

# Vale of the White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Conclusions

## HOCKEY

January, 2024

## Contents

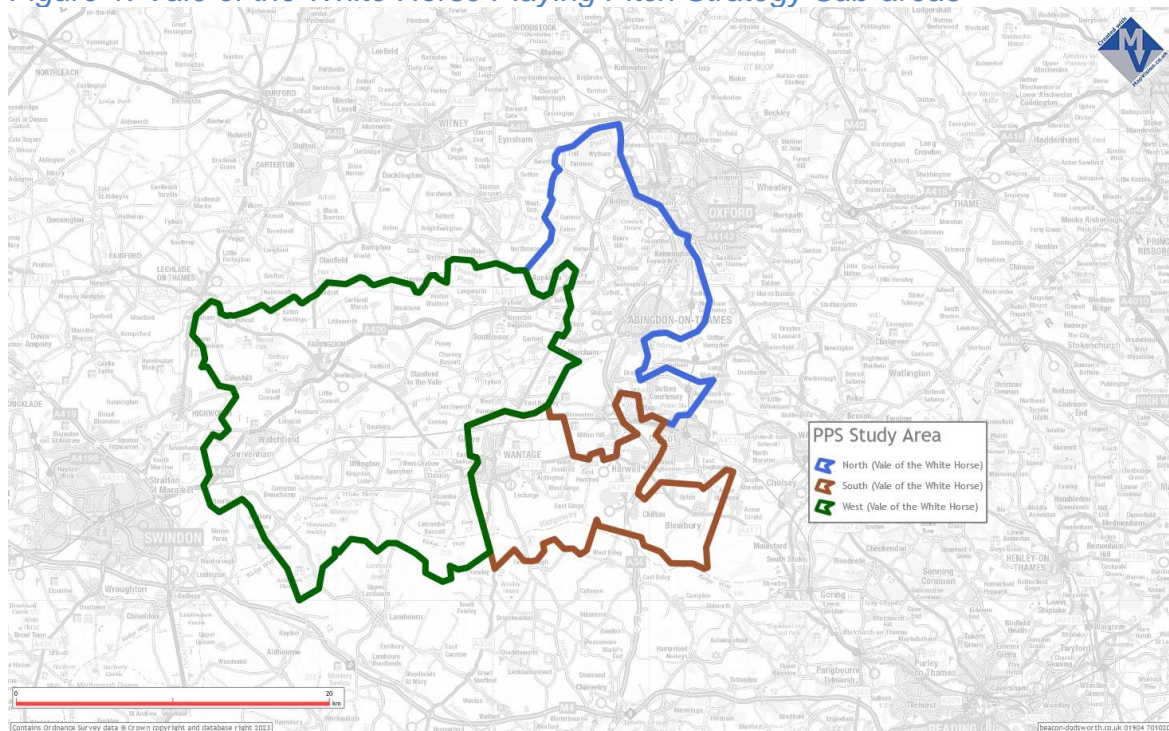
Introduction .....	3
Assessment Summary .....	3
Strategic Housing Allocation Sites .....	7
Summarising Provision .....	8
Standard Scenario – continuing hockey use on sand, water and Gen2 artificial surfaces .....	8
Scenario A - No education sites in supply.....	11
Scenario B - Supply lost in areas of high deprivation.....	11
Scenario C – No additional artificial pitches.....	11
Decarbonisation, Sustainable Travel and Climate Change .....	11
Key Issues Snapshot .....	15
Strategy Recommendations .....	15
PROTECT.....	15
ENHANCE .....	16
PROVIDE.....	17
A Note About Delivery .....	19

# HOCKEY 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. Over the last decade, hockey has seen an increase of junior players taking up the sport and an overall increase in the number of players within the club environment. This increase has been continuing across all age groups with the success at the London 2012 Olympics, Rio Olympics and the home Women's World Cup in 2018.<sup>1</sup>
3. Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) provide a secure and high-quality surface on which to play hockey used for both matches and training (and also football (for training and social games), and rugby where they meet the World Cup 22

<sup>1</sup> Based on information supplied by England Hockey

standard<sup>2</sup>). England Hockey categorises AGPs into four types<sup>3</sup> with sand dressed and sand based the most commonly available and water-based surfaces found largely at elite centres. Hockey matches are typically played over a weekend with adult teams playing on Saturdays and junior teams on Sundays. Training usually takes place on weekday evenings although some junior training can be held on Sundays.

