

# Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy

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## Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy

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**Glossary of Terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>AGP</b>	Artificial Grass Pitch(es)
<b>APS</b>	Active People Survey(s)
<b>ECB</b>	England and Wales Cricket Board
<b>EH</b>	England Hockey
<b>FA</b>	Football Association
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>Strategy</b>	Playing Pitch Strategy
<b>RFU</b>	Rugby Football Union

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### General

1.1 This is one of four documents provided within the overall Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy. The four documents are:

- **The Strategy:** an overarching document providing context and guidance for the future provision and protection of pitch sport opportunities within Wiltshire;
- **The Action Plan (Part 1):** Generic actions relating to the steering group's objectives;
- **The Area Profiles (Action Plan Part 2):** 18 separate profiles (based on Community Board areas), translating the above into location specific recommendations; and,
- **The Needs Assessment:** the technical report examining overall supply and demand for pitch sports which is essentially the 'evidence base' used to inform the above three documents.

1.2 This document is based on a substantial needs assessment (see above) and associated consultation undertaken, and following recognised national guidance. The list of consultees for the needs assessment included National Governing Body of Sport regional and county representatives; and, local clubs and leagues. Other consultations were undertaken with education interests.

1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out policies to help enable communities to access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies need to be based on a thorough understanding of local needs for such facilities and opportunities available for new provision. The Government's public health initiatives have seen local authorities assume more responsibility for improving levels of public health. Studies show that living a healthy lifestyle and maintaining a healthy weight can reduce the risk of developing chronic disease, improves quality of life and increases life expectancy.

1.4 The Council is now responsible for many factors which impact on mental and physical health, including sports and leisure provision in the area, environmental health, green spaces and housing standards. The Council is therefore aiming to support its residents and encourage health improvements by implementing the revised Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy alongside the Council's other policies and strategies.

1.5 Other national policy and strategies such as the DCMS 'Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation' and Sport England's 'Towards an Active Nation' strategy also point to the critical role of local authorities in both providing and facilitating new and improved sports provision to provide not just sports but also wider physical activity and health benefits.

### Remit

1.6 The remit of the Playing Pitch Strategy covers the major 'pitch sports': Association Football; Cricket; Hockey; and Rugby. These sports require significant amounts of open space, and therefore require careful planning, given their popularity as participative sports. As this strategy evolves and is reviewed it may be that its scope can be expanded to cover other pitch sports that look to increase their presence in the area. For example, lacrosse might stand to benefit from some of the recommendations for improvements to artificial turf provision made in this strategy. These and other potential sports development initiatives can be addressed in future reviews.

## **Application**

The Strategy and Action Plans, together with the Area Profiles, will be used to inform the preparation of statutory planning policy, and supplementary planning documents. It can be used in applying the Community Infrastructure Levy and developing Section 106 agreements. The detailed information can also be used to inform other investment decisions on the part of both the Council and its partners, and support the development of funding bids.

## **Method and governance**

1.7 The Strategy and Action Plan, as well as the underpinning Needs Assessment follows national guidance produced by Sport England, and the entire project has been overseen by a Steering Group comprising representatives of relevant authorities and organisations, and these are listed at **Appendix 1**.

1.8 The report is made up of the following:

- A summary of the context for preparing this Strategy;
- A summary of the main issues that have been identified as affecting each sport, now and in the coming years;
- A strategic vision, aims and recommendations to guide the actions and decisions of the Council and its partners over the coming years (The Strategy);
- An Action Plan (Part 1), attached as **Appendix 2**, which also refers to and complements the Area Profiles (Action Plan Part 2); and,
- Recommendations on how the Strategy should be kept up-to-date, and its implementation resourced.

## **Pragmatism**

1.10 Wiltshire is a geographically large local authority. There are around 370 grass sites as well as other artificial pitches included in the Needs Assessment underpinning this document. Given the limited resources available to the Council and its partners responsible for the preparation of this Strategy and Action Plan, it would have been impossible and inappropriate to make site-specific proposals for each and every venue. Instead, site-specific proposals are identified for key locations and actions in the Area Profiles (Action Plan Part 2). Other sites are covered by general recommendations contained in Action Plan Part 1.

## 2.0 CONTEXT

### General

2.1 An understanding of the local strategic context, population and sports participation trends is essential in order to ensure that facility provision is tailored to the needs of the area.

### Population

2.3 As at 2015 the Wiltshire Council area was estimated to have a population of 485,768. This figure is based upon population projections commissioned by the Council<sup>1</sup>. The same projections calculate that by the year 2026 the population will have increased to 530,281. This figure is itself only based upon previous trends, and does not necessarily take into account the impact of planned new residential growth. The Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) allocates land for another 42,000 houses within the local authority and up to the year 2026. The area specific allocations are detailed in the Area Profiles document.

2.4 The primary focus of new housing development will be at Trowbridge, Chippenham and Salisbury and the smaller towns, including: Bradford on Avon; Calne; Corsham; Cricklade; Devizes; Malmesbury; Marlborough; Melksham; Pewsey; and, Royal Wootton Bassett.

2.5 More modest growth, proportionate to the size of the settlement, will be delivered in smaller settlements through site allocation development plan documents, community-led planning policy documents, including neighbourhood plans, and partnership working with the local communities.

2.6 Generally speaking, the natural rate of rise in the population within the pitch sport playing age groups will be lower than that for the population as a whole within Wiltshire. The rates of change will vary across the Council area. To this natural change, however, there needs to be factored in the impact of local population change resulted from allocated housing.

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<sup>1</sup> From a forecast produced by Wiltshire Council on 12/05/2015 using POPGROUP software developed by Bradford Council, the University of Manchester and Andelin Associates

## **Strategic Context**

### **National Policy**

2.7 **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** clearly establishes the requirement that local plans ensure that there is proper provision of community and cultural facilities to meet local needs. The NPPF's expectations for the development of local planning policy for sport and physical activity/recreation, is set out in paragraphs 73 and 74 which require there to be a sound (i.e. up-to-date and verifiable) evidence base underpinning policy and its application. Paragraph 73 indicates that:

'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

2.8 Paragraph 74 states that:

'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss

2.9 **DCMS: Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation.** This cross-government strategy seeks to address flat lining levels of sport participation and high levels of inactivity in this country. Through this strategy, government is redefining what success in sport means, with a new focus on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In future, funding decisions will be made on the basis of the outcomes that sport and physical activity can deliver.

