Vale of the White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Conclusions

RUGBY UNION

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planning | policy | strategy | partnership

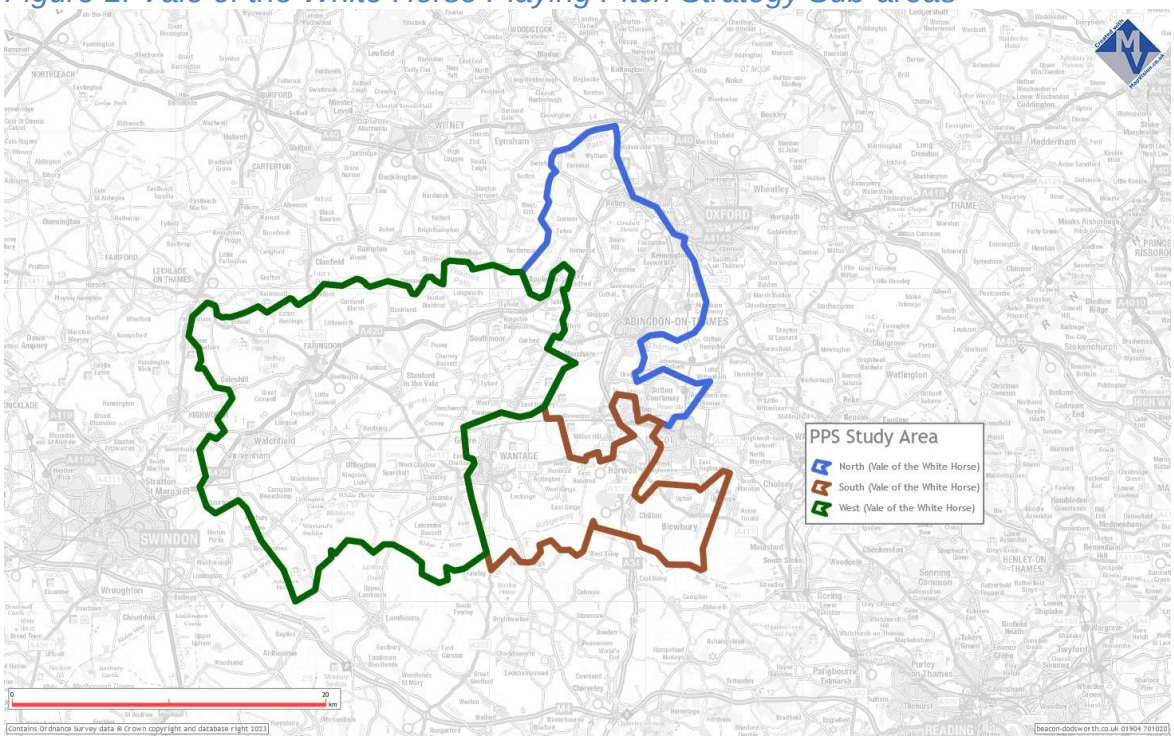
Contents

RUGBY UNION 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. Rugby has a tradition of playing on grass pitches which tend to be subjected to significant wear and tear and therefore have additional pressure to maintain quality to at least a 'standard' condition. More recently, technology has moved sufficiently forward to enable training and matches to take place on artificial grass surfaces where adequately sprung (where a pitch meets the World Regulation 22 standard[1]) and such surfaces can be shared with football. It is

[1] World Cup 22 relates to the standard required of artificial turf for rugby. Pitches need to be tested every 3 years to remain World Cup 22 compliant. See http://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/content/getfile.php?h=363a53bd2243e43b6a56a54cad04b996&p=pdfs/World_Rugby_Regulation_22_EN.pdf for the full regulation. Further information about Rugby 365 3G pitches is available here - https://www.englandrugby.com/rugby365/about

understood that Sport England, the Football Association and Football Foundation and Rugby Football Union are currently exploring the use of hybrid grass / artificial pitches. Club rugby tends to be played on pitches dedicated to a club as a home ground and the supply of pitches at schools tends only to feature in terms of club use if a club's pitches are overplayed or waterlogged, therefore requiring additional capacity to train. Clubs also prefer to retain play (matches and training) at their home ground to retain any spend in the club's social facilities to help maintain viability of the club.

3. In Vale of the White Horse in the 2022/23 season there were 6 Rugby Football Union (RFU) affiliated clubs, namely Faringdon RFC (Folly Sports Park), Grove RFC (Grove Recreation Lane), Harwell RFC (Harwell Labs), Abingdon RFC (Southern Town Park) and Oxford RFC (Southern Bypass Ground). Between them there are 6 women's, 16 men's, 2 U14-U19 girls', 13 U14-U19 boys and 36 U7-U13 mixed teams.

4. Across the District, all home grounds used by the clubs have secure community use, apart from Harwell Labs Recreation Ground where Harwell RFC play. Unsecure community use represents a risk to certainty for clubs using those grounds. Unsecure grounds will also mean that clubs wishing to access grant funding to improve facilities and / or pitches may not qualify for support.

