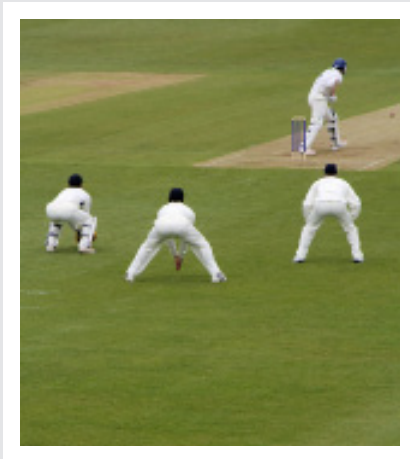


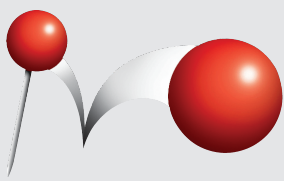
Walsall Council

Walsall Playing Pitch Strategy 2010 - 2015



URS

Scott
Wilson



strategic leisure

A Final Report & Appendices

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Executive Summary

The Project

Strategic Leisure, part of the Scott Wilson Group, was appointed in September 2009 by Walsall Council to develop a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The development of this strategy was undertaken in parallel with the preparation of Walsall's PPG17 Audit and Assessment. The findings of the Playing Pitch Strategy and strategic recommendations need to be considered alongside the PPG17 report.

The Playing Pitch Strategy is based on an assessment of supply and demand for key pitch sports across the Borough (as identified in the study scope), specifically: football, cricket, rugby union and hockey. It takes account of the quantity, quality and access of facilities, using an eight stage assessment method developed by Sport England and CCPR¹ and supersedes earlier Playing Pitch Strategies.

Ensuring a strategic approach to the provision of high quality, accessible pitch provision is important in meeting the aims and objectives of several national and local strategies. These are summarised in the main report. Overall, the local Playing Pitch Strategy provides a framework for:

- **Making informed planning decisions;**
- **Targeting financial support and investment in facilities; and**
- **Planning the delivery of sports development programmes.**

The assessment findings reported and resulting issues, challenges and recommendations need to be considered alongside the outputs of other research and planning, and in particular the PPG17 assessment report.

Approach to developing the Strategy

Developing the strategy included a five month research programme comprising desk research, consultation, data analysis and scenario modelling. Research also included visiting all playing pitch sites with community use and rating facilities for quality and access. This included the completion of a non-technical visual assessment for each pitch facility identified, providing a classification of quality.

Overall the research to compile the strategy has involved:

- **Reviewing existing strategies and policies relating to sports pitch provision across the Borough**
- **Interviews with core stakeholders, including Council Officers and National Governing Body of Sport representatives;**
- **Questionnaires administered to all schools across the Borough**
- **Questionnaires and telephone interviews with sports clubs across the Borough; and**
- **Site visits to 65 playing pitch sites.**

¹ CCPR – Central Council for Physical Recreation

Walsall Council
Playing Pitch Strategy

The Strategy is based on assessments of the current, and the future (estimated changes over the next 5 and 10 years) supply of and demand for the sports identified above. It has also included more focused assessments based on the six neighbourhood management areas. This means focussing on a number of smaller defined geographic areas within the Borough to highlight particular hotspots of under or over supply of provision. This approach is key in determining if facilities are in the ‘right place’ to meet demand, rather than relying on figures for the Borough as a whole.

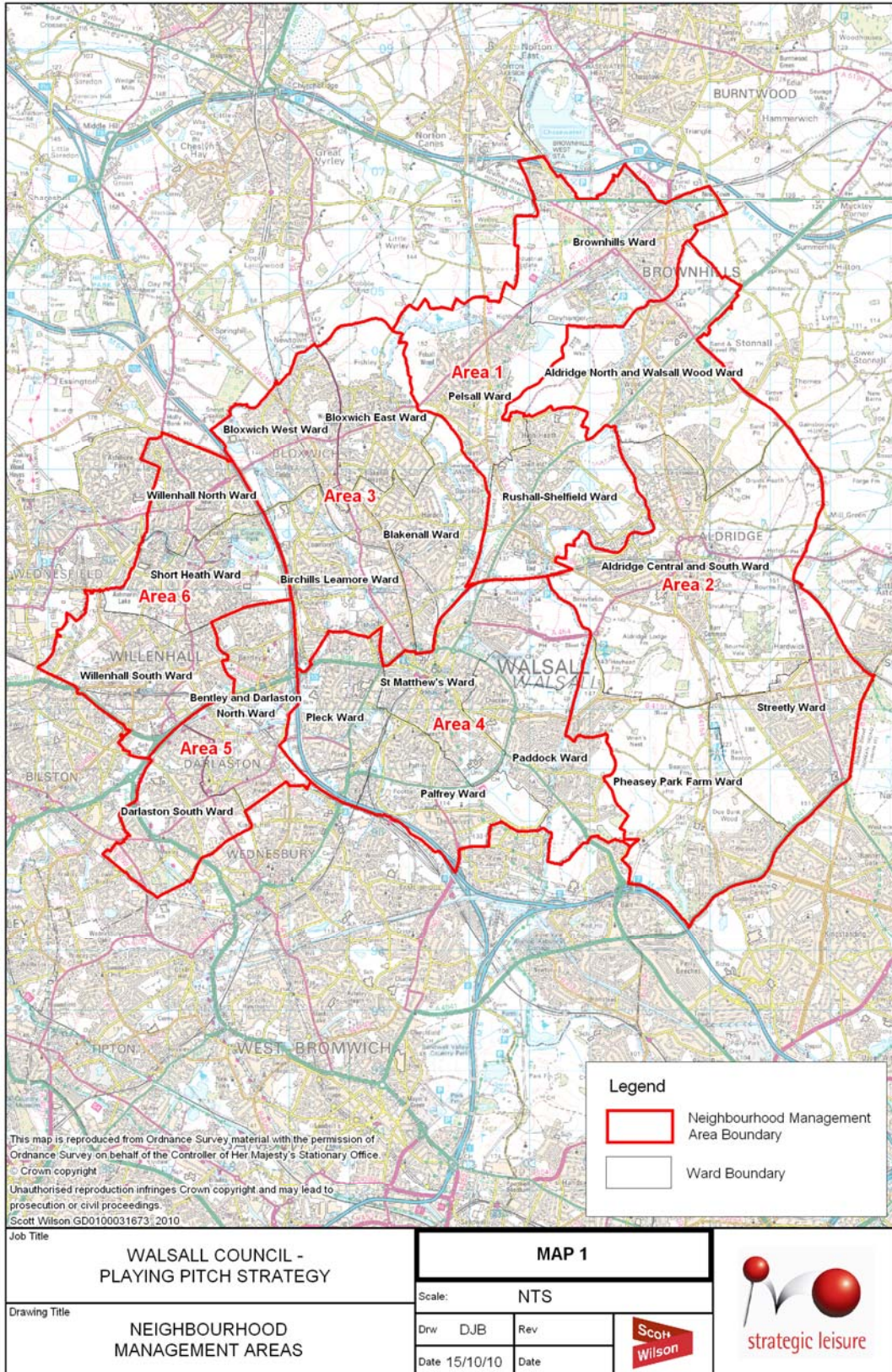
The analysis areas are based on the Borough’s six Neighbourhood Management Areas (NMA), as advised by Walsall Council. The six Neighbourhood Management Areas are summarised in Table 1 and shown in Map 1.

Table 1 : Neighbourhood Management Areas

Area	Wards	Total Population (and % of Borough Total)
Area 1	Brownhills Pelsall Rushall-Shelfield	35,939 (14%)
Area 2	Aldridge Central and South Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Pheasey Park Farm Streetly	49,579 (20%)
Area 3	Birchills Leamore Blakenall Bloxwich East Bloxwich West	51,506 (20%)
Area 4	Paddock Palfrey Pleck St Matthew’s	53,456 (21%)
Area 5	Bentley and Darlaston North Darlaston South	25,555 (10%)
Area 6	Short Heath Willenhall North Willenhall South	38,438 (15%)
Borough Total		254,473

Assessment of future demand is based on % increases agreed with the relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs).

Map 1 : Walsall Neighbourhood Management Areas



Overview of Playing Pitch Supply and Demand

There are 245 formal playing pitches (on 98 sites) across the Borough, 201 of which have secured community use (82%). Facilities are provided by Walsall Council, at education sites (schools, colleges and universities) and privately. Nearly a quarter of all pitch sites identified are in council ownership and over half of all pitch sites are on education sites. The remaining pitches are privately owned.

The research has identified a total of 529 teams requiring pitch facilities to service league fixtures, cup games and training. As in most parts of the Country, pitch sport participation is dominated by boys and men's teams – girls and women's teams make up only 8% of the total number of teams identified (excluding mixed teams).

As expected, and in line with national trends, Football is the most popular sport in the Borough, particularly for boys. For every thousand 10 to 15 year olds around 13 teams are generated. This Team Generation Rate (TGR) is higher than the national average of 11 teams per 1000 population for this age group.

Assessment findings: Sport by Sport headlines

A range of data has been collected, analysed and interpreted for each sport, taking account of quality, quantity and access to provide a number of conclusions summarised overleaf. These draw on an assessment of how adequate provision is across the Borough as a whole, and the results of more focused local area assessments. These local area assessments are based on Walsall Council's six neighbourhood management areas.

Football

There are 382 football teams across the Borough. A total of 164 football pitches have been identified which are community accessible.

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- **There is a current deficiency in mini soccer (-83) and junior football pitches (-4) – however the surplus in senior pitches allows a number of junior games to be played. Pitch quality also allows more than the standard 2 games per week to be played at some sites which allows the current level of demand to be met**
- **By 2015, the identified current deficit in mini football pitches will increase to -86 based on projected growth in participation and team numbers. By 2020 the deficit will increase to -88 mini football pitches.**
- **The current deficit in junior football pitches will remain at -4 over the next 10 years.**
- **There is a current surplus in senior football pitches +77. By 2015 there will be a surplus, but this will have decreased to +75, and by 2020 it will be +76; these changes reflect the demographic and TGR changes in the borough.**
- **The current and future deficits in mini and junior football pitch provision could be met by re-designating existing senior football pitches which are surplus to requirements. In addition the potential to secure community access to the 11 junior football pitches and 20 mini football pitches on school sites should be explored.**
- **There are quality issues across the Borough – a number of changing facilities are of poor quality. Pitch quality also varies significantly across the Borough.**

- **The local area assessments show there are areas of deficiency in certain areas of the Borough for mini and junior pitches – particularly Areas 1 and 3 where most of the demand for football is generated.**
- **Future demand estimates suggest significant growth in team numbers – if realised this will result in deficiencies across all areas of the Borough, for mini and junior provision. Current provision will not meet this additional demand unless the surpluses in senior pitches are utilised.**
- **There are a number of specific issues relating to ‘stifled’ demand – either clubs requiring higher standard provision (to meet league standards) than can be provided by the Council, or demand being curtailed through a lack of capacity.**

Cricket

The audit has identified 69 teams playing cricket across the Borough. A total of 14 cricket squares with community access have been identified. Many of these are privately owned and managed by clubs themselves.

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- **There is a small theoretical surplus in pitches across the Borough, as a result the current level of pitch provision is sufficient in quantitative terms to meet current demand**
- **Most clubs own or manage their own facilities and pitch quality is good across the Borough. Ancillary facilities rate as average, good or excellent**
- **There is a reasonable spread of clubs across the Borough and most clubs have capacity for new members, however access is more limited for residents in the west of the Borough, most notably Areas 5 and 6**
- **Current provision will be sufficient to service the levels of future demand over the next 5-10 years to meet growth across the Borough**

Rugby

The audit has identified 37 teams or team equivalents playing rugby union across the Borough. There is currently no demand for rugby league in Walsall. There is a total of 15 rugby pitches with community access in the Borough, the majority of which are located on rugby club sites.

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- **There is adequate provision in quantitative terms to meet current demand – however, the current surplus of senior rugby pitches is reduced when the growing demand for mini-rugby is taken into consideration and the use by school teams is considered**
- **Current provision will be sufficient to service future demand if current TGRs are sustained.**
- **There are limited opportunities to play rugby in the north and west of the Borough (Areas 1, 5 and 6) mainly due to the lack of pitches and rugby clubs in these areas.**

Hockey

There are 6 clubs across the Borough generating 31 teams in general. Demand for hockey appears to be low when comparing Team Generation Rates with other areas.

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- **There are limited opportunities across certain parts of the Borough to play Hockey – there are no artificial grass pitches or clubs located in Areas 1 and 5 and no hockey clubs based in Area 6**
- **There is adequate provision in quantitative terms to meet current demand – however, the area analysis has demonstrated a small deficiency in Areas 2 and 3 and a club from area 2 playing outside the Borough**
- **There are no quality issues with the majority of facilities – all are rated as good/excellent and are supported by appropriate ancillary facilities. The artificial grass pitch (AGP) at Oak Park has the lowest quality rating and is currently not used for club hockey due to quality issues.**
- **Current provision will be sufficient across the Borough to service future demand if current TGRs are sustained and the growth estimated is realised.**

Addressing the findings

Policy Options considered for addressing the findings of the assessments undertaken included:

- **Changing the use of existing pitches (from one sport to another, or one pitch type to another); this is particularly key in relation to football where identified deficiencies in mini and junior pitch provision could be addressed through the re-designation of surplus senior pitches**
- **Dual-use of facilities and greater use of education pitches under secured community use arrangements;**
- **Improving the quality of facilities to increase carrying capacity (i.e. the number of games which can be played on each pitch); there is also an urgent need to improve the quality of existing changing provision which is generally of very poor quality across the Borough**
- **A range of management options including long term leasing of pitches to allow clubs to have more control over use, improvements etc; and**
- **Create better opportunities for increased female participation**
- **Rationalisation of existing pitches**

No one clear policy option will provide the solutions to addressing pitch deficiencies and issues in Walsall. A combination of some of the traditional options above, together with more innovative solutions is required.

Local Standards of Provision

Standards of provision represent the minimum levels of provision to meet need across the Borough. They include a quantity, quality and accessibility element – put simply a minimum standard for the number of pitches, quality of facilities and accessibility for residents. On the basis of the assessment findings it is recommended that the required levels of provision are sought in the following table.

Table 2 : Application of Quantity Standards

Pitch Type	Current Provision	Required Provision	Surplus or Deficiency at Peak Demand
Mini Soccer	39	41	-2
Junior Football	26	30	-4
Senior Football	99	23	+76
Cricket	14	13	+1
Rugby	15	10	+5
AGP (full size)	7	7	0

There is currently a deficiency of mini soccer and junior football pitches in Walsall, a large surplus in provision for senior football and a marginal surplus for cricket and rugby, and sufficient artificial grass pitches (AGP) used for hockey. The results of the assessment need to be seen in context and it is important to recognise that the deficiencies in junior football are met by teams utilising senior pitches. The quality of pitches also allows more matches to take place and the tournament format for mini soccer utilises pitches up to 3 times a session.

In addition to the quantitative standards of provision, recommendations are made on standards of quality. The proposed standard for quality is that all community accessible provision should be rated as 'Good' or above using the non-technical visual proforma. Applying this standard across current facilities shows there are deficiencies of 43% of pitches not meeting the pitch quality standard (87 pitches at 34 sites) and 58% of sites (38 facilities) not meeting the quality standard for ancillary facilities.