2.10 It is government's ambition that all relevant departments work closer together to create a more physically active nation, where children and young people enjoy the best sporting opportunities available and people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the many benefits that sport and physical activity bring, at every stage in their lives.

2.11 Public investment into community sport is to reach children as young as five as part of a ground-breaking new element to this new strategy. The move will see Sport England's remit changed from investing in sport for those aged 14 and over to supporting people from five years old right through to pensioners, in a bid to create a more active nation.

2.12 Investment will be targeted at sport projects that have a meaningful, measurable impact on how they are improving people's lives – from helping young people gain skills to get into work, to tackling social inclusion and improving physical and mental health.

2.13 Funding will also be targeted at groups who have low participation rates to encourage those who do not take part in sport and physical activity to get involved. This includes supporting women, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people. Sport England will set up a new fund in 2016 to get inactive people physically active and will support and measure participation in sport and wider physical activity going forward.

2.14 **Sport England Strategy – ‘Towards an Active Nation’ 2016 – 2021.** In response to the Government’s strategy, Sport England’s new strategy vision is that everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or ability, feels able to take part in sport or activity. Sport England’s new vision and its supporting aims will therefore contribute to achieving the Government’s strategy. Key features are:

- Dedicated funding to get children and young people active from the age of five, including a new fund for family based activities and offering training to at least two teachers in every secondary school in England to help them better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability.
- Working with the sport sector to put customers at the heart of everything they do, and using the principles of behaviour change to inform their work.
- Piloting new ways of working locally by investing in up to 10 places in England – a mix of rural and urban areas.
- Investing up to £30m in a new volunteering strategy, enabling more people to get the benefits of volunteering and attracting a new, more diverse range of volunteers.
- Helping sport keep pace with the digital expectations of customers – making it as easy to book a badminton court as a hotel room.
- Working closely with governing bodies of sport and other who support people who already play regularly to help them become more efficient, sustainable and diversify their sources of funding.

2.15 With respect to the final bullet point (above) 38% of Sport England controlled investment will be directed through the National Governing Bodies of sport. This is the largest of Sport England’s funding programmes.

2.16 **National Governing Body (NGB) 2013-17 funding.** The NGB 2013-17 funding programme sees Sport England invest £450 million in NGBs with young people (14-25 years old) benefitting from 60% of this investment. Additional funding is also made available to governing bodies that are successfully increasing participation. In April 2017, Sport England will re-align its NGB funding and objectives in order to deliver the ‘Towards an Active Nation’ strategy.

2.17 NGBs have been had a major input into this assessment (as well as that covering built provision). In respect of pitch sport NGBs, the Football Association (FA), England and Wales Cricket Board (ECWB), Rugby Football Union (RFU) and England Hockey (EH), all have their own national strategies:

- The Football Association – National Facilities Strategy
- ‘Champion Counties - ECWB Strategic Plan 2014-2017’
- The Rugby Football Union National Facilities Strategy
- The National Hockey Facility Strategy – The Right Facilities in the Right Places (2012)



2.18 All these above strategies will require review, as appropriate, to reflect altered national government priorities.

2.19 The FA is now promoting strongly the provision of 3G AGPs for both training and also for match play, the latter especially for junior/mini soccer age groups. However, it will have implications in respect of the demand for 3G AGPs at certain times of the day and, potentially, the encouragement of a move of teams training from other types of artificial surface.

2.20 Likewise, the RFU Council has recently approved a strategy to invest in Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP) which will see 100 artificial, floodlit pitches installed across the country over a four-year period. The strategy will see the creation of:

- 60 AGPs on rugby club sites to be used by the host club and other local clubs; and
- 40 AGPs on community sites with a guaranteed number of hours use by rugby.

2.21 The key drivers for this are to sustain and grow participation while addressing the increasing pressure on natural turf pitches, changing player expectations, competition from other sports investing in artificial pitches and changing weather conditions. It is evident nationally that the focus on increasing participation links to the Council own priorities of improving health and wellbeing through more active lifestyles and widening access to sport

### **Local Policy and Strategy**

2.22 The Council formally adopted the **Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan** document in January 2015. The Core Strategy replaces the south Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as a number of policies from the former district council's local plans.

2.23 The Core Strategy sets out a Spatial Vision for the planning of Wiltshire over the next decade:

‘By 2026 Wiltshire will have stronger, more resilient communities based on a sustainable pattern of development, focused principally on Trowbridge, Chippenham and Salisbury.

- Market towns and service centres will have become more self-contained and supported by the necessary infrastructure, with a consequent reduction in the need to travel. In all settlements there will be an improvement in accessibility to local services, a greater feeling of security and the enhancement of a sense of community and place. This pattern of development, with a more sustainable approach towards transport and the generation and use of power and heat, will have contributed towards tackling climate change.
- Employment, housing and other development will have been provided in sustainable locations in response to local needs as well as the changing climate and incorporating exceptional standards of design. Wiltshire’s important natural, built and historic environment will have been safeguarded and, where necessary, extended and enhanced to provide appropriate green infrastructure, while advantage will have been taken of Wiltshire’s heritage to promote cultural and lifestyle improvements as well as tourism for economic benefit. Partnership working with communities will have helped plan effectively for local areas and allow communities to receive the benefit of managed growth, where appropriate.’

2.24 The strategy makes provision for at least 42,000 new homes in Wiltshire in the plan period from 2006 to 2026. It sets out a plan for an appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures, particularly to address affordable housing needs, and will ensure a continuous supply of housing over the plan period that is aligned to job growth and the delivery of infrastructure.

