



# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

JULY 2020

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

**Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd**  
Company No: 9145032 (England)

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Registered Office: 1-2 Frecheville Court, off Knowsley Street, Bury BL9 0UF  
T: 0161 764 7040 E: [mail@kcp.co.uk](mailto:mail@kcp.co.uk) [www.kcp.co.uk](http://www.kcp.co.uk)



# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

## CONTENT AND LIST OF TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS .....	1
PART 1: INTRODUCTION .....	2
Table 1.1: Summary of scope .....	3
Table 1.2: Quantitative headline findings.....	9
PART 2: VISION .....	11
PART 3: AIMS.....	12
PART 4: SPORT SPECIFIC ISSUES SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	13
Table 4.1: Football pitch capacity ratings .....	13
Table 4.2: Levels of overplay if quality improved to good .....	14
Table 4.3: Current spare capacity and shortfalls on adult and youth 11v11 pitches.....	14
Table 4.4: Impact of Local Football Facility Plan quality improvements .....	15
Table 4.5: Demand for full size third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford .....	17
Table 4.6: Local Football Facility Plan projects.....	17
Table 4.7: Addressing overplay through quality improvements.....	19
Table 4.8: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments.....	21
Table 4.9: Impact of maintenance improvements on senior pitches .....	21
Table 4.10: Impact of drainage improvements on senior pitches.....	22
PART 5: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS .....	31
Table 5.1: Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations.....	34
Table 5.2: Capacity of pitches .....	38
Table 5.3: Likely future sport-by-sport demand trends.....	44
PART 6: ACTION PLAN.....	47
Table 6.1: Proposed tiered site criteria .....	47
PART 7: HOUSING GROWTH SCENARIOS .....	58
PART 8: DELIVER THE STRATEGY AND KEEP IT ROBUST AND UP TO DATE .....	60
APPENDIX ONE: SPORTING CONTEXT.....	64

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

## ABBREVIATIONS

National governing bodies of sport throughout this Report and referred to as follows:

ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club

References to club names throughout this Report are referred to as follows:

AC	Athletics Club
BC	Bowls Club
CC	Cricket Club
FC	Football Club
HC	Hockey Club
LTC	Lawn Tennis Club
RFC	Rugby Football Club

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd was appointed by Watford Borough Council to undertake an assessment of all formal outdoor playing pitch facilities across the authority to assist in strategically planning for the future.
- 1.2 The Council is developing a new Local Plan which will provide the planning framework for Watford up until 2036. The Playing Pitch Strategy will form a key element of the evidence base to support local policy and the Local Plan as a whole, ensuring that it is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.3 This is the Playing Pitch Strategy for Watford. It has been developed in accordance with Sport England guidance and under the direction of a steering group led by the Council and including National Governing Bodies of Sport. It builds upon the preceding Assessment Report and is capable of:
- ◀ Providing adequate planning guidance to assess development proposals affecting outdoor sports facilities, as appropriate, directing open space contributions secured through development and informing and shaping local planning policy
  - ◀ Informing the protection and provision of playing pitches
  - ◀ Informing land use decisions in respect of future use of existing playing pitch areas and playing fields (capable of accommodating pitches)
  - ◀ Providing a strategic framework for the provision and management of playing pitches.
  - ◀ Supporting external funding bids and maximising support for playing pitches
  - ◀ Providing the basis for ongoing monitoring and review of the use, distribution, function, quality and accessibility of playing pitches

### Monitoring and updating

- 1.4 It is important to ensure there is regular annual monitoring and review of the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should be led by the Council and supported by the Steering Group. As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the Playing Pitch Strategy being signed off by the Steering Group, then Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of Sport would consider the Playing Pitch Strategy; and the information on which it is based, to be out of date. If the Strategy is used as a 'live' document, and kept up to date, the time frame can be extended to five years.
- 1.5 The Playing Pitch Strategy 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 built up when developing the Playing Pitch Strategy. Taking into account the time spent developing the Playing Pitch Strategy this should also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed. Part 8 of this strategy report contains a suggested process for undertaking the update and monitoring. The Steering Group will need to agree the process prior to the adoption of this strategy.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## Scope

- 1.6 The scope of the Playing Pitch Strategy will focus geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Provision included within the project is as follows:

Table 1.1: Summary of scope

Grass playing pitches	Artificial turf pitches	Non-pitch facilities
Football pitches	Artificial grass pitches <sup>1</sup>	Athletics tracks
Cricket pitches	Third generation artificial grass pitches <sup>2</sup>	Tennis courts
Rugby union pitches		Netball courts
Rugby league pitches		Bowling greens
Gaelic football pitches		Croquet lawns
		Cycling

- 1.7 Please note that, although included in the scope, no rugby league provision is presently considered to exist in Watford. The RFL states that provision in neighbouring Dacorum through Hemel Stags adequately services any demand also arising in Watford.
- 1.8 Pitch sports (i.e. football, rugby union, rugby league, hockey and cricket) will be assessed using the guidance set out in Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy. In addition, any other grass sport pitches identified during the project will also be included. This includes hurling, which is identified as being a key sport within Watford.
- 1.9 Non-pitch facilities (e.g. bowls, tennis etc) will be assessed using Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance (2014). This requires a different methodology to assess supply and demand to that used for pitch sports.
- 1.10 With regards to each sport, the Playing Pitch Strategy will specifically consider the number of pitches/facilities and will take into account the size, quality, location, accessibility and capacity of the provision as well as accompanying ancillary facilities such as changing accommodation, toilets and car parking.

## Study area

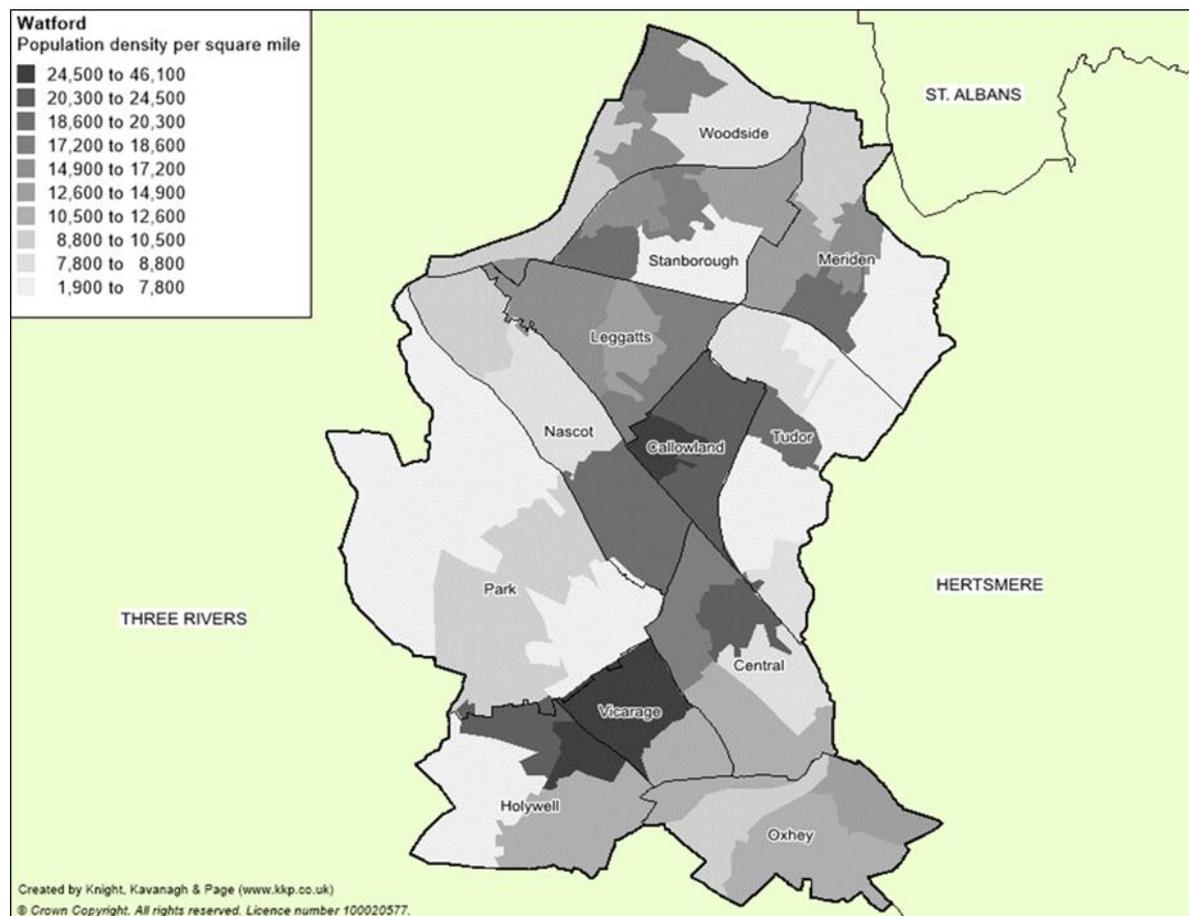
- 1.11 The study area will comprise the whole of the Council's administrative area. It is considered that there is not a requirement to use sub areas within Watford given the relatively small geographical distance across the authority.
- 1.12 In addition, cross-boundary issues will also be explored to determine the level of imported and exported demand from neighbouring authorities; Three Rivers, Hertsmere, Dacorum and St Albans.
- 1.13 A map of the analysis areas can be seen overleaf in Figure 1.1.

<sup>1</sup> Artificial grass pitches are a surface of synthetic fibres with sand or water infills made to look like natural grass and are most often used to accommodate hockey. For further detail on the specifications, please see Part 6: Artificial grass pitches

<sup>2</sup> Third generation artificial grass pitches provide infills that are mixtures of sand and granules of recycled rubber, or rubber crumb and are most often used to accommodate football and rugby. For further detail on the specifications please see Part 3: Third generation artificial grass pitches

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Figure 1.1: Analysis area map



## Population growth

- 1.14 The current resident population in Watford is 96,675 (2017 mid-year estimates<sup>3</sup>). By 2036 (the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand, in line with the Local Plan period) the population is projected to increase to 110,811<sup>4</sup> representing an increase of 14,136 (or equivalent to a percentage increase of 14.6%) according to Office of National Statistics data.

## Housing growth

- 1.15 The target for the number of homes required across Watford comes directly from the central government standard approach that will be used by all boroughs across the UK. This number is derived from Office of National Statistics population and household projections with adjustments made to take account of local house price to earnings ratios.
- 1.16 The revised housing figures have been incorporated into the Watford Local Plan from 2018 – 2036 and means a total of approximately 14,000 dwellings are needed over the Local Plan period. The Council has undertaken a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment which shows that Watford has the capacity to provide between 7,000-8,000 dwellings in the plan period.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Office of National Statistics Mid-2017 Population Estimates for Lower Layer Super Output Areas in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex

<sup>4</sup> Source: Office of National Statistics 2016-based projections 2016-2041. Released: 24 May 2018

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### 1.1: Context

- 1.17 The rationale for undertaking this study is to update current levels of provision within Watford across the public, private, education, voluntary and commercial sectors and to compare this with current and likely future levels of demand.
- 1.18 Its primary purpose is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities meet local and community needs of existing and future residents. The strategies will be produced in accordance with national planning guidance and provide robust and objective justification for future sporting provision throughout Watford.
- 1.19 One of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Paragraph 96 discusses the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.
- 1.20 Paragraph 97 discusses assessments and the protection of “existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields”. A Playing Pitch Strategy will provide the evidence required to help protect playing fields to ensure sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future pitch requirements.
- 1.21 Paragraphs 99 and 100 promote the identification of important green spaces by local communities and the protection of these facilities. Such spaces may include playing fields.
- 1.22 Planning Policy and other relevant sport related corporate strategies must continue to be based upon a robust evidence base in order to ensure planning and sports development policy can be implemented efficiently and effectively;

#### Corporate and strategic:

- ◀ It ensures a strategic approach to outdoor sport provision; the Playing Pitch Strategy will act as a tool for the Council and partner organisations to guide resource allocation and set priorities for outdoor sports in the future
- ◀ It provides robust evidence for capital funding - as well as proving the need for developer contributions towards pitches and facilities, a Playing Pitch Strategy can provide evidence of need for a range of capital grants; current funding examples include the Sport England Funding Programmes, Heritage Lottery Fund (for park improvements), the Football Foundation and the Big Lottery

#### Planning:

- ◀ The Playing Pitch Strategy provides important evidence to support the Local Plan process and implementation
- ◀ It supports strategic policies on green infrastructure, leisure, outdoor sports facilities and health and well-being
- ◀ Evidence for developer contributions

#### Operational:

- ◀ Helps improve management of assets, which should result in more efficient use of resources and reduced overheads
- ◀ The Action Plan identifies sites where quality of provision can be enhanced
- ◀ An assessment of all pitches helps understand how facilities are used and whether the current maintenance and management regimes are appropriate or require change

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

Sports development:

- ◀ It helps identify which sites have community use and whether that use is secure or not
- ◀ It helps identify where community use of school sports pitches is most needed to address any identified deficits in pitch provision
- ◀ It provides better information to residents and other users of sports pitches available for use; this includes information about both pitches and sports teams / user groups
- ◀ It promotes sports development and can help unlock latent demand by identifying where the lack of facilities might be suppressing the formation of teams / community needs

### 1.2: Local context

#### ***Watford Local Plan***

1.23 Watford Borough Council's Local Plan consists of the following documents:

- ◀ Core Strategy 2006-2031 (Adopted 2013)
- ◀ Saved policies of Watford District Plan 2000 (adopted 2003)

1.24 The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, which will set out the vision for Watford and how it will grow up until 2036. It will reconsider housing and employment need and propose ways of meeting that need more fully. It will allocate sites for housing, employment and other forms of development and will set out development management policies for Watford.

1.25 The Council's aim is to publish the Local Plan in May 2020. Timescales for the stages of production of the Local Plan are set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme. The timetable is expected to be as follows:

- ◀ Issues and Options Consultation - September – October 2018
- ◀ First Draft Local Plan (Preferred Options Consultation) – September - October 2019
- ◀ Publication of the Final Draft Local Plan – May 2020
- ◀ Submission – September 2020
- ◀ Independent Examination - October 2020 - February 2021
- ◀ Adoption – May 2021

#### ***South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan***

1.26 Watford Borough Council, together with Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans and Three Rivers councils have also begun work on a Joint Strategic Plan for the wider South West Hertfordshire area.

1.27 The Joint Strategic Plan is intended to set the longer-term strategic framework and shared priorities within which future local plans will be prepared. A key aim will be to ensure that infrastructure such as transport, schools, health and utilities are properly co-ordinated and delivered alongside the need for new homes and jobs.

1.28 The councils are working towards preparing the Joint Strategic Plan by aligning expectations for the Plan initially within a Statement of Common Ground, which is expected to be published in 2020.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### ***Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020***

- 1.29 The Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Partnership was formed in 2008. It brings together partners from the public, voluntary and community sector to identify and respond to health and wellbeing priorities in both areas. It operates under the strategic umbrella of the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board which developed the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020. Its vision is that *'with all partners working together we aim to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of people in Hertfordshire.'*
- 1.30 The strategy will underpin the local contribution to tackling health inequalities and underlying causes and is, thus, built around the four significant stages of the life course. These are:
- ◀ Starting well
  - ◀ Developing well
  - ◀ Living and working well
  - ◀ Ageing well

### ***Herts Sports & Physical Activity Partnership Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021***

- 1.31 Herts Sports Partnership is one of 44 county active partnerships in England tasked with rolling out the local delivery of Sport England initiatives and, in some cases, the dissemination of Sport England funding. It works alongside numerous partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors and its stated mission is to *'work strategically to deliver an inclusive, insight led and sustainable sport and physical activity sector in Hertfordshire.'* It has identified the following strategic objectives and will work with partners to:
- ◀ Increase participation in sport and physical activity
  - ◀ Improve health and wellbeing by reducing inactivity
  - ◀ Demonstrate the economic and social value of sport and physical activity
  - ◀ Strengthen the local delivery infrastructure
  - ◀ Make the Partnership fit for the future

### **1.3: Structure**

- 1.32 As this strategy is specific to Watford, it focuses on findings, recommendations and scenarios for outdoor sports facilities within Watford, although it does give consideration and acknowledgement to facilities in neighbouring local authorities.
- 1.33 This strategy has been developed from research and analysis of outdoor sports provision and usage to provide:
- ◀ A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of outdoor sport facilities
  - ◀ Evidence to help protect and enhance outdoor sport provision
  - ◀ The need to inform the development and implementation of planning policy
  - ◀ The need to inform the assessment of planning applications
  - ◀ The need to provide evidence to help secure internal and external funding
  - ◀ A series of sport-by-sport recommendations that provide a strategic framework for improvements to provision
  - ◀ A series of strategic recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch stock
  - ◀ A prioritised area-by-area action plan to address key issue

- 1.34 The Strategy and Action Plan recommends numerous priority projects for Watford that should be implemented over the course of its lifespan. It is outlined to provide a framework for improvement, with potential partners and possible sources of external funding identified in light of limited council resources.

- 1.35 The recommendations made in this strategy must be translated into local plan policy so that there is a mechanism to support delivery and secure provision and investment into provision where the opportunity arises.
- 1.36 There is a need to sustain and build key partnerships between the Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Herts Sports Partnership, National Governing Bodies, Sport England, education providers, leisure contractors, maintenance contractors, community clubs and private landowners to maintain and improve outdoor sport provision. In these instances, the potential for the Council to take a strategic lead can be limited (except in terms of Section 106 agreements and developer contributions). This document will provide clarity with regard to the way forward and will allow organisations to focus on the key issues and objectives that they can directly influence and achieve.