In terms of acceptable access standards it is proposed that the average acceptable travel distance of 1,000m reported from public consultation is adopted as a catchment area for outdoor sport sites. The focus of any accessibility standard should be placed on access to quality facilities as well as any recommended distance thresholds.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations are made to address the assessment findings. They include:

Recommendations	
1	<p>The re-designation of existing good quality surplus senior football pitches to junior and mini pitches to address the current and future deficits in this type of provision, and realise a stock of high quality, high carrying capacity pitches.</p> <p>Based on the 2010 PPG17 assessment although there is no need for any other greenspace in the Borough, re-considering whether all existing senior football pitches continue to be marked as such also provides the opportunity to de-classify some existing pitch sites and retain as green space in for a range of informal uses, and potentially future pitches as demand requires.</p> <p>The type of senior football pitch that would be a priority for re-designation to mini or junior provision would be a good quality pitch, preferably multi-pitch or with the potential to become so, ideally with provision for training ie synthetic surfaces, served by at minimum toilets suitable for junior and mini players.</p>

Recommendations	
2	<p>Use the findings of the assessment together with the Quality / Value matrix to prioritise investment in playing pitches and ancillary facilities as per Table 5.6 below.</p> <p>The type of site that would be a priority for investment would be an existing good quality multi-pitch site, or have the potential to become so (multi-pitch meaning mini, junior and senior pitches for either one sport, or a range of sports, plus ideally at least synthetic training provision), have existing changing provision of reasonable quality and that meet the needs of all users i.e. women and girls, disability participants etc (or facilities that could become so with limited investment).</p> <p>Council and education pitches should be considered under this category.</p>
3	<p>The type of site that could potentially be considered for rationalisation would be one with a single pitch, where a pitch(es) is poor quality, and where there is poor quality or no changing facilities (or limited facilities i.e. no provision for women and girls, or not compliant with DDA).</p> <p>If poor quality pitches can be replaced with better quality provision through either re-designation/opening up access to other existing pitches on school sites, any capital gained through sale of sites should be ring-fenced for re-investment into pitch development and changing room improvement.</p>
4	<p>Given the findings of the assessment and the reliance on Council facilities there is a need to strengthen and develop partnership working with private providers, Governing Bodies and neighbouring authorities; the Sports Forum should be used to facilitate this. Addressing the deficiencies recorded cannot be the sole responsibility of any one agency / organisation.</p>
5	<p>Explore and develop closer partnership working with Education and the role of school facilities to support mini and junior sports and potentially provide additional community accessible facilities for indoor cricket training.</p> <p>There is a likely need for this recommendation to be supported by revenue funding to support additional maintenance costs and administration relating to pitch bookings.</p>
6	<p>Update the supply and demand information collated as part of the study on an annual basis as part of evaluating action and delivery. A full playing pitch assessment should be repeated every 5 years or as near as possible to fit in with the area planning process. This ongoing updating and monitoring process should be facilitated through a formal Playing Pitch Strategy Group, comprising representatives from the Council (sport and leisure, education assets, planning and grounds maintenance), NGBs and Sport England.</p>

Recommendations	
7	<p>Community use agreements, to an agreed specification, should be required from future school redevelopment schemes. Agreements can be required through the planning process where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There will be a resulting loss in area or quantity of pitch provision• This will aid the achievement of PPG17's objective of remedying local deficiencies• School playing fields are likely to have qualitative improvements, and there are identified qualitative deficiencies, whilst community use agreements should be required from future school redevelopment schemes.
8	<p>Subject to resources, continue to develop regular consultation with pitch users to establish trend data in relation to satisfaction, ratings of quality and common pitch issues. This is partially undertaken via the pitch booking forms administered by the Council to users of public football pitches, and through the Sports Development Team.</p>
9	<p>Work with clubs to aid club and sport development. There are clubs that have reached capacity in terms of expansion through success and would benefit from further support and assistance. Walsall has Strategic Sports Development Groups for hockey, cricket and rugby. This practice should be continued and extended to the development of a football partnership group.</p>
10	<p>Condition surveys on changing facilities should be undertaken at regular intervals to identify any remedial work that may be required, identify any additional disability access requirements and provide an estimated lifespan for the building.</p>
11	<p>Undertake a feasibility study into developing a central hub facility/facilities for clubs. This should include a synthetic pitch large enough to host training and relieve pressure on existing pitch provision. A hub facility could also be used as the venue for developing girls and women's teams to participate in sports such as football, rugby and cricket.</p>

Given the evident opportunities for investment, the potential for the development of borough wide hub sites; should be further investigated through a feasibility study (Recommendation 11). These hub sites could be designated by sport, by pitch type, or be multi-pitch/multi-sport sites; in other words they could be identified as flexible spaces which would be marked to meet demand. In addition to hub sites there is potential to consider the development of a central mini soccer venue, which would be a hub in its own right.

The overall vision for future provision of playing pitches in Walsall, based on the findings of this study is to ensure the community has access to good quality, accessible multi-pitch facilities (training and competition, plus changing and ancillary facilities), which meets demand. The development of 6

strategically located hubs one to serve each of the 6 Neighbourhood Areas, would provide a framework for future pitch provision, building on existing sites of this nature.

1. Introduction and Background

Introduction

- 1.1 Strategic Leisure, part of the Scott Wilson Group plc, was appointed by Walsall Council in September 2009 to undertake an assessment of playing pitch provision in the Borough and the resulting needs for provision, both current and future. This report provides an overall pitch assessment for the Borough, plus a number of recommendations related to playing pitches.
- 1.2 The development of the Borough Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy was undertaken in parallel with the preparation of Walsall's PPG17 Audit and Assessment.

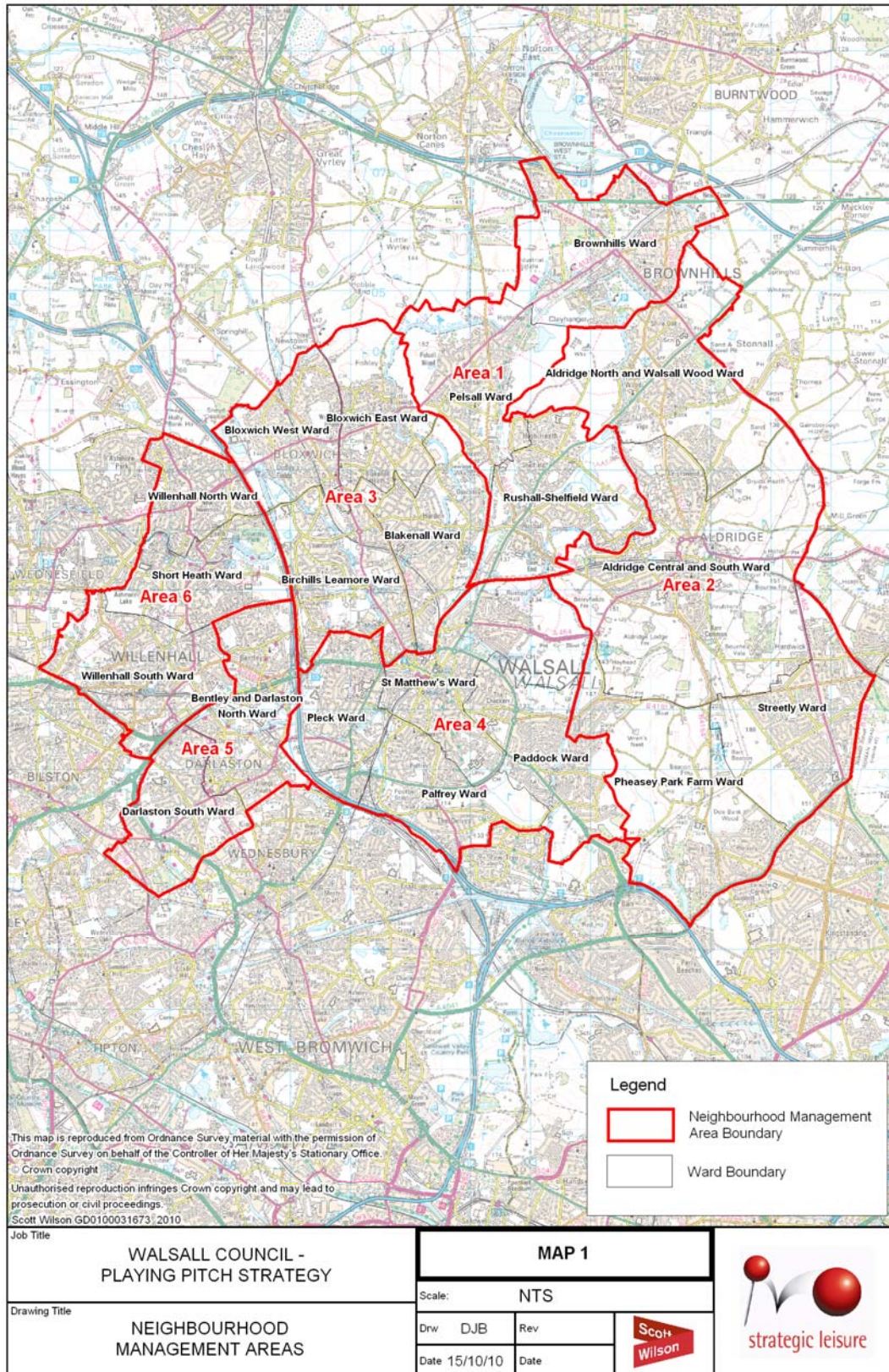
Area Analysis

- 1.3 To build a more accurate picture of issues relating to surplus and deficiencies across the sports assessed, the data collected has been used to carry out a number of 'area assessments'. Put simply this means focussing on a number of smaller defined geographic areas within the Borough to highlight particular hotspots of under or over supply of provision. This approach is key in determining if facilities are in the 'right place' to meet demand, rather than relying on figures for the Borough as a whole.
- 1.4 The analysis areas are based on the Borough's six Neighbourhood Management Areas (NMA) as advised by Walsall Council. Area assessments have not been undertaken below this level, i.e. ward level. The six Neighbourhood Management Areas are summarised in Table 1.1 : Neighbourhood Management Areas and shown in Map 1. The purpose of the area assessment is to understand the borough wide findings more fully.

Table 1.1 : Neighbourhood Management Areas

Area	Wards	Total Population (and % of Borough)
Area 1	Brownhills Pelsall Rushall-Shelfield	35,939 (14%)
Area 2	Aldridge Central and South Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Pheasey Park Farm Streetly	49,579 (20%)
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Area 6	Short Heath Willenhall North Willenhall South	38,438 (15%)
Borough Total		254,473

Map 1 : Walsall Neighbourhood Management Areas



Why develop a Playing Pitch Strategy?

- 1.5 The rationale for undertaking the study is to identify current levels of provision in the Borough, across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors, and to compare this with current, and likely future levels of demand. The supply and demand analysis for playing pitches will help identify the possible surplus or deficiencies of pitches across the Borough. The analysis will help to underpin future planning policy and allocation, and help to support bids for external funding.

Benefits of a Playing Pitch Strategy

- 1.6 There are a number of key benefits in undertaking a local assessment and developing a strategy for Walsall (as adapted from 'Towards a Level Playing Field', Sport England, CCPR, 2005). These can be summarised as:

- **Corporate and Strategic benefits**, which include:
 - Ensuring a **strategic approach** to facility provision. During times of change for local authorities, a strategy will provide direction and set priorities for pitch sports. The playing pitch assessment will also form part of the Borough's PPG17 Assessment.
 - Providing **robust evidence** for capital funding. As well as proving the need for developer contributions towards facilities, a strategy can provide evidence of need for a range of capital grants
 - It will **help to deliver government policies** for social inclusion, environmental protection, community involvement and healthy living
 - It will help to **demonstrate the value of leisure related services** during times of increasing scrutiny for non-statutory services
 - It will help demonstrate **commitment to effective use of available resources**. The assessment methodology has included considerable **consultation** with local sports clubs, schools and stakeholders and **challenges** the current pitch supply arrangements
- **Planning related benefits**, which include:
 - Providing a basis for establishing new facility requirements arising from new housing developments
 - It is one of the best "tools" for the protection of facilities threatened by development
 - It links closely with work being undertaken on open spaces to provide an holistic approach to open space improvement and protection
- **Operational benefits**, which include:
 - Improving the approach to asset management by providing detailed audit information and pitch user views. This should result in more efficient use of resources and reduced overheads
 - It highlights locations and specific sites where quality can be enhanced
- **Sports Development benefits**, which include:
 - Helping to identify where community use of school pitches is most needed
 - Providing better information to residents and other users of pitch facilities
 - Helping to promote sports development by helping to unlock latent demand through identifying where facilities are lacking and how this might be impacting on the formation and further development of teams

The Role of a Playing Pitch Strategy

- 1.7 Undertaking an assessment of playing pitches, and developing a strategy for future provision is important in terms of informing the planning process across the Borough. It is important to ensure there is sufficient local land for pitches and the right level of provision of sport and leisure facilities in relation to the population of the area.

1.8 The generic problems outlined below are relatively common in terms of UK playing pitch provision and suggest the need for change in provision to meet present and future needs:

- **Poor quality**
- **Inadequate changing accommodation**
- **Inadequate provision for small sided games**
- **Pitches not meeting appropriate league rules**
- **Lack of practice facilities**
- **Inadequate artificial grass pitch (AGP) provision**
- **Uneconomic pitch sites**
- **Facilities that are under used or over used**
- **Lack of appropriate equipment**
- **Vandalism and unauthorised use**
- **Inappropriate or inadequate maintenance of publicly owned pitches and facilities (standardised regimes are not always appropriate)**
- **Lack of parking**

Outcomes of a Playing Pitch Strategy

1.9 There are a number of key outcomes (short, medium and long term aims) expected from a Playing Pitch Strategy, some of which include:

- **Identification of the adequate levels of provision of grass and artificial grass pitches (AGP) to meet the reasonable needs of schools, clubs, etc, of all ages and genders and National Governing Bodies (NGBs)**
- **Protection through the planning system of those pitches needed to meet local needs and wider needs including identified land in Development Plans for planned growth**
- **Quality pitches and ancillary accommodation for enjoyable participation**
- **Cost-effective public and club provision**
- **Allocation of adequate resources for management and maintenance**

Scope of the Study

1.10 The study encompasses an assessment of all formal outdoor playing pitch facilities (football, cricket, rugby and hockey) with community use.

1.11 The study has focussed on those facilities typically provided by the Council, in addition to the private and education sectors. The study has been undertaken to provide a Boroughwide assessment of need. The assessment will form part of the Council's response to the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17).

2. Strategic Context

National Context

- 2.1 There is currently a national agenda for sport, leisure and physical activity and numerous studies on the health of the nation. All of these studies and strategies point towards a need to raise participation levels to improve health. The key policy documents are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 : Key Policy Documents

National Context for Sport
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport England Strategy 2008 – 2011• Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) (2008)• DCMS Game Plan (2002)• Sport England The Framework for Sport: A Vision for 2020 (2003)• Everyday Sport, Sport England• Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier: Department of Health White Paper Executive Summary (2004)• Public Sport and Recreation Services, Making them Fit for the Future, Audit Commission/Sport England• A Sporting future for All: The role of Further and Higher Education in Delivering the Government's Plan for Sport (DCMS/DfES) (2000)• Shaping Places Through Sport (Sport England / DCMS)• 2012 London Olympic Games Legacy

- 2.2 The national context which informs the overall need for a strategic approach to the future planning of sports facilities at a local level is summarised in Appendix 1; this demonstrates the Government priorities in relation to health, physical activity and increasing participation, and is reflected in the recommendations developed at local level.

Local Context

Walsall – A Profile

- 2.3 Walsall has a population of just over 250,000 and is one of seven metropolitan boroughs located in the West Midlands. Walsall lies some 12 miles north of Birmingham and 6 miles east of Wolverhampton and is bordered to the south by the M6 before it dissects the western part of the borough running in a north-south direction. The borough of Walsall contains a mixture of urban and rural land uses with the town centre of Walsall being the key focus of activity.
- 2.4 The Borough Council has identified the need to develop a Playing Pitch for the Borough, to assess current provision, and identify future need for investment and development. This is critical given the pressures on any available land for development, and the fact that some areas of the borough have less open space than others.

Demographics

- 2.5 It is important to consider the demographic make up of the Borough as key demographic and socio-economic characteristics are known to influence demand characteristics. For example certain age-groups are known to register higher participation rates in a number of sport and leisure activities; deprived communities often experience issues relating to access to services and opportunities; cultural backgrounds may result in some passive and active recreation pursuits being favoured over others; car ownership levels can impact on the range of facilities that can be accessed.

2.6 Table 2.2 summarises the demographic characteristics of the Borough along with the implications for future playing pitch provision.

