

# **STEVENAGE BOROUGH**

## **Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014 - 2031**

**FINAL REPORT DECEMBER 2014**



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## INTRODUCTION

This Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy covers the period up to 2031. It will provide recommendations to inform long-term land use planning for sports facilities, including Stevenage Borough Council's approach to the new Local Plan and, where relevant, the plans of other relevant authorities under the Duty to Cooperate. It will ensure the policies are supported by robust and up-to-date information.

The Assessment and Strategy will also help to inform the future investment decisions about the Stevenage Borough Council's facility stock, help to support funding applications, and assist with the delivery of the corporate objectives relating to improving health through raising levels of physical activity.

The motivations for the Assessment and Strategy include the fact that Stevenage is a small, underbounded, urban authority where in many places the urban area reaches up to the administrative boundary and, to the north-east, already spreads across it into neighbouring North Hertfordshire District. There are increasing pressures on land within the Borough which means that having an up-to-date evidence base is critical to ensuring sufficient sports facilities are retained, and provided, as necessary.

As a key concept of the original masterplan for Stevenage, leisure facilities were provided locally, within walking distance of residents, and the current corporate policies still reflect the need to plan positively for sports facilities. One of the overarching aims of the Stevenage Community Strategy is to 'create healthier lifestyles', and ensuring the supply of facilities meets the current and future demands of the community will be key to achieving this aim.

This Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy addresses the facilities used by the community for sport and physical activity, and specifically:

- Artificial grass pitches (both full size and small size)
- Athletics tracks
- Bowling greens
- Dedicated gymnastics centre
- Fitness facilities
- Golf
- Grass playing pitches
- Indoor bowls
- Indoor tennis
- Multi use games areas (MUGAs)
- Outdoor tennis
- Sports halls 3+ courts size
- Squash
- Swimming pools
- Water sports, climbing and high ropes at Fairlands Valley
- Youth provision (open access MUGAs and skate parks)

This Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy report provides the full assessment of the facilities, including theoretical modelling of supply and demand, feedback from consultation and the development of planning standards based on the expected future needs of the community in Stevenage.

Introduction

Section 1: The characteristics of Stevenage

Section 2: Facility overview

Section 3: Community views

Section 4: Built facility assessment

Section 5: Playing pitches

Section 6: Implementation

Appendices

A technical summary of the Assessment and Strategy is available which draws out the key points from the main report and is designed to be a quick reference guide to the key findings and recommendations and includes a site by site summary of proposals. There is also a Strategy Summary, which is a short guide to the main proposals for the general community.

# CHAPTER 1: STEVENAGE CONTEXT

## SECTION 1: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF STEVENAGE

- 1.1 This first section of the Assessment and Strategy provides an overview of the geography, history and demographics of Stevenage, and proposals for future growth. It looks at the characteristics of the existing community and identifies the sports and activities that people in Stevenage are most likely to be attracted to.

### Stevenage's Geography

- 1.2 Stevenage is around 30 miles to the north of central London in the county of Hertfordshire. The OS map in Figure 1 shows how Stevenage relates to the adjacent authorities of East Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire, and the other local towns. This geographical closeness is important because many sports facilities such as swimming pools have a drive time catchment of up to 20 minutes, and the catchment areas of many facilities will thus overlap.
- 1.3 Stevenage is within an area which is one of the major drivers of the national economy. It was designated as Britain's first New Town in 1946 and the town's population has grown from around 6,000 in 1939 to 85,200 in 2014. Further growth is expected and there are two main options being explored a part of the Local Plan, an increase in dwellings of around 5,300 over the period up to 2031, or an increase of up to 8,200 dwellings. The 5,300 dwelling figure is Stevenage Borough Council's interim housing target (agreed by Executive) and was the preferred option set out in the Local Plan consultation 'Borough Capacity' at that time. The 8,200 dwelling figure is based on the preliminary findings of the emerging Strategic Land Availability Assessment. The sports facility implications of both the minimum and maximum housing growth options are explored as part of this Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy.
- 1.4 The main locations for the growth are illustrated Figure 2, and the difference between the two options are:

Site	Number of dwellings	
	8,200 option	5,300 option
Stevenage West	1,350	1,350
North	870	750
South East	550	400
Town Centre	3,200	950
Elsewhere in the borough	1,180	800
Sites already committed/built	1,050	1,050
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,200</b>	<b>5,300</b>



Figure 1: Stevenage and its adjoining authorities

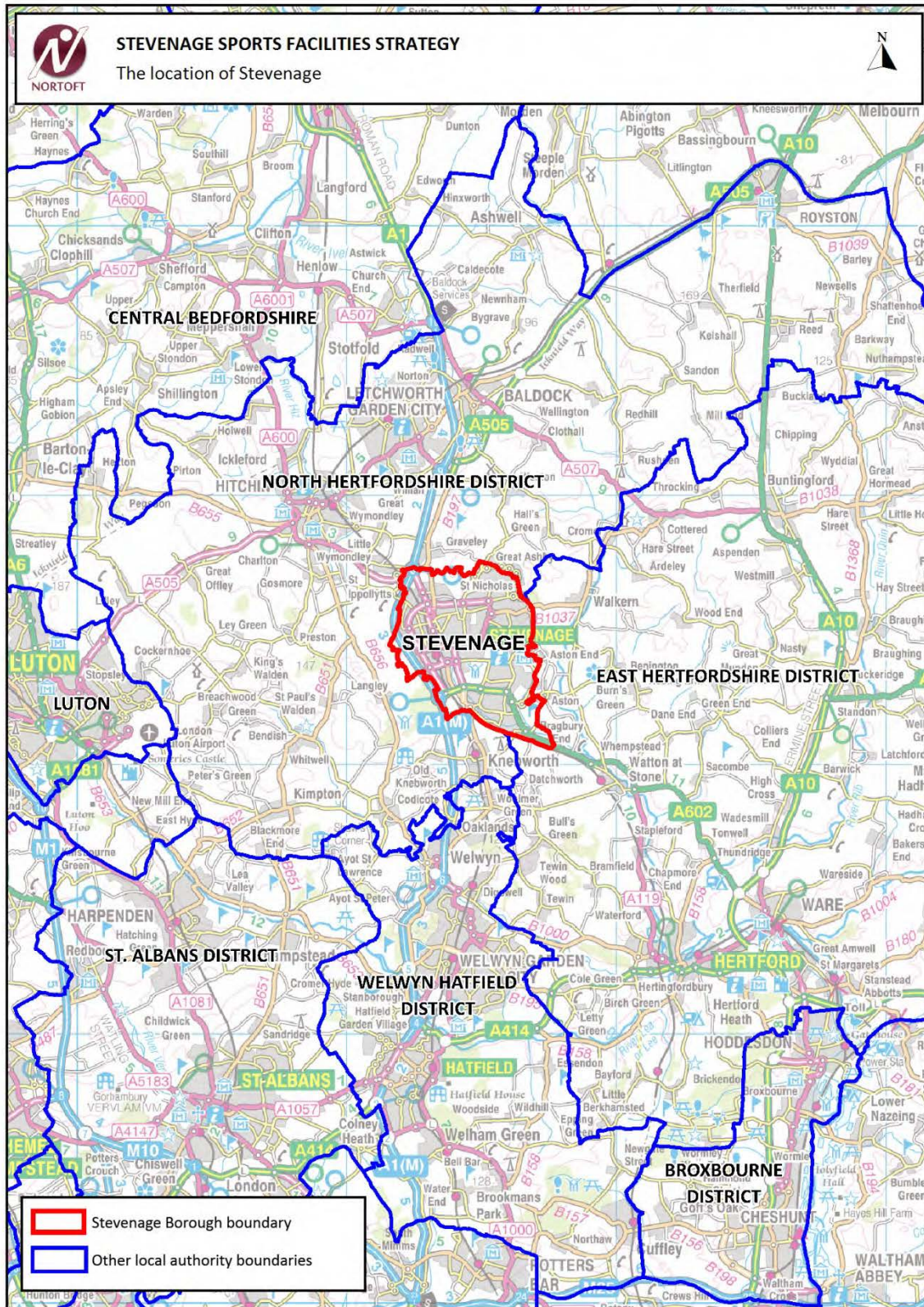
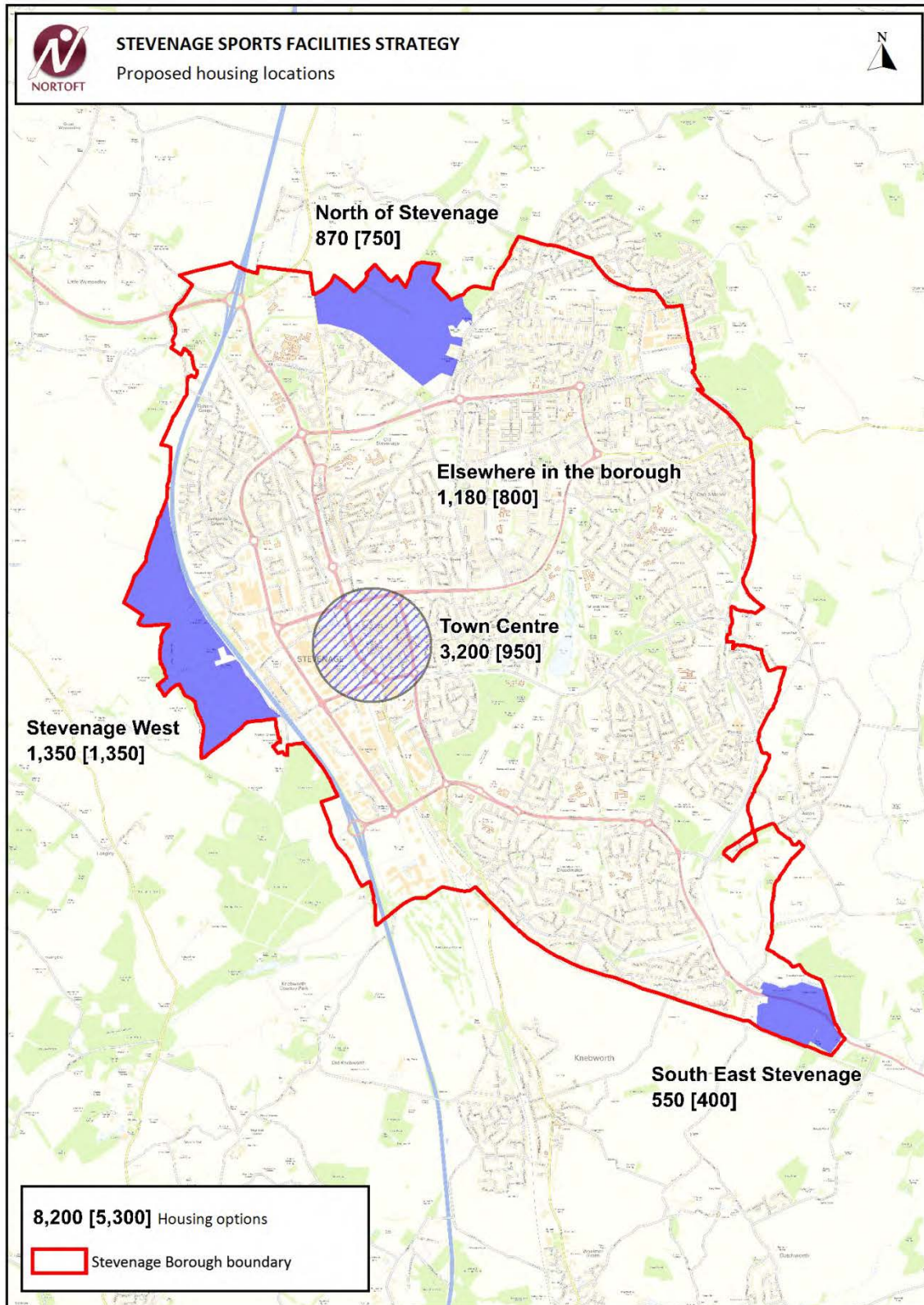




Figure 2: Proposed locations for new housing



- 1.5 Stevenage has the largest employment area in Hertfordshire and its communities benefit from large areas of open space, traffic free cycle networks and local community facilities. However there are a number of significant challenges which include:
- The authority is “underbounded”, with the urban area extending beyond the local authority district boundary.
  - There is limited brownfield land within the town where new development could take place, and the authority is bounded by Green Belt.
  - There are pockets of significant deprivation, where income levels of residents are on average lower than elsewhere in Hertfordshire.
  - Some of the schools received significant investment as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, but others did not and have relatively poor sports facilities.

## Planning Policies

- 1.6 There are a number of key planning policy documents which guide the provision of sport and recreation for Stevenage. These are:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)
  - National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)
  - Stevenage Emerging Local Plan (2013)
  - Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2013)
  - Stevenage District Plan 2<sup>nd</sup> Review (2004)
  - Interim Planning Policy Statement (2012)
  - Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents
- 1.7 The planning policy framework lying behind this strategy has several elements, one of which is the National Planning Policy Framework, but the others are more local, including those in the emerging Local Plan.

### National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

- 1.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012 brought in a fundamental change to the strategic planning system. The Framework is much simpler than the previous planning policy framework, with the more detailed policy documents, such as the set of Planning Policy Guidance Notes, having now been deleted. This includes the Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 on Planning for Open

Space, Sport and Recreation of 2002, which had been the main national policy guidance up to the release of the NPPF.

- 1.9 NPPF advises that new Local Plans produced by each planning authority should set the strategic priorities for the area which specifically includes leisure development and “the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities”. The policies need to be based on an adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence base, including in relation to; housing, ... environment (historic, health and well-being). This Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy will form one part of the evidence base for the emerging Stevenage Local Plan.
- 1.10 Local planning authorities are encouraged to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, including specifically in relation to leisure and to community infrastructure. This report therefore also takes into consideration the cross-border implications of sport and recreation provision which is a very significant issue for Stevenage.
- 1.11 Under NPPF Para 73 it states that:

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

#### National Planning Practice Guidance

- 1.12 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG 003: Reference ID: 23b-003-20140306) states:
- “ Policies for seeking obligations should be set out in a development plan document to enable fair and open testing of the policy at examination. Supplementary planning documents should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development and should not be used to set rates or charges which have not been established through development plan policy”.*
- 1.13 This Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy is founded on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for sports and recreation facilities, and opportunities for new provision, as required by NPPF para 73. The key policies and recommendations now need to be set out as part of the new Local Plan, so as to enable fair and open testing of the policy at examination.

## The Emerging Local Plan

- 1.14 The Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031 completed its First Consultation stage in June 2013 and is progressing towards the next stage. The approximate timetable is:
- Pre submission local plan consultation - Autumn 2015
  - Adoption - end of 2016
- 1.15 The Local Plan is supported by a number of evidence studies, of which this will be one.

## Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2013

- 1.16 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) identifies the infrastructure required to support future levels of growth across the Borough. The plan covers the period from 2011 - 2031, in line with the emerging Local Plan. It covers a wide range of physical and social infrastructure including; transport, utilities, education, health, community facilities, emergency services and green infrastructure requirements. This document will require review in the light of the findings of this Assessment and Strategy.
- 1.17 The IDP aims to:
- Identify the current infrastructure provision within the borough
  - Identify any existing gaps in infrastructure
  - Provide an understanding of the growth that can be supported by the existing infrastructure
  - Identify where and when additional infrastructure may be required
  - Outline the costs of such infrastructure
  - Identify how that infrastructure might be funded and delivered.
- 1.18 Both the IDP proposals and the costs associated with the provision of the sports facilities now require updating to respond to the findings of this report.

## District Plan 2<sup>nd</sup> Review 2004

- 1.19 The Local Plan for Stevenage, also known as the District Plan, was adopted in December 2004 and sets out the policies and proposals for controlling and allocating development and for protecting and enhancing the environment. Policies in the plan that are relevant to a planning application will be used when determining the application, but these will be replaced once the emerging Local Plan and associated new planning guidance is adopted.

## Interim Planning Policy Statement (2012)

- 1.20 An Interim Planning Policy Statement (IPPS) was published in April 2012. This brings together policies backed by evidence produced since the 2004 Local Plan but not included in the emerging Local Plan because of its delays. The IPPS is a material planning consideration for developments.
- 1.21 The IPPS contains policies of relevance to the implementation of the Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy, including in relation to developers contributions towards sport and recreation facilities, and continuing the leisure focus at the Stevenage Leisure Park.

## Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents

- 1.22 Stevenage Borough Council has produced Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and previously Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to provide developers and others with further detail on the interpretation and intent of policies in statutory planning documents. Most of the SPDs relate to specific areas of Stevenage such as Shephall Green Conservation Area, Stevenage West, or Gunnells Wood, but there is also a draft Site Specific Policies document of January 2010 which applies to most of the rest of Stevenage.
- 1.23 Only one of these has direct general relevance to sport and active recreation, which relates to specific parking standards for a range of sports facility types, the Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document 2012.

## Developers' contributions

- 1.24 The Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy will inform the Local Plan and IDP but will also have weight in plan making, decision taking, and at appeal. In the period up to formal adoption, the draft Assessment and Strategy will have increasing weight as it goes through the formal planning processes and should be used as a guide for new development as it meets the test of Para 73 of the NPPF.
- 1.25 Up until the introduction of CIL in Stevenage, the standards set out in this Assessment and Strategy will be used to inform the expectations on developers in the Borough. After the introduction of CIL there will be different mechanisms (see paragraph 1.34 onwards).
- 1.26 This Assessment and Strategy identifies the specific needs for sports facilities based on detailed assessments of quantitative and qualitative issues in Stevenage.
- 1.27 When developer contributions are being sought for individual applications the Council will take into account the NPPF policy that planning obligations (including developer contributions) should only be sought where they meet all 3 tests of NPPF para 204 (related to CIL Reg 122). These are:



- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms

If the sport infrastructure is not provided the impact of the proposal will be unacceptable as it will not meet the needs of the relevant policies, and will lead to increased pressure on the existing facilities, for example by taking them beyond their capacity.

- Directly related to the development

The amount of demand which will be generated by the development is identified through estimating the number of residents living in the number of dwellings, multiplied by Stevenage's local housing multiplier, and applying Stevenage's demographic profile. The impact on the local infrastructure will then be determined based on how the development relates to the catchment area for each particular facility, and the existing and future expected balance in the supply of that facility with the new demand. The process for calculating the infrastructure needs is based on Stevenage's demographic profile, the use of various modelling based on rates of participation, and the assessment of facilities local to the development including their accessibility, hours of opening, and quality.

The contributions sought for sport and recreation will therefore be directly related to the development.

- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

With a known demand for sport and recreation facilities directly related to the development as described above, and an assessment of the impact of the development on the supply and demand balance caused by the development, the contributions sought can be both fairly and reasonably assessed to be in scale and kind to the development.

- 1.28 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) reaffirms the importance of meeting these tests, PPG (para 004) states:

“Does the local planning authority have to justify its requirements for obligations?”

“In all cases, including where tariff style charges are sought, the local planning authority must ensure that the obligation meets the relevant tests for planning obligations in that they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. Planning obligations should not be sought – on for instance, public art – which are clearly not necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms. The Government is clear that obligations must be fully justified and evidenced...”

- 1.29 It is therefore clear that the emerging Local Plan will need to specifically include policies relating to developer contributions for sport and recreation, and to link them to this Assessment and Strategy, as the evidence base.