### 1.4: Headline findings

- 1.37 The table overleaf highlights the quantitative headline findings identified for all main pitch sports included in the preceding Assessment Report. Match equivalent sessions have been used as the comparable unit for natural grass pitches. Converting both the amount of play a site can accommodate (its carrying capacity) and how much play takes place there (its current use) into the same unit of demand enables a comparison to be undertaken.
- 1.38 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 for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions.
- 1.39 Based on how they tend to be played, this unit for football and rugby union pitches relates 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. How much play a cricket pitch can accommodate is primarily determined by the number and quality of wickets on a pitch. Only one match is generally played per pitch per day. However, play is rotated across the wickets to reduce wear and allow for repair. Each wicket is able to accommodate a certain amount of play per season as opposed to a week.
- 1.40 The Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance does not advocate the conversion of match equivalent sessions to pitches as there is not always a case for providing pitches to meet the demand/shortfalls expressed. For example, improving the quality of pitches can also increase the capacity of existing pitches to accommodate such demand. For qualitative findings and site-specific findings, please see Part 4: Sport Specific Recommendations and Scenarios, and Part 6: Action Plan.
- 1.41 For artificial surfaces, how much play can be accommodated is primarily determined by availability, rather than how much play it can accommodate before its quality is adversely affected as with natural grass pitches. Therefore, whole pitches are used as the comparable unit. Similarly, for the other non-pitch sports (i.e. tennis, netball, bowls etc) where it is not as easy to determine carry capacity, whole facilities are used as the comparable unit.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Table 1.2: Quantitative headline findings

Sport	Current demand (2019)		Future demand (2036)
	Pitch type	Current capacity total in match equivalent sessions	Future capacity total in match equivalent sessions
Football (grass pitches)	Adult	Spare capacity of 8.5	Spare capacity of 8
	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 5	Shortfall of 10.5
	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 3.5
	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 1.5	Shortfall of 0.5
	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 2.5	Spare capacity of 1
Football third generation artificial grass pitches <sup>5</sup>	Full size, floodlit	Shortfall of 1 full size floodlit pitch	Shortfall of 1.5 full size floodlit pitches
Cricket	Senior	Shortfall of 107	Shortfall of 143
Rugby union	Senior	Shortfall of 8.5	Shortfall of 11.25
Hockey (sand artificial grass pitches)	Full size, floodlit	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet future demand on the basis West Herts HC can access suitable overspill provision in Three Rivers.
Tennis	Courts	Sufficient supply to meet current demand. Small shortfall identified at Cassiobury TC	Sufficient supply to meet future demand Shortfall identified at Cassiobury TC
Bowls	Greens	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet future demand
Athletics	Track	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet current demand (on the basis that quality is sustained at Woodside Athletic Stadium)
Netball	Courts	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet future demand
Gaelic football	Senior	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet future demand
Croquet	Lawn	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet future demand
Cycling	Road	Sufficient supply to meet current demand	Sufficient supply to meet future demand

## Conclusions

- 1.42 The existing position for all pitch sports is either; demand is currently being met, or there is a current or future shortfall. There are current shortfalls on grass pitches for football, cricket and rugby union.
- 1.43 For football, current shortfalls are identified on both youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch formats with all remaining pitch formats containing spare capacity, with the highest levels on adult pitches. When accounting for future demand, shortfalls are exacerbated, and a new shortfall emerges on mini 7v7 pitch formats.

<sup>5</sup> Based on accommodating 38 teams on one full size pitch

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- 1.44 For rugby union both current and future shortfalls can be attributed to specific club sites, these are; Watford RFC (Knutsford Drive Playing Field) and Fullerians RFC.
- 1.45 For cricket, there are significant shortfalls identified, although shortfalls are largely a result of poor quality provision at public open space sites. Future demand for senior cricket in Watford increases the current shortfalls.
- 1.46 For tennis, most club sites have sufficient capacity to accommodate current levels of demand (notwithstanding a small shortfall at Cassiobury TC). When accounting for future demand, most clubs are also expected to have sufficient capacity to grow. There is no mechanism in place in the Watford to capture usage at publicly available non-club courts, but it is considered that these do have capacity for recreational usage.
- 1.47 For all remaining sports, the current stock of facilities is meeting demand and is expected to do so in the future, although there is a requirement to increase quality of provision at specific sites which are identified within the Action Plan.
- 1.48 Notwithstanding the above, there are clear shortfalls identified for third generation artificial grass pitches which cannot be alleviated unless new provision is created. Given this, there is a need to explore the feasibility of future provision at strategic sites in Watford. With resources to improve the quality of grass pitches being limited, an increase in third generation artificial grass pitch provision could also help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, thus reducing overplay, which in turn can aid pitch quality improvements.
- 1.49 As there is identified shortfalls on grass pitches, there is a need to protect both playing pitch provision currently in use and pitches that are no longer in use due to the potential that they may offer for meeting current and future needs.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

## PART 2: VISION

### 2.1: Vision

- 2.1 Below is Watford's vision for its sport and leisure provision. It sets out the vision and objectives for the period 2020 - 2036.

*To create accessible, high quality and sustainable sport, play and leisure facilities, which offer inclusive services for all; enabling the inactive to become active, increase participation in targeted groups in particular and help improve the health and well-being of all of our residents.*

- 2.2 To achieve this vision, the strategy seeks to deliver the following objectives:
- ◀ Working collectively with partners to create opportunity for everyone to participate
  - ◀ Ensure that all valuable facilities are protected for the long term benefit of sport
  - ◀ Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of playing pitches and management of sports clubs
  - ◀ Ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and projected future demand
  - ◀ Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer term aspirations

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## PART 3: AIMS

- 3.1 The following overarching aims are based on the three Sport England themes. It is recommended that they are adopted by the Council and partners to enable delivery of the overall Playing Pitch Strategy vision and Sport England planning objectives.

### AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.

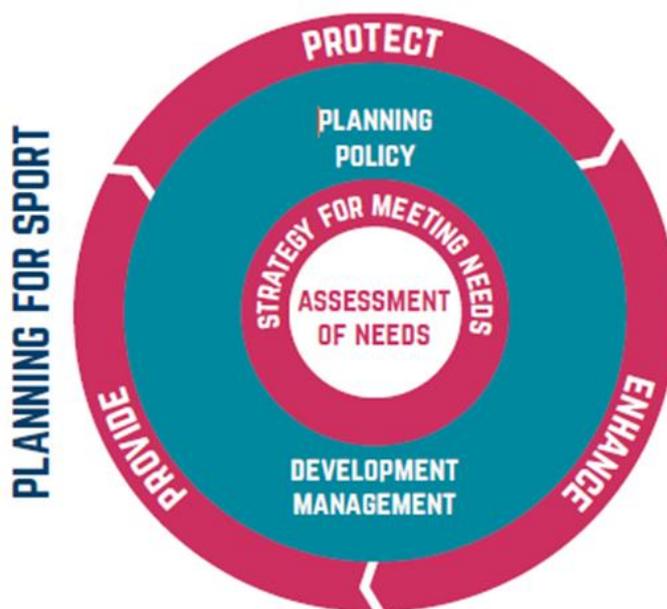
### AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

### AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where feasible and there is current or future demand to do so.

Figure 3.1: Sport England themes



Source: Sport England, Planning for Sport Guidance (2019)

## PART 4: SPORT SPECIFIC ISSUES SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 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 each playing pitch sport; resulting in sport specific recommendations.

### Football – grass pitches

#### 4.2 Summary

- ◀ Current supply of football pitch provision is insufficient with shortfalls evident on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches
- ◀ When considering future demand, these shortfalls will worsen on youth and new shortfalls for mini 7v7 pitches emerge
- ◀ The audit identifies a total of 67 grass football pitches in Watford across 20 sites, of which 57 pitches are available for community use across 14 sites
- ◀ Of pitches which are available for community use, seven are good quality, 38 are standard quality and 12 are poor quality
- ◀ Six changing pavilions are identified as being poor quality
- ◀ No clubs identify issues with lease arrangements or pitch access
- ◀ There are 92 teams from within 25 clubs identified as playing in Watford. This consists of 18 adult men's, one adult women's, 47 youth boys', one youth girls' and 25 mini mixed teams
- ◀ Four clubs are identified as importing demand into Watford to play competitive fixtures.
- ◀ Five clubs report aspirations to increase the number of teams they provide; total growth equates to 15 teams. Team generation rates forecast the potential growth of nine junior boys' teams
- ◀ In total, 15 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity are identified across pitches in Watford. In contrast, 9.5 match equivalent sessions of overplayed are identified.
- ◀ There are current shortfalls on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches which are anticipated to grow in the future. The future position anticipates shortfalls of mini 7v7 pitch provision

### Scenarios

#### *Alleviating overplay/improving pitch quality*

4.3 In total, there are nine community available pitches in Watford that are overplayed beyond their recommended capacity. Improving the quality of these pitches (i.e. through increased maintenance or improved drainage) will increase capacity and consequently reduce overall current and potential future shortfalls.

4.4 To illustrate the above, Table 4.2 shows that current overplay would be alleviated in its entirety if improvements could be made.

4.5 As a reminder, the capacity rating for each type and quality rating are identified in the table below.

*Table 4.1: Football pitch capacity ratings*

Adult pitches		Youth pitches		Mini pitches	
Pitch quality	Matches per week	Pitch quality	Matches per week	Pitch quality	Matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- 4.6 The only pitch which would not generate spare capacity after quality improvements is the youth 11v11 pitch at Everett Rovers FC. If pitch quality were improved to good quality, the pitch would be played to capacity.

Table 4.2: Levels of overplay if quality improved to good

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current quality	Current Capacity rating <sup>6</sup>	Good quality capacity rating <sup>7</sup>
4	Cherry Tree Primary School	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	1.5
5	Everett Rovers FC	Youth 11v11 Youth 9v9*	1	Poor	3	-
5	Everett Rovers FC	Youth 9v9 Mini 7v7*	1	Poor	1	2
6	Francis Combe Academy	Adult	2	Poor	1	3
6	Francis Combe Academy	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	2
29	West Herts Sports Club	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	0.5
30	Westfield Academy	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1.5	0.5
32	Woodside Playing Field	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1	2

- 4.7 Notwithstanding the above, given the costs of improving pitch quality, alternatives also need to be considered that could offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. The alternative to grass pitches is the use of third generation artificial grass pitches for competitive matches. Third generation artificial pitches can support intensive use and are great assets for football use. These do not suffer from overplay in the same way as grass pitches and therefore can be an important tool in reducing pressures on grass pitches.

### Accommodating youth 11v11 demand

- 4.8 Most available pitches in Watford (42%) are adult size which is, in part, due to youth 11v11 teams playing on adult pitches. This is not ideal for youth players at Under13-16 and is not in line with the recent FA Youth Review. Just six available pitches are youth 11v11 size representing 10% of the available supply in Watford which is low in relation to the proportion of youth teams (36 teams – 39% of all teams) which should be playing matches on this size pitch.
- 4.9 The Assessment identifies that the current position is that there is spare capacity on adult pitches and shortfalls on youth 11v11 pitches as identified in the table below.

Table 4.3: Current spare capacity and shortfalls on adult and youth 11v11 pitches

Sport	Current demand (2019)		Future demand (2036)
	Pitch type	Current capacity total in match equivalent sessions	Future capacity total in match equivalent sessions
Football (grass pitches)	Adult	Spare capacity of 8.5	Spare capacity of 8
	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 5	Shortfall of 10.5

<sup>6</sup> Match equivalent sessions

<sup>7</sup> Match equivalent sessions

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

4.10 Given this, there is a clear opportunity available to alleviate current shortfalls on youth 11v11 pitches by reconfiguring existing adult pitches to youth size to accommodate youth demand. The assessment identifies that the following sites have adult pitches which are unused for adult football (or are unused all together):

- ◀ Stanborough Park
- ◀ King George V Playing Field
- ◀ Harebreaks Recreation ground
- ◀ Cassiobury Park
- ◀ Woodside Playing Field

4.11 These sites could provide a starting point for reconfiguration to youth 11v11 pitch formats (on the basis that appropriate size goal posts can also be provided). Doing this would alleviate all current overplay and in turn, create spare capacity for future growth, where the highest level of growth in participation is anticipated.

### *Local Football Facility Plan*

4.12 As improving the quality of certain overplayed sites may not be feasible from an investment point of view, an alternative approach is to focus on improving strategic sites. The Local Football Facility Plan identifies four sites for grass pitch improvements that require investment and that are key for football delivery in Watford. The table below identifies what the impact would be on the supply and demand balance of pitches in Watford if quality were improved by one increment at these sites (i.e. standard to good or poor to standard).

4.13 Sun Postal Sports & Social Club has not been included in the table below despite being listed for pitch improvements in the Local Football Facility Plan. This is because the pitches on site are assessed as good quality and therefore further quality improvements on site would have no impact on pitch capacity. It has been included within the Local Football Facility Plan for it to be potentially developed as a grass pitch hub site.

*Table 4.4: Impact of Local Football Facility Plan quality improvements*

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Quality	Current capacity rating	Improved capacity rating
5	Everett Rovers FC	Adult	1	Standard	1	2
		Youth (11v11)	1	Poor	3	2
		Youth (9v9)	1	Poor	1	-
		Mini (7v7)	1	Standard	2	4
		Mini (5v5)	2	Standard	5	9
30	Westfield Academy	Adult	1	Standard	1	2
		Youth (11v11)	1	Standard	1.5	0.5
		Youth (9v9)	1	Standard	1	3
		Mini (7v7)	1	Standard	3	5
		Mini (5v5)	1	Standard	3	5
32	Woodside Playing Field	Adult	4	Standard	5	9
		Adult	1	Poor	0.5	1.5
		Youth (11v11)	1	Poor	1	-
		Mini (7v7)	1	Poor	1	3
		Mini (5v5)	1	Poor	1	3

4.14 Improving quality as set out in the table above would create 23 match equivalent sessions of additional capacity. In addition, for those pitches that are overplayed (red above), overplay will be alleviated except in the case of the youth 11v11 pitch at Everett Rovers FC.

## 4.15 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Protect both football pitches currently in use and pitches that are no longer in use due to the potential that they may offer for meeting current and future needs (unless replacement provision is agreed upon and provided)
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and/or assessed as poor quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as good quality, pursue transfer of demand to sites with actual spare capacity
- ◀ Work to accommodate future demand as well as expressed exported, unmet and latent demand at sites which are not operating at capacity or at sites not currently available for community use that could be moving forward
- ◀ Provide security of tenure for clubs using educational sites through community use agreements
- ◀ Ensure all teams are playing on the correct pitch sizes and explore reconfiguration of adult pitches to accommodate youth 11v11 teams where possible
- ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer

### ***Third generation artificial grass pitches***

## 4.16 **Summary**

- ◀ There is an insufficient supply of full size third generation artificial grass pitches to meet current and anticipated future football training demand based on the FA training model in Watford
- ◀ There is one full size (Westfield Academy) and one small sided third generation artificial grass pitch (The Meriden Centre) in Watford
- ◀ Both third generation artificial grass pitches are FA approved and can therefore be used to host competitive matches and were both assessed as good quality. No quality issues were identified on either pitch
- ◀ There are no World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford. The nearest is in neighbouring authority, Three Rivers. However, the Watford area is a potential target area for the future delivery for provision
- ◀ Westfield Academy aspires to deliver a new changing pavilion to service its third generation artificial grass and grass football pitches
- ◀ There is a current shortfall of one full size pitches in Watford, which increases to 1.5 pitches when accounting for future demand

### **Scenarios**

#### *Accommodating football training demand*

- 4.17 The FA's long-term ambition is to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once per week on a floodlit third generation artificial grass pitch, together with priority access for every FA Charter Standard Community Club through a partnership agreement. In order to calculate the number of football teams a third generation artificial grass pitch can service for training, peak time access is considered to be from 18:00 until 22:00 Tuesday-Thursday resulting in an overall peak period of 12 hours per week. Mondays and Fridays are not included within this calculation as it is considered that most teams do not want to train in such close proximity to a weekend match.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- 4.18 Full size third generation artificial grass pitches are divided into thirds or quarters for training purposes meaning they can accommodate either three or four teams per hour and either 36 or 48 teams per week (during the peak training period). Based on an average of these numbers, it is estimated that 38 teams can be accommodated on one full size pitch for training.
- 4.19 Given the above, with 92 teams currently affiliated to Watford there is a need for 2.4 full size third generation artificial grass pitches to service affiliated football training demand. It is considered that currently 1.5 pitches are provided through Westfield Academy and the Meriden Centre. And thus, there is a shortfall of one full size pitch (rounded up from 0.9).
- 4.20 When accounting for future demand of 24 teams (established through potential club growth plans and population forecasts) there is a need for three full size third generation artificial grass pitches (an increase of a further 0.5 full size pitches). With 1.5 pitches provided through Westfield Academy and the Meriden Centre, this equates to a future shortfall of 1.5 pitches.

*Table 4.5: Demand for full size third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford*

Current number of teams	Current third generation artificial grass pitch requirement	Future number of teams	Future third generation artificial grass pitch requirement <sup>8</sup>
92	2.4	116	3

### *Local Football Facility Plan*

- 4.21 The Local Football Facility Plan for the Watford identifies priority sites for third generation grass pitch development. The plan identifies two full size third generation artificial grass pitch projects which if developed would service both current and anticipated future demand in Watford.

*Table 4.6: Local Football Facility Plan projects*

Site ID	Site	Local Football Facility Plan project
28	Watford Leisure Centre – Woodside	1 x full size third generation artificial grass pitch
30	Westfield Academy	1 x full size third generation artificial grass pitch

### *World Rugby<sup>9</sup> compliant third generation artificial grass pitches*

- 4.22 The RFU investment strategy into third generation artificial grass pitches considers sites where grass rugby pitches are over capacity and where a pitch would support the growth of the game at the host site and for the local rugby partnership, including local clubs and education sites. There are no World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford with the nearest located in neighbouring, Three Rivers. Watford is considered to be a strategic area for the RFU for the potential delivery of new a World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitch in the future.
- 4.23 Therefore, any new third generation artificial grass pitches created in Watford should consider rugby union demand and examine the feasibility of making the new pitch World Rugby compliant.