Table 2.2 : Demographic Analysis of Walsall

	Walsall profile statistic	What does this mean for future playing pitch provision in Walsall?
Population	<p>The population of the Borough is 254,473 (Source: ONS, mid-year estimates 2007). The overall population gender composition is; 48.6% of the total population are male and 51.4% female.</p> <p>There is a lower than national average adult population aged between 16-59, a demographic who are traditionally associated with playing pitch usage. However the 0-15 year old population is greater than the national average alongside the 60-74 year old population. This has implications on current junior and future pitch provision.</p> <p>According to ONS 2006 sub-national population projections the population of Walsall will have increased to 265,200 by 2020.</p>	<p>The population of Walsall is ageing and pitch provision will have to reflect this changing demographic i.e. that the majority of pitch sports are played by those aged 6 35/40. There may therefore an opportunity to reduce the overall level of pitch provision and improve the quality of what is retained.</p> <p>The Borough's population is increasing and pitch provision will have to allow for possible increases in participation should national Sport England targets be met, alongside the more local targets within the LAA. Increasing participation at local level will be heavily reliant on sport development initiatives, not just the provision of facilities.</p> <p>Facilities will need to provide a range of services taking into account usage by a range of age groups including young people and older citizens.</p>
Ethnicity	<p>13.6% of the population identified themselves as being from black, mixed or other minority ethnic groups, and there are well established Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. 13.6% is higher than the national figure of 9%.</p>	<p>The higher than average number of BME groups within Walsall suggests there is a need for specific facility requirements to cater for BME groups. For example, changing provision should be capable of accommodating single gender use, and must address privacy needs.</p>
Mobility	<p>31% of all households have no access to a car. This is higher than the national average which identifies that 27% of all UK households have no car.</p>	<p>Pitch provision will need to be strategically located so it is accessible to non car users.</p>
Economy	<p>The borough is ranked as the 45th most deprived borough nationally, out of 354 Local Authorities based on the average deprivation scores of its constituent Lower Level Super Output Areas. Given the fact that some of this deprivation relates to the decline in manual industries, the provision of opportunities for active participation is important in developing more active lifestyles.</p>	<p>Pricing of facilities will need to be reflective of the local situation and ensure inclusivity.</p>

Active People

- 2.7 The Active People survey conducted in 2005/6 by Ipsos MORI, on behalf of Sport England, was the largest ever survey of sport and active recreation to be undertaken in Europe. It was a telephone survey of 363,724 adults in England (aged 16 plus) and is unique in providing reliable statistics on participation in sport and active recreation for all 354 local authorities in England at a local level (a minimum of 1,000 interviews were completed in every local authority in England).
- 2.8 The data identifies how participation varies from place to place at a local authority level and between different groups in the population. The survey also measures the proportion of the adult population that volunteer in sport on a weekly basis, club membership, involvement in organised sport/competition, receipt of tuition or coaching, and overall satisfaction with levels of sporting provision in the local community. The survey was replicated in 2007/08 (APS 2) and 2008/09 (APS3) when circa 500 interviews were completed for each local authority.
- 2.9 The headline findings for Walsall from the most recent Active People Survey 3 (APS3) are illustrated in 2.3, these are compared against the regional and national findings.

Table 2.3 : Active People Survey Findings

	Walsall (APS2)	Walsall (APS3)	West Midlands Average (APS3)	England Average (APS3)
KPI 1 – participation at least three days a week at moderate intensity for 30 minutes	13.4%	20.1%	20.1%	21.6%
KPI 2 – at least one hour a week volunteering to support sport	3.1%	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%
KPI 3 – member of sports club	20.8%	21.0%	22.8%	24.1%
KPI 4 – received tuition from instructor or coach in past 12 months	9.9%	13.3%	16.2%	17.5%
KPI 5 – taken part in organised competitive sport in past 12 months	9.3%	9.9%	13.3%	14.4%
KPI 6 – satisfaction with local sports provision	62.1%	64.2%	66.8%	68.4%

- 2.10 When considering levels of participation and volunteering to support sport, Walsall matches those levels in the West Midlands region. However these are lower than the national average for England. Walsall rates lower than the regional or national average for KPI's 3 to 6 including sports club membership, sports coaching/tuition, participation in organised sport and satisfaction with local sports provision. When compared to the results from APS2, participation rates in Walsall (KPI 1) have shown a significant increase, all other KPI's have demonstrated no significant change.

Review of Local Strategic Documents

- 2.11 The increased awareness of the benefits of physical activity and the drive towards healthier lifestyles underpins the need for investment in sports facilities. Local authorities have been tasked to increase participation in sport and physical activity; a key factor of delivering this will be the provision of good quality, fit for purpose, sport and leisure facilities which meet the identified needs of the local community.

- 2.12 In order to provide the context for Walsall and the need to be clear about the level and nature of playing pitch provision at local level the following local documents were reviewed as part of this study. The study recommendations reflect this context to ensure that future provision meets local need and contributes to identified priorities, but also reflects national objectives for sport and physical activity.

Walsall Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12 – Walsall Borough Council

- 2.13 The Council has identified a number of outcomes in the 2009/10 Corporate Plan, these outcomes are as follows:

- **Healthier Citizens – This includes the reduction of health inequalities across the borough and addresses the difference in health experiences between those living in the west and the east. It is also the aim that through the Children and Young People’s Plan services for children and young people will be developed and there will be an increase in the level of physical activity amongst this group.**
- **Safer and More Secure Citizens – The Council aims to assist more vulnerable adults to live safer and more independent lives within the community.**
- **Aspiring and Achieving Citizens – The aim is to encourage young people, parents, families and communities to have higher aspirations and achieve qualifications.**
- **Higher Quality of Life (cleaner, greener, and mobile) – It is the Council’s view that a high quality environment improves quality of life. There are concerns about litter and graffiti in the area and the Council will improve household recycling in order to reduce the subsequent impact on the environment.**
- **Active Citizens – The Council will support citizens in becoming more active members of the community and encourage them to be more involved in decisions which affect them and the community they live in.**
- **Financially and Materially Secure Citizens – Local businesses and people will be supported by the Council with the aim of creating and maintaining employment and training opportunities.**
- **Citizens Free From Discrimination and Harassment – Through the Community Cohesion Strategy the Council aims to ensure that all residents are free from discrimination and harassment.**
- **Effective use of Resources – The Council aims to reduce energy use and the town centre office accommodation footprint in order to improve value for money.**
- **Deliver Quality Services to Meet Customer Expectations – Complaints will be responded to more quickly and it is hoped that this will be achieved by the Council listening to citizens in order to meet expectations.**
- **Take Forward the Transformation Agenda – The Council aims to be more lean, flexible and responsive in order to reduce its operating costs.**

- 2.14 Walsall Council's Corporate Plan also discusses the involvement of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the Primary Capital Programme (PCP) within the area. Combining these two schemes could lead to a large amount of investment being made in the schools in the area. Since this PPS was commissioned and the research commissioned, the BSF Programme has been cancelled (June 2010) by the new Government. The investments proposed would have seen a development in the services for children in areas such as regeneration, sport and leisure.

- 2.15 Despite the urgent need for investment in the education stock in Walsall, the re-development of 5 Wave 6a schools has now been cancelled in the Borough, 2 Academies and the Sneyd University Technical College project are currently under review.

Implications for Playing Pitch Strategy

- Playing pitches can play an important role in helping the Council deliver some of its corporate objectives by providing accessible spaces for local residents to participate in activities.

Sustainable Community Strategy (2008) – Walsall Borough Council

- 2.16 Walsall Borough Council's Sustainable Community Strategy is the twelve year plan which was produced as a result of a consultation with people who live and work in the area to find out about their aspirations for the future. The Strategy outlines the Council's priorities and how they will be achieved over the next six year. It is split into three key themes which are people, places and prosperity.

- **People** – A key priority for people in the Walsall area is that they feel safe and keep healthy. It was made apparent that people in the area are concerned about the availability and adequacy of health care facilities. The Council intends to reduce the health inequalities which currently exist between the east and west of the borough. This will be achieved in a number of ways including the provision of services that encourage independence, and physical and emotional health. The Sustainable Community Strategy aims to establish what factors cause ill-health and work on these factors in order to improve life expectancy and reduce infant mortality.
- **Places** – The places section of the Strategy outlines the Council's intentions to focus investments in new homes, jobs, transport improvements, community facilities and the environment. The result of the consultation showed that people living in the borough would like their local neighbourhood to be a place where people have access to high quality open space for play, recreation and enjoyment. The Council aims to create cleaner, greener and safer neighbourhoods by maintaining existing feature, protect species and create new habitats. They also wish to value and preserve the natural environment by promoting the protection and conservation of species, habitats and geological features. The Strategy also outlines the Council's intentions to provide efficient and effective transport access to services and encourage active transport including walking and cycling.
- **Prosperity** – The prosperity part of the strategy aims to reduce the difference between rich and poor and thus improve the economy and social well-being for individuals. Those living in Walsall made it clear that they wished to see better use of canals and the development of amenities and attractions alongside them. Within the Sustainable Community Strategy, Walsall Council outline their intentions to make a special effort to link their footpaths and cycle routes to the borough's network of schools and local centres and encourage children to do more beneficial physical activity and reduce the negative impact of people travelling to school by car.

Implications for Playing Pitch Strategy

- Playing pitches will be an important resource in helping the Council to achieve its participation and performance targets.

Black Country Core Strategy Preferred Options (2008) – Walsall Borough Council

- 2.17 The four Black Country Local Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) have agreed to work together to produce a Black Country Core Strategy in partnership with the community and other key organisations such as voluntary and private sector bodies and businesses. This will be a ‘spatial planning document’ (dealing not only with land use but also environmental, economic and social issues) that will set out the vision, objectives and strategy for future development in the Black Country to 2026. The Core Strategy will be a Development Plan Document and will form the basis of the Black Country Local Authorities’ Local Development Frameworks.
- 2.18 The key policy areas within the Core Strategy include (but are not limited to) the following:
- **Promoting the sustainable location of community and sporting facilities – this means ensuring that, wherever possible, complementary facilities are grouped together in accessible locations in order to minimise the amount of travel. In the development of such facilities, a range of transport will be provided, including footways, cycle paths and public transport. The Policy area will also include the protection of existing community facilities, particularly where they provide vital service, identity and function to communities.**

Implications for Playing Pitch Strategy

- The location and accessibility of playing pitches to the local community remains an important factor when considering local provision and applying local standards.

Walsall Greenspace Strategy 2006-2011 – Walsall Borough Council

- 2.19 The Greenspace Strategy is the council’s response to the findings of a greenspace audit. The audit found that overall Walsall is well served by green spaces and the quantity of all the types of green spaces in the borough compares well with neighbouring boroughs and other similar local authorities nationally. However, the amount of green space in some areas and the level of access to sites vary in different parts of the borough. It was also found that the quality of greenspace in the area varies across the borough
- 2.20 The aim for Walsall’s greenspace strategy is, “to have excellent, well used and valued green spaces that are safe, accessible and welcoming at the heart of all local communities that meet the needs of current and future generations”
- 2.21 The Council’s greenspace strategy comprises of 5 visions for the area which are:
- **A better quality environment**
 - **Healthy, safe and secure green space**
 - **Raising standards**
 - **Listening to and engaging people**
 - **Achieving excellence within the authority**
- 2.22 It was also the aim that the strategy would raise standards, create good practice, improve quality and move forwards in the future.

3. Methodology

Introduction

- 3.1 The development of this strategy has used the guidance developed by Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) detailed in the Towards a Level Playing Field guidance and methodology. This moves away from the application of generic provision standards and advocates focused research to identify local demand and supply, factor in qualitative factors and assess the adequacy of provision relating to quantity, quality and access for individual sports. This section of the report provides an outline of the methodology and how it has been applied in Walsall.

How the Methodology works

- 3.2 The Sport England and CCPR methodology for assessing playing pitches does not provide specific standards for pitch provision that can be universally applied. Its focus is on providing the means for deriving **local** standards, using **local** information, and developing policy to respond to **local** circumstances.
- 3.3 The overall aim of the assessment methodology is to determine the number of pitches required for each specific sport. In the case of the Walsall the methodology has been used to assess the adequacy of provision for:
- **Football (soccer)**
 - **Cricket**
 - **Rugby Union**
 - **Hockey**
- 3.4 The method has been applied to show the adequacy of facilities to meet existing demand for these sports. Additionally the model can be used to assess provision against a predicted set of circumstances, for example, future population projections. This strategy has used the model to assess future demand across the next five and ten years. Ascertaining accurate supply and demand information is therefore critical in producing a robust, accurate strategy, which is 'owned' by all stakeholders.
- 3.5 These sports have been identified for assessment based on the fact that at national level they are the main playing pitch sports; in addition football, and increasingly rugby union and cricket, as a result of sport development initiatives, are high participant sports. Levels of participation in mini soccer, and girls' football are still growing faster than in any other sport in the UK.

The Eight Stage Playing Pitch Model

- 3.6 The methodology comprises of an **eight-stage approach**, as summarised overleaf in 3.1. This involves a number of specific research tasks to build a comprehensive audit. A series of toolkits are used to analyse the data collected with the resulting assessment figures interpreted in consideration to the local context and results of stakeholder consultation. All toolkits, data modelling and audit data is included within the appendices to this report.

Table 3.1 : Playing Pitch Assessment Methodology

Stage	Description and Key Output
Stage 1	<p><u>Identification of the number of teams</u></p> <p>Demand is established through a count of the number of teams for each sport using a variety of information sources, including pitch booking records, league handbooks, sport governing body databases and a club survey. Latent demand and the impact of future population projections are also considered.</p>
Stage 2	<p><u>Calculating home games per team per week</u></p> <p>In a 'normal' situation for all sports, the number of home games is calculated as 0.5 of the total number of teams, representing weekly 'home' and 'away' fixtures.</p>
Stage 3	<p><u>Assessing total number of home games per week</u></p> <p>This is the product of Stages 1 and 2, and is therefore not independent. The resultant figure indicates how many games have to be accommodated in the study area in the average week.</p>
Stage 4	<p><u>Establishing temporal demand for games</u></p> <p>This stage assesses the proportion of total home games played on each day. The data is expressed as a percentage of total weekly demand. This stage will determine what percentage of all games are played on a Saturday for example.</p>
Stage 5	<p><u>Defining pitches used / required on each day</u></p> <p>This is the product of Stages 3 and 4, and is not therefore independent. The resultant figure will indicate the pitches used/required on each day and time e.g. Saturday p.m.</p>
Stage 6	<p><u>Establishing pitches available</u></p> <p>An accurate assessment of supply is produced which distinguishes between pitches for each sport and between ownership (public, private, voluntary and educational sites). In modelling the existing situation, only pitches currently available for the appropriate days/times will be relevant.</p>
Stage 7	<p><u>Assessing the findings</u></p> <p>The requirements to accommodate demand assessed at Stage 5 are then compared with the facilities as available at Stage 6. If the existing situation has been accurately modelled there should be either a good numerical fit between requirements and facilities available, or even 'surplus' provision on some days.</p>
Stage 8	<p><u>Identifying policy options and solutions</u></p> <p>A range of policy options can be developed, such as new provision or pitch improvements, to help the problems identified at Stage 7. The method can then be used to further assess the impact of policy options, and contribute to the selection of the most cost-effective solution.</p>

Adapted from *Toward a Level Playing Field* – Sport England and CCPR (Page 11)

Auditing techniques and data gathering

Assessment of Supply

- 3.7 The current supply of pitches was established through undertaking a series of data review, research and consultation exercises. These consisted of:
- **Review of information held by Walsall Council;**
 - **Review of information published on relevant websites;**
 - **Site visits to pitches owned and managed by Walsall Council and other providers at a local level with identified community use – quality audits formed part of these visits and were completed using the Sport England Non-Technical Visual Assessment proforma between October 2009 and January 2010;**
 - **Consultation with key stakeholders (Governing Bodies of Sport, Council Officers) November and December 2009;**
 - **A postal survey of all schools within the Borough in October 2009;**
 - **A postal survey to all identified sports clubs within the Borough in October 2009.**

Assessment of Demand

- 3.8 In establishing the current demand for pitches a series of research and consultation exercises were completed, specifically:
- **An initial sports club questionnaire sent to identified clubs within the authority area;**
 - **Additional telephone consultation with key sports clubs (focusing on non-respondents);**
 - **A review of booking information from pitch sites within the Borough where applicable;**
 - **Analysis of local league data (where publicly available); and**
 - **Consultation with governing bodies of sport.**
 - **Analysis of booking and league data**

Data Collection Issues

- 3.9 Establishing precisely how many pitches and teams there are within the study area was difficult for a number of reasons including:
- **The number of pitches at a given site can fluctuate over short periods of time for reasons relating to management and husbandry - this means the findings of a count conducted in one season may differ from results of similar exercise conducted previously or in future seasons.**
 - **The time at which site surveys are conducted will greatly influence the quality of pitches. This factor is particularly relevant to winter pitch sports, given that the site visits were conducted during the season.**

- **Although the inspection programme helps to provide a consistent comparison across the Borough, it may be difficult to compare quality against other authorities if inspections have been undertaken at different times.**
 - **Mini soccer matches often make use of portable goals. This can make pitches difficult to identify through a site visit.**
- 3.10 For the reasons stated previously the assessment of playing pitch supply and demand within the study should be considered a snapshot in time. There is a need to ensure that the data used within the assessment is updated at appropriate intervals to ensure the ongoing validity of the recommendations made.