5. In addition, Oxford Brookes University teams play at Brookes Sport (Harcourt Hill, Botley), but there is no community use (by clubs) on the site that we have been made aware of.

6. The Assessment Tables Report shows the location of pitches.

7. Most clubs see most of their players travelling a reasonably short distance to play at the home ground. However, the clubs at Didcot and Abingdon see a greater dispersal of locations from where their players travel, with a pattern for both being similar with a reasonable proportion of players travelling from Abingdon to Didcot to play and vice versa. There appears to be a reasonably small number of players "imported" from outside of the District, aside from those coming from Didcot which spatially sits on the border with South Oxfordshire and those players travelling from areas such as Oxford and Wallingford to play at Abingdon, Oxford and Didcot RFCs.

8. We have been asked, by the RFU, to record play (demand) only on club home ground pitches which have posts installed. Therefore, pitches and training grids without posts, used by some clubs out of necessity (as overflow pitches) to accommodate demand have not been considered in the figures below. Demand on those overflow pitches have been added to demand on pitches with goalposts.

9. Taking into account the grass pitches' quality (based on an assessment of drainage and maintenance regimes), carrying capacity in relation to their quality and how much play (both matches and training) is taking place:
   i) In the North sub-area, 3 pitches at Abingdon RFC <u>are being over-played</u> by 5 match equivalents (around 1.5 pitches of capacity) while 1 pitch has a

little headroom capacity to accommodate some more play (0.75 match equivalents).

ii) In the North sub-area, 3 pitches at Oxford RFC are being over-played by 7.5 match equivalents (around 2 pitches of capacity)[2].
iii) In the South sub-area, 2 pitches at Didcot RFC are being over-played by 10.75 match equivalents (around 3 pitches of capacity).
iv) In the South sub-area, the single pitch at Harwell RFC has a little headroom capacity to accommodate some more play (0.5 match equivalent).
v) In the South sub-area, 3 pitches at Grove RFC are being over-played by 6.5 match equivalents (around 2 pitches of capacity).
vi) In the West sub-area, 2 pitches at Faringdon RFC are being over-played by 10 match equivalents (around 3 pitches of capacity).

Typically, the most overplayed pitches at club grounds are those which have sports lighting and therefore see significant levels of use on weekday evenings.

10. It is clear from these figures that the existing supply (capacity) of rugby pitches available to club teams should be protected. There is demand at all grounds and overplay on most. Improving capacity at club pitches might be possible on some pitches (but not all) by making improvements to drainage and maintenance regimes (where this is possible), to relieve pressure on overplayed pitches by making other pitches more accessible (for example by introducing sports lighting where the additional play will not compromise quality) and securing additional pitch capacity if possible on existing pitches elsewhere or new additional pitches. 3G surfaces can also play a role in providing a significant amount of additional carrying capacity for clubs.

11. The 3G pitch at Tilsley Park, Abingdon, is World Rugby 22 compliant and can be used by teams if demand requires it. At the current time, only 1 hour of bookable time is used by a rugby club, recorded in the data provided by the provider as imported demand, being used by Gloucester Rugby. Outside of this use, bookings are made by football clubs, but the availability of the pitch is reduced by use of the athletics track which runs around the pitch and there is no headroom capacity most weeks for additional play at the pitch. Additional 3G provision for football in the town (if required – see the football assessment report) could free up additional capacity for rugby clubs to utilise on the Tilsley Park 3G if needed to relieve overplay at club home grounds (at least at Abingdon RFC).

11. Ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and clubhouses seem to be “standard” quality. 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

[2] At the Oxford RFC pitches, there is also some additional demand from the one team rugby league club, Oxford Cavaliers RFLC, whose season is March - October. This demand is not included in the supply/demand figure. During the peak of the rugby union seasons between November and February, when pitches tend to be at their worst quality due to weather impact, there is little (if any) additional wear on the pitches at the RFC site, but use must be managed to ensure that pitches get sufficient rest during the rugby league season, particularly over the summer months.

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. The challenge is similar for retro-fitting older changing rooms which were built for men to use and not women or young people.

12. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (endorsed by the Rugby Football Union) has been used to project potential demand forward to 2041 based on population projections and estimates of change in participation rates agreed with the Rugby Football Union. Results have suggested an additional capacity required of 33.6 match equivalents, to cater for rugby matches and training (where pitches are provided to a M2/D2 quality and supporting 3.25 match equivalents per pitch – i.e. good maintenance / pipe drained pitch). This is equivalent to 10 full size adult / senior pitches. This figure is for the whole of district and the figure can be broken down to estimate where this additional demand may arise based on clubs' ambition to grow, size of the clubs and the sub-areas likely to see the most population growth. For each sub-area, the additional demand to 2041 breaks down as follows:
    - North sub-area = 1.96 pitches
    - South sub-area = 6.02 pitches
    - West sub-area = 1.62 pitches

    In reality, pitch numbers to be provided are rounded to the nearest whole pitch.