### CIL and Pooled Developer Contributions

- 1.30 Developer contributions can be secured for sport and leisure through Planning Obligations (s106 agreements) until 6th April 2015. Where a CIL has not been formally adopted and operational, before the current deadline of 6th April 2015, then the CIL transitional arrangements come into effect within an authority. Transitional arrangements mean that planning obligations (s106 agreements) can still be made but only be pooled from up to five developments.
- 1.31 If contributions have already been made from developments in the past (from 2010) towards a facility, then these count towards the five (Planning Act 2008, CIL Regulations 2010, as amended 2011). After April 2015 (and until a CIL is adopted) care should therefore be taken to choose which developments are used to secure s106 contributions.
- 1.32 Once adopted, CIL can enable the delivery of new or improved infrastructure needed to support the development generally e.g. a new leisure centre or tennis courts. Without a CIL in place the ability of the council to secure developer contributions can be expected to be restricted, and this would probably lose very significant amounts of contributions to sport and leisure facilities.
- 1.33 CIL has not replaced s106 agreements entirely. Developers will still be required to mitigate the specific and direct impact of the development proposed through either a planning condition, for example to provide youth facilities on site, or by a planning obligation, for example to replace a specific sports facility lost as part of the development and needing to be replaced elsewhere.

### Making the case for sports facilities under CIL

- 1.34 It is intended that developers' contributions (CIL or otherwise) will be used to fund infrastructure. Sport is essential to community well-being and health, as well as wider economic benefit and job creation, and should have equal importance in the discussions to other community facilities, such as health and education.
- 1.35 In relation to monies potentially generated from developers' contributions/CIL it will be essential to identify and justify specific schemes (maintenance, repair, replacement or new build), cost them and prioritise. This will be needed both for the larger strategic facilities such as swimming pools, sports halls and artificial pitches, and local facilities such as outdoor tennis courts, skate parks and community halls.
- 1.36 This Assessment and Strategy concludes with an Implementation section which includes a prioritised and costed list of schemes, which will in turn be used to



inform the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) for Stevenage. The sport and recreation elements of the IDP will be reviewed by Stevenage Borough Council on a rolling basis.

- 1.37 In relation to cross-border co-operation, there are currently no mechanisms in place which would enable Stevenage to contribute towards other authorities in relation to sports facilities, or vice versa, including in relation to developers' contributions.

## Community and Corporate Policies

- 1.38 The overall direction of policy in Stevenage is guided by the SoStevenage Community Strategy. The delivery of this is supported by the Council's Corporate Plan for the period 2013-2018.

### Stevenage 2021, Our town – our future

- 1.39 The Vision for Stevenage set out in the Strategy is:

*Stevenage: a prosperous town with vibrant communities and healthy people*

- 1.40 The partnership is working under three themes; healthy economy, healthy communities, healthy people. The strategy supports healthy lifestyle choices and programmes and policies to enable people to be active.

### Stevenage Borough Council Corporate Plan 2013-18, Sharing the Dividends

- 1.41 The Corporate Plan flows from the SoStevenage Community Strategy and informs the services provided by the authority. It has a number of indirect implications for sport and active recreation, for example the regeneration of the town centre including the Arts and Leisure Centre.

## Policies and Strategies of Partners

- 1.42 The assessment and the recommendations for future facility investment in Stevenage need to be set within the context of the wider sub-area because many of the larger or more specialist facilities have catchments which are larger than one authority alone. For example, the Ridlins Wood athletics track and the gymnastics centre at Marriotts both draw users from across Stevenage and much of Hertfordshire. At the same time, Stevenage residents wishing to take part in activities such as diving at performance levels will use facilities outside of the authority.
- 1.43 Also important are the policies of Hertfordshire County Council as the landowner for most of the school sites, as this will determine the security and extent of community use.
- 1.44 In the longer term, the housing growth options which are adopted for both North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire may lead to significant impacts on Stevenage and its services. However as these housing options have not yet been determined, they are not included within this Assessment.

### Hertfordshire County Council

- 1.45 Hertfordshire County Council as the local authority with responsibility for education in Stevenage is involved in the future planning of schools provision, as well as acting as the landowner for the maintained schools. School sites are reviewed in detail later in the report (paragraph 2.59 onwards).
- 1.46 In the longer term there may be a requirement for a new secondary school in or close to Stevenage depending on the amount of new housing to be provided for both within Stevenage and across the border. One option may be to reuse the site at Collenswood, but another is to develop a new school on a new site. However no decisions will be made until the housing proposals across Hertfordshire are clearer.

### North Hertfordshire District

- 1.47 The Sports Facilities Strategy of 2010-2031 concluded that the district would be unlikely to require major new facilities unless there were high levels of housing growth. The options for new provision in this circumstance include the edge of Stevenage, the edge of Luton or the Royston area.
- 1.48 The authority does not have an up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy.

### East Hertfordshire District

- 1.49 The East Hertfordshire Assessment of Sports Facilities (June 2011) recommended retaining the existing facility network with potentially extra provision of (depending on levels of housing growth):

- an additional large sports hall provision in Bishops Stortford or four court hall in Buntingford area
- new indoor bowls site(s) in Bishop Stortford and also possibly in Hertford/Ware
- one additional artificial grass pitch (AGP) location to be confirmed
- athletics training facility at Buntingford

### Welwyn Hatfield

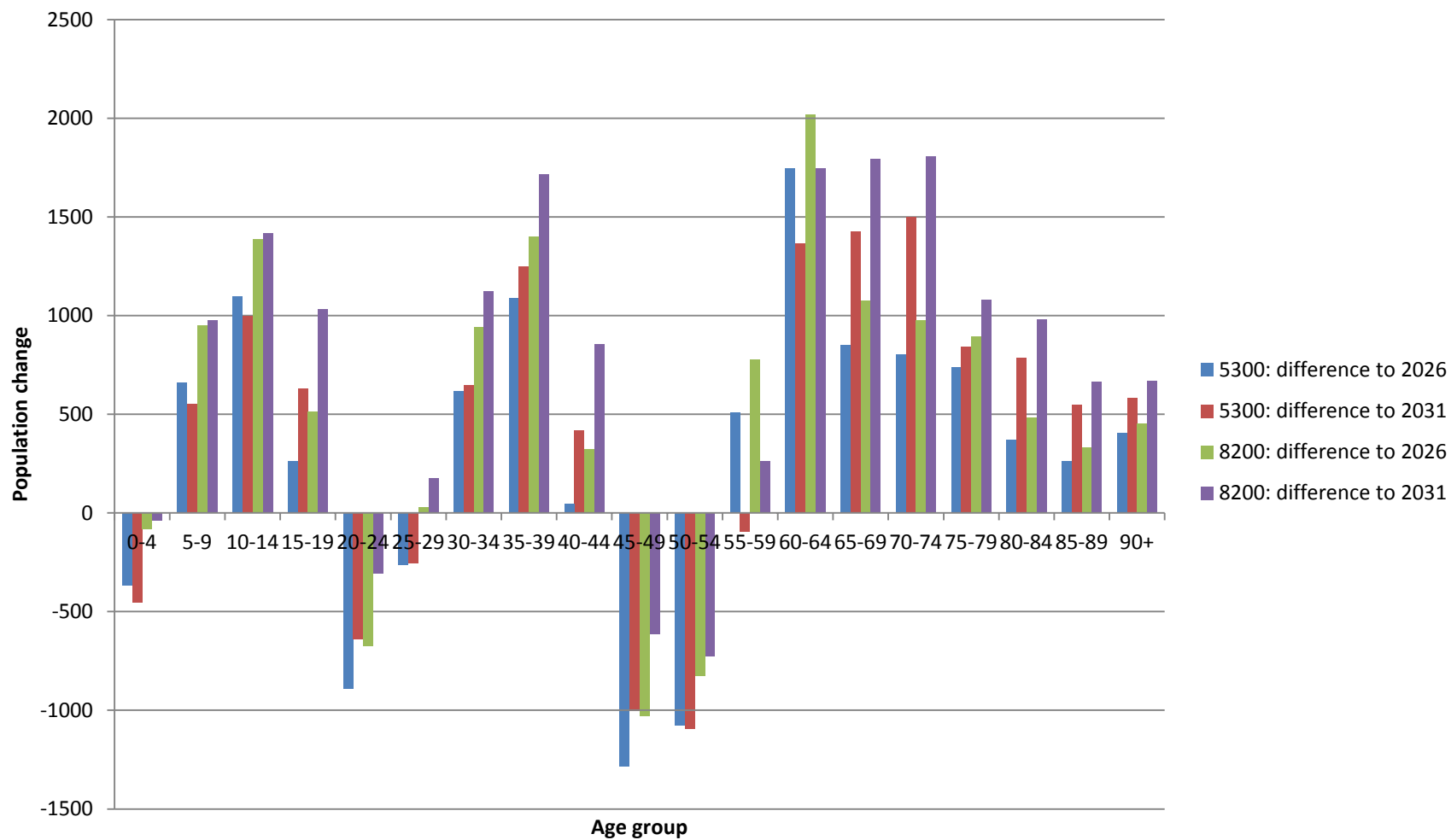
1.50 The Welwyn Hatfield Sport Facility Strategy (June 2012) also provides different scenarios depending upon the rate of housing growth. The key recommendations which potentially impact on Stevenage are:

- 2-3 new 4-court sports halls by 2026, locations to be confirmed
- one community swimming pool, location to be confirmed
- 1 artificial grass pitch suitable for hockey
- 1 artificial grass pitch suitable for football

## Population Characteristics and Change

- 1.51 The housing growth options used in the Assessment and Strategy for Stevenage are based on two alternatives; an increase of 5,300 dwellings or an increase of 8,200 dwellings (see paragraph 1.3). The following findings are based on information provided / agreed with Stevenage Borough Council:
- Demographic forecast by 5 year age bands up to 2031 based on the 5,300 dwellings option but extrapolated as needed for the 8,200 dwelling option.
  - Housing multiplier of 2.28 for the growth between 2021 and 2031.
  - Split in housing provision for the 8,300 dwellings at 33% in 2021, 33% in 2026, 33% in 2031.
- 1.52 The current population of Stevenage is estimated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to be 85,200 and Stevenage Borough Council estimates that with the 5,300 dwelling option this figure will rise to 90,774 by 2026, and 93,191 by 2031. If the number of dwellings increases to 8,200, the growth in population is estimated to be 95,138 in 2026 and 99,803 by 2031.
- 1.53 It is anticipated that in the longer term there is likely to be growth within North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire just outside of the Stevenage boundary. However no housing figures can be included at this stage within this Assessment and Strategy because neither authority has reached a formal stage in their housing options.
- 1.54 Considering housing growth within Stevenage alone, whichever option is chosen the population structure is likely to change from that in 2014 (see Figure 3). There will be fewer under 5s, fewer people both in their twenties and from 45-54 years, but an increase in all other ages. Particularly notable is the increase in all age groups over 55 years.
- 1.55 This demographic picture will have an impact on the take up of sport and active recreation, as very broadly most competitive activities attract those aged under 45 years, other than golf and bowls. There will be a need to provide more for young people aged under 20, and a clear need to provide for activities and opportunities for those aged 55 and over.

Figure 3: Population change over time with alternative housing options



## Benchmarking

- 1.56 This Assessment and Strategy adopts Sport England's approach towards benchmarking Stevenage with other authorities. The 'Nearest Neighbour' model was developed by CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) to aid local authorities in comparative and benchmarking exercises. It is widely used across both central and local government. The model uses a number of variables alongside the traditional distance method to calculate similarity between local authorities. Examples of these variables include population, unemployment rates, tax base per head of population, council tax bands and mortality ratios.
- 1.57 The CIPFA 'Nearest Neighbour' grouping of authorities for Stevenage are:
- Harlow
  - Redditch
  - Gravesham
  - Wellingborough

## Local Profile

- 1.58 Sport England has a web based tool which provides a wide range of background information about an authority. The Stevenage Local Profile is attached as Appendix 1, but some of the key findings are bulleted below.

### *Levels of physical activity*

- Adults in Stevenage tend to be less active than the rest of the East of England region or England as a whole, with fewer doing less than 30 minutes exercise a week.
- Stevenage rates of adult participation in sport of at least 1x30 minutes was lower in 2012-13 than any of its benchmark authorities, both males and females, with the one exception being Wellingborough's females where the rate is lower than that for Stevenage.
- Stevenage's rates of adult (16+ years) participation in sport at least once a week between 2005/06 and 2012/13 have not significantly changed, and in 2012/13 were lower than both the region and England.
- More adults in Stevenage say that they want to do more sport than either the region or the England averages, and this is particularly the case for those who are currently inactive. The sport that adults want to do most is swimming.

### *Health*

- The percentage of overweight adults and incidence of childhood obesity are slightly better than both the rates for the East of England as a whole, and also compared to the benchmark authorities.

- Life expectancy falls between the rates for the East of England region and England.
- The estimated health costs of physical inactivity per 100,000 people in Stevenage was £1,457,383 in the year 2009/10.

### *Involvement in sport*

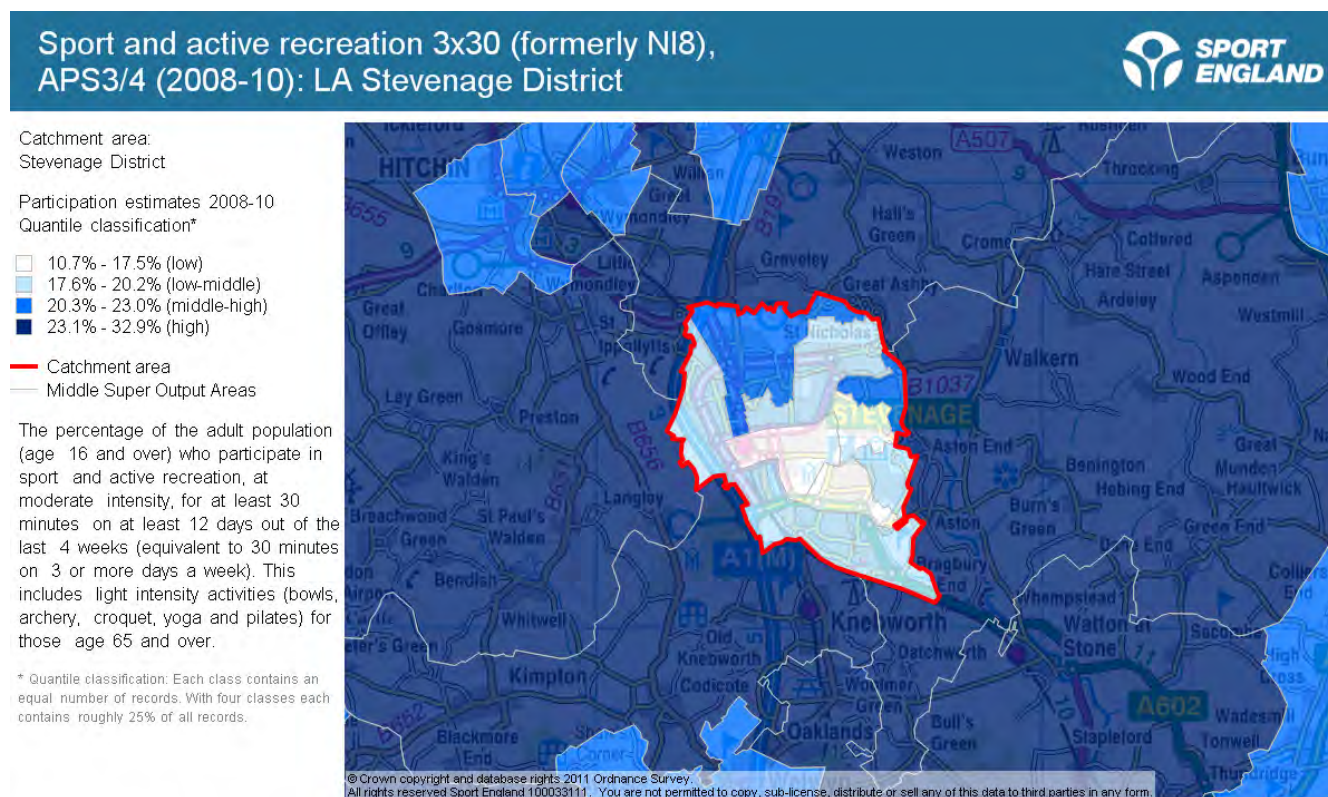
- Club membership rates, rates of volunteering, rates for receiving tuition/coaching and the taking part in organised competitions are all lower for Stevenage than either the East of England region or England as whole.

## **Participation in sport**

- 1.59 These headline figures mask some significant variations in the rates of activity in sport across the different communities and socio-economic groups in the borough. Figure 4 shows that the rates of participation in Stevenage vary from “low” to “middle-high” based on Sport England’s scale. The contrast with the rates of activity in the immediately adjacent areas of East Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire is notable, as these areas have “high” rates of participation.
- 1.60 The map in Figure 5 is based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which is calculated by combining results relating to income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation, and crime. In the IMD of 2010, Stevenage is ranked approximately in the middle of the authorities across England, but is the most deprived district in Hertfordshire. Bedwell is one of the most deprived areas of the country but the wards of Woodfield and Manor are among the least deprived.
- 1.61 In relation to sport and physical activity, broadly the more deprived an area, the lower the rates of participation, as seen for the Bedwell area, which is coloured white on the sport and recreation activity map (“low”) but blue on the IMD map, indicating high levels of deprivation.
- 1.62 The chart in Figure 6 demonstrates that men do more activity than women, younger people are more active than older people, people with disabilities participate less, and that the more deprived socio-economic groups are less active.



**Figure 4: Participation rates in sport and active recreation**  
(Source: Sport England Small Areas Estimates, July 2014)



Modelled estimates of participation are based on data from Sport England's Active People Survey 3 (October 2008-October 2009) and Active People Survey 4 (October 2009-October 2010).

MSOA participation estimates are based on modelled or 'synthetic' estimates of participation. Synthetic or modelled estimates combine survey data from Active People with other data sources that are available at the area level (for example, health indicators, socioeconomic status etc) and through a three stage statistical modelling process, provide small area estimates of participation.

Middle Super Output areas (MSOA's) are a geography for the collection and publication of small area statistics. MSOA's have a minimum population of 5,000; and a mean population of 7,200.