4. For football, the popularity of AGPs has increased in recent decades; while 3G is the preferred surface, training and informal / casual play still takes place on sand pitches which can have an impact on availability of pitches for some hockey clubs. This is the case in Vale of the White Horse, where football teams are using some time on the sand based AGPs used by Abingdon Hockey Club (HC) to train and for small-sided informal / casual play. This use can place some pressure on the supply available for hockey club training on weekday evenings, in particular.
5. There are currently 6 floodlit full-size pitches with capability of hosting hockey matches and / or training (and are available for some form of community use) in the District, at Radley College (3 pitches), Tilsley Park (2 pitches) and 1 at the Defence Academy, Shrivenham (with likely limited community use).. Of these, both of the 2 pitches at Tilsley Park are used by Abingdon HC (with one considered the “main pitch”) and the Defence Academy HC use the Shrivenham pitch. The pitches at Radley College, outside of education use, are known not to be used by hockey clubs and it is assumed that all time booked at the pitches outside of College hours are for football training and informal use. All pitches are considered to have unsecure community use and the Shrivenham pitch is unlikely to be used for much community use outside of use by the Academy’s own clubs (hence why it is considered to have unsecure use given limited access to the wider community). The unsecure status for Abingdon HC puts the club at risk, as without formal use agreements in place between clubs and the provider, providers could choose not to hire the pitch out for hockey. This is despite the site being owned by the local authority and let on a lease to Abingdon School to operate. The sand AGP at UTC Oxfordshire is a smaller floodlit pitch (approximately 50m x 35m) and would not typically be used by a hockey club because of its small dimensions.

---

<sup>2</sup> 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](http://www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs/regulations/04/21/57/42157_pdf.pdf) for the full regulation.

<sup>3</sup> England Hockey category 1 water surface essential for international hockey, category 2 sand dressed surfaces essential for domestic national premier competition and higher levels of player pathway, category 3 sand-based surfaces essential for all adult and junior club training and league hockey, EH provided competitions for clubs and schools and intermediate or advanced school hockey, and category 4 all long pile 3G surfaces only desirable for play where categories 1 – 3 are absent. Further details are available in the following documents:

[http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/core/core\\_picker/download.asp?id=17206&filetitle=EH+Artificial+Grass+Policy+2018&log\\_stat=true](http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/core/core_picker/download.asp?id=17206&filetitle=EH+Artificial+Grass+Policy+2018&log_stat=true) and section 6 of the following document regarding length of fibres - [http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/core/core\\_picker/download.asp?id=17290&filetitle=EH+AGP+Guidance&log\\_stat=true](http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/core/core_picker/download.asp?id=17290&filetitle=EH+AGP+Guidance&log_stat=true)