<sup>8</sup> Rounded to the nearest whole number

<sup>9</sup> <https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/rugbyturf>

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### 4.24 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Protect current stock of third generation artificial grass pitches
- ◀ Ensure that any new third generation artificial grass pitches are constructed to meet FA recommended dimensions and quality performance standards to meet performance testing criteria
- ◀ Explore opportunities for new third generation artificial grass pitches to also be rugby union certified as Watford is considered strategic area by the RFU
- ◀ Carry out consultation with England Hockey in relation to provision of new third generation artificial grass pitches to ensure the sustainability of existing sand-based artificial grass pitches
- ◀ Ensure that any new third generation artificial grass pitches have community use agreements in place as part of the planning permission
- ◀ Encourage providers to put in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability
- ◀ Encourage more match play demand to transfer to third generation artificial grass pitches, where possible, and ensure that pitches remain suitable to accommodate such demand through appropriate certification when it is required

### **Cricket pitches**

### 4.25 **Summary**

- ◀ There is insufficient supply of cricket provision to cater for current and future senior demand across Watford
- ◀ There are ten grass wicket squares in Watford located across six sites. Of these, eight are available for community use over five sites
- ◀ In Watford, there are two non-turf pitches that accompany grass wicket squares, these are located at Woodside Playing Field (aligned to use from Watford Town CC) and one at Watford Grammar School for Boys (New Field)
- ◀ Most clubs in Watford are considered to have secure tenure at their primary home venue. Old Fullarians CC is the sole club with unsecure tenure
- ◀ The non-technical assessment of community available grass wicket squares in Watford found one square to be good quality, three standard and four poor quality
- ◀ The poor quality squares are located at Cassiobury Park, King George V Playing Field and Woodside Playing Field
- ◀ The audit of ancillary facilities determines that provision at both Woodside Playing Field and Watford Town CC are both outdated and in need of improvement
- ◀ There is a masterplan for Woodside Playing Fields which outlines plans for a new changing pavilion and clubhouse which would benefit Watford Town CC and other site users
- ◀ West Herts Sports Club aspires to sell a portion of its site to invest the capital receipt into improving facilities at the site
- ◀ West Herts CC aspires to develop a non-turf pitch on site to improve training and match opportunities
- ◀ There are 13 clubs competing in Watford, generating 41 teams. As a breakdown, this equates to 22 senior men's and 19 junior boys' teams
- ◀ West Herts CC exports senior demand outside of Watford to accommodate cricket provision. It also identifies latent demand equating to one senior men's and four junior boys' teams
- ◀ Future demand in Watford equates to one senior men's team and three junior boys' teams. This is derived from Watford Town CC and population growth
- ◀ There are five sites in Watford considered to be overplayed by a total of 119 match equivalent sessions per season

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## Scenarios

### Addressing overplay

- 4.26 The capacity of a cricket square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. For good quality squares, capacity is five matches per wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not safe for play.
- 4.27 The table below evidences that if quality improvements were undertaken to improve quality to good, that all squares identified as being poor quality have overplay eradicated. The quality at West Herts Sports Club is already good and cannot be made drastically better through qualitative improvements so overplay will remain and other options need to be explored. It is worth noting that if all poor quality squares were improved to standard quality (an improvement of one increment) that overplay would still be alleviated at Cassiobury Park, King George V Playing Field and Woodside Playing Field.

Table 4.7: Addressing overplay through quality improvements

Site ID	Site name	No. of squares	No. of wickets	Current quality	Current capacity rating <sup>10</sup>	Good quality capacity rating <sup>11</sup>
3	Cassiobury Park	1	12	Poor	27	33
10	King George V Playing Field	2	9	Poor	24	21
			9	Poor	22	23
29	West Herts Sports Club	1	14	Good	30	30
32	Woodside Playing Field	1	12	Poor	16	44

- 4.28 To alleviate overplay at West Herts Sports Club there is a need to understand what current demand is attributed to the square. It is identified that the square is regularly utilised for competitive match play by two senior teams and its 12 youth teams (three senior teams play fixtures at alternate sites to access provision in the peak period). If a non-turf pitch can be provided at the site to complement the existing facilities this will enable a transfer of play away from the natural turf square and reduce identified shortfalls.
- 4.29 If, for example, demand from its Under 13s through to its Under 9s (eight teams) this will reduce overplay by a total of 25 match sessions per season. The further five match sessions of overplay which are remaining could be alleviated through either additional use by its U14s or a mixture of ad hoc play from its older age group teams utilising a non turf pitch.

### Accommodating junior future demand

- 4.30 Through delivery of its new strategy, Inspiring Generations<sup>12</sup>, the ECB and county board programmes of activity are targeting growth in women's cricket, club and school's activity targeting growth in girls' cricket and there is increased engagement of young people. All Stars Cricket, the ECB national programme for 5-8 year olds, is engaging large numbers of children and has already been delivered over the past 3-4 years, with increasing numbers of participants year on year, alongside Chance to Shine cricket delivery in primary schools. Increasing numbers of those children are continuing to play cricket as they get older, so junior numbers are increasing within clubs.

<sup>10</sup> Match equivalent sessions

<sup>11</sup> Match equivalent sessions

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ecb.co.uk/about-us/action-plans>

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- 4.31 The ECB has also launched Dynamos Cricket, a new programme to inspire children aged 8-11 to play cricket. Dynamos Cricket is the latest launch by the ECB, building on the existing All Stars programme for 5-8-year-olds. Participants will continue to develop their skills and be introduced to a countdown style of cricket match.
- 4.32 It is generally considered that all clubs which identified future demand for junior teams, or that are engaged within participation initiatives such as All Stars or Dynamos have sufficient capacity on site to accommodate this demand.
- 4.33 **Recommendations**
- ◀ Protect cricket pitch provision currently in use (unless replacement provision is agreed upon and provided)
  - ◀ Ensure protection from development that may prejudice the use of a cricket square such as residential development in close proximity to a cricket outfield (ball strike issues)
  - ◀ Work with grounds staff to review quality issues on squares to ensure appropriate quality is achieved at sites assessed as poor or standard and sustained at sites assessed as good
  - ◀ Ensure security of tenure for Watford Town CC at Woodside Playing Field with lease arrangements in place by ensuring agreements have over 25 years remaining
  - ◀ Work to accommodate targeted growth for women's and girls' cricket through the ECB Inspiring Generations Strategy

### Rugby union

- 4.34 **Summary**
- ◀ An overall shortfall is evident to service senior demand in Watford
  - ◀ In total, there are 22 rugby union pitches in Watford spread across six sites, as a breakdown this consists of 13 senior pitches and nine mini pitches. Pitches aligned to Watford Grammar School for Boys are unavailable for community use
  - ◀ Of the community available pitches in Watford, there are five good quality senior pitches, seven good quality mini pitches. There are also four poor quality senior pitches (across three sites) provided at Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC), Francis Combe Academy and Westfield Academy
  - ◀ There are two community rugby union clubs based in Watford; Watford RFC and Fullerians RFC. Collectively, these clubs operate a total of 34 teams
  - ◀ Both Watford RFC and Fullerians RFC have good quality ancillary provision
  - ◀ There are no identified issues with security of tenure
  - ◀ There are no World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford with the closest available to clubs being based in Three Rivers
  - ◀ Both clubs aspire to increase the number of teams they currently offer
  - ◀ Three pitches are overplayed in Watford. Two are based at Knutsford Playing Field (Watford RFC) and one is based at Fullerians RFC. Overplay totals 13 match equivalent sessions per week
  - ◀ Future demand equates to 2.75 match equivalent sessions per week and exacerbates current shortfalls to 11.25 match equivalent sessions per week

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## Scenarios

### Improving pitch quality (via maintenance)

- 4.35 Two sites in Watford are overplayed by a total of 13 match equivalent sessions per week. Knutsford Drive Playing Fields (Watford RFC) is overplayed by 2.5 match equivalent sessions and Fullerians RFC by 10.5 match equivalent sessions. It is also noteworthy that the capacity of the floodlit training pitch at Fullerians RFC has been reduced by 1.5 match equivalent sessions in agreement with the RFU. This is because the pitch is significantly overplayed and therefore the maintenance undertaken cannot suitably mitigate the effects of overuse.
- 4.36 Table 4.9 looks at the effect of improving the maintenance regime at Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC) by one increment (M0 to M1). As can be seen, improvements to the maintenance on site would reduce overplay to one match equivalent sessions per week.
- 4.37 Pitches at Fullerians RFC are already maintained to a good standard and therefore it is considered that quality improvements to its maintenance regime will have little impact on increasing capacity and therefore reducing overplay.
- 4.38 As a reminder, the capacity rating for each type and quality rating is identified in the table below.

Table 4.8: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
	Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
	Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

Table 4.9: Impact of maintenance improvements on senior pitches

Site ID	Site name	Number of senior pitches	Floodlit?	Quality rating	Current capacity rating	Improved quality rating	Potential capacity rating
12	Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC)	1	No	Poor (M0/D1)	1.5	Standard (M1/D1)	1
		1		Poor (M0/D0)	1	Standard (M1/D0)	-

### Improving pitch quality (via drainage)

- 4.39 Like above, exploring the effect of improving drainage by one increment on each pitch has been explored in the table below. The installation of drainage systems at Knutsford Drive Playing Field would fully reduce overplay on one senior pitch, but it would still be considered to be poor quality. The other senior pitch (which has had drainage works undertaken in the past few years) will only have minimal effects.
- 4.40 Likewise, improving the drainage on the overplayed pitch at Fullerians RFC will have a minimal effect, reducing overplay by just 0.25 match equivalent sessions.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Table 4.10: Impact of drainage improvements on senior pitches

Site ID	Site name	Number of senior pitches	Floodlit?	Quality rating	Current capacity rating	Improved quality rating	Potential capacity rating
12	Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC)	1	No	Poor (M0/D1)	1.5	Poor (M0/D2)	1.25
		1		Poor (M0/D0)	1	Poor (M0/D1)	0.5
39	Fullerians RFC	1	Yes	Good (M2/D1)	10.5	Good (M2/D2)	10.25

### Improving pitch quality conclusion

- 4.42 In theory, overplay at Knutsford Drive Playing Fields (Watford RFC) can be alleviated through a combination of improving the existing maintenance regime and providing a suitable drainage installation on its second senior pitch.
- 4.43 Neither pitch improvements or enhancing drainage options will have a significant impact on the identified overplay at Fullerians RFC and therefore other options are required to alleviate overplay.

### Providing new floodlighting

- 4.44 The senior floodlit pitch at Fullerians RFC is overplayed by 10.5 match equivalent sessions per week. In contrast, the remaining four senior pitches have a total spare capacity of 4.5 match equivalent sessions per week.
- 4.45 Providing new floodlighting across an additional full senior pitch will not alleviate overplay in its entirety, but as a starting point it will reduce overplay by three match equivalents. This will allow a transfer of concentrated demand to a senior pitch with spare capacity. Further to this, it will also allow the quality of the training pitch to improve (due to a reduction of concentrated demand) and therefore this would reduce overplay by a further 1.5 match equivalent sessions which were previously discounted in agreement with the RFU.
- 4.46 In total, this will reduce the overall site overplay by 4.5 match equivalent sessions leaving the site overplayed by six match sessions. Further floodlighting of an additional senior pitch could in theory, further reduce overplay by 1.5 match sessions by utilising spare capacity on alternate pitches which would result in the site still being overplayed by 4.5 match equivalent sessions.
- 4.47 Improving drainage across all five senior pitches to a D3 specification would further reduce overplay by 2.5 match equivalent sessions, although this is unrealistic due to cost implications. As such, for overplay to be alleviated in its entirety, a transfer of demand off site would be required, most likely to a floodlit World Rugby Compliant third generation artificial grass pitch.

### World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitches

- 4.48 The RFU investment strategy into third generation artificial grass pitches considers sites where grass rugby pitches are over capacity and where a pitch would support the growth of the game at the host site and for the local rugby partnership, including local clubs and education sites. There are no World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford with the nearest located in neighbouring, Three Rivers. Watford is a strategic area for the RFU for the potential delivery of new a World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitch in the future.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

4.49 Given the high levels of identified overplay at Fullerians RFC the site should be considered as a potential location for the development of a World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitch on the basis suitable funding opportunities can be established. A pitch would be able to accommodate all current midweek training demand as well as match play which would in turn free up further spare capacity on the currently un-floodlit pitches.

### 4.50 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Protect both rugby pitches currently in use and pitches that are no longer in use due to the potential that they may offer for meeting current and future needs (unless replacement provision is agreed upon and provided)
- ◀ Improve pitch quality at Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC) to reduce overplay, primarily through improved maintenance and the installation of an effective drainage system where appropriate
- ◀ Explore opportunities to develop a World Rugby Compliant third generation artificial grass pitch at Fullerians RFC or alternatively work to develop further floodlighting on the site to reduce overplay
- ◀ Retain supply of rugby pitches at school sites for curricular and extra-curricular purposes and encourage secure community availability should demand exist in the future

### **Hockey pitches (sand/water-based artificial grass pitches)**

#### 4.51 **Summary**

- ◀ There is sufficient availability of pitches within Watford and Three Rivers to accommodate current demand from West Herts HC
- ◀ There is also a sufficient level of provision in Watford in the future, if suitable provision can be secured in Three Rivers
- ◀ There are two full size and one small size sand based artificial grass pitches in Watford.
- ◀ All full size provision is available for community use, although the artificial grass pitch at Woodside Leisure Centre is not marked for competitive hockey and is unavailable for community use for hockey
- ◀ The artificial grass pitch at Woodside Leisure Centre is assessed as poor quality and the remaining provision at Watford Grammar School for Boys is assessed as good quality.
- ◀ West Herts HC is the only registered hockey club in Watford. It operates a total of 11 senior and eight junior teams. It does not express any future demand
- ◀ West Herts HC has a long term lease arrangement in place with Watford Grammar School for Boys and as such has secure tenure

#### **Scenarios**

##### *Accommodating demand and protecting provision*

4.52 There is one community hockey club in Watford; West Herts HC. The Club is based at Watford Grammar School (New Field) and has a long term lease agreement in place with the school to access the pitch for the foreseeable future (and over the lifespan of the Playing Pitch Strategy). The Club also rents an artificial grass pitch in Three Rivers at St Michaels School which it accesses as an overspill site. While this is considered to be exported demand, in reality this is a short drive time from its home site and not an issue.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- 4.53 Thought needs to be given to the reliability and security of accessing St Michaels School in Three Rivers in the future. As the pitch is considered to be poor quality (based on the findings of the 2019 Three Rivers Playing Pitch Strategy) and provides unsecure tenure, the future position of usage may be either reduced to a more social level of hockey, or removed altogether, at which point, the Club would need to access provision elsewhere in either Watford or Three Rivers.
- 4.54 Based on the findings of the 2019 Three Rivers Playing Pitch Strategy, there is spare capacity elsewhere in Three Rivers, with both Merchant Taylors Sports Complex and Nuffield Health at Royal Masonic School showing as having capacity for additional hockey usage. If access to either of these sites could be secured (and considered suitable to use), the future position of the Club would be secure with no shortfalls in Watford for hockey provision
- 4.55 As such, it is imperative that the pitch provided at Watford Grammar School (New Field) is protected from any development to the detriment to hockey and that secure access to a secondary artificial grass pitch is secured.

### *Converting sand-based sand based artificial grass pitches to third generation artificial grass pitches*

- 4.56 Since the introduction of third generation artificial grass pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way of replacing their tired sand-based carpet and generating money from hiring out a third generation artificial grass pitch to football clubs and commercial football providers. This has come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams being displaced from their preferred geographical area.
- 4.57 Due to its impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand-based artificial grass pitches are retained for the playing development of hockey. To that end, a change of surface will require a planning application and, as part of that, the applicants will have to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Advice from Sport England and EH should therefore be sought prior to any planning application being submitted.
- 4.58 The artificial grass pitch at Woodside Leisure Centre is currently unusable for competitive hockey (due to being inadequately sized and having no hockey line markings) although it is noted that it has in the past accommodated recreational and academy based hockey sessions.
- 4.59 Given the above, it is considered that the artificial grass pitch at Woodside Leisure Centre is not required to facilitate competitive hockey. However, there remains a need to provide appropriate facilities for historic and potential future recreational hockey demand in Watford. In theory, both recreational and academy based sessions can be run on the newly provided small sided artificial grass pitch at Watford Grammar School for Boys or the full size pitch at Watford Grammar School (New Field). As such, the pitch at Woodside Leisure Centre is suitable for conversion to a third generation artificial grass pitch.

### 4.60 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Ensure that the artificial grass pitch at Watford Grammar School (New Field) is protected from development which would be at a detriment to hockey
- ◀ Work in partnership with West Herts HC and England Hockey to ensure that the Club can access suitable provision in neighbouring authorities to service its overspill demand
- ◀ Ensure that any recreational based hockey programme can be accommodated for in Watford to service non-competitive demand
- ◀ Ensure sinking funds are in place for long-term sustainability
- ◀ Seek to maximise hockey usage where hockey is being played
- ◀ Increase participation driven through community clubs and schools

### **Bowls**

#### 4.61 **Summary**

- ◀ There is a sufficient supply of bowling greens to accommodate current and future demand in Watford
- ◀ There are five flat outdoor bowling greens located across five sites in Watford, none of which, are floodlit
- ◀ Four greens are assessed as good quality and one as standard. None are poor quality.
- ◀ There is one disused green located at Woodside Playing Fields following the closure of Owls Bowls Club in March 2019
- ◀ There are five bowls clubs playing in Watford
- ◀ North Watford BC highlight that its clubhouse needs a new heating system to enable all round year sport. The Club is looking to secure external grant funding to achieve this
- ◀ Taking the above into account, there is no requirement for additional flat green bowls provision to be provided in Watford to service current or future demand

#### **Scenarios**

- 4.62 There is a sufficient supply of bowling greens in Watford to accommodate current levels of club demand. Despite several clubs having high memberships, none state a need for further provision to be provided. Where high club membership is evidenced, there is a need to ensure green quality is of a high level to sustain high levels of use, this is particularly relevant for Oxhey Bowls Club which has a high membership and a standard quality green.