Data Analysis

Defining community use

- 3.11 The key component of the analysis was an examination of the extent to which pitches identified were in secured public use. This was undertaken in the context of the Sport England definition of community use, and broadly embraces:
- **All local authority pitches (Walsall Council)**
 - **Educational facilities where they are subject to formal dual use, community use agreements or similar formal hire arrangements with local teams (this was assessed through a specific question on the Schools Questionnaire);**
 - **Any other institutional facilities which are available to the public as a result of formal dual / community use agreements;**
 - **Any facilities owned, used or maintained by clubs/private individuals, which as a matter of policy or practice are available for use by large sections of the public through membership of a club or admission fees; and**
 - **Formal playing pitches that are marked out and in use for the relevant pitch sports have been included in the modelling and analysis.**

Quality Audit and Assessment

- 3.12 The quality of pitches has been assessed using a non-technical visual assessment proforma. This is part of the *Towards a Level Playing Field* toolkit and is included within the report appendices. The quality proforma collects a range of information about pitches based on a visual inspection. Specific criteria rated include:
- **Grass cover;**
 - **Length of grass;**
 - **Size of pitch (and suitability);**
 - **Slope;**
 - **Evenness;**
 - **Presence of common pitch problems; and**
 - **Availability of changing rooms.**

- 3.13 Each pitch is scored out of a possible 100% and graded on a quality scale from ‘Poor’ through to ‘Excellent’. A proforma is also used to provide a quality rating for the ancillary facilities serving the site and rates the quality of the changing accommodation, parking facilities and general site access.
- 3.14 In making recommendations and interpreting assessment results, pitch quality scores have been considered alongside sports club ratings of the facilities they use. A summary of the scores for all pitches identified is included in the report appendices.
- 3.15 Table 3.2 identifies the types of pitch identified as part of the audit and assessment and their dimensions.

Table 3.2 : Pitch Dimensions

Pitch Type	Age Group	Dimensions			
		Length (m)		Width (m)	
		Min	Max	Min	Max
Mini-Soccer	U7 - U8	27.5	36.6	18.3	27.5
Mini-Soccer	U9 - U10	45	55	27.5	36.6
Junior Football*	U16	82	90	45	90
Senior Football*	16+	90	120	45	90
Cricket*	U18	37m minimum from edge of cricket square to outfield boundary			
Cricket*	18+	45.72m minimum from edge of cricket square to outfield boundary			
Rugby Union*	Senior	n/a	144 [†]	n/a	70
Rugby League*	Senior	n/a	122 [†]	n/a	68
Hockey AGP	Senior	n/a	91.4	n/a	55

* Dimensions vary for different standards of play, age groups and grades of competition

[†] Measured from dead-ball line

Assessing the impact of quality on pitch capacity

- 3.16 Quality audits have been used to demonstrate how quality might affect the capacity of current pitch provision. Table 3.3 outlines the assumptions used to measure the impact of quality on capacity. Higher quality pitches are assumed capable of accommodating three matches per week, and those pitches below average one match per week or less.

Table 3.3 : Quality and Carrying Capacity Modelling

Quality Rating of Pitch	Assumed Carrying Capacity	Multiplication Factor
Excellent / Good	Three matches per week	1.5
Average	Two matches per week	1.0
Below average	One match per week	0.5
Poor	One match per fortnight	0.25

- 3.17 This model has been used to arrive at a number of conclusions about the adequacy of pitch provision. For example, if all pitches are rated as Below average then the overall supply will be equivalent to roughly half the actual number of pitches. Findings are reported in the following section of the report in relation to each sport assessed.

Team Generation Rates

- 3.18 Team Generation Rates (TGRs) have also been considered in the assessment of future needs for playing pitch provision. A TGR is the ratio of the number of teams within a given area to the total population within a given age group from that same area. The groupings which have been used reflect age groups participating in the different sub-groups of each of the assessed sports (e.g. 6-9 year olds for Mini Soccer).

3.19 Identifying TGRs provides the means to:

- **Compare participation in the assessed sports between the study area and other parts of the country where TGRs have formed part of Playing Pitch Strategy developments.**
- **Assist in modelling future demand for pitches.**

3.20 The use of TGRs needs to be treated with caution. It is important to make use of them as a guide only and not at the expense of using qualitative evidence gathered as part of the study. Essentially, TGRs reflect the current situation and are based on current demand information. They may not include potential / latent demand where teams may not be able to develop due to lack of a suitable facility.

Estimating future demand

3.21 Projecting changes to demand is not an exact science. It involves consideration to changes to population and the likely impact of any local plans or initiatives to increase participation and club membership. At the same time, arriving at a realistic estimate of future demand is critical in assessing the adequacy of current and planned provision to meet any growth or other changes to sports participation.

3.22 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimates (2007) for current population figures have been used to calculate Team Generation Rates. For population growth figures, the latest estimates available from the ONS based on 2006-based subnational population projections have been used. Assumptions have been made that growth within individual age groups follows the same trend as subnational population projections.

Quality Value matrix

3.23 To provide a basis for general recommendations for the playing pitch sites assessed a Quality Value matrix has been utilised. This uses the results of the quality audits undertaken and the assessment results.

3.24 The matrix also considers the value of each site assessed in relation to the number of pitches available. It works on the assumption that multi-pitch sites are of greater value to local sport. The number of different sports that can be accommodated on each site (i.e. winter and summer sports) is also factored in. Responses to a number of key questions about each site form part of the site score and it's subsequent classification.

Inclusions, Exclusions and Exceptions – Sport on a Local Level

3.25 The **facilities not** covered by the assessment calculations can be identified as follows:

- **Educational establishment facilities, which have no formal community use agreement and are not available for hire by the public;**
- **Professional stadia/pitches, which are reserved by a specific team for elite use only; and**
- **All other sports pitches which are not available for public use.**

However such pitches have been identified and are taken into account in making the recommendations resulting from the audit and assessment.

4. Audit, Assessment and Analysis

Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the report provides the headline audit findings relating to the supply of, and demand for, sports pitches. The analysis results for individual sports are also reported. Consultation findings have been used to interpret this. Conclusions for each sport form the basis of the recommended local provision standards and the recommendations in the next section of the report.
- 4.2 In order to assess in some detail the adequacy of playing pitch provision, it is necessary to consider the different types of provision and their primary role and function. Knowing why and what a playing pitch is there to do is critical to making judgments about its adequacy in respect of quantity, quality and accessibility.

Assessment of Supply: Quantity

- 4.3 Playing pitch supply in the Borough is delivered through a number of providers and only formally marked out pitches are included in the assessment. These include:
- **Walsall Council** –This includes pitches on recreation grounds, general open space and formal parks.
 - **Schools** – Individual schools provide pitches for School Sport and PE and in a number of cases make their facilities available for the local community. The local management of schools has meant that some schools make their facilities available to the local community and others do not. This can result in significant playing pitch resources within local communities not being available for the local community to use and in some cases present access issues with schools determining their own levels of fees and charges. In some cases these pitches are managed by the local community association.
 - **Private/ Voluntary Sports Clubs** - These providers include Private Sports Clubs that own their own facilities or have a long term lease of facilities for their own exclusive use.
- 4.4 The audit of pitches identified that there are 98 playing pitch sites and 245 playing pitches (Football, Cricket, Rugby and full-size artificial grass pitches) within Walsall at the time of audit. This pitch supply comprises the following:

Table 4.1 : All Playing Pitch Sites in Walsall

Playing Pitch Type	Total Number of Pitches	Pitches with Community Access	%Community Use
Senior Football Pitch	108	99	92%
Junior Football Pitch	46	26	57%
Mini Soccer Pitch	50	39	78%
Sub-Total Football	204	164	80%
Cricket Pitch	14	14	100%
Rugby Pitch	18	15	83%
Full-Size Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP)	9	8	89%
TOTALS	245	201	82%

- 4.5 There are currently 201 playing pitches available with community access i.e. 82% of existing pitches are available for community use, the location of these sites is shown in Map 2 (Appendix 7). The ownership of these playing pitch sites are detailed in Table 4.2 and can be seen in Map 3 (Appendix 7).

Table 4.2 : Number of Pitches by Ownership and Community Access

Playing Pitch Type	Total Number of Sites	Total Number of Pitches	Pitches with Community Access	Pitches without Community Access
Council	25	87	87	0
Education	56	124	82	42
Private / Club	17	34	32	2
Total	98	245	201	44

- 4.6 Of the 44 pitches without community access, the majority are located on education sites with the exception of the two pitches at Bescot Stadium (Walsall FC).

Training facilities

- 4.7 Clubs were consulted about the training facilities they use. Establishing issues around training facilities, whether they concern lack of facilities, poor quality or limited access is important for a number of reasons. Specifically a lack of dedicated training facilities can impact negatively on those facilities used for formal matches and other competitions. A lack of training facilities can lead to overplaying of match facilities, can lead to unofficial use of facilities and can stifle club development.

Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP's)

- 4.8 There are currently 8 full-size AGPs in the Borough with community use. The facilities are located at:
- **Alumwell Business and Enterprise College – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for general sports use**
 - **Aston University Sports Ground – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
 - **Oak Park Leisure Centre – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for general sports use**
 - **Sneyd Community College – full-size, sand dressed pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
 - **St Thomas More Enterprise and Catholic – Business and Enterprise College – full-size, 3G, providing for general sports use**
 - **The Streetly - A Specialist Sports College – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
 - **Willenhall School Sports College – full-size, sand dressed pitch, providing for general sports use**
 - **Wolverhampton University Sports Ground (Walsall Campus) – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
- 4.9 Local Standards for the future provision of AGPs in the Borough are included in Section 5, based on locally identified need for both training and competition.

- 4.10 In setting Local Standards for this type of pitch surface there are a number of national trends which need to be taken into account. The FA is moving to increased use of artificial grass surfaces for football at league level; this could have the impact of further increasing levels of surplus senior football pitches, now and into the future.
- 4.11 Equally it will be important to consider securing additional community use of artificial grass pitches located on school sites; this would impact on levels of demand for existing grass football pitches, but could deliver better value for money in terms of maintenance costs. Community use could be secured by way of planning conditions on new pitches as has already been achieved with Sheffield and Darlaston Academy.
- 4.12 Additional demand for training facilities for both football and rugby was identified during the Playing Pitch assessment. Given that there are existing sand-filled AGPs in the Borough, which provide for hockey (as long as they are maintained appropriately) any additional AGPs should be 3G, which provides predominantly for football and rugby training. The rationale for this is the additional flexibility provided by this surface in terms of providing for the training needs of two sports, and the opportunity to decrease use of sand filled facilities for football training to facilitate increased use for hockey.

Assessment of Supply: Quality

- 4.13 The quality of playing pitches was assessed through:
- **Site visits and a visual non-technical pitch quality assessment of pitches identified as having secured community use.**
 - **Self ratings by schools of their own facilities**
 - **Ratings by local clubs of the facilities they use**

Non-Technical Visual Assessments

- 4.14 For the non-technical turf quality pitch assessment, the scoring matrix devised as part of the Sport England Electronic Toolkit for undertaking pitch assessments was used. A summary of quality scores are contained within the Appendices. The key criteria areas assessed comprised:
- **Grass Cover**
 - **Length of Grass**
 - **Size of pitch (in relation to recommended dimensions)**
 - **Safety Margins**
 - **Slope of pitch**
 - **Evenness of pitch**
 - **Presence of common problems such as dog fouling and litter**
 - **Evidence of unofficial use**
 - **Evidence that the pitch is also used for training**
 - **Whether the pitch is served by changing accommodation**

- **Condition/quality of equipment (e.g. goalposts)**
- **Condition/quality of line markings**

- **Whether there are training areas on the site**

4.15 Site inspections also rated the quality of changing and ancillary facilities for pitch sites with community use, based on:

- **Overall Quality**
- **Evidence of vandalism**
- **Whether there are showers**
- **Whether there are toilet facilities**
- **Whether the pitch site is served by car parking facilities**
- **Links to public transport**
- **Security**
- **Whether there is segregated changing to allow male and female sport to be accommodated on the site at the same time**

4.16 Site visits were made in the period October - December 2009. Inspections were undertaken on a total of 193 grass pitches and 8 artificial grass pitches (AGP) across 65 sites within the Walsall Council area, encompassing:

- **39 Mini Football Pitches**
- **26 Junior Football Pitches**
- **99 Senior Football Pitches**
- **14 Cricket Pitches**
- **15 Rugby Pitches**
- **8 Artificial Grass Pitches**

4.17 The spatial distribution of pitch types with community use can be seen in Map 4 (Appendix 7). All grass pitches were rated using the Sport England scoring matrix, this provides a numerical score for each pitch. The maximum score for any one pitch is 100%. Pitch quality is rated using the following values:

Pitch Quality Line

Less than 30%	30% - 54%	55% - 64%	65% - 90%	Over 90%
A Poor Pitch	A Below Average Pitch	An Average Pitch	A Good Pitch	An Excellent Pitch

4.18 The non-technical visual inspections showed that on a Borough wide basis quality of audited pitches varies from 43% (below average) through to 87% (good) with a mean pitch rating of 65% (good). Map 5 (Appendix 7) shows the spatial distribution of sites with community use and their average pitch quality rating.

4.19 Ratings provide a comprehensive guide to the varying quality across the Borough, but need to be treated with caution for the following reasons:

- **The inspections were non-technical, based on a visual assessment only**
- **The inspections are a snapshot view of provision – scores are recorded based on what is seen on site at one particular visit.**
- **The presence of changing room facilities boost the score for a pitch.**

Ancillary Facilities

4.20 Where access was provided, changing facilities alongside other ancillary facilities (car parking, toilets, and access to the site) were rated at sites with community use. Where access was not possible, the ancillary score was taken from consultation findings from clubs using the facilities. The Sport England scoring matrix was used to score each pitch site out of 100% and rated using the following values:

Ancillary Facilities Quality Line

Less than 30%	30% - 39%	40% - 59%	60% - 89%	Over 90%
Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent

4.21 The following scores for ancillary provision were recorded:

- **4 sites rated as ‘excellent’ (6%)**
- **23 sites rated as ‘good’ (36%)**
- **21 sites rated as ‘average’ (32%)**
- **9 sites rated as ‘poor’ (14%)**
- **8 sites rated as ‘very poor’ (12%)**

4.22 Map 6 (Appendix 7) shows the spatial distribution of sites with community use and their ancillary facility quality ratings.

Consultation with Schools / Colleges

4.23 108 schools and colleges within the Borough responded to consultation about their sports facilities (91% response rate). 23 schools/colleges identified themselves as having secured community use of their facilities (i.e. a formal written usage agreement). A further 32 schools identified pitches on their site but with no community use i.e. solely used by the school for sport.

4.24 Of the schools and colleges that rated the quality of their pitches:

- **11% of schools/colleges rate their pitches as ‘excellent’**
- **61% of schools/colleges rate their pitches as ‘good’**
- **22% of schools/colleges rate their pitches as ‘average’**
- **6% of schools/colleges rate their pitches as ‘below average’ or ‘poor’**
- **No schools/colleges rate their pitches as ‘very poor’**

4.25 Education establishments were also asked to rate the quality of their changing and ancillary facilities. 20 schools identified having car parking facilities which on average rated as 'good'. 13 schools identified having changing facilities, the average rating being 'good'. 9 schools identified having shower facilities generally rating them as 'average'. 4 schools identified having referees changing facilities and 4 schools identified having a social area for spectators and players.

Consultation with Sports Clubs

4.26 A consultation exercise was undertaken with all identified sports clubs that use pitches within the Council boundary. Clubs were asked to rate and comment on the quality of the home facilities they use and to identify issues with facilities that have a negative impact on their club.

4.27 A total of 114 sports clubs using pitches responded to the questionnaire either through postal returns or through follow-up phone calls. This equates to 56 football clubs (50% of all football clubs in Walsall) fielding 193 teams (51% of all football teams in Walsall), 5 rugby clubs (71% of all rugby clubs) fielding 39 teams (93% of all rugby teams), 8 cricket clubs (67% of all clubs) fielding 57 teams (83% of all teams) and 3 hockey clubs (50% response rate) fielding 21 teams (59% response rate). The remaining 42 clubs were identified as playing outside the Borough.

4.28 Further consultation was undertaken with league secretaries and governing bodies of sport, to ensure the demand data was as accurate as possible to ensure all teams that play pitch sports in the Borough were included.

4.29 43% of the football clubs who responded said that they expect their membership numbers to grow within the next 5 years. 44% said they expect their membership to remain the same, whilst 13% said that they expect a decrease. 78% of cricket clubs expect to see an increase in membership and 22% expect to see no change at all. All of the rugby clubs said that they expect an increase in membership and all of the hockey clubs anticipate that their membership will remain the same. Table 4.3 indicates the types of issues clubs identified as a problem and the percentage of clubs who are experiencing them.

Table 4.3 : Percentage of clubs experiencing problems

Type of Issue	% of Clubs who Reported the Issue
Lack of external funding	63%
Lack of internal funding	56%
Lack of appropriate facilities	49%
Limited access to suitable facilities	38%
Lack of volunteers / coaches	30%
Retaining / recruiting members	24%
Lack of information about local services	22%
Access difficulties	18%

4.30 Lack of internal and external funding are the biggest issues, alongside lack of appropriate facilities and limited access to suitable facilities.

4.31 Each of the clubs were asked if they would prefer to travel further for better facilities or have facilities which are nearer but of a lower standard. Of the clubs who gave their priorities, 49% said they would prefer to access better facilities which are further away, but 51% said they would rather used lower standard facilities which are nearer to members.