6. The other sand/water based pitches not used by the hockey clubs, but which do have community use, see use for other sports, predominantly football. Demand for their use is set out in the football assessment report. It is also worth noting other pitches with no community use at the current time (and their size), should they become options in the future to increase supply / capacity through negotiation with the owners. These are a full-size floodlit pitch at Chandlings School (Kennington, near Oxford) and a smaller pitch without floodlights at Pinewood School, Shrivenham (unlikely to be come suitable for hockey club use due to its size and likely lack of need).
7. Comparing current supply and demand on the clubs' home pitches, combined with use by football and / or other uses, there is some headroom capacity at both of the pitches used by the HC at Tilsley Park. This amounts to 13 hours of headroom capacity on one pitch (5 hours of which are on weekday evenings) which is used predominantly for matches at weekends by the HC, and 26.5 hours of headroom capacity on the other pitch (10.5 hours of which are available on weekday evenings). With EH remarking that HCs do not tend to start training until 6pm, available capacity at the two pitches for additional training notional reduces by 4 hours per week on each pitch. With regard to time available at weekends, the HC regularly uses around 8 hours of time on one pitch and so there is notionally 24 hours available of headroom capacity to accommodate additional weekend play. These figures do, however, suggest that there is capacity to accommodate HC growth where headroom available time is not taken up by an increase in football use or other sports<sup>4</sup>. Comments provided by a football club which books the pitches for training has remarked that the pitches can freeze in the winter months with an insufficient amount of sand on the pitches, although no comments in relation to this being an issue have been provided by the HC and the pitch quality has been rated as "good" in the quality audit process.
8. Across the area, no other types of demand (such as unmet or latent demand) have been identified by the club. The club has attempted, in the past, to create an additional adult team, but not managed to achieve the critical threshold required to be able to regularly field a whole squad on a match day from the numbers registered. The club does, however, have aspirations to grow its number of competitive teams to accommodate the pathway of junior player moving through the age groups to senior level.
9. Spatially, the catchment area of full size floodlit AGPs which are used or could be used for hockey (based on a 20-minute peak midweek drive-time) is shown below. There is reasonably good coverage across much of the district, but with a noticeable spatial gap in club coverage in the southern part of the district centred around Wantage and Didcot. It is likely that any demand for club hockey in these areas moves to play at Abingdon HC, further west to Swindon and to the east to Wallingford HC in South Oxfordshire. However, spatial coverage needs also to take account the fact that the club at Shrivenham Defence Academy is likely to comprise mainly of students and staff based at the Academy. Therefore, demand arising in the Faringdon area

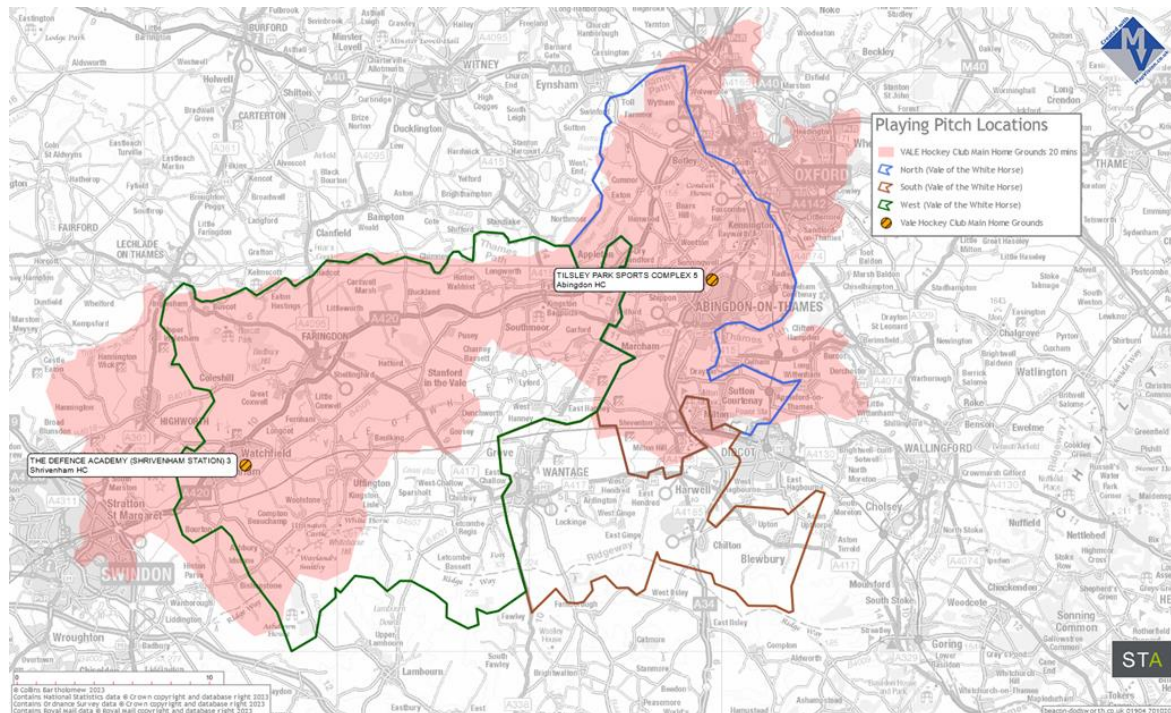
---

<sup>4</sup> For example, one of the pitches is marked out for tennis, although use for tennis is unlikely to affect the hockey season.



