5 | 3 |
| BROOKES SPORT BOTLEY 8 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | 4 | 22 | | | | | | | 6.5 | 3 |
| RADLEY COLLEGE SPORTS CENTRE 11 | AGP - sand | Full – size | 34 | 16 | 18 | | | | | | | 34 | 0 |

| Pitch Name | Pitch Type | Pitch Size | Hours open in peak period | Hours used for football weekend | Hours used for football weekday evenings | Hours used for rugby weekend | Hours used for rugby weekday evenings | Hours used for hockey weekend | Hours used for hockey weekday evenings | Hours used for other sports weekend | Hours used for other sports weekday | Hours used <u>full size equivalent</u> | Hours unused <u>full size equivalent</u> |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| RADLEY COLLEGE SPORTS CENTRE 12 | AGP - sand | Full - size | 34 | 16 | 18 | | | | | | | 34 | 0 |
| RADLEY COLLEGE SPORTS CENTRE 13 | AGP - sand | Full - size | 34 | 16 | 18 | | | | | | | 34 | 0 |
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 6 | AGP - sand | Full - size | 38 | | 4.5 | | | | 7 | | | 11.5 | 26.5 |
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 2 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | | 12 | | | | | | | 3 | 6.5 |
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 3 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | | 12 | | | | | | | 3 | 6.5 |
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 4 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (7v7) | 38 | | 14 | | | | | | | 5 | 8 |
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 5 | AGP - sand | Full - size | 38 | | 16.5 | | | 8 | 0.5 | | | 25 | 13 |

| Pitch Name | Pitch Type | Pitch Size | Hours open in peak period | Hours used for football weekend | Hours used for football weekday evenings | Hours used for rugby weekend | Hours used for rugby weekday evenings | Hours used for hockey weekend | Hours used for hockey weekday evenings | Hours used for other sports weekend | Hours used for other sports weekday | Hours used <u>full size equivalent</u> | Hours unused <u>full size equivalent</u> |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 1 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 38 | | 12 | | | | | | | 3 | 6.5 |
| TILSLEY PARK SPORTS COMPLEX 7 | AGP - 3G | Full - size | 38 | 3 | 8 | | 1 | | | | | 12 | 26* |
| South | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HARWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL 1 | AGP - 3G | Small-sided (5v5) | 34 | 1 | 17 | | | | | | | 4.5 | 4 |
| UTC OXFORDSHIRE 1 | AGP - sand | Small-sided (7v7) | 36 | | 20 | | | | | | | 6.75 | 5.5 |

Notes: * Of this 26 hours of capacity, not all is available. The pitch is bordered by the running track and so 3G pitch use is limited by use of the track by the athletics club. Football clubs report that there is no available capacity on the 3G pitch on weekday evenings. Booking sheets indicate that 12 hours of pitch time is unavailable during weekday evenings. This means that there is a total of 10 hours of availability for football and rugby use on weekday evenings, and 1 hour after taking into account football and rugby bookings.

43. There is always going to be a degree of spare capacity on smaller than full size pitches at weekends with their size meaning that they cannot accommodate teams playing most age group formats. The same is true of sand-based pitches unless hockey matches can fill supply, with competitive football matches on artificial pitches not sanctioned unless on a 3G surface. Full size and smaller size artificial pitches also see a dip in use on Friday evenings when teams do not often wish to train.
44. It is important to note that, while 5v5 pitches (including those which are fenced “pens”) can provide opportunities for clubs to do a limited amount of training, they often have little or no run-off and cannot be used for matches. They are also a popular choice for social play and 5-a-side leagues, reducing the time available to clubs which may wish to utilise them (although, conversely this can direct demand for 5-a-side play away from larger 3G pitches allowing club use at those locations). While 5v5 pitch use is important for football as a whole, offering flexibility for play outside of a formal club structure, and many players using 5v5 pitches for 5-a-side will play for formal club teams too (and we therefore take note of them in terms of importance of supply), we have been asked by the FA not to factor the supply they provide into current supply / demand calculations which inform future demand and provision for clubs. This is because as a size and format they cannot provide sufficient flexibility for club use for training for different age groups and cannot host matches for most teams. Figures and commentary which follow below on recommendations for additional 3G pitch provision take this into account.
45. Considering catchment areas based on a 20-minute drive-time for ease of access to secure full-size 3G provision and a smaller catchment to small secure use 3G pitches, most of North and south-eastern part of the South sub-area have access to an unsecure 3G pitch. Looking at sand AGPs, the North sub-area, again, is well-served, with a small part of the South sub-area having coverage and the West sub-area only served by the AGP at Shirvenham, which is unlikely to see real community use. There is therefore a significant gap in supply to provide football teams the chance to train on an AGP west of a line drawn between Harwell and Kingson Bagpuize.
46. With regard to current known changes in supply, it is understood that there are two 3G pitches with sports-lighting “in the pipeline” (where there is commitment to delivery in terms of either planning permission or funding confirmed, for example) located at Faringdon Community College (full-size, West sub-area) and at Alfredian Park (Wantage FC, South sub-area). There are also aspirations for 3G pitches at The Heights, Milton Hill (at Milton Utd., full-size, North sub-area near Didcot) and at Stanford-in-the-Vale (unknown size, West sub-area), but there is not sufficient certainty of them being delivered for them to be considered as part of forthcoming supply, instead, forming options which could be followed up during the delivery stage of the PPS should demand require additional provision in those areas. The conclusions from the assessment and strategy should inform the final 3G size of pitch to be delivered at the sites where the size is not yet certain.
46. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (endorsed by the Football Association) has been used to project potential demand forward to 2041 based on population projections and estimates of change in participation rates agreed with the FA. Results have suggested an additional capacity required of almost

96 hours for football if each additional team generated by increasing demand and population growth by the end of the strategy period is to have an opportunity to train on a 3G pitch, equivalent to 2.52 full size sports-lit pitches (rounded up to 3 in reality).

47. However, this does not necessarily mean that additional physical pitch space must be provided. Accommodating this projected capacity need should first be catered for within existing headroom capacity at existing 3G pitches first, if feasible⁸, and where anticipated demand is likely to occur near to existing pitches with headroom capacity, and secondly consideration of the role and demand that football teams and informal / casual use will continue to play at sand-based pitches. That role will need to be explored alongside hockey use where pitches are the home ground of hockey clubs. Care will need to be taken with regard to new 3G capacity with regard to the potential impact on the long-term viability of sand-based pitches where those sand-based pitch providers rely on income from football bookings to remain viable. 3G provision for football should also be considered alongside use by rugby, most likely to accommodate training needs.

48. The summary picture for supply and demand, now and in the future is as follows.

⁸ It will not always be feasible for theoretical headroom capacity on 3G pitches to be utilised, from a practical point of view. Time slots available may not suit timing of when clubs can or wish to use it.

| Sub-area | A. Number of 3G pitches required for current no. of teams (and full size equivalent peak hours) * | B. Number of 3G pitches currently in supply (and full size equivalent peak hours) | C. Supply / suggested demand balance (A-B) ^ | D. Headroom capacity on existing 3Gs (full-size equivalent hours) ** | | E. Pipeline 3G pitches (full size equivalent peak hours) ^^ | F. Additional 3G capacity required (hours) (calculator scenario 2) | G. Residual number of additional hours on full-size 3G pitches required by 2041 ((C+F)-E) | H. Equivalent number of additional full-size pitches required (club demand) (G/38) |
|----------|--|--|---|---|------------|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | Secure *** | Un-secure | | | | |
| North | 4 pitches (152 peak time available hours) (for 154 teams) | 8 x 5v5, 1 x 7v7, 1 x full-size (115 peak time full-size equivalent hours, equivalent to 3 full-size pitches) | -1 full-size pitches (37 full-size equivalent hours) | - | 56.5 hours | 0 | 47 hours (1.22 pitches) | 84 | 2 |

Commentary:

No secure use 3Gs in the sub-area.

Columns A – C suggest that there is a 3G pitch deficit in the sub-area.