4.32 Some of the clubs chose to provide additional comments regarding their club and its need and requirements. A frequent comment made by clubs was that there is not enough funding for them to maintain changing facilities and rebuild / refurbish ones which have been vandalised.

4.33 The clubs were asked to rate the facilities which they use and give details about any facilities which they felt were poor or very poor. It was clear that many of the facilities were rated poor due to the condition of the pitch or changing facilities.

Assessment of Supply: Accessibility

4.34 Access to pitch provision is influenced by a number of factors, and needs to be considered differently to accessibility factors for more general open space provision. The following factors need to be considered:

- **The need for ancillary facilities, such as changing rooms and car parking to ensure that some league standards are met**
- **The level of fees and charges for use of the facility – playing pitches have been assessed from the perspective of being formal sports facilities**
- **The demand ‘unit’ is different to that of other types of open space. A team may not necessarily comprise of residents from the same locality**

4.35 For the purposes of the assessment we have looked at access from two perspectives. Specifically access to affordable facilities (i.e. cost of hire) and geographical access (i.e. proximity to quality facilities and average travel distances). We also considered access from a demand perspective, taking account of the capacity for new members at the clubs identified. We found:

- **72% of clubs report issues relating to a lack of funding (either internal or external) and nearly a half of all clubs cite ‘lack of appropriate facilities’ as a key issue; and**
- **82% of all clubs have capacity for new members – and 45% of these clubs are projecting an increase in their membership over the next 5 years.**

4.36 In terms of geographical access to facilities, the research undertaken has sought to determine an acceptable catchment area for playing pitch sites through consulting with local people and sports clubs and assessing the quality and potential of existing provision. The study has found that there is a variance in acceptable travel time to pitch facilities ranging from 5 minutes to 45 minutes.

4.37 From the public consultation undertaken as part of the PPG17 study, 71% of all respondents identified using outdoor sports facilities, 16% on a daily basis, 28% on a weekly basis, 12% on a monthly basis and 15% within the last six months to a year. 64% of respondents stated driving as the preferred mode of travel to this type of provision, driving for 12 minutes or 3.96 miles (6.37 km) to access outdoor sports provision (the equivalent when walking is 0.60 miles (0.97 km) or 966 metres).

4.38 The access standard set is that no person should live more than 1,000m from their nearest formal outdoor sports facility. This includes sites that are classified as other types of open space, e.g. parks, but may contain pitch facilities, e.g. Willenhall Memorial Park. This mirrors the access standard set in the accompanying PPG17 study. Map 7 (Appendix 7) demonstrates this 1,000m accessibility catchment for all sites with community use.

4.39 This obviously has implications for the future development and promotion of opportunities and initiatives to stimulate demand for pitch sports, in addition to addressing current issues around supply.

4.40 In terms of access we also reviewed the hire fees and charges levied for pitches. On average, clubs report paying just under £50 per pitch for a match. Although the study has not included a comprehensive comparison of fees and charges across the region, comparisons with other studies completed by Strategic Leisure suggests these fees are similar to those in similar areas to Walsall.

Assessment of Demand

- 4.41 In order to assess the levels of provision for Football, Cricket, Rugby and Hockey across the Borough it is important to compare the quantity of facilities with the current level of demand in order to establish whether there is a surplus or deficiency in provision.
- 4.42 The current demand for pitches is established through a range of methods including:
- **An initial sports club questionnaire sent to identified clubs and schools within the Borough**
 - **Additional telephone consultation with key sports clubs/schools**
 - **Analysis of local league handbooks**
 - **Consultation with key stakeholders and sports specific contacts e.g. NGBs**
 - **Input from Walsall Council**
 - **Internet research**
- 4.43 A total of 529 teams have been identified as playing regular fixtures throughout the relevant season. A full and comprehensive list of teams is provided in the appendices of this report. The data in Table 4.4 is presented on a sport-by-sport basis.

Table 4.4 : Numbers of Teams

Sport and Team Type	Age Group	Number of Teams
Football		
Mini-soccer (U7-U10s) - mixed	6-9yrs	135
Junior football - boys	10-15yrs	130
Junior football - girls	10-15yrs	12
Men's football	16-45yrs	95
Women's football	16-45yrs	10
Totals for football		382
Cricket		
Junior cricket - boys	11-17yrs	21
Junior cricket - girls	11-17yrs	4
Men's cricket	18-55yrs	42
Women's cricket	18-55yrs	2
Totals for Cricket		69
Hockey		
Junior hockey – mixed	11-15yrs	5
Men's hockey	16-45yrs	18
Women's hockey	16-45yrs	13
Totals for Hockey		36
Rugby Union		
Mini-rugby - mixed	8-12yrs	10
Junior rugby - boys	13-17yrs	14
Junior rugby - girls	16-17yrs	0
Men's rugby	18-45yrs	18
Women's rugby	18-45yrs	0
Totals for Rugby		42

- 4.44 It is important to note that several teams associated to areas outside the Borough have been included within the figures as the home ground they play is located within Walsall. In these instances the teams may be travelling from outside the Borough to use the facilities in Walsall.
- 4.45 'Latent demand' can be described as demand for a pitch that is suppressed or is not met, due to a range of factors including:
- **No pitch facilities in the local area**
 - **The team is unable to afford to rent a pitch or participate in leagues that require significant travel for away fixtures**
 - **There is a shortage of officials**
 - **Schools restricting community use**
- 4.46 An attempt was made to assess levels of latent demand in the Borough. This was predominantly conducted through consultation with sports clubs who were asked to identify issues with provision. No clubs specifically expressed unmet demand, although a number of comments were made in relation to poor quality facilities. A number of clubs expressed concern that the Borough needed a greater number of better quality pitches, training facilities and ancillary facilities.
- 4.47 In order to identify the level of demand, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration, some of which apply to all sports whilst others are specific to the sports concerned. For junior and senior football, rugby, cricket and hockey, calculations are based on teams playing home and away league fixtures generally with a demand for 0.5 pitches per week (1 home game every fortnight), reflecting that only half the teams will play at home each week. However this is different for mini soccer (1 pitch per week) reflecting that mini soccer is played in a tournament format where each team will play at the same home venue every week.

Sport by Sport Assessment – Key Findings

- 4.48 Assessment using the Playing Pitch Model has been completed to provide an indication of the adequacy of provision for association football (soccer), cricket, rugby union and hockey. Modelling results have been interpreted using findings from consultation with sports clubs and other stakeholders.

Football Assessment - Current

- 4.49 The supply and demand data collated was analysed to provide a quantitative assessment. Put simply the assessment provides an initial indication of the adequacy of provision to cater for estimated demand. A summary of the application of the Towards a Level Playing Field eight stage model assessment for football is provided in Table 4.5.
- 4.50 Table 4.5 sets out the number of teams identified in the Borough and therefore how many home games there are per week i.e. assuming half the teams play home games each week, and the other half play away games each week. Based on the total number of home games each week, and the peak times at which pitches are needed i.e. the time when most home games are played, the methodology then calculates how many pitches are required at any one time during this period of peak demand. This figure is effectively the 'worst case scenario' for pitch demand; meeting this is the minimum level of provision that should be made.
- 4.51 Further details of how the following figures have been calculated are included within the appendices to this report.

Table 4.5 : Football Assessment Results

Model Stage		Results		Comments
1	Identifying teams	Mini Soccer	135	Figures as per Table – identified through audit completed and including ‘regular’ season teams only
		Junior Football	142	
		Senior Football	105	
2	Home games per week	Mini Soccer	1	Junior and senior teams play home and away fixtures – demand equates to 1 pitch every other week or an average of 0.5 per week. Mini soccer teams use the same pitch each week and play 2 games each week.
		Junior Football	0.5	
		Senior Football	0.5	
3	Total home games per week	Mini Soccer	135	Results of Stage 1 x Stage 2
		Junior Football	71	
		Senior Football	53	
4	Establishing temporal demand for games	Mini Soccer	90% Sun a.m.	Peak demand and percentage of matches played at this time
		Junior Football	41% Sun a.m.	
		Senior Football	43% Sun a.m.	
5	Defining pitches required each day	Mini Soccer	122	Figures show pitch requirements at peak time.
		Junior Football	30	
		Senior Football	23	
6	Establishing pitches available	Mini Soccer	39	A number of senior pitches are used to play junior football throughout the Borough
		Junior Football	26	
		Senior Football	99	
7	Assessing the findings	Mini Soccer	-83 pitches	Figures do not take account of quality. Quantitative assessment only.
		Junior Football	-4 pitches	
		Senior Football	+76 pitches	
8	Identifying policy options and solutions	Mini Soccer	Findings discussed in more detail below	
		Junior Football		
		Senior Football		

4.52 The results show:

- A theoretical deficit of dedicated mini soccer pitches – however these figures do not take pitch quality into consideration and the tournament format of mini soccer in Walsall where a pitch can be utilised up to 3 times during the session; the 39 available pitches can host 3 games, therefore making a possible 117 pitch ‘slots’ available in one session (3 games x 39 pitches = 117). **The deficit is therefore more likely to be - 2 mini soccer pitches at peak demand** (122 games – 117 pitch slots = 5 pitch slots) equivalent to 2 mini pitches (5/3 = 2 pitches)
- A theoretical deficiency of junior football pitches – our audit established that some junior games are played on senior pitches across the Borough; and
- A large surplus of senior pitches.

4.53 The results are based on pitches required to accommodate peak demand. Given the above findings, the existing supply of mini soccer pitches with community use is struggling to meet the demand placed on them. It is likely that the deficiency of junior pitches is compensated by junior teams playing on available senior pitches. Quantity is only sufficient if pitches are of sufficient quality.

Pitch Quality

- 4.54 The results of the quantitative assessment need to be considered alongside quality issues, as quality will affect the capacity of pitches to accommodate games. Given the findings of the quantitative assessment it is important pitches are of sufficient quality to accommodate at least two, but ideally three matches per week.
- 4.55 We assessed the quality of 164 football pitches comprising 99 senior pitches, 26 junior pitches and 39 mini soccer pitches. A summary of the pitch scores is provided in Table 4.6. Details of the scores for each pitch, and the rating for each quality criteria are included in the appendices.

Table 4.6 : Football Pitch Quality: Visual Inspection summary

Rating of Pitch	Score Ratio	Number of pitches	% of accessible pitch 'stock'
Excellent	Over 90%	0	0%
Good	65-90%	99	60%
Average	55-64%	53	32%
Below average	30-54%	12	7%
Poor	Less than 30%	0	0%

- 4.56 Most pitches are rated as 'Good' or 'Average' using the Non-Technical Visual Inspection proforma. However 12 pitches rated as below average. No pitches were rated as 'Excellent' or 'Poor'.
- 4.57 It is important to assess the impact of quality of pitches on capacity. If pitches are particularly poor then they may not be able to accommodate the number of games required to meet demand and this could increase any deficiency recorded or reduce surpluses. We have used the results of the quality inspections to show how quality might affect capacity. Table identifies assumptions that we have made regarding capacity. We used the model outlined in Table 3.1 shown in Section 3.

Table 4.7 : Impact of quality on quantity - Football Pitches

Rating of Pitch	No. of pitches	Quality Factor	Score / No. of pitches
Excellent / Good	99	1.5	148
Average	53	1.0	53
Below average	12	0.5	6
Poor	0	0.25	0
TOTAL PITCHES	164		207

- 4.58 The analysis in 4.7 suggests that the 164 football pitches could, given the high quality of some of them, be equivalent to 207 pitches in terms of the number of fixtures they can accommodate. Over half of the pitches can in theory accommodate 3 games per week. However, a number are also unlikely to meet the demands placed upon them.
- 4.59 Ancillary facilities (specifically changing rooms) greatly affect the quality of, and access to, facilities. In terms of our assessment, the lack of changing facilities reduces a potential pitch quality score by 15%. We found that 13 sites with football pitches are served by no changing provision. This approach is recognised as being valid in the context of equality of access; if changing provision is inadequate for e.g. use by women, girls of minority ethnic participants, and does not meet child protection policies, such a facility is unlikely to be used to its full potential, even if the pitch is good quality.

4.60 In addition, gender specific leagues are unlikely to approve such a site as a venue. Site specific details can be found in Appendix 2.

Area Analysis

4.61 An area based assessment for football has been undertaken based on the neighbourhood management areas described in Table 1.1. Overall most football demand is generated from Areas 1, 2 and 3 of the Borough. Approximately two thirds of the Borough's demand is from these areas. A significant amount of the provision is also located within these areas.

4.62 The deficiency/surplus figures recorded in Table 4.8 reflect the patterns of temporal / peak demand recorded for the Borough as a whole. This information needs to be taken into account in relation to the more detailed area analysis and conclusions. It is also worth noting that the theoretical surplus shown for mini soccer can be reduced if 'pitch slots' are taken into consideration.

Table 4.8 - Area Analysis - Football

Area	Wards	Demand (No. of teams)	Supply (No. of pitches)	Surplus / Deficiency During Peak Demand	Average Pitch Quality Score
Area 1	Brownhills Pelsall Rushall-Shelfield	46 mini soccer 33 junior football 18 senior football	13 mini pitches 5 junior pitches 23 senior pitches	-29 mini pitches -2 junior pitches +19 senior pitches	68% - Good
Area 2	Aldridge Central and South Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Pheasey Park Farm Streetly	17 mini soccer 40 junior football 20 senior football	10 mini pitches 10 junior pitches 28 senior pitches	-6 mini pitches +2 junior pitches +23 senior pitches	60% - Average
Area 3	Birchills Leamore Blakenall Bloxwich East Bloxwich West	47 mini soccer 29 junior football 18 senior football	8 mini pitches 2 junior pitches 9 senior pitches	-35 mini pitches -4 junior pitches +5 senior pitches	57% - Average
Area 4	Paddock Palfrey Pleck St Matthew's	2 mini soccer 22 junior football 24 senior football	0 mini pitches 2 junior pitches 15 senior pitches	-2 mini pitches -3 junior pitches +9 senior pitches	70% - Good
Area 5	Bentley and Darlaston North Darlaston South	5 mini soccer 11 junior football 19 senior football	3 mini pitches 3 junior pitches 15 senior pitches	-2 mini pitches 0 junior pitches +10 senior pitches	61% - Average
Area 6	Short Heath Willenhall North Willenhall South	18 mini soccer 7 junior football 6 senior football	5 mini pitches 4 junior pitches 9 senior pitches	-12 mini pitches +2 junior pitches +7 senior pitches	70% - Good

Quality based on average site score if more than one pitch.

Football Assessment – Future

- 4.63 We assessed the adequacy of football provision to meet future demand through estimating levels of future demand based on population growth and the development plans and aspirations of clubs. We have used the supply and demand modelling to identify changes to surplus and deficiencies in provision for 5 (2015) and 10 years (2020).
- 4.64 *Team Generation Rates* (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team.

Table 4.9 : Team Generation rates for Football

Team	Age Groups	Number of Teams within age group	Teams generated per 1,000 population	Team Generation Rate *
Mini-soccer (U7-U10s) - mixed	6-9yrs	135	10.6	1 team per 95 residents
Junior football - boys	10-15yrs	130	12.8	1 team per 78 residents
Junior football - girls	10-15yrs	12	1.2	1 team per 850 residents
Men's football	16-45yrs	95	1.9	1 team per 525 residents
Women's football	16-45yrs	10	0.2	1 team per 4990 residents
Totals for football (excluding mini soccer)		247	2.1	1 team per 487 residents

* Team Generation Rate – the population within the *specified age group* required to generate 1 team

- 4.65 The team generation show significant levels of demand for male football. Despite this, local clubs project some levels of growth in their membership mostly in the junior and mini sections.
- 4.66 The playing pitch model has been used to assess future demand using the team generation rates, predicted population growth/decline and a 0.4% year-on-year increase in participation based on current growth data from Birmingham and Staffordshire County FA.

Table 4.10 : Future Assessment – Football

Year	Pitch Type	Surplus / Deficit to meet highest temporal demand
2015	Mini Soccer	-86 pitches
	Junior Football	-4 pitches
	Senior Football	+ 75 pitches
2020	Mini Soccer	-88 pitches
	Junior Football	-4 pitches
	Senior Football	+75 pitches

- 4.67 The results are based on using existing team splits (i.e. the existing percentage split across mini, junior and adult teams) across the Borough. The results show there is likely to be a continued deficiency in provision of mini and junior pitches in all areas across the Borough if estimated growth is realised. The Borough wide deficiency is based on peak time for football.
- 4.68 The audit has highlighted some 'spare' supply at school sites without secured community use where access could be explored. This includes 11 mini pitches and 20 junior pitches across the Borough. There may be some scope for these pitches, subject to appropriate arrangements between the school and local club to meet some of the projected shortfall. There is land available that could be used for playing pitch provision which is currently disused or unmarked and could address some deficiencies. It is also likely that junior demand is addressed by teams using the surplus of senior pitches.