(and across much of the West sub-area) seems also likely to have to migrate east or west to the nearest clubs, or perhaps north to the clubs in Whitney (Whitney HC and Wychwood Ladies HC). In reality, therefore, the catchment areas around club home grounds is likely to be more than the typical 20-minute area used as a basis to explore spatial provision.

Figure 2: Catchment Map for Club Pitches



10. With the Tilsley Park site operated by Abingdon School, although this is based on a lease from the local authority, as it is operated by a school, this is still considered to pose a risk to certainty of future play on the site. Security of use should be a focus for the strategy on the site, both formally, and also a need to maintain and improve relationships between user and provider, to minimise risk of loss of the use of the pitches or of a change of surface when the surface needs replacement for commercial reasons<sup>5</sup>. However, the three sand based pitches at Radley College do present an opportunity for use by hockey if use at Tilsley Park is lost or reduced for any reason. The surface provided at Tilsley Park should be retained to accommodate hockey use in the future.
11. Ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and clubhouses seem to be in “standard” condition. Issues have not been raised or identified by clubs or providers in relation to changing facilities not being generally able to accommodate people who do not identify as male or female or are transitioning, by adapting existing provision as necessary. It a recognised challenge, financially, to be able to retrofit gender neutral or unisex provision

<sup>5</sup> England Hockey has suggested that due to the loss of hockey compliant surfaces to 3G replacement, in some areas in England, hockey players are travelling over 30 minutes to get to a suitable AGP (in some cases this is doubling the travel time). Additionally, because of the conversion to 3G surfaces some local authority areas no longer have hockey teams playing within their boundary and they have been displaced to different areas or had to disband altogether.

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 genders.

12. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (endorsed by England Hockey) has been used to project potential demand forward to 2041 based on population projections and estimates of change in participation rates agreed with England Hockey. Results have suggested an additional capacity required in the district of around one-fifth (0.21) of a full size sports-lit hockey compliant pitch. This demand, if it is retained in the district, will need to be accommodated in Abingdon.
13. However, this does not necessarily mean that additional physical pitch space must be provided, and in any case, provision of one-fifth of a full-size pitch is neither practical, desirable or viable. Accommodating this projected capacity need should be catered for within existing headroom capacity at Tilsley Park, with around 3 hours of additional training time needed on weekday evenings and around 2 hours likely to be needed for matches at weekends. Consideration of the balance between hockey and football use on weekday evenings will need to be considered, to enable the HC to maximise opportunities to train whole sections on the same evening. With two pitches on the site, and both with evening capacity, there seems to be a good opportunity to be able to achieve this on the site.

## Strategic Housing Allocation Sites

14. 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 include as “pipeline” commitments to additional supply).

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

15. The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Dalton Barracks allocation will generate demand for around 0.07 of a full-size AGP to accommodate hockey. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest in the Abingdon HC site at Tilsley Park.

## **Summarising Provision**

16. To summarise provision now and in the future, four scenarios are set out below.

### **Standard Scenario – continuing hockey use on sand, water and Gen2 artificial surfaces**

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



Hockey Supply / Demand Snapshot (unsecure and secure community use combined)						
Clubs	Teams		Home (and sub-area)	Club use (hours)	Headroom capacity (hours) <sup>6</sup>	Pitch calculator future additional demand
<b>Abingdon HC</b>	Women	3	Tilsley Park (across 2 pitches), Abingdon (North)	8 weekend	24 weekend	0.21 pitches / 4.64 hours (0.85 adult matches, 0.79 junior matches, 2.56 adult training, 0.44 junior training)
	Men	3		7.5 weekday	15.5 weekday	
	Juniors	5		evenings	evenings	
<p>There are currently 10.5 hours of time available on weekday evenings which could be used by the club on the pitch that they mostly train on, and 5 hours available on weekday evenings on the pitch they mostly play matches on at weekends. However, these 5 free hours on the pitch mainly used for training are on days and at time which may not work for the club (for example, are at 9pm and / or not on days when they currently train). However, realigning when the pitches are booked for football training or informal use would free up capacity for the hockey club to accommodate the additional evening use (for training) generated by additional population. There is also plenty of capacity on the pitch mainly used for matches on weekday evenings which could be used to accommodate additional demand. There is sufficient time to accommodate additional matches at weekends, with matches only currently being played on one pitch. Sustained use of both pitches into the future will rely on the surfaces being of a quality to host matches and training and sports lighting to the standard required for hockey to be played in the evening. Potential growth emerging from retention of the player pathway through age groups could result in additional teams emerging from existing club membership, which could result in additional time being needed on the pitches, but subject to the suggested requirements above, this seems likely to be able to be accommodated.</p>						
<b>Shrivenham HC</b>	Women	2	Shrivenham Defence Academy HC, Shrivenham (West)	Unknown	Unknown	-
	Men	2				
	Juniors	0				