Column D, however, suggests that there is some headroom capacity available to book in some locations. However, much of this is at weekends and also on 5v5 pitches which are only mainly suitable only for social and small-sided play and mini soccer – there is no run-off and 5v5 “pens” do not provide flexibility of use beyond 10 players at any one time. There is only 1 hour of existing headroom capacity, on the full-size 3G (at Tilsley Park) as its use on weekday evenings is impacted by use of the athletics track which encompasses the pitch. This is supported by information from clubs which suggests that little or no time is usually available on the pitches (including the sand based AGPs) for any additional slots to be booked outside of any block bookings at peak times and evenings during the week. On the smaller pitches, most availability is at weekends, when clubs do not typically need to book smaller pitches for training (as matches are played over the weekend, and on grass, for most age groups requiring a larger size pitch).

| Sub-area | A. Number of 3G pitches required for current no. of teams (and full size equivalent peak hours) * | B. Number of 3G pitches currently in supply (and full size equivalent peak hours) | C. Supply / suggested demand balance (A-B) ^ | D. Headroom capacity on existing 3Gs (full-size equivalent hours) ** | | E. Pipeline 3G pitches (full size equivalent peak hours) ^^ | F. Additional 3G capacity required (hours) (calculator scenario 2) | G. Residual number of additional hours on full-size 3G pitches required by 2041 ((C+F)-E) | H. Equivalent number of additional full-size pitches required (club demand) (G/38) |
|---|--|--|---|---|-----------|---|---|--|---|
| | | | | Secure *** | Un-secure | | | | |
| <p>Column H suggests 2.2 full-size sports-lit 3G pitches are necessary. However, if supply from unflexible 5v5 pitches is discounted from total supply for most club types of use, an additional 76 hours of provision (2 x full-size sports-lit pitches assuming 38 hours supply per pitch) should be factored into additional need.</p> <p>A total of 4 x sports-lit full-size 3G pitches in the North sub-area would respond positively to demand.</p> <p>Delivery of at least 1 additional full-size 3G in Abingdon would likely draw some demand for football training use during weekday evenings away from the sand based AGPs, but possibly not all. This would however, free-up some time for hockey, helping the hockey club accommodate growth in the future. Delivery of 1 pitch which will help to cater for emerging demand during the strategy period from Didcot which straddles the boundary with South Oxfordshire could also be appropriate.</p> <p>It should also be noted that there could be some demand arising in the north-eastern part of the sub-area due to both housing growth and possible exported demand from Oxford. Any provision on the edge of Oxford must be informed by a full understanding of what contribution of exported demand could play to help ensue viability of a new 3G pitch in this area. The strategy for this sub-area would reflect, therefore, a 4 + 1 possible pitch approach.</p> | | | | | | | | | |
| South | 1.5 pitches (57 peak time hours) (for 57 teams) | 1 x 5v5 (8.5 peak time full-size equivalent hours) | -1.3 full-size pitches (48.5 full size equivalent hours) | - | 4 hours | 76 hours (Valley Park, Didcot and Alfredian Park, Wantage) | 31 hours (0.82 pitches) | 3.5 | 0 |
| Commentary: | | | | | | | | | |

| Sub-area | A. Number of 3G pitches required for current no. of teams (and full size equivalent peak hours) * | B. Number of 3G pitches currently in supply (and full size equivalent peak hours) | C. Supply / suggested demand balance (A-B) ^ | D. Headroom capacity on existing 3Gs (full-size equivalent hours) ** | | E. Pipeline 3G pitches (full size equivalent peak hours) ^^ | F. Additional 3G capacity required (hours) (calculator scenario 2) | G. Residual number of additional hours on full-size 3G pitches required by 2041 ((C+F)-E) | H. Equivalent number of additional full-size pitches required (club demand) (G/38) |
|--|--|--|---|---|-----------|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | Secure *** | Un-secure | | | | |
| <p>There are no secure use 3Gs in the sub-area, which represents a risk to future supply. Columns A – C suggest that there is a 3G pitch deficit in the sub-area. Column D, suggests that there is only a very small amount of time available to book. The only AGPs in the sub-area are a small 3G (5v5), and a sand based pitch (7v7), the latter used for football training / informal use. <i>If the 5v5 3G pitch is removed from supply, reflecting the unflexible nature of use and that clubs will likely only train on the pitch of this size if nothing else is available, a total of around 0.5 of an additional full-size sports-lit 3G pitch will be needed, over and above the two pitches in the pipeline in the sub-area, subject to demonstrating viability. This should be considered for delivery in the middle to later part of the strategy period, and, should demand prove it viable could be rounded up to a full-size pitch.</i> There is a significant spatial gap in provision of 3G pitches in the western half of the sub-area, particularly in relation to the Wantage area. The proposed 3G pitch at Alfredian Park would help to fill this gap.</p> | | | | | | | | | |
| West | 1.5 pitches (57 peak time hours) (for 56 teams) | 0 | -1.5 full-size pitches (57 full-size equivalent hours) | - | - | 38 hours (Faringdon College, with some time possibly for rugby use if shock pad and pile) | 19 hours (0.48 pitches) | 38 | 1 |

| Sub-area | A. Number of 3G pitches required for current no. of teams (and full size equivalent peak hours) * | B. Number of 3G pitches currently in supply (and full size equivalent peak hours) | C. Supply / suggested demand balance (A-B) ^ | D. Headroom capacity on existing 3Gs (full-size equivalent hours) ** | | E. Pipeline 3G pitches (full size equivalent peak hours) ^^ | F. Additional 3G capacity required (hours) (calculator scenario 2) | G. Residual number of additional hours on full-size 3G pitches required by 2041 ((C+F)-E) | H. Equivalent number of additional full-size pitches required (club demand) (G/38) |
|----------|--|--|---|---|-----------|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | Secure *** | Un-secure | | | | |
| | | | | | | appropriate) | | | |

Commentary:

There are no secure use 3Gs in the sub-area, which represents a risk to future supply. Columns A – C suggest that there is a 3G pitch deficit in the sub-area. Column D, however, suggests that there is some headroom capacity available to book in some locations. There are no 3G pitches in the sub-area. There is a significant spatial gap in provision of 3G pitches across the whole sub-area, particularly in relation to the Faringdon area. The proposed 3G pitch at Faringdon Community College will help to fill this gap. There then remains additional demand for one additional full-size sportlit pitch in the sub-area to the end of the strategy period.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|----------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| District Total | 7 full-size pitches (266 hours) | 8 x 5v5, 1 x 7v7, 1 x 9v9, 1 x full-size (123.5 hours) | -3.75 full-size pitches (142.5 hours) | - | 60.5 hours | 114 hours | 97 hours (2.5 pitches) | 125.5 hours | 3.3 pitches |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|----------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|

| Sub-area | A. Number of 3G pitches required for current no. of teams (and full size equivalent peak hours) * | B. Number of 3G pitches currently in supply (and full size equivalent peak hours) | C. Supply / suggested demand balance (A-B) ^ | D. Headroom capacity on existing 3Gs (full-size equivalent hours) ** | | E. Pipeline 3G pitches (full size equivalent peak hours) ^^ | F. Additional 3G capacity required (hours) (calculator scenario 2) | G. Residual number of additional hours on full-size 3G pitches required by 2041 ((C+F)-E) | H. Equivalent number of additional full-size pitches required (club demand) (G/38) |
|----------|--|--|---|---|-----------|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | Secure *** | Un-secure | | | | |

Commentary:

Grounding figures and removing 5v5 3G pitches from supply suggests that an additional 1.5 x full-size sports-lit pitches will be needed in addition to the +3.3 identified from data calculations. This gives a total of up to 5 full-size sports-lit 3G pitches required in addition to those in the pipeline.

Notes: * based upon the FA / FF ratio used of 1 full-size 3G pitch enables 38 teams to train. ** Based on booking records received from providers for one average week during the season. "Headroom" means capacity (hours) not regularly booked for use on an average week during the season. *** No secure community use 3G pitches in the District. ^ negative figure suggests undersupply, positive an oversupply. ^^ Based on "pipeline" schemes, with "aspirational" schemes excluded at this stage. Assumed that a new pitch will be available for 38 peak time hours.

49. Levels of actual and short and medium-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand changes and emerges “on the ground” during the lifetime of the strategy. A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity and viability and feasibility of any new potential pitches fully tested prior to commitment to delivery.

50. Examining this estimated required capacity:

- i) Based on weekend match capacity of 1 x full size 3G being equivalent to around 2-3 good quality adult grass pitches (depending on the format and age group of teams playing) this will mean that an equivalent of around 10 - 15 grass pitches of match capacity will be added into supply if the additional up to 6 pitches are delivered (i.e. grass pitch capacity which could be subtracted from the grass pitch additional need to the end of the strategy period *if the 3G pitches are delivered*). Pipeline pitches will also deliver 2-3 grass pitch equivalents per full-size 3G, of particular importance in those areas where teams are struggling to play the number of matches that they need to at weekends due to growing numbers of teams and / or poor weather giving rise to cancellations. The significant amount of pitch equivalent capacity provided for matches by additional 3Gs is in addition to the very significant amount of time made available for training on weekday evenings.
- ii) Securing use of unsecure pitches and accepting that some training and informal / casual / small-sided league use will continue on non-3G sand-based pitches is also important as it is unrealistic to expect all demand migrating to or being accommodated solely on 3G surfaces. The transition between sand-based pitches being used for football and new 3G pitches becoming available must be carefully managed should sand-based AGPs be dependant on high levels of football use to ensure viability.
- iii) At the mid-point in the strategy period, demand “on the ground” should be reviewed to understand if there is sufficient justification for investment in any additional provision highlighted in the latter part of the strategy period.