- 4.69 If pitch slots are taken into consideration for mini football this does reduce the deficiency for mini soccer to -4 pitches by 2015 and -6 pitches by 2020.

Other Factors to Consider

- 4.70 In the last two decades the game of football has changed considerably with the development of mini soccer and the explosion of the female and disability versions of the game. The game is currently looking at further developments including a 9 v 9 version of the game to improve the experience and transition for players from mini soccer to 11 v 11, this in turn poses a number of challenges around facility provision for the game.
- 4.71 In addition technology for all weather facilities has moved on significantly and the advent of the 3rd generation all weather artificial grass pitch provides not only a training base but an alternative match day venue, the FA is working with leagues, clubs and local authorities to educate them as to the benefits of these facilities. The game is also now looking particularly in Walsall in the delivery of central venue football as opposed to the more traditional formats of the game. In turn this is making multi pitch venues key to the success of the delivery and growth of the game.

Summary of assessment findings: Football

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- **There is a current deficiency in mini soccer and junior football pitches – however the surplus in senior pitches allows a number of junior games to be played. Pitch quality also allows more than the standard 2 games per week to be played at some sites which allows the current level of demand to be met**
- **There are quality issues across the Borough – a number of changing facilities are of poor quality. Pitch quality also varies significantly across the Borough**
- **The local area assessments show there are areas of deficiency in certain areas of the Borough for mini and junior pitches – particularly Areas 1 and 3 where most of the demand for football is generated**
- **Future demand estimates growth in team numbers – if realised this will result in deficiencies across the Borough, for mini and junior provision. Current provision will not meet this additional demand unless the surpluses in senior pitches are utilised**
- **There are a number of specific issues relating to ‘stifled’ demand – either clubs requiring higher standard provision (to meet league standards) than can be provided by the Council, or demand being curtailed through a lack of capacity**

Cricket Assessment - Current

- 4.72 As with other sports, the supply and demand data collated was analysed to provide a quantitative assessment. Put simply the assessment provides an initial indication of the adequacy of provision to cater for estimated demand. A summary of the application of the eight stage model assessment for cricket is provided in Table 4.11 : Further details of how the following figures have been calculated are included within the appendices to this report.

Table 4.11 : Cricket Assessment Results

Model Stage		Results		Comments
1	Identifying teams	Junior Cricket	25	Figures as per Table – identified through audit completed and including ‘regular’ season teams only
		Senior Cricket	44	
2	Home games per week	Junior Cricket	0.5	Junior and senior teams play home and away fixtures – demand equates to an average of 0.5 per week.
		Senior Cricket	0.5	
3	Total home games per week	Junior Cricket	13	Results of Stage 1 x Stage 2
		Senior Cricket	22	
4	Establishing temporal demand for games	Junior Cricket	64% Sun a.m.	Peak demand and percentage of matches played at this time
		Senior Cricket	57% Sat p.m.	
5	Defining pitches required each day	Junior Cricket	9	Figures show pitch requirements at peak time.
		Senior Cricket	13	
6	Establishing pitches available	Cricket	14	Figure shows cricket grounds
7	Assessing the findings	Junior Cricket	+6 pitches	Figures do not take account of quality. Quantitative assessment only.
		Senior Cricket	+1 pitch	
8	Identifying policy options and solutions	Junior Cricket	Findings discussed in more detail below	
		Senior Cricket		

- 4.73 The results show:

- **A theoretical surplus of both junior and senior cricket pitches at peak demand**

- 4.74 The results are based on pitches required to accommodate peak demand. Overall the existing supply of pitches with community use are meeting the demands placed upon them. From our consultation it is apparent that games are played at weekend and week days, especially junior cricket. As with other sports, this is potentially driven more by the availability of pitches than by scheduling of games. In light of this, the quality of pitches is a key factor.

Pitch Quality

- 4.75 Given the findings of the quantitative assessment it is important pitches are of sufficient quality to accommodate a significant number of games. Based on the data collected, pitches are required to accommodate up to 3 games per week.

- 4.76 The quality of all 14 cricket pitches has been assessed at 11 sites across the Borough. Quality audits were undertaken outside of the playing season which did have an affect on overall quality scores. A summary of the pitch scores is provided in Table 4.12 : Details of the scores for each pitch, and the rating for each quality criteria are included in the appendices.

Table 4.12 : Cricket Pitch Quality: Visual Inspection summary

Rating of Pitch	Score Ratio	Number of pitches	% of accessible pitch 'stock'
Excellent	Over 90%	0	0%
Good	65-90%	8	57%
Average	55-64%	4	29%
Below average	30-54%	2	14%
Poor	Less than 30%	0	0%

- 4.77 The standard of facilities is generally good, with 57% of pitches rated as 'good' using the non-technical visual inspection proforma. Only 2 pitches were rated 'below average'.
- 4.78 It is important to assess the impact of quality of pitches on capacity. If pitches are particularly poor then they may not be able to accommodate the number of games required to meet demand and this could increase any deficiency recorded or reduce surpluses. The results of the quality inspections have been used to show how quality might affect capacity. Table 4.13 : identifies assumptions that have been made regarding capacity.

Table 4.13 : Impact of quality on quantity - Cricket Pitches

Rating of Pitch	No. of pitches	Quality Factor	Score / No. of pitches
Excellent / Good	8	1.5	12
Average	4	1.0	4
Below average	2	0.5	1
Poor	0	0.25	0
TOTAL PITCHES	14		17

- 4.79 The analysis above suggests that the 14 audited pitches could, given their general high quality, be equivalent to 17 pitches in terms of the number of fixtures they can accommodate. This is important given the high number of games some of the club facilities need to accommodate per week.

Area Analysis

- 4.80 An area based assessment for cricket has been undertaken based on the neighbourhood management areas described in Table 1.1. Overall most cricket demand is generated from Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Borough, a significant amount of the provision is also located within these areas. Area 5 provides a smaller level of demand and Area 6 has no cricket provision and no demand for the sport.
- 4.81 In undertaking the area analysis the deficiency/surplus figures recorded in Table 4.14 : reflects the patterns of temporal / peak demand recorded for the Borough as a whole. All areas show a small surplus at peak demand with the exception of Area 3, where a deficiency of -1 senior pitch has been recorded. Calculations for the area analysis can be found within the playing pitch model (Appendix 4).

Table 4.14 : Area Analysis - Cricket

Area	Wards	Demand (No. of teams)	Supply (No. of pitches)	Surplus / Deficiency During Peak Demand	Average Pitch Quality Score
Area 1	Brownhills Pelsall Rushall-Shelfield	5 junior teams 6 senior teams	2 pitches	0 junior pitches 0 senior pitches	72% - Good
Area 2	Aldridge Central and South Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Pheasey Park Farm Streetly	9 junior teams 15 senior teams	5 pitches	+2 junior pitches 0 senior pitches	67% - Good
Area 3	Birchills Leamore Blakenall Bloxwich East Bloxwich West	4 junior teams 8 senior teams	2 pitches	0 junior pitches -1 senior pitches	61% - Average
Area 4	Paddock Palfrey Pleck St Matthew's	7 junior teams 12 senior teams	4 pitches	+1 junior pitches 0 senior pitches	65% - Good
Area 5	Bentley and Darlaston North Darlaston South	0 junior teams 3 senior teams	1 pitch	+1 junior pitches 0 senior pitches	64% - Average
Area 6	Short Heath Willenhall North Willenhall South	0 junior teams 0 senior teams	0 pitches	0 junior pitches 0 senior pitches	n/a

Quality based on average site score if more than one pitch.

Cricket Assessment – Future

- 4.82 The adequacy of cricket provision has been assessed to meet future demand through estimating levels of future demand based on population growth and the development plans and aspirations of clubs. The supply and demand model has been used to identify changes to surplus and deficiencies in provision for 2015 and 2020.
- 4.83 *Team Generation Rates* (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team, these are found in Table 4.15 : .

Table 4.15 : Team Generation Rates for Cricket

Team	Age Groups	Number of Teams within age group	Teams generated per 1,000 population	Team Generation Rate *
Junior cricket - boys	11-17yrs	21	1.8	1 team per 570 people
Junior cricket - girls	11-17yrs	4	0.3	1 team per 2,990 people
Men's cricket	18-55yrs	42	0.7	1 team per 1,414 people
Women's cricket	18-55yrs	2	0.03	1 team per 31,102 people
Totals for cricket		69	0.5	1 team per 2,150 people

* Team Generation Rate – the population within the *specified age group* required to generate 1 team

- 4.84 Cricket is relatively healthy in Walsall with 12 Borough-based clubs fielding anything between 1 and 12 teams each season. There is a historical culture of cricket in the authority, and over the years, more opportunities to participate have been developed. Consultation with local clubs suggest that participation in cricket will continue to grow. Clubs stressed the need for additional and improved indoor training facilities to support this growth in participation. Developing better links with schools who have appropriate indoor space for cricket could be one option to address this need.
- 4.85 As with the assessments completed for other sports, we have assessed the adequacy of cricket provision to meet future demand. The playing pitch model has been used to assess future demand using the team generation rates, predicted population growth/decline and a 1% year-on-year increase in participation based on Sport England targets for local authorities.

Table 4.16 : Future Assessment – Cricket

Year	Pitch Type	Surplus / Deficit to meet highest temporal deficiency
2015	Junior Cricket	+5 pitches
	Senior Cricket	+1 pitch
2020	Junior Cricket	+4 pitches
	Senior Cricket	0 pitches

- 4.86 The results are based on using existing team splits (i.e. the existing percentage split across Junior and Senior teams) across the Borough. In our comments we have factored in any specific differences to demand patterns on a local level that need to be taken into account.
- 4.87 The results show there is likely to be a continued surplus in provision if estimated growth is realised and the level of provision stays the same. The Borough wide surplus is based on peak time for cricket (Saturday p.m. senior and Sunday a.m. junior). Our analysis suggests there is currently a sufficient supply of pitches and future demand is not estimated to match supply until 2020. Our audit highlights little 'spare' supply in relation to pitches without secured community use where access could be explored. However some school sites may have the space for additional cricket pitch provision.

Other Factors to Consider

- 4.88 Staffordshire Cricket has previously considered the creation of a county cricket hub, based centrally within the county, providing the county's senior clubs with permanent outdoor facilities and appropriate indoor facilities to support the cricket needs of the county board, the county clubs and some of the individual clubs in the close proximity. Whilst needing considerable financial input, a future project along these lines is still under consideration. Should Staffordshire Cricket's playing and developmental strength at both junior and senior levels continue, it is envisaged that appropriate resources would be sought to support a central cricket facility in the longer term. In the short to medium term, Staffordshire Cricket believe a more geographically wide-spread improvement of existing facilities would provide a better return on investment for both Staffordshire County and club cricket.

Summary of assessment findings: Cricket

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- **There is a small theoretical surplus in pitches across the Borough, as a result pitches are sufficient in quantitative terms to meet current demand**
- **Most clubs own or manage their own facilities and pitch quality is good across the Borough. Ancillary facilities rate as average, good or excellent**
- **There is a reasonable spread of clubs across the Borough and most clubs have capacity for new members, however access is more limited for residents in the east of the Borough, most notably Areas 5 and 6**
- **Current provision will be sufficient to service the levels of future demand over the next 5-10 years to meet growth across the Borough**

Rugby Assessment - Current

- 4.89 As with other sports, the supply and demand data collated was analysed to provide a quantitative assessment. Put simply the assessment provides an initial indication of the adequacy of provision to cater for estimated demand. A summary of the application of the eight stage model assessment for rugby is provided in Table 4.17:
- 4.90 There are no specific junior rugby pitches identified in Walsall and from the consultation with clubs and the RFU, it is clear junior teams use senior pitches for matches. An assumption has been made that mini teams create the equivalent of half a team. Further details of how the following figures have been calculated are included within the appendices to this report. Estimates have been made for demand created by schools based on schools playing rugby as recorded by the RFU. Exact team information for all schools is not available assumptions have been made that each school generates 2 teams (i.e. 1 match per week). There are no rugby league teams identified that play in the Borough.

Table 4.17: Rugby Assessment Results

Model Stage		Results		Comments
1	Identifying teams and team equivalents	Rugby	37	Figures as per Table – identified through audit completed and including ‘regular’ season teams, school teams and team equivalents.
2	Home games per week	Rugby	0.5	All teams play home and away fixtures – demand equates to an average of 0.5 per week.
3	Total home games per week	Rugby	19	Results of Stage 1 x Stage 2
4	Establishing temporal demand for games	Rugby	51% Sun a.m.	Peak demand and percentage of matches played at this time
5	Defining pitches required each day	Rugby	10 pitches	Figures show pitch requirements at peak time.
6	Establishing pitches available	Rugby	15	Figure shows all available pitch provision with community use
7	Assessing the findings	Rugby	+5 pitches	Figures do not take account of quality. Quantitative assessment only.
8	Identifying policy options and solutions	Rugby	Findings discussed in more detail below	

- 4.91 The results show:
- **A theoretical surplus of senior rugby pitches at peak demand**
- 4.92 The results are based on pitches required to accommodate peak demand and it would appear there is adequate provision to meet demand for rugby given that junior games are played on senior pitches.

Pitch Quality

- 4.93 Given the findings of the quantitative assessment it is important pitches are of sufficient quality to accommodate a significant number of games. Based on the data collected, pitches are required to accommodate up to 2 games per week.
- 4.94 We assessed the quality of all 15 rugby pitches at 9 sites in the Borough. A summary of the pitch scores is provided in Table 4.18 : . Details of the scores for each pitch, and the rating for each quality criteria is included in the appendices.

Table 4.18 : Rugby Pitch Quality: Visual Inspection summary

Rating of Pitch	Score Ratio	Number of pitches	% of accessible pitch 'stock'
Excellent	Over 90%	0	0%
Good	65-90%	11	73%
Average	55-64%	4	27%
Below average	30-54%	0	0%
Poor	Less than 30%	0	0%

- 4.95 The standard of facilities is generally good, with almost three quarters of all pitches rated as 'Good' using the non-technical visual inspection proforma.
- 4.96 It is important to assess the impact of quality of pitches on capacity. If pitches are particularly poor then they may not be able to accommodate the number of games required to meet demand and this could increase any deficiency recorded or reduce surpluses. The results of the quality inspections have been used to show how quality might affect capacity. Table 4.19 identifies assumptions that have been made regarding capacity.

Table 4.19 : Impact of quality on quantity - Rugby Pitches

Rating of Pitch	No. of pitches	Quality Factor	Score / No. of pitches
Excellent / Good	11	1.5	16
Average	4	1.0	4
Below average	0	0.5	0
Poor	0	0.25	0
TOTAL PITCHES	15		20

- 4.97 The analysis in Table 4.19 : suggests that the 15 rugby pitches could, given the quality of some of them, be equivalent to 20 pitches in terms of the number of fixtures they can accommodate. Nearly three quarters of the pitches can in theory accommodate 3 games per week. However, a number are also unlikely to meet the demands placed upon them.
- 4.98 Ancillary facilities (specifically changing rooms) greatly affect the quality (and access) of facilities. In terms of our assessment, the lack of changing facilities reduces a potential pitch quality score by 15%. Sites containing rugby pitches had the greatest variance in ancillary ratings, these ranged from excellent to very poor.

Area Analysis

- 4.99 An area based assessment for rugby has been undertaken based on the neighbourhood management areas described in Table 1.1. Overall most rugby demand is generated from Area 4. With the majority of pitch provision located within Areas 2 and 4. Areas 1, 5 and 6 have no rugby provision and no demand for the sport.
- 4.100 In undertaking the area analysis the deficiency/surplus figures recorded in Table 4.20 reflect the patterns of temporal / peak demand recorded for the Borough as a whole. With junior games being played on senior pitches, only Area 2 shows an actual surplus of +4 pitches during peak demand.

Table 4.20 - Area Analysis - Rugby

Area	Wards	Demand (No. of teams / team equivalent)	Supply (No. of pitches)	Surplus / Deficiency During Peak Demand	Average Pitch Quality Score
Area 1	Brownhills Pelsall Rushall-Shelfield	0 teams	0 pitches	0 senior pitches	n/a
Area 2	Aldridge Central and South Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Pheasey Park Farm Streetly	8 teams	6 pitches	+4 senior pitches	72% - Good
Area 3	Birchills Leamore Blakenall Bloxwich East Bloxwich West	6 teams	2 pitches	0 senior pitches	61% - Average
Area 4	Paddock Palfrey Pleck St Matthew's	24 teams	7 pitches	0 senior pitches	65% - Good
Area 5	Bentley and Darlaston North Darlaston South	0 senior teams	0 pitches	0 senior pitches	n/a
Area 6	Short Heath Willenhall North Willenhall South	0 senior teams	0 pitches	0 senior pitches	n/a

Quality based on average site score if more than one pitch.