**Wiltshire Corporate Business Plan (2013-17).** The Council's business plan sets out how it intends to meet challenges whilst delivering its vision to create stronger, more resilient communities. The Business Plan's priorities are to:

- protect those who are most vulnerable
- boost the local economy; and,
- bring communities together to enable and support them to do more for themselves

2.25 At the outset of the plan period, it highlighted that over its span funding from central government would reduce by £22 million and with the predicted increase in service demands, combined with inflation, it would mean pressures of around another £100 million. As a result, the plan outlines how the council will work innovatively to realign £120m over the four years to deliver its priorities.

2.26 The Plan identified 12 key actions designed to achieve the above priorities; two of which are especially relevant to this Playing Pitch Strategy:

- Create a campus opportunity in community areas; and,
- Integrate public health at the heart of all public services.

2.27 Again this plan will be revised in line with the local elections due to take place in May 2017 and the changing financial climate.

**2.28 Wiltshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Wiltshire Joint Health & Well Being Strategy 2015 – 2018.** A Health and Wellbeing Board for Wiltshire was formally established in 2013. It brings together the leaders of the health and social care system in Wiltshire to deliver a set of specific responsibilities which are set out in legislation and includes duties to:

- to prepare a Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA);
- prepare a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS); and,
- to encourage integrated working between health and social care.

2.29 The first **JSA** was published in 2013 and it provides a shared analysis of Wiltshire's population – allowing the Council and its partners to look at and agree the key issues facing the area and providing an evidence base for developing future plans and strategies designed to deal with these issues. The JSA is currently being refreshed and will be consulted upon in the coming months. In addition, Community Area Assessments were produced covering the period 2013 – 2015. These provide more detailed analysis of each Community Area with comparisons to other areas across the county.

2.30 A specific JSA for Health and Wellbeing has also emerged and is the assessment tool on which all commissioning decisions for the area are based and, as such, it provides detailed information on each community area in Wiltshire and covers a breadth of topics focusing on health and social needs as well as wider factors affecting the wellbeing of our community. The topics include climate change and the economy, which recognise the dynamic nature of health and wellbeing and the factors that influence it.. Again each community area also has a JSA for Health and Wellbeing.

2.31 The JSA data shows that people in Wiltshire are living longer, healthier lives. This is something to be celebrated – but it brings with it new challenges. Without action, the demand for health services is predicted to increase substantially, putting strain on carers and public services. Ill-health and physical inactivity are not only detrimental to individuals and wider communities, they also have financial implications for public services. Increased levels of demand and limits on funding means that new models of delivery need to be considered.

2.32 In September 2015, Wiltshire’s Health and Wellbeing Board agreed a refreshed **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2015-18)**. The strategy sets out the main areas that working together will be a priority for health and social care organisations in Wiltshire. It focuses on setting out a vision for integrated working for the future; to support and sustain healthy, independent living and this is described in the strategy within two key aims:

- Healthy lives: encouraging communities, families and individuals to take on more responsibility for their own health; and,
- Empowered lives: personalising care and delivering care in the most appropriate setting at or as close to home as possible.

#### **Comment**

2.33 The above national and local policy guidance has helped to shape and inform this Strategy and Action Plan. In turn, this Strategy and underlying needs assessment will make an important contribution to informing emerging Council statutory plans and other local policy guidance.

### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

#### General

#### Methodology

3.1 The needs assessment underpinning this Strategy was undertaken using current Sport England Guidance.<sup>2</sup> The method advocated by Sport England is described more fully in the needs assessment. The key elements of the work involved site surveys and quality assessments using Sport England's recommended quality assessment methods; clubs and league questionnaire surveys; and, liaison with relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport and other interests (largely through the project Steering Group). More general consultations were undertaken often as part of a larger open space, sport and recreation study conducted for the Council, of which this project formed part.

3.2 The following totals all known grass football, cricket, rugby grass pitches in the local authority. Not all of these will be available in practice for community use. The provision of pitches is analysed in more detail on a sport-by-sport basis in the Needs Assessment.

**Table 3.1: Grass pitch provision in the local authority**

<b>Adult Football</b>	<b>Youth Football (11v11)</b>	<b>Youth Football (9v9)</b>	<b>Minisoccer (7v7)</b>	<b>Minisoccer (5v5)</b>	<b>Cricket Fields</b>	<b>Adult Rugby</b>	<b>Mini Rugby</b>
<b>189</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>15</b>

3.3 Of the 611 pitches in Table 3.1 above most are noted as being in the 'public sector' (largely local parish and town councils and associated trusts). The MoD also controls a significant stock of grass playing pitches, and these are sometimes made available for community use. The MoD pitches are rarely in secured community use for a variety of reasons, and are often 'behind the wire', and therefore largely unavailable with a few exceptions. However due to the Army Rebasing Programme, the Sports and Community Access Scheme (SCAS) agreement has been drawn up which will provide significant opportunities for the community to access Army / MOD Sports and Leisure Facilities inside and outside of the wire. As this agreement is linked to specific Planning Applications and associated triggers it is probable that the Scheme will not be open for use until 2017.

3.4 Not included in the above table are pitches that were once available, but are on sites that are closed, or disused, but remain undeveloped. The only known example within the local authority is the Westinghouse Sportsground in Chippenham, which has permission for residential development but, at the time of this report, remained undeveloped.

3.5 There are also many examples of former pitches in recreation grounds throughout rural Wiltshire, which are no longer marked out and used for matches, but which have other recreational functions.

3.6 In addition, there are Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) at various locations, and which are more fully described in the relevant sections (primarily for football and hockey) of the Needs Assessment.