Strategic Housing Allocation Sites

51. In addition to using the playing pitch calculator to project potential future additional demand for each sub-area, the calculator has also been used to project potential demand which arises just from the strategic housing allocations where the PPS can still have an influence on provision (some allocations already have agreements in place for provision of pitches which the assessment and strategy consider as “pipeline” commitments to additional supply). The calculator estimates are not additional demand to that included within sub-area calculations for future additional demand, but within the sub-area totals. It is important to note that provision does not include capacity required if new developments take place on existing pitch sites. In those cases, additional provision will have to be made to mitigate loss of existing pitches.

52. When considering how best to plan for and accommodate demand arising from major developments, it is dangerous to assume that in every instance

provision for grass or AGP pitches identified from the pitch calculator for all sports should be provided within the development itself. Experience suggests that “provide and they will come” does not work for most pitch sports.

53. Careful thought must be given the appropriateness, viability and practicalities of use, running and maintaining a pitch if in a location away from a club’s home ground. Economies of scale and critical mass of members and volunteers required are also important factors, with provision of single pitch sites rarely representing good value or a practical solution when split sites draw members away from an existing home ground (therefore, introducing additional travel for some existing members / players) and where ancillary facilities also need to be provided at significant cost. Careful consideration must be given to not create single pitch sites where no existing club is prepared to play or run and maintain the site as a satellite location. It should not be automatically assumed that a new club will simply emerge from demand and it is important to note that demand arising from the new population will occur incrementally as the development is delivered and occupied and that without sports infrastructure and “people capacity” in place at an early stage, demand will simply gravitate towards an existing club or clubs. This can often be the result of new residents moving to new developments who already live within the same housing market area – it cannot be automatically assumed that all new residents are new to the area and these people will already have associations with existing sports clubs (and will be likely to retain them if travel time does not introduce an impediment such that it will stop them playing at their “home” club).
54. Operation of a satellite site for an existing club must be carefully thought through if this is considered to be a workable potential solution. For critical mass within age groups, it would be likely that a club would favour moving several age groups, for example, to a new satellite pitch. The implication can be that more existing players then have to travel further to the new satellite location than the alternative of players arising from demand at a new development travelling to an existing club home ground. Support of NGBs is critical to realise effective and efficient creation of new clubs and / or the introduction of satellite sites for existing clubs.
55. Pooling or securing contributions from multiple sites can often be a more workable and appropriate solution where funds can be used to strengthen and improve capacity at existing club sites or can be channelled into strategic sports hub sites within a major development site to replace existing club sites where improvements and expansion of capacity could prove challenging in the longer-term.

Dalton Barracks (c.2,750 dwellings, approx. 6,600 population) – North Sub-area

56. The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Dalton Barracks allocation will generate demand for around 2.24 x 11v11 football pitches (rounded to 3), 2.69 x youth football pitches (most likely 9v9 pitches, rounded to 3) and 2.27 x mini soccer (7v7 and 5v5 pitches, rounded to 3). Demand arising from this site could be provided on the site, subject to one or more clubs expressing a desire to use the pitches as their home ground or as supplementary capacity to their existing home pitch(es). An existing club moving to or having a presence on these pitches would help to generate and cater for demand arising from the development and from

existing membership in Abingdon. Given the pressures on pitches facing clubs in Abingdon, it could be appropriate to secure pitches on the development site, but this decision must be informed by the likelihood for demand to arise or be accommodated on the site based on this assessment findings and conversations with the FA. While only generating a small amount of demand for a 3G pitch (0.38 of a full-size sports-lit pitch), Dalton Barracks could provide an opportunity to locate a second 3G pitch in Abingdon later in the strategy period subject to demonstrable demand arising following delivery of a first 3G elsewhere.

North West Valley Park (c.800 dwellings, approx. 1,920 population) – South Sub-area

57. The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the North West Valley Park allocation will generate demand for around 0.27 x 11v11 football pitches, 0.72 x youth football pitches (most likely 9v9 pitches) and 0.65 x mini soccer (7v7 and 5v5 pitches). Given the pressures on pitches facing clubs in Didcot and the small amount generated by this development, it would seem most appropriate to secure off-site contributions towards pitches on another site, co-locating with other football pitches to create a larger hub site. Demand generated for 3G provision should also be sought as off-site contributions to help fund provision of a 3G pitch elsewhere in Didcot.

North West Grove (c.624 dwellings⁹, approx. 1,498 population) – South Sub-area

58. The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the North West Grove proposed development will generate demand for around 0.21 x 11v11 football pitches, 0.56 x youth football pitches (most likely 9v9 pitches) and 0.51 x mini soccer (7v7 or 5v5 pitches). It would seem sensible to plan on the basis of 1 x 11v11 full-size adult pitch being provided, as this can be split or overmarked as appropriate to serve demand as it appears “on the ground”. Alternatively, off-site contributions could be sought based on the calculator outputs set out in the assessment report, including costs for provision of changing facilities. 3G demand only equates to around 0.07 of a full-size pitch and therefore it would be pragmatic to seek off-site contributions for this demand to utilise on provision of a 3G pitch in another location, for example to serve either Wantage / Grove or growing clubs on A417 corridor.

Summarising Provision for Grass and 3G Pitches

59. The table below summarises provision now and in the future, based on the standard scenario above in the main body of the report.

⁹ The applicant’s Planning Statement states that the development could comprise around 531 dwellings, and an additional 93 dwellings if a Primary School was not needed on the site. The calculator scenario has therefore been run on the basis of the upper number of estimated dwellings and should be adjusted accordingly if the number of dwellings on site is confirmed as being less than this.

Standard Scenario – continuing balance between 3G and Grass Pitch

Supply to accommodate training for all clubs on a 3G surface

60. Applying the results of the grass pitches assessment alongside that for 3G pitches, the strategy for football, in broad terms, could be as follows.
61. The PPS cannot be a blueprint for change for all provision in the future. It should not, and will not, “straight-jacket” the ability to respond to demand by identifying sites for new pitches where there is not certainty that demand will arise in that specific location, or that providers, operators and owners will support provision in a location that they own or run. Flexibility is therefore key. The PPS will be as specific as it can be where there is certainty about the demand likely to emerge and locations or areas where it will occur “on the ground”. In cases where the assessment cannot be specific about potential sites where new pitches can be located, broad areas of search have been indicated. It will be the role of both Stage E of the process (i.e. delivery), administered and managed by the Steering Group, and NGB or other partners’ funding strategies, plans and programmes, to be more specific about the locations which will be most suitable to respond to demand in these circumstances.

| Settlement (at or near to) | Strategic allocation | Improve following grass pitch quality to “standard” (or “good” where stated) | Grass pipeline pitches | Additional grass pitches needed (new) | | | | 3G pitches (full – size, sports-it) | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|--|--|-----|-----|-----|--|---|
| | | | | 11v11 | 9v9 | 7v7 | 5v5 | Pipeline* | Additional |
| North | | | | | | | | | |
| Didcot | | Harwell Recreation Ground 1, 11v11 | | | | | | | 1 additional to serve Didcot catchment, location to be determined, for example, in Milton United, The Heights. Provision must be made in conjunction with consideration of overall delivery sequence in Didcot (also see South Oxfordshire report) |
| Abingdon | | | | | | | | | 2 additional, location to be determined, subject to managed transition re football played on sand AGPs and the timing of delivery being able to respond to the existing known unmet demand. |
| | | | North of Dunmore Road / North of Abingdon, 1 x 11v11, 2 x Youth 7v7 | | | | | | |
| | | Abingdon Utd FC, 11v11 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Abingdon Utd FC, 9v9 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |

| Settlement (at or near to) | Strategic allocation | Improve following grass pitch quality to “standard” (or “good” where stated) | Grass pipeline pitches | Additional grass pitches needed (new) | | | | 3G pitches (full – size, sports-it) | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|--|---|
| | | | | 11v11 | 9v9 | 7v7 | 5v5 | Pipeline* | Additional |
| | | Boxhill Recreation Ground 2, 7v7 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Boxhill Recreation Ground 3, 5v5 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Southern Town Park 11, 7v7 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Southern Town Park 12, 7v7 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Southern Town Park 4, 9v9 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Southern Town Park 5, 9v9 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre 2, 11v11 | | | | | | | |
| | | Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre 3, 7v7 | | | | | | | |
| | Dalton Barracks, 3 x 11v11, 3 x 9v9, 3 x 7v7 | | | | | | | | 1 additional, location to be determined, in the middle to latter part of the strategy period, in or around Abingdon, if demand arises on the ground following delivery of other 3Gs. Dalton Barracks could provide the |