#### *Disused provision*

- 4.63 There is one disused green at Woodside Playing Fields following the closure of Owls Bowls Club in March 2019. There is no evidence to suggest that this needs to be retained as a bowling green and therefore options should be explored, in the first instance, to utilise the land for other sporting uses. If this is not feasible and the bowling green is lost for non-sporting uses, mitigation for its loss should be provided by making qualitative improvements to the surrounding sports provision at Woodside Playing Field.

#### 4.64 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Retain existing quantity of greens which are used for bowling
- ◀ Mitigate the loss of the bowling green at Woodside Playing Field if it is to be lost
- ◀ Sustain good quality greens and explore improvements on greens assessed as standard quality, particularly at Oxhey Bowls Club
- ◀ Seek funding opportunities to support North Watford Bowls Clubs in replacing its heating system for its clubhouse
- ◀ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised

### **Tennis**

#### 4.65 **Summary**

- ◀ Based on recommended LTA capacity guidance, there is insufficient supply of tennis courts at Cassiobury LTC to cater for current demand. All other club sites are deemed to have suitable capacity for current and future demand.
- ◀ As all remaining, non-club courts are deemed to have spare capacity, focus should be on improving quality to an adequate standard and to increase informal activity.
- ◀ There are 46 tennis courts identified in Watford across eight sites, with all courts available for community use.
- ◀ No clubs' express concerns with regards to security of tenure.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- ◀ Grosvenor LTC is the only club in Watford which is not serviced by floodlighting. It highlights that it has demand for floodlighting at Cassiobury Park to service its members during autumn and winter.
- ◀ West Herts Sports Club plans to provide floodlighting for three of its onsite macadam courts.
- ◀ Following a non-technical assessment, 18 courts are identified as being good quality and 24 are standard, there are four poor grass courts located at Cassiobury Park.
- ◀ None of the responding tennis clubs highlight any issues with the ancillary provision at their respective sites, although it is noted that Grosvenor LTC has submitted a grant funding application to Sport England to develop a new clubhouse.
- ◀ Combined, membership of all clubs in Watford equates to a total of 502 members.

### **Scenarios**

#### *Alleviating shortfalls – Cassiobury Tennis Club*

- 4.66 The LTA suggests that a non-floodlit hard court can accommodate a maximum of 40 members whereas a floodlit hard court can accommodate a maximum of 60 members. Using these figures, the table below analyses whether or not courts currently in use by clubs are sufficient to meet both current and future demand.
- 4.67 Based on the above criteria, Cassiobury TC is operating over its recommended capacity by 19 members and when considering its future demand aspirations of 60 members, by 79 members. This is based on the Club having six courts, of which, four are floodlit.
- 4.68 Providing floodlighting on both unfloodlit courts will increase the overall site capacity by an additional 40 members and therefore alleviate the current shortfall entirely, it will also reduce the potential future shortfall to 39 members. As the site is landlocked no further courts can be provided and therefore options to transfer a proportion of demand off site should be given consideration. The most realistic opportunity for off-site access is at Cassiobury Park which is located within walking distance from the Club.

#### *Recreational and informal tennis*

- 4.69 Tennis clubs and public tennis courts experienced a significant increase in demand and use following the easing of COVID19 restrictions. Due to nature of the activity and ability to social distance a number of residents moved away from their traditional activity habits to play tennis. Depending on the long term outlook for leisure provision future consideration may need to be given to increasing outdoor facilities like tennis courts.
- 4.70 Based on the findings of the Assessment, it is considered that all community available courts in Watford that are not accessed by clubs have spare capacity to accommodate a growth in demand. Although this is difficult to quantify, it is generally considered that public courts are at their busiest during summer months, with little activity taking place outside of this. The LTA has developed a package of support for local authorities to grow the use of park tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The three products are ClubSpark<sup>13</sup>, Rally and Gate Access and can be used individually or in combination.
- 4.71 It is important to also consider the critical factors of how people access and discover courts to play tennis. LTA insight demonstrates that over 50% of all people who play between 1-11 times a year will do so in a non-club environment, for those who play monthly this figures remains at 40%. For those who play weekly the percentage share does split more evenly, showing 40% of weekly players doing so in clubs vs 30% in a non-club environment.

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://clubspark.com/case-studies/delivering-british-tennis>

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

4.72 Given the above, the Council and the LTA should consider opportunities to develop tennis hub sites to promote greater opportunities for tennis engagement, by utilising the three LTA products. To optimise and target resource, as well as stimulating demand for tennis, it is advised to look at creating non tennis club 'hub sites' which can better attract, grow and support recreational tennis in the area. This would involve working with the LTA on target sites that could improve the customer journey to court.

### 4.73 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Retain and protect the existing stock of tennis club facilities via appropriate maintenance and management support to ensure adequate provision remains for those who seek regular tennis activity, whilst also encouraging club venues to consider how access and use can be improved at clubs to enable more informal play
- ◀ For non-club venues look to sustain and protect tennis courts that can continue to provide informal access and use
- ◀ Look to align any future investment to LTA technological opportunities such as Gate Access systems and being part of LTA Rally
- ◀ Explore opportunities to alleviate the current and future shortfall identified at Cassiobury Tennis Club
- ◀ Support Grosvenor Lawn Tennis Club in its development plan for a new clubhouse to service its membership and its aspiration for floodlighting to enable year round play at Cassiobury Park

## Netball

### 4.74 **Summary**

- ◀ There is enough netball provision in Watford to meet current and future demand therefore a priority should be placed on maintaining court quality
- ◀ In total, there are 13 outdoor netball courts located across three sites in Watford. All are based at education sites and are available for community use
- ◀ Following a non-technical assessment, all 13 courts are standard quality
- ◀ There is neither any clubs nor leagues based in Watford. All demand is played at central venue locations in Three Rivers
- ◀ There is one Back to Netball session delivered by Hertfordshire Netball located at Westfield Academy

## Scenarios

4.75 There is enough outdoor netball provision in Watford to meet current and any future club/league demand. All competitive teams are likely to compete within the local Hertfordshire league structures (which operates as central venue) at Thomas Parmiter School in neighbouring Three Rivers. It is also noted that all netball demand locally is for indoor provision with no formal demand identified in the Watford or Three Rivers Playing Pitch Strategy. As such, there is no perceived demand likely to be generated for outdoor courts, other than, recreational sessions.

### 4.76 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Retrain the current supply of outdoor netball courts to cater for recreational opportunities
- ◀ Seek to improve poor quality courts at education sites to provide enhanced curricular and extracurricular opportunities for netball
- ◀ Explore opportunities to work in partnership with England Netball to increase participation into the sport

### Athletics

#### 4.77 *Summary*

- ◀ Evidence does not suggest a wider need (based on accessed demand) for further dedicated athletics facilities within Watford
- ◀ Priority should therefore be placed on improving the maintenance regime at Woodside Athletics Stadium to maintain the quality of provision on site and ensure refurbishment work is undertaken when necessary
- ◀ Sustaining and increasing the popularity of numerous running events taking place within Watford such as Couch to 5k, RunTogether and Watford 10k will also be key to ensure athletics continues to grow
- ◀ There may be opportunities to consider compact athletics tracks to further help satisfy the growing demand for athletics in Watford
- ◀ There is one formal athletics tracks in Watford located at Woodside Athletic Stadium which is an eight lane, synthetic 400 metre track. The track is fully floodlit and also provides all accompanying field event facilities
- ◀ Track and field facilities at Woodside Athletic Stadium are both reported to be in good condition. The site is considered to be a key facility regionally for athletic competition, however, Watford Harriers AC report that quality has deteriorated over the past year
- ◀ There is one identified athletics club in Watford; Watford Harriers AC. The Club is based at Woodside Athletics Track, with competitions and training taking place on site
- ◀ There are currently 60 male, 35 female and 251 junior (Under18) members of Watford Harriers AC. Over the previous three years, senior membership is reported to have declined. Meanwhile, junior membership has remained static over recent years. The Club hopes to add an additional 20 male and 35 female members soon
- ◀ At present, there is one Parkrun event that takes place in Watford every week

#### *Scenarios*

- 4.78 There is one formal athletics tracks in Watford located at Woodside Athletic Stadium, which is an eight lane, synthetic 400 metre track. The track is fully floodlit and provides all accompanying field event facilities including, four sand pits, hammer and discuss cages, Olympic standard pole vault, two shot putt fans and two synthetic javelin runways. The stadium provides a 700 seater covered spectator stand. It is the primary home venue of Watford Harriers.
- 4.79 It is considered that in order for an athletics track to be sustainable, a club membership of 200 is required; however, a number of other factors should also be considered. As Watford Harriers is operating well above this threshold with 346 members the track is deemed to be sustainable.
- 4.80 Given the quality of both the track and field facilities at Woodside Athletics Stadium, evidence does not suggest a wider need (based on accessed demand) for further dedicated athletics facilities within Watford. Priority should therefore be placed on sustaining the maintenance regime at Woodside Athletics Stadium to maintain the quality of provision on site and ensure refurbishment work is undertaken when necessary.
- 4.81 The Woodside Playing Field Athletic track plays a significant sub-regional in servicing demand for residents from neighbouring authorities, this includes Three Rivers, Dacorum and Hertsmere. None of the aforementioned authorities have significant, dedicated provision for athletics and therefore this facility plays a role for competitive meetings and competition.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### *TrackMark*

4.82 TrackMark<sup>14</sup> is a UK athletics quality assurance scheme for outdoor track & field facilities. Accreditation of a facility can demonstrate to hirers, athletes, clubs etc, that a facility is well managed, well maintained and accessible to all potential users.

4.83 The Woodside Track currently has a 'working towards' status to accreditation. Of the six units, it has passed two, has two pending accreditation and is working toward another two (see footnote for details of TrackMark units).

#### 4.84 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Protect the athletics track and the accompanying ancillary provision at Woodside Athletic Stadium. Work to achieve full TrackMark certification
- ◀ Support the running events taking place as well as exploring the implementation of initiatives not currently serviced to increase participation in recreational running
- ◀ Ensure that any new developments consider the need for running and opportunities to link with/to existing running routes

### **Croquet lawns**

#### 4.85 **Summary**

- ◀ There are three croquet lawns at Cassiobury Park which service Watford (Cassiobury) Croquet Club
- ◀ The ancillary offer servicing the club is poor quality and in need of modernisation. The Club has announced plans to develop a new pavilion
- ◀ It is considered that existing provision is sufficient to service current levels of demand

### **Scenarios**

4.86 There is sufficient croquet provision in Watford to meet current and any future club demand. The priority is to ensure it remains of a good quality with suitable ancillary provision to service membership.

#### 4.87 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Retain and protect the existing stock of croquet lawns at Cassiobury Park
- ◀ Support participation initiatives ran by the Watford (Cassiobury) Croquet Club where possible to encourage growth in the sport
- ◀ Support plans to develop a new clubhouse to service Club membership

### **Gaelic football pitches**

#### 4.88 **Summary**

- ◀ There is one dedicated Gaelic football pitch provided in Watford, located at Radlett Road Playing Fields. It is the home of the only Gaelic Athletic Association club in Watford; Glen Rovers Hurling & Football Club
- ◀ The pitch and ancillary offer were opened in 2017 after refurbishment and are therefore of a good quality
- ◀ It is considered that existing provision is sufficient to service current levels of demand

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uka.org.uk/governance/facilities/>

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

## **Scenarios**

4.89 There is sufficient supply of Gaelic football pitches in Watford to meet current and any future club demand. The priority is to ensure it remains of a good quality and that participation at the site is sustained.

## 4.90 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Retain and protect the provision at Radlett Road Playing Field as dedicated site for Gaelic football
- ◀ Support participation initiatives ran by Glen Rovers Hurling & Football Club

## **Cycling provision**

## 4.91 **Summary**

- ◀ There are no purpose-built facilities within Watford with the nearest dedicated cycling facility located at Gosling Sports Park in Welwyn Hatfield. In addition to this, there are no current recreational BMX tracks available for recreational use
- ◀ Watford Borough Council is planning to develop a BMX track (and skatepark facility) in Oxhey Park which will service demand for this type of activity in the future
- ◀ Watford Velo Club is a British Cycling affiliated Club which has 90 members. The Club was formed in 2009 to encourage and support Watford residents which shared a passion for cycling

## **Scenarios**

4.92 Limited formal demand for cycling is identified within Watford; however, it is considered that most of the current demand does not require dedicated facilities as participants mostly utilise roads and cycle paths. As such, there is no clear evidence to suggest that dedicated cycling provision is a priority in Watford, especially considering the proximity of the facilities at Gosling Sports Park in Welwyn Hatfield.

## 4.93 **Recommendations**

- ◀ Support participation initiatives ran by the Watford Velo Club
- ◀ Encourage further recreational formats of cycling in Watford such as *HSBC UK Go-Ride*

## PART 5: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The strategic recommendations for the Strategy have been developed via a combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis which culminated in the production of an assessment report, as well as key drivers identified for the Strategy. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across outdoor sports facilities and may not be specific to just one sport.

### OBJECTIVE 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.

#### Recommendations:

- a. Ensure, through the use of the Playing Pitch Strategy, that outdoor sports facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so.

**Recommendation (a) – Ensure, through the use of the Playing Pitch Strategy, that outdoor sports facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.**

- 5.2 The Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment shows that all currently used outdoor sports 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 meet the identified shortfalls. Therefore, based on the outcomes of the Playing Pitch Strategy, local planning policy should reflect this situation.
- 5.3 NPPF paragraph 97 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.
- 5.4 Should outdoor sports facilities be taken out of use for any reason (e.g. council budget restraints), it is imperative that the land is retained so that it can be brought back into use in the future. This means that land containing provision should not be altered (except to improve play) and should remain free from tree cover and permanent built structures, unless the current picture changes to the extent that the site in question is no longer needed, or unless replacement provision is provided to an equal or greater quantity and quality.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

5.6 Although there are identified shortfalls of match equivalent sessions, most demand is currently being met and most shortfalls are likely to be addressed through quality improvements. Including the need for additional facilities in the Local Plan is therefore not recommended as a priority, except in the case of third generation artificial grass pitches where there is a discrete need for additional provision, or where there is significant housing growth.

5.7 The Playing Pitch Strategy should be used to help inform Development Management decisions that affect existing or new outdoor sports facilities 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 is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of playing fields and will use the Playing Pitch Strategy to help assess that planning application against its Playing Fields Policy<sup>15</sup>.

5.8 Sport England's playing field policy exception E1 only allows for development of lapsed or disused playing fields if a Playing Pitch Strategy 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:*

5.9 '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'.

5.10 Where the Playing Pitch Strategy cannot demonstrate that 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 the remaining Sport England policy exceptions.

### *Policy Exception E2*

5.11 'The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity and quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use'.

### *Policy Exception E3*

5.12 'The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- ◀ Reduce the size of any playing pitch.
- ◀ Result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas).
- ◀ Reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain quality.
- ◀ Result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site.
- ◀ Prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site'.

---

<sup>15</sup>[https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing\\_fields\\_policy](https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing_fields_policy)

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### *Policy Exception E4:*

- 5.13 '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.

### *Policy Exception E5*

- 5.14 'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice of use, of the area of playing field'.
- 5.15 Lapsed and disused sites should also be protected from development or replaced in accordance with Sport England's policy exceptions as they currently provide a solution to reducing identified shortfalls. A disused site is a playing field which is not currently being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years they will then be categorised as 'lapsed sites'. Any disused/lapsed playing fields are included within the Action Plan together with a recommendation in relation to bringing the site back into use or to mitigate the loss on a replacement site to address the shortfalls identified.

### **Recommendation (b) – Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.**

- 5.16 A number of education sites are being used in Watford for competitive play, predominately for football. In some cases, use of pitches has been classified as secure, however, use is not necessarily formalised and further work should be carried out to ensure an appropriate community use agreement is in place (including access to changing provision where required).
- 5.17 For the remaining providers, National Governing Bodies, Sport England and other appropriate bodies such as the Football Foundation can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may not have direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from these bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of the agreement.
- 5.18 In the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review, which announced public spending cuts, it is increasingly important for the Council to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities. To facilitate this, where practical, it should support and enable clubs to generate sufficient funds, providing that this is to the benefit of sport.
- 5.19 The Council should also further explore opportunities where security of tenure could be granted via lease agreements (minimum 25 years as recommended by Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport) so clubs are in a position to apply for external funding. This is particularly the case at poor quality local authority sites, possibly with inadequate ancillary facilities, so that quality can be improved and sites developed.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- 5.20 Local sports clubs should be supported by partners including the Council and National Governing Bodies to achieve sustainability across a range of areas including management, membership, funding, facilities, volunteers and partnership work. For example, support club development and encourage clubs to develop evidence of business and sports development plans to generate income via their facilities. All clubs could be encouraged to look at different management models such as registering as Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)<sup>16</sup>. They should also be encouraged to work with partners locally – such as volunteer support agencies or local businesses.
- 5.21 For clubs with lease arrangements already in place, these should be reviewed when fewer than 25 years remain on existing agreements to secure extensions, thus improving security of tenure and helping them attract funding for site developments. Any club with less than 25 years remaining on an agreement is unlikely to gain any external funding.
- 5.22 Each club interested in leasing a site should be required to meet service and/or strategic recommendations. An additional set of criteria should also be considered, which takes into account club quality, aligned to its long-term development objectives and sustainability, as seen in the table below.