Rugby Assessment – Future

- 4.101 The adequacy of rugby provision has been assessed to meet future demand through estimating levels of future demand based on population growth and the development plans and aspirations of clubs. We have used the supply and demand modelling to identify changes to surplus and deficiencies in provision for 5 (2015) and 10 years (2020).
- 4.102 *Team Generation Rates* (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team, these are shown in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21 : Team Generation rates for Rugby

Team	Age Groups	Number of Teams within age group	Teams generated per 1,000 population	Team Generation Rate *
Mini-rugby - mixed	8-12yrs	10	0.6	1 team per 1,655 residents
Junior rugby - boys	13-17yrs	14	1.6	1 team per 613 residents
Junior rugby - girls	16-17yrs	0	0	0 teams
Men's rugby	18-45yrs	18	0.4	1 team per 2,580 residents
Women's rugby	18-45yrs	0	0	0 teams
Totals for Rugby (excluding mini)		32	0.3	1 team per 3,279 residents

* Team Generation Rate – the population within the *specified age group* required to generate 1 team

- 4.103 As with the assessments completed for football and cricket, we have assessed the adequacy of rugby provision to meet future demand. The playing pitch model has been used to assess future demand using the team generation rates, predicted population growth/decline and a 2% year-on-year increase in participation based on figures from the RFU. Consultation with local clubs suggest that participation in rugby will continue to grow.

Table 4.22 : Future Assessment – Rugby

Year	Pitch Type	Surplus / Deficit to meet highest temporal demand
2015	Senior Rugby	+5 pitches
2020	Senior Rugby	+3 pitches

- 4.104 The results show there is likely to be a continued surplus in senior provision if estimated growth is realised. The Borough wide surplus is based on peak time for rugby. All junior games in the Borough are played on senior pitches. These figures take into consideration the growth in mini-rugby and the space required to play this game.

Summary of assessment findings: Rugby

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- There is adequate provision in quantitative terms to meet current demand – however, the current surplus of senior rugby pitches is reduced when school use is taken into account.
- Current provision will be sufficient to service future demand if current TGRs are sustained.
- There are limited opportunities to play rugby in the north and west of the Borough (Areas 1, 5 and 6) mainly due to the lack of pitches and rugby clubs in these areas.

Hockey Assessment - Current

- 4.105 The audit identified 6 hockey clubs in the Borough generating 31 senior teams and 5 junior teams. This includes Aldridge Hockey Club who play outside Walsall Borough but are effectively based in Walsall. No grass hockey pitches were found to be in use, all references to hockey pitches refer to artificial grass pitches (AGP).
- 4.106 There are currently 8 full-size AGPs in the Borough with community use. The facilities are located at:
- **Alumwell Business and Enterprise College – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for general sports use**
 - **Aston University Sports Ground – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
 - **Oak Park Leisure Centre – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for general sports use**
 - **Sneyd University Technical College – full-size, sand-dressed pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
 - **St Thomas More Catholic – Business and Enterprise College – full-size, 3G, providing for general sports use**
 - **The Streetly - A Specialist Sports Collage – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
 - **Willenhall School Sports College – full-size, sand-dressedpitch, providing for general sports use**
 - **Wolverhampton University Sports Ground (Walsall Campus) – full-size, sand-filled pitch, providing for hockey and general sports use**
- 4.107 In relation to supply for hockey the third generation (3G) pitch at St Thomas More Enterprise and Catholic College has been excluded from the calculations, this type of synthetic surface is not suitable for hockey.
- 4.108 As with other sports, the supply and demand data collated was analysed to provide a quantitative assessment and provide an initial indication of the adequacy of provision to cater for estimated demand. A summary of the application of the eight stage model assessment for hockey is provided in Table 4.23 : For assessing the adequacy of AGPs we have modified the model. Each full size AGP is counted as two pitches, given the potential to play back to back fixtures in a morning or afternoon session. Access needs to be considered alongside this as clearly not all AGP facilities will be prioritised for hockey use.

Table 4.23 : Hockey Assessment Results

Model Stage		Results		Comments
1	Identifying teams	Junior Hockey	5	Figures as per Figure 9 – identified through audit completed and including 'regular' season teams only
		Senior Hockey	31	
2	Home games per week	Junior Hockey	0.5	Junior and senior teams play home and away fixtures – demand equates to an average of 0.5 per week.
		Senior Hockey	0.5	
3	Total home games per week	Junior Hockey	3	Results of Stage 1 x Stage 2
		Senior Hockey	16	

Model Stage		Results		Comments
4	Establishing temporal demand for games	Junior Hockey	67% Sun a.m.	Peak demand and percentage of matches played at this time
		Senior Hockey	84% Sat p.m.	
5	Defining pitches required each day	Junior Hockey	2	Figures show pitch requirements at peak time.
		Senior Hockey	14	
6	Establishing pitches available	Hockey	14	Pitch slots – 7 sand-based AGPs x 2 potential games per session = 14 potential match slots
7	Assessing the findings	Junior Hockey	+12 match slots	Figures relate to 'pitch slots' rather than whole pitches.
		Senior Hockey	0 match slots	
8	Identifying policy options and solutions	Junior Hockey	Findings discussed in more detail below	
		Senior Hockey		

4.109 The results show that current demand for hockey equals current supply. This equates to one match every other week for both teams requiring pitches on a Saturday. This is subject to pitches being of adequate quality for hockey matches and access to pitches at the required times.

Pitch Quality

4.110 All eight AGPs were rated for quality, details of the scores for each pitch, and the rating for each quality criteria are included in Table 4.24 : and the appendices. 3 AGPs rated as excellent, 4 pitches rated as good and 1 pitch rated as average. All AGPs have changing provision on site with good or average ancillary ratings. Details can be found in Table 4.24 : .

Table 4.24 : AGP Quality : Visual inspection summary

Site Name	Quality Score	Quality Rating	Ancillary Score	Ancillary Rating
Alumwell Business and Enterprise College	81%	Good	50%	Average
Aston University Sports Ground	81%	Good	63%	Good
Oak Park	62%	Average	71%	Good
Sneyd Community College	91%	Excellent	50%	Average
St Thomas More Enterprise and Catholic College	94%	Excellent	85%	Good
The Streetly School	79%	Good	76%	Good
Willenhall School Sports College	91%	Excellent	76%	Good
Wolverhampton University Sports Ground	79%	Good	46%	Average

Area Analysis

4.111 An area based assessment for hockey has been undertaken based on the neighbourhood management areas described in Table 1.1. All hockey demand is currently generated from Areas 2, 3 and 4. There are no AGPs in Areas 1 and 5 and currently no demand in these areas.

4.112 In undertaking the area analysis the deficiency/surplus figures recorded in Table 4.25 : reflect the patterns of temporal / peak demand recorded for the Borough as a whole. The modelling uses pitch slots assuming that 2 matches can be played on one pitch in a morning or afternoon session.

Table 4.25 : Area Analysis - Hockey

Area	Wards	Demand (No. of teams)	Supply (No. of pitches)	Surplus / Deficiency During Peak Demand*	Average Pitch Quality Score
Area 1	Brownhills Pelsall Rushall-Shelfield	0 junior teams 0 senior teams	0 pitches	0 match slots	n/a
Area 2	Aldridge Central and South Aldridge North and Walsall Wood Pheasey Park Farm Streetly	5 junior teams 12 senior teams	2 pitches	-1 match slots	71% - Good
Area 3	Birchills Leamore Blakenall Bloxwich East Bloxwich West	0 junior teams 8 senior teams	1 pitch	-1 match slot	91% - Excellent
Area 4	Paddock Palfrey Pleck St Matthew's	0 junior teams 11 senior teams	3 pitches	+2 match slots	80% - Good
Area 5	Bentley and Darlaston North Darlaston South	0 junior teams 0 senior teams	0 pitches	0 match slots	n/a
Area 6	Short Heath Willenhall North Willenhall South	0 junior teams 0 senior teams	1 pitch	+2 match slots	91% - Excellent

* Based on 2 match slots per morning/afternoon session

- 4.113 The supply of pitches in Areas 4 and 6 are currently sufficient to meet demand. However Areas 2 and 3 are both demonstrating a small deficiency of -1 match slot, which suggests that demand outstrips supply in this area during peak demand.

Hockey Assessment – Future

- 4.114 The adequacy of hockey provision to meet future demand has been assessed through estimating levels of future demand based on population growth and the development plans and aspirations of clubs. The supply and demand modelling has been used to identify changes to surplus and deficiencies in provision for 2015 (5 years) and 2020 (10 years).
- 4.115 *Team Generation Rates* (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team. Table 4.26 demonstrate these for hockey in Walsall.

Table 4.26 – Team Generation rates for Hockey

Team	Age Groups	Number of Teams within age group	Teams generated per 1,000 population	Team Generation Rate *
Junior hockey - mixed	11-15yrs	5	0.3	1 team per 3,400 residents
Men's hockey	16-45yrs	18	0.4	1 team per 2,772 residents
Women's hockey	16-45yrs	13	0.3	1 team per 3,839 residents
Totals for hockey		36	0.3	1 team per 3,245 residents

* Team Generation Rate – the population within the *specified age group* required to generate 1 team

4.116 The playing pitch model has been used to assess future demand using the team generation rates, predicted population growth/decline and a 1% year-on-year increase in participation based on Sport England targets for local authorities.

Table 4.27- Future Assessment – Hockey

Year	Pitch Type	Surplus / Deficit to meet highest temporal demand
2015	Junior Hockey	+11 match slots
	Senior Hockey	0 match slots
2020	Junior Hockey	+11 match slots
	Senior Hockey	0 match slots

4.117 The results are based on using existing team splits (i.e. the existing percentage split across Junior and Senior teams) across the Borough. Given the results of the current assessment, there is likely to be sufficient capacity at existing AGPs to accommodate hockey providing access is appropriate for the clubs' needs. However some teams perceived to be local currently play outside the Borough.

Summary of assessment findings: Hockey

The following findings are drawn from the assessment:

- There are limited opportunities across certain parts of the Borough to play Hockey – there are no artificial grass pitches or clubs located in Areas 1 and 5 and no hockey clubs based in Area 6
- There is adequate provision in quantitative terms to meet current demand – however, the area analysis has demonstrated a small deficiency in Areas 2 and 3 and a club from Area 2 currently playing outside the Borough.
- There are no quality issues with the majority of facilities – all are rated as good/excellent and are supported by appropriate ancillary facilities. However the AGP at Oak Park has the lowest quality rating and is currently not used for club hockey due to quality issues.
- Current provision will be sufficient across the Borough to service future demand if current TGRs are sustained and the growth estimated is realised.

Training facilities

- 4.118 Clubs were consulted about the training facilities they use and facilities used for training were audited as part of the quality assessment. Establishing issues around training facilities, whether they are around lack of facilities, poor quality or limited access is important for a number of reasons. Specifically a lack of dedicated training facilities can impact negatively on those facilities used for formal matches and other competitions. A lack of training facilities can lead to overplaying of match facilities, can lead to unofficial use of facilities and can stifle club development.

Synthetic pitches

- 4.119 There are a number of artificial grass pitches in the Borough which football clubs in particular report using for training. The larger full-size AGPs were most commonly stated in consultation e.g. Oak Park and Alumwell College, several smaller synthetic pitches are also utilised where access allows including the Goals Soccer Centre at St Thomas More Catholic School.
- 4.120 A lack of training facilities is not an issue that affects all clubs or all the sports assessed. The key issues regarding training facilities (if any) for each sport are summarised below.

Football

- 4.121 Issues relating to training facilities (lack of, or access to) were not widely reported by clubs. However, we note that several clubs use their match facilities for training use. A number of clubs make use of the same facility they use for matches to accommodate their training sessions. It is not clear whether this is due to preference or lack of alternative options in most cases. This is likely to add to issues of overplaying and quality deterioration, given the levels of demand placed on existing pitches.

Cricket

- 4.122 From the consultation undertaken we are aware that the majority of cricket clubs in the borough use facilities on their own grounds for training. Most cricket clubs have a dedicated area for nets and practice away from the main pitch area.

Rugby

- 4.123 Issues relating to lack of training facilities are more prominent across rugby. Several clubs use their match facilities for training use. Although a number of Clubs own or manage good quality facilities, some are struggling to accommodate all matches and training sessions onto the existing pitches. As a result the surface of the pitch deteriorates due to overuse and a lack of recovery time.

Hockey

- 4.124 The majority of hockey clubs are able to access their home synthetic pitch facilities during the week for training. There are some potential issues relating to the cost of hire and the impact of this on frequency of use and the actual quality of the pitch surfaces.

5. Policy Options & Recommendations

Introduction

- 5.1 In this section of the report the policy options are considered for addressing the findings of the assessment undertaken for each sport. An overview of the options and their appropriateness for Walsall are also considered. Drawing on this, a set of standards and recommendations are provided to address gaps and deficiencies highlighted in the application of the recommended local standards of provision.

Policy Options

- 5.2 A number of policy options have been considered for addressing the findings of the assessment undertaken. These have been developed in the clear context that 'doing nothing' in terms of current and future pitch provision is not an option. This 2010 assessment has highlighted and reinforced the same issues as were identified in the former Walsall Playing Pitch Strategy (2003), but these issues have now intensified. Although there are some 'good' sites in Walsall (as highlighted in Table 5.6), and good practice in terms of pitch development, there is significant potential to do more, and in so doing deliver fewer, better quality and strategically located playing pitches, meeting local demand.
- 5.3 Walsall has a large stock of senior football pitches which are surplus to requirements; this green space could be more effectively used for other pitches to meet demand from junior and mini football participation.
- 5.4 The policy options are summarised in Table 5.1 : , together with a brief evaluation of their relevance for Walsall.

Table 5.1 : Policy Options

Policy Option	Most appropriate when...	Relevance for Walsall
Changing the use of existing pitches	There is a large surplus in provision for one sport, and deficiency in others	<p>Re-designation of existing senior football pitches which are clearly surplus to provision would help to address identified current and future pitch deficiencies in mini and junior football.</p> <p>This option could also assist in focussing resources on multi-pitch sites which could become 'hubs' for outdoor sport/sports</p>
Dual-use facilities and greater use of education pitches	There is a large stock of high quality education facilities not in community use, and commitment from schools to open their facilities for wider use	<p>24 education owned sites already in use throughout the Borough, many with good links to clubs and community associations.</p> <p>A further 32 school sites have been identified with 35 extra pitches on school sites currently with no community use. Some potential for bringing these into play.</p>
Enhancing carrying capacity through improving the quality of pitches	There is potential to improve a number of key sites	<p>Pitches are generally good quality but overplaying will reduce capacity. A number of pitches are used beyond ideal capacity already.</p> <p>This option could though include additional sports on existing sites, which would also contribute to the development of a number of hub sites across the Borough.</p>
Bringing into play unmarked and disused facilities	There is land available that could be used for playing pitch provision which is currently disused or unmarked and could address some deficiencies	Few disused pitch sites identified so unlikely to be a key option in addressing deficiencies.
Management options, including long term leasing of pitches	There is a track record of this policy resulting in more effective investment and access to external funding, improvements in quality etc and where there is also adequate provision to service demand created by the emergence of new clubs / teams	Long-term leasing could enable clubs to secure funding although it can limit availability of pitches to the wider community.

Policy Option	Most appropriate when...	Relevance for Walsall
Develop new facilities on new sites	There is a lack of provision overall and deficiencies across a number of sports which cannot be fully addressed by implementing the policy options outlined above	Possible option, at least for some sports. Where appropriate and if deliverable, this option could also be used to create a number of strategically located hub sites, with shared access to changing and other ancillary facilities, which represent good value in terms of investment.
Create opportunities for increased female participation	There is a notable lack of Women's and Girls team participating in outdoor sports such as Football, Rugby and Cricket.	The Council needs to consider the options for developing opportunities to engage women and girls in outdoor sport, especially Rugby, Football and Cricket. One option would be to consider strategically located multi-pitch sites where participants would have access to opportunities in a number of sports.
Rationalisation of existing pitches	A clear surplus of pitches has been identified even taking into account re-marking pitches to address other local deficiencies, and allowing some contingency for resting and rotation.	A significant surplus of senior pitches has been identified; this most recent assessment re-enforces the previous findings of the 2003 study. The Council should consider disposal / change of use on a site by site basis and reflect the findings of the recent PPG17 assessment.

- 5.5 It is clear from a review of the assessment findings that no one policy option will sufficiently address the deficiencies and issues highlighted. As a result our recommendations draw on a variety of these options.