13. Across the area, some other types of demand (unmet or latent) have been identified by Abingdon RFC, Didcot RFC and Faringdon RFC, although clubs have not indicated the number of additional teams that they could field if this unmet and latent demand was satisfied. Clubs identified the following issues which would help them better accommodate current demand:
    - Abingdon RFC – additional volunteers and coaches, access to artificial grass pitches for training and additional facilities such as changing rooms;
    - Didcot RFC – additional volunteers, additional grass pitches for training and artificial grass pitch access for training; and,
    - Faringdon RFC – additional grass pitches for matches and for training, access to artificial grass pitches for training and additional facilities such as changing rooms.

14. Indications of these types of demand help to guide where future additional capacity should be apportioned, how it could be best accommodated and also whether any additional capacity is required over and above accommodating existing overplay and future growth arising from calculator outputs.

15. In relation to imported and exported demand, information from clubs on where their players travel from to play at the club suggest that clubs such as Didcot and Abingdon on the boundary with South Oxfordshire see imported demand from that area, while there is expected imported demand from Oxford to the north, particularly to Oxford RFC which is one of the clubs which serves the city's population of rugby players. Imported demand can have implications for additional future demand in addition to that calculated for the sub-area,

although it is difficult to quantify unless an up-to-date PPS for the areas from which demand is imported is in place.

16. Clubs provided information on their aspirations to grow. The information provided enables an understanding to be gained of their view of their own direction of travel, what they need to achieve this growth and it helps to ground (or "bring alive") projected demand for growth derived from the calculator. The information provided is, however, "sense checked" to ensure that the information provided is reasonable.
    - Abingdon RFC (North sub-area) – 4 junior teams;
    - Oxford RFC (North sub-area) – 1 senior and 12 junior teams;
    - Didcot RFC (South sub-area) – 1 senior and 12 junior teams;
    - Grove RFC (South sub-area) – 1 senior and 5 junior teams;
    - Harwell RFC (South sub-area) – 2 senior teams; and,
    - Faringdon RFC (West sub-area) – 7 senior and 16 junior teams.

17. 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 from the pitch calculator.

18. Summing all types of demand and overplay together for the district as a whole on community use (club) sites and assuming that all existing club pitches can be improved to support a higher carrying capacity (including provision of sports lighting to support demand in the evenings for training) to a D2/M2 quality (which supports 3.25 match equivalents per week), equates to an equivalent of around 42.5 match equivalents or 13 additional grass pitches, preferably with sports lighting, needed by the end of the strategy period (to 2041, over the next 18 years).

The Role of WR22 Compliant 3G Pitches

19. WR22 compliant 3G pitches can play an important role in supporting demand and addressing over-use of pitches, particularly in relation to accommodating training, but also for matches where fully WR22 compliant (including dimensions of the pitch and rugby posts in place, as well as being the appropriate pile and sufficiently sprung). Assumptions can be made about the "carrying capacity" equivalent for 3G pitches which meet these requirements. We use the following basic calculations to equate a full-size sports-lit WR22 compliant pitch to a number of grass pitches.

	Assumptions	**Notes**
Weekend use	1 match equivalent = 120 minutes (2 hours)	Reflects additional "buffer" time likely to be needed before and after an 80 minute match (for warm-up / warm-down) as well as playing time and half-time.
	Peak time hours available on a 3G = 16 hours	

	Peak time on 3G = 8 match equivalents	
Weekday evening use	1 match equivalent = 1 x 2 hour training session (for 2 teams)	Based on PPS guidance and typical duration of training session for senior teams.
	Peak time available on a 3G = 22 hours	
	Peak time on 3G = 11 match equivalents	
Weekend and weekday use combined	Peak time on 3G total = 19 match equivalents	
	D2/M2 rated grass pitch = 3.25 match equivalents per week	
	Number of 3G pitches equivalent to the number of grass pitches therefore 19 / 3.25 = 5.8 grass pitches	
	Therefore it is a reasonable assumption that 1 x WR22 compliant 3G provides a similar level of capacity to around 6 grass pitches	This is a data driven figure. In reality, a 3G pitch is most likely to be a solution to sustain training on weekday evenings, with a preference of most clubs to play matches on grass pitches.

Strategic Housing Allocation Sites

20. 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).

21. 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 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.

22. 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. 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).

23. 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.

24. 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

25. The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Dalton Barracks allocation will generate demand for around 0.61 full-size rugby pitches. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest in the Abingdon RFC site to help improve the quality and therefore carrying capacity of existing pitches. Located close to Abingdon, most demand arising from residents in the development seems likely to gravitate towards the club in the town.