Figure 5: Indices of Deprivation

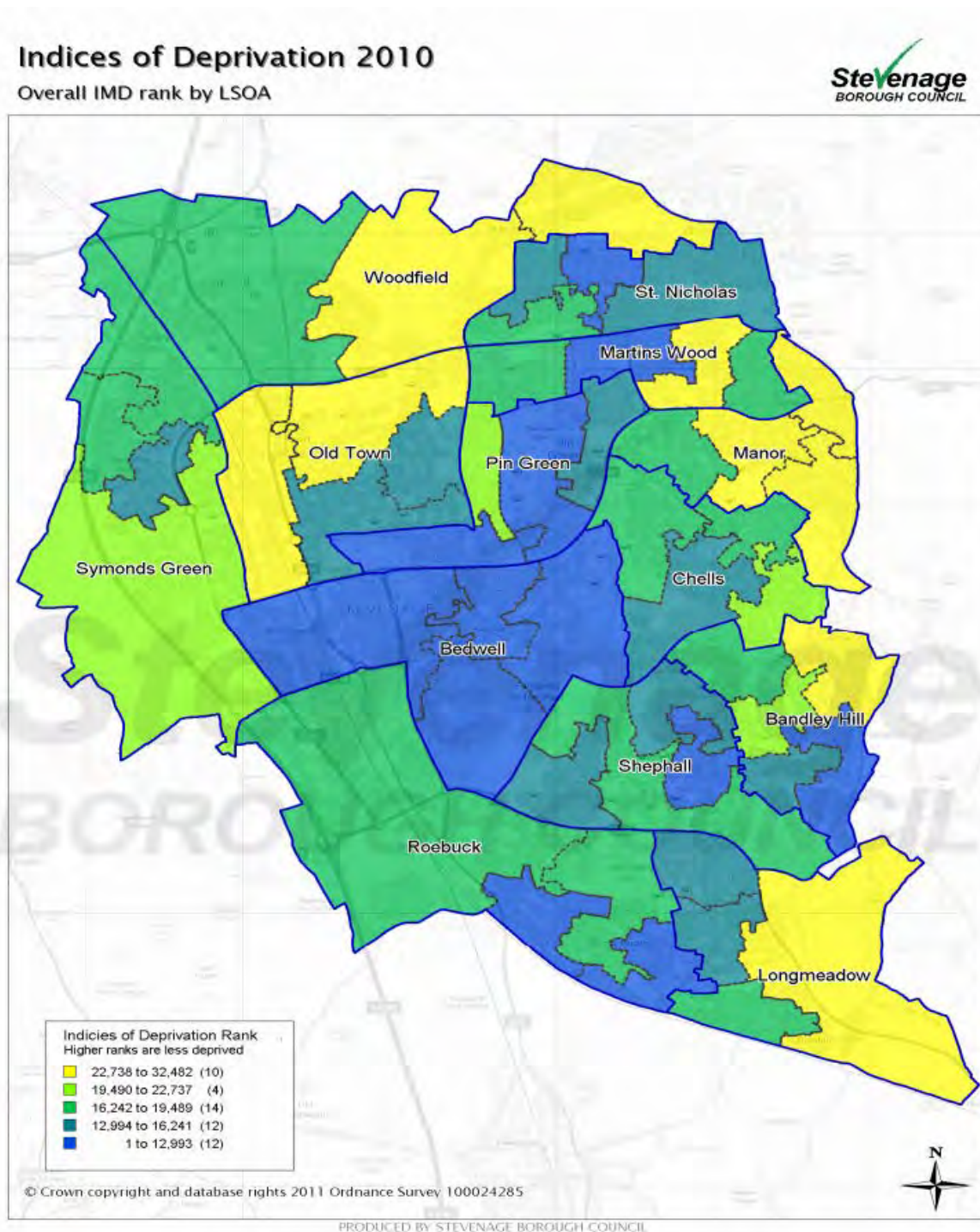
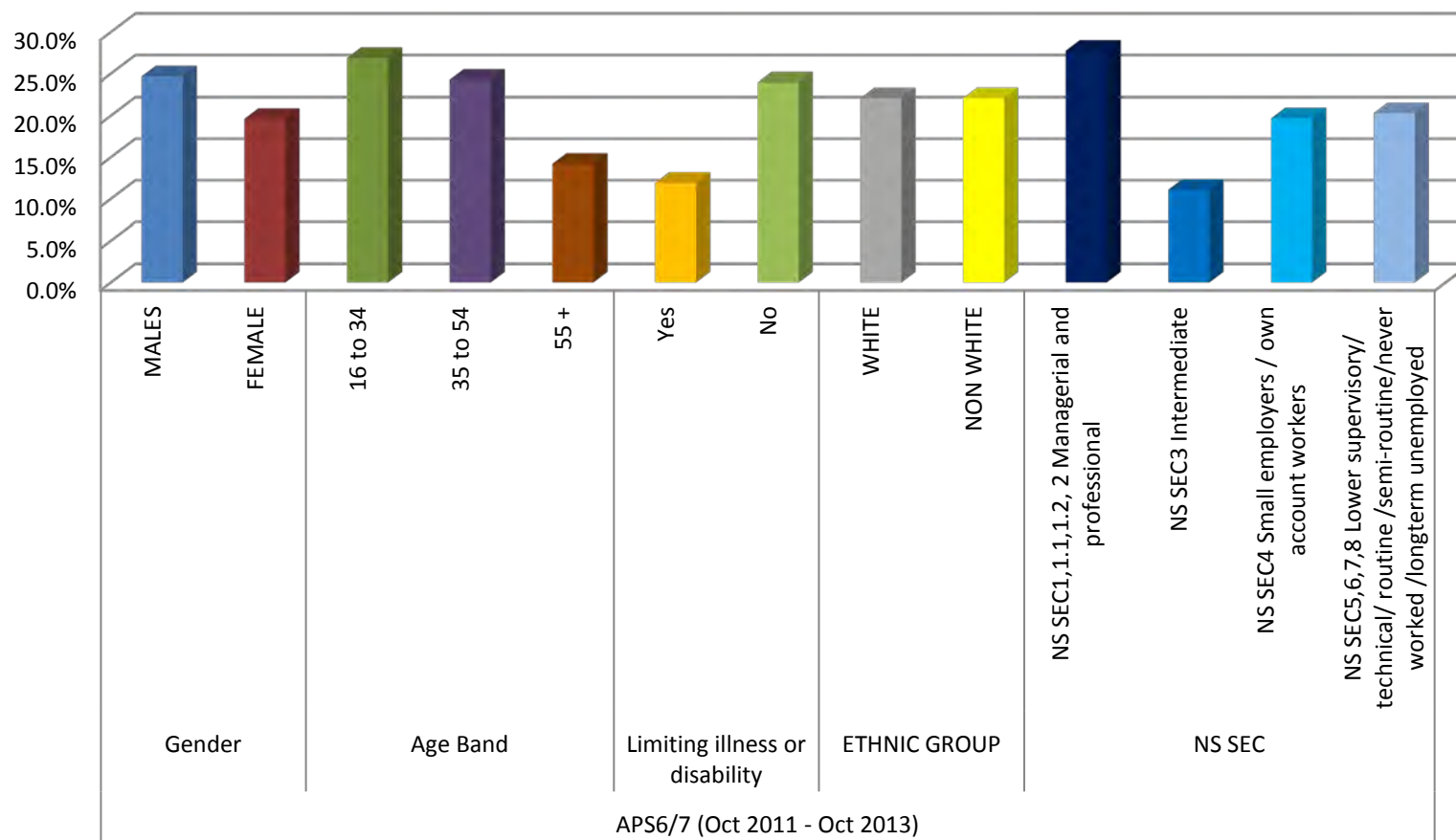


Figure 6: Rates of participation by social characteristic  
(at 3 x 30 minutes a week)



- 1.63 The Sport England Local Profile tool based on the Active People Survey concludes that the top 5 sports in Stevenage are gym, cycling, swimming, football and fitness/conditioning. In this Sport England tool, the definition of “fitness/conditioning” includes weight training, running machines, cross training and circuit training, and the term “gym” includes activities such as fitness classes.
- 1.64 The rates of participation in gym and cycling are above the East of England regional and England average rates, but the other sports are lower. Most notable is swimming which is at 8.1% for Stevenage compared to 11.1% for the East of England region and 11.5% for England.

## Market Segmentation

### *Introduction to the tool*

- 1.65 Sport England has developed market segmentation to help understand the life stages and attitudes of different population groups and the sporting interventions most likely to engage them. The market segmentation data builds on the results of Sport England’s Active People survey; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport’s Taking Part survey; and the Mosaic tool from Experian. It presents a picture of the dominant social groups in each area, and puts people’s sporting behaviour in the context of complex lives.
- 1.66 Propensity modelling – a statistical technique that matches the probability of displaying a particular behaviour or attitude to each demographic category – was used to link the survey data to wider population groups. This created a tool with two key elements: a Sport England segment for every adult in England; and the ability to count market segment profiles for any region or community, down to postcode level.
- 1.67 Sport England encourages the use of market segmentation to help guide local decisions about sport and active recreation priorities, and the following analysis reports the results of the market segmentation results for Stevenage.

### *Results for Stevenage*

- 1.68 The following pie chart (Figure 7) suggests that there is a broad mixture of people in Stevenage from all walks of life, but the map in Figure 8 suggests that there are geographical areas dominated by certain groups such as the middle aged (Philip and Tim segments) or older people (Elsie & Arnold segment).
- 1.69 Figure 9 provides more details about the 9 largest adult market segments and is ordered as according to the size of each group, as illustrated by the pie chart. This chart summarises the characteristics of each market segment group, the sports that they currently do, and which others may appeal to them. This chart confirms the

importance of swimming, cycling and gym/keep fit in Stevenage, but also underpins the need to retain opportunities for “athletics” including jogging and running, golf and football to a lesser extent. The sports of tennis and bowls receive relatively limited support. It should be noted that this Sport England tool combines all types of gym and fitness activities including such things as weight training and fitness classes.

- 1.70 All of these sports and activities are addressed within this report, although some such as cycling and jogging will be impacted upon by other Council policies, including in relation to sustainable transport, green infrastructure and open spaces. These findings will help to prioritise the future investment in sport and active recreation in Stevenage.

*Figure 7: Market segmentation pie chart*

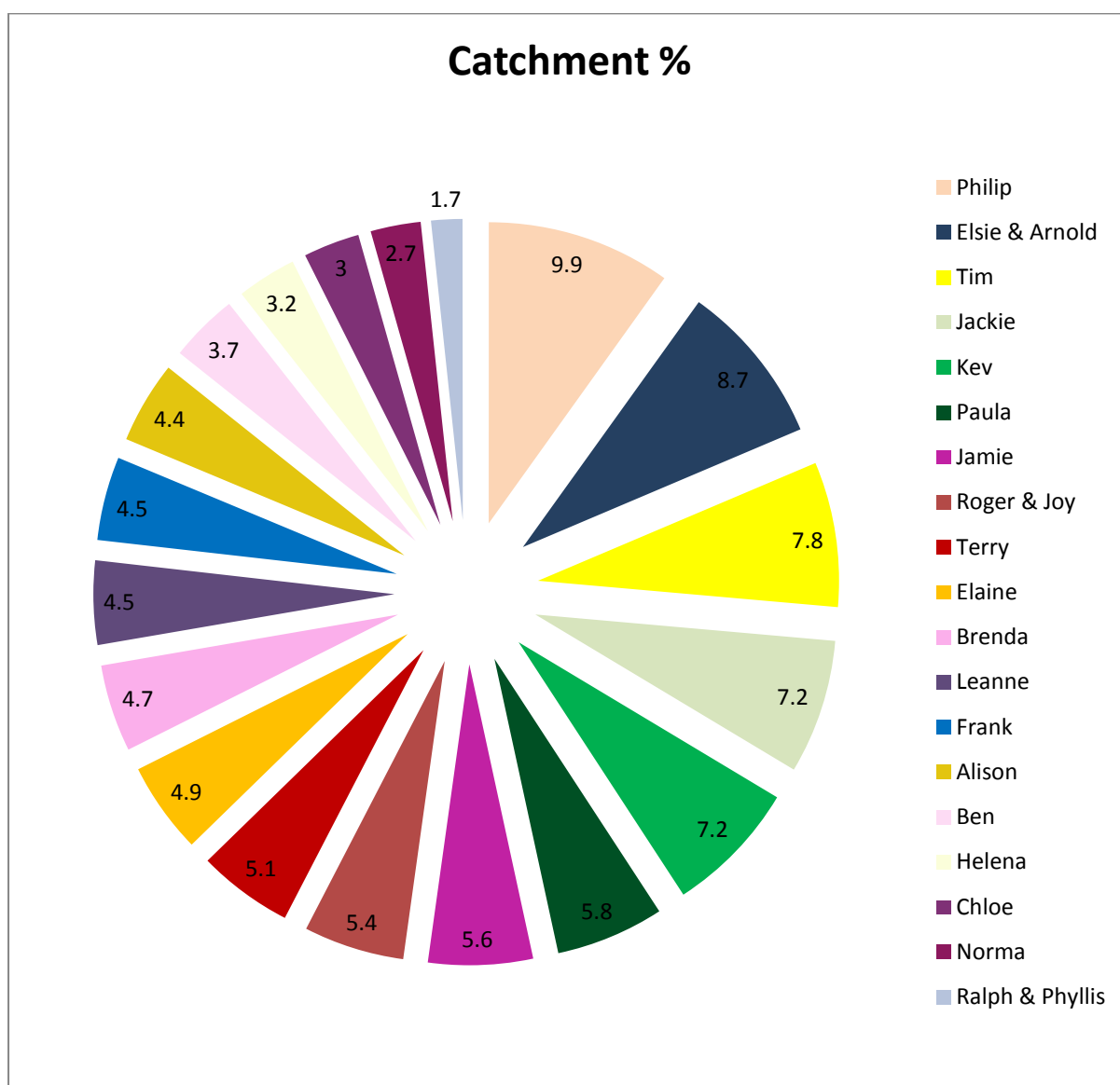




Figure 8: Market segmentation for Stevenage  
(based on Lower Super Output Areas)

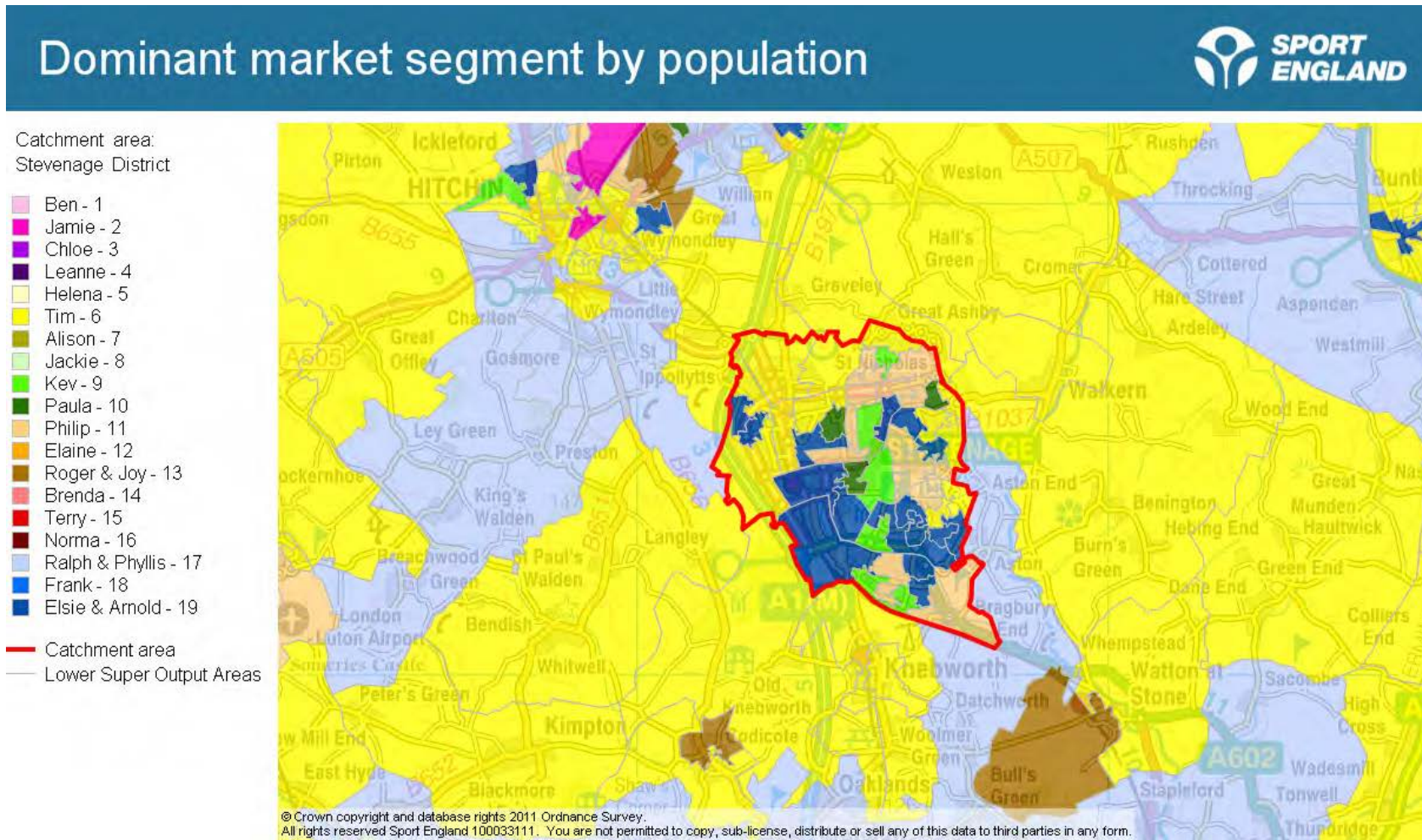


Figure 9: Who does what in Stevenage?

Segment	Characteristic	Age	Marital status	Work type	Sports do now, decreasing order top 5					Sports would like to do more of, decreasing order top 5				
					1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Philip	Comfortable Mid-Life Male	45-55	Married with children	Full time employment and owner occupier	Cycling	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Football	Golf	Swimming	Cycling	Keep fit/gym	Golf	Athletics
Elsie & Arnold	Retirement Home Singles	66+	Widowed	Retired	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Bowls	Golf	Cycling	Swimming	Keep fit/gym	Cycling	Tennis	Bowls
Tim	Settling Down Male	26-45	Married or single. May have children	Professional	Cycling	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Football	Athletics	Cycling	Swimming	Keep fit/gym	Athletics	Golf
Jackie	Middle England Mum	36-45	Married	Part time skilled worker or stay-at-home mum	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Cycling	Athletics	Badminton	Swimming	Keep fit/gym	Cycling	Athletics	Tennis
Kev	Pub League Team Mates	36-45	Married or single. May have children	Vocational job	Keep fit/gym	Football	Cycling	Swimming	Athletics	Swimming	Cycling	Keep fit/gym	Athletics	Football
Paula	Stretched Single Mums	26-45	Single	Job seeker or part time low skilled	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Cycling	Athletics	Football	Swimming	Keep fit/gym	Cycling	Athletics	Tennis
Jamie	Sports Team Lads	18-25	Single	Vocational student	Football	Keep fit/gym	Athletics	Cycling	Swimming	Swimming	Cycling	Football	Keep fit/gym	Athletics
Roger & Joy	Early Retirement Couples	56-65	Married	Full time employment or retired	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Cycling	Golf	Angling	Swimming	Keep fit/gym	Cycling	Golf	Athletics
Terry	Local "Old Boys"	56-65	Single or Married	Unemployed	Keep fit/gym	Swimming	Cycling	Angling	Golf	Swimming	Keep fit/gym	Cycling	Golf	Athletics

## The challenge for increasing levels of physical activity

- 1.71 The challenge is therefore to provide for the wide range of communities in Stevenage, from the older age groups in the community to younger people, and for those without access to a car. Sport England has identified as a national priority young people, those aged 14-25 years, as it is hoped that by retaining young people in sport and activity this will in turn address the significant falls in participation seen in later years. This priority is also one relevant to Stevenage.
- 1.72 Where people do not have access to a car or are unable or unwilling to drive any distance, they rely more on local facilities. The community centres are therefore a significant tier in the provision of active recreation opportunities, and the facilities at schools are likely to remain very important, even in the long term.

## SECTION 2: FACILITY OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The major sports facilities in Stevenage are mainly either provided by Stevenage Borough Council or are dual use facilities at the secondary schools. There is also some commercial provision, such as the David Lloyd centre and some smaller private fitness gyms.
- 2.2 The Arts and Leisure Centre, the Swimming Centre, Fairlands Valley and the Golf Centre are all managed by Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) on a contract running to 2023. The management contract has a substantial management fee payable by the authority.
- 2.3 This section provides an overview of the major built facilities in Stevenage, those provided by Stevenage Borough Council and managed by SLL, and those provided by the schools.