<sup>6</sup> notional capacity only, as the hours of availability may not suit the needs of clubs or their teams and some of the headroom capacity could be used for football training or casual use. Hockey clubs also typically do not start weekday evening training until 6pm, while the peak period across the district starts at 5pm on weekdays. So, if the club cannot make use of the 5-6pm hour on weekday evenings if the slot is available, this reduces the evening headroom capacity across the pitches by an hour each weekday evening.

	(Estimates only)			
<p>The number of teams at the club are unknown. However, on the basis that the pitch will be used, mainly for the establishment's own teams, and that they might have two adult men's and 2 adult women's teams, it seems likely that there will be sufficient capacity on the site to accommodate demand channelled through the establishment's student entry and employed staff.</p>				
<b>Projected additional demand<sup>7</sup> across district to 2041</b>		Hours (training & matches)	0.21 pitches / 4.64 hours (0.85 adult matches, 0.79 junior matches, 2.56 adult training, 0.44 junior training)	
		Pitches (full size, floodlit)	0.21 pitches	

---

<sup>7</sup> it is important to note that figures for future demand should not be read or relied upon in isolation outside of the context provided by the strategy recommendations

18. 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.

### **Scenario A - No education sites in supply**

19. While the Tilsley Park site is owned by the local authority and represents a low risk in terms of loss of the site for sale, with operator being the school, this still presents a risk in terms of certainty of access for the club. With this in mind it is appropriate to understand and quantify potential loss which can act as a motivation to ensure greater certainty of use between the provider, local authority and club, which can be partially achieved through building strong relationships with the provider. Loss of the site to use by hockey would mean that 8 hours of current demand would be necessary at weekends and 7.5 hours on weekday evenings, with a further 5 hours of capacity projected for demand arising in the future to 2041.

### **Scenario B - Supply lost in areas of high deprivation**

20. There are no AGPs used by hockey clubs located in areas of high deprivation.

### **Scenario C – No additional artificial pitches**

21. Should a “no AGP” policy extend beyond 3G surfaces to other surface types there will be an impact on hockey which is not currently played on grass outside of school use. Competitive hockey is only played on sand based or “Gen2” surface pitches. Loss of either of these surfaces would mean that hockey cannot be played. There would be no initial short-term impact for Abingdon HC assuming that the current surface can be maintained to a good quality. When the surface needs replacement, however, a “no replacement” policy would have an impact. Some limited capacity might be available at sand based pitches not currently used by Abingdon HC (e.g. at Radley College), but access would not currently be guaranteed, with predominant use on the College pitches on weekday evenings for football, and the life of those College pitches will also come to an end with a need for resurfacing at some point in the future, maintaining risk of loss of playing surfaces for hockey. While no additional hockey AGPs are necessary to 2041 based on calculator projections, provision of no further 3G pitches for football use would mean that the current pressure felt by sand pitches to accommodate both hockey needs and informal or training activity for football would be compounded.

## **Decarbonisation, Sustainable Travel and Climate Change**

22. 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.

23. 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 buildings<sup>8</sup>.
24. Considering cycling and walking catchments, much of the district is outside of a reasonable walking and cycling distance to grounds, including most of the West sub-area, all of the South sub-area and northern and southern fringes of the North sub-area. The assessment of grounds suggests that Tilsley Park, used by Abingdon HC has secure cycle parking.
25. 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 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.
26. 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 AGPs<sup>9</sup>.
27. 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

---

<sup>8</sup> Advice is available for clubs, for example, <https://susfootball.com/net-zero-football-club/>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://sapca.org.uk/guide/codes-of-practice/>

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.