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

26. 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 0.63 full-size rugby pitches. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest in the Didcot RFC site to help make improvements to increase capacity.

North West Grove (c.624 dwellings[3], approx. 1,498 population) – South Sub-area

27. 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 0.49 full-size rugby pitches. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest in the Grove RFC site to help improve the quality or quantity and therefore carrying capacity of the home ground.

RFU Position on Contributions from Development Sites

28. The RFU strongly objects to the isolated development of pitches on new housing sites for rugby use. The RFU is clear and has been for several years that all planning gain which can benefit rugby should be channelled towards member clubs to achieve a number of key areas:
    - Enhancement of strategic rugby facilities and sites.
    - Enabling sustainable business models for the rugby clubs to develop.
    - Creating opportunities for age grade teams to flow through the age ranges into senior rugby on single club sites, key to providing the necessary support to grow the game.
    - The RFU is open to looking at different types of surfaces, but are always keen to improve the grass / natural turf pitches at club sites. This can be through improved maintenance and, if required, drainage.
    - The RFU is often looking to solve training deficits by increasing sports lighting on sites, also key for the RFU, and the RFU always looks to seek 106 / CIL support for this.

29. The RFU would only consider on-development-site provision for rugby if this is to support a club move.

Summarising Provision

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

Standard Scenario – main preferred use of grass pitches on club sites supplemented by 3G and other grass pitch locations where necessary

31. The summary picture for supply and demand at club grounds (and sub-areas), now and in the future is as follows.

[3] 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.

Figure 2: Rugby Supply / Demand Snapshot

Rugby Supply / Demand Snapshot (unsecure and secure community use combined)							
Club	**Teams**	**Home (and sub-area)**	**Home ground supply**	**Club demand**	**Supply / demand balance**	**Additional capacity introduced if existing pitch quality improved (and sports lighting available)**	**Projected net additional future demand (based on split of sub-area projected demand)**
			(match equivalents)				
Abingdon RFC	Women 1 Men 3 Juniors 8	Southern Town Park (North)	6	10.25	-4.25	7	2
While the club has a likely moderate level of aspirational growth and seems likely to share equally the level of the growth projected in the sub-area with Oxford RFC, if existing pitches see improved quality, it is likely to result only in a small need for additional capacity. The ability to improve the pitches beyond the current quality level is also subject to whether improvements can be made with the pitches being on an old landfill site. Pitches closest to the River Thames also particularly suffer from flooding during the winter which could further restrict the ability to improve quality. One additional new grass pitch seems the appropriate target from additional demand in the sub-area if quality is improved on existing pitches. Based on calculator figures, an additional pitch could be required, should imported demand be generated from the strategic allocations in Berinsfield and Culham Science Centre sites (South Oxfordshire District) and provision is not made on either site to accommodate a realistic club option for rugby in either location. This results in around 2 additional pitches being needed at the club overall. However, if evening slots for training can be freed-up from football on the 3G pitch at Tilsley Park, for example, through provision of an additional 3G pitch in Abingdon (see football assessment) this could reduce the need for additional grass pitches for club use.							
Oxford RFC	Women 0 Men 3 Juniors 7	Southern Bypass Ground (North)	1.5	10.25	-8.75	8.25	2.25
While the club has a likely moderate level of aspirational growth and seems likely to share equally the level of the growth projected in the sub-area with Abingdon RFC, if existing pitches see improved quality, it is likely to result only in a small need for additional capacity. One additional new grass pitch seems the appropriate target if quality is improved on existing pitches. However, should a significant level of imported demand arise from Oxford, this could lead to an increased need for grass pitch capacity and this potential scenario seems to fit with the club's stated aspirational growth, which seems reasonably high given that the club currently has 10 teams (although not							

Rugby Supply / Demand Snapshot (unsecure and secure community use combined)							
Club	**Teams**	**Home (and sub-area)**	**Home ground supply**	**Club demand**	**Supply / demand balance**	**Additional capacity introduced if existing pitch quality improved (and sports lighting available)**	**Projected net additional future demand (based on split of sub-area projected demand)**
			(match equivalents)				
unachievable if growth in junior age groups can be maintained). A factor which will mitigate and possibly avoid the need for additional pitches will be securing community use of the 2 x St Peter's College pitches which see some overspill use by the club at the current time.							
Didcot RFC	Women 1.5 Men 2.5 Juniors 14	Boundary Park (South)	6	16.75	-10.75	0.5	18
The number of teams that Didcot RFC has (19) correlates with the significant levels of growth in population in the town in recent years (both within Vale of the White Horse and South Oxfordshire districts). Figures suggest that, even with improvements to quality, the club could struggle to accommodate demand and retain quality of the pitches (not because of any maintenance issues, but simply because of demand seeing significant overplay). This despite the Boundary Park pitches being relatively new. Continued growth in Didcot will likely see additional need for a greater capacity of grass pitches and the club does well to manage demand on two pitches at the current time. It seems likely that a large proportion of the net additional 8 pitches required in the sub-area will be needed in Didcot, perhaps 5-6, unless alternative provision can be made to accommodate training for example, through a WR22 compliant 3G pitch. It is sensible to also associate some additional demand from South Oxfordshire's West sub-area to Didcot, perhaps 1 additional pitch, equating to a total of 6-7 pitches being required to cater for demand to 2041. A new WR22 compliant 3G pitch to serve the club would significantly reduce the number of additional grass pitches needed.							
Harwell RFC	Women 0 Men 1 Juniors 0	Harwell Labs (South)	1.5	1	0.5	1.75	0.5
As a small club, it is likely that Harwell RFC will continue to be able to manage with their current provision. The focus for the club and site will be to achieve secure community use (despite their good relationship with Harwell Labs) or find others ways to mitigate the risk of loss of the pitch in the coming years.							
Grove RFC	Women 1 Men 3 Juniors 7	Grove Recreation Lane (South)	1.5	8	-6.5	8.25	7.25