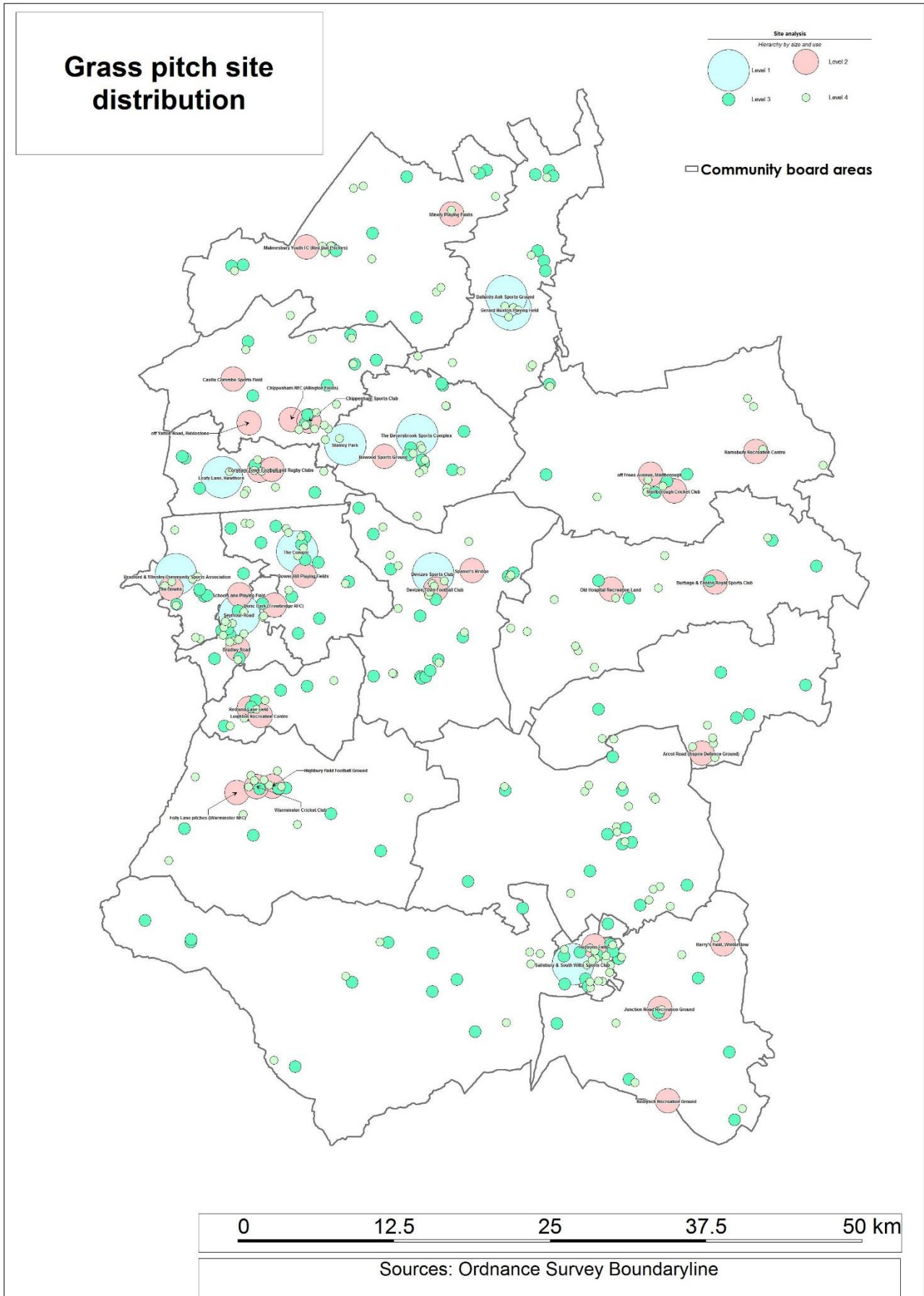
<sup>2</sup> 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' (Sport England 2013)

AGPs are now accepted as essential facilities for match play for hockey, as well as for football match play and rugby training.

3.7 Various sites (especially primary/junior schools) have grass spaces, but which are not formally marked as pitches.

3.8 **Map 3.1** shows the distribution of provision through the local authority, and it is graded by a combination of the size of each site, and the amount of activity/pitch sport use taking place on each site.

Map 3.1: Overall grass pitch provision in the local authority



3.9 The grading of sites has been based principally on the following criteria:

- **Level 1:** Very large sites accommodating relatively large numbers of pitches as well as teams, these tend to be found in the larger urban areas;
- **Level 2:** Other large sites, but with not quite the levels of pitch provision and team activity as the above, often these can be highly important single-sport sites such as for rugby and cricket, for example.
- **Level 3:** Where there is some pitch provision and associated team activity, but not sufficient to warrant inclusion as Level 1 and 2 sites; and,
- **Level 4:** Sites which have some pitch provision but no use by community teams, as far as has been ascertained.

3.10 The **Level 1 and 2 sites** have been named on the map. All but one of the defined Level 1 sites are located in the northern half of the local authority.

3.11 In some areas, because of the absence of Level 1 and 2 sites, Level 3 sites will assume greater importance.

3.12 Grass and AGPs are analysed in detail in the Needs Assessment and Area Profiles.

#### **Sites that are wholly or partly excluded from the study analysis**

3.13 This report acknowledges the existence of playing pitches on school sites. Where such facilities are known to be available for community use they have been included in the analysis. Other school sites may though have potential to be used by community teams in the future.

#### **Multi-Functional Recreation Grounds**

3.14 There are a significant number of sites around the local authority that host more than one pitch sport, and these can therefore be particularly important local sports venues. Whilst the analysis in the following Needs Assessment is largely sports-specific, those sites hosting more than one pitch sport will be acknowledged.

#### **A constantly evolving picture**

3.15 The audit of both pitches and teams conducted for this study, can only represent a snapshot in time. The numbers of clubs and teams will change year-in, year-out. Likewise, the stock of sports pitches will change over time, although more gradually.

3.16 To evidence the above point, there have been some recent and significant changes in the provision of pitches in some locations, for example:

- The provision of a new full-size AGP in the redevelopment of Springfield School, as part of a 'community campus' development for the Corsham Community Area; and,
- The recent opening of a new 'sports hub' based at the Gerard Buxton Sports Ground in Royal Wootton Bassett.