| Settlement (at or near to) | Strategic allocation | Improve following grass pitch quality to “standard” (or “good” where stated) | Grass pipeline pitches | Additional grass pitches needed (new) | | | | 3G pitches (full – size, sports-it) | |
|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|--|---|
| | | | | 11v11 | 9v9 | 7v7 | 5v5 | Pipeline* | Additional |
| | | | | | | | | | location for the third pitch in Abingdon. |
| Edge of Oxford | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | 1 additional, location to be determined, in the middle to latter part of the strategy period, to serve the edge of Oxford (Kennington / Botley arc), should demand arise and be demonstrable from Oxford City in addition to that in the sub-area). |
| South | | | | | | | | | |
| Didcot | Valley Park | | | | | | | Valley Park, Didcot | |
| Wantage | | Tugwell Field 3, 7v7 | | | | | | Alfredian Park, Wantage FC, Wantage | |
| Grove | Grove Airfield | | 4 x 11v11, 4 x 9v9, 4 x 7v7 / 5v5 | | | | | | |
| Wantage / Grove and / or to satisfy growth at Ardington & Lockinge FC, Blewbury Amazons Girls FC, East | | | | 4 | | | | | 0.5 additional, location to be determined, in the middle to latter part of the strategy period, to serve areas where demand appears on the ground, either Wantage / |

| Settlement (at or near to) | Strategic allocation | Improve following grass pitch quality to “standard” (or “good” where stated) | Grass pipeline pitches | Additional grass pitches needed (new) | | | | 3G pitches (full – size, sports-it) | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|--|--|
| | | | | 11v11 | 9v9 | 7v7 | 5v5 | Pipeline* | Additional |
| Hendred AFC (A417 corridor) | | | | | | | | | Grove or growing clubs on A417 corridor. Should it be viable, at the time of proposal, the 0.5 pitch could be increased to 1 full-size additional 3G pitch. |
| West | | | | | | | | | |
| Faringdon | | Tucker Park Recreation Ground 4, 7v7 | | | | | | Faringdon College, Faringdon | |
| Abingdon | | Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground 3, Youth 11v11 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| | | Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground 4, Youth 11v11 (to “good”) | | | | | | | |
| Wantage | | West Hanney Playing Field 5, Hanney Youth FC, 9v9 | | | | | | | |
| Eastern Edge | | | | | | | | | 1 additional, location to be determined, possibly later in strategy period and subject to demand demonstrated “on the ground”. Potential location in north-eastern part of sub-area, if there is |

| Settlement (at or near to) | Strategic allocation | Improve following grass pitch quality to “standard” (or “good” where stated) | Grass pipeline pitches | Additional grass pitches needed (new) | | | | 3G pitches (full – size, sports-it) | |
|--|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|--|---|
| | | | | 11v11 | 9v9 | 7v7 | 5v5 | Pipeline* | Additional |
| | | | | | | | | | demand for 1 full-size pitch, or 2 x 0.5 size 3G pitches in two locations, again subject to demand being demonstrated on the ground at the time of the proposal. |
| Shirvenham and / or Faringdon (spread between settlements) and / or to satisfy growth at Kingson Colts FC | | | | | 2 | 1 | | | |

Notes: * Should any of these pipeline commitments not come forward, this will result in the capacity they provide needing to be provided in addition to the capacity recommended in this assessment.

62. This scenario depends on as many “unsecure” community use pitches being brought into secure use or securing a long-term lease or period of tenure by clubs on existing pitches used as home grounds. It also assumes that the “poor” quality pitches listed are improved to at least “standard” quality. .
63. The delivery phase (stage E) should plan, deliver, monitor and manage the balance between supply and demand and ensure a good understanding of the migration of teams from using grass pitches to 3G for both training and matches.
64. As certainty of the above measures cannot be guaranteed, it is important that mothballed, lapsed and closed sites should be protected should demand for additional grass pitches increase and require them to be brought back into use, which could be particularly relevant towards the latter end of the strategy period. If such pitches are unavoidably lost, replacement should be made in line with Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy¹⁰ to mitigate loss.
65. Levels of actual and short-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand increases during the lifetime of the strategy, particularly after the initial 5 years of the strategy period. As projections of demand and need are based on assumptions around increasing growth and participation, which may or may not come to fruition, additional provision after the first few years of the strategy period should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand. The movement of demand away from sand-based surfaces to any new full size 3G provision should also be monitored (with regard to potential impact on other sports such as hockey – with use by other sports often being important to maintain viability of full-size sand based pitches in the long term)¹¹. Importantly, the transition of demand to 3G pitches, both for training and for match play, must be well managed. The impact (or not) of transfer of pitches from being unsecure to secure community use should also be monitored to understand any resultant needs to provide additional grass pitches alongside 3G delivery.

Scenario A - No education sites in supply

66. Removing education sites currently used by clubs results in the following headlines. In each case, both available supply and the demand they cater for would need to be replaced within reasonably close proximity to the site. The large number of AGPs in the district which are on education or education

¹⁰ See https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport?section=playing_fields_policy

¹¹ Experience of discussing issues with clubs suggests that the cost of hiring an AGP can dissuade teams, particularly within the younger age groups, from booking AGP time. This can be a bigger issue in the winter months when charges for sports-lighting can be in addition to the cost of hiring the pitch. However, while cost can be an understandable concern for some clubs, it should be noted that AGPs can be expensive to build, run and maintain properly and so a balance has to be struck between providing good quality surfaces and the need to charge appropriately. Notwithstanding this issues, the Football Association and Football Foundation understand the position and look to understand the position between viability of new 3G pitches and the likelihood of teams within its catchment using and affording hire costs.

controlled sites suggests a priority to gain secure community use agreements for sports use on the sites.

- Brookes Sport Botley (North sub-area) hosts 3 x 11v11 adult grass pitches of standard quality (2 match equivalents each). Demand on the site equates to 2 match equivalents. The site also hosts 5 x small 3G pitches which provide around 37.5 full-size equivalent hours per week to football.
- Radley College, Abingdon (North sub-area) hosts 3 sand AGPs with an approximate 54 hours of use for football per week.
- Tilsley Park in Abingdon (North sub-area), hosts a WR22 compliant 3G pitch which, while owned by the local authority, still poses a risk to certainty of supply for clubs using the site. For football, loss of AGP use there would remove a substantial amount of supply 50.5 hours (full-size equivalent hours) across sand and 3G pitches.
- Harwell Primary School (South sub-area) small 3G supports around 4.5 hours of demand for football use.
- UTC Oxfordshire (South sub-area) small 3G supports around 7 hours of demand for football use.

Scenario B - Supply lost in areas of high deprivation

67. There are no football club home grounds located in areas of high deprivation.

Scenario C – No additional 3G pitches

68. Beyond the additional 3G pitches currently in the pipeline likely to be delivered, up to 5 additional full-size 3G pitches with sports lighting are projected as necessary to accommodate demand to 2041. These pitches could host, based on the FA / FF 1 pitch to 38 teams ratio, 190 teams' training, which would otherwise require provision on good quality grass pitches with sports lighting and / or indoor provision in sports halls. To give an indication of the scale of replacement grass pitch provision needed to absorb demand from a single full-size sports-lit 3G pitch (for both training and matches), capacity equivalent to around 8-10 full size grass pitches would be needed (5-6 of which would need to be sports-lit and fenced to protect quality and ensure that bookings can be honoured, with consequent costs and impact of powering more lighting and potential impact on dark skies). Should existing and pipeline full-size sports-lit 3G pitches also be lost to supply, this would represent another significant number of additional grass pitches needed to support the game.

Commentary on Provision of a Hybrid Pitch

69. Hybrid pitches (which feature elements of both natural turf grass and artificial grass) provide a harder wearing surface than can be achieved through a 100% grass pitch, but do not require as much capital cost to install as a 3G. They are becoming a favoured surface for some players and clubs, where play on a good quality grass surface is preferred to playing on a full 3G surface. However, they may still represent a concern, environmentally as the pitch has an element of plastic integrated into it, the "carpet" being artificial and grass growing through it, although some hybrid pitches comprise mainly grass with a plastic / fibre weave through it.

70. Sport England has been testing hybrid pitch pilots across the country to understand issues such as carrying capacity, management and maintenance regimes and associated costs to install and maintain the surface. Hybrid surfaces would introduce a greater carrying capacity than the existing grass pitch although there are currently no figures to confidently quantify match equivalents. From recent Sport England monitoring of the pilot hybrid pitch sites and facilities costs, the following information is helpful, suggesting that capital cost is less than installing a 3G (which runs at around £1m, while maintenance is more than for a grass pitch):

- Capital cost for installation of full-size (106m x 70m) hybrid pitch – c.£350,000-£450,000
- Maintenance and restoration per annum – c.£16,000

At the current time, the Football Association does not consider hybrid pitches as a viable option for community use, although this position may change during the strategy period.