Rugby Supply / Demand Snapshot (unsecure and secure community use combined)							
Club	**Teams**	**Home (and sub-area)**	**Home ground supply**	**Club demand**	**Supply / demand balance**	**Additional capacity introduced if existing pitch quality improved (and sports lighting available)**	**Projected net additional future demand (based on split of sub-area projected demand)**
			(match equivalents)				
A key area of focus for Grove RFC will be the improvement of their existing pitches, which could bring a significant amount of additional capacity. The move of the football club off of the site will present an opportunity to better maintain quality and increase capacity through use of the 2x former football pitches (with the rugby club likely to move the first team pitch to the pitch in front of the pavilion). Opportunity for growth should arise from the continued development of the Grove Airfield development and the club has expressed a reasonable level of aspirational growth in the next 5 years. It would seem reasonable to suggest that c.1-2 of the net additional grass pitches could be appropriate in Grove to accommodate growth to 2041 subject to demand arising on the ground and should the additional pitches from the football club move not bring forward sufficient additional capacity.							
Faringdon RFC	Women 2 Men 3 Juniors 11	Folly Sports Park (West)	4	14	-10	2.5	12.5
Projected demand for the sub-area is likely to mostly arise within the sub-area, although some may cross the boundary with other sub-areas on its eastern side. As a large club (16 teams) with only two pitches, only one of which is sports-lit to accommodate training, there is significant pressure on the existing pitches. Provision of an additional 4 pitches to 2041 would seem to match the club's ambition for growth. However, the club's growth could be constrained by the absence of secure tenure or control over the facilities on the site (with current control resting with the cricket club). If an opportunity for a new WR22 compliant 3G arises in Faringdon, this could help relieve supply and capacity issues and might negate the need for some or all of the additional grass pitches to be provided.							
Projected additional demand[4] across district to 2041 (without improvements to existing pitch quality or additional 3G pitches)						Match equivalents (training & matches)	42.5
						Pitches (full size, sports-lit)	13

[4] 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.

32. The figures represent a “top end” figure for demand which would need to be carefully monitored to understand the realistic need for the resultant pitch capacity. 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 should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand prior to going ahead.

33. As the table above suggests, the figures for demand by the end of the strategy period do not necessarily mean that all projected additional physical pitches must be provided. Accommodating the projected capacity / demand needed should be catered for first from:
    - securing pitches with unsecure community use on education and other sites used by clubs for community use, also securing long-term tenure;
    - any existing headroom capacity, through improvements to the quality of existing pitches where necessary to increase carrying capacity (in terms of the number of match equivalents that can be played on the pitch);
    - provision of sports-lights to accompany improved maintenance to enable pitches to be used for additional training and relieve other sports-lit pitches of over-use;
    - use of other existing pitches not currently used by clubs;
    - reconfiguration of grounds to fit additional pitches with posts in the same area, where feasible;
    - bringing any “mothballed”, closed or lapsed pitch sites back into use where in the right location to satisfy demand; and,
    - matching clubs with over-play on pitches with new grass pitches already “in the pipeline” to be delivered.

34. Any new pitches which are needed should be provided close to club grounds if possible to maintain and enhance the financial viability and security of the clubs and minimise need for additional changing or clubhouse facilities. Strategically, if demand is so significant that these measures combined cannot accommodate demand, a 3G pitch serving more than one rugby club or a shared surface with football could be considered as a solution if viable and feasible. However, of all of these options, to help maintain and enhance club viability in the long-term the first step should be to maximise the capacity of the current pitches used by clubs with secure sites through quality improvements.

35. 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

36. Only one club uses education sites at the current time. Oxford RFC uses 2 x pitches on the St Peter’s College site adjacent to their club pitches. Demand on the site is not recorded in the supply / demand figures and so loss of their use is already factored into calculations. A priority will be to secure community use and certainty of tenure for the club. If use of these pitches are lost to club use, replacement pitches would need to be found to accommodate existing and future play.

