



EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

2015-2021

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QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

CONTENTS

PART 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART 2: SPORT SPECIFIC SUMMARIES, SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..	6
PART 3: AIMS	16
PART 4: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	17
PART 5: ACTION PLAN	34
PART 6: KEEP THE STRATEGY ROBUST AND UP TO DATE	54
APPENDIX ONE: STRATEGIC CONTEXT.....	58
APPENDIX TWO: FUNDING PLAN	66
APPENDIX THREE: GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	71

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
CSP	County Sports Partnership
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
ENC	East Northamptonshire Council
FA	Football Association
FE	Further Education
FIT	Fields in Trust
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HE	Higher Education
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page Ltd
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
RFU	Rugby Football Union
S106	Section 106
TGR	Team Generation Rate

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for East Northamptonshire. Building upon the preceding Assessment Report, it provides a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between 2015 and 2021, which can be extended if the Strategy is reviewed and kept up to date. The PPS covers the following playing pitches and outdoor pitch sports:

- ◀ Football pitches (grass and third generation turf (3G))
- ◀ Rugby union pitches
- ◀ Hockey pitches (artificial grass pitches (AGPs))
- ◀ Cricket pitches
- ◀ Tennis courts
- ◀ Bowling greens

The Strategy is capable of:

- ◀ Providing adequate planning guidance to assess development proposals affecting playing fields, as appropriate, directing open space contributions secured through development and informing and shaping local planning policy.
- ◀ Inform the protection and provision of sports facilities and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and S106 and CIL schedules.
- ◀ Informing land use decisions in respect of future use of existing outdoor sports areas and playing fields (capable of accommodating pitches) across the District;
- ◀ Providing a strategic framework for the provision and management of outdoor sports across the Authority;
- ◀ Supporting external funding bids and maximise support for outdoor sports facilities;
- ◀ Providing the basis for on-going monitoring and review of the use, distribution, function, quality and accessibility of outdoor sport.

Objectives

The Strategy has been developed from research and analysis of playing pitch provision and usage within ENC to:

- ◀ Inform local planning policy in line with National Planning Policy Framework and provide an evidence base for responding to planning applications affecting playing fields.
- ◀ Establish a clear strategic pathway for improvement, investment and protection of playing pitches.
- ◀ Provide a robust evidence base upon which to be able to apply for external funding such as Sport England's Protecting Playing Fields Fund.
- ◀ Provide a rationale to improve the quality and capacity of existing provision, regardless of ownership or management and to drive participation.

The Strategy and Action Plan recommends a number of priority projects for ENC which should be implemented from 2015 to 2021. It provides a framework for improvement and, although resources may not currently be in place to implement it, potential partners and possible sources of external funding (see Appendix Two: Funding Plan).

The recommendations that come out of this strategy should inform local planning policy and can support the local planning evidence base so there is a policy mechanism to support delivery and secure provision/investment where the opportunity arises.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

There is a need to build key partnerships between the Council, parish/town councils, National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Sport England, schools, further education providers, community clubs and private landowners to maintain and improve playing pitch provision. In these instances, the potential for the Council to take a strategic lead is more limited (except in terms of Section 106 Agreements/future Community Infrastructure Levy). This document will provide clarity about the way forward, and allow key organisations to focus on the key issues that they can directly influence and achieve.

Context

The National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 (NPPF) recognises 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.

NPPF requires that planning policies are 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.

Paragraph 74 of NPPF is concerned with the protection of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields. One of the matters set out is that such buildings and land 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. National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) refers local authorities to Sport England's guidance on how to assess the need for sport and recreation facilities.

Current Planning Policy Framework:

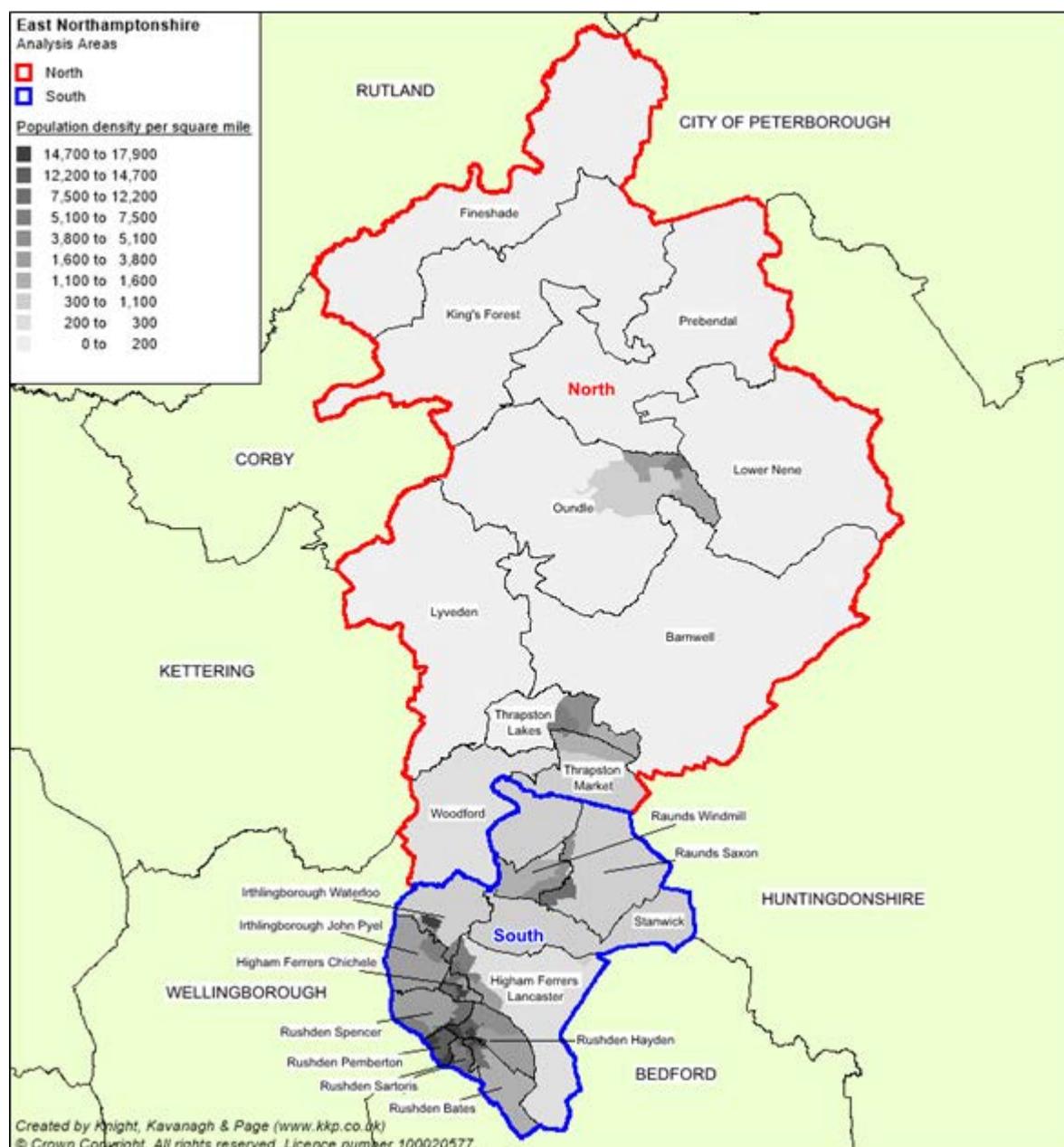
- ◀ North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS 2011-2031), adopted July 2016.
- ◀ Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan (RNOTP), adopted 2011 – Site specific Local Plan for the Northern half of the district (some policies superseded by the JCS (see appendix 3 of the JCS)).
- ◀ Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan – Made April 2016. For the latest Neighbourhood Plan updates please visit www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning
- ◀ Some saved policies from Local Plan 1996. (available to view online)
- ◀ Emerging District Wide Local Plan – Regulation 18 consultation due to be held Autumn 2016. Once adopted, this will replace the RNOTP.
- ◀ For the most up-to-date information visit www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/dpd

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Study area

The study area is the East Northamptonshire (ENC) administrative area. Further to this sub areas or analysis areas have been created to allow a more localised assessment of provision and examination of playing pitch supply and demand at a local level. Use of analysis areas also allows local circumstances and issues to be taken into account. ENC is divided into two analysis areas, North and South.

Figure 1.1: PPS analysis areas



EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Vision

Therefore, this study has been developed on the basis of the above strategic drivers in order to ensure that it reflects the Council's wider ambitions. A vision has been set out to provide a clear focus with desired outcomes for the East Northamptonshire Playing Pitch Strategy:

“To produce a robust and comprehensive Strategy which will provide the essential evidence base for informing decisions on planning and investment in the pursuit to provide appropriate outdoor sports provision for all.”

Headline findings

The table below highlights the quantitative headline shortfalls from the ENC Playing Pitch Assessment Report.

Sport	Analysis area	Current demand shortfall ¹	Future demand shortfall (2021) ²
Football (grass pitches)	North	1.5 youth (11v11) match sessions 1.5 youth (v9v) match sessions	0.5 adult match sessions 2.5 youth (11v11) match sessions 2.5 youth (v9v) match sessions
	South	2.5 adult match sessions 1 youth (11v11) match session 0.5 youth (9v9) match sessions	4 adult match sessions 5 youth (11v11) match sessions 4.5 youth (9v9) match sessions
Football (3G AGPs) ³	North	One 3G pitch	-
	South	-	-
Rugby union	North	4.5 senior match sessions 3 mini match sessions	-
	South	5 senior match sessions	-
Hockey (Sand AGPs)	ENC	Demand being met	-
Cricket	North	Demand being met	-
	South	2 match sessions	5 match sessions
Tennis	ENC	Demand being met	-
Bowls	ENC	Demand being met	-

¹ Current demand is calculated from an analysis of overplay and spare capacity only.

² Please note that this is demand that will exist in 2021 if the current demand is not met and also includes latent and displaced demand identified.

³ Based on accommodating 42 teams to one full size pitch for training.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The existing position for all pitch sports is either demand is being met or there is a shortfall. The future position shows the sports with current shortfalls is exacerbated and those where demand was being met will experience shortfalls. Therefore, there is a need to protect all existing provision and create access to school sites if feasible.

Definitions

Match sessions

Pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected. As the main usage of pitches is likely to be for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions but may for example include training sessions.

Based on how they tend to be played this unit for football and rugby union pitches relate to a typical week within the season for each sport. For cricket pitches it is appropriate to look at the number of match equivalent sessions over the course of a season.

Pitch capacity

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing football. In extreme circumstances it can result in the inability of the pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off peak times. Pitch quality is often influenced by weather conditions and drainage.

As a guide, each NGB has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its current quality (pitch capacity):

Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches per week		
		Good quality	Standard quality	Poor quality
Football	Adult pitches	3	2	1
	Youth pitches	4	2	1
	Mini pitches	6	4	2
Rugby union*	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2	1.5	0.5
	Natural Adequate (D1)	3	2	1.5
	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25	2.5	1.75
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5	3	2
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	N/A	N/A
	One synthetic wicket	60 per season	N/A	N/A

Shortfalls

Please note that shortfalls are expressed in match sessions rather than converted to pitches. To convert match sessions into pitches, the number of match sessions should be halved (to take account of teams playing on a home and away basis).

For a full Glossary of terms please refer to Appendix Three.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 2: SPORT SPECIFIC SUMMARIES, SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to help develop the recommendations/actions and to understand their potential impact, a number of relevant scenario questions are tested against the key issues in this section for the playing pitch sports resulting in the sport specific recommendations. The section below highlights the summary boxes from each sports section within the Assessment Report:

Football summary

- ◀ The audit identifies a total of 66 football pitches in East Northamptonshire on 36 sites. Of these, 51 (77.2%) are available, at some level, for community use.
- ◀ Of the pitches available for community use, none are assessed as good quality, 18 as standard and 34 as poor quality.
- ◀ In total, 123 teams within 26 clubs were identified as existing within East Northamptonshire, consisting of 34 adult teams, 52 youth teams and 37 mini teams.
- ◀ There has been a change in the number of teams over the previous three years, with an additional three mini teams and a loss of two adult teams overall. Youth teams have not changed.
- ◀ There are six youth teams registered within East Northamptonshire that currently play outside of the local authority area. In addition, 29 mini teams are also displaced due to the nature of the Weetabix Youth League and its use of central venues outside of East Northamptonshire.
- ◀ Peak time demand is Saturday PM for adult pitches, Sunday PM for youth (11v11) pitches, Sunday AM for youth (9v9) pitches and both Saturday and Sunday AM for all mini football.
- ◀ Team generation rates predict an increase of five youth teams and a loss of just over two men's teams. Future demand expressed by a single club indicates a planned increase of four youth teams.
- ◀ There is a total of eight match sessions of actual spare capacity across East Northamptonshire, the majority of which (4.5) is on adult pitches.
- ◀ There are 11 pitches overplayed across eight sites, by a total of 5.5 match sessions.
- ◀ There is a current shortfall of adult pitches, youth (11v11) and youth (9v9) pitches. Spare capacity exists on mini (7v7) and (5v5) pitches.
- ◀ Factoring in future demand results in shortfalls of adult pitches, youth (11v11) pitches and youth (9v9) pitches.
- ◀ There is a low take up of grants to improve pitch quality, such as the Sport England Improvement Fund or Protecting Playing Fields Fund.
- ◀ There are three clubs without long term (i.e. over 25 years) security of tenure on the pitches that are accessed - Thrapston Town FC, Higham Town FC and Rushden and Higham United FC.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Scenarios - grass

Improving quality

Improving pitch quality on overplayed pitches (either through increased maintenance or drainage improvements in order to increase pitch capacity) to either standard or good quality will help to accommodate overplay expressed. Improving all poor adult and youth pitches to standard quality would result in no overplayed pitches in the authority. This can be supported through the FA Pitch Improvement Programme or Sport England's Improvement Fund. Given the cost of doing such work and the continued maintenance required (and associated costs) alternatives need to be considered that can offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. The alternative to grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches for competitive matches and this is something that the FA is supporting, particularly for mini football. There are 37 mini teams from East Northamptonshire, 29 of these are displaced outside East Northamptonshire.

Utilising spare capacity

Opening up sites which are currently unavailable for community use i.e. school sites, will provide capacity for an additional five adult match equivalent sessions, 16 youth (9v9) sessions, four youth (11v11) sessions, ten mini (7v7) sessions and four mini (5v5) sessions per week, which would address the shortfall for adult and youth pitches. However, quality and management issues, plus access to changing and ancillary facilities would first need to be addressed before this is a realistic option.

Displaced demand

Currently, 29 mini teams play in the Weetabix Youth Central Venue League at three different venues outside of the area. If these teams were to require pitches to play fixtures within East Northamptonshire, then this would require the equivalent of 15 match equivalent sessions per week (to account for home and away fixtures). Given, there are not enough pitches to accommodate this level of demand a more sustainable solution would be to accommodate these fixtures on an existing 3G pitch such as Manor School Sports College, or if new 3G pitches are provided in the future.

Recommendations – grass

- ◀ Existing quantity of football pitches to be protected (unless, a new 3G pitch can be provided to mitigate a reduction in quantity of grass football pitches).
- ◀ Where pitches are assessed as poor quality, work with providers to review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to improve pitch quality. Prioritise sites that are currently overplayed and link this with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.
- ◀ Work with educational establishments to maximise and secure access to pitches and ancillary facilities on sites which are currently unavailable for community use to help address overplay on adult and youth pitches.
- ◀ Support clubs in securing long term security on pitches as required.
- ◀ Consider the future value of one pitch sites and where appropriate, fully mitigate loss and reinvest into the development of hub sites.
- ◀ Establish a hub site which operates as a mini soccer central venue to accommodate displaced demand including provision of a 3G pitch.
- ◀ Explore opportunities for development of additional 3G pitches to cater shortfalls of youth and mini matches and review impact on grass pitches as part of the PPS Annual Review.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

3G pitch summary

- ◀ There are two full size 3G pitch within East Northamptonshire, both floodlit, located at Manor School Sports College and Ferrers Specialist Arts College. Both are on the FA register to host competitive matches.
- ◀ There is also a 60 x 40m 3G AGP at Kings Cliffe Recreation Ground, which contributes to provision for training but not match play.
- ◀ All 3G pitches are rated as good quality and no issues reported. However, Manor School Sports College is approaching eight years old and no recorded refurbishment has taken place.
- ◀ Of clubs in East Northamptonshire that responded to consultation, 53% report that they require additional training facilities, of which, 78% specifically mentioned demand for 3G pitches.
- ◀ In order to satisfy training demand, there is a need for at least two full size community available full size 3G pitches.
- ◀ To accommodate all mini football matches on 3G pitches there is a need for three 3G pitches; to accommodate all 9v9 matches there is a need for two.
- ◀ Priority should be placed on the creation of at least one new 3G pitch in order to meet the potential displaced demand from mini football.
- ◀ There is demand from rugby union for additional training facilities.