Decarbonisation, Sustainable Travel and Climate Change

68. When considering the decarbonisation, sustainable travel and climate change agendas, there are several ways that the sport can help to minimise impact and contribute positively towards mitigating and adapting to the changing climate.

69. For example, clubs in control of their ground and providers / owners of grounds and facilities, measures such as solar pv and heat pumps can help to secure a local supply of energy and contribute towards lowering energy costs, as can retrofitting insulation to buildings¹².

70. Considering cycling and walking catchments, there is a football pitch within a reasonable walking and cycling distance to grounds in most areas of the district. The assessment of grounds used by clubs suggested that many club sites have secure cycle parking, although most with a limited number of cycle stands, and additional infrastructure could be offered to clubs to help encourage modal shift from cars. There were no cycle stands recorded at 21 club home grounds.

71. However, this type of infrastructure provision can only be part of the answer. Sports facility, pitch and ground providers, nor NGBs or the local authority alone cannot be expected to provide all solutions to deliver this type of change “on the ground”. Cultural shift is also required across sport with many players using cars to get to matches and training, and a continuing challenge is likely to be that there are not and cannot be a sufficient number of facilities, grounds and pitches provided in all locations to enable a 20 minute cycle or walk to them – it seems unlikely to be viable to provide that number for each sport. Cultural shift will be difficult to embed in many sports, also because many players will simply not have the time in their day to factor in a longer journey time to play and many will not be prepared to cycle or walk significant distances to play matches or train after playing their sport for anywhere

¹² Advice is available for clubs, for example, <https://susfootball.com/net-zero-football-club/>

between one and several hours (and particularly if the weather is poor and they play outside). This is not to say that this is a challenge not worth addressing, but the Playing Pitch Strategy cannot provide full answers and proposals to resolve such issues, particularly as they go beyond the remit of the strategy and will require cross-discipline, cross-department and cross-sector working within and with organisations and other stakeholders outside of sport and planning.

72. There are some environmental concerns about the use of artificial pitch surfaces for sport. This is a greater concern perhaps for football and hockey than for cricket, while rugby will use WR22 compliant 3G pitches for training and matches where demand suggests a need and play cannot be accommodated at club ground grass pitches. Concerns seem to focus around use of a synthetic pitch which is predominantly plastic, and for 3G pitches used by football and rugby, the use of rubber crumb to manage the movement of the ball and consequential loss of rubber particles off-site and into the environment and watercourses. Guidance already exists, however, about the use of infill materials on AGPs¹³ and design and operational arrangements can be implemented which help in managing and mitigating elements of environmental concerns. For example, the Football Foundation has highlighted that independent studies¹⁴ have shown that through good field design, operation and maintenance, infill migration from an artificial grass pitch can be reduced by up to 98% from typical worst-case situations.

73. At the current time, competitive play of hockey on grass is not supported by England Hockey. Therefore, no other scenarios for hockey play with use of AGPs removed from future supply have been developed. If no sand or Gen2 surfaces are permitted in the future, either new additional or replacement surfaces, or an alternative surface other than grass does not come forward, at the current time, this will mean an end to club-based competitive hockey.

74. When considering benefits and perceived disbenefits of the use of AGPs, the following presents a summary.

75. Benefits / arguments for provision:

- Health and wellbeing – greater access to an all-weather surface for a greater number of users.
- “Outdoor classrooms” for schools.
- Matches can still be played during very wet winters when grass pitches are flooded.
- Rubber crumb on 3G pitches is typically made from recycled material (e.g. vehicle tyres) and the surface (carpet) is recyclable at the end of its life.
- There are other infills for use on 3G pitches, for example cork olive pips.
- Design features on 3G pitches - as identified in the FA Guide to 3G Football Turf Pitches - significantly reduces infill loss.

¹³ See <https://sapca.org.uk/guide/codes-of-practice/>

¹⁴ See <https://www.estc.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ecoloop-Report-Effectiveness-RMMs.pdf>

- Economies of scale¹⁵ – while there is a significant cost to building an AGP, for football, for example, a single full-size sports-lit 3G pitch can provide capacity equivalent to around 8-10 full size grass good quality pitches (5-6 of which would need to be sports-lit and fenced to protect quality and ensure that bookings can be honoured, with consequent costs and impact of powering more lighting and potential impact on dark skies). Good quality grass pitches would require proper management and maintenance to ensure that they remain good quality and able to accommodate the wear. If the pitches are only provided to “standard” quality, additional grass pitches would be necessary, with perhaps 15 pitches equating to the provision available from a single full-size 3G pitch. For rugby, a WR22 compliant 3G sports-lit pitch provides capacity equivalent to around 6 grass pitches.
- Hockey can be played on a high-quality reliable, all-weather surface, minimising risk of injury. Competitive hockey cannot be played on a grass pitch, at the current time.
- Other sports, for example, rugby and lacrosse are played on AGPs.
- The potential impact of rubber crumb being lost and finding its way into watercourses, compared to erosion of micro-plastics and rubber from footwear, car and bike tyres, etc seems likely to be significantly small. There are measures which can be put in place through a scheme’s design and location to minimise loss. However, it is also the responsibility of users to ensure that they make use of some measures to reduce loss from the site.
- A “ban” on all artificial “carpets” for sport would also have an impact on non-turf wickets for cricket and could also impact some indoor sports such as indoor bowls, if the principle is adopted equitably.
- Full-size AGPs can serve a wide catchment of population. While travel to AGPs is typically by private car by most users (unless they live within a comfortable walking or cycling distance) it is the responsibility of others, not just sports clubs or pitch providers, to help ensure modal shift to lower carbon forms of travel. This will be a practical challenge to many sports players given time constraints, the need to take kit and equipment with them and desire to avoid poor weather (a disincentive to cycle). Improved travel solutions (both in terms of lower carbon and frequency of public transport) is necessary to change behaviour.

76. Disbenefits / arguments made against provision

- Environmental impact at the end of the life of the carpet (surface).
- Environmental impact (in the case of 3G pitches) of infill.
- Building an AGP usually takes place on a grass pitch or greenfield site (although mitigation of loss of a playing field is usually required).
- AGPs tend to provide “strategic” provision due to the amount of use they can accommodate, their cost and catchment of users they need to be viable in the long-term. AGPs cannot usually be provided in a greater

¹⁵ At the current time, a new full-size sports-lit AGP costs around £1m to develop. A single full-size 11v11 grass pitch, without sports-lighting, costs around £200k. Equivalent capacity on grass pitches is likely to therefore be around double the cost of a single AGP. Maintenance of this number of grass pitches and cost of lighting is also likely to be significantly more per annum than for an AGP if the grass pitches are to be maintained to a level which can cope with likely use. Costs estimates do not include the cost of land, likely to be higher for grass equivalent pitches due to the footprint / area required.

number of locations, meaning that travel to them, typically by private car, can be inevitable. Therefore, even if at much higher capital and maintenance cost, a greater number of high quality grass pitches in more locations will encourage users to cycle and walk to play sport and reduce the need to travel.

77. Work is ongoing (for example, by the AGP provider industry, Sport England and NGBs) to identify alternative materials to replace rubber crumb use on 3G pitches, for example, using cork. Other studies are underway looking at the impact of rubber crumb and measures to mitigate its impact. It should be noted that, at time of writing, there are no such alternatives available which meet FIFA Quality requirements, and as such, they cannot yet provide a solution to support affiliated football requirements/matchplay aligned to the demand identified within this strategy.

78. Clearly, for the environment, sport and health to benefit, and for solutions to be financially viable, a balance needs to be struck, as is the case throughout the planning system between provision of AGPs and resolution of adverse impact and satisfactory mitigation of these. For example, the Government has been looking at carbon assessments for developments to be brought in (which seem likely to be introduced anyway by many local authorities) and impact assessments for travel / transport and the environment already exist. Net gain for development has been introduced through the Environment Act and many Local Plans already introduced such requirements through policy. There is no reason why proposals for AGPs should not be required to demonstrate that they pass such tests. Authorities can already seek conditions on permissions including the design of schemes including multiple measures to prevent loss of rubber crumb from 3G pitches and end of surface life recycling for all AGPs. There is clearly a role for the planning system (and planning policies in particular in Local Plans) to ensure that such tests and requirements for mitigations are introduced to ensure that communities and people's physical and mental health can still benefit from AGPs without compromising or having a net additional adverse impact on the environment. Much will need also to be done, outside of sport and the planning system, particularly if there is a future without artificial pitches, to help make the shift required to achieve net zero and to prevent, mitigate and adapt to climate change, while also providing fully for sport and health.