37. Tilsley Park in Abingdon, hosts a WR22 compliant 3G pitch which could be utilised by Abingdon RFC, but which does not have sufficient available capacity to do so if desired by the club, would represent a loss from supply if, in the future, the club accesses slots for weekday evening training or weekend matches and the school, as the operator of the site did not wish to book the pitch out to the club or prioritises hire for football over rugby.

38. Two full-size rugby pitches at Brookes Sport (Harcourt Hill, Botley) would be lost if education sites were removed from supply, although there is no community use on these pitches for clubs (with the only use for Brookes University teams).

Scenario B - Supply lost in areas of high deprivation

39. There are no rugby club home grounds located in areas of high deprivation.

Scenario C – No additional artificial pitches

40. Full-size sports-lit WR22 compliant 3G pitches could play a role, as indicated above, in accommodating a significant level of demand for both Faringdon RFC and Didcot RFC, instead of the high number of additional grass pitches required to 2041. Should 3G pitches not be supported, the number of grass pitches set out above to accommodate demand for these clubs will likely need to be provided on sites close to existing club provision to ensure their long-term use and viability or on a new club ground which hosts the appropriate number of total pitches, after other options to accommodate additional demand have been exhausted.

41. There could also be a “knock-on” impact of no new additional artificial pitches, with a greater number of teams across rugby, football and hockey all competing for artificial pitch time on existing AGPs. With hockey unable to play on 3G surfaces, this puts pressure on sand-based surfaces, competing with football and in Abingdon, for example, this will squeeze the amount of time available to rugby in the future on the WR22 compliant 3G at Tilsley Park.

Decarbonisation, Sustainable Travel and Climate Change

39. 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.

40. 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[5].

[5] Advice is available for clubs, for example, https://susfootball.com/net-zero-football-club/

41. Considering cycling and walking catchments, the following areas are outside of a reasonable walking and cycling distance to grounds: the south-western and north-western parts of the West sub-area. The assessment of grounds used by clubs suggested that almost all club sites have secure cycle parking, although 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 Folly Sports Park (Faringdon RFC's home ground).

42. 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.

43. 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[6].

44. 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.

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

46. Benefits / arguments for provision:

[6] See https://sapca.org.uk/guide/codes-of-practice/

- 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[7] – 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 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.

[7] 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.

47. 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.

48. 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.

49. 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

50. The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:
    - Priorities and main concerns can be summarised as:
        - the significant amount of existing overplay on most club grounds which needs to be resolved to reduce the number of pitches needed moving forward, particularly on grounds which host large, growing clubs;

    - improving quality of existing pitches as a priority to support existing demand and reduce overplay;
    - ensuring that sports lighting can be provided to enable additional evening use in co-ordination with pitch quality improvements;
    - exploration of the role that WR22 compliant 3G pitches could play in one or two locations to support growth and negate a high number of additional grass pitches being necessary (in Didcot and Faringdon); and,
    - if 3G options are not supported, how and where best to find additional pitch capacity close to existing grounds to cater for demand which ensure club use away from the home ground.
- Pitches used by clubs which have unsecure community use (for example, at Harwell) should be secured to ensure long-term certainty of use.
- If projected growth comes to fruition, by 2041, and no measures are taken to improve existing pitches' quality, capacity which allows the equivalent to around 13 full-size pitches will be necessary to support existing and future club demand.

Strategy Recommendations

51. The above assessment conclusions suggest that the approach to the PPS strategy for **rugby** in the district should be as follows:

PROTECT

District-wide

R1) Protect the existing supply of pitches (and their capacity) identified in the assessment (for existing known, projected and potential additional currently unidentified future demand) 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 (also see PROVIDE recommendations).

R2) Monitor the position in relation to clubs which have rolling annual, short and medium term leases or rental / hire arrangements for their home ground during the strategy period to ensure in advance of their expiry that they are renewed to provide certainty into a new period, preferably for the long-term.

R3) Regular monitoring of the balance between supply and demand should take place to ensure that appropriate use of any available capacity is being made and confirm that any spare "headroom" capacity to accommodate growth is not considered as "surplus" to rugby union use.

R4) Ensure that all existing and new pitches that are World Rugby 22 compliant are re-tested every two years to sustain certification.

R5) Protect the quality of changing facilities through formal agreements to maintain the quality to a standard quality, at least, and improve to a "good" quality where possible.

R6) 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

R7) Protection of 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) used by Abingdon RFC (Southern Town Park) and Oxford RFC (Southern Bypass Ground).

R8) Protect the WR22 compliant 3G surface at Tilsley Park from loss on the basis that it could play an important role in supporting additional demand from Abingdon RFC.

South

R9) Protection of 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) used by Didcot RFC (Boundary Park), Grove RFC (Grove Recreation Lane) and Harwell RFC (Harwell Labs).