### Stevenage Borough Council facilities

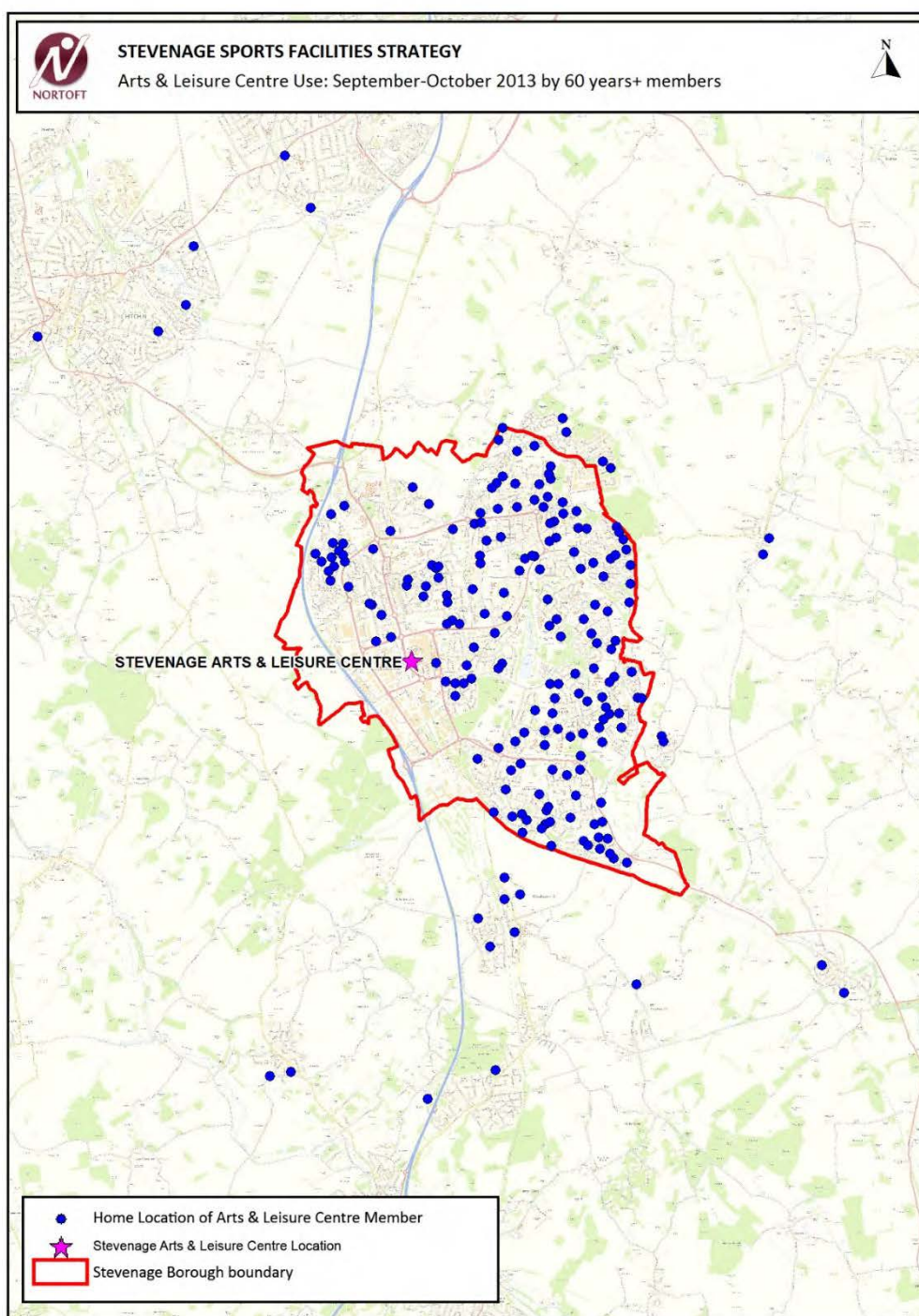
#### Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre

- 2.4 The Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre (A&LC) is the most important leisure facility in Stevenage. It was built in 1975 as part of the new town development of the town centre. The centre contains dry-side sports facilities: an 8 badminton court sports hall, fitness gym, studios, 3 badminton courts, and a 6 rink indoor bowls hall.
- 2.5 The Arts and Leisure Centre (aka the Leisure Box) also hosts the Gordon Craig Theatre, a gallery, cafe, and conference rooms. The traditional theatre has 501 seats, but the 8 court sports hall with its 1200 seats and the indoor bowls centre are often operated together to host much larger events, such as the schools 'Be Your Best Stevenage Rock Challenge', and other large shows. The complexities of this building and the integration of the hall spaces make future planning for any replacement facilities very difficult. It should be noted that the brief for the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy excludes consideration of the future of the Gordon Craig Theatre and the use of the sports hall and bowls hall for arts and other events.
- 2.6 The main pedestrian route from the town centre to the train station runs right through the middle of the building.
- 2.7 The Arts and Leisure Centre has around 185,000 visits per year for sport and physical activity, with the dry-side activities, other than fitness, generating around 63,000 visits for the year ended March 2014, and the fitness nearly 122,000 visits. The fitness membership is now around 3,500.



- 2.8 The theatre-arts aspects of the building saw nearly 258,000 visits in total, with 128,000 visits to the theatre and concert hall and 96,500 to the visual arts and gallery, with the remainder of the total being made up of attendees for events, room hire etc.
- 2.9 The usage figures for the A&LC have increased significantly since the year ending March 2012. There has been a 43% increase in total usage, with most of this being from a 70% increase in fitness visits. The other activities increased by 26% over the same period. Squash visits seem slightly different, they rose from around 7,500 in year ended March 2011 to a peak of around 10,000 for the year ended 2012. For the year ended March 2014 the squash visits were down to around 9,000.
- 2.10 The home postcodes of the members of SLL who used the A&LC during the period September – October 2013 and who are aged over 60 years have been mapped in Figure 10. The 60+ age group is a key target group for sports development initiatives and the wider objective of keeping older people active, so the role of the A&LC in this context is important. This map shows that the facility is drawing around 90% of its older users from Stevenage itself, and that the centre appears to be catering for people from all parts of Stevenage.
- 2.11 There are very few individual SLL members using the A&LC who are aged under 16 years, so these have not been specifically mapped, unlike for the Swimming Centre where this age group are major users.
- 2.12 A similar general home post code analysis of all sports users of the A&LC for two periods, April-May 2013 and September-October 2013 showed a comparable pattern to that in Figure 10. However the percentage of use by Stevenage residents falls to around 80%, with around 20% being users living outside of the authority. Because of the similarities to the 60+ map in Figure 10, separate maps showing this wider age group analysis have not been included within this report.

Figure 10: Home location of members aged 60+ using A&LC



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- 2.13 The A&LC building is managed as a single enterprise, with the bowls centre being used as a multipurpose hall much of the time. Many of the staff operate across the facility as a whole, though some specialists are also employed, for example theatre technicians and lifestyle consultants.

- 2.14 SLL are seeking to respond to the need to support a healthier lifestyle across the Stevenage community, and run a number of group activities aimed at those less active or with health problems. There is also a strong GP referral programme. SLL would like to further develop these aspects of the community offer.
- 2.15 The building itself is starting to look tired and the stock conditions survey of 2013 shows a total of £718,150 needing to be spent on the building and services by 2018. As well as these high priorities there is an additional £4 million of works identified to be completed in the next 15 years. These figures are for the building fabric as well as mechanical and electrical elements.
- 2.16 A number of the responses to the surveys supporting this Assessment and Strategy identified a need for improvements at the A&LC from the user's perspective, across a range of the facilities, (see paragraph 3.1 onwards). Also identified as a significant issue is the lack of dedicated car parking and the cost of the parking.
- 2.17 The layout of the centre and the way in which the demands on the building have changed over the years means that the fitness/studio space is split across different rooms on different floors, and the gallery/café area is not used to its fullest extent, although it can cater for and host large events.
- 2.18 Stevenage Borough Council has previously considered a number of alternative options for improving the A&LC or replacing it as part of the wider town centre redevelopment. Recent feasibility studies by SLL have included exploring the conversion of the bowls hall, in part or completely into additional gym and fitness studio space.

## Stevenage Swimming Centre

- 2.19 The Stevenage Swimming Centre is the only public pool in Stevenage. It is located on the edge of the town centre. The Swimming Centre was built in 1962 and contains a 33m x 12m 6 lane pool (with boom usually set at 25m) with diving facilities (2 x 1 m springboards and 1 x 3 m springboard), a 12m x 7m teaching pool and a wellness centre which includes spa, beauty rooms and a kinesis studio. It also has a training suite which is used for a variety of commercial and non-commercial training courses.
- 2.20 The site of the Swimming Centre is separated from the town centre and bus station by a dual carriage way, with poor pedestrian access.
- 2.21 The Swimming Centre is well used at peak time and regularly reaches its maximum capacity on Saturday afternoons and school holiday days.
- 2.22 The Swimming Centre had a throughput in the pool (excluding school use) of around 170,000 for the year ending March 2014. Of this, the club use was around 26,000, and the learn to swim programme (Aqua Ed) accounted for around 57,500

visits from it's around 1,100 participants. The fitness/wellness centre generated around 17,000 visits. The number of swimming visits increased over the past 3 years, with the year ending March 2013 having around 155,000 visits excluding schools, and the year ending March 2012 having 148,000 visits. This is around a 15% increase in swimming visits over the past 3 years.

- 2.23 The fitness aspects of the swimming centre has also had increased use, from around 15,700 visits for the year ending March 2013 to just under 17,000 for the year ending March 2014, i.e. a 10% increase.
- 2.24 The GP referral and wellness programmes are well liked and tend to have good retention.
- 2.25 The postcodes of members have been mapped to assess the draw of the pool from both Stevenage and the surrounding area. Using the data from two periods, April-May 2013 and September-October 2013 it is clear that around 80% of all users of the pool live in Stevenage. Of younger people under the age of 16 years, including those on the Aqua Ed programme, about 75% come from within Stevenage (see Figure 11 for the map of home locations). A higher proportion of those aged 60+ come from Stevenage, about 85% (see Figure 12). The pool draws from across all areas of Stevenage.
- 2.26 The pool is used for different swimming disciplines including for competition. Stevenage Swimming Club uses it for training and competitive swimming, and for diving. The synchronised swimming has a separate club, and there are two sub-aqua diving training clubs using the pool. The pool also hosts, free of charge, the Dolphin Club for people with disabilities and their families or carers. The pool is additionally occasionally used for water polo.
- 2.27 The pool hosts around 10-15 events per year, but these events generate less income than other pool hire, for example for parties. The diving boards are used for four hours on a Saturday morning, but as the rest of that part of the pool needs to be closed for other users, this is not cost effective.
- 2.28 The pool provides a venue for primary school swimming, attracting schools from both within and outside the authority.
- 2.29 In terms of the quality of the centre, it had a £2 million refurbishment in 2000 and further more recent investment. However the pool and site is now showing its age and many of the survey respondents commented that there was need for improvement (see paragraph 3.1 onwards).



Figure 11: Home location of swimmers aged under 16 yrs

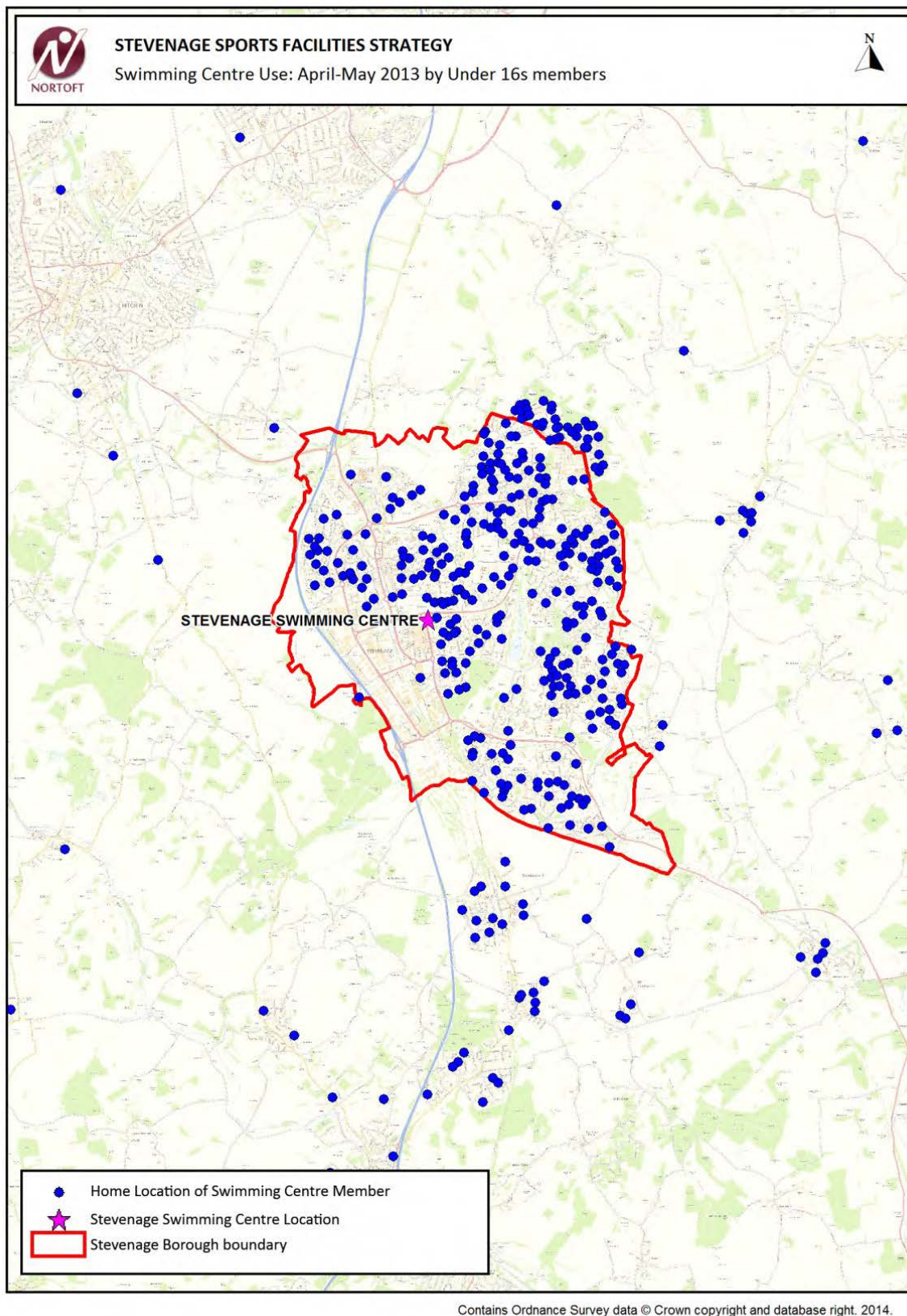
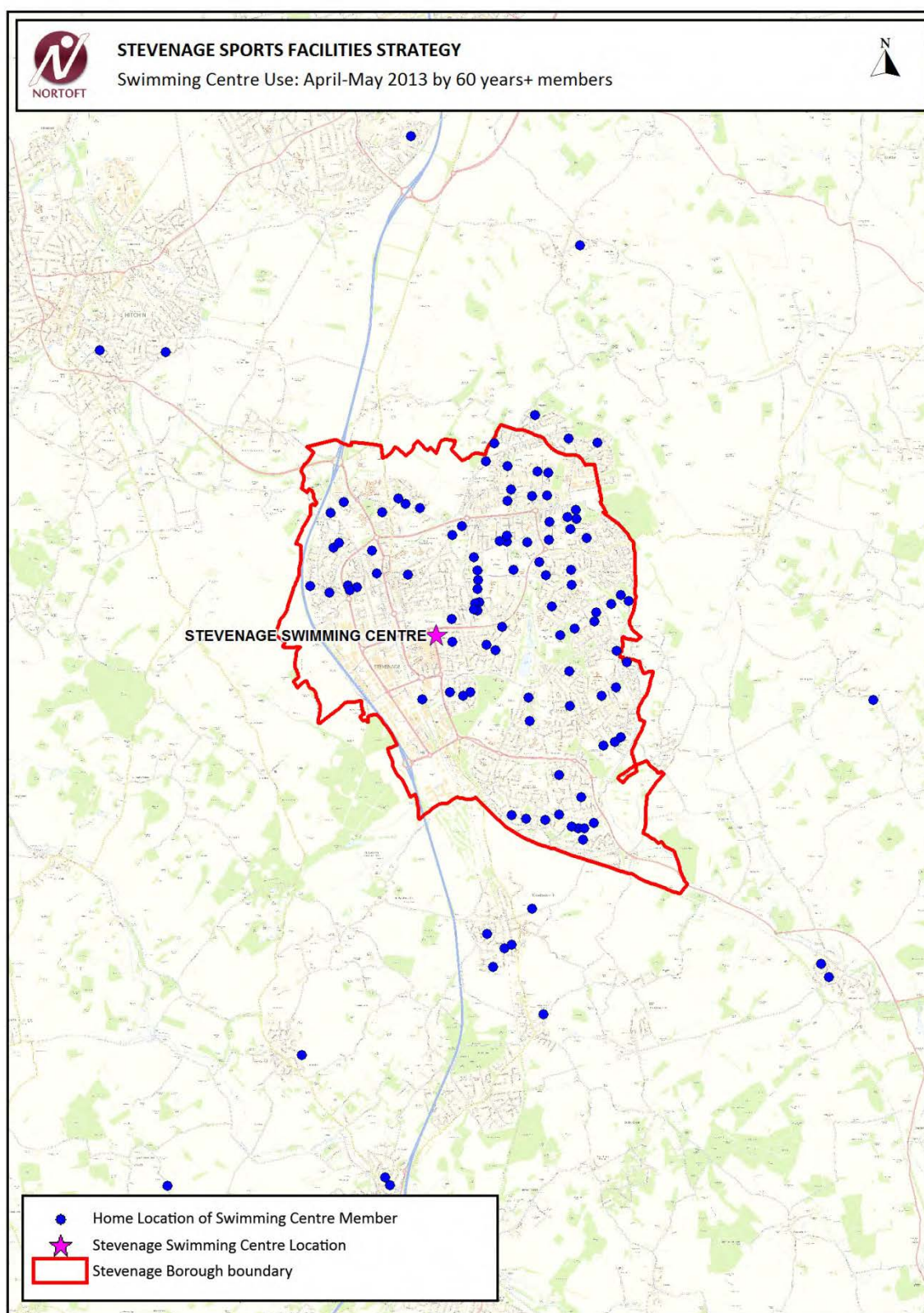


Figure 12: Home location of swimmers aged 60+





- 2.30 The energy costs are high generally although the site has a combined heat and power unit, and the cost of heating the volume of water with the diving area is large. The priority 1 and 2 costs from the stock conditions survey total identifies that £77,800 of works will need to be completed by 2018, with a further £1.3 million of costs expected within the next 15 years.
- 2.31 The car parking for the site has been extended from 45 spaces to 100 but a lack of space is a continuing problem, particularly for events.