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

29. 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.
- Economies of scale<sup>10</sup> – 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.

---

<sup>10</sup> 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.

- 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 other, 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.

30. 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 loss.
- 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 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.

31. Work is ongoing (for example, by the AGP provider industry, Sport England and NGBs) to identify alternative materials to supplement 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.

32. 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

33. The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- If projected growth comes to fruition, by 2041, the 0.21 pitch capacity for hockey should be able to be accommodated on the current home ground pitches use by Abingdon HC at Tilsley Park.
- For the future long-term sustainability of hockey clubs (with regard to financial viability and maximising the availability of volunteer / coaches' time) a "one site model" is preferred by England Hockey, focusing club activity on one central site.
- While projections indicate no growth in demand in the south sub-area, this is based on baseline data of no clubs being present at a home ground in this sub-area, and does not mean that there will be no demand from the population in that area. Demand arising from any developments in the sub-area should be accommodated by collecting off-site contributions based on Stage E discussion between the local authority and England Hockey, with contributions being channelled to improvements at the closest clubs to the proposed development site.
- Priorities and main concerns can be summarised as:
  - the need to achieve greater security of tenure for Abingdon HC at Tilsley Park; and,
  - ensure that there is sufficient capacity on the pitches for hockey to accommodate its demand, particularly on weekday evenings when the club is competing with football use.

## Strategy Recommendations

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

### PROTECT

#### District-wide

- H1) Protect the existing supply of pitches (and the capacity they provide) identified in the assessment unless replacement capacity is provided (for existing known, projected and potential additional currently unidentified future demand).
- H2) Maintain any good quality AGP surfaces and lighting to the appropriate quality standard.
- H3) Protect the capacity available for hockey use on England Hockey Category 1, 2 and 3 surfaces. Consultation should take place between providers, clubs, England Hockey, Football Association and the Football Foundation prior to any change in surface type is introduced (for example, from sand to 3G). A change of surface type (or carpet) will require planning application and applicants will have to show that there is sufficient AGP provision available for hockey within the demand catchment if the surface is changed. Advice from Sport England and England Hockey should be

sought prior to any planning application being submitted. In the event of any proposed replacement of an AGP pitch used for hockey with a 3G pitch, to ensure protection of capacity for hockey, any replacement capacity must be provided for hockey clubs at the same site or an alternative site convenient for the club to access within the same settlement or wider sub-area if not feasible.

- H4) For the future long-term sustainability of hockey clubs (with regard to financial viability and maximising the availability of volunteer / coaches' time) a "one site model" for focusing club activity on one central site for each club should be followed.
- H5) Protect the current number of hours used by hockey in the peak period as a minimum (i.e. seek to prevent use by additional football training on pitches used for hockey).
- H6) Seek agreement between hockey (England Hockey) and football (Football Association), and with providers and clubs, about timely sole or priority use of sand based full size secure use AGPs within the context of the football assessment conclusions and recommendations.
- H7) 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

- H8) There is sufficient demand at the current time and projected during the strategy period to 2041 to warrant protection of the sand-based pitches at Tilsley Park used by Abingdon HC.
- H9) There is not strictly any need to protect the sand based pitches which can support hockey play for the club at Radley College when the pitches need resurfacing, but retention of two of the pitches with a surface which can accommodate hockey (such as sand or Gen2) when they need to be resurfaced would put the club in a good position should risk of loss of the surfaces at Tilsley Park not be minimised.

## ENHANCE

#### District-wide

- H10) Gain formal agreement or greater security of use (in relation to unsecure tenure) on pitches used by clubs to provide certainty of supply for hockey.
- H11) Support proposals for improved energy efficiency and localised renewable and low carbon energy generation at facilities and grounds through measures such as LED lighting, solar pv, heat pumps and building insulation.
- H12) Work with partners and key stakeholders to improve sustainable travel options to grounds, pitches and facilities at times when players are most likely to travel to and from the sites. This is particularly important in the district with only one community based club in operation.