West

R10) Protection of 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) used by Faringdon RFC (Folly Sports Park).

ENHANCE

District-wide

R11) Prioritise pitch quality improvements at secure community use grounds over unsecure community use grounds. Improving the carrying capacity of pitches should be aligned with provision of sports-lighting to ensure that additional capacity provided by pitch improvements can be practically utilised on weekday evenings. The specific programme of works required to improve a pitch's quality must be informed by an independent GMA / Pitch Power report instructed by the NGB, local authority or club. 2023 GMA report recommendations are captured in the data tables report for rugby.

R12) Gain the secure use of clubs' 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.

R13) Enhance the quality of changing and other ancillary facilities where necessary to help ensure the quality of the experience for the sport is enhanced.

R14) Improve the current use of existing pitches, where physically and logistically possible, by considering flexibility of when matches take place.

R15) 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.

R16) 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.

R17) Work with partners and key stakeholders to improve sustainable travel options to grounds, pitches and facilities.

R18) 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

R19) Gain the secure use / tenure of the 2 x pitches used by Oxford RFC at St Peter's College Recreation Ground to provide certainty of future supply.

R20) Enhance capacity on pitches at Abingdon RFC and Oxford RFC by improving quality through improved drainage (where viable / subject to funding and a business plan being in place to ensure maintenance costs are catered for in the long-term), by introducing sports-lights where necessary and feasible and by improving surface maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. Pitch improvements should be made to enhance capacity to at least 3.25 match equivalents (D2/M2 rating) and improvements should follow the recommendations made in the most up-to-date GMA pitch assessment report.

South

R21) Gain the secure use / tenure of the ground at Harwell RFC which does not currently have secure community use, to provide certainty of future supply and which will in turn enable the club to access necessary funding to invest in improvements if necessary.

R22) Enhance capacity on pitches at Didcot RFC (Boundary Park) and Grove RFC (Grove Recreation Lane) by improving quality through improved drainage (where viable / subject to funding and a business plan being in place to ensure maintenance costs are catered for in the long-term), by introducing sports-lights where necessary and feasible and by improving surface maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. Pitch improvements should be made to enhance capacity to at least 3.25 match equivalents (D2/M2 rating) and improvements should follow the recommendations made in the most up-to-date GMA pitch assessment report.

West

R23) Enhance capacity on pitches at Faringdon RFC (Folly Sports Park) by improving quality through improved drainage (where viable / subject to

funding and a business plan being in place to ensure maintenance costs are catered for in the long-term), by introducing sports-lights where necessary and feasible and by improving surface maintenance to ensure that the better quality is sustained in the long-term. Pitch improvements should be made to enhance capacity to at least 3.25 match equivalents (D2/M2 rating) and improvements should follow the recommendations made in the most up-to-date GMA pitch assessment report.

R24) Explore opportunities for a joint lease arrangement on the pavilion at Folly Park with the ECB and cricket club to increase access and viability of RFC in the long-term.

PROVIDE

District-wide

R25) Where the loss of an existing pitch is unavoidable, provide replacement pitches or capacity to good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.

R26) 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.

R27) Ensure that proposals for new and resurfaced 3G pitches:

a) provide satisfactory protection and mitigation to minimise rubber crumb and other infill loss (retrofitting containment if necessary);
b) are constructed to meet FA and RFU recommended quality performance standards to meet performance testing criteria; and,
c) provide energy efficient directional LED sports-lighting;
d) satisfy tests applied by the local authority in relation to carbon emissions, whole lifecycle of materials and requirements for net gains in biodiversity.

R28) Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the Rugby Football Union and Sport England.

R29) 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.

R30) 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 RFU, and the provider must report to the local authority, Sport England and the RFU 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.

R31) Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity), including secure tenure, and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements.

R32) Seek to provide additional capacity, where needed, at (or, if this is not possible, within close proximity to) existing club home grounds as a preference over sites far from home grounds, where physical, ownership and planning constraints do not prevent such change. This will help to ensure the long-term financial stability of clubs given the social tradition and culture of the sport. Developer contributions sought for pitch provision / improvements for rugby should (for example, from the Community Infrastructure Levy or section 106 planning obligations) where feasible within planning regulations be considered first as contributions towards existing rugby club sites given the nature of how and where rugby is played (as a club on-site based sport). This could help to avoid contributions being sought or spent inappropriately on sites which may be remote from existing club home grounds and infrastructure and help to ensure any new provision or additional capacity provided through development is used (and in the most effective way). Additional capacity could be provided through grass, hybrid or 3G pitches.

R33) For development detailed in the adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Chargin 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.

R34) 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 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.

R35) Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand.