*Table 5.1: Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations*

Club	Site
<p>Clubs should have NGB accreditation.</p> <p>Clubs commit to meeting demonstrable local demand and show pro-active commitment to developing school-club links.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Ideally, clubs should have already identified (and received an agreement in principle) any match funding required for initial capital investment identified.</p> <p>Clubs have processes in place to ensure capacity to maintain sites to the existing, or better, standards.</p>	<p>Sites should be those identified as ‘Club Sites’ (recommendation d) for new clubs (i.e. not those with a Borough - wide significance) but that offer development potential.</p> <p>For established clubs which have proven success in terms of self-management ‘Key Centres’ are also appropriate.</p> <p>As a priority, sites should acquire capital investment to improve (which can be attributed to the presence of a Clubmark/Charter Standard club).</p> <p>Sites should be leased with the intention that investment can be sourced to contribute towards improvement of the site.</p>

- 5.23 The Council could 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
- 5.24 In addition, clubs should be made fully aware of the associated responsibilities/liabilities when considering leases of multi-use public playing fields. It is important in these instances that the site, to some degree, remains available for other purposes or for other users.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.cascinfo.co.uk/cascbenefits>

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### ***Community asset transfer***

- 5.25 Another way of ensuring long term tenure for clubs is through a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).
- 5.26 CAT is the transfer of management and/or ownership of public land and buildings from its owner (usually a local authority) to a community organisation (such as a Development Trust, a Community Interest Company or a social enterprise) for less than market value – to achieve a local social, economic or environmental benefit.
- 5.27 Community based organisations are often much more effective at engaging people than other types of organisation because they are close to and directly accountable to their community.
- 5.28 Communities that come together to plan and deliver services can make them more inclusive and responsive than state run services. Communities can mobilise a lot of volunteer time and energy. Asset transfer can, for example:
- ◀ Give sports clubs and community organisations more security and sustainability
  - ◀ Enable people to protect the assets in their communities – including iconic heritage buildings and open spaces
  - ◀ Involve people in designing and running the services from which, they benefit
  - ◀ Be a catalyst for getting people more involved as volunteers
  - ◀ Keep money in the local economy through enterprise and locally owned assets
- 5.29 The Sport England Community Sport Asset Transfer Toolkit is a bespoke, interactive web based tool that provides a step by step guide through each stage of the asset transfer process should this be an option for the Council to consider. It can be accessed here: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/community-assets-and-rights>

### **Recommendation (c) - Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so.**

- 5.30 In order to maximise community use of education facilities it is recommended to establish a coherent, structured relationship with schools. 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 and train. Pricing policies at facilities can be a barrier to access but also physical access and resistance from schools to open up provision due to staffing, site security or to protect the quality of facilities for school use.
- 5.31 A 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 any underlying problems.
- 5.32 The highest priority sites for securing formal community access arrangements should be those schools which already have community use but do not have secured community use arrangements. These already provide an important role in meeting community needs but this must be secured to ensure continued use into the future. Where appropriate, it will be important for schools to negotiate and sign formal and long-term agreements that secure community use. Westfield Academy is a key site in Watford which is heavily used for community sport, it has no formal community use agreement in place.

## **WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

---

- 5.33 As detailed earlier, National Governing Bodies and Sport England can often help to negotiate and engage with schools where the local authority may have limited direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from the relevant bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of the funding agreement.

## OBJECTIVE 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

### Recommendations:

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

### ***Recommendation (d) – Improve quality***

- 5.34 There are a number of ways in which it is possible to increase pitch quality and these are explored below. One way for improving quality on football sites is via the FA's pitch improvement programme.

#### *The FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP)*

- 5.35 The key principles behind the service are to provide football clubs with advice/practical solutions on a number of areas and discounts on machinery and materials to support improving the clubs' playing surface. The programme should be utilised in order to help any clubs that take on the management and maintenance of sites or which are currently managing and maintaining their own pitch site.

### ***Addressing quality issues***

- 5.36 Quality in Watford is variable but generally pitches are assessed as standard quality. Where facilities are assessed as standard or poor quality and/or overplayed, maintenance regimes should be reviewed and, where possible, improved to ensure that what is being done is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality. Ensuring continuance of existing maintenance of good quality sites is also essential.
- 5.37 It is also important to note the impact the weather has on quality. The worse the weather, the poorer facilities tend to become, especially if no drainage systems are in place or if existing drainage systems are inadequate. This also means that quality can vary, year on year, dependent upon the weather and levels of rainfall.
- 5.38 Based upon 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 as provided in electronic format). The Strategy approach to outdoor sports facilities achieving these standards should be to enhance quality and therefore the planning system should seek to protect them.
- 5.39 For the purposes of quality assessments, the Strategy refers to outdoor sports facilities and ancillary facilities separately as being of 'Good', 'Standard' or 'Poor' quality. For example, some good quality sites have poor quality elements and vice versa (e.g. a good quality pitch may be serviced by poor quality changing facilities).

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- 5.40 Good quality refers to pitches that have, for example, good grass cover, an even surface, are free from vandalism and litter. For rugby, a good quality pitch is also pipe and/or slit drained. 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.
- 5.41 Standard quality refers to pitches that have, for example, adequate grass cover, minimal signs of wear and tear and goalposts may be secure but in need of minor repair. For rugby, drainage is natural but adequate. In terms of ancillary facilities, standard quality refers to adequately sized changing rooms, storage provision and provision of toilets.
- 5.42 Poor quality refers to provision with, for example, inadequate grass cover, uneven surfaces and poor drainage. For rugby, pitches will have inadequate natural drainage. In terms of ancillary facilities, poor quality refers to inappropriate changing rooms with no showers, no running water and/or old, dated interiors. If a poor quality site receives little or no usage that is not to say that no improvement is needed, it may instead be the case that it receives no demand because of its quality, thus an improvement in said quality will attract demand to the site, potentially from overplayed standard or good quality sites.
- 5.43 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 should be given priority for improvement.
- 5.44 In order to prioritise investment into key sites it is recommended that the steering group works up a list of criteria, relevant to Watford, to provide a steer on future investment.
- 5.45 For improvement/replacement of artificial grass pitches refer to Sport England and National Governing Bodies 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface for Hockey, Football, and Rugby Union' document for a guide as to suitable artificial grass pitch surfaces [:https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/outdoor-surfaces](https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/outdoor-surfaces)

## **Addressing overplay**

- 5.46 In order to improve the overall quality of the outdoor facility stock; it is necessary to ensure that provision is not overplayed beyond recommended carrying capacity. This is determined by assessing quality (via a non-technical site assessment) and allocating a match limit to each (daily for hockey, weekly for football and rugby union and seasonal for cricket).
- 5.47 The FA, the RFU, the ECB and EH all recommend a number of matches that pitches should take based on quality, as seen in the table below. For other grass pitch sports, no guidelines are set by the National Governing Bodies although it can be assumed that a similar trend should be followed.

*Table 5.2: Capacity of pitches*

Sport	Pitch type	Number of matches		
		Good quality	Standard quality	Poor quality
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Sport	Pitch type	Number of matches		
		Good quality	Standard quality	Poor quality
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
	One synthetic wicket	60 per season		

- 5.48 For all remaining non-pitch sports (e.g. bowls and tennis) there are no capacity recommendations set out by the pitch National Governing Bodies of Sport. Instead, potential capacity is evaluated on a site-by-site basis following consultation and site assessments.
- 5.49 It is imperative to engage with clubs to ensure that sites are not played beyond their capacity. Play should therefore be encouraged, where possible, to be transferred to alternative venues that are not operating at capacity. This may include transferring play to third generation artificial grass pitches or to sites not currently available for community use but which may be in the future.
- 5.50 A cost-effective way to reduce unofficial use (and therefore overplay), particularly for football, could be to remove goalposts in between match days, principally at open access, high traffic sites that are managed by clubs. This will, however, require adequate, secured storage to be provided.
- 5.51 For cricket, an increase in the usage of non turf pitches
- 5.52 is key to alleviating overplay as this allows for the transfer of junior demand from grass wickets, this should be undertaken in situ of quality improvements to a cricket square to improve the quality which in turn will increase carrying capacity.
- 5.53 For rugby union, additional floodlighting can mitigate some of the overplay as it allows training demand to be spread across a greater number of pitches or unmarked areas. However, this is on the basis that it there are enough pitches on a site to make this feasible. Alternatively, access to a World Rugby compliant third generation artificial grass pitches will help the transfer of midweek training demand and competitive match play which in turn will reduce the pressure on grass pitches.

### ***Increasing maintenance***

- 5.54 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 National Governing Body of Sport can provide assistance with reviewing pitch maintenance regimes.
- 5.55 The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme which has been developed in partnership with Grounds Management Association to develop a grass pitch maintenance service that can be utilised by grassroots clubs with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and therefore the quality of pitches.
- 5.56 The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice/practical solutions in a range of areas, with the simple aim of improving playing surfaces. The programme is designed to help clubs on sites that they themselves manage and maintain but can also be used to advise council-maintained sites.
- 5.57 In addition, PIP also aims to focus on developing an improved maintenance programmes with local authorities that can be utilised at local authority maintained sites.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- 5.58 For cricket and the ECB, the equivalent is the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme, which is jointly funded by the ECB, FA, Football Foundation and the Grounds Management Association. Its aim is to raise the standards of sports surfaces as well as the understanding of sports turf management practices among grassroots sports clubs across England Wales.
- 5.59 In relation to cricket specifically, maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of the sport. If the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and, in some instances, become dangerous. The ECB recommends full technical assessments of wickets and pitches available through a Performance Quality Standard assessment. The Performance Quality Standard Assessment assesses a cricket square to ascertain whether it meets the standards that are benchmarked by the Ground Management Association.

### ***Improving changing provision***

- 5.60 There is a need to address changing provision at some sites in Watford (these are detailed in the Action Plan). As previously mentioned, 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 should be given priority for improvement.
- 5.61 As an example, Woodside Playing Field is a multi-sport site which has a poor quality changing facility which is underutilised due to its quality. An improved facility on the site would enable usage by both adult and junior participations in sport, it could also provide opportunities to provide a social setting aligned to potential revenue generation as a result of high footfall and associated demand for good quality facilities for both cricket and football.
- 5.62 Sites which predominantly accommodate adult and/or older junior age group sports should be prioritised for improvements, whilst there is a trend for younger junior age groups (particularly for football) not to require use of changing provision, with suitable male and female toilet provision for players and spectators considered to be of greater importance.

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

- 5.63 To allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of playing pitch sites and associated facilities. Please refer to Part 6: Action Plan for the proposed hierarchy.

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

- 5.64 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 outdoor sports facilities.
- 5.65 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 Steering Group.
- 5.66 Although some investment in new provision will not be made by the Council directly, it is important that the Council seeks to direct and lead a strategic and co-ordinated approach to facility development by education sites, National Governing Bodies, sports clubs and the commercial sector to address community needs whilst avoiding duplication of provision.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

5.67 One of sport's greatest contributions is its positive impact on public health and it is therefore important to lever in investment from other sectors such as health and wellbeing, for example. 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.

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

### **Recommendation (g) – Secure developer contributions**

5.69 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.

5.70 For playing pitches, the Council should use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as a tool for determining developer contributions linking to sites within the locality.

5.71 This uses team information from the Assessment Report to determine how many new teams would be generated from an increase in population derived from housing growth. It then converts this into pitch requirements and gives the associated costs (both for providing the provision and for its life cycle).

5.72 The Playing Pitch Strategy should be used to help determine the likely impact of a new development on demand and the capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity of existing provision or if new provision is required. Where a development is located within access of existing high-quality provision, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further provision or improvement to existing provision, as additional demand arising from the development is likely to result in increased usage (which can result in overplay or quality deterioration). Please refer to Part 7: Housing growth scenarios for more detail.

5.73 Where it is determined that new provision is required to accompany a development, priority should be placed on providing facilities that contribute towards alleviating existing shortfalls within the locality. To determine what supply of provision is provided, it is imperative that the Playing Pitch Strategy findings are taken into consideration and that consultation takes place with the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport. This is due to the importance of ensuring that the stock of facilities provided is correct to avoid provision becoming unsustainable and unused, such as single grass pitch football sites without adequate ancillary facilities or new cricket/rugby grounds located away from existing clubs. Instead, multi-pitch and multi-sport sites should be developed, supported by a clubhouse and adequate parking facilities which consider the potential for future artificial grass pitch development.

5.74 To support the implementation of this recommendation, KKP has prepared a developer's contributions guide for playing pitches (provided separately to the Council). The guide should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to include provision and/or enhancement of appropriate playing fields and subsequent maintenance.

5.75 A number of planning policy objectives could 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/CIL Agreement or equivalent must be completed that should specify, when applied, the amount that will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the permission and timing of the contribution/s to be made.

## **WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

---

- ◀ Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches. National Governing Bodies 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 outdoor sports facilities on school sites should be subject to community use agreements.

## OBJECTIVE 3

To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where feasible and there is current or future demand to do so.

### Recommendations:

- h. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.
- i. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock.
- j. Consider opportunities to meet the need of community demand for playing pitches through new and proposed education facilities.

### **Recommendation (h) - Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand**

- 5.76 The Steering Group should use the Action Plan within this Strategy for improvements to the Council's own outdoor sports facilities 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.
- 5.77 Although there are identified shortfalls of match equivalent sessions, most current and future demand is currently being met and most shortfalls can be addressed via quality improvements and/or improved access to sites that are presently used minimally or currently unavailable. Adding to the current stock, particularly in the short term, is therefore not recommended as a priority, except in the case of third generation artificial grass pitches where there is a discrete need, where there is significant housing growth, or where sites fall out of use and require mitigation.
- 5.78 For third generation artificial grass pitches, there is a shortfall of provision identified in Watford, Three Rivers, Hertsmere and Dacorum (based on the findings of each local authorities Playing Pitch Strategy). As such, a feasibility study should be carried out across the South West Herts region (including St Albans) to look at opportunities to increase the stock, with emphasis on sites that can accommodate more than one pitch in order to develop football hub sites. It is important that there is a joined-up approach between the relevant authorities to ensure that third generation artificial grass pitches are developed at the most appropriate sites, such as by selecting sites that can contribute towards accommodating demand from neighbouring authorities. This approach will also ensure there is no duplication of provision that will compete against each other to attract demand. This review should be aligned to each local authorities Local Football Facility Plan as part of the update and review process.

### **Recommendation (i) - Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock**

- 5.79 The Council and its partners should work to rectify identified inadequacies and meet identified shortfalls as outlined in the preceding Assessment Report and the sport by sport specific recommendations (Part 3) as well as the following Action Plan (Part 6).
- 5.80 It is important that the current levels of provision are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure provision now and in the future. For most sports the current and future demand for provision identified in Watford can be overcome through maximising use of existing stock through a combination of:

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- ◀ Improving quality in order to improve the capacity to accommodate more demand
- ◀ Transferring demand from overplayed sites to sites with spare capacity
- ◀ Securing long term community use at school sites including those currently unavailable

5.81 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.

5.82 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.