Key Issues Snapshot

79. The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent at the time of writing. Priorities and main concerns can be summarised as:

- The lack of unsecure AGPs and in particular 3Gs in the District.
- Supply / demand balance figures mask some of the overplay and lack of space to train or play matches experienced by clubs and reported by both the FAs and clubs themselves.
- 3G pitch capacity will be key to enabling teams to grow, particularly in housing growth areas (main towns). Loss of support for 3Gs (and possibly other AGP types) would represent a significant blow to supporting football in the District. While lack of future provision can be replaced by good

quality sports-lit pitches, between 10 and 15 would be required, a challenge in a District with high land costs and likely revenue challenges moving forward – would such a way forward be viable?

- Opportunity for provision of new additional pitches rests largely at strategic housing allocation sites and so these should be utilised for additional provision where their location fits with the ability to start a new club or for an existing club to use new pitches as their home ground or additional home ground. It is important to be aware that additional playing pitches provided on housing allocation sites, or elsewhere, are also likely to require ancillary facilities.
- Quality and accessibility of provision of both existing and future provision of pitches and facilities must recognise the needs of girls and women, given continued likely growth in the game.

Strategy Recommendations

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

PROTECT

District-wide

- F1) Protect the existing supply of grass pitches and AGPs identified in the assessment and their capacity (for existing known, projected and potential additional currently unidentified future demand) unless the strategy proposes their replacement or alternative re-use for sport, leisure and recreation or unless replacement equivalent capacity can be provided elsewhere to an equal or better standard (i.e. “net improvements”) reflecting the demand and type of use required “on the ground” by clubs. The PROVIDE section sets out criteria which responds to proposals where the loss of a pitch is unavoidable. Any proposals which suggest potential loss of a playing pitch or wider playing field to supply should respond appropriately to Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy¹⁶. It must not be assumed that the intensification of provision on an existing playing pitch or playing field site equates to satisfactory mitigation for loss of a grass pitch.
- F2) Where pitches are lost to formal pitch use, where appropriate, the Local Planning Authority should seek to ensure that there is significant policy protection through the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plans or legal means to prevent their loss as open or green space.
- F3) Maintain the quality of existing pitches to at least current standards where they have a quality rating of “standard” or “good”.
- F4) The identified notional spare grass pitch capacity at pitches already used for matches should be retained during the strategy period to allow for “capacity headroom” and flexibility of provision to help accommodate growth to the end of the strategy period.
- F5) “Mothballed”, closed or lapsed pitches previously used for football and pitches rested or reserved on multi-pitch sites should be retained as green /

¹⁶ See https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport?section=playing_fields_policy

open space to protect potential future long-term demand and capacity for football or other sports should demand suggest a need. It should be noted that reinstatement of pitches could require investment to ensure that they are available to a “good” standard of quality. Re-opening pitches could also have implications for ancillary facilities and the suitability or age-group of teams using the pitches. If such pitches are unavoidably lost, replacement should be made in line with Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy¹⁷ to mitigate loss.

- F6) The supply / capacity provided by existing grass pitches within a 20-minute drive-time catchment of a new 3G pitch should not be considered for loss from formal use / supply until their capacity is replaced and utilised by operational secure community use 3G capacity and they are deemed surplus over and above the identified “capacity headroom”. No team should be left without its usual home grass pitch just because a 3G has been provided and transition from grass to 3G use must be well-managed.
- F7) Ensure that all existing and new pitches that are on the FA register are re-tested every three years to sustain certification.
- F8) Seek agreement between hockey (EH) and football (FA), and with providers and clubs, about which sport should have sole or priority use of sand based full size AGPs as new 3G pitches proposed are introduced.
- F9) Proposals for development which have an implication for the use of an existing pitch (such as change of land use) should take into account the recommendations of this strategy and policies of relevance in adopted Development Plans relevant to the site / pitch (i.e. Adopted Local Plans, other Development Plan Documents and Made Neighbourhood Plans).

Sub-Area Specific

North

- F10) Protection of grass pitch supply is particularly important for club pitches. In this sub-area, this means protecting from loss all pitches (and the entirety of the club home ground and facilities).
- F11) Protect the 3G surfaces at Tilsley Park and Brookes Sport Botley from loss, on the basis that they currently play an important role in supporting demand from clubs for training and additional demand from informal, casual and small-sided league play.
- F12) Protect the sand-based surfaces at Tilsley Park from loss, on the basis that they currently play an important role in supporting demand from clubs for training and additional demand from informal, casual and small-sided league play. These pitches may continue to play an important role moving forward, subject to the ability to deliver additional and pipeline 3G pitches. The pitches also play a critical role in supporting hockey in the town (see Hockey assessment).
- F13) Protect the AGP facility Radley College Sports Centre from loss, on the basis that it currently plays an important role in supporting demand from clubs for training and additional demand from informal, casual and small-sided league play. The pitch may continue to play an important role moving forward, subject to the ability to deliver additional and pipeline 3G pitches.

¹⁷ See https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport?section=playing_fields_policy

South

- F14) Protection of grass pitch supply is particularly important for club pitches. In this sub-area, this means protecting from loss all pitches (and the entirety of the club home ground and facilities).
- F15) Protect the 3G surface at Harwell Primary School from loss, on the basis that it currently plays an important role in supporting local demand for training and from informal, casual and small-sided league play.
- F16) Protect the AGP facility at UTC Oxfordshire from loss, on the basis that it currently plays an important role in supporting demand from clubs for training and additional demand from informal, casual and small-sided league play. The site may continue to play an important role moving forward, subject to the ability to deliver additional and pipeline 3G pitches.

West

- F17) Protection of grass pitch supply is particularly important for club pitches. In this sub-area, this means protecting from loss all pitches (and the entirety of the club home ground and facilities).
- F18) Protect the 3G surface St Hugh's School from loss, on the basis that it could play a role in supporting local demand from clubs for training and additional demand from informal, casual and small-sided league play.

ENHANCE

District-wide

- F19) Gain the secure use of clubs' and teams' home grounds / pitches which do not currently have secure community use, to provide certainty of future supply and enable clubs and users to access necessary funding to invest in improvements. This includes club or team use of pitches on education sites and any newly marked out pitches on any site. This could be through a secure community use agreement (where the local authority or other body is identified to enforce the agreement), long-term lease or long-term tenure of the ground, extending to ancillary facilities if possible.
- F20) Gain secure community use of unsecure 3G pitches.
- F21) Gain secure community use of unsecure sand based pitches where they are currently in use for football training and social / small-sided games to maintain security of supply until additional 3G pitches are delivered to accommodate training and informal / small-sided game demand.
- F22) Prioritise pitch quality improvements at secure community use grounds over unsecure community use grounds. Enhance capacity on existing pitches by improving quality, and improve maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. There should be a focus on improving secure use pitches rated as "poor" and "standard", where feasible.
- F23) Improvement of unsecure community use pitches should be a second priority after secure use pitch improvements. Where unsecure use pitches are secured, they should be added to the programme of improvement set out in the sub-area sections below.

- F24) To inform fully, the specific programme of improvements to be made to a pitch to enhance quality, delivery must be informed by an independent Grounds Management Association / Pitch Power report or equivalent, instructed by the NGB, local authority or club.
- F25) Enhance the quality of existing secure community use pitches or consider replacement where flooding / waterlogging is known to be a consistent issue over several seasons and is preventing consistency and certainty of play by improving drainage (where viable / subject to funding and a business plan being in place to ensure maintenance costs are catered for in the long-term).
- F26) Enhance the quality of existing pitches where they are subject to dog fouling by considering the introduction of open fencing and / or signage where cost effective to do so, where shared uses allow and practical to do so (in view of the available space outside the pitch for recreational use and where shared pitch sites can be fenced without compromising the quality of summer sports' areas of play).
- F27) Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where necessary to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced. Particular focus should be on supporting the growth of girls' and women's football through improvements which enhance the quality and accessibility of facilities.
- F28) Enhance where necessary, outside of the sites named in sub-area sections below, the quality of toilets and storage facilities, where improvements are required as a priority.
- F29) NGBs and the local authority should work with clubs, operators and providers, on sites where facilities and / or pitch areas are shared between sports, to ensure that management, maintenance and access is shared appropriately between sports, for example, through establishment of multi-sport site Trusts or other management bodies.
- F30) Improve the current use of existing pitches, where physically and logistically possible, by considering flexibility of when matches take place.
- F31) Support proposals for improved energy efficiency and localised renewable and low carbon energy generation at facilities and grounds through measures such as LED directional lighting, solar pv, heat pumps and building insulation.
- F32) Work with partners and key stakeholders to improve sustainable travel options to grounds, pitches and facilities.
- F33) Support provision of secure cycle stands and ev vehicle charge points at club and other providers' grounds and facilities to enhance provision for low carbon forms of travel.
- F34) Clubs should be encouraged to open-up facilities and pitches that they own and manage to other local clubs where there is capacity for them to do so (rather than allowing only their own teams to use their facilities and pitches).