R36) The total amount of additional supply should come from a variety of sources, i.e. the projected demand is unlikely to need to be delivered solely through additional, new, grass pitches. Increased capacity to this amount will come from a combination of:

a. Increase reliability of pitch use and improving the quality and / or maintenance regimes of existing pitches to improve quality to a D2/M2 rating to accommodate 3.25 match equivalents per week (where viable / subject to funding and a business plan being in place to ensure maintenance costs are catered for in the long-term) (see **Enhance**);
b. providing sports lighting to increase evening training capacity (see **Enhance**);
c. securing community use and security of tenure on current non-club unsecure sites if possible and feasible for club use, for example on education or other provider sites;

d. new additional pitches at existing club grounds where feasible, for example, through reconfiguration of existing pitch layouts to accommodate additional pitches, or provision adjacent or close to existing club sites; and / or,
e. WR22 compliant 3G pitch(es) to serve as strategic provision if other provision to accommodate overplay and additional demand cannot be catered for through the above measures. (If a shared rugby and football 3G is seen as a solution for both sports, a programme of use and certainty of availability for each sport should be agreed.)

R37) New additional pitches required should be provided as close to existing club grounds or provided on new sites which accommodate all club needs. Where this cannot be achieved and provision of s106 or CIL monies are not provided to enhance capacity at existing clubs sites, satellite grounds could be explored, but practical use will be dependent upon a club's ability to adequately run (and maintain) a satellite ground. Volunteer capacity must feature as one of the tests to assess viability and feasibility, amongst others, and other risks to the club's long-term sustainability and viability must be mitigated. An alternative option, subject to financial viability and critical masses required to ensure viability both at start-up and in the long-term could be the establishment of a new club at a new ground. All off-club site provision must take into account the RFU position on provision of pitch capacity and facilities away from existing club sites.

R38) 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 condition[8] on permission to ensure that mitigation is delivered as intended (and therefore certainty of delivery is guaranteed).

R39) Provision of new additional pitches 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 projected demand has actually come forward. A "plan, deliver, monitor, manage" approach should therefore be taken to the provision of additional capacity.

R40) The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should be closely co-ordinated between the club, RFU, Sport England, the local authority, and the land owner (where not one of the aforementioned bodies).

R41) Ensure that usage plans are developed for new 3Gs and include agreement on the balance of use between rugby and other sports where relevant.

Sub-Area Specific

[8] 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)".

North

R42) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:

a. Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 19.5 match equivalents across this sub-area with demand likely to arise at Abingdon RFC and Oxford RFC.
b. Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE.
c. Should quality improvements be achievable to improve the quality and capacity of existing pitches on club grounds to accommodate 3.25 match equivalents per pitch, additional capacity should be provided to the following scale at the following clubs:
    i. Abingdon RFC – provision to support a net additional demand of around 1-2 grass pitches with sports lighting, unless sufficient capacity can be guaranteed for the club at the Tilsley Park WR22 compliant 3G. Alongside the recommendations for South Oxfordshire in relation to rugby demand arising from Culham and Berinsfield development populations, consider the appropriate approach to catering for the additional demand generated by those developments in relation to provision at Abingdon RFC, in addition to catering for demand from the Dalton Barracks development.
    ii. Oxford RFC – provision to support a net additional demand of around 1-2 grass pitches, should secure community use and certainty of tenure not be achieved on the St Peter's College pitches used by the club as overspill at the current time.

South

R43) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:

a. Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 36.25 match equivalents across this sub-area with most demand likely to arise at Didcot RFC and Grove RFC.
b. Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE.
c. Should quality improvements be achievable to improve the quality and capacity of existing pitches on club grounds to accommodate 3.25 match equivalents per pitch, additional capacity should be provided to the following scale at the following clubs:
    i. Didcot RFC – provision to support a net additional demand of around 6-7 grass pitches with sports lighting, unless capacity can be provided through a new WR22 compliant sports-lit 3G pitch. This response to demand includes an element of demand generated in South Oxfordshire's West sub-area within which part of Didcot sits. Off-site contributions from major developments in the town can help fund improvements in capacity.

ii. Grove RFC – provision to support a net additional demand of around 1-2 grass pitches, should the additional capacity brought to the club from the move of the football club from two football pitches at the club site not provide sufficient additional supply.

West

R44) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:

a. Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 15 match equivalents across this sub-area with demand likely to arise at Faringdon RFC.
b. Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE.
c. Should quality improvements be achievable to improve the quality and capacity of existing pitches on club grounds to accommodate 3.25 match equivalents per pitch, additional capacity should be provided to the following scale at the following club:
    i. Faringdon RFC – provision to support a net additional demand of around 4 grass pitches with sports lighting, unless sufficient capacity can be guaranteed for the club from use at a new 3G pitch in Faringdon, if, for example, the proposed pitch at the College comes forward and is WR22 compliant or at least is able to cater for rugby training (through the appropriate pile and inclusion of a shock-pad. Following delivery of a new 3G pitch and confirmation of the nature and amount of rugby club use, the number of additional grass pitches needed can be reduced.

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.