## Fairlands Valley Park

- 2.32 Fairlands Valley Park is the premier open space in Stevenage and attracts a high number of visits for informal recreation, which are mostly likely to be drawn from Stevenage itself. Special events however including the annual firework display are likely to draw visitors from a much wider area.
- 2.33 The sporting/activity facilities at Fairlands include sailing lakes with a sailing centre and boathouse, climbing wall/high ropes, an aquatic playground (spray park), playgrounds and a cafe. SLL manages the activity centre with specialist instructors, but the cafe is managed separately.
- 2.34 The site offers an introduction to sailing, rowing, and canoeing, which are available on a pay and play basis. The nature of the site however means that individuals need to join clubs outside of Stevenage to progress in the activities.
- 2.35 Other activities offered at Fairlands include angling via the Welwyn Garden Angling Club which uses the main lake. A model boating club uses the Millennium Lake twice a week.
- 2.36 The total throughput of users at the Water Sports Centre was around 9,000 for the year ending March 2014, of which education/school use accounted for more than 95%. There were just over 400 other visits to the centre. The overall use has increased from 7,800 visits in 2012, but the non-school visits were higher in 2012 at around 950.
- 2.37 The regular education users are drawn from a wide area around Stevenage, including Hemel Hempstead, Luton and Harpenden. The groups tend to be small, many only 3-4 in number, with the largest regular groups coming by minibus. There are also occasional activity events for local schools where there can be much higher numbers involved, up to around 70 students.
- 2.38 The high ropes tower with its climbing wall is now two years old and has proven expensive to staff and has generated limited income. It is hoped that improved marketing will increase its use, but the location of the tower means that it cannot

be seen easily by casual visitors to the park. The hire charge for the high ropes tower is also considered to be too high for the nature of the site and Stevenage.

- 2.39 The stock conditions survey only includes the sailing centre, boathouse and the aquatic playground. The priority 1 and 2 work equates to £60,100 with a further £0.5 million to be spent in the next 15 years.

## Stevenage Golf & Conference Centre

- 2.40 The Stevenage Golf Centre was developed in 1970 and contains an 18 hole course, a 9 hole par 3 course, and a 24 bay driving range. The clubhouse also houses conference, bar and catering facilities. The golf course is situated close to the boundary of Stevenage and is likely to draw users from both Stevenage and a wider area, particularly into East Hertfordshire.
- 2.41 The Golf and Conference Centre annual golf use for the year ending March 2014 was just over 31,000. The hire of the site for events, functions and conferences brought another 10,000 people to the site. Since 2012 there has been little change in the overall number of visits for golf. The use of the main course has increased by around 3,000, mainly at the expense of the Par 3 course. The amount of use for events/functions and conferences has increased by over 70%.
- 2.42 The golf course, driving range and clubhouse facilities are generally in good condition but there is a need to replace the irrigation system, which is scheduled for 2014. The stock conditions survey information shows a need for £65,750 to be spent on priority 1 and 2 items by 2018, but there will be a need for a further £440,000 to be spent over the next 15 years.

## Ridlins Wood Athletics Track

- 2.43 Ridlins Wood Athletics Track stadium is an 8 lane synthetic track, currently certified by the national governing body, UK Athletics as Grade B. The facility was built in 1994, and has a stand with integral changing rooms. The stadium is also used for changing for football in Ridlins Park.
- 2.44 The athletics track is managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council and is primarily used by the Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club, both for training and events. However it is also used by schools both from within and outside Stevenage. For 2013 there were a total of 624 bookings for the athletics track but this includes 7 club meetings (events). There is no total for the number of individual users.
- 2.45 The year ending March 2014 saw an income from the track of around £18,000 from Stevenage and other Hertfordshire users, with an expenditure on maintenance of £100,000, with less than 50% staffing. This staff time was taken up mainly with the



operational management of event bookings, maintenance and the general running costs of the site.

- 2.46 In the longer term, there will be a need to carry out a full resurfacing of the track at an estimated cost of £290,000 (UK Athletics, 2012 prices).
- 2.47 The club would wish to enhance the fitness and club house facilities at the site, but the options have yet to be explored (see page 123).

### Bowling Greens at Shephalbury Park and King George V Playing Fields

- 2.48 There are two flat green bowling greens at King George V Playing Fields (KGV) and one at Shephalbury Park, and both sites are managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council.
- 2.49 The bowling greens at KGV are played on by the Stevenage Town Bowls Club and Shephalbury is home to the Three Horseshoes Bowls Club. On the sites, 4 rinks were used in 2013 at Shephalbury and 2 + 6 rinks used at KGV.
- 2.50 The total costs of maintaining the three greens was around £81,000 for the year ending March 2014, and there was a total income of £13,000. The bulk of the costs for the maintenance relate to staff time, although the materials costs were around £5,000 across the three greens for 2013. The staff time costs relate mainly to: the regular daily maintenance and renovation works that are required to manage fine turf which is subject to high usage compaction and disease attack.

### Football pitches in parks

- 2.51 Stevenage Borough Council maintains all of the football pitches and pavilions in the parks around the town. These are made available to all ages of players and sites are allocated to teams either on a seasonal or weekly basis.
- 2.52 Detailed consideration of the playing pitches is provided in Section 5 of this report.

### Summary of the Stevenage Borough Council facilities

- 2.53 The A&LC and Swimming Centre have experienced significant increases in visits over the last three years, with fitness at the A&LC growing by about 70%. Swimming uptake has increased by around 15%. The Fairlands Valley (non schools) and Golf Centre have conversely seen little overall change in their use.
- 2.54 The non school use of the A&LC and the Swimming Centre is predominantly by Stevenage residents, and this is particularly the case for older people. Conversely sports facilities at Fairlands Valley and the Golf Centre are likely to draw more people from a wider area.

- 2.55 Both the Swimming Centre and Fairlands Valley have a significant role in supporting education. The Swimming Centre is used for primary school swimming both for schools within and outside Stevenage. The Fairlands Valley site is predominantly used by groups originating outside of Stevenage.
- 2.56 There are significant costs associated with maintaining these sport and leisure facilities, especially those that are aging. The total of the priority works for the four built facilities: the A&LC, Swimming Centre, Fairlands Valley and Golf Centre are just under £1 million. When all costs are added together across the next fifteen years, these add up to £7.27 million.
- 2.57 The management contract with SLL which covers the Arts & Leisure Centre, Swimming Centre, Fairlands Valley Water Sports Centre and the Golf and Conference Centre runs to 2023. This contract would need to be renegotiated if changes were to be proposed to any of these facilities.
- 2.58 The athletics track and bowling greens are currently managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council.

## School facilities

- 2.59 Schools in Stevenage play an important role in providing for community sport and recreation but the facilities and the approaches to community use by the schools varies widely. The secondary schools are particularly important in relation to their sports halls and artificial grass pitches, although some also have some community use of their playing fields. The primary schools which provide for community sport use mainly host football, primarily the mini and junior game.
- 2.60 The quality of the school facilities varies dramatically across Stevenage, very largely reflecting whether or not a school was rebuilt/significantly redeveloped as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme. The Marriotts and Nobel schools both have excellent facilities and only recently opened in their new/expanded facilities. By contrast, The Barclay School has very poor sports provision, and the facilities at Thomas Alleyne and John Henry Newman fall somewhere in between.

## Community Use Agreements

- 2.61 The security of community use of the school sites in Stevenage has been, and continues to be an issue. This is explored in more depth below in relation to each site, but is critical to the consideration of the sports facilities network in Stevenage. Without community use agreements in force (and enforced) there is no protection for the community use of the sites and no guarantee that sports facilities will be remain open to the community in the short, medium, or longer term.

- 2.62 Community Use Agreements (CUA) drawn up between the individual school, Hertfordshire County Council and Stevenage Borough Council, plus on occasion Sport England, confirm access to the school's facilities for an agreed length of time (usually at least 20 years). This has been the established mechanism for ensuring continuity of community use, and the "protection" of investment into the sports facilities on a school site.
- 2.63 Where schools change to academy status any community use agreements in force at the time of the change become invalid, as the school site switch to the control of the schools themselves, and the County Council is no longer party to the agreements. In these cases the community use agreements need to be reviewed if community use of the sports facilities is to be retained, and especially if there is to be further investment of grant aid, for example Lottery funding. In this case any agreement would be between Stevenage Borough Council, the school, and the grant aid organisation.
- 2.64 Where schools have received Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding and have not switched to academy status then the tripartite community use agreement approach applies, involving Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council and the school. The CUAs for Marriotts (new sports facilities), Nobel and Barnwell schools are still outstanding as at November 2014, but there is an existing CUA for the gymnastics centre at Marriotts.
- 2.65 Of note is the previous requirement on schools and Hertfordshire County Council as the education authority to sign community use agreements in order to mitigate planning proposals, particularly responding to Sport England as a statutory consultee in relation to developments on playing fields. This has led to some schools technically offering their facilities but for which there has been no community uptake. Future similar situations on school sites should be considered within the context of the findings and recommendations of this Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy.

## Secondary schools

### *Barnwell School*

- 2.66 The school currently has around 1,300 students aged 11-18 on three sites, Collenswood which closed in August 2014, and two adjacent sites, the old Heathcote School which is now the Barnwell Middle School and the Barnwell School West site. The school is a maintained school. It did not receive Building Schools for the Future funding, but has been undertaking works on both the old Heathcote site and the West site prior to the shutting of Collenswood.
- 2.67 The Barnwell School West site houses the Shephall Leisure Centre sports hall and two studio spaces which were previously run by SLL on behalf of the Council on a pay and play basis, and as such were deficit funded. For the year ending March 2013 and prior to the school taking over the management of the site, the leisure

centre had a throughput of around 35,500 visits per year, of which the sports hall throughput was around 23,300 and fitness / gym was around 8,000 visits per year. Barnwell School now runs the site on a block bookings basis, primarily providing for badminton and 5-a-side football.

- 2.68 A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in April 2014 which has now progressed to an advanced stage of the draft formal community use agreement. There are ongoing discussions between the school and Stevenage Borough Council to finalise it. The agreement covers:

Barnwell School West	Adult football pitch
	Adult rugby pitch
	Leisure Centre
	Indoor multi-use games area
	Ancillary hall
	Dance studio

Barnwell Middle School	2 x junior football pitch
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- 2.69 The school has aspirations for a 3G artificial grass pitch.

### *Collenswood School*

- 2.70 Collenswood School became part of Barnwell School in 2006 but the site closed in August 2014. It had no indoor sports facilities but did have a large playing field which had been used by both the school, and by the community for football.

- 2.71 The site has been occupied on a leasehold basis since 1961 by the County Council, but the freeholder is unknown as the site has been subject to a 500 year lease starting in 1564. The County Council is now proposing to Compulsory Purchase Order the site so that it can retain the site for education purposes. Further feasibility work will be needed to identify the future education uses for the site pending the potential allocation of the site for an additional secondary school. This is subject to the completion of the Local Plan Review process. In the interim the County Council propose to arrange suitable uses for the site that do not compromise the long term options.

- 2.72 The playing fields have a moderate slope but are fenced and therefore secure, and are large enough for 4 adult football pitches. The access to the playing fields is via Redwing Close and currently through the school gates and security fence. There is no dedicated parking or changing/wash facilities.

- 2.73 The playing fields offer a significant opportunity to provide a high quality football facility, certainly in the short-medium term and potentially in the longer term, depending upon the use of the main school site. There would be a need for new security fencing between the access/hard court area and the school buildings, and

for at least basic wash facilities to be provided. The existing hard court area could be used for car parking.

- 2.74 The long term future of the playing fields in relation to community use will be dependent upon the future use of the main school site. If the school is brought back into secondary school use, it is likely that the playing fields will need to be brought back into school curriculum use, and the extent and opportunity for community use will therefore reduce significantly. If the school changes to a special school or other education support use then it is likely that the playing fields would not be needed and the community use could be permanent.
- 2.75 Once the short-medium term future of Collenswood School site is determined, then the site should be considered as a high priority for investment to make the changes needed on site to enable it to become a centre for community football.

### *John Henry Newman School*

- 2.76 This academy school was proposed to have extensive rebuilding on its current site as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, but this did not come to fruition. As the original school site was designed for a much smaller school role than the present one of over a 1000 students, there is significant pressure on the facilities, in particular the sports hall.
- 2.77 The sports facilities (sports hall, artificial grass pitch and hard courts) used to be managed in the community hours by SLL on behalf of Stevenage Borough Council, but the school withdrew from the community use agreement in 2013 resulting in the closure of the sports facilities for community use. The throughput of the facilities for the year ending March 2013 which was the last full year managed by SLL were: 28,500 for the sports hall, 7,000 for the artificial pitch, and 8,000 for the hard courts which was wholly for netball.
- 2.78 The lack of indoor space for the school generally has caused such pressure on the sports hall that the school did not and still does not feel able to offer community use for the indoor space. This is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.
- 2.79 The artificial grass pitch (AGP) on the site is in moderate condition, but there are significant issues with overhanging trees and some fencing vandalism damage. The surface is likely to need replacing in about 5 years. The hard courts are also in moderate condition. Both the AGP and hard courts have floodlights but these are rarely used because of the very close proximity of adjacent housing.
- 2.80 There are grass pitches of good quality, but these are for school use only.
- 2.81 The school is currently building new outdoor changing space as part of a new music block adjacent to the grass pitches.

- 2.82 The school has recently made the AGP available to Stevenage Hockey Club to enable the reintroduction of club hockey out of school hours. This allows the hockey club to retain and improve on its 2013 membership levels and is a positive move by the school which is welcomed by Stevenage Borough Council, Sport England and England Hockey. However until community hockey use is secured via a community use agreement, then the site must be considered at risk. A new community use agreement will be an essential pre-requisite for any grant aid from Hockey England or for support from Stevenage Borough Council for site improvements.

### *Marriotts*

- 2.83 Marriotts School has been substantially rebuilt having received Building Schools for the Future funding. It currently has around 850 students but has been designed to cater for up to 1600. It is adjacent to the Lonsdale Special School and is a maintained school although it is considering becoming an academy.
- 2.84 The development involved the provision of new and improved sports facilities including:
- a new four court sports hall (suitable for wheel chair activities) and activity studio adjoining the existing gymnastics centre.
  - retention of the existing gymnastics centre.
  - new floodlit synthetic (3G surface) turf pitch (96x52m) with viewing terrace on the site of the previous Marriotts School buildings.
  - two new Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) with different surfaces, one of which is floodlit.
  - informal sports provision including a sports activity zone and outdoor gym/trim trail.
  - improvements to the remaining school playing fields and the Ridgemonk Park playing fields.
  - retention of the changing pavilion.
- 2.85 All of the sports facilities including the grass playing fields are proposed to be covered by a community use agreement, but this has yet to be signed. The gymnastics centre has an existing community use agreement, which is proposed to be incorporated into the expanded agreement.
- 2.86 The leisure centre is available for some (limited) community use throughout the school day and is fully available during evenings, weekends and school holidays. The sports centre is extensively and intensively used, particularly by specialist clubs such as the Scorpions Basketball Club and the gymnastics clubs, plus Stevenage Football Club which bases some of its academy there.
- 2.87 The success of the Marriotts Sports Centre is evidenced by the fact that a recurring theme from clubs is the inability to book as much time (or at times that they would like) the sports hall space.

## *Nobel School*

- 2.88 The Nobel School has 1300 students and is a community school. Nobel also received Building Schools for the Future funding and the new school buildings were fully opened in 2013. The sports facilities comprise a full size sand based artificial grass pitch, 4 court sports hall, studio space and hard courts. There will also be grass pitches but these are yet to come into use. The school prides itself on its range and extent of community use and has a number of clubs using the site on a regular basis. There are particularly good links with Stevenage Hockey Club and Stevenage Cricket Club.
- 2.89 The facilities should all be of excellent quality but there are a number of unresolved problems which impact upon their use, including the floor of the sports hall, meeting and waiting space for parents, and the surface of the hard courts. The hard court issues, for example have meant that the courts cannot be safely used by the community for tennis.
- 2.90 At this time there is still no formal community use agreement which secures community use of the sports facilities in the evenings, weekends and holiday periods. Until this agreement is signed, the facilities should be considered potentially at risk for the community. As the community use has to be financially self-sustaining, this is already resulting in the restriction of hockey use on Sundays.
- 2.91 The school has aspirations to improve and add to their facilities, and their current needs/aspirations are:
- hard courts: provision of floodlights, and resurfacing to address original construction problems
  - artificial grass pitch: equipment and remarking to enable division of the pitch into 3 to provide for small sided football.
  - sports hall: resurface to address original construction problems.
  - storage: greater permanent storage space for both the school and community users.
  - outdoor shelter/community space: to provide for club, spectators and school use.
- 2.92 The school is already a base for indoor cricket training and good relationships have been established with Stevenage Cricket Club. There is now an aspiration by the Cricket Club to establish outdoor club cricket on the “new” playing fields. However the practicalities of this are yet to be confirmed and depend upon the final size and quality of the pitches, as well as the other uses that the school needs for the playing field space during the summer term.

### *The Barclay School*

- 2.93 This school did not receive Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding although detailed consideration was given about what could be done on the site by Hertfordshire County Council in 2010. A major issue for the school is that most of the school has listed building status so the options to make major changes are limited.
- 2.94 The school has approximately 1100 students and only limited sports facilities. These are one old school gym (one court size) which is listed and of poor quality, two basic changing rooms, a small size new artificial grass pitch (sand based) with floodlights, and 3 senior size grass football pitches on a sloping playing field. The school would like to expand its community use programme and also needs a modern sports hall and extra changing to cater for its curriculum. The Barclay is a maintained school.
- 2.95 There are no formal community use agreements for the site except in relation to the new training size artificial grass pitch, but the pitches and gym are also used by the community on a block booking basis

### *The Thomas Alleyne School*

- 2.96 This academy had been expected to be relocated to a site at Great Ashby as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, so only very limited investment in sports facilities has been made on this site for some time. Consequently the school is now seeking ways of improving its facilities independently.
- 2.97 The school currently has a 3 court hall of moderate quality, a one court old gym with poor quality floor, a small fitness room with limited and old equipment, fenced hard courts with moderate school quality surface, and a number of grass pitches on three different sites, only one area of which is within the secure area of the school. The school has some limited community use of its sports hall and also occasionally hires out the grass football pitches on the Burymead site, which is of poor quality and not used by the school.
- 2.98 There are no formal community use agreements in place. The school may consider some increase in community use but this would need to be financially self-sustaining.



## Primary schools with Community Use Agreements

### *Broom Barns Primary School*

- 2.99 This school entered into a community use agreement as a planning condition in relation to its playing fields. It has two mini soccer pitches but, although technically available, these are not used by the community. The school is however a Sports Premium Plus partner school, working with the Stevenage Sporting Futures team.

### *Fairlands Primary School*

- 2.100 The school has a formal community use agreement for its hall, multi use games area (MUGA) and playing fields, which was completed last year as a planning condition. There is some limited community use of its hall, for zumba and taekwondo but there does not appear to be regular use of its MUGA or pitches by the community, although the school advertises their availability on the school web site.

### *Roebuck Primary School*

- 2.101 A community use agreement is in place in relation to the school playing fields which was drawn up as a requirement of planning permission.
- 2.102 The school has two mini soccer pitches but these are not used by the community. The school does offer a variety of after school clubs including football and lacrosse.

## Other schools used by the community

- 2.103 In addition to the schools with community use agreements there are three schools which currently have community use for football. These are:
- Almond Hill Junior
  - Camps Hill Primary
  - Featherstone Wood
  - Lodge Farm Primary
  - Longmeadow Primary
  - Mossbury Primary
  - Shephalbury Park Primary
  - Woolenwick Junior
- 2.104 No school grass playing field sites are currently used by the community for rugby or cricket.

## Schools outside Stevenage

- 2.105 The Round Diamond School is just over the border of Stevenage and has a training size 3G rubber crumb training pitch which is used by a number of Stevenage football clubs for training.
- 2.106 Further away, the cricket club uses a St Christopher School in Letchworth for its lower level adult teams.

## Commercial facilities

- 2.107 There are a number of commercial sports facilities in and close to Stevenage, particularly small fitness gyms. The following are the most significant and are open to registered members.