3.17 There are also changes in Melksham, with the co-relocation of the Melksham Town Football and Rugby Clubs to Woolmore Farm in Autumn 2016, as part of a Community Area Campus scheme, which will release the Conigre sportsground for use by cricket. In fact, the Wiltshire Council Community Campus development programme, although still itself evolving, is likely to be a driver for the upgrading and rationalization of sports facilities in other parts of Wiltshire. Some of these schemes will not be at a stage to be properly captured by this Strategy. Indeed, the use of new

provision at the (above) Gerard Buxton Sports Ground could not be fully captured. For each of the four sports covered by this Strategy, recent as well as proposed developments likely to alter the local supply of playing pitches will be identified in the Area Profiles.

### **Projected change in demand**

3.18 Taking into account both projected planned and natural population change, the following estimates the potential change in demand for pitches resulting from the demands of new teams forming by 2026. The method behind the calculations is explained in **Appendix A** to the Area Profiles. The figures in the table below are local authority-wide, and separate projections for covering the Community Board area are provided in the Area Profiles.

**Table 3.2: Change in demand for pitch space**

<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>Total new teams (resulting from natural population change + housing growth)</b>	<b>Matches per pitch</b>	<b>Pitches required (assuming 2 teams/match)</b>
Mini-soccer (6-9 mixed gender)	58.2	4	7.3
Junior football (10-15 male)	100.5	2	25.1
Junior football (10-15 female)	8.1	2	2.0
Senior football (16-45 male)	68.3	2	17.1
Senior football (16-45 female)	2.9	2	0.7
Mini-rugby (7-12 mixed gender)	22.0	0	0.0
Junior rugby (13-18 male)	14.0	0	0.0
Junior rugby (13-18 female)	2.2	0	0.0
Senior rugby (19-45 male)	11.8	2	3.0
Senior rugby (19-45 female)	0.4	2	0.1
Junior cricket (7-17 male)	38.6	0	0.0
Junior cricket (7-17 female)	6.7	0	0.0
Senior cricket (18-55 male)	31.9	3	5.3
Senior cricket (18-55 female)	0.7	3	0.1
Junior hockey (11-15 male)	6.2	0	0.0
Junior hockey (11-15 female)	6.3	0	0.0
Senior hockey (16-45 male)	6.1	4	0.8
Senior hockey (16-45 female)	4.2	4	0.5



### **Key Issues for Football**

3.19 Wet weather really impacts upon the ability of pitches to absorb play and training.

3.20 There is a significant need for more AGPs both for training and, increasingly, for match play to help deal with wet weather, and increased demand leading to wear and tear.

3.21 The FA should play a central role in advising on the establishment of such venues.

3.22 If there were to be geographical priority areas for additional facilities, they would be located in the vicinity of existing clubs that have clear growth potential and need for additional facilities; and, with good transportation links. The immediate priority areas for new provision, in no particular order of priority, should be:

- The Trowbridge/Melksham/Bradford on Avon areas
- The Chippenham/Calne area
- The Warminster/Westbury areas
- Salisbury/South Wiltshire
- Devizes

3.23 The Area Profiles provide detail on the specific needs of each Community Board area, and how and where they might best be met locally.

3.24 Community Campus development programmes may be able to support such projects, where appropriate, such as the Melksham/Woolmore Farm developments. 'Land swaps' might help to initiate such schemes, with existing underused and/or badly located venues being identified and released for development to fund new or upgraded facilities in better locations.

3.25 The Strategy and Area Profiles consider the development of a grass pitch improvement programme, given issues highlighted with regard to wet weather/waterlogging with football taking the lead in the development of these programmes.

3.26 There are geographical hotspots of demand where access to good quality pitches is problematic

3.27 It might be an aim to get as much junior match play onto AGPs as possible.

3.28 The FA and Wiltshire Council should work together to initiate a volunteers' training/experience programme to help bolster the volunteer base for local football, but which will enhance the curricular vitae of young people, and widen their portfolio of transferable skills.

### **Key Issues for Cricket**

3.29 The concept of venues for casual cricket should be explored, with the provision of non-turf wickets. This would help develop team-based (as opposed to club-based cricket for those who cannot commit to regular and frequent games).

3.30 It is likely that future population growth in Chippenham, Trowbridge, and the Salisbury area will require additional cricket field provision. In Chippenham, additional provision would be best focused on the currently unused Westinghouse sports ground, which would be an ideal dedicated second venue for Chippenham CC. (See paragraph 3.4).

3.31 The requirement for an alternative second ground for Trowbridge CC in lieu of a site that is now to be developed for housing. There is Section 106 funding attached to the relocation on the cricket activity as part of the planning proposal.

3.32 Many of the higher performing clubs in the Wiltshire County Cricket League may have aspirations to field teams in the West of England Premier League (WEPL). The absence at certain venues of facilities required to join the WEPL may therefore be of longer-term concern to some clubs, beyond shorter-term facility deficiencies identified in this section. There are certainly opportunities to provide these upgrades in relation to the prospective relocation of Beanacre and Melksham CC to the Conigre site, which will become a dedicated cricket venue. (See paragraph 3.18 in respect of proposals for Melksham).

### **Key Issues for Rugby**

3.33 A planned programme of improved drainage and training provision should be agreed to cover key sites. The immediate priorities in respect of training provision should consider the stated needs of the following sites in particular.

**Table 3.2: Priorities for suggested for improvements in rugby training facility and drainage provision. (n.b. these are in no particular order)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area</b>
Bradford & Winsley Community Sports Association	Bradford on Avon
Chippenham RFC (Allington Fields)	Chippenham
Ballards Ash Sports Ground	Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade
off Frees Avenue, Marlborough	Marlborough
Hudsons Field	Salisbury
Minety Playing Fields	Malmesbury
Corsham Town Football and Rugby Clubs	Corsham
Folly Lane pitches (Warminster RFC)	Warminster
Colerne RUFC (Higgins Field)	Corsham

3.34 The Conigre ground in Melksham has been excluded from this list, due to the Autumn 2016 co-location with Melksham Town FC to Woolmore Farm. Devizes Sports Club has also been excluded due to recent drainage improvement works.