Scenarios – 3G⁴

Moving all mini football to 3G pitches

There are currently 25 mini 5v5 teams which would require three full size 3G pitches and 12 mini 7v7 teams which would require one full size 3G pitch. To accommodate all mini football demand (i.e. 5v5 and 7v7) within ENC there is need for three full size 3G pitches. There is currently one full size pitch available for community use, and the opening of Ferrers Specialist Arts College will increase this total to two. This will leave a deficit of one 3G pitch.

Developing a World Rugby compliant AGP

The RFU investment strategy into World Rugby compliant AGPs considers sites where grass rugby pitches are over capacity and where an AGP would support the growth of the game at the host site and for the local rugby partnership, including local clubs and educational establishments. The RFU is keen to work locally with partners such as the Council and the FA to look at sites of mutual interest for future 3G AGP provision.

Recommendations – 3G

- ◀ Protect the two existing full size 3G pitches and seek to engage the RFU and FA to work together to provide one new full size 3G pitch to reduce shortfalls on grass pitches and accommodate potential displaced demand.
- ◀ In a phased approach, establish all mini soccer to be played on 3G pitches.
- ◀ Work with existing providers to ensure that 3G pitches are fully utilised and available for community use at peak times, including weekends to accommodate back programming of mini matches at peak times.
- ◀ Encourage providers to have a mechanism in place which ensures the long term sustainability of provision.

⁴ Please refer to Appendix One for the full football scenario of programming 3G pitches for competitive play.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Encourage providers to test and subsequently FA register in order to maximise use for competitive football to be played.
- ◀ County FA to carry out consultation with leagues/clubs to gauge acceptance/buy in of moving competitive play to 3G pitches in the future.
- ◀ Work with providers to help ensure pricing policies are in line with current provision.

Rugby union summary

- ◀ There are 28 rugby union pitches in East Northamptonshire located across nine sites, whilst there are no World Rugby compliant AGPs. There are 17 senior and 11 mini pitches (generally over marked on senior pitches), of which exactly half are unavailable for community use.
- ◀ Overall in East Northamptonshire there are 11 senior pitches available for community use, all of which were rated as poor quality. Similarly, all three available mini pitches are rated as poor.
- ◀ The lease agreement Oundle RFC has with Oundle Town Council for one senior pitch is due to expire within the next two years. Renegotiating secured long term use of this pitch is of key priority.
- ◀ Rushden and Higham RFC identifies changing and shower facilities as an issue because they are non-compliant with child protection guidelines and present a potential welfare issue.
- ◀ Training generally takes place at the club sites, either on a floodlit pitch (Oundle RFC) or a partially lit grass training area (Rushden and Higham RFC).
- ◀ Two rugby union clubs play within East Northamptonshire; Oundle RFC and Rushden and Higham RFC. Between them they field a total of six senior, nine junior and 13 mini teams.
- ◀ Oundle School contributes a significant number of pitches to existing supply; however, all are unavailable for community use. Rugby union is very popular at the school and pitches are well used both during the school day and for Saturday fixtures.
- ◀ No sites show potential spare capacity, therefore there is no actual spare capacity in East Northamptonshire to accommodate additional play at peak time.
- ◀ Both sites with recorded community use are overplayed, resulting in total overplay of 10.5 match equivalents each week.
- ◀ At present, East Northamptonshire does not have sufficient supply of senior rugby union pitches to accommodate current or future demand, with requirements for a further 7.5 match equivalent sessions on senior pitches.
- ◀ Both clubs are currently without long term (i.e. over 25 years) security of tenure on the pitches that are accessed.

Scenarios

Improving pitch quality

Significant improvements are required to the maintenance programme and drainage at both Rushden and Higham RFC and Oundle RFC, with all pitches assessed as poor quality (M0/D0). This would assist in addressing overplay. Rushden and Higham RFC's senior pitches are overplayed by five matches, Oundle RFC's senior pitches are overplayed by 4.5 matches and mini pitches by three matches per week.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Improving pitch quality would not address overplay in its entirety, however, if the pitches could all be improved to a standard quality (M1/D1) then this would reduce overplay to 3.5 matches on the senior pitches at Oundle RFC. This is more realistic than improving the quality to good, which is not likely to be achievable. Securing access to additional grass pitches (preferable floodlit) or a 3G World Rugby AGP would address the remaining shortfalls.

Improving pitch quality (M1/D1) to standard at Rushden and Higham RFC would reduce overplay so the pitches would be played at capacity.

Creating new pitches

Oundle RFC could potentially be open to moving to a new site, if the correct ground could be found. Currently the ground is located on a floodplain (with the exception of one pitch) and although significant investment has already been made pitches are still overplayed due to poor quality and matches are often cancelled due to waterlogged pitches. As identified earlier, access to an additional pitch is required for the Club even if existing pitches were good quality.

Rushden and Higham RFC is also interested in relocating. The Club is currently landlocked on its current site and has expressed demand to expand due to being overplayed. The Club is keen to access additional pitches to accommodate training, as the current training area does not meet requirements.

Both clubs are happy to work with respective football clubs, but would require some planning and negotiation as both would require facilities simultaneously.

Recommendations

- ◀ Where possible, improve quality through increased maintenance of pitches to help address overplay.
- ◀ Support clubs to secure long term future of pitches.
- ◀ In the short term, seek access to additional pitches to help address overplay.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to partner the FA in funding a new 3G pitch which is also World Rugby compliant to accommodate club training demand and reduce overplay on grass pitches.
- ◀ In the longer term, explore local opportunities for relocation of clubs and to develop better quality sites with access to more pitches.

Hockey summary

- ◀ Schools provide the total supply of sand based AGPs in East Northamptonshire. There are two sand dressed pitches at Oundle School Sports Centre and one sand filled pitch at Prince William School.
- ◀ One pitch at Oundle School Sports Centre is rated as good quality having recently been resurfaced. The other pitch at the site along with the pitch at Prince William School were both rated as standard quality.
- ◀ The surface of the AGP at Prince William School is approximately eight years old and therefore approaching the end of its recommended ten year lifespan. Consideration should be given to resurfacing should it deteriorate to an extent that it is unsuitable.
- ◀ Oundle School plans to build two more hockey suitable AGPs at Oundle School Sports Centre, forming a four pitch site. It also plans to resurface the existing standard quality AGP.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Oundle Hockey Club is the only hockey club in East Northamptonshire, with one senior men's team, two senior ladies' teams and small number of junior age groups. The Club plays matches at Oundle School Sports Centre and trains at Prince William School.
- ◀ The Club is keen to increase numbers, particularly within the junior section. However the Club is unsure how additional numbers would be accommodated, due to Oundle School Sports Centre pitch only available on a Saturday morning.
- ◀ Oundle School acts as a focus for hockey in East Northamptonshire, supplying the majority of provision. Hockey is very popular at the school and many of its pupils play for Oundle HC.
- ◀ Team generation rates indicate that population increases are not sufficient enough to result in the likely creation of additional teams at either senior or junior level.
- ◀ The Club is keen to continue to increase membership of the junior section and is focused on establishing school links to do so.
- ◀ Oundle HC reports no issues with accessing required capacity on AGPs for matches and training at present but is concerned that this may not be the case should the Club continue to grow.
- ◀ The security of tenure and long term agreement between Oundle School Sports Centre and Oundle Hockey Club is unclear.
- ◀ Current supply of hockey suitable AGPs is enough to meet current demand although given the rate at which the Club is growing and potential latent demand in the area, it may not be sufficient to cater for future demand.
- ◀ This may be addressed by the two new AGPs planned at Oundle School Sports Centre providing they are available for community use as the existing pitches are.

Recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing supply of sand based AGPs (Prince William School and Oundle School Sports Centre) to accommodate current and future hockey demand.
- ◀ Determine the user agreement between Oundle Hockey Club and Oundle School to ensure long term use of the site.
- ◀ Encourage providers to have a mechanism in place which ensures the long term sustainability of provision.
- ◀ If future demand exists, work with Oundle School to secure community use on new AGPs likely to be developed on site.

Cricket summary

- ◀ There are 13 senior grass cricket pitches in East Northamptonshire all of which are available for community use and secured.
- ◀ The majority of pitches are considered to be standard quality, indicating that on the whole the pitches are fit for purpose but further work could be carried out to improve them.
- ◀ There are a total of three non-turf wickets in East Northamptonshire. Two are stand-alone non-turf wickets at education sites. Although both are rated as good quality, neither is available for community use.
- ◀ Although most clubs report that ancillary facilities are good or standard, Easton on the Hill Cricket Club rates their ancillary facilities as poor.
- ◀ Just over half of the clubs report demand for additional, or new, training provision.
- ◀ All clubs in East Northamptonshire have at least one adult team. However, the majority have more than one. There are three clubs that do not have any junior teams (Easton on the Hill Cricket Club, Laxton Park Cricket Club and Benefield Cricket Club). However Easton on the Hill Cricket Club has aspirations to create a junior section.
- ◀ Demand for cricket is good with a total of nine clubs generating 70 teams. There are a total of 33 senior and 36 junior teams.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ There are clubs within each analysis area that wish to grow. Thrapston Cricket Club and Irthlingborough Town Cricket Club are the more ambitious, both hoping to expand by three teams. The latter also has ambitious to upgrade its home ground to premier league standard.
- ◀ As there is no actual spare capacity available on any of the squares at peak time, this suggests that there is an opportunity for further play on the squares but that the play must take place midweek or Sundays. This lends itself to junior cricket which allows clubs to grow these sections if demand exists in the future.
- ◀ Total overplay equates to 40 match sessions per season across five sites, Castle Playing Fields, Oundle Town Cricket Club, Rushden Town Cricket Club, The Meadow and Nassington Playing Fields.
- ◀ Analysis suggests there is an overall spare capacity of 65.5 match equivalent sessions in East Northamptonshire. However, in South Analysis Area there is a small shortfall of two equivalent sessions currently. This is further exacerbated in the future to five match equivalent sessions.
- ◀ Greater use of artificial wickets could be one way to alleviate some overplay.
- ◀ There are three clubs without long term (i.e. over 25 years) security of tenure on the pitches that are accessed - Thrapston Cricket Club, Higham Ferrers Cricket Club and Brigstock Cricket Club.

Scenarios

Improve pitch quality

Improving the quality of the two pitches (The Meadow, Nassington Playing Fields) that are standard quality and slightly overplayed is likely to address the level of overplay expressed at these sites.

Utilising spare capacity

Castle Playing Fields is currently overplayed by 11 matches per season. Nearby Toll Bar Road Playing Fields has capacity for 26 additional matches per season and has some spare capacity at peak time, both mid-week and on Saturdays. The quality of the pitch at Toll Bar Road Playing Fields is standard, which would support this move.

This will not be possible in all instances, however, Nassington Town CC for example, does not have another venue close by to transfer play to.

Develop new pitches

Rushden Sports Limited, which owns the ground at Rushden Town Cricket Club is considering plans to sell the land and relocate to a larger site. The Club report that there is a potential to accommodate two cricket pitches if this were to happen. This would accommodate two displaced teams that currently travel outside the study area to access pitches, reduce overplay and would also accommodate the planned increase of teams within the Club.

Opening up school sites which accommodate a good quality artificial wicket and are currently unavailable for community use will accommodate junior training demand, alleviating some demand on grass pitches. An example would be the artificial pitch at Rushden Academy which could accommodate the latent demand expressed by Rushden Town Cricket Club.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Recommendations

- ◀ Protect current levels of provision to accommodate current and future demand.
- ◀ Work with clubs to review quality issues on those pitches assessed as standard and poor quality and to address quality issues through increased maintenance.
- ◀ Work to relocate overplay to sites with peak time spare capacity.
- ◀ Support clubs to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities or additional access to training provision elsewhere.
- ◀ Support Rushden Town CC to identify a suitable ground to expand cricket activity to alleviate overplay on the current site.
- ◀ Work with partners to open up school artificial turf wickets for training and junior activity.
- ◀ Ensure that any facilities developed support opportunities for women's and girl's competitive cricket.
- ◀ Work with clubs to ensure appropriate access to good ancillary facilities supports provision of pitches/sites.
- ◀ Support clubs in securing long term tenure on pitches.

Tennis summary

- ◀ There is a total of 49 tennis courts across nine sites identified in East Northamptonshire with seven sites categorised as being available for community use.
- ◀ 46% of community accessible courts are available on school sites; however minimal demand is reported for their use.
- ◀ Of the provision that is available for community use and with a quality score, 77% (20 courts) are rated as good quality. The remaining 23% (six courts) are average quality.
- ◀ There are five tennis clubs in East Northamptonshire, three have their own site, one hires from the Parish Council and one intends to build courts soon.
- ◀ There are 15 floodlit courts, all available for community use. The courts are not regularly used with club activity as there is no current demand.
- ◀ Development plans are in place for the creation of three new tennis courts at Kings Cliffe Active.
- ◀ Ferrers and Rushden TC do not have access to adequate changing facilities on site.
- ◀ There are five clubs in East Northamptonshire, providing a total of 479 senior and 122 junior members.
- ◀ The LTA reports that unless tennis courts are supported by changing facilities, a café and floodlighting, it becomes harder to run a sustainable tennis programme.
- ◀ No education sites which are available for community use report any regular demand from the community, other than Oundle School Sports Centre, which hires its four courts out regularly for holiday camps.
- ◀ Based on LTA guidelines, Oundle Tennis Club is operating at capacity. However, it is understood the Club is still able to accommodate new members. Kings Cliffe TC and Ferrers and Rushden TC both express a desire to develop floodlights and increase capacity.
- ◀ Priority should be placed on improving current facilities, in particular relating to ancillary facilities where lacking.
- ◀ On the whole, it is believed that the current level of provision can accommodate current and predicted future demand.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Recommendations

- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts on club sites as appropriate.
- ◀ Ensure clubs can access the appropriate standard of courts to allow LTA competitions to be played.
- ◀ Support clubs with own facility development plan.

Bowls summary

- ◀ There are seven flat green bowling sites in East Northamptonshire across seven sites and eight clubs.
- ◀ The green at Raunds Conservative Bowls Club is assessed as average quality. All remaining greens are assessed as good quality.
- ◀ Half of clubs choose not to enter formal leagues, participating in more casual and informal matches within the club, suggesting a demand for less formal competition.
- ◀ Despite a national trend of declining membership, Oundle Bowling Club report an increase in membership, while Stanwick, Thrapston, Islip and Irthlingborough all report membership numbers have stayed the same over the past three years.
- ◀ Four clubs plan to increase membership and all are confident that this can be accommodated at existing sites.
- ◀ Future population projections suggest that almost one in three of the East Northamptonshire population by 2021 will be over 65+, the most likely band to play bowls.
- ◀ Generally, through consultation, it is considered that most bowling greens in East Northamptonshire have spare capacity, meaning current membership and an increase in membership is sustainable.
- ◀ Priority should therefore be placed on ensuring green quality and ancillary provision is sustained and improved where necessary.
- ◀ Oundle Bowls Club is operating at above average membership for the area and it is therefore important to ensure that the Club is supported to enable it to further grow.
- ◀ Most bowling clubs in East Northamptonshire have spare capacity, meaning that current membership and an increase in membership is sustainable and clubs are able to accept additional members should demand increase. It would appear that there are enough greens to accommodate both the current and future demand.

Recommendations

- ◀ Support and encourage junior bowls development in order to grow and sustain future participation levels in the sport.
- ◀ Address spare capacity and maximise the availability of bowling greens for pay and play in order to raise the profile of the game, increase levels of membership and the revenue generated by sites.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of green as appropriate.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 3: AIMS

The East Northamptonshire PPS is a strategy not just for the local authority, but holistically for sport across the District as a whole. Delivery of the Strategy is the responsibility of and relies on, *all* stakeholders.