*Table 5.3: Likely future sport-by-sport demand trends*

Sport	Future sports development trend	Strategy impact
Football	Demand for adult football is likely to be sustained with the FA focusing on retention. There is also likely to be some continued movement towards small sided football for adults.	Additional need for third generation artificial grass pitches. Sustain current pitch stock but give consideration to pitch reconfiguration to accommodate youth 11v11 football. Qualitative improvements.
	Demand for mini and youth football is likely to increase based on TGRs and the FA has a key objective to deliver 50% of mini and youth football on third generation artificial grass pitches	Sustain current stock and consideration given to reconfigure pitches if required. Qualitative improvements. Where possible utilise new or existing third generation artificial grass pitches to further accommodate this demand and ensure FA testing.
	The FA's strategy for Women's and Girls' football: 2017 – 2020 was released in March 2017. One of the major goals of the new strategy will be to double participation.	Demand for grass pitches and third generation artificial grass pitches is likely to increase.
Third generation artificial grass pitches	Demand for third generation artificial grass pitches for football is high and will continue to increase as currently there is a shortfall of full size pitches. It is likely that future demand for the use of third generation artificial grass pitches will increase for both training and match play purposes.	Requirement for new third generation artificial grass pitches to be provided and a need for community use agreements to be in place for any new pitches as well as sinking funds. Requirement for third generation artificial grass pitches to be FA/FIFA tested to host competitive matches. Utilise Sport England/National Governing Body guidance on choosing the correct surface.
Cricket	Except for grounds identified as poor quality, ECB predicts further growth in cricket demand for pitch use over the next few years.	Pitches that are already identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy as being at capacity will not be able to accommodate additional playing demand generated and it is predicted there will be demand for additional cricket playing facilities.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Sport	Future sports development trend	Strategy impact
	<p>All Stars Cricket, the ECB national programme for 5-8 year olds, is engaging large numbers of children and has already been delivered over the past 3-4 years, with increasing numbers of participants year on year, alongside Chance to Shine cricket delivery in primary schools. Increasing numbers of those children are continuing to play cricket as they get older so junior numbers are increasing within clubs. Dynamos Cricket is the ECB national programme for 8-11 year old. It builds on the core principles of All Stars Cricket and participants will continue to develop skills and be introduced to a countdown style of cricket.</p>	<p>Greater usage of outfields to accommodate demand from All Stars Cricket. Shorter formats of cricket, and additional formats including softball cricket, are also driving up demand for pitches. An increase stock of non turf pitches is likely to be required to accommodate demand at West Herts Sports Club.</p>
	<p>Women's and girls' cricket is a national ECB priority and there is a target to establish more female teams in every local authority.</p>	<p>Increased requirement for peak time access to pitches. Need to ensure access to good quality facilities including, segregated changing and toilet provision.</p>
Rugby union	<p>Locally, it is expected that there will be a rise in demand for several key clubs which will lead to a higher demand for pitches and midweek training facilities.</p>	<p>Clubs are likely to field more teams in the future. It is important, therefore, to work with the clubs to maintain the current pitch stock and support facility development. In particular, capital improvements are required to the existing natural turf pitches as is improvements to the quality of changing rooms, where appropriate. All clubs should have access to high quality floodlit pitches to support training and match play demand.</p> <p>Need for greater access to current third generational artificial World Rugby pitches in other authorities given shortfalls identified on grass pitches and level of training demand on grass pitches. Potential future need to develop a World Rugby in Watford aligned to Fulleriens RFC if funding opportunities become feasible in the future.</p>
Hockey	<p>Current playing level is likely to increase with a 15% growth rate predicted by England Hockey.</p>	<p>Ensure continued access to at least two sand-based artificial grass pitches to accommodate current demand and ensure sinking funds are in place for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Ensure overspill facilities can be secured for West Herts Hockey Club.</p> <p>Ensure that no third generation artificial grass pitch conversions take place that are detrimental to hockey and revisit hockey demand when and if a conversion is proposed to ensure the subjected pitch is not required.</p>

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Sport	Future sports development trend	Strategy impact
	High profile events (Hockey World Cup 2018 Legacy)	These high profile events aim to raise the profile of the game within England and there will be community events in the build-up within clubs and a promotional programme through clubs and local schools. This will inevitably raise the profile of the game with the aim to increase participation.
	New England Hockey initiative, Hockey Heroes (aimed at growing participation for under 10s).	Ensure that outfields are able to accommodate additional future demand.
Bowls	No expected net increase in memberships.	Likely that any future increase could be accommodated on existing greens.
Tennis	The LTA has a key priority for the strategic development and growth of tennis at both a club and wider community level such as local parks.	Increases in participation can be accommodated through providing additional courts that are floodlit. An increase in casual play can be encouraged through adopting LTA initiatives such as digital access systems.
Netball	Membership of clubs is expected to increase.	Likely that any future increase could be accommodated on existing courts,
Croquet	No expected net increase in memberships.	Likely that any future increase could be accommodated on existing lawns.
Gaelic football	No expected net increase in memberships.	Likely that any future increase could be accommodated on existing provision at Radlett Playing Fields.
Cycling	Current participation levels not expected to drastically increase.	A need to support recreational events and activities.
Athletics	Membership is expected to increase at recreational events i.e. parkrun. Watford Harriers AC identifies an aspiration to grow its membership by circa 55 members.	Need to accommodate recreational demand with toilet facilities. Formal demand can be accommodated at Woodside Athletic Stadium.

### **Recommendation (j) - Consider opportunities to meet the need of community demand for playing pitches through new and proposed education facilities.**

- 5.83 The Council and its relevant education partners should consider how the creation of new school facilities in Watford can meet the needs of community sport. New facilities (and particularly those in major new residential developments) may provide opportunities to address shortfalls for grass playing pitches which have been identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy.
- 5.84 As earlier detailed in Recommendation B, to maximise community use of education facilities it is recommended to establish a coherent, structured relationship with schools. 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 and train. Securing the use of new school facilities through a formal community use agreement (secured through planning permission) therefore provides a platform for local sports organisations to securely access facilities and may also work to address identified shortfalls.
- 5.85 The Playing Pitch Strategy should be used as a baseline to inform the facility mix of playing pitches at any new school developments in Watford (in line with consultation with the National Governing Bodies of Sport) to ensure that both community and educational needs are provided for.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## PART 6: ACTION PLAN

- 6.1 The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the preceding 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. The Action Plan is separated by analysis area.
- 6.2 The Council should make it a high priority to work with National Governing Bodies and other partners to comprise a priority list of actions based on local priorities, National Governing Body priorities and available funding. To allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach, the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of outdoor facility sites and associated provision.
- 6.3 The identification of sites is based on their strategic importance within Watford i.e. they accommodate the majority of demand, or the recommended action has the greatest anticipated impact on addressing shortfalls (identified either on a sport-by-sport basis or across the Council area as a whole).

*Table 6.1: Proposed tiered site criteria*

Criteria	Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites
<b>Site location</b>	Strategically located in Watford. Priority sites for National Governing Bodies of Sport.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Serves the local community.
<b>Site layout</b>	Accommodates three or more grass pitches, including provision of an artificial grass pitch.	Accommodates two or more grass pitches.	Accommodates one or more pitches.
<b>Type of sport</b>	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.
<b>Management</b>	Management control remains within the local authority/other provider or with an appropriate lease arrangement through a committee or education owned.	Management control remains within the local authority/provider or with an appropriate club on a lease arrangement.	Management control remains within the local authority/provider or with an appropriate club on a lease arrangement.
<b>Maintenance regime</b>	Maintenance regime aligns with National Governing Bodies guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns with National Governing Bodies guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime either by the club or in house maintenance contract.
<b>Ancillary facilities</b>	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.	No changing room access on site or appropriate access to accommodate both senior and junior use concurrently (if required).

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- 6.4 Hub sites are of strategic 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 the impact that the site will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.
- 6.5 Key centres are more community focused sites, although some are still likely to service a wider analysis area. There may be more of a focus on a specific sport.
- 6.6 Additionally, it is considered that some financial investment may be necessary to improve the ancillary facilities at both hub sites and key centre sites 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.
- 6.7 Local sites refer to those sites offering minimal provision or that are of minimal value to the wider community. Primarily they are sites with one facility or a low number of facilities that service just one or two sports. The level of priority attached to them for external investment may be relatively low.
- 6.8 For local authority sites, consideration should be given, on a site-by-site basis, to the feasibility of a club taking on a long-term lease (if not already present), in order that external funding can be sought. Such sites will require some level of investment, either to the outdoor sport facilities or ancillary facilities, and is it anticipated that one of the conditions of offering a hire/lease is that the Club would be in a position to source external funding to improve/extend the provision.
- 6.9 Other sites considered in this tier may be primary school sites or secondary school sites that are not widely used by the community or that do not offer community availability.
- 6.10 Some local sites are suitable for rationalisation providing that capital receipts are allocated to replace the lost provision at larger, multi-pitch sites.

### **Management and development**

- 6.11 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.
  - ◀ Options to assist community groups to gain funding to enhance existing provision.
  - ◀ Negotiation with landowners to increase access to private hub sites.
  - ◀ Football investment programme/ third generation artificial grass pitch development with the FA and Football Foundation.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### **Partners**

- 6.12 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.

### **Priority**

- 6.13 Although hub sites are mostly likely to have a high priority level as they have wide importance, high priority sites have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the key issues identified in the assessment. Therefore, some key centres and local sites are also identified as having a high priority level. It is these projects/sites which should generally, if possible, be addressed within the short term (1-2 years).
- 6.14 The majority of key centres are a medium priority, 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.
- 6.15 The low priority sites tend to be single pitch or single sport sites and often club or education sites with local specific importance but that may also contribute to addressing the issues identified in the assessment for specific users.

### **Costs**

- 6.16 The strategic actions have also been ranked as low, medium or high based on cost. The brackets are:
- ◀ (L) -Low - less than £50k;
  - ◀ (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k;
  - ◀ (H) -High £250k and above.
- 6.17 These are based on Sport England's estimated facility costs which can be found at: <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>

### **Timescales**

- 6.18 The Action Plan has been created to be delivered over a ten-year period. The information within the Assessment Report, Strategy and Action Plan will require updating as developments occur.

The indicative timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based:

- ◀ (S) -Short (1-2 years);
- ◀ (M) - Medium (3-5 years);
- ◀ (L) - Long (6+ years).

### **Aim**

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

**WATFORD ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
1	Bromet School	Football	School	Two standard quality mini 5v5 pitches. No community use available on pitches.	Retain pitches for school use.	FA, FF School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
2	Callowland Recreation Ground	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch and one standard quality mini 7v7 pitch. Standard quality ancillary provision. There is a current proposal for the playing fields to be used by a new nearby primary school at Watford Junction (that will not have its own playing field).	Sustain the current maintenance programme for current uses. If the proposal for the new school is progressed, ensure that the capacity of the playing fields is not reduced by curricular use. Consider enhanced maintenance regime to increase site capacity.	FA, FF Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
3	Cassiobury Park	Football	Council	Two standard quality adult pitches which are underused. Good quality ancillary provision.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Consider reconfiguration of pitches to youth 11v11 size to reduce identified shortfalls.	FA, FF Council	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Cricket		One poor quality cricket square with 12 wickets. Pitch is overplayed as a result of poor quality.	Explore opportunities to improve the quality of the square through a partnership approach with the ECB and Hertfordshire County Cricket.	ECB Council		H	S	L-M	
		Bowls		One good quality flat bowling green. Home ground to Watford with Cassiobury Ladies BC. Carparking is a current issue for members.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime.	BE Council		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Total of eight grass courts with four assessed as standard quality and four assessed as poor quality and two macadam courts assessed as good quality. No courts are floodlit. Grosvenor LTC submitted funding application to Sport England to develop new clubhouse. Courts managed and maintained by Veolia.	Consider the feasibility of converting some of the existing grass courts to tarmac macadam and floodlighting the courts to accommodate more usage in the autumn and winter months. This would increase the available court hours for use and support the possibility of creating a central community tennis hub. Support Grosvenor LTC and Sport England in a potential development of a new clubhouse. Work with the LTA to explore smart access technology to help manage usage and access.	LTA Council		H	S	H	
		Croquet		Three good quality croquet lawns. The lawns are maintained by Veolia. The main user, Watford (Cassiobury) aspires to develop a new clubhouse to service demand.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Support any ancillary development to service participation in Croquet.	Sports Club Council		M	M	M-H	
4	Cherry Tree Primary School	Football	School	One standard quality mini 5v5 pitch and one standard quality youth 11v11 pitch which has small levels of overplay. Used by Watford Youth Sports FC as an overspill site.	Sustain pitch quality on the site and explore options to potential transfer a proportion of demand off site to sites with spare capacity or a third generation artificial grass pitch to alleviate overplay.	FA, FF School	Local Site	M	L	L	Protect

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
5	Everett Rovers FC	Football	Sports Club	Two standard quality adult pitches, one poor quality youth 11v11, one poor quality youth 9v9 pitch and three standard quality mini pitches. Several pitches are overmarked with smaller pitches to facilitate fixtures. Small levels of overplay across several pitches. Poor quality pitches due to basic maintenance regime. Portion of pitches have trees overhanging which impact on pitch playability during autumn and winter. The clubhouse and changing facilities are good quality. Pitches are identified in the Watford Local Football Facility Plan for pitch improvements.	Improve the quality of all pitches on site to reduce overplay. Look to utilise the Watford Local Football Facility Plan as a channel to improve quality.	FA, FF Sports Club	Local Site	H	S	L	Protect Enhance
6	Francis Combe Academy	Football	School	Two poor quality adult pitches and one poor quality youth 9v9 pitch. Small levels of overplay on pitches. Pitches are basically maintained and drain poorly.	Explore potential opportunities to improve maintenance regime on all pitches to alleviate overplay.	FA, FF School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Rugby union		One poor quality (M0/D1) senior rugby pitch due to basic maintenance regime. Pitches at capacity through curricular use. Tenure unsecure on site.	Retain pitch for curricular use and improve when required. Work with school to secure tenure on site.	RFU School		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Four standard quality (floodlit) macadam courts.	Retain courts for curricular use. Work with LTA to explore opportunities for non-school use of courts to increased use, income and public access.	LTA School		L	L	L	
		Netball		Three (floodlit) macadam courts.	Retain courts for curricular use.	EN School		L	L	L	
8	Garston Park	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch which is at capacity.	Sustain current maintenance regime.	FA, FF Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
9	Harebreaks Recreation Ground	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch and two standard mini pitches. Changing provision site assessed as poor quality and needing either refurbishment or replacing as identified through the Watford Local Football Facility Plan.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with football partners to develop a new pavilion on site aligned to the Watford Local Football Facility Plan. Consider reconfiguration of pitches to youth 11v11 size to reduce identified shortfalls.	FA, FF Council	Local Site	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
10	King George V Playing Fields	Football	Council	Four standard quality adult pitches and one standard quality youth 11v11 pitch. Changing provision site assessed as poor quality and needing either refurbishment or replacing as identified through the Watford Local Football Facility Plan.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with football partners to develop a new pavilion on site aligned to the Watford Local Football Facility Plan. Consider reconfiguration of pitches to youth 11v11 size to reduce identified shortfalls.	FA, FF Council	Local Site	M	M	M-H	Protect
11	Kingsway Junior School	Football	School	One standard quality mini 5v5 pitch and one standard quality mini 7v7 pitch.	Retain for school use.	FA, FF School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim		
12	Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC)	Rugby union	Council	Two poor quality senior rugby union pitches and a small floodlit training area. The site is overplayed by 2.5 match equivalent sessions. The site has good quality ancillary facilities. Home ground to Watford RFC.	Given identified overplay, there is a need to improve pitch quality through an improved pitch maintenance programme and drainage solutions. Providing additional floodlighting on the site would provide an enhanced opportunity to improve the midweek training offer to members of Watford RFC.	RFU Council	Local Site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance		
15	Meriden Community Centre	Third generation artificial grass pitch	Watford Community Sports & Education Trust	One good quality (floodlit) small sided third generation artificial grass pitch.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Ensure sinking fund is in-place for refurbishment when required.	FA, FF Watford Community Sports & Education Trust	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect		
17	Radlett Road Playing Fields	Gaelic football	Council	One standard quality Gaelic football pitch. Good quality ancillary facilities due to being recently built.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime.	GAA Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect		
18	Stanborough Park	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch and one standard quality youth 9v9 pitch. Poor quality changing facilities.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Consider reconfiguration of pitches to youth 11v11 size to reduce identified shortfalls. Consider feasibility of refurbishing changing facilities to service demand.	FA, FF Council	Local Site	L	L	M	Protect		
20	Sun Postal Sports and Social Club	Football	Sports Club	Three good quality adult pitches, two good quality youth pitches and three good quality mini pitches. Pitches are identified in the Watford Local Football Facility Plan for pitch improvements as to develop the site as a grass pitch hub site.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Look to utilise the Watford Local Football Facility Plan to improve pitch quality.	FA, FF Sports Club	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect		
23	Watford FC (Vicarage Road Stadium)	Football	Sports Club	One good quality stadia adult pitch which services elite football.	Sustain and protect stadia provision.	FA, FF Sports Club	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect		
25	Watford Grammar School for Boys	Cricket	School	Two standard quality cricket squares. No community use on pitches.	Retain for curricular use. Work with school to secure community use.	ECB School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect		
		Rugby union		Two standard quality (M1/D1) rugby union pitches. No community use on pitches.	Retain for curricular use. Work with school to secure community use.	RFU School		L				L	L
		Hockey		One good quality small sided artificial grass pitch which is sand dressed.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Ensure sinking fund is in-place for refurbishment when required. Explore opportunities for further use for recreational based hockey sessions such as those provided by Alex Danson Hockey Academy.	EH School		L				L	M

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
26	Watford Grammar School for Boys (New Field)	Cricket	School	One standard quality cricket square. Tenure is unsecure on site. Home ground to Old Fullarians CC.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with school to secure tenure on site for community access to fa	ECB School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
		Rugby union		Four standard quality (M1/D1) rugby pitches which are unavailable for community use. Pitches at capacity through curricular use.	Retain for curricular use. Work with school to secure community use.	RFU School		L	L	L	
		Hockey		One good quality full size artificial grass pitch which is sand dressed. Home ground to West Herts HC which has a long term lease on the facility.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Ensure sinking fund is in-place for refurbishment when required.	EH School		L	L	L	
27	Watford Grammar School for Girls	Tennis	School	Six standard quality (no floodlighting) macadam courts.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with LTA to explore opportunities for non-school use of courts to increased use, income and public access.	LTA School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
		Netball		Six macadam netball court.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime.	EN School		L	L	L	
28	Watford Leisure Centre - Woodside	Hockey	Commercial Management	One poor quality full size artificial grass pitch which is sand dressed. Poor quality is a result of the pitch having exceeded its ten year lifespan expectancy and having limited repair/maintenance works undertaken. Pitch managed by Everyone Active. Watford Borough Council has developed a masterplan which proposes that the existing artificial grass pitch at the site is converted to a third generation artificial grass pitch. This site is identified in the Watford Local Football Facility Plan as having the potential to convert the current artificial grass pitch to a full size third generation artificial grass pitch.	Work with football partners to explore opportunities to develop a full size third generation artificial grass pitch on current artificial grass pitch to reduce identified shortfall of third generation artificial grass pitches in Watford. Ensure that the development is not at a detriment to hockey and that any small sided recreational hockey can be provided elsewhere in Watford. The small sided artificial grass pitch at Watford Grammar School for Boys is most suitable for use and is good quality. Ensure sinking fund is in-place for refurbishment when required.	EH Commercial Management	Local Site	H	S	H	Protect Enhance
29	West Herts Sports Club	Football	Sports Club	One standard quality adult pitch which has small levels of overplay, one standard quality mini 7v7 pitch and one standard quality youth 9v9 pitch.	Sustain current maintenance regime. Explore options to transfer a proportion of overplay off site to alleviate identified overplay.	FA, FF Sports Club	Key Centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide
		Cricket		One good quality cricket square. The square is identified as being overplayed.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Explore options to reduced identified overplay through the installation of a non-turf-pitch to support a transfer of demand from the natural turf wickets on site from on-site junior teams.	ECB Sports Club		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Four good quality floodlit macadam courts, three good quality (non floodlit) macadam courts and three good quality (non floodlit grass courts. West Herts Sports Club has a live planning application to provide floodlighting around three of its macadam courts.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Support West Herts Sports Club to provide additional floodlighting to its unflood lit macadam courts.	LTA Sports Club		L	L	M	