**Key Issues for Hockey**

- 3.35 The protection and improvement of existing venues for hockey clubs, unless acceptable alternative venues exist.
- 3.36 The protection of floodlit school-based hockey venues, in particular.
- 3.37 Explore the potential for establishing a new club in the Trowbridge area- perhaps as part of a wider hub-sport venue.
- 3.38 The potential coordination of a 3G AGP programme (as outlined in Section 5 of the Needs Assessment and in the Area Profiles) with a programme for the greater use of some school-based venues for hockey match play and training.
- 3.39 Improved access to facilities for clubs in south and south west Wiltshire, in particular.
- 3.40 Floodlighting should be considered as integral to all recognized hockey venues.

## 4.0 THE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

### General

4.1 The production of this Strategy is timely. The character of the local authority's population continues to change, and this has a profound effect on the types of sport, play and leisure activity appealing to local people.

4.2 The Council is working in a financially difficult environment, this brings challenges, but it also presents a clear opportunity for reviewing and transforming the way in which the Council and its partners delivers its service with respect to the sports covered in this report.

4.3 Many agencies, groups and organisations have shared aspirations in respect of the 'health agenda' and great potential exists for collaboration between public and voluntary sectors, as well as social and commercial enterprises to realise these aspirations.

4.4 The above suggests that the following will be the major determinants in the demand for pitch sports into the foreseeable future within the local authority:

- A growing population, which may be further accentuated by planned new residential growth that has not yet been allocated.
- The representation within the local population of age groups with characteristics that make them more likely to take part in pitch sports;
- New forms of the sports concerned, with the aim of appealing to children and young people, together with adults whose other 'life commitments' do not give them the opportunity to play traditional forms of the sports, and at the traditional times.
- Geographical pockets within the urban areas that exhibit quite high levels of economic and social deprivation, where and the levels of participation in sport and active recreation are depressed as a consequence. Improving prospects for participating should be a priority for the local authority and its partners in these areas, with the consequent health and economic benefits.

4.5 The Playing Pitch Strategy therefore provides the strategic vision, aims and recommendations to guide the actions and decisions of Wiltshire Council and its partners over the coming years.

### Vision and Aims

4.6 **The vision and key aims for this strategy are therefore identified to be:**

*'To achieve the best possible quality, quantity, and type of playing pitch provision to meet the varying needs of Wiltshire's residents, throughout the local authority area.'*

1. Provide an evidence base that underpins the statutory land-use planning process in respect of its forward planning and development control functions.
2. Underpin the development of a range of council policies and strategies, including the development plan framework, leisure strategies, public health strategies and community infrastructure plans.
3. Support the overall management, protection, improvement and conservation of the playing pitch stock to the best advantage of the residents of Wiltshire.

4. To create an environment for sport and healthy physical activity which helps to improve the health and well-being of the population, increase participation levels and reduce inactivity and inequalities.
5. Inform the Council in its negotiation and securing of Section 106 agreements, and other developer contributions.

4.7 Five **Strategic Recommendations** are proposed, in order to achieve the above Vision and Aims. Each strategic recommendation is stated, along with a justification. Together with the Vision and Aims, these strategic recommendations help to shape the tone and direction of the Action Plan.

4.8 **Strategic Recommendation 1: Maintain an evidence base of the quality, quantity and type of playing pitch surface available within the local authority area**

4.9 **Reasoning:** The starting point for the development of this Strategy and Action Plan has been the identification of the local authority's stock of playing pitches in order to create a typology of sites. This documentation is essential in order to help achieve the strategic recommendations. It is therefore imperative that this typology is maintained and updated on a regular basis, as opportunities present themselves.

4.10 **What to look for in the action plan:** Taking into account the findings of the Needs Assessment, it is clear that sites can be classified generally into one of four groupings by type, depending on the role that they serve. No one group is more important than any other, as each grouping represents sites with contrasting but nevertheless vital functions in terms of providing opportunities.

4.11 The groups are as follows:

- **Level 1:** Very large sites accommodating relatively large numbers of pitches as well as teams- these tend to be found in the larger urban areas;
- **Level 2:** Other large sites, but with not quite the levels of pitch provision and team activity as the above- often these can highly important single-sport sites such as for rugby and cricket, for example.
- **Level 3:** Where there is some pitch provision and associated team activity, but not sufficient to warrant inclusion as Level 1 and 2 sites; and,
- **Level 4:** Sites which have some pitch provision but no use by community teams, as far as has been ascertained. (These sites are likely to serve other important local recreation functions).

4.12 The typology noted above is linked to the Strategic Policy recommendations. This typology has been used inform site and sports specific actions identified in the Action Plan.

4.13 **Strategic Recommendation 2: Develop planning policies for the conservation and maintenance of playing pitches and include in the Local Development Plan**

4.14 **Reasoning:** It is essential that the recommendations of the strategy, action plan and area profiles underpin local planning policy and are consistent with paragraphs 73 and 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework guidance. In circumstances where proposals for development and use

of a site are contrary to those contained in the recommendations of this Strategy and Action Plan, they should only be approved where:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or,
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.'

4.15 **What to look for in the action plan:** There are recommendations for appropriate policies and other statements to be included in statutory and supplementary planning documents. (See Action Plan Part 1). It will be essential for local authority planning representatives to be involved in the development of these policies and statements.