The following overarching objectives are based on the three Sport England themes (see Figure 1 below). It is recommended that the following are adopted by the Council and its partners to enable it to achieve the overall vision of the Strategy and Sport England planning objectives. Objective specifics and timescales are included within the action plan (Part 5).

AIM 1

To **protect** playing field sites through local planning policy

AIM 2

To **enhance** playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities through working in partnership with others to improve the quality and management of sites

AIM 3

To **provide** new playing pitches where there is current or future demand to do so

Figure 1: Sport England themes



Source: Sport England 2015

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 4: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic recommendations for the Strategy have been developed from the key issues cutting across all playing pitch sports and categorised under each of the Strategy Aims. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed which apply across outdoor sports facilities and may not be specific to just one sport.

AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of playing pitch facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future needs

Recommendations:

- a. Protect playing field sites through local planning policy
- b. Assist in securing tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is a need to do so.

Recommendation a – Protect playing field sites through local planning policy

The PPS Assessment shows that all currently used playing field sites require protection and therefore cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future. Therefore, based on the outcomes of the PPS, local planning policy should reflect this situation. Planning policy should either seek to protect sites from development or replace them to an equivalent or better quantity and quality in a suitable location.

NPPF 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.

Lapsed and disused – playing field sites that formerly accommodated playing pitches but are no longer used for formal or informal sports use within the last five years (lapsed) or longer (disused).

The PPS Assessment shows that all currently used playing field sites require protection or replacement and therefore cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future. Lapsed, disused underused and poor quality sites should also be protected from development or replaced as there is a requirement for playing field land to accommodate more pitches to meet the identified shortfalls.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

New housing development - where proposed housing development is located within access of a high quality playing pitch, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further pitch provision or improvements to existing pitches in that area in order to accommodate additional demand arising from that development. The PPS should be used to help determine what impact the new development will have on the demand and capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity or if new provision is required.

The PPS, should be used to help inform Development Management decisions that affect existing or new playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities. All applications are assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case by case basis taking into account site specific factors. In addition, Sport England as statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of playing field will use the PPS to help assess that planning application against their Playing Fields Policy

Sport England's playing field policy exception E1 only allows for development of lapsed or disused playing fields if a PPS shows a clear excess in the quantity of playing pitch provision at present and in the future across all playing pitch sports types and sizes.

Policy Exception E1:

'A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport'.

Where the PPS cannot demonstrate the site, or part of a site, is clearly surplus to requirements then replacement of the site, or part of a site, will be required to comply with Sport England policy exception E4.

Policy Exception E4:

'The playing field or fields to be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new playing field site or sites:

- ◀ of equivalent or better quality and
- ◀ of equivalent or greater quantity;
- ◀ in a suitable location and
- ◀ subject to equivalent or better management arrangements.

Further to this, all playing fields should be protected or replaced up until the point where all satisfied demand has been met within the study area or each individual sports catchment areas.

Mitigation in the form of qualitative improvements to other sites for the loss of lapsed/disused playing field sites will only be supported if it is clearly demonstrated that all demand is being met elsewhere. If the site is located in an area of deficiency then the entire area of playing field needs to be replaced whether that is an extension to an existing site to make it a multi pitch site or large enough to be replaced as a new site.

In the event that all demand is satisfied and the pitch assessment shows significant spare capacity across all pitch types and sizes in excess of that required to meet a strategic reserve, the following factors should be considered when assessing the suitability of lapsed/disused sites proposed for alternative development:

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Location and willingness of LA/club or other party to take on ownership/lease/maintenance
- ◀ Size and quality e.g. single pitch site with no ancillary facilities and poorly located to meet demand
- ◀ History of community access
- ◀ Availability of ancillary facilities

In some instances there is a recommendation in the sport specific sections that refer to the potential for disused/lapsed sites to be brought back into use particularly where a site is located in an area of deficiency as identified with the Assessment. However, the PPS Steering Group (or the Council in consultation with the relevant NGB) should fully determine which sites could feasibly be brought back into use. The annual review of the Playing Pitch Assessment and Action Plan by the Steering Group will determine whether a position of significant surpluses and all demand has been satisfied has been reached. The amount of strategic reserve required for each pitch type in each sub area should also be determined by the Steering Group.

Three sites within East Northamptonshire is currently not in use and, therefore, classified as a disused/lapsed site:

- ◀ Rushden & Diamonds Sports And Exhibition Centre
- ◀ Former primary school, Glapthorn Road (Oundle)
- ◀ Laxton School, Oundle

These sites are included within the action plan together with a recommendation in relation to the need to bring the sites back into use or mitigate their loss on a replacement site to address the shortfalls identified with the Assessment.

Local authorities wanting to dispose of school playing field land need consent under Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, but consent is now also required for disposal of any land used by a school or academy under Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010. Academies also need consent to any leases or disposals under their Funding Agreement.

It should be noted that consent under Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act does not necessarily mean subsequent planning approval will be granted. Therefore, any application for planning permission must meet the requirements of the relevant policy, in this case paragraph 74 of NPPF, Local Plan Policy and Sport England policy. Indeed, applicants are advised to engage Sport England before submitting applications. Robust implementation of the statutory obligation will ensure protection of school playing fields for use by pupils (and sometimes the community as a whole) to ensure receipt is ploughed back into sports education.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Recommendation (b) – Assist in securing tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

Local sports clubs should be supported by partners including the Council, NGBs or the County Sports Partnership (CSP) to achieve sustainability across a range of areas including management, membership, funding, facilities, volunteers and partnership working. For example, support club development and encourage clubs to develop evidence of business and sports development plans to generate an income through their facilities. All clubs could be encouraged to look at different management models such as registering as Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)⁵. Clubs should also be encouraged to work with partners locally, such as volunteer support agencies or linking with local businesses.

There are a number of sites in East Northamptonshire where security of tenure for the club/user needs to be secured, including on 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. For further information on this, please refer to Recommendation (c) of Aim 1.

A minimum of 25 years is recommended by Sport England and NGBs to ensure security of a site and enable clubs to apply for external funding. There are a number of clubs that have been identified as having less than this term remaining on its lease and it is recommended that agreements are in place to future proof the sustainability of the clubs:

- ◀ AFC Rushden and Diamond CIC- all pitches currently hired
- ◀ Higham Town FC- Lancaster Park - short lease, length unspecified
- ◀ Rushden and Higham United FC - Hayden Road- 18 years remaining
- ◀ Thrapston Town FC- Chancery Lane - 19 years remaining
- ◀ Oundle RFC- Oundle School Sports Centre - six years remaining
- ◀ Oundle RFC- Oundle Town Council - two years remaining
- ◀ Rushden and Higham RFC - approx. 22 years remaining
- ◀ Oundle Hockey Club - type and length of agreement unspecified
- ◀ Brigstock Cricket Club- The Meadow - leased from ENC, length of lease unknown
- ◀ Higham Ferrers Cricket Club - Saffron Road Recreation Ground - currently rented annually from Higham Ferrers Town Council
- ◀ Thrapston Cricket Club - Castle Playing Fields - currently rented annually from Thrapston Town Council

Partners should further explore opportunities where security of tenure could be granted to the clubs playing on these sites (minimum 25 years as recommended by Sport England and NGBs) so the clubs are in a position to apply for external funding to improve the ancillary facilities.

Further to this there could be examples where long term leases could be put into place for the continued use of a site. Each club should be required to meet service and/or strategic recommendations. However, an additional set of criteria should be considered, which takes into account the quality of the club, aligned to its long term development objectives and sustainability.

In the context of spending cuts it is increasingly important for pitch providers to work with users in order that they may be able to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities.

⁵ <http://www.cascinfo.co.uk/cascbenefits>

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations:

Club	Site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Clubs should have Clubmark/FA Charter Standard accreditation award. ◀ Clubs commit to meeting demonstrable local demand and show pro-active commitment to developing school-club links. ◀ Clubs are sustainable, both in a financial sense and via their internal management structures in relation to recruitment and retention policy for both players and volunteers. ◀ Ideally, clubs should have themselves already identified (and received an agreement in principle) any match funding required for initial capital investment identified. ◀ Clubs have processes in place to ensure capacity to maintain sites to the existing, or better, standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Sites should be those identified as 'Club Sites' (see Part 5, recommendation e) for new clubs (i.e. not those with a District wide significance) but which offer development potential. For established clubs which have proven success in terms of self-management 'Key Centres' (see Part 5) are also appropriate. ◀ If required, sites should acquire capital investment via external funding and partnerships to improve quality. ◀ Sites should be leased with the intention that investment can be sourced to contribute towards improvement of the site. ◀ An NGB/Council representative should sit on a management committee for each site leased to a club.

Partners can further recognise the value of ClubMark/Charter Standard by adopting a policy of prioritising the clubs that are to have access to these better quality facilities. This may be achieved by inviting clubs to apply for season long leases on a particular site as an initial trial.

Where clubs are unable to meet the required outcomes of the agreement the Council will consider the continued support and use of the site and an intervention may be required.

Club outcomes for lease agreements

Partners should establish a series of core outcomes to derive from clubs taking on a lease arrangement to ensure that the most appropriate clubs are assigned to sites. As an example outcomes may include:

- ◀ Increasing participation.
- ◀ Supporting the development of coaches and volunteers.
- ◀ Commitment to quality standards.
- ◀ Improvements (where required) to facilities, or as a minimum retaining existing standards.

In addition, clubs should be made fully aware of the associated responsibilities/liabilities when considering leases of multi-use public playing fields.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Recommendation (c) Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is a need to do so

Education sites

In order to maximise community use of educational facilities it is recommended to establish a more coherent, structured relationship with schools, regardless of ownership, i.e. academies, independent schools, etc. The ability to access good facilities within the local community is vital to any sports organisation, yet many clubs struggle to find good quality places to play, but especially to train. Pricing policies at facilities can be a barrier to access at some of the education sites but physical access and resistance from schools, especially academies, to open up provision is also an issue for a number of reasons.

The following clubs play all of their games on education sites and it is recommended therefore that a formalised community use agreement is negotiated and put in place:

- ◀ AFC Rushden and Diamond Youth C.I.C (Manor School Sports College and South End Junior School)
- ◀ Oundle Junior FC (Oundle Primary School Field and Prince William School)

A large number of sporting facilities are 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 and concerns that schools may have. Consideration should be given to a centralised booking system for community use of schools and colleges to minimise administration and make access easier for the users.

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. Consultation identified several issues relating to the use of school facilities:

- ◀ Quality of pitches are unable to cater for both school use and community use, so schools prefer to preserve pitches for school use.
- ◀ Quality of pitches not good enough to hire out, due to rabbits or mole issues
- ◀ Many schools report that pitches cannot be accessed by the community due to being unable to staff the opening/closing of facilities both during and outside of the school day.
- ◀ Community use is limited and often based on informal agreements between individual schools and clubs.
- ◀ There is no strategic guidance as to which clubs are allocated the use of playing pitch facilities (i.e. in accordance with a strategic need).
- ◀ There are management issues inherent in developing, implementing and managing community use agreements. Advice and guidance can be obtained from Sport England's Schools toolkit and Sports organisations toolkit.
(www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning)

Where appropriate, it will be important for schools to negotiate and sign formal and long-term agreements that secure community use. This needs to be examined against the following:

- ◀ The analysis provides a clear indication of the future pitch requirements and provides a basis for partners to negotiate.
- ◀ Community use should not impact on the needs of schools to deliver curricular and extracurricular activities and;
- ◀ Community use must not impact on the school's educational budget.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Community use should not impact on safeguarding during the school day.
- ◀ Consideration of “wear and tear” on school premises versus budget available for repairs and maintenance.
- ◀ The need for agreement by Governing Bodies responsible for the safe management of school premises.

‘Use Our School’ is a Sport England resource to support schools in opening their facilities to the community and keeping them open. It provides tried and tested solutions, real life practice, tips from people making it happen and a range of downloadable resources. The information can be accessed here:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/use-our-school/>

It is recommended that a working group, led by a partner from the education sector and supported by a range of other sectors including sport and leisure, is established to implement the strategic direction in relation to the increased/better use of school facilities. Broadly speaking, its role should be to:

- ◀ Better understand current community use, practices and issues by ‘auditing’ schools.
- ◀ Ensure community use agreements are upheld
- ◀ Identify and pilot one school/club formal community use agreement with a view to rolling out the model across the area.
- ◀ Ensure that funding to improve the quality and maintenance of the facilities is identified and secured.
- ◀ As part of any agreement secure a management arrangement for community access, which does not rely on existing school staff structures.
- ◀ Ensure that pitch provision at schools is sufficient in quality and quantity to be able to deliver its curriculum. Once this has been achieved provision could contribute to overcoming deficiencies in the area.

Sport England reports that housing growth often leads to an increase in school places. S106 contributions are then secured to pay for these places which usually result in an extension to a school, sometimes on playing field. If applicable, this should be identified early in the process and embraced in policy. Any replacement of playing fields i.e. compensatory provision, due to school expansion should be negotiated directly with the relevant developer.

The following schools were reported as being available for community use but currently unused. It is recommended that these schools are prioritised in terms of further exploring the reason pitches are currently unused by the community:

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Sport	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches
4	Ferrers Specialist Arts College	South	Football	Adult		1
4	Ferrers Specialist Arts College	South	Football	Youth	9v9	1
16	Oundle School Playing Fields	North	Football	Adult		2
35	Prince William School	North	Football	Adult		1
60	Denfield Primary School	South	Football	Youth	9v9	1
4	Ferrers Specialist Arts College	South	Rugby union	Senior		1
30	The Rushden Academy	South	Rugby union	Senior		1
35	Prince William School	North	Rugby union	Senior		2
14	Manor School	South	Tennis	Tarmac		3
				Macadam		3

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Sport	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches
17	Oundle School Sports Centre	North	Tennis	Macadam		4
30	The Rushden Academy	South	Tennis	Tarmac		3

As detailed earlier, Sport England has also produced guidance, online resources and toolkits to help open up and retain school sites for community use and can be found at:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/accessing-schools/>

Other sites

Given the mix of providers in East Northamptonshire, including for example, parish/town councils and private clubs, there is a need for the Council and NGBs to work with other partners to help maximise use of outdoor sports facilities and in particular grass pitches and AGPs.

Using spare capacity at such sites may help to rectify shortfalls in the current pitch stock and alleviate overplay on other sites within the same analysis area by transferring play, particularly in the shorter terms whilst, for example, quality improvements are made. This may also be a longer term solution on some sites where the use of alternative, adequate secured provision can be achieved.

In terms of non pitch sports, the issue of spare capacity on bowling greens was identified within the Assessment Report. In order to ensure that existing provision is sustained there is a need to maximise the use of bowling greens, which may, for example, include increasing the availability of greens for pay and play in order to raise the profile of the game, increase levels of membership and the revenue generated by sites.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities through working in partnership with others to improve the quality and management of sites

Recommendations:

- d. Maintain the quality of pitches and improve where appropriate.
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure community funding.
- g. Secure developer contributions.

Recommendation (d) – Maintain the quality of pitches and improve where appropriate.

There are a number of ways in which it is possible to increase pitch quality, including for example, addressing overplay and improving maintenance. Given that most councils are operating under reducing budgets it is currently advisable to look at improving only poor quality pitches as a priority. However, given such pressures on budgets any direct investment into pitch quality is unlikely and other options for improvements should be considered. This could be via long term lease arrangements as highlighted in recommendation b, for example for cricket, the Club could maintain the square and the Parish Council the outfield. Other options may include equipment banks and the pooling of resources for maintenance.

The FA and ECB all part of the Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) which has been developed in partnership with Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) to develop a Grass Pitch Maintenance service that can be utilised by grassroots clubs with the aim of improving the quality of grass pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice/practical solutions on a number of areas, with the simple aim of improving the clubs' playing surface. Where quality issues are identified the Pitch Improvement Programme should be accessed to help support improvements.