Local Standards of Provision

- 5.6 In this section a number of recommendations for local standards of provision are made. The assessment findings are drawn upon to recommend the levels of provision required to meet anticipated future demand in terms of quantity, quality and access.
- 5.7 The need to set Local Standards for future playing pitch provision reflect the policy guidance of PPG17 (of which Towards a Level Playing Field is a recognised and required component), which requires that quantity, quality and accessibility standards are applied following audit and assessment, to inform future planning policy and delivery of provision. Standards are set on the basis of required provision to meet both current needs and, where estimations have been possible, future demand and growth anticipated within specific sports.
- 5.8 Local standards have been set in relation to quantity and quality, based on:
- **Assessment results and the adequacy of current provision to meet known and estimated demand;**
 - **Anticipated changes to demand based on current participation rates;**
 - **Anticipated changes to demand based on participation increases and demographic changes**
 - **Current and desired quality of facilities.**

Quantity Standards

- 5.9 Quantity standards have been derived on the basis of the assessment results and estimations of future demand. The recommended standards reflect the assessment results and findings of local consultation. Standards have been set to reflect pitch requirements to meet peak demand and are proposed for all types of natural turf pitches assessed. For the purpose of setting standards, the assessment has been undertaken for each pitch sport and appropriate sub-categories where different types or specification of pitch are required. This specifically concerns football where mini soccer teams and youth teams require appropriately sized pitches.
- 5.10 Presently, it is known that the majority of mini soccer is played through the Walsall Junior Youth Football League at 6 mini soccer centres across the Borough. Each team play 2 matches per session and pitches generally accommodate 2 or 3 games per session. For junior football, rugby, cricket and hockey, most junior teams make use of senior pitches where required.
- 5.11 The local standards recommended are based on the actual number of pitches required to meet current demand. It is also prudent to ensure that there is an adequate surplus to enable pitches to be taken out of use periodically for major renovation works. Advice from Sport and Landscape Development (a specialist natural turf consultancy) indicates that spare supply equating to 10% of the total required number of pitches would be prudent. This effectively allows every pitch to be taken out of use for a season once every ten years. This allows time for any essential renovation and re-instatement of drainage works. A number of recommendations are made later in the report in consideration to meeting local standards of provision.

Table 5.2 : Application of Quantity Standards

Pitch Type	Current Provision	Required Provision	Surplus or Deficiency at Peak Demand
Mini Soccer	39	41	-2
Junior Football	26	30	-4
Senior Football	99	23	+76
Cricket	14	13	+1
Rugby	15	10	+5
AGP (full size)	7	7	0

- 5.12 Table 5.2 : shows that there is a deficiency of mini soccer and junior football pitches in Walsall, a large surplus in provision for senior football and a marginal surplus for cricket and rugby and sufficient AGPs used for hockey. This needs to be kept in context and it is important to recognise that the deficiencies in junior football are met by teams utilising senior pitches. The quality of pitches also allows more matches to take place and the tournament format for mini soccer utilises pitches up to 3 times a session.
- 5.13 The findings are based on the assessments previously recorded in Section 4. We recommend the levels of required provision are adopted as local provision standards. However, they represent an increase in current levels. They therefore cannot be met fully in the short term unless the deficiencies are met by converting any surplus senior pitches into junior and mini.
- 5.14 We outline a number of recommendations below to seek to address the deficiencies. A number of policy options are considered and additional pitch provision could be secured through a number of policies.
- 5.15 There are 44 pitches in the Borough that currently have no community use and these also need to be considered as an option prior to new provision. They include 11 mini soccer pitches, 20 junior football pitches, 9 senior football pitches and 3 rugby pitches and 1 AGP. Table 5.3 : sets recommended standards based on future demand. We suggest reviewing the Playing Pitch Model at five year intervals to update the data in Table 5.3 : .

Table 5.3 : Future Quantity Standards

Pitch Type	Required Provision (pitches)		
	2010	2015	2020
Mini Soccer	41	43	45
Junior Football	30	30	30
Senior Football	23	24	24
Cricket	13	13	14
Rugby	10	10	12
AGP (full size)	7	7	7

Quality Standards

- 5.16 Quality standards have been set on the basis of the quality assessment results and the categorisation of scored pitches using the electronic toolkit accompanying “*Toward a Level Playing Field*”. The quality standard is based on all pitches being rated within the “Good” classification. In simple terms, **the standard for playing pitch provision is “all pitches available for the community to use will be of a good standard”**. Ratings for pitches fall into the categories shown in Table 5.4 : .
- 5.17 Provision standards should be set and applied to identify deficiencies in provision. This has been done through the completion of quality assessments on pitches. Maps 5 and 6 demonstrate quality across the Borough, these can be found in Appendix 7 of this report. These provide an indication of the quality of each playing field site based on the average quality score.

Table 5.4 : Quality Categories

Playing Pitches		Ancillary / Changing Room Facilities	
Pitch Score	Pitch Rating	Site Score	Quality Rating
90% +	Excellent Pitch	90% +	Excellent Facilities
65% - 90%	A Good Pitch	60% - 80%	Good Facilities
55% - 64%	An Average Pitch	40% - 59%	Average Facilities
30% - 54%	A Below Average Pitch	30% - 39%	Poor Facilities
<30%	A Poor Pitch	< 30%	Very Poor Facilities

Table 5.5 : Application of Quality Standard

	Range (%)	Average Score (%)	% NOT meeting Quality Standard
Playing Pitches	43% - 87%	65%	43% (87 pitches at 34 sites)
Ancillary Facilities	15% - 93%	54%	58% (38 facilities)

- 5.18 Table 5.5 shows deficiencies in provision when the recommended quality standard is applied. Just less than a half of pitches across the Borough do not meet the quality standard for pitches. In terms of ancillary facilities, 58% do not meet the quality standard. Notable Council-run facilities where ancillary provision (including changing provision) is not up to a ‘good’ standard include Holland Park, Reedswood Park, Airport Playing Fields, Sheffield Recreation Ground, Rushall Playing Fields and Lower Bradely Playing Fields.

Access Standards

- 5.19 Access standards are arguably more difficult to set for playing pitch provision than other types of green space facility. For example, provision standards for formal parks ordinarily take the form of a number of hectares of provision per 1,000 of the general population, with quality often linked to national standards (e.g. Green Flag Award). The access element of a provision standard is normally comprised of a distance threshold based on all residents residing within a set distance of a facility. Setting standards relating to access to playing pitches is difficult for a number of key reasons, including:

- **Access can be affected directly by quality – some teams will play at higher standards than others and as result may require higher specifications of facility provision;**
- **The level of hire fees and charges can also affect access, although this does not appear to be a major factor in Walsall,**
- **The presence of ancillary facilities also has a significant bearing on access – some leagues will not permit teams to play at venues not adequately served by changing rooms; and**

- **Opinions on acceptable distance thresholds vary significantly, as identified through the consultation process. In many cases close proximity to a facility for home games is less relevant given that teams travel on alternate weeks for away games.**

- 5.20 In terms of geographical access to facilities, the research undertaken has sought to determine an acceptable catchment area for playing pitch sites through consulting with local people and sports clubs and assessing the quality and potential of existing provision. The study has found that there is a variance in acceptable travel time to pitch facilities ranging from 5 minutes to 45 minutes.
- 5.21 From the public consultation, 71% of all respondents identified using outdoor sports facilities, 16% on a daily basis, 28% on a weekly basis, 12% on a monthly basis and 15% within the last six months to a year. 64% of respondents stated driving as the preferred mode of travel to this type of provision, travelling for 12 minutes to access a site for outdoor sport. This equates to 3.96 miles (at 20m.p.h.) or 6.37 km to access outdoor sports provision. The equivalent when walking is 0.60 miles, 0.97 km or 966 metres.
- 5.22 The access standard has been set that no person should live more than 1,000m from their nearest playing pitch facility. This includes sites that are classified as other types of open space, e.g. parks, but may contain pitch facilities, e.g. Willenhall Memorial Park. Map 7 (Appendix 7) demonstrates this 1,000m accessibility catchment for all sites with community use. Access deficiencies can be found in Area 1 (Brownhills West and Highbridge), Area 2 (Barr Beacon), Area 3 (Ryecroft, West and Northeast Bloxwich), Area 4 (Central Walsall & Pleck) and Area 6 (Central Willenhall). Many of these deficiencies could be addressed by addressing community use at school sites. Area 5 is the only Neighbourhood Management Area with no access deficiencies to pitch sites with community use.

Recommendations

- 5.23 We make a number of recommendations to address the findings of the assessment. These draw on the policy options above and include a number of general recommendations and those specific to each sport assessed. In developing these recommendations, we have reflected the summary context in Section 2. These include:
- **Playing pitches can play an important role in helping the Council deliver some of its corporate objectives by providing accessible spaces for local residents to participate in activities.**
 - **Playing pitches will be an important resource in helping the Council to achieve its participation and performance targets.**
 - **The location and accessibility of playing pitches to the local community remains an important factor when considering local provision and applying local standards.**

Recommendations	
1	<p>The re-designation of existing good quality surplus senior football pitches to junior and mini pitches to address the current and future deficits in this type of provision, and realise a stock of high quality, high carrying capacity pitches.</p> <p>Based on the 2010 PPG17 assessment although there is no need for any other greenspace in the Borough, re-considering whether all existing senior football pitches continue to be marked as such also provides the opportunity to de-classify some existing pitch sites and retain as green space in for a range of informal uses, and potentially future pitches as demand requires.</p> <p>The type of senior football pitch that would be a priority for re-designation to mini or junior provision would be a good quality pitch, preferably multi-pitch or with the potential to become so, ideally with provision for training ie synthetic surfaces, served by at minimum toilets suitable for junior and mini players.</p>

Recommendations	
2	<p>Use the findings of the assessment together with the Quality / Value matrix to prioritise investment in playing pitches and ancillary facilities as per Table 5.6 below.</p> <p>The type of site that would be a priority for investment would be an existing good quality multi-pitch site, or have the potential to become so (multi-pitch meaning mini, junior and senior pitches for either one sport, or a range of sports, plus ideally at least synthetic training provision), have existing changing provision of reasonable quality and that meet the needs of all users i.e. women and girls, disability participants etc (or facilities that could become so with limited investment).</p> <p>Council and education pitches should be considered under this category.</p>
3	<p>The type of site that could potentially be considered for rationalisation would be one with a single pitch, where a pitch(es) is poor quality, and where there is poor quality or no changing facilities (or limited facilities i.e. no provision for women and girls, or not compliant with DDA).</p> <p>If poor quality pitches can be replaced with better quality provision through either re-designation/opening up access to other existing pitches on school sites, any capital gained through sale of sites should be ring-fenced for re-investment into pitch development and changing room improvement.</p>
4	<p>Given the findings of the assessment and the reliance on Council facilities there is a need to strengthen and develop partnership working with private providers, Governing Bodies and neighbouring authorities; the Sports Forum should be used to facilitate this. Addressing the deficiencies recorded cannot be the sole responsibility of any one agency / organisation.</p>
5	<p>Explore and develop closer partnership working with Education and the role of school facilities to support mini and junior sports and potentially provide additional community accessible facilities for indoor cricket training.</p> <p>There is a likely need for this recommendation to be supported by revenue funding to support additional maintenance costs and administration relating to pitch bookings.</p>
6	<p>Update the supply and demand information collated as part of the study on an annual basis as part of evaluating action and delivery. A full playing pitch assessment should be repeated every 5 years or as near as possible to fit in with the area planning process. This ongoing updating and monitoring process should be facilitated through a formal Playing Pitch Strategy Group, comprising representatives from the Council (sport and leisure, education assets, planning and grounds maintenance), NGBs and Sport England.</p>

Recommendations	
7	<p>Community use agreements, to an agreed specification, should be required from future school redevelopment schemes. Agreements can be required through the planning process where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a resulting loss in area or quantity of pitch provision • This will aid the achievement of PPG17’s objective of remedying local deficiencies • School playing fields are likely to have qualitative improvements, and there are identified qualitative deficiencies, whilst community use agreements should be required from future school redevelopment schemes.
8	<p>Subject to resources, continue to develop regular consultation with pitch users to establish trend data in relation to satisfaction, ratings of quality and common pitch issues. This is partially undertaken via the pitch booking forms administered by the Council to users of public football pitches, and through the Sports Development Team.</p>
9	<p>Work with clubs to aid club and sport development. There are clubs that have reached capacity in terms of expansion through success and would benefit from further support and assistance. Walsall has Strategic Sports Development Groups for hockey, cricket and rugby. This practice should be continued and extended to the development of a football partnership group.</p>
10	<p>Condition surveys on changing facilities should be undertaken at regular intervals to identify any remedial work that may be required, identify any additional disability access requirements and provide an estimated lifespan for the building.</p>
11	<p>Undertake a feasibility study into developing a central hub facility/facilities for clubs. This should include a synthetic pitch large enough to host training and relieve pressure on existing pitch provision. A hub facility could also be used as the venue for developing girls and women’s teams to participate in sports such as football, rugby and cricket.</p>

5.24 A ‘Quality / Value’ matrix has been completed to help prioritise sites for improvement. The outcomes are summarised in Table 5.6. This uses the results of the assessment to establish the current quality of the facilities, and their value in terms of providing for local sporting opportunities. Sites with more than one pitch and catering for more than one sport are viewed as being higher value sites. Low value sites are typically single pitch sites with no changing facilities or underutilised.

5.25 Using the matrix, 15 sites are prioritised for improvement. This provides a framework for targeting investment and supporting funding applications.

Table 5.6 - Quality / Value Matrix Site Classifications

Site Classification	Likely Action	Sites
High Quality / High Value	Protect Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston University Sports Ground* • Barr Beacon Language College* • Brownhills Community Technology College* • Joseph Leckie Community Technology College* • Middlemore Lane Sports Ground • Oak Park* • Pelsall EDC* • Pelsall Football and Cricket Ground • Sheffield Community Academy* • Shire Oak • Streetly School* • Veseyans Sports & Social Club <p>It is important to highlight that some of the above sites could offer potential as future outdoor pitch hub sites; these are marked *.</p>
High Quality / Medium Value	Protect Site / Enhance Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darlaston Town Football Club • Rushall Olympic • Streetly Sports Club • Willenhall Town Football Club
High Quality / Low Value	Enhance Value / Change Use	No sites
Medium Quality / High Value	Improve (1 st tier of Priority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airport Playing Fields • Aldridge School • Aldridge Stick & Wicket • Alumwell Business & Enterprise College • Bentley Leisure Pavilion • Bourne Vale • Clayhanger Playing Fields • King George V Playing Fields • Leamore Park • Pelsall lane Sports Ground • Sneyd Community College • St Michael's School • Streetly Playing Fields • Willenhall Memorial Park • Wolverhampton University Sports Ground (Walsall Campus)

Site Classification	Likely Action	Sites
Medium Quality / Medium Value	Improve (2 nd tier of Priority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbey Park Stadium • Arboretum Extension • Beacon Primary School • Bentley Youth Football Club • Hall Street • Handsworth RUFC • Pheasey Park Farm Primary School • Pleck Park • Anson Ground - Bronze CC • Rough Hay Primary • Salisbury Primary School • Walsall CC • Walsall RUFC • Walstead Road Playing Field • Western Avenue
Medium Quality / Low Value	Improve (Low Priority)	No sites
Low Quality / High Value	Improve (High Priority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushall Playing Fields
Low Quality / Medium Value	Consider Rationalisation / Change use of site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor Meadow Playing Fields • Brereton Road • Castlefort JMI School • Doe Bank Park • Holland Park • Leighswood School • Lower Bradely Playing Fields • Meadow View JMI School • New Invention Junior School • Pelsall Common • Pinfold Street JMI School • Reedswood Park • Shelfield Recreation Ground • Walstead Road Open Space
Low Quality / Low Value	Consider Rationalisation / Change use of site	No sites

5.26 Given the evident opportunities for investment, there is clear potential for the development of boroughwide hub sites; these need to be further investigated through a feasibility study (Recommendation 10). These hub sites could be designated by sport, by pitch type, or be multi-pitch/multi-sport sites; in other words they could be identified as flexible spaces which would be marked to meet demand. In addition to hub sites there is potential to consider the development of a central mini-soccer venue, which would be a hub in its own right. This would need more detailed investigation and partnership working with the FA.

- 5.27 The overall Vision for future provision of playing pitches in Walsall, based on the findings of this study is to ensure the community has access to good quality, accessible multi-pitch facilities (training and competition, plus changing and ancillary facilities), which meets demand. The development of 6 strategically located hubs one to serve each of the 6 Neighbourhood Areas, would provide a framework for future pitch provision, building on existing sites of this nature.

6. Disclaimer

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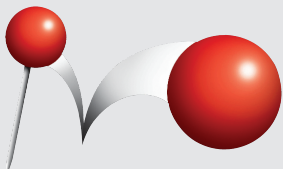
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