Sub-Area Specific

North

- F35) Gain the secure use of unsecure community use pitch sites through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce

the need for additional secure use new pitches (where desirable by the club and provider). These include:

- Brookes Sport Botley; and,
- Thrupp Lane.

F36) Enhance capacity on existing pitches by improving quality and improve maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. There should be a focus, where feasible, on improving secure use pitches rated as “poor” to “standard” as a priority, and then secure use “standard” pitches to “good”, where there are known pressures on demand identified by clubs. Pitches with secure community use should be prioritised:

Poor

- Harwell Recreation Ground 1, 11v11;
- Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre 2, 11v11; and,
- Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre 3, 7v7;

Standard

- Abingdon United FC, 11v11;
- Abingdon United FC, 9v9;
- Boxhill Recreation Ground 2, 7v7;
- Boxhill Recreation Ground 3, 5v5;
- Forest Side and Playfield Road - all pitches at Kennington FC sites (club has funding to make pitch improvements);
- Southern Town Park 11, 7v7;
- Southern Town Park 12, 7v7;
- Southern Town Park 4, 9v9; and,
- Southern Town Park 5, 9v9.

F37) Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where possible to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced (with a focus on those of “poor” quality listed below, and then those with “standard” quality). Pitches with secure community use should be prioritised:

Poor

- Appleford Recreation Ground;
- Boxhill Recreation Ground;
- Caldecott Recreation Ground;
- Forest Side;
- The Heights, Milton Utd.; and,
- Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre.

Such improvements are particularly important to help grow participation in the women’s game and pitches hosting women’s teams should be prioritised where improvements are required. Improvement of unsecure community use pitch changing and other ancillary facilities should be a second priority after secure use site improvements. Where unsecure use pitches are secured, sites should be added to the programme of improvement set out in the list above.

South

F38) Gain the secure use of unsecure community use pitch sites through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce the need for additional secure use new pitches (where desirable by the club and provider). These include:

- Harwell Labs Recreational Association; and,
 - Rutherford Labs.
- F39) Enhance capacity on existing pitches by improving quality and improve maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. There should be a focus, where feasible, on improving the following pitches rated as “poor” to “standard” as a priority, and then secure use “standard” pitches to “good”, where there are known pressures on demand identified by clubs. Pitches with secure community use should be prioritised:
- Poor*
- Tugwell Field 3, 7v7.
- F40) Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where possible to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced (with a focus on those of “poor” quality listed below, and then those with “standard” quality). Pitches with secure community use should be prioritised:
- Poor*
- Harwell Recreation Ground.
- Such improvements are particularly important to help grow participation in the women’s game and pitches hosting women’s teams should be prioritised where improvements are required. Improvement of unsecure community use pitch changing and other ancillary facilities should be a second priority after secure use site improvements. Where unsecure use pitches are secured, sites should be added to the programme of improvement set out in the list above.

West

- F41) Gain the secure use of unsecure community use pitch sites through clubs and relevant authorities working with pitch providers / owners to seek a long-term secure use agreement to provide certainty of supply and reduce the need for additional secure use new pitches (where desirable by the club and provider). These include:
- Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground.
- F42) Enhance capacity on existing pitches by improving quality and improve maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. There should be a focus, where feasible, on improving the following pitches rated as “poor” to “standard” as a priority, and then secure use “standard” pitches to “good”, where there are known pressures on demand identified by clubs. Pitches with secure community use should be prioritised:
- Poor*
- Tucker Park Recreation Ground 4, 7v7; and,
 - West Hanney Playing Field 5, Hanney Youth FC, 9v9.
- Standard*
- Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground 3, Youth 11v11; and,
 - Kingston Bagpuize Sports Ground 4, Youth 11v11.
- F43) Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where possible to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced (with a focus on those of “poor” quality, if any emerge during the strategy period, and then those with “standard” quality). Pitches with secure community use should be prioritised. Such improvements are particularly important to help grow participation in the women’s game and pitches hosting women’s teams should be prioritised where improvements are required. Improvement of unsecure community use pitch changing and other

ancillary facilities should be a second priority after secure use site improvements. Where unsecure use pitches are secured, sites should be added to the programme of improvement.

PROVIDE

District-wide

- F44) Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, ensure that replacement pitch capacity and associated facilities are provided to a good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss. Opportunities should be taken to replace pitches to a better quality than the provision they are replacing.
- F45) Ensure that proposals for new pitches, both grass and 3G, and ancillary facilities, are provided outside of flood risk zones, or provision can be satisfactorily tested through the sequential and exceptions tests to mitigate satisfactorily against adverse impact and risk.
- F46) Ensure that proposals for new and resurfaced 3G pitches:
- provide satisfactory protection and mitigation to minimise rubber crumb and other infill loss (retrofitting containment if necessary);
 - are constructed to meet FA and RFU recommended quality performance standards to meet performance testing criteria; and,
 - provide energy efficient directional LED sports-lighting;
 - satisfy tests applied by the local authority in relation to carbon emissions, whole lifecycle of materials and requirements for net gains in biodiversity;
 - for new pitches, explore the provision on multi-pitch sites where demand can be demonstrated.
- F47) Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the FA and Sport England. Provision must ensure that all sexes, genders and age groups are supported and catered for. Any new grass pitches provided by a developer must be signed-off by an agronomist prior to “handover”.
- F48) Ensure that new 3G pitches are marked out to cater for quarter pitch segregation and capable of hosting 11v11, 9v9, 7v7 and 5v5 matches. Essentially however, markings and design should be prepared aligned to an intended programme of use to ensure the pitch is best able to meet local demand.
- F49) Ensure that delivery of additional 3G pitch capacity takes into account use of non 3G based pitches by teams for training and is introduced in-step with demand required by hockey teams for additional sand based pitches.
- F50) Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- F51) Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability which includes usage plans. This includes, for 3G pitches in particular, the need for a sinking fund to retain funds during use for refurbishment or replacement of the surface and for recycling of the carpet and infill, a maintenance programme agreed between the provider, local authority and the FA, and the provider must report to the local authority, Sport England and the FA on an annual basis on the state of the sinking

fund and statement of availability and use during the agreed peak period hours. Sinking funds established should be monitored to ensure that collection is taking place. The costs of hiring 3G pitch time and space will need to be competitive to help ensure future viability but it is important that, to help enable transition from use of grass for matches to maximise use of capacity on 3Gs at weekends, match play charges reflect those paid for grass pitch use.

- F52) Ensure that all new 3G pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) for community access for a 38 hour peak period¹⁸ where feasible and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements. Providers should ensure that provision is made for different user groups during the peak period including clubs, pay and play, informal use and casual leagues.
- F53) Ensure, as far as possible, that any proposed new grass pitches have certainty of users (clubs / teams) committed to them and that commitments to the management and maintenance of the ground are in place prior to delivery. The management and operation of new pitches and facilities should rest with a single operator if possible.
- F54) Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements.
- F55) Support opportunities to utilise sites not currently available for community use where the provider has indicated a desire to do so, where they fill a spatial gap in supply, address a local team's demand not already catered for locally and where secure use can be agreed.
- F56) Ensure that the supply of grass pitches can accommodate existing and future demand for matches in sync with the provision of additional 3G capacity. At no time should the total supply of grass pitches not be able to accommodate demand for play outwith 3G capacity and "on the ground" demand for match play by each age group within the structure of the game. The role of grass pitches is particularly important should the additional 3G capacity not be delivered.
- F57) Where needed, increased capacity and / or use of grass pitches to meet demand could come from a combination of:
- a) Increasing reliability of pitches through improved quality, drainage and maintenance;
 - b) Considering better grouping of age groups (and therefore pitch types and sizes) on multi-pitch sites;
 - c) Making better use of pitches which are available for community use but not yet currently used by teams, where additional community use on those pitches would not result in unacceptable wear which significantly reduces a pitch's ability to cope with the additional demand / use placed upon it (for example, careful consideration must be given to use of education site pitches if those pitches are already well-used by students during the week);
 - d) Re-opening "mothballed", lapsed or closed pitches, where they provide supply in a location which can respond to demand. If such pitches are

¹⁸ The peak period is Mon-Thurs 5pm-9pm, Fri 5pm-7pm and Sat and Sun 9am-5pm.