Addressing quality issues

Pitch quality in East Northamptonshire is variable but on the whole pitches are assessed as poor quality, with a small proportion of both standard and good quality pitches. There are no good quality football or rugby pitches available for community use. Currently used sites that are of poor quality and require pitch improvements are listed in the table below. Improving pitch quality increases the carrying capacity of pitches and can help to reduce overplay and/or shortfalls.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Currently used sites with poor pitch quality and overplayed:

PPS Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Sport	Pitch type	Pitch Size	No. of pitches
5	Gladstone Street Recreation Ground	South	Football	Youth	9v9	1
6	Hayden Road	South	Football	Adult		2
11	Kiln Park	South	Football	Adult		1
13	Lancaster Park	South	Football	Adult		2
				Youth	11v11	2
				Youth	9v9	2
15	Oundle Rugby Football Club	North	Rugby Union	Mini		3
				Senior		3
22	Rushden and Higham RFC	South	Rugby Union	Senior		2
32	Toll Bar Road Playing Field	North	Football	Adult		1
34	Woodford Sports and Social Club	North	Football	Adult		2
48	Irthlingborough Central Recreation Ground	South	Football	Adult		1

For the purposes of the Quality Assessments, the Strategy will refer to pitches and ancillary facilities separately as Good, Standard or Poor quality. For example, some good quality sites have poor quality elements i.e. changing rooms or a specific pitch.

Good quality refers to pitches that have, for example, good grass cover, an even surface, are free from vandalism, litter etc. In terms of ancillary facilities, good quality refers to access for disabled people, sufficient provision for referees, juniors/women/girls and appropriate provision of showers, toilets and car parking.

Standard quality refers to pitches that have, for example, adequate grass cover, minimal signs of wear and tear, goalposts may be secure but in need of minor repair. In terms of ancillary facilities, standard quality refers to adequately sized changing rooms, storage provision and provision of toilets.

Poor quality refers to pitches that have, for example, inadequate grass cover, uneven surface and damage. Please refer to the Sport England/NGB quality assessments. Sites played beyond capacity may require remedial action to help reduce this.

For improvement/replacement of AGPs refer to Sport England and the NGBs 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface for Hockey, Football, Rugby League and Rugby Union' document for a guide as to suitable AGP surfaces:

www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/artificial-sports-surfaces/

In order to improve the quality of pitches and non-pitches all partners should work in a co-ordinated way to address the issues. By working with the NGBs through the key programmes as follows

- ◀ Grass pitches – addressing poor quality pitches through the Pitch Improvement Programme.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Rugby union pitches – addressing quality issues at club sites through the RFU and implementing a groundsman programme.
- ◀ Cricket pitches – addressing poor quality wickets through technical assessments of wickets and pitches available through a Performance Quality Standard Assessment (PQS).
- ◀ Tennis courts – improve the quality of existing sites, ancillary facilities in particular, with support from the LTA.
- ◀ Bowling greens – continue club investment to maintain/improve quality of greens.

Generally, where pitches are assessed as standard or poor quality and/or overplayed, review/improve maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality. Ensuring existing maintenance of good quality pitches continues is also important.

Based on an achievable target using existing quality scoring to provide a baseline, a standard should be used to identify deficiencies and investment should be focused on those sites which fail to meet the proposed quality standard (using the site audit database, provided in electronic format).

In terms of ancillary facilities, poor quality refers to inappropriate size of changing rooms, no showers, no running water and old dated interior. The following sites were highlighted as poor quality and in need of investment:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ◀ Amos Lawrence Park | ◀ Lancaster Park |
| ◀ Chancery Lane | ◀ Oundle Town FC |
| ◀ Hayden Road | ◀ Saffron Road Recreation Ground |
| ◀ Jubilee Park | ◀ Spencer Park |
| ◀ Kiln Park | ◀ Woodford Sports and Social Club |
| ◀ Kingsmead | |

Without appropriate, fit for purpose ancillary facilities, good quality pitches may be underutilised. Changing facilities form the most essential part of this offer and therefore key sites such as those mentioned above should be given priority for improvement.

Addressing overplay

In order to improve the overall quality of the playing pitches stock; it is necessary to ensure that pitches are not overplayed beyond recommended weekly carrying capacity. This is determined by assessing pitch quality (via a non-technical site assessment) and allocating a weekly match limit to each. Each NGB recommends a number of matches that a good quality pitch should take:

Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week
	Youth pitches	4 per week
	Mini pitches	6 per week

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches
Rugby union*	Pipe and Slit Drained and a good level of maintenance (D3/M2)	3.5 per week
	Pipe drained and a good level of maintenance (D2/M2)	3.25 per week
	Natural (adequate) drainage and a good level of maintenance (D1/M2)	3 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season
	One synthetic wicket	60 per season

*Please note that the RFU believes that it is most appropriate to base the calculation of pitch capacity upon an assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme afforded to a site.

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	Poor	Poor	Standard
	Natural Adequate (D1)	Poor	Standard	Good
	Pipe Drained (D2)	Standard	Standard	Good
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	Standard	Good	Good

There are also sites that are poor quality but are not overplayed. These sites should not be overlooked as often poor quality sites have less demand than other sites but demand could increase if the quality was to increase. Improving pitch quality should not be considered in isolation from maintenance regimes.

Whilst it works both ways, in so much as, poor pitch condition is a symptom of pitches being over played, potential improvements may make sites more attractive and, therefore, more popular; which in the long run can lead again to poor quality pitches if they are not maintained properly.

There is also a need to balance pitch improvements alongside the transfer of play to alternative pitch sites. Therefore, it is beneficial to work with clubs to ensure that sites are not played beyond their capacity and encourage play, where possible, to be transferred to alternative venues which are not operating at capacity.

Increasing pitch maintenance

Standard or poor grass pitch quality may not just be a result of poor drainage. In some instances ensuring there is an appropriate maintenance for the level/standard of play can help to improve quality and therefore increase pitch capacity. Each NGB can provide assistance with reviewing pitch maintenance regimes.

For example, the FA, ECB, RFL in partnership have introduced a Pitch Advisor Scheme and has been working in partnership with Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) to develop a Grass Pitch Maintenance service that can be utilised by grassroots clubs with the simple aim of improving the quality of grass pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice/practical solutions on a number of areas, with the simple aim of improving the club's playing surface.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

In relation to cricket, maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket. If the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous. The ECB recommends full technical assessments of wickets and pitches available through a Performance Quality Standard Assessment (PQS). The PQS assesses a cricket square to ascertain whether the pitch meets the Performance Quality Standards that are benchmarked by the Institute of Groundsmanship. Please note that PQS assessments are also available for other sports.

Recommendation (e) – Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites

To allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach the Steering Group, including key partners such as NGBs should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of playing pitch sites and associated facilities. Please refer to Part 5: Action Plan for the proposed hierarchy.

Recommendation (f) – Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure community funding

Partners, led by the Council, should ensure that appropriate funding secured for improved sports provision are directed to areas of need, underpinned by a robust strategy for improvement in playing pitch facilities. Priorities should be identified from the NGBs that can also feed into the overall priorities of East Northamptonshire.

In order to address the community's needs, to target priority areas and to reduce duplication of provision, there should be a coordinated approach to strategic investment. In delivering this recommendation the Council should maintain a regular dialogue with local partners and through the Playing Pitch Steering Group.

Not all investment in new provision will be made by the Council directly, it is important, however, that the Council seeks to direct and lead a strategic and co-ordinated approach to facility development by education sites, NGBs, sports clubs and the commercial sector to address community needs whilst avoiding duplication of provision.

Please refer to Appendix Two for further funding information which includes details of the current opportunities, likely funding requirements and indicative project costs.

Sport and physical activity can have a profound effect on peoples' lives, and plays a crucial role in improving community cohesion, educational attainment and self-confidence. However, one of sport's greatest contributions is its positive impact on public health. It is therefore important to lever in investment from other sectors such as health and wellbeing for example.

Recommendation (g) –Secure developer contributions

It is important that this strategy informs policies and supplementary planning documents by setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development. As the Council is not currently pursuing CIL the Strategy and in particular the Action Plan should be used as the evidence base for securing and negotiating developer contributions through S106.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The guidance should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to include provision and/or enhancement of appropriate playing fields and its subsequent maintenance. Section 106 contributions could also be used to improve the condition and maintenance regimes of the pitches in order to increase pitch capacity to accommodate more matches. A number of planning policy objectives should be implemented to enable the above to be delivered:

- ◀ Planning consent should include appropriate conditions and/or be subject to specific planning obligations. Where developer contributions are applicable, a Section 106 Agreement or equivalent must be completed specifying the amount which will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the Planning Committee, and timing of the Contribution(s) to be paid.
- ◀ Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches. NGBs and Sport England can provide further and up to date information on the associated costs.
- ◀ External funding should be sought/secured to achieve maximum benefit from the investment into appropriate playing pitch facility enhancement and its subsequent maintenance.
- ◀ Where new multiple pitches are provided, appropriate changing rooms and associated car parking should be located on site.
- ◀ All new or improved playing pitches on school sites should be subject to community use agreements. For further guidance please refer to Sport England:
<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/community-use-agreements/>

AIM 3

To enable the **provision** of new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

- h. Seek to address the quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock.
- i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall pitch stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

Recommendation (h) - Seek to address quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock.

The Council and its partners should work to rectify identified inadequacies and meet identified shortfalls as outlined in the Assessment Report and the sport by sport specific recommendations.

It is important that the current levels of grass pitch provision are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure provision now and in the future. Maximising use of existing pitches through a combination of the following will help to reduce shortfalls:

- ◀ Improving pitch quality in order to improve the capacity of pitches to accommodate more matches.
- ◀ The re-designation of pitches for which there is an oversupply.
- ◀ Securing long term community use at school sites.
- ◀ Working with commercial and private providers to increase usage.

Unmet demand, changes in sport participation and trends, and proposed housing growth should be recognised and factored into future facility planning. Assuming an increase in participation and housing growth occurs, it will impact on the future need for certain types of sports facilities. Sports development work also approximates unmet demand which cannot currently be quantified (i.e., it is not being suppressed by a lack of facilities) but is likely to occur. The following table highlights the main development trends in each sport and their likely impact on facilities. However, it is important to note that these may be subject to change.

Furthermore, retaining some spare capacity allows some pitches to be rested to protect overall pitch quality in the long term. Therefore, whilst in some instances it may be appropriate to re-designate a senior pitch where there is low demand identified, a holistic approach should be taken to re-designation for the reasons cited. The site-by-site action planning will seek to provide further clarification on where re-designation is suitable.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Likely future sport-by-sport demand trends

Sport	Future development trend	Strategy impact
Football	As a result of the FA Youth Development Review pitch demands are changing. This could also see changes in the seasonal demand of pitches (youth football).	Consider re-allocating leases to Community Charter Standard clubs with a large number of teams. Work with clubs to identify facility development opportunities. Work with clubs in relation to their pitch demands as a result of the FA Youth Development Review.
	Demand for adult football is likely to be sustained based on current trends and the move to small sided football. County FA focus to maintain growth of youth football through to adults.	Sustain current stock but consideration given to reconfigure pitches if required.
	An increase in women and girls football following £2.4m investment over the next two years (2014-2016) from Sport England to increase the number of women and girls taking part in football sessions.	A need to provide segregated ancillary facilities and the potential need for more pitches.
Rugby union	The RFU works towards achieving the stated outcomes of the Rugby Football Union National Facilities Strategy (2013-2017), the Rugby Football Union Women and Girls Strategy and the Rugby Football Union Male XV-a-side Strategy. Locally, the RFU wants to ensure access to pitches in East Northamptonshire that satisfies existing demand and predicted growth. It is also an aim to protect and improve pitch quality, as well as ancillary facilities including changing rooms and floodlights.	Improve current quality of pitches to satisfy existing demand. This may also include developing training facilities to meet current demand. Work with the clubs to support facility development where appropriate and increase the number of floodlit facilities where necessary.
AGPs	Demand for 3G pitches for competitive football will increase. It is likely that future demand for the use of 3G pitches to service competitive football, particularly mini and youth will result in some reduced demand for grass pitches. Provision of 3G pitches which are World Rugby compliant will help to reduce overplay as a result of training on rugby pitches.	Ensure that access to new 3G provision across the area is maximised and that community use agreements are in place. Utilise Sport England/NGB guidance on choosing the correct surface: http://www.sportengland.org/media/30651/Selecting-the-right-artificial-surface-Rev2-2010.pdf
Cricket	Demand is likely to remain static in East Northamptonshire for grass wickets for both junior and adult participation.	Isolated pockets of demand for access to additional facilities where pitches are operating at capacity. A need to encourage greater use of non turf wickets particularly for junior use to help meet shortfalls.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Future development trend	Strategy impact
	Women's and girls' cricket is a national priority and there is a target to establish two girls' and one women's team in every local authority over the next five years.	Support clubs to ensure access to segregated changing and toilet provision and access to good quality cricket pitches to support growth.
Tennis	Demand is likely to remain static in East Northamptonshire for tennis courts both now and in the future.	Sustain current stock and support clubs to ensure continued maintenance of greens and ancillary facilities to support participation.
Bowls	Demand is likely to increase for bowling greens due to an aging population and a propensity for bowls with the older age group.	Support clubs to ensure continued maintenance of greens and ancillary facilities to support growth.

Recommendation (i) - Identify opportunities to add to the overall pitch stock to accommodate both current and future demand

The Steering Group should use, and regularly update, the Action Plan within this Strategy for improvements to all pitches whilst recognising the need to support partners. The Action Plan lists improvements to be made to each site focused upon both qualitative and quantitative improvements as appropriate for each area.

Furthermore any potential school sites which become redundant over the lifetime of the Strategy may offer potential for meeting community needs on a localised basis. Where schools are closed their playing fields may be converted to dedicated community use to help address any unmet community needs.

Adding to the pitch stock, particularly in the short term is not currently required, except in the case of AGPs where there is a discrete need for one additional pitch.

Based on the model for 3G pitches, the area requires a total of three full size 3G pitches to cater for all mini football competition, plus training for adult teams (there are currently two although one isn't currently available for community use although it is hoped it will become available in the near future). Currently there is significant displaced demand from mini teams playing at central venues outside of East Northamptonshire, if this demand was to return to the Area there would not be enough grass pitches to cater for this level of demand. The solution to this could be the potential for a hub site within the authority that incorporates a full size 3G pitch.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 5: ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The site-by-site action plan list seeks to address key issues identified in the accompanying Assessment Report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement.

It should be reviewed in the light of staff and financial resources in order to prioritise support for strategically significant provision and provision that other providers are less likely to make. Recommendations below explain the hierarchy of priorities on the list. It is imperative that action plans for priority projects should be developed through the implementation of the strategy.

It is imperative to keep the action plan up to date and review regularly as developments take place. With pitch improvements and/or facility developments the status of sites could therefore change, as could any site specific recommendations.

Recommendation (e) - Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites

To allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach partners should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of playing pitch sites and associated facilities.

The identification of sites is based on their strategic importance in a District-wide context i.e. they accommodate the majority of demand or the recommended action has the greatest impact on addressing shortfalls identified either on a sport by sport basis or across the District as a whole.

Recommended tiered site criteria

Strategic sites	Key centres	Local sites
Strategically located. Priority sites for NGB.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Serves the local community. Likely to include education sites.
Accommodates three or more good quality grass pitches. Including provision of at least one AGP.	Accommodates two or more good quality grass pitches.	Accommodates more than one pitch.
Single or multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision.
Maintenance regime aligns with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime either by the club or in house maintenance contract.
Good quality ancillary facility on site, with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Good quality ancillary facility on site, with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Appropriate access changing to accommodate both senior and junior use concurrently (if required).

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Strategic sites are of District wide importance where users are willing to travel to access the range and high quality of facilities offered and are likely to be multi sport. These have been identified on the basis of high impact on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

The financial, social and sporting benefits which can be achieved through development of strategic sites (also known as hub sites) are significant. Sport England provides further guidance on the development of community sports hubs at:

http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance/sports_hubs.aspx

Where development of hub sites includes provision of 3G pitches for football it is recommended that further modelling/feasibility work is carried out to ensure sustainability of new 3G pitches to accommodate competitive fixtures. However, as a priority consultation should be carried out with leagues/clubs to gauge acceptance/buy in of moving competitive play to 3G pitches in the future.

Key centres although these sites are more community focused, some are still likely to service a wider analysis area (or slightly wider). However, there may be more of a focus on a specific sport i.e. a dedicated site.

It is considered that some financial investment will be necessary to improve the ancillary facilities at both Hub sites and Key Centres to complement the pitches in terms of access, flexibility (i.e. single-sex changing if necessary), quality and that they meet the rules and regulations of local competitions.

Local sites refer to those sites which are generally one and two pitch sites and may be Council owned hired to clubs for a season or are sites which have been leased on a long-term basis. However, they are also likely to be private club sites serving one particular sport. This would also likely include education sites used for community use.