4.16 **Strategic Recommendation 3: Conserve and improve the existing stock of pitch sports facilities and identify opportunities for new provision or development that have maximum impact on the individual sport/s, and participation levels**

4.17 **Reasoning:** It is fundamental to the achievement of the vision and aims of the strategy, that the local authority's stock of pitch sports sites is conserved. This will mean the outright protection and improvement of many sites, but it may also mean potentially the redeployment of some sites that are or were used for outdoor sport. In terms of the latter, 'redemption' may mean simply making a decision not to invest in maintaining sports facilities, but also that the site is still suited to other recreation activity. In other far more limited circumstances it might be appropriate to release sites for alternative built development. The emphasis is therefore on overall conservation of the stock of local facilities, given the need for facilities to change to best meet current needs as reflected in the Vision and Aims.

4.18 **What to look for in the Action Plan:** Apart from the conservation of existing stock, it is an aspiration to improve the quality of the overall stock of facilities, to make them more 'playable' and therefore attractive to use.

4.19 Where sites have been identified for new and/or improved facilities, the quality target should be to achieve a good standard of construction as recognised by the relevant Governing Bodies of Sport, and detailed in the Needs Assessment.

4.20 The local stock of pitch sport facilities can sometimes be conserved and improved by encouraging some clubs that exhibit the capacity and willingness, to assume some additional responsibility for the management and maintenance of facilities. This might sometimes include formal asset transfer of sites or ancillary facilities (such as pavilions) to clubs. Wiltshire Council owns few playing pitch sites, and asset transfer is more likely in respect of local parish and town councils coming to arrangements with local clubs.

4.21 The ability of local clubs to take control of facilities should not be overestimated. Although a select number of clubs might already have the capacity and expertise to achieve this, the large majority won't and, if they want to progress toward this goal, they will need help. The Council should work towards adopting a policy which supports community management and ownership of

assets to local clubs, community groups and trusts- but only where this is appropriate. This presents sports clubs and national governing bodies with opportunities to assume a stronger and more responsible role in the management and safekeeping of facilities; it may also provide non-asset owning sports clubs with their first chance to take on a building.

4.22 There are some sites in the local authority where security of tenure for the club/user needs to be assured. This also often refers to education sites where formal community use agreements are not in place. NGBs can often help to negotiate and engage with schools, particularly academies where the local authority may not have direct influence.

4.23 The Area Profiles identify locations where there is potential to create new facilities to meet existing and future demands. For example, locations for new AGPs or improved grass pitches.

4.24 In addition, there are a large number of sporting facilities located on education sites and making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the school/college and the local clubs. The Council and other key partners must work with schools and colleges to develop an understanding of the issues that restrict or affect community access. Support should be provided, where appropriate, to address underlying problems.

4.25 It is not uncommon for school pitch stock not to be fully maximised for community use. Even on established community use sites, access to grass pitches for community use is limited.

4.26 Beyond the above, there are sites of limited utility and/or potential. There are also other institutionally controlled facilities that are not used for community sports, but which have a primary function in meeting the needs of their client groups. The introduction of community use to these facilities may be an aspiration, but not a short-term priority of the Strategy.

4.27 **Strategic Recommendation 4: Identify and provide new and improved opportunities that stand the best chances of encouraging participation in sport and physical activity, in particular; for children with the aim of helping to develop a ‘habit for life’; for groups that don’t traditionally take part; where opportunities help to retain and allow for progress of participants.**

4.28 **Reasoning:** In recent years some sports (notably pitch sports like football) have developed forms of the game that have enjoyed considerable success in encouraging children and young people into sport. Such opportunities and age-appropriate facilities should be the bedrock of any serious attempt to encourage even higher levels of participation amongst children and young people.

4.29 Sport and active recreation has much to offer in improving the individual health, as well as encouraging social and community development. However, it needs to embrace the changing nature of society and accept that the terms of engagement with potential participants are changing, and new forms of provision and facility management may be required to encourage the identified target groups into sport and active recreation.

Successfully encouraging new participants is just one challenge to be faced in growing participation in sport and active recreation: retaining new and long-standing participants is the other challenge. To achieve this will require the opportunities for those who wish to stay and progress in a given

sport with the facilities and pathways to enable them so to do. Enthusiasm should not be thwarted by a lack of facilities of right type and appropriate quality.

**4.30 What to look for in the Action Plan:** Facilities that are suited to hosting child-friendly versions of sports are encouraged at various sites - this might be achieved by simple initiatives such as reviewing and re-marking pitches, but also more structural changes, such as improved and expanded ancillary buildings.

4.31 There are some parts of the local authority that have comparatively low levels of participation in sport, and these tend to coincide with areas of relatively high levels of social and economic deprivation when measured by government indicators.

4.32 This Strategy and Action Plan does not provide for facilities to be used by the elite performance level, but by the general community. However, the priority sites will be of a kind that will help players play to a good level. Below these priority sites there will be smaller sites, which will still be important entry level venues.

**4.33 Strategic Recommendation 5: Work with partners to identify and secure the resources that are required to deliver SR3 and SR4**

**4.34 Reasoning:** Whilst this Strategy and action plan is owned by Wiltshire Council, it is not feasible for Wiltshire Council, (or indeed any other partner), to identify and allocate the financial resources to deliver the recommendations, particularly when operating in such a financially challenging climate. It is for Wiltshire Council and its key stakeholders and partners to work together to identify potential sources of funding through developer contributions, National Governing Body facilities strategies, Sport England funding and through support to town and parish councils, sports club and other organisations that will enable and empower communities to seek their own funding. One partner alone cannot deliver the plan.

**4.35 What to look for in the Action Plan:** There are recommendations for the key priorities to be included in the Section 106 and Community Investment Levy lists, which should realise a significant contribution to the maintenance and provision of new stock. There are also recommendations within the action plan as to who the key stakeholder may be in terms of supporting potential pitch and facility stock improvements and new developments. Support should be referred to in its widest sense and does not indicate any commitment to 'financial' support.

**The Action Plan**

4.36 The Action Plan has two parts:

- Part 1: which provides general actions; and
- Part 2: (Area Profiles) - which has area and site-specific priority actions.

4.37 The Strategy and Action Plan has been prepared and agreed by the all members of the Steering Group. These stakeholders must therefore cooperate in achieving the strategic and area-specific actions proposed. The land-use planning system will be a principal vehicle for addressing many of the actions.