- unavoidably lost, however, replacement should be made in line with Sport England's Playing Fields Policy¹⁹ to mitigate loss; and,
- e) Provision of additional pitches in appropriate locations as demand requires during the strategy period to:
- i. respond to growth in demand (as a result of club unmet and latent demand, club growth, growth in social / informal and non-club participation, increased population and spatial gaps in provision) where this cannot be catered for on existing pitches; and / or,
 - ii. provide new additional capacity on strategic housing allocation sites where a new club can be formed to fully utilise pitches provided, where such provision responds to demand arising from the new residents, and / or responds to insufficient supply locally to respond to demand, enabling an existing club to make the new pitches their home ground or an additional home ground. Such sites, if providing sufficient pitch capacity, could form new home grounds for nomadic clubs which currently play across more than one site and are looking to consolidate club activity in one location; and / or,
 - iii. replace and increase the capacity of existing pitches of poor or standard quality; or, which prove uneconomical to manage and maintain; or, are unattractive to club use due to quality and / or cost.
- F58) Suggested provision of pitch sizes in the sub-area sections which follow needs to be considered flexibly as calculator outputs for future provision are projections and do not reflect specificity of team composition on the ground. Therefore, provision could be made, for example, for 1 x 11v11 instead of 4 x 5v5 pitches to ensure that flexibility is there in the long-term for clubs to adapt pitch sizes and markings to the needs of teams they have at any given point in time.
- F59) New grass pitches should be secure and, where feasible, be resistant to dog fouling and vandalism.
- F60) New grass pitches should be provided to a "good" quality, with programmes put in place and managed to help ensure that this quality is retained into the future.
- F61) Provision of new additional pitches which increase net capacity / supply will need to respond to demonstrable demand "on the ground". This is particularly important in the latter part of the strategy period to ensure that supply responds to demand which has actually or will come forward.
- F62) For development detailed in the adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule / infrastructure list, CIL monies could be secured towards the upgrade and management of existing strategic outdoor sports and recreation provision and creation of new provision and associated facilities (this includes playing pitches as identified in the PPS). However, it is recommended that local authority officers consider the benefits of bringing forward new and improved facilities related to development through s106 planning obligations as the most appropriate mechanism to understand and apply requirements generated for sports pitches and ancillary facilities by a given population.
- F63) Support provision of or contributions to fund new full-size sports-lit 3G pitches where certainty of delivery of the intended new 3G is or can be put

¹⁹ See https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport?section=playing_fields_policy

in place (for example, planning permission secured) and mitigation of loss of the existing grass pitch on which the 3G would be built is considered satisfactory.

- F64) Enable opportunity for club progression up the FA pyramid by ensuring that one or more pitches can meet FA requirements for progression to the next step.
- F65) The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGBs, clubs, leagues, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).
- F66) Ensure that usage plans are developed for new 3Gs and include agreement on the balance of use between rugby and other sports where relevant.
- F67) In cases where mitigation is required as the result of a loss of a pitch to development, and that mitigation is in the form of off-site contributions, to ensure certainty that the contributions can be used to deliver the intended provision in part or in full (and in turn help to address any “knock-on” mitigation required on the site to which the contribution applies), the Local Planning Authority should consider introducing a Grampian condition²⁰ on permission to ensure that mitigation is delivered as intended (and therefore certainty of delivery is guaranteed).
- F68) A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the management and any necessary “re-packaging” of existing supply (if necessary) and the provision of additional capacity.
- F69) Given the nature of demand, provision set out in the sub-area sections below may require adjustment during the strategy period, and provision should be considered in a flexible way to allow provision of additional supply in one area to respond to demand which arises in another, in other words, reflecting spatial need across sub-area boundaries and likely travel times to the nearest pitch.

Sub-Area Specific

North

- F70) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:
 - a. Should quality improvements be achievable to improve the quality and capacity of existing pitches on club grounds to “standard” quality from “poor” and to improve “standard” quality pitches to “good” where indicated in “ENHANCE”, deliver 1 x 11v11 and 2 x 9v9 good quality pitches in one or more of the following locations, to respond to demand:
 - i. in or on the edge of Abingdon;
 - ii. on the edge of Oxford;

²⁰ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions#Application-of-the-six-tests> for further details on use of Grampian Conditions. Section - “When can conditions be used relating to land not in control of the applicant?” Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 21a-009-20140306. The NPPG states that Grampian Conditions are conditions which are “prohibiting development authorised by the planning permission or other aspects linked to the planning permission (eg occupation of premises) until a specified action has been taken (such as the provision of supporting infrastructure)”.

- iii. on the edge of Didcot (in alignment with recommendations in the South Oxfordshire PPS);
 - iv. responding to demand at St Edmunds FC;
 - v. responding to demand at Abingdon Youth FC;
 - vi. responding to demand at Steventon FC.
- F71) Deliver pitches to respond to additional demand arising from growth in population at the strategic housing allocations:
- a. At Dalton Barracks, deliver 3 x 11v11, 3 x 9v9 and 3 x 7v7 pitches and associated necessary ancillary facilities. To ensure their use, identify either an existing club or clubs which can relocate to the pitches as a new home ground, an existing club which will use the pitches at a home ground in addition to its existing home ground, or that capacity and support exists to create a new club.
- F72) Deliver proposed pitches “in the pipeline” to meet demand arising in those locations. This means that pitches at:
- a. land North of Dunmore Road / North of Abingdon, Abingdon, to deliver 1 x 11v11 pitch and 2 x Youth 7v7 pitches and associated necessary ancillary facilities.
- F73) Provide 3 x full-size sports-lit 3G pitches to serve Abingdon to address unmet and future demand (one of which could be delivered at Dalton Barracks), and consider additional +1 x full-size sports-lit 3G to serve the edge of Oxford (Botley – Kennington arc) should demand arise in the middle to late part of the period to 2041. Also consider additional +1 x full-size sports-lit 3G to serve western catchment of Didcot, with provision made in conjunction with overall sequencing of additional 3G provision in the town (also see South Oxfordshire report). This could be provided, for example, at The Heights, Milton United.

South

- F74) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:
- a. Should quality improvements be achievable to improve the quality and capacity of existing pitches on club grounds to “standard” quality from “poor” and to improve “standard” quality pitches to “good” where indicated in “ENHANCE”, deliver 4 x 11v11 good quality pitches in one or more of the following locations, to respond to demand:
 - i. in or on the edge of Wantage;
 - ii. on the edge of Didcot (in alignment with recommendations in the South Oxfordshire PPS);
 - iii. responding to demand at Ardington & Lockinge FC;
 - iv. responding to demand at Blewbury Amazons Girls FC;
 - v. responding to demand at East Hendred AFC;
 - vi. responding to demand at Grove Challengers FC (should the additional proposed pitches at Grove Airfield not satisfy demand);
 - vii. responding to demand at Wantage Town FC (should the proposed 3G at their home ground not satisfy demand).
- F75) Deliver proposed pitches “in the pipeline” to meet demand arising in those locations. This means pitches at:
- a. Valley Park, Didcot to deliver 2 x grass youth (Alma Park), 2 x grass youth (Common Park) and 2 x grass 11v11 adult pitches (Common

- Park), 1 x full-size sports-lit 3G (Common Park) and associated necessary ancillary facilities.
 - b. Crab Hill, Wantage, 2 x grass adult 11v11 and 1 x grass youth 11v11 and associated necessary ancillary facilities.
 - c. Grove Airfield, 4 x grass adult 11v11, 4 x youth 9v9 and 4 x 5v5 / 7v7 pitches.
 - d. Alfredian Park, Wantage Town FC, deliver 1 x full-size sports-lit 3G pitch and associated necessary ancillary facilities.
- F76) Provide 0.5 x additional full-size sports-lit 3G pitch to serve demand, in a location to be determined, in the middle to latter part of the strategy period, to serve areas where demand appears on the ground, either in the Wantage / Grove or edge of Didcot area. This could be increased to a full-size 3G should demand be demonstrated that this will be viable at the time of proposal.

West

- F77) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:
- a. Should quality improvements be achievable to improve the quality and capacity of existing pitches on club grounds to “standard” quality from “poor” and to improve “standard” quality pitches to “good” where indicated in “ENHANCE”, deliver 1 x 7v7 and 2 x 9v9 good quality pitches in one or more of the following locations, to respond to demand:
 - i. in or on the edge of Shrivenham;
 - ii. in or on the edge of Faringdon;
 - iii. responding to demand at Kingson Colts FC.
- F78) Deliver proposed pitches “in the pipeline” to meet demand arising in those locations. This means pitches at:
- a. Faringdon Community College to deliver 1 x full-size sports-lit 3G pitch and any associated necessary ancillary facilities.
- F79) Consider provision of an additional +1 x full-size sports-lit 3G should demand arise in the middle to late part of the period to 2041, in either Faringdon or split on 2 x 0.5 3G pitches in Faringdon and Shrivenham.

A Note About Delivery

It is the responsibility of all signatories to the PPS and to users and providers, to act upon and deliver actions identified in the strategy. Responsibility for provision is not solely the responsibility of any one party.