The level of priority attached to them for partner-generated investment may be relatively low and consideration should be given, on a site-by-site basis, to the feasibility of a club taking a long-term lease on the site (if not already present), in order that external funding can be sought.

It is possible that sites could be included in this tier which are not currently hired or leased to a club, but have the potential to be leased to a suitable club. NGBs would expect the facility to be transferred in an adequate condition that the club can maintain. In the longer term, the Club should be in a position to source external funding to improve/extend the facilities.

Management and development

The following issues should be considered when undertaking sports related site development or enhancement:

- ◀ Financial viability.
- ◀ Security of tenure.
- ◀ Planning permission requirements and any foreseen difficulties in securing permission.
- ◀ Adequacy of existing finances to maintain existing sites.
- ◀ Business Plan/Masterplan – including financial package for creation of new provision where need has been identified.
- ◀ Analysis of the possibility of shared site management opportunities.
- ◀ The availability of opportunities to lease sites to external organisations.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Options to assist community groups to gain funding to enhance existing provision.
- ◀ Negotiation with landowners to increase access to private strategic sites.
- ◀ Football investment programme/3G pitches development with The FA.

Action plan columns

Partners

The column indicating Partners refers to the main organisations that the Council would look to work with to support delivery of the actions. Given the extent of potential actions it is reasonable to assume that partners will not necessarily be able to support all of the actions identified but where the action is a priority and resource is available the partner will endeavour to provide support.

Site hierarchy tier and priority level

Strategic sites have a high priority level as they have District wide importance and have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the key issues identified in the assessment.

Key centres are a medium priority and have analysis area importance and have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

Low priority sites are club or education sites with local specific importance and have been identified on a site by site basis as issues appertaining to individual sites but that may also contribute to addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

Costs

The strategic actions have also been ranked as low, medium or high based on cost. The brackets in which these sit are:

(L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above. These are based on Sport England's estimated facility costs which can be found at www.sportengland.org/media/198443/facility-costs-4q13.pdf

Timescales

The action plan has been created to be delivered over a five year period. The information within the Assessment Report, Strategy and Action Plan will require updating as developments occur. The timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based.

Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-4 years); (L) - Long (5+ years).

Aim

Each action seeks to meet at least one of the three aims of the Strategy; **Enhance, Provide, Protect.**

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

NORTH ANALYSIS AREA

Football

Summary of pitches required to meet current and future demand

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity ⁶	Demand (match equivalent sessions)				
		Overplay	Latent demand	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult pitches	2.5	1.5	1	0	0.5	0.5
Youth pitches	0	0.5	2.5	3	2	5
Mini pitches	9	0	5	4	0	4

- ✦ Spare capacity does not currently exist on adult or youth pitches, there is a shortfall both now and in the future of youth pitches.
- ✦ Future demand will result in a shortfall of 0.5 adult and five youth match equivalent sessions.
- ✦ Adult pitches are currently played to capacity, with a shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions once future demand is taken into account.
- ✦ Three adult pitches and one youth pitch are recorded as overplayed.
- ✦ Two youth pitches are also recorded as being used for mini football.
- ✦ There are just four mini pitches in the North Analysis Area and the majority of demand is accommodated from outside the area.
- ✦ There are no full size 3G pitches in the North Analysis Area, resulting in a shortfall of one 3G pitch required to accommodate the 38 teams playing within the Analysis Area.

Recommendations – grass

- ✦ Where pitches are assessed as poor quality, review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to improve pitch quality. Prioritise sites that are currently overplayed. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.
- ✦ Transfer youth 11v11 teams from adult pitches on to youth 11v11 pitches. Use resultant spare capacity on adult pitches to create and build future capacity on youth pitches.
- ✦ Support Thrapston Town FC to gain long term security on pitches.

Recommendations - 3G

- ✦ Explore possible sites for a new full size 3G pitch in order to reduce shortfalls.
- ✦ Ensure any new facility is fully utilised and available for community use at peak times, including weekends.
- ✦ Ensure that sinking funds are in place to maintain 3G pitches in the long term and consider the operational and management model of future hub sites.
- ✦ Ensure that any new 3G pitch is FA certified

⁶ In match equivalent sessions

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Rugby union

- ◀ There are five senior pitches and three mini pitches available for community use. All are rated poor.
- ◀ The one site with recorded community use is Oundle RFC, and is overplayed, largely due to midweek training and poor quality pitches.
- ◀ This site is also predicted to have a shortfall to meet future demand.

Recommendations

- ◀ Improve the quality and maintenance of pitches to help increase capacity and address overplay on pitches at Oundle RFC.
- ◀ Explore alternative sites for the Club to relocate in order to provide additional pitches to accommodate shortfalls.
- ◀ Develop new training facilities, potentially in the form of a World Rugby AGP as a way to accommodate shortfalls.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime on additional pitches for school and casual use
- ◀ Support Oundle RFC to gain long term security on current or new site.

Hockey

- ◀ There are three full size hockey suitable AGP located in the North Analysis Area, two at Oundle School and one at Prince William School.
- ◀ Facilities at Oundle School are limited by the access required by the School.
- ◀ All three are well used for hockey and accessed by Oundle Hockey Club.
- ◀ Current supply is adequate to meet current demand, although it may not be sufficient to cater for future demand.
- ◀ There are plans to build an additional two AGPs at Oundle School, but it is unclear whether these will be available for community use.

Recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing sand based pitches (Prince William School and Oundle School Sports Centre) to accommodate current and future demand.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to maintain/improve quality.
- ◀ Ensure that sinking funds are in place to maintain AGP quality in the long term.
- ◀ Work with Oundle School to secure community use on new AGPs developed on site.
- ◀ Determine the user agreement between Oundle Hockey Club and Oundle School to ensure long term use of the site.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Cricket

- ◀ There are nine grass wicket pitches available for community use in the Analysis Area.
- ◀ Six are standard quality, one is poor and two are good quality.
- ◀ There is no actual spare capacity available on any of the squares at peak time, suggesting opportunity for further play mid-week or Sundays only.
- ◀ Four sites are accommodating overplay to the equivalent of 38 matches per season.
- ◀ Future demand suggests that there will be an equivalent of 70.5 matches per season spare capacity in the North Analysis Area.

Recommendations

- ◀ Work with clubs to review quality issues on those pitches assessed as standard and poor quality and to address quality issues through increased maintenance.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to increase junior play on the non-turf wicket at Prince William.
- ◀ Support clubs to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities or additional access to training provision elsewhere.
- ◀ Support Oundle Town CC to identify a suitable ground to expand cricket activity to alleviate overplay on the current site.
- ◀ Improve/increase training provision, particularly at sites that do not contain practice nets.
- ◀ Explore the possibility of agreeing lease arrangements between Thrapston Cricket Club and Brigstock Cricket Club and their respective landlords.

Tennis

- ◀ Currently Kings Cliffe Active TC exists as a club without a permanent home, however. Kings Cliffe Active (Kings Cliffe and Area Community Sports Project) has recently been successful in securing funding towards developing three new tennis courts/two netball courts.

Recommendations

- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts on club sites as appropriate.
- ◀ Ensure clubs can access the appropriate standard of courts to allow LTA competitions to be played.
- ◀ Support clubs with own facility development plan.

Bowls

- ◀ There are four bowling greens, all of which are assessed as good quality.
- ◀ Current supply is deemed adequate to service demand, as the majority of bowling greens are considered to have spare capacity.

Recommendations

- ◀ Support and encourage junior bowls development in order to grow and sustain future participation levels in the sport.
- ◀ Address spare capacity and maximise the availability of bowling greens for pay and play in order to raise the profile of the game, increase levels of membership and the revenue generated by sites.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of green as appropriate.

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

NORTH AREA

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ⁷	Cost ⁸	Aim	Priority
2	Benefield Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality grass pitch with eight wickets. Has spare capacity. Club is in process of applying for community facilities fund grant from ENC.	Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Investigate funding to improve quality of pavilion.	Club ECB	Local	S	L	Enhance	
3	Castle Playing Fields	Cricket	Sports Association	One standard quality grass pitch with 12 wickets. Used by the community and overplayed.	Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Agree lease arrangements between Thrapston Cricket Club and the Town Council to ensure long term use. Transfer some play to Toll Bar Road Playing Fields to alleviate overplay.	Thrapston Cricket Club Thrapston Town Council ECB	Local	M	M	Enhance	Priority
12	Kingsmead (also known as Kings Cliffe Active)	Football	Community Organisation	Two adult pitches, all poor quality. Used by Kings Cliffe Youth FC. One of the pitches is unusable due to pot holes and is unplayable for the junior teams. Ancillary facilities are excellent with two good rooms and a clubhouse. One small sized 3G pitch is located at Kings Cliffe Recreation which is good quality and although undersized, is used for training.	Explore funding opportunities to improve grass pitch quality/drainage in order to maximise use.	Community Organisation The FA	Local	M	M	Enhance	No
		Tennis		Kings Cliffe Active TC exists as a club without a permanent home. Kings Cliffe Active (Kings Cliffe and Area Community Sports Project) has been successful in securing £35,000 towards developing three new tennis courts/two netball courts.	Support additional funding bids in order to develop tennis courts at the site to accommodate the tennis club.	Community Organisation LTA		M	M	Provide	

⁷ Timescales: (S) - Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-4 years); (L) - Long (5+ years).

⁸ Cost: (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above.

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ⁷	Cost ⁸	Aim	Priority
15	Oundle Rugby Football Club	Rugby union	Sports Club	<p>Three senior and three mini pitches, all poor quality and overplayed. Midweek demand is not being met.</p> <p>Currently the ground is located on a floodplain and although significant investment has already been made, pitches are still overplayed due to poor quality and matches are often cancelled due to waterlogged pitches. Access to an additional pitch is required for the Club even if existing pitches were good quality.</p> <p>The Club's lease agreement with Oundle Town Council for one of the senior pitches is due to expire within the next two years.</p> <p>The Club also has ambitions to extend the clubhouse to accommodate the increasing number of parents and to ensure that it can provide en-suite changing to meet their safeguarding objectives.</p>	<p>In the short term, improve quality of pitches⁹ and develop a floodlighting scheme on site to meet the midweek demand. Club to join Groundsman Connected programme.</p> <p>Further to this, support the Club to gain long term security on current or alternatively explore options for a new site.</p> <p>In the longer term, explore alternative sites for the Club to relocate to in order to provide additional pitches. Need to work collaborative for a solution on this site as there are a number of sports that could be affected with any re-development or lease negotiation.</p> <p>Explore funding options to make required improvements to the clubhouse facilities.</p>	Club Town Council RFU	Key Centre	S-L	H	Enhance Provide	Priority within the East Midlands Facility Plan
16	Oundle School Playing Fields	Football	School	Two adult and two youth pitches, all poor quality. Adult pitches unused by community.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Maximise use of adult pitches for community use.	School	Local	M	M	Enhance Provide	No
17	Oundle School Sports Centre	Rugby union	School	Four senior pitches and eight mini pitches. One adult pitch rated standard, all others rated poor. Not available for community use.	Continue with pitch improvement programme. Work with school to negotiate community use to help alleviate overplay at Oundle RFC. Consider leasing further pitch to the Club.	School RFU Club	Strategic site	S	M-H	Enhance Provide	No
		Sand AGP		Two sand based AGPs, one pitch is rated as good quality having recently been resurfaced. The other is rated as standard. Available and used by the community. Oundle Hockey Club is the key user of the site.	Encourage provider to have a mechanism in place which ensures the long term sustainability of provision. Determine the user agreement between Oundle Hockey Club and Oundle School to ensure long term community use of the site. Work with Oundle School to secure community use on potential new AGPs to be developed on site.	School Club England Hockey		M	M	Enhance Protect	No
		Cricket		One good quality grass pitch with 12 wickets. Used by Oundle Town CC although has spare capacity this is not at peak time.	Retain spare capacity and continue with appropriate maintenance programme to sustain quality.	School Club ECB		L	L	Protect	No

⁹ Please refer to Appendix for full breakdown of cost for rugby pitch maintenance

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ⁷	Cost ⁸	Aim	Priority
		Tennis		Four good quality macadam courts available for community use but no demand for regular use. Also eight average quality tarmacadam courts with no floodlights which are not available for community use. More of a playground area than courts.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts for school use.	School		L	L	Enhance	No
18	Oundle Town Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass pitch with eight grass wickets and overplayed.	Support the Club to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities. Support the Club to identify a suitable ground to expand cricket activity to alleviate overplay on the current site including potential to transfer some training to Prince William School artificial wicket.	Club Town Council ECB	Local	M	H	Provide Enhance	Priority
19	Oundle Town Football Club	Football	Sports Club	One poor quality adult football pitch. Community use, no spare capacity.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme Secure long term future of Club on site. Investigate funding options to improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Sports Club	Local	S-M	H	Protect Enhance	Review in 12 months
28	Thrapston Primary School	Football	School	On standard quality youth football pitch. Not available for community use.	Work with partners to negotiate community access to pitches to help address shortfall in provision. Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime.	School	Local	M	L	Provide Enhance	No
29	The Meadow	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality grass pitch with ten wickets. Community use, slightly overplayed.	Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Extend lease arrangements between Brigstock Cricket Club and the Parish Council to ensure long term security.	Sports Club	Local	S	M	Protect Enhance	Priority for review in 12 months
31	Titchmarsh Playing Field	Football	Parish Council	One adult, two youth pitches, all poor quality. Used by the community and some spare capacity on youth pitches.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Explore possibility of agreeing lease arrangements between Thrapston Town FC and the Parish Council to ensure long term security. Investigate funding options to improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Parish Council	Local	L	H	Protect Enhance	No
32	Toll Bar Road Playing Field	Cricket	Parish Council	One standard quality grass pitch with seven wickets used by Thrapston Cricket Club and has spare capacity.	Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Accommodate some play from Castle Playing Fields to alleviate overplay.	Parish Council Clubs	Key Centre	S	L	Protect Enhance	No

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ⁷	Cost ⁸	Aim	Priority
		Football	Sports Club	One adult and two youth pitches, all poor quality. Adult pitch is overplayed, youth pitches have some spare capacity.	Improve quality of pitches to increase capacity and sustain levels of play. Move youth 11v11 play from adult pitch to reconfigured youth 11v11 pitch at Prince William School.	Sports Club		M	M		Priority to consider Pitch Improvement Programme
33	Warmington Fun Field	Football	Parish Council	One adult pitch and one mini pitch, both poor quality and available for community use. Mini pitch unused.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.	Parish Council	Local	S	M	Enhance	No
34	Woodford Sports and Social Club	Football	Sports Club	Two poor quality adult pitches with no spare capacity. Used by a variety of clubs.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Move youth 11v11 from adult pitch to reconfigured pitch at High Street Recreation Ground. Consideration of a long term lease with umbrella body representing football clubs.	Parish Council Sports Club	Key Centre	M	M	Enhance	No
35	Prince William School	Football	School	One adult and one youth pitch, both standard quality and are available for community use. Adult pitch over marked with a rugby pitch. Youth pitch has no spare capacity; adult pitch is unused.	Consider reconfiguring adult pitch into additional youth 11v11 pitch and remove rugby over marking, to accommodate play on adult pitches at Toll Bar Road Playing Fields. Formalise long term agreement with club to protect future use. Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.	School	Strategic site	S	L	Protect Enhance Provide	No
		Rugby union		Two senior pitches, poor quality. Available but unused regularly. One pitch is over marked with adult football pitch.	Consider remarking to youth 11v11 football pitch. Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime.	School		S	M		No
		Sand AGP		One standard quality sand based AGP. Available and used to capacity by the community. Used by Oundle Hockey Club.	Replace surface of pitch in next two years to improve quality. Ensure appropriate maintenance regime for new surface. Ensure that sinking funds are in place to maintain AGP quality in the long term. Protect as a sand based surface to retain hockey use.			M	M		
		Cricket		One good quality artificial wicket, not available for community use.	Work with partners to negotiate access to pitch for community use. Transfer some training from Oundle Town CC here to alleviate overplay. Ensure appropriate maintenance programme to sustain quality.	School Club ECB		M	L		Priority
36	Oundle Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Five macadam floodlit courts, good quality and currently operating at capacity but still able to accommodate new members.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts and floodlights. Support club in developing sinking fund for resurfacing the courts.	Sports Club LTA	Local	S	M	Protect Enhance	No