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
		-		The Club has gained planning permission which will enable it to sell a proportion of its land on Cassiobury Road for the development of 23 apartments. The Club is expected to receive £1.75 million from the sale of land which will be directed into the refurbishment of its ageing ancillary provision which is identified as being poor quality. Enhancements will also be made to its fitness suit, carparking and fencing. A new floodlit multi-use-games area, practise cricket nets and a non-turf cricket wicket will also be provided.	Ensure that the any development on site is provided to a good quality and that it will provide long-term opportunities for people to participate in sport and recreational opportunities as part of a varied offer for members of West Herts Sports Club.	Council		-	-	-	
30	Westfield Academy	Football	School	One adult, two youth and two mini pitches which are all standard quality. The ancillary provision servicing the grass football pitches and third generation artificial grass pitch is an old portacabin facility which is poor quality. The Watford Local Football Facility Plan identifies the grass pitches and changing pavilion need improvement linked to current and to potential future demand generated by a secondary third generation grass pitch.	Given identified overplay, there is a need to improve pitch quality. Look to utilise the Watford Local Football Facility Plan to improve pitch quality. Work with school to secure tenure on site. Work with football partners to develop a new pavilion on site aligned to the Watford Local Football Facility Plan.	FA, FF School	Hub Site	H	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide
		Third generation artificial grass pitch		One good quality (floodlit) full size third generation artificial grass pitch. This site is identified in the Watford Local Football Facility Plan as having the potential to accommodate a secondary full size third generation artificial grass pitch to service identified shortfalls within the Playing Pitch Strategy.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with football partners to explore opportunities to develop a secondary full size pitch to reduce identified shortfall of third generation artificial grass pitches. Ensure sinking fund is in-place for refurbishment when required.			H	M	H	
		Rugby union		One poor quality (M0/D1) senior rugby pitch which is at capacity through curricular use. Pitch is available for community use but is unused.	Retain pitch for curricular use and improve when required.	RFU School		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Five standard quality (no floodlighting) macadam courts.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with LTA to explore opportunities for non-school use of courts to increased use, income and public access.	LTA School		L	L	L	
		Netball		Four macadam netball courts. Back to netball sessions take place outdoor at Westfield Academy.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime.	EN School		L	L	L	
		-		There is no formal community use agreement in place on site. As a priority, this should be addressed.	Work with the School to secure a formal community use agreement. Consult with Sport England as part of the process to ensure a suitable agreement is established.	School Council		H	S	L	

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
32	Woodside Playing Field	Football	Council	Four standard quality adult pitches, one poor quality adult pitch, two poor quality mini pitches pitch and two poor quality youth 11v11 pitches which have small levels of overplay. Pitches are identified in the Watford Local Football Facility Plan for pitch improvements.	Work with football partners to identify opportunities to improve the quality of football grass pitches on the site. Consider reconfiguration of one or two adult pitches to youth 11v11 size to reduce identified shortfalls.	FA, FF Council	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
		Cricket		The site has three natural turf cricket squares and is the home venue to Watford Cricket Club and several teams which use the site on a more varied, adhoc basis. The primary square used by Watford Cricket Club is standard quality but would benefit from being relayed. This square is complimented by a good quality non-turf pitch. The remaining two squares have football pitches overmarked on the outfields. One is poor quality and one is standard quality. The poor quality score is overplayed, and this is primarily due to its poor quality.	Explore funding opportunities to improve the quality of the existing stock of natural turf cricket squares on the site to service current and future users.	ECB Council		M	L	L	
		Bowls		<b>Disused</b> – currently one disused green following the closure of Owl Bowls Club in March 2019.	There is no evidence to suggest that this needs to be retained as a bowling green and therefore options should be explored to utilise the land for other sporting uses. If this is not feasible and the bowling green is lost for non-sporting uses, mitigation should be provided by making qualitative improvements to the surrounding sports provision.	BE Council		L	L	L	
		Athletics		One good quality athletic track which is an eight lane, synthetic 400 metre track located at Woodside Athletic Stadium. The stadium provides a 700 seater covered spectator stand. The Woodside Track currently has a 'working towards' status to accreditation. Of the six units, it has passed two, has two pending accreditation and is working toward another two (see footnote for details of TrackMark units).	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work towards gaining full TrackMark certification.	EA Council		L	L	L	
		-		Watford Borough Council has been working to develop a masterplan and feasibility study for Woodside Playing Field. The outline plans feature a new community sports hub which will service existing and future sporting demand on the site. The current ancillary offer is poor quality.	Given the identified ancillary offer for both football and cricket is poor, the opportunity to develop a new community hub which can service all current sporting users which be highly beneficial to the area. The Watford Local Football Facility Plan identifies the existing pavilion as needing replacement and this may provide a potential funding opportunity if so required.	FA,FF ECB Council		H	M	H	
33	Garston Bowling Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality flat bowling green.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime.	BE Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
34	Lea Farm Recreation Ground	Tennis	Council	Two standard quality macadam tennis courts.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with the LTA to explore smart access technology to help manage usage and access.	LTA Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
35	North Watford Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality flat bowling green. The Club highlight a need to replace its heating system to service its membership. It is currently exploring potential funding opportunities to do this.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Support the Club in trying to secure funding to replace its heating system.	BE Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
36	Herts Bowling Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality flat bowling green.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime.	BE Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
37	Orchard Park	Tennis	Council	Three standard quality (no floodlighting) macadam courts. The site previously accommodated mini football pitches	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work with the LTA to explore smart access technology to help manage usage and access. Protect grass playing field to meet potential grass pitch shortfalls for football.	LTA Council	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
38	Cassiobury Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Two good quality (no floodlighting) macadam courts, one good quality (floodlit) macadam court and three good quality (floodlit) artificial courts.	Sustain court quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Support Cassiobury Tennis Club to provide additional flood lighting on its two non-floodlit courts to enable it to better cater for its high membership base.	LTA Sports Club	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
39	Fullerians RUFC	Rugby union	Sports Club	Five good quality (M2/D1) senior rugby pitches and seven mini rugby pitches. One senior pitch is floodlit which accommodates all midweek training for all 23 teams. This pitch is significantly overplayed due to it accommodate all midweek training. The ancillary facilities which service the site are very good quality and meet all of the latest RFU technical build specifications.	Sustain quality by upholding the current maintenance regime. Work to develop additional floodlighting on the site across a further full senior pitch as a minimum. In the long term, consider the site for the development of a World Rugby Regulation 22 third generation artificial grass pitch to service demand from the Club and others in South West Hertfordshire.	RFU Sports Club	Local Site	H	S-M	M	Protect Provide
40	Oxhey Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard quality flat bowling green.	Look to improve quality to service club members.	BE Sports Club	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
41	Coats Way JMI and Nursery School	Football	School	One standard quality mini 5v5 pitch which is unavailable for community use.	Retain for curricular use.	FA, FF School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
42	Holy Rood Catholic Primary school	Football	School	One standard quality mini 5v5 pitch which is unavailable for community use.	Retain for curricular use.	FA, FF School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect
43	The Grove Academy	Football	School	Two standard quality mini 5v5 pitches which are unavailable for community use.	Retain for curricular use.	FA, FF School	Local Site	L	L	L	Protect

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
-	Former Meriden Primary School Playing Field	-	Hertfordshire County Council	Lapsed school playing field at the former Meriden Primary School. The playing field is proposed as a development allocation in the emerging Watford Local Plan (Site HS8). The playing fields are the detached playing fields of Parkgate Junior School but these are not used by the school.	Site should be protected from development or replacement (unless adequately re-provided elsewhere in accordance with Sport England's Playing Fields Policy Exception E4), as there is potential need for playing field land to accommodate more pitches to meet the identified shortfalls. Given that the site is lapsed, if it is considered that mitigation can be delivered through qualitative improvements to existing sites, local sites which require improvements to pitch quality and/or ancillary provision are Harebreaks Recreation Ground and Lea Farm Recreation Ground.	Hertfordshire County Council Sport England	Local site	-	-	-	-
-	Land at Alban Wood Former Playing Field	-	Hertfordshire County Council	Lapsed playing field site. Previously accommodated demand from Alban Wood Junior School.	Site should be protected from development or replacement (unless adequately re-provided elsewhere in accordance with Sport England's Playing Fields Policy Exception E4), as there is potential need for playing field land to accommodate more pitches to meet the identified shortfalls. Given that the site is lapsed, if it is considered that mitigation can be delivered through qualitative improvements to existing sites then Woodside Playing Field is the nearest site in its locality. The site requires improvements to its cricket squares, football pitches and onsite ancillary provision.	Hertfordshire County Council Sport England	Local site	-	-	-	-

## PART 7: HOUSING GROWTH SCENARIOS

- 7.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy provides an estimate of demand for pitch sport based on population forecasts and club consultation to 2036 (in line with the emerging Local Plan period). This future demand is translated into teams likely to be generated, rather than actual pitch provision required. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator adds to this, updating the likely demand generated for pitch sports based on housing increases and converts the demand into match equivalent sessions and the number of pitches required. This is achieved via team generation rates in the Assessment Report to determine how many new teams would be generated from an increase in population derived from housing growth and gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision.
- 7.2 Experience shows that only housing sites with 600 dwellings or more are likely to generate demand for new provision to be created. For large scale developments, it is likely that demand will be potentially generated for larger sports such as football and/or cricket. Consideration should be given to providing multi-pitch sites with suitable ancillary provision, including appropriate clubhouse/changing facilities and carparking. Single pitch sites which have been provided traditionally by developers are not considered to provide long term sustainable provision for pitch sports.
- 7.3 Where demand does not warrant new pitch provision, contributions should be used to enhance existing provision in the locality through, for example, improving quality or providing new or improved ancillary provision. The Action Plan in this document, as well as consultation with appropriate National Governing Bodies of Sport, should be used to assist in the selection of suitable sites and suitable enhancements.
- 7.4 The scenario below shows the additional demand for pitch sports generated from housing growth over the Local Plan period. The demand is shown in match equivalent sessions per week for the majority of sports, with the exception of cricket, where match equivalent sessions are by season. Training demand is expressed in either hours or match equivalent sessions. Where expressed in hours, it is expected that demand will be to either a third generation artificial grass pitch (to accommodate football demand) or an artificial grass pitch (to accommodate hockey demand). Where expressed in match equivalent sessions, it is expected training will take place on floodlit grass pitches.
- 7.5 The indicative figures assume that population growth will average 2.4 per dwelling (based on the national average occupancy rate) and uses the accumulative housing figures identified in the Watford Local Plan (2018-2036) of 14,000 dwellings. It is expected that population growth generated from this figure will equate to an additional population increase of 33,600.
- 7.6 Please note that the scenarios can be updated as required over the Local Plan period throughout the lifespan of the Playing Pitch Strategy to reflect population projections and projections, changes in the housing requirement and change in the average household size.
- 7.7 The number of pitches required in the following tables has been rounded up or down accordingly, however, capital and revenue costs are based on indicative pitch costs, proportionate to the total match equivalent sessions required rather than just whole pitches required. Though increases in match sessions for some sports are not sufficient to warrant the creation of new pitches, the associated costs have been incorporated and investment into alternative sites could instead be considered to increase capacity to accommodate this new demand.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## Local Plan housing target – 14,000 forecasted dwellings

- 7.8 The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 2018-2036 is 33,600 (based on 14,000 dwellings being delivered). This population increase equates to 19.71 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 3.2 match equivalent sessions of demand per week on artificial grass pitch for hockey and 125.35 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket.
- 7.9 Training demand equates to 31 hours of use per week for football on third generation artificial grass pitches and hockey equates to 7.2 hours of use per week on artificial grass pitches. There are also 4.27 match equivalent sessions per week of training for rugby union on a floodlit grass pitch.

Table 7.1: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 14,000 forecasted dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport	
	Match demand (MES) per week <sup>17</sup>	Training demand <sup>18</sup>
Adult football	3.2	31 hours
Youth football	8.09	
Mini soccer	4.21	
Rugby union	4.21	4.27
Adult hockey	1.85	5.56 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	1.35	1.64 hours
Cricket	125.35	-

- 7.10 The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifecycle costs.

Table 7.2: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches				
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost <sup>19</sup>	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) <sup>20</sup>	Changing rooms (numbers)	Changing rooms (capital cost)
Adult football	3 (3.2)	£352,116	£74,297	6 (6.4)	£1,197,196
Youth football	8 (8.09)	£667,168	£140,105	12 (12.13)	£2,268,371
Mini soccer	4 (4.21)	£115,828	£24,324	-	-
Rugby union	(4.21)	£648,636	£138,808	8 (8.42)	£1,575,258
Cricket	2 (2.77)	£898,162	£181,429	5 (5.54)	£1,035,170
Sand based artificial grass pitches	0 (0.54)	£490,091	£15,193	1 (1.09)	£203,208
Third generation artificial grass pitches	0 (0.82)	£888,387	£29,882	1 (1.63)	£305,103

<sup>17</sup> As per the Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

<sup>18</sup> Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit third generation artificial grass pitch or hockey suitable artificial grass pitch

<sup>19</sup> Sport England Facilities Costs Second Quarter 2019 – (<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>)

<sup>20</sup> Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

### **PART 8: DELIVER THE STRATEGY AND KEEP IT ROBUST AND UP TO DATE**

#### ***Delivery***

- 8.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy provides guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across Watford. By addressing issues identified in the Assessment Report and using the strategic framework presented in this Strategy, the current and future sporting and recreational needs of Watford can be met. The Strategy identifies where there is a deficiency in provision and identifies how best to resolve this in the future.
- 8.2 Production of this Strategy is the start of the planning process. Successful Strategy implementation and the benefits to be gained depend upon regular engagement between all partners involved and the adoption of a mutually bought into, strategic approach. It is important that this document is used in a practical manner, supports engagement 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.
- 8.3 Each member of the Steering Group should take the lead to ensure the Playing Pitch Strategy is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence. The role of the Steering Group should not end with the completion of the Playing Pitch Strategy document
- 8.4 To help ensure that the Playing Pitch Strategy is well used it should be regarded as the key document within the study area guiding the improvement and protection of playing pitch provision. It needs to be the document to which people and agencies regularly turn to for information in respect of how current demand should be met and what actions are required to improve the situation and meet future demand. To ensure that this is achieved the Steering Group need to have a clear understanding of how the Playing Pitch Strategy can be applied and therefore delivered.
- 8.5 The process of Playing Pitch Strategy development has already led to a number of benefits that assist its application and delivery. These include enhanced partnership work across different agendas and organisations, pooling of resources along with strengthened relationships and understanding between stakeholders, members of the Steering Group and the sporting community. The drivers behind the Playing Pitch Strategy and the work to develop the recommendations and action plan will have also highlighted, and helped the Steering Group to understand, the key areas to which its influence should be applied and strategy delivered.
- 8.6 Following sign off of the Playing Pitch Strategy, a short-term Action Plan should be prepared by the Council, in consultation with relevant partners, in order to distil the existing Action Plan and to give the Steering Group a short-term focus. This would then need to be revised through regular meetings.

#### ***Monitoring and updating***

- 8.7 It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This should be led by the Council and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the Playing Pitch Strategy has been applied should be a key component of monitoring its delivery and be an on-going role of the Steering Group.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- 8.8 The Steering Group that takes the Playing Pitch Strategy forward should be a sub-regional group made up of representatives from the South West Herts authorities as well as other partners such as the National Governing Bodies of Sport, and Herts Sports Partnership. This offers benefits in terms of joint working on strategic and cross-boundary issues and will also be more efficient in terms of administration when compared to each authority having its own individual Steering Group.
- 8.9 KKP will provide the tools used to produce the Playing Pitch Strategy to the Council as well as training on how to use such tools, such as the Playing Pitch Strategy database used to hold all information gathered. This will enable the monitoring and updating process to be carried out.
- 8.10 As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the Playing Pitch Strategy being signed off by the steering group, Sport England and the National Governing Bodies will consider the Playing Pitch Strategy and the information on which it is based to be out of date.
- 8.11 The nature of the supply and in particular the demand for outdoor sports facilities will likely to have changed over the three years. Therefore, without any form of review and update within this time period it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.
- 8.12 Ideally the Playing Pitch Strategy 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 built up during its development. Taking into account the time to develop the Playing Pitch Strategy this should also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed.
- 8.13 An annual review should not be regarded as a particular resource intensive task. However, it should highlight:
- ◀ How 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 or reduce following the delivery of others)
  - ◀ How the Playing Pitch Strategy 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.
- 8.14 Once the Playing Pitch Strategy 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 Playing Pitch Strategy and outdoor sports provision in the area
  - ◀ Monitors, evaluates and reviews progress with the delivery of the recommendations and action plan
  - ◀ Shares lessons learnt from how the Playing Pitch Strategy has been used and how it has been applied to a variety of circumstances
  - ◀ Ensures that the Playing Pitch Strategy is used effectively to input into any new opportunities to secure improved provision and influence relevant programmes and initiatives
  - ◀ Maintains links between relevant parties with an interest in local outdoor sports provision;

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

- ◀ Reviews the need to update the Playing Pitch Strategy 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 Playing Pitch Strategy document (including the supply and demand information and assessment details).
    - ◀ Consider how provision for sport be made in new development, where on-site provision is required and how developer contributions are used.
- 8.15 Alongside regular Steering Group meetings, a good way to keep the Playing Pitch Strategy up to date and maintain relationships is to hold annual sport specific meetings with pitch sport National Governing Bodies and other relevant parties. These could be part of a process of updating key supply and demand information plus, if necessary, amending assessment work, tracking progress in respect of implementing action plan recommendations and highlighting new issues and opportunities.
- 8.16 Meetings could be timed to coincide with annual National Governing Body affiliation processes. This would help to signal 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 should also feed into these meetings.
- 8.17 National Governing Bodies will also be able to confirm any further performance quality assessments undertaken within the study area. Discussion with league secretaries may also indicate annual league meetings may be useful to attend to pick up on specific issues and/or enable a review of the relevant club details to be undertaken.
- 8.18 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 sites in the future.
- 8.19 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 work encompassing, for example, grounds maintenance and sports development departments, to ensure that this is achieved and that results inform subsequent annual sports facility development plans. Results should be shared with partners via a consultative mechanism.