### David Lloyd

- 2.108 A David Lloyd centre is based in the leisure park and has a 25 m x 4 lane pool, 99 station fitness provision and a studio. The facility was built in 1997 and operates on a membership basis with a number of alternative options. The centre is less than half a mile from the Arts & Leisure Centre.
- 2.109 The facility appears to be in good condition, but its layout means that some of the fitness stations are located around the edges of the pool within the same space.

### Odyssey Health and Fitness Club, Knebwoth

- 2.110 This commercial club is just over the border of Stevenage within North Hertfordshire. It has a 25 m x 12 m (4 lane) pool, 80 station fitness suite, 2 badminton court hall, 2 standard squash courts, a studio, 4 outdoor floodlit tennis courts, 8 mini tennis courts indoors, and 3 small sand based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). This facility operates on a membership basis and is located just to the south west of Stevenage.

### Stevenage Football Club – Shephalbury Sports Academy

- 2.111 This site on Broadhall Way has a 7 small sided 3G AGPs and is a main training base for the Stevenage Football Club Academy. The 3G pitches are made available to the community, and small sided football leagues are operated.

### Valley Football Akademy

- 2.112 This site is also located on Broadhall Way and has a full size 3G AGP plus grass pitches. It offers small-sided league football and is also used by some community football clubs for training.

## **Private facilities**

- 2.113 There are two private company facilities which in practice meet some of the community demand in Stevenage, but which are only open to their staff, the GSK and MBDA fitness gyms. As these are not generally available, they are not specifically included within the facility assessments in this report.

## SECTION 3: COMMUNITY VIEWS

3.1 As part of the strategy process wide ranging consultations were undertaken with individuals (both adults and students), clubs and groups in the community, partner organisations including schools, Sport Stevenage and Stevenage Sporting Futures, the adjacent authorities, and other stakeholders such as Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of sport.

3.2 The consultations took place between January and September 2014 and included:

- Web-based surveys targeted at all sports clubs, individual adults, students and schools promoted via the Council, via SLL and other partners. The web based survey for the clubs was sent out via Sport Stevenage and using the club specific contacts for football, rugby and cricket.

The rate of responses were:

- Individual surveys: 425
  - Sports club surveys: 68
  - Students: 60
- Paper copy versions of the individual survey via the Arts and Leisure Centre and Swimming Centre.
  - Focus group discussions with older people, presentation to Sport Stevenage Annual General Meeting.
  - Face to face meetings with: all secondary schools (PE staff and business managers); representatives of Sport Stevenage; SLL; football leagues and clubs; cricket club; Sport England; Park for Life representative (King George V playing field); Stevenage Borough Council staff in leisure, planning and parks; planning and leisure officers at East Hertfordshire District Council; leisure and parks officers of North Hertfordshire District Council, and leisure officers at Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
  - Phone / email consultations as follow up included with key national governing body representatives, specific clubs, North Hertfordshire planning, and Stevenage Borough Council equality officer.

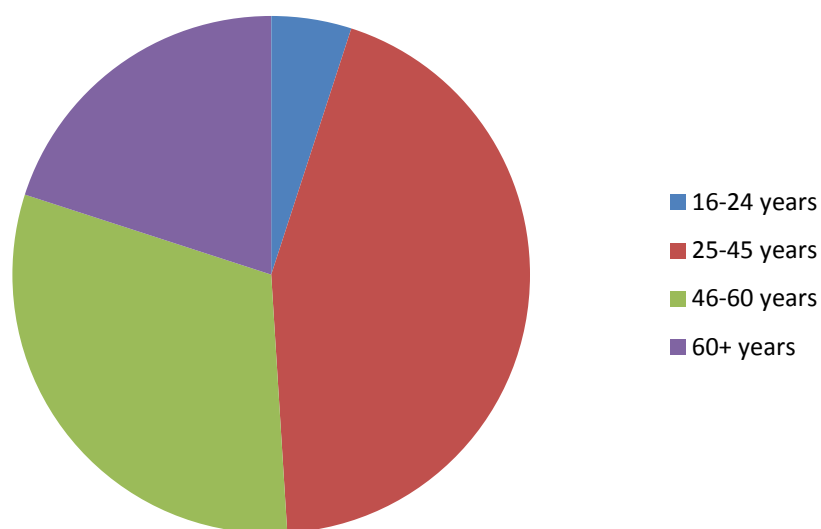
3.3 The outcomes of these consultations have been used in the facility assessment to help check and interpret the theoretical modelling, and to confirm future priorities.

3.4 The Individual and Student surveys included walking, running and cycling routes because they are very important “facilities”, supporting physical activity in Stevenage. The findings from these surveys will help to justify on-going investment in these routes, linked with themes such as sustainable transport, active travel and routes to school. This Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy does not however provide site specific recommendations.

## Individual survey

- 3.5 A full copy of the analysis for the individual survey is provided as Appendix 2, but the main findings across the sports and recreation activities are given below.
- 3.6 Most people using facilities in Stevenage live in Stevenage.
- 3.7 The demographics of the survey respondents were; 60% women: 40% men; with the following split between the age groups, see Figure 13.

*Figure 13: Age of respondents to survey*



- 3.8 There was a high response rate from people considering themselves to be “professional” at 46%, with skilled or manager/director/company owner being 24%. Around 17% were retired. Only 6% percentage considered themselves to be manual or semi-skilled. A further 6% were unemployed, at home not earning or seeking work, or a student.
- 3.9 94% of the respondents considered themselves to be white, with around 2% each of Asian/Asian British and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British.
- 3.10 Survey respondents were asked to identify whether they used a range of facilities in Stevenage. The table in Figure 14 shows the importance of the parks, green spaces and other outdoor areas as well as the importance in terms of usage of the main facility types, such as swimming pools.
- 3.11 These responses should be considered in the light of the demographic profile of those responding as there is likely to be an underrepresentation of the facilities

used by younger people for example grass pitches and skate parks, as most of the respondents were middle aged or older.

*Figure 14: Most used facilities*

(Q2, Do you use any of the following facilities in Stevenage? Please select all that apply)

Facility type	% of respondents using
Parks and gardens e.g. Fairlands Valley	75%
Natural green space	49%
Swimming pool	42%
Other parks and gardens	42%
Walking/running routes (traffic free)	40%
Cycle routes	39%
Children's playgrounds	34%
Gym/fitness facilities	32%
Sports halls	26%
Community centres/village halls	21%
Amenity green space e.g. grass areas in housing areas	21%
Synthetic pitch	17%
Golf course	15%
Grass pitches	13%
Outdoor hard courts/Multi Use Games Areas	8%
Squash courts	5%
Athletic facilities	4%
Skate parks	3%
Indoor bowls	2%
Outdoor bowls	1%
Indoor tennis	0.5%
None	5%

- 3.12 The level of provision of most facilities including the parks and green spaces is considered "about right". Very few respondents (max of 6% for fitness facilities) considered there was too much provision, but some respondents considered there was too little facility provision, see Figure 15.



*Figure 15: Levels of provision*

(Q3, Please tell us whether you feed that there is TOO MUCH or TOO LITTLE provision for each type of facility)

Facility type	% of respondents
Natural greenspace, amenity green space, children's playgrounds	20-30% of respondents stating too little provision
Outdoor hard courts/ MUGAs	
Swimming pools	
Synthetic / all weather pitches	
Skate parks	
Other parks and gardens	10-20% of respondents stating too little provision
Walking / running routes (traffic free)	
Cycle routes	
Sports halls	
Grass pitches	
Squash courts	
Athletics facilities	
Indoor tennis	
Community centres	

3.13 Respondents to the individual survey were asked to rank the five most important "facility" types. The ranking of facilities resulted in, in descending order:

- Walking/running routes (traffic free)
- Cycle routes
- Swimming pools
- Community centres/village halls
- Gym/fitness facilities
- Sports halls
- Artificial grass pitches
- Grass pitches
- Multi use games areas

3.14 The percentage of respondents to the survey currently saying that they take part in some form of sport or physical activity in their leisure time is 87%. This is much higher than the Sport England research figures and may reflect a combination of: the fact that no timescales were put on the activity (number of days a month), the scope of the activity as this was not precisely defined, and the self-selection of individuals participating in the survey i.e. they have an interest in sport/activity.

3.15 The number of people doing gym and fitness classes is the highest on a weekly basis, with swimming/pool fitness classes being the second most popular. In terms of the outdoor activities taken part in at least once a week, walking/rambling is by

far the highest, and the rate of participation is more than for either the gym/fitness or swimming/pool classes.

3.16 Around 50% of respondents used facilities outside of Stevenage, the main reasons being given were:

- Nearer to home
- Facilities are better
- No facilities of required type in Stevenage

3.17 There were also a number of other reasons given including training requirements, nicer scenery and away matches.

3.18 Most respondents to the survey would like to do more, or would consider doing more activity but there are a number of barriers to increasing the rates of participation. The survey question asked *“What prevents you from participating/participating more?”* In descending order the responses were:

- Lack of free time
- Cost
- I do enough already
- Family commitments/childcare arrangements

## Student survey

3.19 A student survey was set up because of the low returns from the individual survey for under 16s. The student survey was made available to all the secondary schools in Stevenage, but only The Barclay School students completed the survey in school. There were a small number of other responses via the Youth Council. A copy of the Student Survey responses is provided as Appendix 3.

3.20 Most of the respondents were either school Years 8, 9 and 10, which is age 12-15 years, and more boys (62%) completed the survey than girls (38%). 85% of the respondents were white.

3.21 The students were asked to identify the sports facilities they used outside of school PE lessons. Ten of the respondents did not do activities outside of school but those using facilities were, in descending order of usage:

- Swimming pools
- Walking/running routes (traffic free)
- Grass pitches (football, rugby, cricket)
- Cycle routes
- Artificial grass pitches

3.22 The students tended to identify more facilities for which there was too little provision, with the greatest lack of provision in descending order being:

- Artificial grass pitches
- Sports halls
- Swimming pools
- Outdoor hard courts/multi use games areas
- Skate parks

3.23 For the students the most important facilities were considered to be:

- Walking/running routes (traffic free)
- Grass pitches
- Swimming pools
- Artificial grass pitches
- Cycle routes

3.24 Around 81% of students take part in sport and physical activity outside of their school PE lessons. The activity most participated in on a weekly basis is gym and fitness classes, but on a monthly basis, swimming is the most popular of the indoor activities. In relation to the outdoor activities, football followed by walking/rambling are the most popular weekly activities, but there is no one activity that stands out in terms of participation levels on a monthly basis.

3.25 About 41% of students use facilities outside of Stevenage, mainly because the facilities are better or because the student's club or training is based outside Stevenage.

3.26 More than 75% of students would like or may like to participate in sport or physical activity more, and the survey also asked the question asked "*What prevents you from participating/participating more?*" In descending order the responses were:

- Lack of free time
- Cost
- I do enough already
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of knowledge of what's available

3.27 Some students provided additional comments to the survey, the most relevant ones were a like to see:

- Better facilities at The Barclay School to support after school sport
- A gym suitable for u18s at an affordable price
- An indoor athletics training facility
- New skate park/ bike facility
- Better swimming provision including ancillary facilities

- Improved basketball courts

### *Summary of individual and student consultation*

- 3.28 In summary, all of the surveys and consultations have resulted in similar themes emerging. The highest priorities for sport and active recreation are the free/lowest cost walking and cycling opportunities in the Borough, better swimming provision, and for younger people more sports hall and pitch space. Community halls and fitness/gyms are important for adults but students also want better access to gym facilities. New multi use games areas/hard courts and a new skate park/bike facility were also flagged as desired facilities by young people.
- 3.29 There is a notable export of participation to outside of Stevenage mainly because the facilities do not exist in Stevenage, or the facilities elsewhere are better, or because the individual's club is based outside the authority.

### **Sports Clubs**

- 3.30 The sports clubs survey was sent out via Sport Stevenage and direct to the clubs listed by the Football Association. Sport Stevenage has 204 clubs on its database and although these clubs may have some members from Stevenage, not all of these would consider themselves to be primarily Stevenage based. For example none of the sites used by the Biggleswade and Hitchin Angling Club are in Stevenage, and the Lacrosse club is based in Hitchin. However the approximately 70 responses from clubs actually received in relation to the Strategy work are all based in or close to Stevenage. A summary of the findings from the club responses is provided as Appendix 4. This appendix does not include personal contact information nor information about 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> sites used by a small number of clubs because the returns provided little new information. Key points from the clubs survey are set out below.
- 3.31 The survey covers a wide range of indoor and outdoor sports.
- 3.32 Many of the clubs attract members from both the town and the surrounding areas, but about 83% of the response said that most members came from Stevenage. Three of the football clubs (Stevenage Borough Juniors, Stevenage Colts and Stevenage Ladies) members come mainly from Stevenage but play partially outside the district. These clubs expect to grow over the next few years, and would like to relocate to sites within Stevenage.
- 3.33 There are a number of other clubs in the area which have a high proportion of members from Stevenage, such as the Datchworth Rugby Club which has about 40% of its members living in Stevenage, and Letchworth Rugby Football Club at about 30%. The Knebworth Cricket Club has some members from Stevenage but

most come from the surrounding villages. These are sports which use grass pitches.

- 3.34 Two clubs responded to the survey who are based outside Stevenage but attract Stevenage residents; the WGC Judo club which is based at Gosling Sports Park in Welwyn, and the Team Trisports triathlon club based in Hitchin. The judo club draws most of its members from Welwyn but also has some from Stevenage. The triathlon club draws members from a number of different areas, with some members from Stevenage. It is also known that some Stevenage residents will travel outside of Stevenage to specialist or higher level training, for example to athletics clubs and to Luton Inspire swimming centre.
- 3.35 About a third of the clubs have a school-club link, and the schools involved are: Marriotts, Giles, Lodge Farm, Almond Hill, Nobel, Barclay, Featherstone Wood, Hitchin Boys School, Knebworth Primary.
- 3.36 About half of the clubs responding have a formal development plan. Facility proposals in the plans include in relation to the King George V playing fields and new ancillary facilities at the athletics club. There are also desires for more badminton court space and more indoor bowling.
- 3.37 More than half of the clubs responding anticipate growing over the next 5 years. Most do not have a waiting list, but the clubs reporting that they have include:
- Gymnastics – Marriotts Gymnastics Club with a very large waiting list of around 600 pre and school aged children on the waiting list. The club is based at Marriotts.
  - Acrobatic gymnastics – Stevenage Sports Acrobatics with up to 30 minis and 20 juniors on their waiting list. Waiting time is usually around 3 months. The club is also based at Marriotts.
  - Richard’s Trampoline Club – up to 10 minis (primary school) and up to 10 juniors (11-15 years), with most members under the age of 13 on their waiting list. The club is also based at Marriotts.
  - 5 a side football – Sodexo football club, with up to 5 seniors on the waiting list. They use Stevenage Leisure Centre.
  - Synchronised swimming – Aqualina with around 5 minis/juniors on their waiting list. The club is based at the Swimming Centre.
- 3.38 More than half of the clubs responding to the surveys increased their membership over the past 5 years, and a third have had steady membership levels. However 6 clubs based in Stevenage have had a declining membership, from the sports of football, squash, trampolining, and indoor bowling. The reasons are varied but

include a lack of coaches, the cost of facilities/hire charges, the recruitment of members, a lack of volunteers.

- 3.39 The reducing indoor bowls club membership is in large part identified as a result of the poor quality existing facility at the Arts and Leisure Centre and the difficulties booking the indoor rink. The squash club also identifies some quality problems with the Arts and Leisure Centre, but these are not identified as the main reason for their declining membership.
- 3.40 More than 40% of the facilities used regularly by clubs who responded to the web based survey are Stevenage Borough Council facilities, and a further 36% are school facilities. No club owns their own site, but a small number have a lease, of which only 3 clubs have a 10+ year lease (Stevenage Cricket Club, Stevenage Town Bowls Club and Stevenage District Scouts). If the football clubs are also taken into account in these figures, the percentage using Borough Council facilities on a hire basis would increase.
- 3.41 The peak period for use is weekday evenings and weekends daytime. Only the bowling takes place during weekday daytimes.
- 3.42 Most clubs find it fairly easy to book their home site, with the exceptions being:
- Stevenage Borough Junior football club, based at Valley Football Academy.
  - Stevenage Badminton club which uses the bowls hall at the Arts and Leisure Centre.
  - Stevenage Indoor Bowls club which uses the bowls hall at the Arts and Leisure Centre.
  - Stevenage Scorpions Basketball club based at Marriotts.

#### *Summary of club consultation*

- 3.43 The clubs in Stevenage who responded to the surveys cover a wide variety of sports, indoor and outdoor. Most of the clubs are stable and many have an increasing membership, with a high proportion drawing members from both within Stevenage and the surrounding area, particularly so with the larger clubs with good rates of junior membership.
- 3.44 Most clubs are reasonably satisfied with their home venue, though there are clearly some pressures. The main facility issues appear to be:
- Poor quality bowls space at the Arts and Leisure Centre, and competing pressures for the use of both the sports hall and indoor bowls hall.



- Too much demand by competing activities on the sports hall space at Marriotts.
- The desire of two main football clubs to be able to relocate back to Stevenage.

## **CHAPTER 2: BUILT FACILITY ASSESSMENT**

### **SECTION 4: ASSESSMENT PROCESS/METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

4.1 This section of the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy considers the built facilities used by the community for sport and physical activity, and specifically includes the following facility types.