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ⁷	Cost ⁸	Aim	Priority
37	Thrapston and District Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Four macadam floodlit courts, good quality and well used by the Club.	Support club in seeking funding to upgrade floodlighting and potential resurfacing of courts. Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts.	Sports Club LTA	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	No
42	Islip Bowls Club	Bowls	Parish Council	One good quality green with five rinks. Has spare capacity for additional members.	Work with the Club to investigate alternative parking options. Club to raise funds to ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of green.	Parish Council	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	
43	Oundle Bowling Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green with six rinks.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of green. Support the Club to improve clubhouse.	Town Council Sports Club	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	
45	Thrapston Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green with six rinks. Has spare capacity for additional members.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of green. Support the Club to improve the clubhouse.	Town Council Sports Club	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	
51	Easton Playing Field	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality grass pitch with seven wickets. Available and used by Easton on the Hill Cricket Club. Although it has spare capacity this is not at peak time.	Retain spare capacity and improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Support the Club to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities Explore funding to improve ancillary facilities at site.	Parish Council Sports Club ECB	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	No
		Football	Parish Council	One standard quality adult pitch with some spare capacity.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of pitch.	Parish Council		S	L		No
52	Nassington Playing Fields	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality cricket pitch with 12 wickets. Available and used by the community, overplayed.	Improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Support the Club to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities.	Parish Council	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	No
53	Laxton Park	Cricket	Sports Club	One poor quality grass pitch with four wickets with spare capacity but not at peak time.	Retain spare capacity and improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime.	Sports Club	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	No
54	Chancery Lane	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one youth pitch, both standard quality. Youth pitch overplayed and adult pitch played to capacity.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Explore possibility of increasing lease length to allow Thrapston Town Football Club more security and ability to apply for funding.	Sports Club	Key Centre	S	L	Protect Enhance	Priority

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ⁷	Cost ⁸	Aim	Priority
55	Oundle Primary School Fields	Football	School	One youth and one mini pitch, both standard quality and both have spare capacity for further community use.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Explore possibility of agreeing lease arrangements between Oundle Junior FC and the School to ensure long term security.	School	Local	M	L	Protect Enhance	Review in 12 months
56	Apethorpe Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Two good quality macadam courts, not floodlit.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts. Develop ancillary facility to support courts.	Sports Club LTA	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	No
58	High Street Recreation Ground	Football	Parish Council	One standard quality mini football pitch. Available for community used but unused.	Consider reconfiguring mini pitch into youth 11v11 pitch to accommodate play on adult pitches at Woodford Sports and Social Club. Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.	Parish Council	Local	S	L	Provide Enhance	No
59	Thrapston Primary School	Football	School	One standard quality mini pitch. Not available for community use.	Ensure appropriate maintenance programme to sustain quality for school use.	School	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
65	Former primary school, Glapthorn Road	Football	Unknown	Lapsed playing field site.	Explore opportunities to bring the site back into use to meet identified shortfalls in the Assessment. If bringing the site back into use is not feasible or sustainable or disposal of the site is inevitable it must meet the requirements of the second criterion of paragraph 74 of NPPF. This requires replacement provision of an equivalent or better quantity and quality in a suitable location.	Council	Local	M	L	Protect	No
66	Laxton School, South Road	Football	Unknown	Lapsed playing field site.	Explore opportunities to bring the site back into use to meet identified shortfalls in the Assessment. If bringing the site back into use is not feasible or sustainable or disposal of the site is inevitable it must meet the requirements of the second criterion of paragraph 74 of NPPF. This requires replacement provision of an equivalent or better quantity and quality in a suitable location.	Council	Local	M	L	Protect	No

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

SOUTH ANALYSIS AREA

Football

Summary of pitches required to meet current and future demand

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity ¹⁰	Demand (match equivalent sessions)				
		Overplay	Latent demand	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult pitches	2	3	1.5	2.5	1.5	4
Youth pitches	0.5	0.5	1.5	1.5	8	9.5
Mini pitches	0	0	7.5	7.5	0	7.5

- ◀ Spare capacity does not currently exist on any pitch type, there is a shortfall both now and in the future of adult, youth and mini pitches.
- ◀ Future demand will result in a shortfall of four adult and 9.5 youth and 7.5 mini match equivalent sessions.
- ◀ There are currently no existing mini pitches available for community use, and 7.5 match equivalent sessions being met outside of the area.
- ◀ Six adult pitches and five youth pitches are recorded as overplayed.
- ◀ Six adult pitches are recorded as used for youth football.
- ◀ There are two full size 3G pitches in the South Analysis Area, resulting in meeting current demand but falling short by one pitch of future demand, to accommodate mini and youth football competition in the Analysis Area.

Recommendations

- ◀ Where pitches are assessed as poor quality, review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to improve pitch quality. Prioritise sites that are currently overplayed. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.
- ◀ Transfer youth 11v11 teams from adult pitches on to youth 11v11 pitches. Use resultant spare capacity on adult pitches to create and build future capacity on youth pitches.
- ◀ Support Higham Town FC, Rushden and Higham United and AFC Rushden and Diamonds to gain long term security on pitches.

¹⁰ In match equivalent sessions

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

3G pitches

- ◀ There is a requirement for two full size 3G pitches within the Analysis Area and there are two full size 3G pitches that exist.
- ◀ Ensure sinking fund is in place for eventual re-surfacing of the two pitches at Manor School Sport College and Ferrers Specialist Arts College.
- ◀ Protect the future of the two facilities.

Rugby union

- ◀ There are six senior pitches available for community use. All are rated poor.
- ◀ The one site with recorded community use is Rushden and Higham RFC, and is overplayed due to minimal maintenance and resultant poor quality.
- ◀ This site is also predicted to have a shortfall to meet future demand.
- ◀ There are four sites with available but unused pitches. All report issues with pitch quality so are unsuitable.

Recommendations

- ◀ Improve the quality and maintenance of pitches to help increase capacity and address overplay on pitches at Rushden and Higham RFC.
- ◀ Explore alternative sites for the Club to relocate in order to provide additional pitches to accommodate shortfalls.
- ◀ Develop new training facilities, potentially in the form of a World Rugby AGP as a way to accommodate shortfalls.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime on additional pitches for school and casual use.
- ◀ Support Rushden and Higham RFC to gain long term security on current or new site.

Hockey

- ◀ There are no hockey suitable AGPs and no identified demand in the Analysis Area.

Cricket

- ◀ There are four grass wickets available for community use in the Analysis Area. All are standard quality.
- ◀ There is no actual spare capacity available on any of the squares at peak time, suggesting opportunity for further play mid-week or Sundays only.
- ◀ One site, Rushden Town Cricket Club, is accommodating overplay to the equivalent of two matches per season.
- ◀ Future demand suggests that there will be a shortfall of 6.5 matches across the season in the South Analysis Area.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Recommendations

- ◀ Work with clubs to review quality issues on those pitches assessed as standard and poor quality and to address quality issues through increased maintenance.
- ◀ Explore opportunities for increasing junior play on the non-turf wickets at The Rushden Academy.
- ◀ Support clubs to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities or additional access to training provision elsewhere.
- ◀ Improve/increase training provision, particularly at sites that do not contain practice nets.
- ◀ Support Rushden Town CC to identify a suitable ground to expand cricket activity to alleviate overplay on the current site.
- ◀ Support clubs in meeting ancillary and training facility demands.
- ◀ Support the improvement of the quality of grass wickets.
- ◀ Explore the possibility of agreeing lease arrangements between Higham Ferrers Cricket Club and Higham Ferrers Town Council.

Tennis

- ◀ The current supply of tennis courts is deemed adequate to accommodate current and future demand.

Recommendations

- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts on club sites as appropriate.
- ◀ Ensure clubs can access the appropriate standard of courts to allow LTA competitions to be played.
- ◀ Support clubs with own facility development plan.

Bowls

- ◀ There are four bowling greens in the Analysis Area, three of which are assessed as good quality and one is average quality.
- ◀ Current supply is deemed adequate to service demand, as the majority of bowling greens are considered to have spare capacity.

Recommendations

- ◀ Support and encourage junior bowls development in order to grow and sustain future participation levels in the sport.
- ◀ Address spare capacity and maximise the availability of bowling greens for pay and play in order to raise the profile of the game, increase levels of membership and the revenue generated by sites.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of green as appropriate.

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ¹¹	Cost ¹²	Aim	Priority
1	Amos Lawrence Park	Football	Town Council	One poor quality adult football pitch, played to capacity.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Seek investment to support modernisation of changing and ancillary facilities.	Town Council FA	Local	M	M	Enhance	No
4	Ferrers Specialist Arts College	Football	School	One adult and one youth pitch, both standard quality. Both available for community use but unused. Spare capacity discounted as drainage on the pitch is poor.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality and seek opportunities to maximise usage.	School FA	Strategic Site	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide	No
		3G AGP		One good quality 3G pitch. Newly available and used by the community.	Ensure the pitch is fully accessible for community use and is FA Registered.	School FA		S	L		No
		Rugby union		One poor quality senior pitch, available for community use but no demand.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No
		Tennis		Eight average quality tarmac courts, not floodlit and not available for community use. More of a playground area than courts.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve/sustain quality of courts for school use.	School		S	L		No
5	Gladstone Street Recreation Ground	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one youth pitch, both poor quality and used for community use. No spare capacity on adult pitch and youth pitch is overplayed.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality and accommodate overplay. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Ascertain length of lease and ensure long term security of club is confirmed.	Parish Council Sports Club FA	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	Priority
6	Hayden Road	Football	Sports Club	Two poor quality adult pitches, used for community use and overplayed.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality and accommodate overplay. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Extend lease arrangements between Rushden and Higham United and Rushden Sports Association to ensure long term security.	Sports Club FA	Local	S	M	Protect Enhance	Priority
7	Huxlow Science College	Football	School	One standard quality adult pitch and two youth pitches one standard quality and one good quality. Not available for community use.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve pitch quality Work with partners to negotiate community access to school pitches to help address the shortfall in provision.	School FA	Local	M	L	Provide	No
		Rugby union		One poor quality senior rugby pitch, not available for community use.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No
		Tennis		Five average quality tarmac courts, not floodlit and not available for community use.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No

¹¹ Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-4 years); (L) - Long (5+ years).

¹² (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above.

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ¹¹	Cost ¹²	Aim	Priority
8	Irthlingborough Junior School	Football	School	One standard quality youth pitch, available for community use and used to capacity.	Review maintenance regime to maintain pitch quality.	School	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	No
9	Irthlingborough Town Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality grass pitch with 11 wickets with some minimal spare capacity but not at peak time. Club has aspirations to upgrade ground to premier standard.	Retain spare capacity and improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime.	Sports Club ECB	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	No
10	Jubilee Park	Football	Town Council	One poor quality adult football pitch with minimal spare capacity. Used by Rushden Rangers FC.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality.	Town Council	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
		Rugby union		One poor quality senior pitch. Available for community use and used as overspill pitch for Rushden and Higham RFC. On a severe slope.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve pitch quality and continue to provide overspill. ¹³	Town Council Club RFU		S	M		No
11	Kiln Park	Football	Sports Club	One poor quality adult football pitch. Used by Raunds Town FC and overplayed.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality and accommodate overplay. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.	Town Council Sports Club FA	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
13	Lancaster Park	Football	Sports Club	Two adult and four youth pitches, all poor quality. Used by Higham Town FC and overplayed.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality to accommodate over play. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Ensure long term security of club is confirmed. Move youth 11v11 teams off adult pitches.	Duchy of Lancaster Sports Club FA	Key Centre	S	L	Enhance	Yes
14	Manor School Sports College	Football	School	One good quality adult pitch, not available for community use.	Work with partners to negotiate community access to school pitches to help address shortfall in provision.	School	Strategic Site	S	L	Protect	No
		3G AGP		One good quality full size 3G pitch. Available for community use and used almost to capacity. Built in 2008 and no recorded refurbishment since. Planning permission sought for modular changing facilities to support AGP.	Maximise use and programme to accommodate future mini soccer matches and to accommodate displaced demand. Consider refurbishment of surface.	School FA		S-M	L		Yes
		Rugby union		One poor quality senior pitch, not available for community use but no demand.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No
		Tennis		Six average quality courts. Floodlit and available for community use but no demand.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No

¹³ Please refer to Appendix for full breakdown of cost for rugby pitch maintenance

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim	Priority
30	The Rushden Academy	Football	School	Three standard quality youth pitches, all available for community use and unused due to rabbit damage on occasion.	Address quality issues and consider for future community use.	School FA	Local	M	M	Enhance	No
		Rugby union		One poor quality senior pitch, available for community use but unused due to rabbit damage.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No
		Tennis		Three average quality tarmac courts. Available for community use, not floodlit, no demand.	Retain for school use and improve quality as necessary.	School		L	L		No
		Cricket		One good quality artificial wicket, not available for community use.	Retain for school use.	School		S	L		No
20	Raunds Town Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality grass pitch with eight wickets and some spare capacity although this is not available at peak time.	Retain spare capacity and improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Support the Club to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities.	Sports Club ECB	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	No
21	Rushden & Diamonds Sports and Exhibition Centre	Football	Private	Three poor quality adult football pitches, lapsed site. One pitch is a stadia pitch, the other two are not. The stadia pitch was the home ground of Rushden and Diamonds FC and has stood empty since November 2012. Understood some community play still occurs on a pitch.	Explore opportunities to bring the whole site back into use to meet identified shortfalls in the Assessment. If bringing the site back into use is not feasible or sustainable or disposal of the site is inevitable it must meet the requirements of the second criterion of paragraph 74 of NPPF. This requires replacement provision of an equivalent or better quantity and quality within boundaries of Irthlingborough.	Council FA SE	-	M	H	Protect, Provide	No
22	Rushden and Higham RFC	Rugby union	Sports Club	Two senior pitches, poor quality and over played by three match sessions per week. Issues with rabbits and dogs. Floodlighting on site needs to be addressed as the current columns for the training area are in a poor state and could potentially become dangerous rendering the Club with no provision at all.	As a priority improve floodlighting to ensure continued access to training area. Improve the quality and maintenance of pitches to help increase capacity and address overplay. ¹⁶ Support the Club to gain long term security on current or new site. The Club is currently attempting to add space to the main club site by clearing and developing more playing surface to the far end away from the clubhouse. If unsuccessful, explore alternative sites for the Club to relocate in order to provide additional pitches to accommodate shortfalls.	Town Council Sports Club RFU	Key Centre	M	H	Enhance Provide	Priority

¹⁴ Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-4 years); (L) - Long (5+ years).

¹⁵ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above.

¹⁶ Please refer to Appendix for full breakdown of cost for rugby pitch maintenance.