### ***Watford Local Football Facilities Plan***

- 8.20 The findings of and any subsequent changes to the Playing Pitch Strategy should align with the Local Football Facilities Plan for Watford (which has been created in conjunction with the Playing Pitch Strategy) which will also serve as a live document requiring concurrent management. The position for formal and affiliated football provision determined and updated through the Playing Pitch Strategy should form the basis for investment into formalised football provision echoed through the Local Football Facilities Plan, which will further explore opportunities for investment into informal, recreational, small sided and indoor football as an extension of the Playing Pitch Strategy findings, the result being a wholistic plan for partnership investment into football facilities in Watford over the next decade. The Playing Pitch Strategy and Local Football Facilities Plan should demonstrate synergy and should inform each other.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## Checklist

- 8.21 To help ensure the Playing Pitch Strategy 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:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport>

Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date	Tick 	
	Yes	Requires Attention
<b>Step 9: Apply &amp; deliver the strategy</b>		
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?		
<b>Step 10: Keep the strategy robust &amp; up to date</b>		
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 National Governing Bodies 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 1: SPORTING CONTEXT

The following section outlines a series of national, regional and local policies pertaining to the study and which will have an important influence on the Strategy.

### National context

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.

### ***Department of Media Culture and Sport Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (2015)***

The Government published its strategy for sport in December 2015. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:

- ◀ More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ More people volunteering in sport.
- ◀ More people experiencing live sport.
- ◀ Maximising international sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ A more productive sport sector.
- ◀ A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
- ◀ A more responsible sport sector.

### ***Sport England: Towards an Active Nation (2016-2021)***

Sport England has recently released its new five year strategy 'Towards an Active Nation'. The aim is to target the 28% of people who do less than 30 minutes of exercise each week and will focus on the least active groups; typically women, the disabled and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Sport England will invest up to £30m on a plan to increase the number of volunteers in grassroots sport. Emphasis will be on working with a larger range of partners with less money being directed towards National Governing Bodies.

The Strategy will help deliver against the five health, social and economic outcomes set out in the Government's Sporting Future strategy.

- ◀ Physical Wellbeing
- ◀ Mental Wellbeing
- ◀ Individual Development
- ◀ Social & Community Development
- ◀ Economic Development

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### ***National Planning Policy Framework (2018)***

The National Planning Policy Framework 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 National Planning Policy Framework 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 National Planning Policy Framework sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

The 'promoting healthy and safe communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sports and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

As a prerequisite, the National Planning Policy Framework 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 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 benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

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 Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)***

The Football Association's (FA) National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a ten-year period. The Strategy is presently in draft and is due for publication in 2018.

The Strategy sets out shared aims and objectives it aims to deliver on in conjunction with The Premier League, Sport England and the Government, to be delivered with support of the Football Foundation.

These stakeholders have clearly identified the aspirations for football to contribute directly to nationally important social and health priorities. Alongside this, the strategy is clear that traditional, affiliated football remains an important priority and a core component of the game, whilst recognising and supporting the more informal environments used for the community and recreational game.

Its vision is: *"Within 10 years we aim to deliver great football facilities, wherever they are needed"*

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

£1.3 billion has been spent by football and Government since 2000 to enhance existing football facilities and build new ones. However, more is needed if football and Government's shared objectives for participation, individual well-being and community cohesion are to be achieved. Nationally, direct investment will be increased – initially to £69 million per annum from football and Government (a 15% increase on recent years).

The NFFS investment priorities can be broadly grouped into six areas, recognising the need to grow the game, support existing players and better understand the different football environments:

- ◀ **Improve 20,000 Natural turf pitches**, with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 third generation artificial grass pitch 'equivalents'** (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses**, linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;  
**Support access to flexible indoor spaces**, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;
- ◀ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision**, recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;
- ◀ **Support testing of technology and innovation**, building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

### *Local Football Facility Plans*

To support in delivery of the NFFS, The FA has commissioned a national project. Over the next two years to 2020, a Local Football Facility Plan will be produced for every local authority across England. Each plan will be unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation, including currently underrepresented communities.

Identifying strategic priorities for football facilities across the formal, recreational and informal game, Local Football Facility Plans will establish a ten-year vision for football facilities that aims to transform the playing pitch stock in a sustainable way. They will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all will be identified via Local Football Facility Plans. These will guide the allocation of 90% of national football investment (The FA, Premier League and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) and forge stronger partnerships with local stakeholders to develop key sites. This, together with local match-funding will deliver over one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next 10-years.

It is important to recognise that a Local Football Facility Plan is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Therefore, it cannot be used as a replacement for a Playing Pitch Strategy and it will not be accepted as an evidence base for site change of use or disposal.

A Local Football Facility Plan will; however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a Playing Pitch Strategy and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### ***The FA: National Game Strategy (2018-2021)***

The FA launched its new National Game Strategy in July 2018 which aims to inspire a life-long journey in football for all. To achieve this, the strategy will focus on five key aspects of the game:

- ◀ A high quality introduction to football
- ◀ Developing clubs and leagues
- ◀ Embrace all formats of football and engage all participants
- ◀ Recruit, develop and support the workforce
- ◀ Develop sustainable facilities

Through these five pillars, The FA's objectives are to:

- ◀ Increase the number of male affiliated and recreational players by 10%.
- ◀ Double the number of female affiliated and recreational players via a growth of 75%.
- ◀ Increase the number of disability affiliated and recreational players by 30%.
- ◀ Ensure affiliated Futsal is available across the country in order to increase the number of Futsal affiliated and recreational players.

The sustainable football facilities should provide support to an agreed portfolio of priority projects that meet National Football Facility Strategy (NFFS) investment priorities. The sustainable football facilities should provide support to an agreed portfolio of priority projects that meet National Football Facility Strategy (NFFS) investment priorities.

### ***England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Inspiring Generations (2019-2024)***

"Inspiring Generations" is the new ECB participation strategy which was announced in January 2019. It builds on the strong foundations laid by Cricket Unleashed and supports the growth of cricket in England and Wales between 2020 and 2024. At the heart of this strategy is a single unifying purpose, which gets to the core of what the game can do for society both on and off the field to ensure that cricket is in an even stronger position that it is in 2019.

Inspire Generations has six key priorities and activities including transforming women's and girls' cricket to increase the representation of women in every level of cricket by:

- ◀ Growing the base through participation and facilities investment.
- ◀ Growing the base through participation and facilities investment.
- ◀ Launching centres of excellence and a new elite domestic structure.
- ◀ Investing in girls' county age group cricket.
- ◀ Delivering a girls' secondary school programme.

### ***The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan (2017-2021)***

The RFU has released its new strategic vision for rugby in England. The strategy is based on four main elements which are; Protect, Engage, Grow and Win. It covers all elements of rugby union ranging from elite rugby to grassroots, although the general relevancy to the Playing Pitch Strategy is centred around growing the game.

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

The RFU exists to promote and develop rugby union in England and ensure the long-term sustainability of clubs by growing player numbers and retaining them across all age groups. Responding to wider market influences, work will continue on developing new ways to take part in all forms of the game, without comprising the sports traditions. This will ensure a lasting legacy from elite success by attracting new players and encouraging current male and female adult players to play.

The four key aims to ensure long term sustainability are to:

- ◀ Improve player transition from age grade to adult 15-a-side rugby
- ◀ Expand places to play through artificial grass pitches
- ◀ Engage new communities in rugby
- ◀ Create a community 7's offering

### ***England Hockey - A Nation Where Hockey Matters 2013***

The vision is for England to be a 'Nation Where Hockey Matters'.

We know that delivering success on the international stage stimulates the nation's pride in their hockey team and, with the right events in place, we will attract interest from spectators, sponsors and broadcasters alike. The visibility that comes from our success and our occasions will inspire young people and adults to follow in the footsteps of their heroes and, if the right opportunities are there to meet their needs, they will play hockey and enjoy wonderful experiences.

Underpinning all this is the infrastructure which makes our sport function. We know the importance of our volunteers, coaches, officials, clubs and facilities. The more inspirational our people can be, the more progressive we can be and the more befitting our facilities can be, the more we will achieve for our sport. EH will enable this to happen and we are passionate about our role within the sport. We will lead, support, counsel, focus and motivate the Hockey Nation and work tirelessly towards our vision.

As a governing body, we want to have a recognisable presence to participants of the game, be that through club or association website or their communications, or through the work of the many outstanding coaches in our game, so that players understand that their club is part of a wider team working together to a common goal.

The core objectives are as follows:

1. Grow our Participation
2. Deliver International Success
3. Increase our Visibility
4. Enhance our Infrastructure
5. For EH to be proud and respected custodians of the sport

#### *Club participation*

Our club market is well structured and clubs are required to affiliate to EH to play in community leagues. As a result only relatively few occasional teams lie outside our affiliation structure. Schools and Universities are the other two areas where significant hockey is played.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

Hockey is clearly benefiting from a double Olympic legacy. After Great Britain's women won bronze in front of a home crowd in London in 2012 the numbers of young girls playing the sport doubled and a historic gold in Rio 2016 saw more than 10,000 players promptly joining clubs. These triumphs have inspired the nation to get active and play hockey. Thanks to the outstanding work of the network of clubs across the country, EH has seen unprecedented growth at both ends of the age range. There has been an 80% increase in the number of boys and girls in clubs, as well as a 54% increase in players over the age of 46.

Hockey clubs have reaped the rewards of the improved profile of the sport, focussing on a link with schools to provide excellent opportunities for young players. Programmes such as Quick sticks – a small-sided version of hockey for 7-11 year olds – in Primary Schools have been hugely successful in allowing new players to take part in the sport from an early age. The growth in the sport since the eve of London 2012 has been seen across the country, examples being a 110% increase in under 16s club participation in London, and a 111% growth in the North West in the same age bracket.

### ***England Hockey Strategy***

EH's Facilities Strategy can be found [here](http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=2075&sectionTitle=Facilities+Strategy).  
<http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=2075&sectionTitle=Facilities+Strategy>

**Vision:** For every hockey club in England to have appropriate and sustainable facilities that provide excellent experiences for players.

**Mission:** More, Better, Happier Players with access to appropriate and sustainable facilities

The 3 main objectives of the facilities strategy are:

#### **1. PROTECT: To conserve the existing hockey provision**

- There are currently over 800 pitches that are used by hockey clubs (club, school, universities) across the country. It is important to retain the current provision where appropriate to ensure that hockey is maintained across the country.

#### **2. IMPROVE: To improve the existing facilities stock (physically and administratively)**

- The current facilities stock is ageing and there needs to be strategic investment into refurbishing the pitches and ancillary facilities. EH works to provide more support for clubs to obtain better agreements with facilities providers & education around owning an asset.

#### **3. DEVELOP: To strategically build new hockey facilities where there is an identified need and ability to deliver and maintain. This might include consolidating hockey provision in a local area where appropriate.**

EH has identified key areas across the country where there is a lack of suitable hockey provision and there is a need for additional pitches, suitable for hockey. There is an identified demand for multi pitches in the right places to consolidate hockey and allow clubs to have all of their provision catered for at one site.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### ***Bowls England: Strategic Plan 2014-2017***

Although the Plan is currently being updated, this version remains the most up to date available. 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.
- ◀ 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.
- ◀ 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.

### ***British Tennis Strategy 2019***

The new LTA Strategy includes seven strategies relating to three objectives which are built around the following vision and mission:

**Vision:** tennis opened up

**Mission:** to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable

#### **Objectives**

- ◀ Increase the number of fans on our database from [623,602] to [1,000,000] by 2023.
- ◀ More people playing more often;
  - ◀ Increase the number of adults playing tennis each year from [7.7% (4,018,600)] of the population to [8.5% (4,420,460)], and the frequency of adults playing tennis twice a month from [1.9% (858,700)] of the population to [2.2% (1,000,000)] by 2023.
  - ◀ The number of children playing tennis from [x] to [y] by 2023 (to be finalised December 2018 on publication of Sport England's new Child Participation Survey).
- ◀ Enable 5 new players to break into the top 100 by 2023 and inspire the tennis audience.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

### Strategies

1. Visibility - Broaden relevance and increase visibility of tennis all year round to build engagement and participation with fans and players.
2. Innovation - Innovate in the delivery of tennis to widen its appeal.
3. Investment - Support community facilities and schools to increase the opportunities to play
4. Accessibility - Make the customer journey to playing tennis easier and more accessible for anyone
5. Engagement - Engage and collaborate with everyone involved in delivering tennis in Britain, particularly coaches and volunteers to attract and maintain more people in the game.
6. Performance - Create a pathway for British champions that nurtures a diverse team of players, people and leaders.
7. Leadership - Lead tennis in Britain to the highest standard so it is a safe, welcoming, well-run sport.

### ***England Netball - Your Game, Your Way 2013-17***

Even though this Plan is out of date, England Netball remains committed to its '10-1-1' mission, vision and values that form the fundamentals for its strategic planning for the future for the sport and business. To facilitate the successful achievement of Netball 10:1:1 and Goal 4, England Netball will:

- ◀ Accelerate the participation growth by extending our market penetration and reach through the activation of a range of existing and new participant-focused products and programmes that access new and targeted markets.
- ◀ Increase the level of long-term participant retention through targeting programmes at known points of attrition and easy transition through the market segments, supported by an infrastructure that reflects the participant needs and improves their netball experience.
- ◀ Build a sustainable performance pathway and system built on the principles of purposeful practice and appropriate quality athlete coach contact time.
- ◀ Develop sustainable revenue streams through the commercialisation of a portfolio of products and programmes and increasing membership sales. This will also include the creation of cost efficiencies and improved value for money through innovative partnerships and collaborations in all aspects of the business.
- ◀ Establish high standards of leadership and governance that protect the game and its people and facilitates the on-going growth and transformation of the sport.

### ***England Athletics Strategic Plan – Athletics & Running: for everyone, forever – 2017 and beyond***

This plan sets out England Athletics' mission, vision and strategic priorities that will direct how they work as an organisation during the coming years: what they do and how they will do it.

**Vision:** Make athletics and running the most inclusive and popular sport in England, led by a network of progressive clubs and organisations and supported by a sustainable, respected and trusted governing body.

For England Athletics to achieve this vision, they will focus on three values:

- ◀ Pride – taking pride in their work and demonstrating to athletes that they recognise the importance of their role in bettering athletics.
- ◀ Integrity – demonstrate integrity to earn respect and to build effective partnerships.
- ◀ Inclusivity – promote inclusivity in all their actions.

# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

---

**Mission:** To grow opportunities for everyone to experience athletics and running, to enable them to reach their full potential.

In order to achieve their mission, England Athletics will have three strategic priorities.

1. To expand the capacity of the sport by supporting and developing its volunteers and other workforce. The target is to achieve a 6% increase every year of licensed leaders, coaches and officials.
2. To sustain and increase participation and performance levels in our sport. To achieve this, England Athletics' current targets are to increase the number of club registered athletes from (149,000 to 172,000), engage 135,000 people through the RunTogether programme and to increase athlete performance levels across all events and disciplines by 1% every year.
3. To influence participation in the wider athletics market. Their target here is to increase the number of regular athletes or runners by at least one million.

### ***England Athletics Facility Strategy (2018 – 2025)***

The purpose of this document is to set out our long term vision for athletics facilities in England. Facilities form a vital component of the overall England Athletics strategy.

The development, protection and enhancement of facilities will support our strategic plan and help England Athletics contribute to the delivery of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Futures: A New Strategy for Sport and Sport England's strategy Towards an Active Nation. Appropriate facilities help to attract and inspire new participants and provide the foundation and focus for a significant proportion of the England Athletics family.

The England Athletics Strategic Plan notes that the sport increasingly needs to become financially sustainable and that a business-like and innovative approach is a vital component of its future success. Facilities are fundamental, but they are also expensive to create and to maintain. The sport therefore faces a significant challenge to develop, improve and maintain facilities, most of which are currently operated and funded by third parties.

This strategy sets out a challenge to all those involved with the delivery of the sport to be innovative and business like in the operation and development of facilities at a time of financial challenge, as it aims "To create an innovative and inspiring network of sustainable athletic facilities, with the capacity to meet both current and future demand across England".

### ***UK Athletics Facilities Strategy (2014-2019)***

Facilities are essential to attracting, retaining and developing athletes of the future. Having the right facilities in the right place will be crucial in meeting growing demand, increasing participation in physical activity and athletics, improving the health of the nation and supporting a new generation of athletes in clubs and schools through to national and world class level.

UKA and the Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs) recognise the challenges faced by facility owners and venue operators, and the 5 year Facility Strategy (2014-2019) uses a Track & Field facility model designed to support a sustainable UK network of development, training and competition venues that meet Home Country needs aligned to UKA's Athlete/Participant Development Model. In addition to Track and Field provision, UKA recognises the huge amount of club activity that takes place on roads, paths and trails and the strategy also maps out a plan for future "running" facilities