H13) 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.

#### Sub-Area Specific

##### North

- H14) Gain formal agreement or security of use or tenure for club use of the Tilsley park pitches.
- H15) Support improvements to the lighting at Tilsley Park, upgraded to LED lighting meeting England Hockey standards.
- H16) Implement an improved maintenance regime / plan for the Tilsley Park sand AGPs.
- H17) Resolve sharing issues between hockey and football use if apparent as the hockey club grows and requires additional weekday evening slots at times which reduce operational and volunteer pressures. If 3G provision is made in Abingdon, ensure that a managed transition takes place as hockey demand grows on-site and as solutions for football 3G surfaces are delivered to accommodate demand for football training.

##### West

- H18) Work with Shrivenham HC and Academy to enable non-student and staff members to join the club, as this is an issue which needs resolving. Enabling community members' access to the club will help ensure that residents in the western part of the district do not have to travel as far to access hockey provision.

## **PROVIDE**

#### District-wide

- H19) Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, provide replacement pitch capacity on a surface compliant for hockey use to good quality standard in a single site / location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.
- H20) Ensure that proposals for new AGPs, 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.
- H21) Ensure that proposals for new AGPs:
  - a. satisfy tests applied by the local authority in relation to carbon emissions, whole lifecycle of materials and requirements for net gains in biodiversity.
- H22) Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England and include directional energy efficient LED sports lighting with a minimum of 350 lux.
- H23) 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. Pitches should be secure;

be easily and safely accessible by cycle, foot and public transport; have secure cycle storage / parking; electric vehicle charge points; and, have sufficient car parking spaces to accommodate demand for the use of the facility and any associated shared uses and comply with the most up-to-date Highways Authority, Local Planning Authority and Sport England requirements / guidance.

- H24) Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability. This must include arrangements for a sinking fund to ensure that the replacement or refurbishment of the pitch surface is viable when renewal is likely to be required. Sink funds established should be monitored to ensure that collection is taking place. It should also include a management and maintenance regime appropriate for the surface and level of use agreed with the appropriate bodies (for example, the District Council, England Hockey and / or Sport England).
- H25) Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) for peak period use and that the appropriate body or bodies are identified to monitor and enforce such agreements. Pitches should be available for 38 peak period hours (Mon – Thurs 5pm-10pm, Fri 5pm-7pm and Sat – Sun 9am-5pm).
- H26) The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between NGBs, clubs, leagues, Sport England, the District Council, and the land owner (where the latter is not one of the aforementioned bodies).
- H27) For development detailed in the adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), 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.
- H28) Monitor closely the change in demand to map against projected demand and understand the real demand “on the ground” for additional match and training time. Additional new pitch provision, if required, should be provided only in response to demonstrable demand “on the ground”, together with a full understanding of feasibility and viability. The delivery of additional pitches should be made in a timely fashion, i.e. co-ordinated in alignment with demand, availability of supply and risk of loss of existing supply on unsecure sites. A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.
- H29) New AGP pitches will be considered as “development” and the local authority should consider applying requirements to proposals, through planning policy, for future new AGPs, which assess impact in relation to carbon emissions from development through to the long-term use of the pitch, sports lighting and ancillary facilities, the impact of travel to and from the site and how the local authority and other partners will help to mitigate the impact of travel by private car and encourage active travel, the life of the surface and recycling at the end of its life, confirmation of maintenance

- regimes and viability of funding for them in the long-term to ensure longevity of the surface, and how net gains in biodiversity will be achieved.
- H30) New AGPs should be located on a managed site hosted by a provider which will: adhere to the recommendations for pitches above; and, not rely on third party management of the pitch and ancillary facilities.

#### Sub-Area Specific

##### North

- H31) No recommendations to provide additional capacity, based on existing capacity being available at Tilsley Park for Abingdon HC.

##### South

- H32) The appropriate level of off-site contributions for hockey sought from any new developments in this sub-area should be discussed between the local authority and England Hockey, given that the playing pitch calculator can only be used based on a baseline number of teams and club members (which in this sub-area is zero). Contributions should be focused on making improvements in existing provision at the clubs most likely to receive additional players from the location of the new development.

## **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.