- Sports halls 3+ badminton court size
- Swimming pools
- Health and fitness provision
- Indoor bowls centres
- Indoor tennis centres
- Dedicated gymnastics centres
- Athletics tracks
- Outdoor tennis
- Multi use games areas (MUGAs) on closed sites
- Youth provision including open access MUGAs, skate and wheels parks
- Outdoor bowls
- Golf
- Water sports, climbing and high ropes at Fairlands

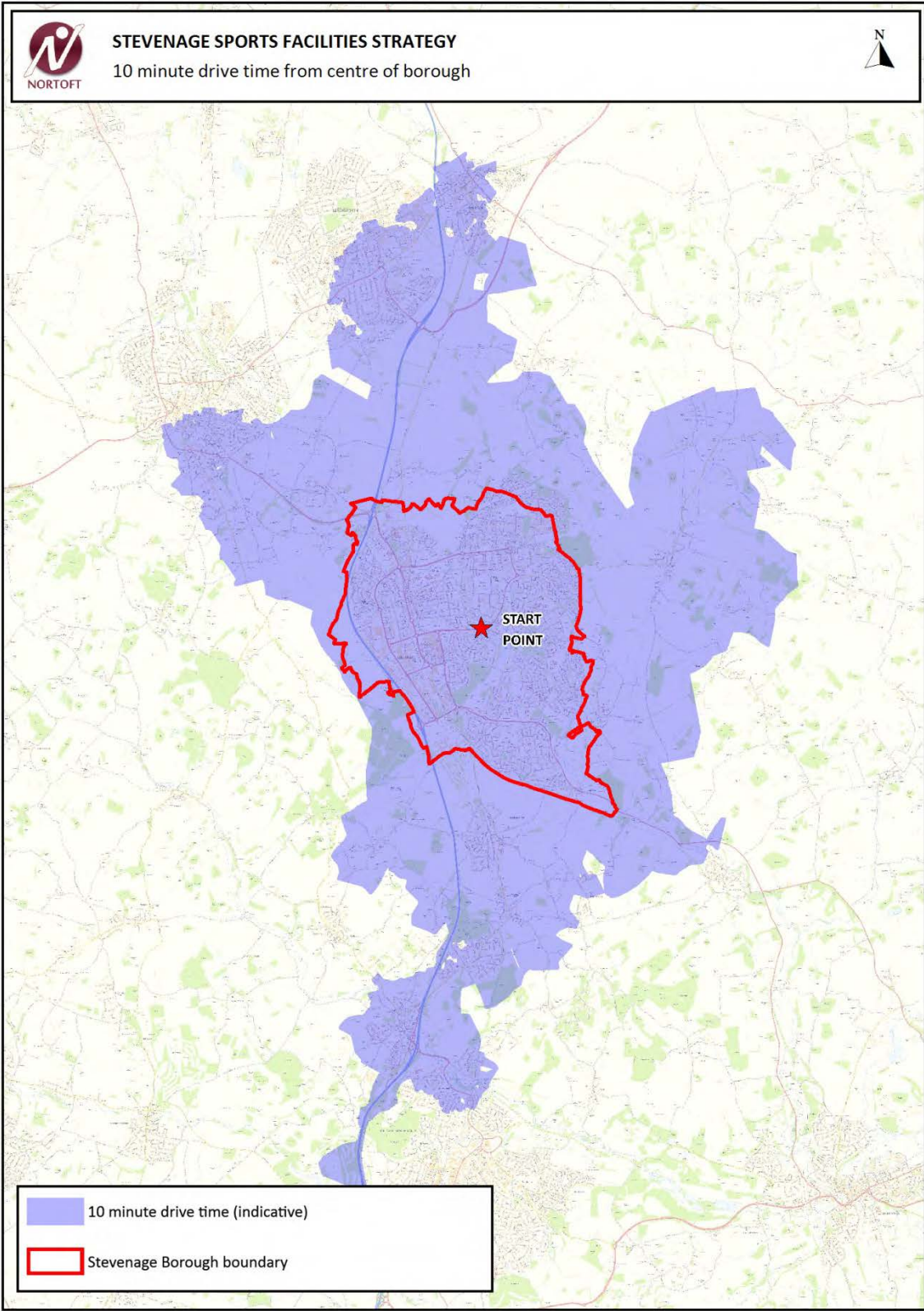
4.2 Artificial grass pitches are addressed in the next section of the Assessment and Strategy, under pitch provision, which also includes playing fields.

4.3 The approach to this assessment and the development of the recommendations reflects the guidance in the Sport England Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance of July 2014, adapted as necessary to the needs of Stevenage.

#### **Stevenage and its adjoining authorities**

4.4 A key theme throughout this assessment is the cross-border movement of people to take part in sport. Stevenage is a compact authority which is underbounded and there is significant cross border movement of people taking part in sport, both into Stevenage for example to the athletics track and gymnastics centre, and outwards for rugby. The excellent road network means that even a 10 minute off-peak catchment time from the centre of Stevenage covers a large area around Stevenage. This is well illustrated by the map in Figure 16. The ability to travel is a key consideration, particularly given the fact that most people will travel up to 20 minutes to take part in sports hall activities and swimming, and up to 30 minutes for more specialist sports such as to a hockey club, athletics track or gymnastics hall.

Figure 16: 10 minute drive time



- 4.5 The approach of this Assessment and Strategy in relation to cross-border movement reflects both the policy direction given in the National Planning Policy Framework, which actively encourages authorities to work together, and the work undertaken by the Hertfordshire Sports Partnership.
- 4.6 The review of the strategies of the adjoining authorities and the follow-up discussions held with each of the leisure officers suggests that there are no specific proposals for facility changes, so the current cross-border flows of people playing sport should continue into the foreseeable future. However in the longer term, there can be no guarantee that the existing pattern of community sports facility provision will remain, so Stevenage Borough Council will need to keep this Assessment and Strategy under review, and to consider alternative options to meet the needs of their resident population should the facility network elsewhere change.

## Methodology

- 4.7 The assessment of each facility type draws on a number of different elements:
- The theoretical demand for facilities based on various modelling tools;
  - The results of consultation;
  - Issues associated with facility quality, accessibility for the community etc;
  - The future population characteristics;
  - The Council's policies on participation, and sports development objectives;
  - The resources which may be available to meet the future requirements;
  - National governing body strategic requirements.
- 4.8 As each assessment is based on a number of factors which can change over time, the recommendations will need to be kept under review. Of particular importance will be any significant housing growth proposals within North or East Hertfordshire, in addition to changes in the facility network within the neighbouring authorities.

## Modelling tools

- 4.9 There is no one theoretical modelling tool which provides the answer to facility planning. A number of different tools need to be employed and the results of each synthesised together to provide a recommendation for the Borough.
- 4.10 The following paragraphs provide a detailed explanation of each methodology.

## Facilities Planning Model

- 4.11 The Facilities Planning Model (FPM) has been developed as a planning tool by Sport England for the strategic assessment of the community needs for swimming pools, sports halls and large size artificial grass pitches (AGPs). The modelling provides an objective assessment of the balance between the supply of the sports facilities and the demand for them at “peak time”, which is in the evenings Monday-Friday, and during the daytime at weekends.
- 4.12 The FPM assessments take into account key factors influencing participation at the local level, including; the age profile of residents, levels of deprivation, and car ownership. In relation to the individual facilities, it can take into account the hours actually available to the community and weight the facilities for their attractiveness (usually associated with the age of the facility).
- 4.13 The FPM tool is much more sophisticated than the Active Places Power tools available on the Sport England interactive web-site, although it is only available for halls, pools, and large size AGPs. For halls and pools in Stevenage no additional analysis of the *current* balance in supply and demand has therefore been undertaken. However the FPM report for AGPs is less reliable because it does not take into account the number of small sized AGPs in Stevenage, such as the ones at the Stevenage Football Club Academy.
- 4.14 Sport England undertakes a “national run” of each facility type early in the calendar year, based on the facility information known to them and standardised parameters. This gives a good current picture of provision, but does not forecast future demand. The key findings from the national assessments for 2014 are included in the sports halls and swimming pool sections.
- 4.15 The FPM is not easily able to provide an authority-wide forecast of demand-supply and therefore alternative methodology and modelling is required. The FPM however can be useful for “testing” local facility proposals to take account of population changes in specific areas, and also specific facility proposals, such as closures or new facilities. This scenario testing is available through Sport England, and would be a useful follow-up to this work, particularly in relation to the potential options for the proposed new leisure centre.

## Nortoft Calculator

- 4.16 Nortoft has developed a calculator which helps to forecast future need for each facility type based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation. In this Assessment and Strategy it has been used for halls, pools, artificial grass pitches, indoor bowls, indoor tennis, athletics tracks, health and fitness, bowling greens, and outdoor tennis.
- 4.17 The Nortoft Calculator is not an officially endorsed tool by Sport England and is relatively simplistic, as it treats each facility type on a ‘provision per 1000’ basis.

The authority is treated as an island and no account has been taken of facility quality. The Nortoft Calculator also has no spatial element to it. These restrictions mean that, as with the other theoretical modelling, the findings of the Calculator should be reviewed in the light of the results from the other modelling, and also the feedback from consultation.

- 4.18 For sports halls and swimming pools, the Nortoft Calculator uses the current levels of provision per 1000 (scaled by hours) as one of the key starting points. The scaled by hours figure is that identified in the relevant FPM reports as being the publicly available facility supply, scaled by the hours available in the peak period. This means for instance, that school sports halls which are not available during the whole of the peak period are treated on a different basis from the sports halls at the leisure centre site, which has few restrictions on community use at peak time.
- 4.19 For other facility types, the overall level of provision per 1000 for each authority is taken from the data contained in the Sport England Active Places Power database, but this is not scaled by hours. Where possible (where the information is available) the rate of provision for Stevenage has been compared to its benchmark authorities.
- 4.20 The population base for each of the milestone years has been provided and agreed by Stevenage Borough Council, and includes all of the anticipated housing growth in the district up to 2031.
- 4.21 The agreed rate of additional participation per annum applied to the Calculator is 0.5%. This is a percentage increase over and above the demand expected to be generated from the population growth alone. The justification behind the 0.5% increase in participation is given in detail in the Growth in Participation per Annum sub-section below.

### Sports Facilities Calculator

- 4.22 The Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) has been developed by Sport England to help local planning authorities quantify how much additional demand for the key community sports facilities (swimming pools, sports halls, indoor bowls and artificial grass pitches) is generated as a result of new growth linked to specific development locations. It has been used to help local authorities in infrastructure planning, devising supplementary planning documents, negotiating Section 106 agreements, and in preparing for the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 4.23 The SFC helps with quantifying the demand side of the facility provision equation. It helps to answer questions such as, “How much additional demand for swimming will the population of a new development area generate?”, and “What would the cost be to meet this new demand at today’s values?” The figures it produces represent total demand for the chosen population.



- 4.24 The SFC is designed to estimate the needs of discrete populations for sports facilities created by a new community of a residential development. It is important to note however that the SFC looks only at demand for facilities and does not take into account any existing supply of facilities.
- 4.25 Sport England states that the SFC should not therefore be used for strategic gap analysis; this approach is fundamentally flawed as the SFC has no spatial dimension. It is also important to note that the SFC does not take account of:
- Facility location compared to demand
  - Capacity and availability of facilities - opening hours
  - Cross boundary movement of demand
  - Travel networks and topography
  - Attractiveness of facilities
- 4.26 At the present time the final location of the future housing in Stevenage is still to be confirmed, but the locations for the potential housing options are illustrated in Figure 2. Most of the growth is expected to be in the west and north with some in the central and southern parts of the Borough. The estimated populations in each housing area have been used in the SFC for halls, pools, AGPs and indoor bowls. As the housing proposals are progressed, then the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator will be a valuable tool to identify the amount of funding which should be sought from each developer as part of the developers' contributions.

#### Active Places Power

- 4.27 Active Places Power (APP) is a website developed by Sport England to help those involved in providing sport provision with a series of tools to guide investment decisions and develop sport provision strategies. Primarily for Local Authorities and National Governing Bodies of sport it can help to build an evidence base when identifying and planning where to target interventions for facilities, clubs or other activities.
- 4.28 The website is underpinned by a single database that holds information on sports facilities and clubs (pilot data) throughout England. The data held on APP for each facility includes the type of facility, location, size, ownership and managements, opening times, age, refurbishment date, access type. The tools within the website have a range of capabilities from quick searches and simple reports to a series of analytical tools.
- 4.29 In this Assessment APP has been used for facilities other than sports halls and pools, because these facilities are covered by the Sport England FPM reports, which are more comprehensive.

## Comparator authorities

- 4.30 The Sport England usually recommends the use of the CIPFA grouping of authorities to enable comparisons (see paragraph 1.56). The 'Nearest Neighbour' model was developed by CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) to aid local authorities in comparative and benchmarking exercises. It is widely used across both central and local government. The model uses a number of variables to calculate similarity between local authorities. Examples of these variables include population, unemployment rates, tax base per head of population, council tax bands and mortality ratios.
- 4.31 The local authorities that are 'similar' to Stevenage are:
- Gravesham
  - Harlow
  - Redditch
  - Wellingborough
- 4.32 Sport England in the production of the Facilities Planning Model reports in support of this Assessment for Stevenage provided comparator information for two authorities in the East of England region, Harlow which is one of the CIPFA benchmark authorities, and Basildon. No information was however provided for the other CIPFA authorities, and these have not therefore been referenced in the Assessment for sports halls or swimming pools.

## Growth in participation per annum

- 4.33 An important consideration in the modelling to assess future facility needs is to determine what the likely growth in participation each year will be. This will impact upon the overall level of demand for each facility type. Participation rates in adult sport (16 years and over) is monitored nationally by Sport England through their Active People Survey. This is the mechanism which Stevenage also uses to assess the success of its policy objectives of getting more people active.
- 4.34 The Active People Survey has effectively shown no change in the rates of overall participation in sport and active recreation over the last few years in Stevenage, and this is mirrored by the fact that very few national governing bodies have seen an increase in their sport's rate of participation. However there has at the same time, been a significant year on year increase in the usage of the Arts & Leisure Centre and Swimming Centre. It is likely that the increased use of the leisure centres is a combination of factors for example: a decrease in the use of other facilities (commercial, independent schools etc), use of facilities closer to home, better programming and better "offer" from the Council's facilities, fewer people being "exported" to facilities over the border, and some people using the facilities more often e.g. from once to twice a week.

- 4.35 The rates of participation in “trendy” activities will fluctuate from year to year as the activities gain popularity then reduce again. However most of these use activity room or studio type spaces, or programmed time in the pools, rather than taking up significantly more pool or hall time, so the overall strategic planning for facilities tends to be largely unaffected.
- 4.36 A 0% growth rate in participation per annum would be too limited, particularly with the needs to get everyone more active. Taking this approach would also mean that the Council would fail to plan for sufficient facility space to allow for any growth in participation, particularly if there were to be increased pressures from new housing over the Stevenage borders, or if the network of sports facility provision elsewhere reduces.
- 4.37 However a 1% per annum increase in demand for facilities is probably too high, given that there has been no overall increase in rates of participation across the Borough in the last few years.
- 4.38 On this basis it is suggested that the modelling should use a 0.5% growth rate in participation per annum i.e. a growth of 8.5% from 2014 to 2031, on top of the current rates of demand. This still means that there can be higher growth in demand coming through the leisure centre(s), but that this will probably be balanced across Stevenage by reduced use of other facilities, continuing the trends already noted.

### Community priorities for participation

- 4.39 The Assessment and Strategy for Stevenage draws on the extensive consultation with the community, stakeholders and partners undertaken as part of the strategy development process, (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.44). The findings from this consultation which relate to specific facilities are included within the relevant facility sub-sections.

### National Governing Body Strategies

- 4.40 Sport England and UK Sport have a formal recognition process for both activities and for National Governing Bodies (NGBs). The latest list of both sports and NGBs for England can be found on Sport England’s web site at <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-work/national-governing-bodies/sports-that-we-recognise/>.
- 4.41 The NGB picture is complex as some sports will have different NGBs for England from Britain or the UK (for example athletics), some have different NGBs for different disciplines (for example shooting), some have specialist interests (for example disability specific sport organisations), and some sports will be “recognised” but have no officially “recognised” NGB in England (for example Gaelic Football). There are also other activities which are not officially recognised

as “sports” by Sport England, examples being general fitness and gym activities, and parkour.

- 4.42 The Assessment for each facility type includes relevant NGB strategy reviews and priorities where these are appropriate. Where a facility such as a sports hall is used by a number of different sports, there will be more than one NGB strategy reviewed. Similarly, where a sport has more than one relevant NGB, more than one NGB may be referred to in the Assessment.
- 4.43 It should be noted that many of the small-medium NGBs do not have specific facility strategies, and even the larger ones such as the Amateur Swimming Association rarely make specific reference to Hertfordshire or Stevenage.
- 4.44 A further general issue is that where facilities strategies have been produced previously, several are close or beyond their end date, and in many cases new priorities have yet to be set. Where a previous strategy is still relevant, the key points are identified.

### Costs of facility development

- 4.45 The costs of the proposals are primarily addressed in the Implementation section of this Assessment, but also are referred to in the detailed sections on sports halls, swimming pools, AGPs, and indoor bowls. Here the Sports Facilities Calculator has been used as part of the Assessment, and the costs /value generated has been included for completeness.
- 4.46 Sport England produces a regularly updated list of facilities and their development costs which are largely based on typical schemes funded through the Lottery with layouts developed in accordance with Sport England Design Guidance Notes. These are used both in relation to the Sport England Sports Facilities Calculator web tool, and also more generally in estimating the costs of the proposals.
- 4.47 As and when new facilities are proposed in Stevenage, Stevenage Borough Council will refer to the current Sport England guidance on the expected costs (<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>).
- 4.48 Where the facility issues are ones of improvement rather than new provision, the costs of the works required will need to be based on a conditions survey of each individual facility.

### The development of planning standards

- 4.49 Planning standards are critical to planning for sport, and as part of this, the unlocking of developer contributions associated with new housing development. Planning standards have been developed for each facility type where relevant, and these are based on a number of factors, including amongst others:

- The policy of the authority to seek to increase the rates of participation in all sports in the period up to 2031 by a rate of 0.5% per annum
- The estimate of demand, now and in the future including taking account of sports development initiatives
- The current facility network, its distribution, accessibility to the community and quality
- Facilities over the border of the authority and their accessibility to residents, and also the importation of demand into Stevenage
- Future facility proposals and aspirations
- Population distribution across the authority and expected population change including new housing growth within Stevenage
- Feedback from consultation with stakeholders and the community.

4.50 The planning standards are given as a rate of provision per 1000 population. The rate of provision for any particular facility type will reflect the demand for it. For instance, a large proportion of residents want to swim in pools, so the standard reflects the amount of space needed to cater for this high level of demand. Conversely only a relatively small number of residents would wish to use the athletics track, so the rate of provision per 1000 for athletics is much lower.

4.51 The policy of increasing rates of participation by 0.5% pa is applied to the rate of provision per 1000, so for the period from 2014 to 2031 the expected growth in participation is 17 years x 0.5% pa, or a growth in participation of 108.5%. As an example if a current rate of provision of y facility is 5.00 per 1000, the expected rate of provision by 2031 would be  $5.00 \times 108.5\% = 5.43$  per 1000.

4.52 The amount of facility needed is then a relatively simple calculation; the rate of provision per 1000 population multiplied by the population.

4.53 In relation to Stevenage, it is proposed to have a single planning standard for new developments:

<b>New housing standard</b>	the rate of provision required to make new housing developments acceptable
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## Summary

4.54 The findings and recommendations in the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy are derived from: the site audits; the results of theoretical modelling; anticipated changes in the population; trends in participation in sport and recreation; priorities and issues in relation to increasing participation; an assessment of what monies may be realisable from any housing growth; and both the implications of the new National Planning Policy Framework in relation to cross-boundary working and its practicalities.

## SECTION 5: SPORTS HALLS

### Introduction

- 5.1 Sports halls are one of the prime sports facilities for community sport because they are able to provide a venue for many different activities.

#### Sports hall design and activities

- 5.2 Sports halls are used for a wide range of sports and activities (see Figure 17), some of which are common and others which are less so.

*Figure 17: Most popular sports hall activities*

Activity	Sport hall visits (%)
Badminton	24.4
Keep fit/aerobics/step/yoga	23.6
Indoor 5-a-side football/futsal	18.3
Martial arts	6.3
Carpet/mat/short bowls	6.1
Gymnastics	3.6
Basketball	2.3
Netball	2.1
Table tennis	1.9
Dance	1.8
Trampolining	1.8
Indoor hockey	1.6
Tennis/short tennis	1.5
Roller skating/roller blading	1.2
Indoor cricket	1.0
Multi-sport session	0.7
Racquetball	0.6
Volleyball	0.6
Others	0.6

*Source: Sports Hall Design and Layout Sport England (2012) based on Survey of Sports Halls and Swimming Pools in England (1999)*

- 5.3 The standard methodology for measuring sports halls is by the number of badminton courts contained within the floor area. However it is recognised that there is extensive use of these types of facility by a wide range of other sports including basketball, volleyball, handball etc. Sports halls are generally considered to be of greatest value if they are of at least 3+ badminton court size, and with sufficient height to allow games such as badminton to be played. This is therefore the minimum size of hall considered in this section of the report.