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim	Priority
23	Rushden Town Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass pitch; minor overplay identified but considered able to be accommodated due to quality of site.	Ensure quality of pitch is retained through maintenance regime. Support the Club to identify a suitable ground to expand cricket activity to expand and accommodate third and fourth teams.	Rushden Sports Limited Sports Club	Local	M	H	Protect Enhance	No
24	Saffron Road Recreation Ground	Football	Town Council	One poor quality adult pitch, no spare capacity.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality.	Town Council FA	Key Centre	M	L	Enhance	No
		Cricket		One standard quality grass pitch with 12 wickets (has a non-turf wicket) and some spare capacity although this is not available at peak time. Used by Higham Ferrers CC.	Retain spare capacity and improve quality of pitch through improved/increased maintenance regime. Support the Club to develop and improve 'off pitch' practice facilities. Explore possibility of agreeing lease arrangements between Higham Ferrers CC and the Town Council to ensure long term use.	Town Council ECB Club		M	M		No
		Tennis		Two good quality macadam courts. Available for community use, not floodlit.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to sustain quality of courts. Seek to secure long term agreement with Ferrers and Rushden LTC.	Town Council Club LTA		M	L		No
25	South End Junior School	Football	School	One standard quality youth pitch, used for community use with spare capacity.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Agree lease arrangements between AFC Rushden and Diamond CIC and the School to ensure long term security.	School Club FA	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	No
26	Spencer Park	Football	Town Council	Two adult football pitches, one standard quality, one poor quality. Used for community use and has spare capacity. Poor quality goalposts due to vandalism.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Link with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme. Provision of new removable goalposts to avoid damage.	Town Council	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	Review in 12 months
27	Stanwick Recreation Ground	Football	Sports Club	One standard quality adult pitch, used by Stanwick FC and has minimal spare capacity.	Retain spare capacity and review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Support the Club to seek funding to extend ancillary facilities.	Sports Club FA	Local	M	M	Protect Enhance	No
40	Higham Ferrers Town Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green with six rinks. Has spare capacity for additional members.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to sustain quality of green.	Sports Club	Local	S	L	Protect	
41	Rushden Town Bowling Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality rink. Likely to have spare capacity for additional members.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to sustain quality of green.	Sports Club	Local	S	L	Protect	
44	Stanwick Bowls Club	Bowls	Parish Council	One good quality rink with spare capacity for additional members.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to sustain quality of green	Parish Council	Local	S	L	Protect	
47	Raunds Conservative Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One average quality green with six rinks. Has spare capacity for additional members.	Ensure appropriate maintenance regime to improve quality of green	Sports Club	Local	S	L	Protect Enhance	

**EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Time scales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim	Priority
48	Irthlingborough Central Recreation Ground	Football	Town Council	One poor quality adult pitch which is overplayed. Used by Irthlingborough Town FC, Irthlingborough Rangers FC and Irthlingborough FC. Entrance to ancillary facilities is on a slope which regularly becomes muddy and makes access difficult.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality and transfer some play to Crow Hill Fields to alleviate overplay. Improve access to ancillary facilities.	Town Council	Local	M	L	Enhance	No
57	Crow Hill	Football	Town Council	One standard quality adult pitch. Available for community use but unused. Entrance to ancillary facilities is on a slope and can become very slippery in bad weather.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality. Address issues with access to ancillary facilities and check rental costs are in line with local competition. Accommodate some play from Irthlingborough Central Recreation Ground to alleviate overplay.	Town Council FA	Local	M	M	Provide	No
60	Denfield Primary School	Football	School	One standard quality youth football pitch. Available in school holidays for community use but unused.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality.	School	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
61	Henry Chichele Primary School	Football	School	One mini and one youth pitch, both standard quality. Not available for community use.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality to maintain for school use.	School	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
62	St Peters Academy	Football	School	One mini and one youth pitch, both standard quality. Not available for community use.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality to maintain for school use.	School	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
63	Windmill Primary School	Football	School	One standard quality youth pitch. Not available for community use.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality to maintain for school use.	School	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
64	Moulton College, Higham Ferrers Campus	Football	College	One poor quality mini pitch. Not available for community use.	Review maintenance regime to improve pitch quality to maintain for school use.	College	Local	S	L	Enhance	No
67	Spencer Park Tennis Courts	Tennis	Rushden Town Council	Artificial surface courts. No floodlights.	Retain provision. Explore opportunity for club use if required.	Town Council	Local	L	L	Protect	No

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 6: KEEP THE STRATEGY ROBUST AND UP TO DATE

Delivery

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

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.

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

Each member of the steering group should take the lead to ensure the PPS 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 PPS document.

To help ensure the PPS 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 on the 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 PPS can be applied and therefore delivered. Key uses for the PPS include evidence for supporting funding bids, guidance to inform planning decisions and planning applications and decision making for capital investment.

The process of developing the PPS 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 PPS 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.

Monitoring and updating

It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should be led by the local authority and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the steering group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. This should form an on-going role of the steering group. It is possible that in the interim between annual reviews the steering group could operate as a 'virtual' group; prepared to comment on suggestions and updates electronically when relevant.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPS being signed off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider the PPS and the information on which it is based to be out of date. If the PPS is used as a 'live' document, and kept up to date, the time frame can be extended to five years.

Furthermore, the process of refreshing the PPS would be much less resource intensive if changes and updates have been made throughout the five years. If there are no updates to the document within the period the nature of the supply and in particular the demand for playing pitches is likely to have changed. 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.

Ideally the PPS should be reviewed on an annual basis from the date it is formally signed off by the steering group. This will help to maintain the momentum and commitment that would have been built up when developing the PPS. Taking into account the time to develop the PPS this should also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed.

An annual review should not be regarded as a particularly resource intensive task. However, it 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 PPS has been applied and the lessons learnt.
- ◀ 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.
- ◀ Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

Once the PPS is complete the role of the steering group should evolve so that it:

- ◀ Acts as a focal point for promoting the value and importance of the PPS 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 PPS has been used and how it has been applied to a variety of circumstances
- ◀ Ensures the PPS 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;
- ◀ Reviews the need to update the PPS along with the supply and demand information and assessment work on which it is based. Further to review the group should either:
 - ◀ Provide a short annual progress and update paper;
 - ◀ Provide a partial review focussing on particular sport, pitch type and/or sub area; or
 - ◀ Lead a full review and update of the PPS document (including the supply and demand information and assessment details).

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Alongside the regular steering group meetings it is recommended that the Council holds annual sport specific meetings with the pitch sport NGBs and other relevant organisations. These meetings should look to update the key supply and demand information, if necessary amend the assessment work, track progress with implementing the recommendations and action plan and highlight any new issues and opportunities. Things to consider include formation of new teams or loss of teams, any new formats of the sports that would impact on facilities, changes in quality or creation of new facilities.

These meetings could be timed to fit 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.

The steering group should 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 or other private sites in the future. Updating the action plans will make the task of updating the PPS much easier.

It is important that the Council maintains the data contained with the accompanying Playing Pitch Database. This will enable it to refresh and update area by area plans on a regular basis. 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, 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.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Checklist

To help ensure the PPS is delivered and is kept robust and up to date, the steering group can refer to the new methodology Stage E Checklist: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/playing-pitch-strategy-guidance/>

Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date	Tick 	
	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 9: Apply & deliver the strategy		
1. Are steering group members clear on how the PPS can be applied across a range of relevant areas?		
2. Is each member of the steering group committed to taking the lead to help ensure the PPS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence?		
3. Has a process been put in place to ensure regular monitoring of how the recommendations and action plan are being delivered and the PPS is being applied?		
Step 10: Keep the strategy robust & up to date		
1. Has a process been put in place to ensure the PPS is kept robust and up to date?		
2. Does the process involve an annual update of the PPS?		
3. Is the steering group to be maintained and is it clear of its on-going role?		
4. Is regular liaison with the NGBs and other parties planned?		
5. Has all the supply and demand information been collated and presented in a format (i.e. single document that can be filtered accordingly) that will help people to review it and highlight any changes?		
6. Have any changes made to the Active Places Power data been fed back to Sport England?		

APPENDIX ONE: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The recommendations within this Strategy have been developed via the combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis. They reflect key areas to be addressed over its lifetime. However, implementation must be considered in the context of financial implications and the need for some proposals to also meet planning considerations.

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports facilities at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the targets set out by the Government and Sport England. It is vital that this strategy is cognisant of and works towards these targets in addition to local priorities and plans.

DCMS (Department for Culture Media & Sport) is currently (2015) consulting on a new strategy for sport. It will seek to address the following challenges:

- ◀ How to address the recent decline in the number of people that regularly take part in sport and deliver a long-term sustainable increase in participation;
- ◀ What type(s) of participation should be encouraged and how should they be measured;
- ◀ How to ensure that funding goes to those who can best deliver results;
- ◀ How to specifically target under-represented groups;
- ◀ Understanding the role of the private sector, and how public sector bodies, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and other sports bodies should work with the private sector to help deliver an increase in participation;
- ◀ How to best support participation in new and/or non-traditional sports and activities;
- ◀ How to maximise the potential of new technology to increase participation;
- ◀ How to use the power of sport to achieve broader positive social outcomes and whether some funding should specifically be spent for that purpose.

Sport England: A Sporting Habit for Life (2012-2017)

In 2017, five years after the Olympic Games, Sport England aspires to transforming sport in England so that it is a habit for life for more people and a regular choice for the majority. Launched in January 2012 the strategy sets out how Sport England will invest over one billion pounds of National Lottery and Exchequer funding during the five year plan period. The investment will be used to create a lasting community sport legacy by growing sports participation at the grassroots level following the 2012 London Olympics. The strategy will:

- ◀ See more people starting and keeping a sporting habit for life
- ◀ Create more opportunities for young people
- ◀ Nurture and develop talent
- ◀ Provide the right facilities in the right places
- ◀ Support local authorities and unlock local funding
- ◀ Ensure real opportunities for communities

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The vision is for England to be a world leading sporting nation where many more people choose to play sport. There are five strategic themes including:

- ◀ Maximise value from current NGB investment
- ◀ Places, People, Play
- ◀ Strategic direction and market intelligence
- ◀ Set criteria and support system for NGB 2013-17 investment
- ◀ Market development

The aim by 2017 is to ensure that playing sport is a lifelong habit for more people and a regular choice for the majority. A specific target is to increase the number of 14 to 25 year olds playing sport. To accomplish these aims the strategy sets out a number of outcomes:

- ◀ 4,000 secondary schools in England will be offered a community sport club on its site with a direct link to one or more NGBs, depending on the local clubs in a school's area.
- ◀ County sports partnerships will be given new resources to create effective links locally between schools and sport in the community.
- ◀ All secondary schools that wish to do so, will be supported to open up, or keep open, their sports facilities for local community use and at least a third of these will receive additional funding to make this happen.
- ◀ At least 150 further educational colleges will benefit from a full time sports professional who will act as a College Sport Maker.
- ◀ Three quarters of university students aged 18-24 will get the chance to take up a new sport or continue playing a sport they played at school or college.
- ◀ A thousand of our most disadvantaged local communities will get a Door Step Club.
- ◀ Two thousand young people on the margins of society will be supported by the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust into sport and to gain new life skills.
- ◀ Building on the success of the Places People Play, a further £100 million will be invested in facilities for the most popular sports.
- ◀ A minimum of 30 sports will have enhanced England Talent Pathways to ensure young people and others fulfil their potential.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

The NPPF states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that 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. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

As a prerequisite the NPPF states existing open space, sports and recreation buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ◀ An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown that the open space, buildings or land is surplus to requirements.
- ◀ 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.
- ◀ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

The FA National Game Strategy (2015 – 2019)

The Football Association's (FA) National Game Strategy provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities, expenditure proposals and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a four year period. The main aims of the National Games Strategy are:

- ◀ Sustain and increase participation
- ◀ Ensure access to education sites to accommodate the game.
- ◀ Help players to be the best that they can be and provide opportunities for them to progress from grassroots to elite
- ◀ Recruit, retain and develop a network of qualified referees
- ◀ Support clubs, leagues and other competition providers to develop a safe, inclusive and positive football experience for everyone.
- ◀ Support Clubs and Leagues to become sustainable businesses, understanding and serving the needs of players and customers.
- ◀ Improve grass pitches through the pitch improvement programme to improve existing facilities and changing rooms
- ◀ Deliver new and improved facilities including new Football Turf Pitches.
- ◀ Work with priority Local Authorities enabling 50% of mini-soccer and youth matched to be played on high quality artificial grass pitches

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Champion Counties Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017

The England and Wales Cricket Board unveiled a new strategic plan in 2013 which seeks to deliver successful England teams at all levels, to produce a vibrant domestic game as well as increasing participation during the period 2014-17. It builds on the 2005 plan, Building Partnerships and the subsequent 2009 initiative, Grounds to Play.

The plan will take advantage of local partnerships developed in earlier plans and support local delivery of priorities through the County network. It targets operational excellence to make maximum use of scarce resources and facilities during a time of economic austerity.

Among the targets set under the four pillars of Effective Governance, Vibrant Domestic Game, Enticing Participation and Successful England teams, which are relevant to the playing pitch strategy, are:

- ◀ An increase in participation as measured by Sport England's Active People Survey from 183,400 to 197,500
- ◀ Expand the number of clubs participating in NatWest CricketForce from 2,000 to 2,200

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Increase the number of cricket's volunteers to 80,000 by 2017
- ◀ Expand the number of participants in women's and disabilities cricket by 10% by 2017
- ◀ To increase the number of TwelfthMan members from 220,000 to 250,000 by 2017
- ◀ Complete an approved Community Engagement programme with all 18 First Class Counties and MCC
- ◀ For each £1 provided in facility grants through the 'Sport England Whole Sport Plan Grant Programme' ensure a multiplier of three with other funding partners
- ◀ Provide a fund of £8.1m of capital investment to enhance floodlights, sightscreens, replay screens, power sub-stations and broadcasting facilities at First Class County venues
- ◀ Provide an interest-free loan fund to community clubs of £10 million
- ◀ Qualify and engage 50 Level 4 coaches to support the development of professional cricketers
- ◀ Expand the number of coaches who have received teacher level 1, 2 or 3 qualifications to 50,000
- ◀ Provide a fund of £2 million for community clubs to combat the impact of climate change
- ◀ Introduce a youth T20 competition engaging 500 teams by 2017

The following actions executed during the duration of Building Partnerships provide a strong base for this plan. Actions include:

- ◀ Streamlining ECB governance
- ◀ Building participation by more than 20% per annum (as measured through ECB focus clubs and County Cricket Boards)
- ◀ Developing women's cricket
- ◀ Attracting volunteers
- ◀ Expanding cricket's spectator base
- ◀ Introducing grants and loans to clubs
- ◀ Developing disabilities cricket

This plan therefore influences 'Grounds to Play' in the areas of facilities and coaches, which is where ECB investment will be focussed. Partnership funding and support will play a key role in the delivery of actions and maintaining the strength of the pillars.

The Rugby Football Union National Facilities Strategy (2013-2017)

The RFU National Facility Strategy 2013-2017 provides a framework for development of high-quality, well-managed facilities that will help to strengthen member clubs and grow the game in communities around them. In conjunction with partners, this strategy will assist and support clubs and other organisations, so that they can continue to provide quality opportunities for all sections of the community to enjoy the game. It sets out the broad facility needs of the sport and identifies investment priorities to the game and its key partners. It identifies that with 1.5 million players there is a continuing need to invest in community club facilities in order to:

- ◀ Create a platform for growth in club rugby participation and membership, especially with a view to exploiting the opportunities afforded by RWC 2015.
- ◀ Ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of rugby clubs, through supporting not only their playing activity but also their capacity to generate revenue through a diverse range of activities and partnerships.

In summary the priorities for investment which have met the needs of the game for the previous period remain valid:

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Increase the provision of changing rooms and clubhouses that can sustain concurrent adult and junior male and female activity at clubs
 - ◀ Improve the quality and quantity of natural turf pitches and floodlighting
 - ◀ Increase the provision of artificial grass pitches that deliver wider game development
- It is also a high priority for the RFU to target investment in the following:

- ◀ Upgrade and transform social, community and catering facilities, which can support the generation of additional revenues
- ◀ Facility upgrades, which result in an increase in energy-efficiency, in order to reduce the running costs of clubs
- ◀ Pitch furniture, including rugby posts and pads, pitch side spectator rails and grounds maintenance equipment.

England Hockey (EH) - A Nation Where Hockey Matters (2013-2017)

EH have a clear vision, a powerful philosophy and five core objectives that all those who have a role in advancing Hockey can unite behind. With UK Sport and Sport England's investment, and growing commercial revenues, EH are ambitious about how they can take the sport forward in Olympic cycles and beyond.

"The vision is for England to be a 'Nation Where Hockey Matters'. A nation where hockey is talked about at dinner tables, playgrounds and public houses, up and down the country. A nation where the sport is on the back pages of our newspapers, where children dream of scoring a goal for England's senior hockey team, and where the performance stirs up emotion amongst the many, not the few"

England Hockey aspires to deepen the passion of those who play, deliver and follow sport by providing the best possible environments and the best possible experiences. Whilst reaching out to new audiences by making the sport more visible, available and relevant and through the many advocates of hockey.