4.38 The sports and site-specific actions contained in Action Plan Part 2 (Area Profiles) have been identified as being the most important for the presence and development of pitch sports in each individual area, and practical involvement and leadership in achieving the implementation of actions must be agreed between members of the on-going steering group.

4.39 Section 5 of this document explains how the Strategy and Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. However, the steering group should be constantly alert to new issues and opportunities that emerge over the course of time, and the Strategy and Action Plan is therefore not intended to be inflexibly prescriptive.

## 5.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

### Delivery

5.1 The Strategy seeks to provide guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across the local authority area. By addressing the issues identified in the Needs Assessment Report and using the strategic framework presented in this Strategy, the current and future pitch sport and recreational needs of the local authority can be satisfied. The Strategy identifies where there is a deficiency in provision and identifies how best to resolve this in the future.

5.2 It is important that this document is used in a practical manner, is engaged with partners and encourages partnerships to be developed, to ensure that outdoor sports facilities are regarded as a vital aspect of community life and which contribute to the achievement of Council priorities.

5.3 The production of this Strategy should be regarded as the beginning of the planning process. The success of the Strategy and the benefits that are gained are dependent upon regular engagement between all partners involved and the adoption of a strategic approach.

5.4 Each member of the current Strategy Development Steering Group should take the lead to ensure the Strategy is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence. The role of the steering group should not end with the completion of the Strategy document.

5.5 To help ensure the Strategy is well used it should be regarded as the key document within the study area guiding the improvement and protection of playing pitch provision. It needs to be the document people regularly turn to for information about how the current demand is met and what actions are required to improve the situation and meet future demand. In order for this to be achieved the steering group need to have a clear understanding of how the Strategy can be applied and therefore delivered.

5.6 The process of developing the Strategy will hopefully have already resulted in a number of benefits that will help with its application and delivery. These may include enhanced partnership working across different agendas and organisations, pooling of resources along with strengthening relationships and understanding between different stakeholders and between members of the steering group and the sporting community. The drivers behind the Strategy and the work to develop the recommendations and action plan will have also highlighted, and helped the steering group to understand, the key areas to which it can be applied and how it can be delivered.

5.7 Once the Strategy is complete the role of the Strategy Development Steering Group should evolve so that it:

- Acts as a focal point for promoting the value and importance of the Strategy and playing pitch provision in the area
- Monitors, evaluates and reviews progress with the delivery of the recommendations and action plan

- Shares lessons learnt from how the Strategy has been used and how it has been applied to a variety of circumstances
- Ensures the Strategy is used effectively to input into any new opportunities to secure improved provision and influence relevant programmes and initiatives
- Maintains links between all relevant parties with an interest in playing pitch provision in the area; and,
- Reviews the need to update the Strategy along with the supply and demand information and assessment work on which it is based.

5.8 Effectively the Strategy Development Steering Group will become the Strategy Implementation Steering Group.

**5.9 An immediate priority of the Strategy Implementation Steering Group will be to establish a 'Year 1' series of projects to be pursued in accordance with the priority ratings and time-frames indicated in the Action Plan and Area Profiles.**

5.10 Year 1 project initiatives may not only include active pursuit of the high priority projects, but also could include projects that are easy to implement and achieve in the short-term.

### **Monitoring and updating**

5.11 It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring will be led by the local authority and supported by all local Wiltshire members of, and reported back to, the full Strategy Implementation Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the Strategy has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. This should form an on-going role of the steering group.

5.12 As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the Strategy being signed off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider the Strategy and the information on which it is based to be out of date.

5.13 The nature of the supply and in particular the demand for playing pitches will likely to have changed over the three years. Therefore, without any form of review and update within this time period it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.

5.14 Therefore, the Strategy will be reviewed by the full Strategy Implementation Group on an annual basis from the date it is formally signed off by the Strategy Development Steering Group. This will help to maintain the momentum and commitment that has been built up when developing the Strategy. Taking into account the time to develop the Strategy this should also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed.

5.15 The annual review should highlight:

- How the delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g. the priority of some may increase following the delivery of others);
- How the Strategy has been applied and the lessons learned;
- Any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area (e.g. the most used or high quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues;
- Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport; and,
- Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

5.16 Further to the annual review the group should:

- Provide a short annual progress and update paper to be presented to both the Cabinet Member for Leisure and the Environment Select Committee.

5.17 It will be beneficial to hold annual sport specific meetings with the pitch sport NGBs and other relevant parties to update and amend the assessment work where necessary, track progress with implementing the recommendations and action plan and highlight any new issues and opportunities. Timing this with the annual affiliation process undertaken by the NGBs which would help to capture any changes in the number and nature of sports clubs in the area. Other information that is already collected on a regular basis such as pitch booking records for local authority and other sites could be fed into these meetings. The NGBs will also be able to indicate any further performance quality assessments that have been undertaken within the study area. Discussion with the league secretaries may also indicate annual league meetings which it may be useful to attend to pick up any specific issues and/or enable a review of the relevant club details to be undertaken.

5.18 The steering group will regularly review and refresh area by area plans taking account of any improvements in pitch quality (and hence increases in pitch capacity) and also any new negotiations for community use of education sites in the future.

5.19 The accompanying databases are intended to be refreshed on a season by season basis and it is important that there is cross-departmental working, including for example, grounds maintenance and sports development departments, to ensure that this is achieved and that results are used to inform subsequent annual sports facility development plans. Results should be shared with partners via a consultative mechanism.

**APPENDIX 1: Steering Group composition**

The project Steering Group comprised representatives of the following organisations:

- Wiltshire Council
- England Hockey
- Sport England
- The England and Wales Cricket Board
- The Football Association
- The Rugby Football Union
- Wiltshire and Swindon Sports Partnership

The Steering Group will continue to exist to oversee the implementation and review/updating of the Strategy and Action Plan, as detailed elsewhere in this document.