Underpinning all this is the infrastructure which makes the sport function. EH understand the importance of volunteers, coaches, officials, clubs and facilities. The more inspirational people can be, the more progressive Hockey can be and the more befitting the facilities can be, the more EH will achieve. The core objectives are as follows:

- ◀ Grow our Participation
- ◀ Deliver International Success
- ◀ Increase our Visibility
- ◀ Enhance our Infrastructure
- ◀ Be a strong and respected Governing Body

England Hockey has a Capital Investment Programme (CIP) that is planned to lever £5.6 million investment into hockey facilities over the next four years, underpinned by £2m million from the National Governing Body. With over 500 pitches due for refurbishment in the next 4-8 years, there will be a large focus placed on these projects through this funding stream. The current level of pitches available for hockey is believed to be sufficient for the medium term needs, however in some areas, pitches may not be in the right places in order to maximize playing opportunities.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

‘The right pitches in the right places’¹⁷

In 2012, EH released its facility guidance which is intended to assist organisations wishing to build or protect hockey pitches for hockey. It identifies that many existing hockey AGPs are nearing the end of their useful life as a result of the installation boom of the 90's. Significant investment is needed to update the playing stock and protect the sport against inappropriate surfaces for hockey as a result of the rising popularity of AGPs for a number of sports. EH is seeking to invest in, and endorse clubs and hockey providers which have a sound understanding of the following:

- ◀ Single System – clubs and providers which have a good understanding of the Single System and its principles and are appropriately places to support the delivery.
- ◀ ClubsFirst accreditation – clubs with the accreditation are recognised as producing a safe effective and child friendly hockey environment.
- ◀ Sustainability – hockey providers and clubs will have an approved development plan in place showing their commitment to developing hockey, retaining members and providing an insight into longer term goals. They will also need to have secured appropriate tenure.

England Hockey Strategy

EH's new Club Strategy will assist hockey clubs to retain more players and recruit new members to ultimately grow their club membership. EH will be focusing on participation growth through this strategy for the next two years. The EH Strategy is based on seven core themes. These are:

- 1 Having great leadership
- 2 Having Appropriate and Sustainable Facilities
- 3 Inspired and Effective People
- 4 Different Ways to Play
- 5 Staying Friendly, Social and Welcoming
- 6 Being Local with Strong Community Connections
- 7 Stretching and developing those who want it

2015-2018 British Tennis Strategy

The new strategy is presented in a concise one page framework that includes key strategies relating to three participation "focus" areas, six participation "drivers" and three participation "enablers". To achieve success, the 12 strategy areas will need to work interdependently to stem the decline and unlock sustainable growth:

The three participation “focus” areas are where tennis is consumed:

- ◀ Deliver great service to clubs
- ◀ Build partnerships in the community, led by parks
- ◀ Enhance the tennis offer in education

17

<http://englandhockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=1143§ionTitle=The+Right+Pitches+in+the+Right+Places>

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The six participation "drivers" are the areas that will make the biggest difference where tennis is consumed. They must all be successful on a standalone and interconnected basis and include:

- ◀ Becoming more relevant to coaches
- ◀ Refocusing on recreational competition
- ◀ Providing results orientated facility investment
- ◀ Applying best in class marketing and promotion
- ◀ Jump starting the peak summer season
- ◀ Establishing a "no compromise" high performance programme with focus

The final layer is comprised of three participation "enablers" that underpin our ability to be successful. These enablers are rooted in how the LTA will get better; how the entire network of partners must be harnessed to work together and the need to raise more financial resources to fund our sport's turnaround. They include:

- ◀ Becoming a more effective and efficient LTA
- ◀ Harnessing the full resource network
- ◀ Generating new revenue

For further information and more detail on the framework please go to <http://www.lta.org.uk/about-the-lta/structure-vision>

Bowls England: Strategic Plan 2014-2017

Bowls England will provide strong leadership and work with its stakeholders to support the development of the sport of bowls in England for this and future generations. The overall vision of Bowls England is to:

- ◀ Promote the sport of outdoor flat green bowls.
- ◀ Recruit new participants to the sport of outdoor flat green bowls.
- ◀ Retain current and future participants within the sport of flat green bowls.

In order to ensure that this vision is achieved, ten key performance targets have been created, which will underpin the work of Bowls England up until 31st March 2017.

- ◀ 115,000 individual affiliated members.
- ◀ 1,500 registered coaches.
- ◀ Increase total National Championship entries by 10%.
- ◀ Increase total national competition entries by 10%.
- ◀ Medal places achieved in 50% of events at the 2016 World Championships.
- ◀ 35 county development plans in place and operational.
- ◀ County development officer appointed by each county association.
- ◀ National membership scheme implemented with 100% uptake by county associations.
- ◀ Secure administrative base for 1st April 2017.
- ◀ Commercial income to increase by 20%.

Despite a recent fall in affiliated members, and a decline in entries into National Championships over the last five years, Bowls England believes that these aims will be attained by following core values. The intention is to:

- ◀ Be progressive.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- ◀ Offer opportunities to participate at national and international level.
- ◀ Work to raise the profile of the sport in support of recruitment and retention.
- ◀ Lead the sport.
- ◀ Support clubs and county associations.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

APPENDIX TWO: FUNDING PLAN

Funding opportunities

In addition to using the planning system to lever in contributions through Section 106 or CIL, it is recognised that external partner funding will need to be sought to deliver much of the action plan. Although seeking developer contributions in applicable situations and other local funding/community schemes could go some way towards meeting deficiencies and/or improving provision, other potential/match sources of funding should be investigated. Below is a list of current funding sources that are relevant for community improvement projects involving sports facilities.

In order to deliver much of the Action Plan it is recognised that external partner funding will need to be sought.

Awarding body	Description
Big Lottery Fund http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/	Big invests in community groups and to projects that improve health, education and the environment
Sport England : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement Fund • Sportsmatch • Small Grants • Protecting Playing Fields • Inspired Facilities • Strategic Facilities Fund http://www.sportengland.org/funding.aspx http://www.sportengland.org/funding/our-different-funds/strategic-facilities/	Sport England is keen to marry funding with other organisations that provide financial support to create and strengthen the best sports projects. Applicants are encouraged to maximise the levels of other sources of funding, and projects that secure higher levels of partnership funding are more likely to be successful.
Football Foundation http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk/	This trust provides financial help for football at all levels, from national stadia and FA Premier League clubs down to grass-roots local development.
Rugby Football Foundation - The Grant Match Scheme www.rugbyfootballfoundation.org	The Grant Match Scheme provides easy-to-access grant funding for playing projects that contribute to the recruitment and retention of community rugby players. Grants are available on a 'match funding' 50:50 basis to support a proposed project. Projects eligible for funding include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pitch Facilities – Playing surface improvement, pitch improvement, rugby posts, floodlights. 2. Club House Facilities – Changing rooms, shower facilities, washroom/lavatory, and measures to facilitate segregation (e.g. women, juniors). 3. Equipment – Large capital equipment, pitch maintenance capital equipment (e.g. mowers).
EU Life Fund http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/intro_en.htm	LIFE is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU.
EH Capital Investment Programme (CIP)	The CIP fund is for the provision of new pitches and re-surfacing of old AGPs. It forms part of EH's 4 year Whole Sport's Plan.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Awarding body	Description
National Hockey Foundation http://www.thenationalhockeyfoundation.com/	The Foundation primarily makes grants to a wide range of organisations that meet one of our chosen areas of focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Young people and hockey. ◀ Enabling the development of hockey at youth or community level. ◀ Smaller Charities.
Lawn Tennis Association http://www.lta.org.uk/venue-management/	British Tennis has £5.125m million pounds of new funding per annum to enhance tennis facilities, with the aim of getting more people playing more often. The LTA have three funding streams available to support clubs and community projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Easy Access Loan Funding Any LTA registered club that can demonstrate that the facility development will retain or grow membership can apply for this funding at any time. ◀ Growing the Game – now closed Any LTA registered venue that can demonstrate sustainable growth through facility development and a tennis development plan can apply for this funding. ◀ The Community Tennis Fund Any registered venue that can demonstrate the ability to grow community participation through tennis facility development. This fund will be allocated throughout the year.

Protecting Playing Fields

Sport England launched a funding programme; Protecting Playing Fields (PPF) as part of its Places People Play Olympic legacy mass participation programme. The programme is being delivered via funding rounds with approximately £4 million being awarded to projects in each round.

Its focus is on protecting and improving playing fields and developing community sport. It will fund capital projects that create, develop and improve playing fields for sporting and community use and offer long term protection of the site for sport. Projects are likely to involve the construction of new pitches or improvement of existing ones that need levelling or drainage works.

The programme is being delivered via five funding rounds (with up to £2 million being awarded to projects in each round). Its focus is on protecting and improving playing fields and developing community sport. It will fund capital projects that create, develop and improve playing fields for sporting and community use and offer long term protection of the site for sport. Projects are likely to involve the construction of new pitches or improvement of existing ones that need levelling or drainage works.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Inspired Facilities

Sport England's 'Inspired Facilities' funding programme is an open programme where clubs, community and voluntary sector groups and local authorities can apply for grants of between £25k and £150k where there is a proven local need for a facility to be modernised, extended or modified to open up new sporting opportunities.

The programmes three priorities are:

- ◀ Organisations that haven't previously received a Sport England Lottery grant of over £10k.
- ◀ Projects that are the only public sports facility in the local community.
- ◀ Projects that offer local opportunities to people who do not currently play sport.

Besides this scheme providing an important source of funding for potential voluntary and community sector sites, it may also providing opportunities for Council to access this funding particularly in relation to resurfacing the artificial sports surfaces.

Strategic Facilities Fund

Facilities are fundamental in providing more people with the opportunity to play sport. The supply of the right facilities in the right areas is key to getting more people to play sport. Sport England recognises the considerable financial pressures that local authorities are currently under and the need to strategically review and rationalise leisure stock so that cost effective and financially sustainable provision is available in the long-term. Sport England has a key role to play in the sector, from influencing the local strategic planning and review of sports facility provision to investing in major capital projects of strategic importance.

The Strategic Facilities Fund will direct capital investment into a number of key local authority projects that are identified through a strategic needs assessment and that have maximum impact on growing and sustaining community sport participation. These projects will be promoted as best practice in the delivery of quality and affordable facilities, whilst demonstrating long-term operational efficiencies. The fund will support projects that bring together multiple partners, including input from the public and private sectors and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs). The fund is also designed to encourage applicants and their partners to invest further capital and revenue funding to ensure sustainability. Sport England has allocated a budget of circa £30m of Lottery funding to award through this fund (2013-17).

Key features which applications must demonstrate are:

- ◀ A robust needs and evidence base which illustrates the need for the project and the proposed facility mix
- ◀ Strong partnerships which will last beyond the initial development of the project and underpin the long-term sustainability of the facility
- ◀ Multi-sport provision and activity that demonstrates delivery against NGB local priorities
- ◀ A robust project plan from inception to completion with achievable milestones and timescales.

Lottery applications will be invited on a solicited-only basis and grants of between £500,000 and £2,000,000 will be considered.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Strategic Facilities Fund will prioritise projects that:

- ◀ Are large-scale capital developments identified as part of a local authority sports facility strategic needs assessment/rationalisation programme and that will drive a significant increase in community sports participation
- ◀ Demonstrate consultation/support from two or more NGBs and delivery against their local priorities
- ◀ Are multi-sport facilities providing opportunities to drive high participant numbers
- ◀ Are a mix of facility provision (indoor and/or outdoor) to encourage regular & sustained use by a large number of people
- ◀ Offer an enhancement, through modernisation, to existing provision and/or new build facilities
- ◀ Have a long-term sustainable business plan attracting public and private investment
- ◀ Show quality in design, but are fit for purpose to serve the community need
- ◀ Have effective and efficient operating models, combined with a commitment to development programmes which will increase participation and provide talent pathways.

Projects will need to demonstrate how the grant will deliver against Sport England's strategic priorities. The funding available is for the development of the capital infrastructure, which can contribute to the costs of new build, modernisation or refurbishment and purchasing of major fixed equipment as part of the facility development.

Funder's requirements

Below is a list of funding requirements that can typically be expected to be provided as part of a funding bid, some of which will fall directly out of the Playing Pitch Strategy:

- ◀ Identify need (i.e., why the Project is needed) and how the Project will address it.
- ◀ Articulate what difference the Project will make.
- ◀ Identify benefits, value for money and/or added value.
- ◀ Provide baseline information (i.e., the current situation).
- ◀ Articulate how the Project is consistent with local, regional and national policy.
- ◀ Financial need and project cost.
- ◀ Funding profile (i.e., Who's providing what? Unit and overall costs).
- ◀ Technical information and requirements (e.g., planning permission).
- ◀ Targets, outputs and/or outcomes (i.e., the situation after the Project/what the Project will achieve).
- ◀ Evidence of support from partners and stakeholders.
- ◀ Background/essential documentation (e.g., community use agreement).
- ◀ Assessment of risk.

Indicative costs

The indicative costs of implementing key elements of the Action Plan can be found on the Sport England website:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>

There are two sets of costs that are highlighted here; facility capital costs and lifecycle costs.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Facility capital costs

- ◀ Facility capital costs are calculated using estimates of what it typically costs to build modern sports facilities, including fees and external work, naturally taking into account varying conditions, inflation and regional adjustments.
- ◀ Costs are updated regularly in conjunction with information provided by the BCIS (Building Cost Information Service) and other Quantity Surveyors.
- ◀ The document is often referred to as the Planning Kitbag costs as the figures are often used by planners and developers when reviewing potential planning contributions to site developments.

Lifecycle costs

- ◀ Life cycle costs are how much it costs to keep a facility open and fit-for-purpose during its lifetime.
- ◀ It includes costs for major replacement and planned preventative maintenance (PPM) – day to day repairs. The costs are expressed as a percentage of the capital cost.
- ◀ You should not underestimate the importance of regular maintenance and the expense in maintaining a facility throughout its life.

APPENDIX THREE: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Displaced demand generally relates to play by teams or other users of playing pitches from within the study area (i.e. from residents of the study area) which takes place outside of the area. This may be due to issues with the provision of pitches and ancillary facilities in the study area, just reflective of how the sports are played (e.g. at a central venue for the wider area) or due to the most convenient site for the respective users just falling outside of the local authority/study area.

Unmet demand is demand that is known to exist but unable to be accommodated on current supply of pitches. This could be in the form of a team with access to a pitch for matches but nowhere to train or vice versa. This could also be due to the poor quality and therefore limited capacity of pitches in the area and/or a lack of provision and ancillary facilities which meet a certain standard of play/league requirement. League secretaries may be aware of some unmet demand as they may have declined applications from teams wishing to enter their competitions due to a lack of pitch provision which in turn is hindering the growth of the league.

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision. This could include feedback from a sports club who may feel that they could set up and run an additional team if they had access to better provision.

Future demand is an informed estimate made of the likely future demand for pitches in the study area. This is generally based on the most appropriate current and future population projections for the relevant age and gender groupings for each sport. Key trends, local objectives and targets and consultation also inform this figure.

Casual use or other use could take place on natural grass pitches or AGPs and include:

- ◀ Regular play from non-sports club sources (e.g. companies, schools, fitness classes)
- ◀ Infrequent informal/friendly matches
- ◀ Informal training sessions
- ◀ More casual forms of a particular sport organised by sports clubs or other parties
- ◀ Significant public use and informal play, particularly where pitches are located in parks/recreation grounds.

Carrying capacity is the amount of play a site can regularly accommodate (in the relevant comparable unit) for community use without adversely affecting its quality and use. This is typically outlined by the NGB

Overplay is when a pitch is used over the amount that the carrying capacity will allow, (i.e. more than the site can accommodate). Pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected.

Spare capacity is the amount of additional play that a pitch could potentially accommodate in addition to current activity. There may be reasons why this potential to accommodate additional play should not automatically be regarded as actual spare capacity, for example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below its carrying capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of friendly matches and training activity. This needs to be investigated before the capacity is deemed **actual spare capacity**.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Match equivalent sessions is an appropriate comparable unit for pitch usage. For football, rugby union and rugby league, pitches should relate to a typical week within the season and one match = one match equivalent session if it occurs every week or 0.5 match equivalent sessions if it occurs every other week (i.e. reflecting home and away fixtures). For cricket pitches it is appropriate to look at the number of match equivalent sessions over the course of a season and one match = one match equivalent session.

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

APPENDIX FOUR: RUGBY PITCH MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

The below table provides a summary of the common off-season operations that rugby union clubs may undertake to maintain their pitches and associated costs according to feedback. Note that clubs would deliver either the Vertidrain or Linear Aeration not typically both.

If clubs were to deliver all of the below, which would be absolutely ideal then the total cost would be in the region of £3,170 per pitch. Where it is deemed there is a need for a more robust maintenance programme, the table below can be used as a reference point.

Description	Unit	Number	£/unit	Cost
Vertidrain	M2	7,500 sqm	-	£350
Linear Aeration	M2	7,500 sqm	-	£400
Sand Top Dressing	Tonnes	50	£34	£1,600
Seeding	Bags	6 per pitch	£60 per bag + operation	£750
Fertiliser	Bags	10	-	£220
Herbicide application	N/A	7,500 sqm	-	£250