- 5.4 A spread of 4 court halls is often the most effective way of achieving the greatest accessibility for general community use. However, the space required for many indoor team games exceeds the space provided by a standard 4 court hall and in general terms the higher the standard of play the larger the space required. At higher levels of performance the playing area is usually the same size but increased safety margins and clear height may be required, as well as additional space requirements for spectators, teams and officials during competitions. Larger halls i.e. 6 plus courts are therefore able to accommodate higher level training and/or competition as well as meeting day to day needs.
- 5.5 Larger halls (6 plus badminton courts) may also provide the opportunity for more than one pitch/court which increases flexibility for both training and competition. The table in Appendix 5 is from the Sport England Design Guidance Note on Sports Hall Design and Layouts (2012) and identifies the hall size required to accommodate a range of sports at different levels of play. This updates previous guidance. There is also now a strong recommendation for a slightly larger size 4-court hall for schools, to enable more community use as well as more flexibility for education. The new minimum size proposed for 4-court halls by Sport England is 34.5m x 20.0m x 7.5 m, rather than the previous standard of 33m x 18m x 7.5 m.

## Current provision

- 5.6 There are a number of sports halls across Stevenage and they are reasonably well distributed geographically. The list of current sports halls available for community use is given in the table in Figure 18 and mapped in Figure 19. Everyone with access to a car can reach a 4 court hall or larger within 10 minutes drive time.
- 5.7 The most important facility is the Arts and Leisure Centre (A&LC), which has an 8 court sports hall and indoor bowls hall which is also used as a sports hall for part of the time, with roll down badminton courts. The A&LC however is an aging facility and the key issues include; the quality of the facility overall, and if/whether the indoor bowls hall should be retained for bowls or converted to other uses, and the extent use of both the 8 court hall and the indoor bowls hall for non-sport events and shows.
- 5.8 The other main 4 court sports halls at Marriotts, Nobel and Barnwell schools have community access during weekday evenings during the school term and at weekends, but there is no community use during the school day. The management during the community hours is via the schools themselves, almost always on a club booking basis.
- 5.9 The Thomas Alleyne School with its 3 court hall has more limited opening hours than the other schools. There is no community use of the sports hall at John Henry Newman School. The Barclay School does not currently have a sports hall. There is one private facility for staff at the GlaxoSmithKline which is not open to the general community.

Figure 18: Sports halls- current provision

Site Name	Number of Badminton Courts	Ownership Type	Access Type	Included in modelling	Number of hours avail per week in peak period**
BARNWELL SPORTS CENTRE	4	Community school	Pay and Play	yes	38
GLAXO SMITHKLINE	4	Industry (for employees)	Private Use	no	0
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	4	Voluntary Aided School	Private Use	no	0
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	4	Community school	Pay and Play	yes	41
STEVENAGE ARTS & LEISURE CENTRE	8	Local Authority	Pay and Play	yes	38
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	4	Community school	Sports Club / Community Association	yes	26
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	3	Academy	Sports Club / Community Association	yes	27

\*\* Number of hours from Facilities Planning Model.

NB this table excludes the indoor bowls centre at the Arts & Leisure Centre although it is used part time for sports hall activities.

Figure 19: Sports Halls map (existing)



- 5.10 Within the neighbouring authorities there are 5 sports halls of 6+ badminton court size, so the area is well supplied by large halls. There is a 12 court plus 4 court hall at the Hertfordshire Sports Village in Hatfield, 8 court halls at the Haileybury College in Hertford and at Queenswood School in Hatfield, and two 6 court halls the Wodson Park Sports Centre in Ware.

## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 5.11 The mapping of the home locations of the members of the A&LC who have used the facility (see Figure 10) show that the facility is drawing most of its users from across Stevenage, with some living outside of the authority.
- 5.12 The A&LC throughput figures for the use of the sports hall for the period ended 31 March 2014 is 54,200. A further 12,500 is recorded against the bowls hall use, which probably included around 8,500-9,000 bowls uses so the remainder being 3,500-4,000. The total sports hall use of the A&LC is therefore around 58,000.
- 5.13 The A&LC hosts some of the Herts School Badminton Association's tournaments which require at least an 8 court hall, and preferably 12 courts. However the facility does not meet the current technical standards for international tournaments.
- 5.14 No throughput figures are available for the other facilities in Stevenage for the year ending March 2014.
- 5.15 In relation to the quality of the sports halls in Stevenage, the main requirement is to determine the future of the A&LC, and to ensure that the problems with the hall floor at Nobel are addressed. A detailed visual survey leading to a condition report for the A&LC has recently been conducted. The cost/benefit of retaining and maintaining the existing A&LC needs to now be compared to the costs of a new facility.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

- 5.16 The survey of individuals in Stevenage demonstrates the importance of sports halls within the sports facility network:
- 26% of respondents to the survey said that they use sports halls
  - Of those expressing an opinion, about 58% felt that the level of provision was "about right"
  - 25% of respondents felt that sport halls were important or very important to them, and a further 38% felt that sports halls were reasonably important.

- The main activities which the respondents play in sports halls in Stevenage are, in descending order; badminton (12%), 5-a-side football (7.5%), netball (3%), basketball (3%), volleyball (1%).

## Clubs

5.17 The club survey suggests that there is:

- insufficient suitable space for club activities, particularly those using/wishing to use the Marriotts Sports Centre for gymnastic type activities
- there are no other waiting lists for sports hall based clubs
- that hire costs can be a limiting factor
- much of the indoor cricket training is held at Nobel School.

5.18 The Stevenage Storm Netball Club is based at Marriotts and uses both the sports hall and outdoor multi use games area. They state that the facilities meet both their current needs and anticipated future requirements.

5.19 Stevenage Cricket Club uses Nobel School for winter nets training, and is pleased with the current provision.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

5.20 The NGBs involved with hall sports were given the opportunity to comment on the Stevenage issues and priorities. The only responses were from Badminton England and the Football Association.

5.21 Although there are also a number of other sports and activities which use sports halls, and some of these have design requirements, none have facilities strategies with investment priorities of specific relevance to Stevenage.

## Badminton

5.22 Badminton England's National Facilities Strategy 2012-16 provides the framework for investment priorities. There is no regional plan for badminton, but Stevenage has been identified as a priority 1 area for facility development investment. In terms of specific badminton development projects, opportunities currently exist through Badminton England's Play Badminton framework and via the North Herts Community Badminton Network.

5.23 Badminton England hope that its recent engagement with Royston Leisure Centre resulting in Play Badminton being run at that centre, can be copied in Stevenage to help unlock the support that the NGB can offer, including support towards the bidding for external grant aid.



- 5.24 The Herts School Badminton Association runs 17 tournaments a year, some of which are hosted at the A&LC. These tournaments require a minimum of 8 courts and ideally 12 courts, which the A&LC can offer by also using the bowls hall.
- 5.25 Badminton England has recently helped to improve the sports hall floor at Gosling Sports Park in Welwyn and they are exploring the possibilities of a new sports hall with North Hertfordshire College at their Hitchin centre.
- 5.26 Any potential grant aid support from Badminton England would be linked to increasing adult rates of participation, and their grants are usually for less than £100,000.

### *Football Association*

- 5.27 Futsal, the indoor version of the game is growing quickly as a sport, especially in new towns such as Stevenage and Basildon. Currently provision is focussed around Nobel School for Futsal 5s, competitive matches, and School Games with links to Stevenage Borough Juniors. Due to the popularity of futsal, the Football Association (FA) would like to see the development of a new sports hall in Stevenage which is designed to the larger 4 court hall recommended dimensions of Sport England. The FA believes that the income generated by futsal is crucial to the long term sustainability of sports halls.
- 5.28 The FA have concerns about the lack of signed community use agreements (CUAs) at Nobel and Barnwell schools, and an apparent lack of clarity of who is responsible for enforcing CUAs generally. This has arisen because the FA has been made aware via its clubs of pressures by the schools to limit community usage.

## **Modelling**

- 5.29 A number of different modelling tools are used to assess future needs, and the results for sports halls are set out below. The details about each of the modelling tools are provided in the Methodology section above.

## **Market Segmentation and sport development**

- 5.30 The Market Segmentation findings suggest that sports halls will only attract limited use from the largest market segment groups for adults in Stevenage, mainly for keep fit/gym. This suggests that the level of demand for this type of facility will not increase beyond the 0.5% per annum rate of participation over the period up to 2031.
- 5.31 Sports halls remain however one of the primary sports facilities for community activity because they can provide a venue for many different activities. This facility



type therefore is and will remain one of the most important for the Borough up to 2031.

## Facilities Planning Model

- 5.32 Sport England undertakes a “national run” of each facility type early in the calendar year and makes the results available to inform local authority strategy work. A full copy of the Facilities Planning Model Assessment from Sport England is provided as Appendix 6. The findings can generally be considered a useful guide to the supply and demand for sports halls in Stevenage
- 5.33 The table in Figure 18 includes the number of hours that each facility is available in the peak period (weekday evenings and weekends). This hours information is used by the Sport England’s Facilities Planning Model (FPM) to help determine the balance in the demand for sports hall space and its supply. The FPM also considers the extent of cross-border movement, which is important for Stevenage. It should be noted that the badminton (and other hall sports) usage of the bowls centre at the A&LC has not been included in the FPM analysis because it is primarily an indoor bowls facility.
- 5.34 The A&LC’s 8 court hall is used as a whole facility for sport on a number of occasions, for example for the schools’ sports hall athletics competitions. The slightly reduced number of hours available in the peak period reflects the usage of the hall for non-sport activities. However there is no booking information available about how or when the A&LC is used for non-sport events which can be used to test these FPM figures for accuracy.
- 5.35 More details about the FPM are provided in Appendix 6, but the table (Figure 20) highlights some of the most important sports hall parameters used in the model. This identifies the number of hours that facilities are expected to be open to cover the “peak period”, what the “peak period” is and how long people are usually willing to travel to a sports hall.

Figure 20: Facilities Planning Model key parameters halls

At One Time Capacity	20 users per 4-court hall, 8 per 144 sq m of ancillary hall.
Catchments	<p>Car: 20 minutes</p> <p>Walking: 1.6 km</p> <p>Public transport: 20 minutes at about half the speed of a car</p> <p>NOTE: Catchment times are indicative, within the context of a distance decay function of the model.</p>
Peak Period	<p>Weekday: 17:00 to 22:00</p> <p>Saturday: 09:30 to 17:30</p> <p>Sunday: 09:00 to 14:30, 17:00 to 19:30</p> <p>Total: 40.5 hours</p>
Percentage of use taking place within the Peak Period	60%
Utilised capacity considered “busy”	80% = “comfort factor”

5.36 The main findings from the Sport England report for sports halls in Stevenage can be summarised as:

- About 93% of the potential demand for sports hall space is currently met, either by facilities within Stevenage or by facilities in the neighbouring authorities.
- There is an estimated import of demand to Stevenage of around 1280 visits per week in the peak period (about 30% of the used capacity), but an export from Stevenage to elsewhere of around 365 visits. This gives a net import of 915 visits per week in the peak period.
- The total average sports hall usage at 98% is well above what Sport England considers busy (80%). The FPM estimates that halls at Barnwell, Stevenage A&LC, Nobel and Thomas Alleyne are running at 100% full during their opening hours, with only Marriotts being below this figure at 88%.
- Only about 285 potential visits to sports halls across Stevenage cannot currently be met, which is about 7% of the total demand.

- Almost everyone with access to a car can reach a sports hall with capacity within 20 minutes.
- About 6% of the potential demand is unmet, and almost all of this is due to people living too far from a sports hall to walk and them not having access to a car. This unmet demand is spread across Stevenage and reaches a maximum of 0.09 of a badminton court, within a 1 km area. This is illustrated by the map in Figure 21.
- There is no justification in terms of demand at this time for any additional community sports halls because the “unmet demand” /exported demand is widely spread. Even when all of the unmet demand is aggregated, there is still insufficient demand at the present time to justify a new 4 court sports hall, (see Figure 22).

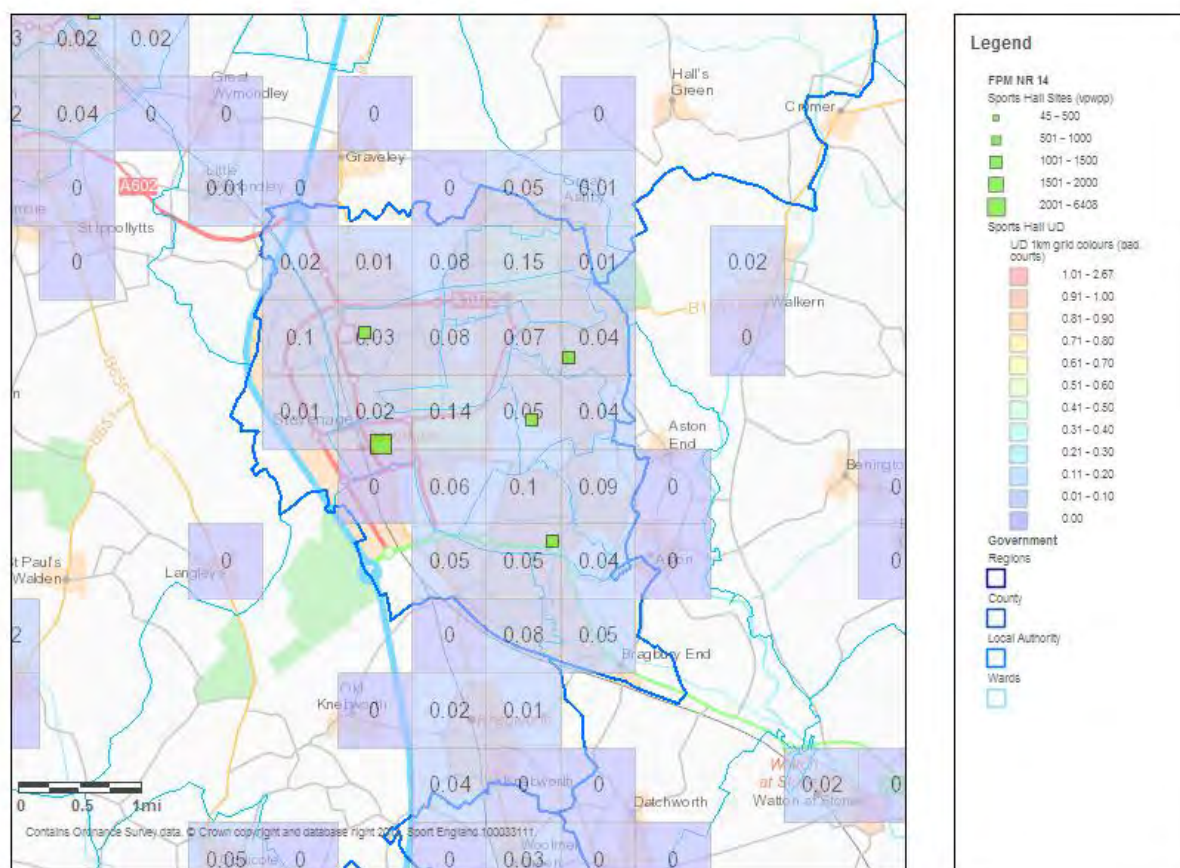
5.37 The theoretical findings of the FPM need to be set against the known realities of Stevenage, in particular:

- The throughput figure for the A&LC main court hall plus use of the bowls hall is 58,000 compared to the FPM model’s estimate of the used capacity of 146,439. This very large difference in the throughput figures are possibly explained by the use of the 8 court hall as a theatre and concert venue, which takes it out of sporting use for a significant period of time.
- The feedback from the consultation also suggests that there is a real lack of sports hall space at Marriotts School, with a number of clubs reporting a desire for more sports hall time.
- The sports halls at Thomas Alleyne and at Barnwell seem likely to be attracting fewer users than the FPM assessment is suggesting, because of the way in which these two facilities are managed.

Figure 21: Sports Halls FPM map – unmet demand

## Facilities Planning Model - National Runs - Sports Halls 2014 Unmet Demand

Unmet Demand expressed as units of badminton courts (rounded to two decimal places). Data outputs shown thematically (colours) at either output area level or aggregated at 1km square (figure labels).

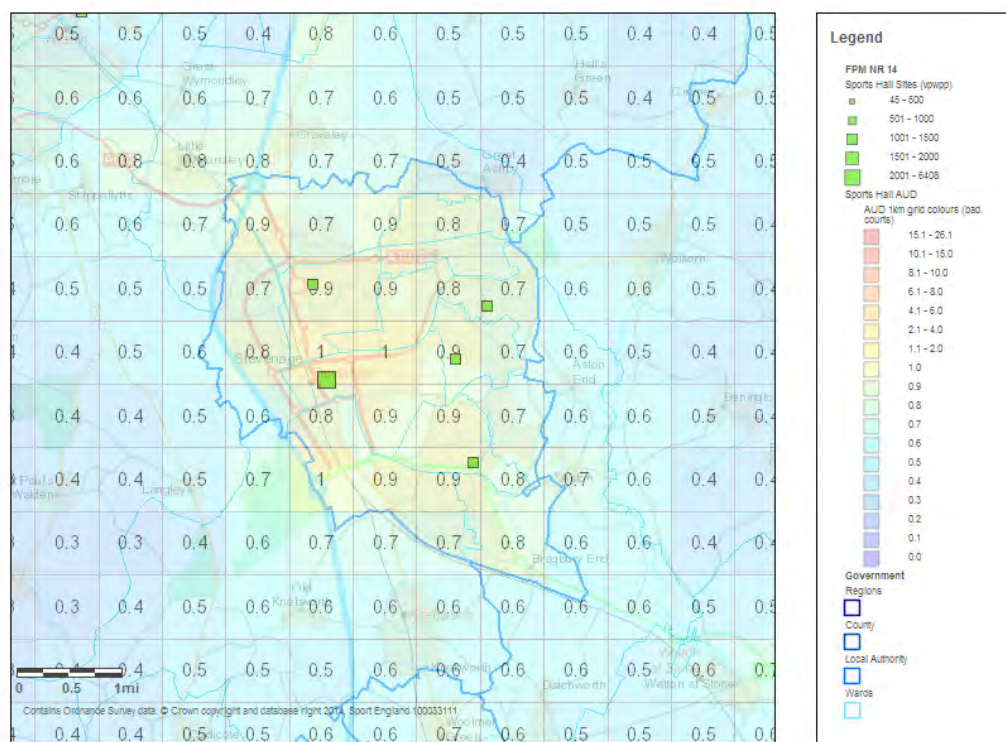


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Figure 22: Sports Halls FPM map – aggregated unmet demand

## Facilities Planning Model - National Runs - Sports Halls 2014 Aggregated Unmet Demand

Aggregated Unmet Demand expressed as units of badminton courts (rounded to one decimal place). Data outputs shown thematically (colours) at 1km square (figure labels).



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## Comparator authorities' provision

5.38 Using the data available via the Facilities Planning Model Sport England has provided comparisons with Harlow, which is one of the CIPFA comparator authorities, with Basildon, and with the East of England region and England as a whole. This information is also contained in the FPM report. The key findings from this comparison are given below, however note should be made of the commentary above, that the FPM is probably estimating a greater supply of sports hall space than is actually the case in Stevenage.

- Overall there is too little supply to meet demand in Stevenage, but all of the other authorities have sufficient supply.
- However the rate of “satisfied demand” in Stevenage is better than the average for England, for the East of England Region and Harlow at about 93%. Only provision at Basildon is better at 95% satisfied demand.
- Stevenage meets 90% of its demand through its own facilities, which is better than Basildon but slightly worse than Harlow.



- More of the unmet demand is caused by a lack of capacity of the sport halls in Stevenage than elsewhere, though it is lower than the national average.
- Stevenage's estimated 98% use of the halls on average at peak time is well above the used capacity of Basildon, Harlow, the regional average or England as a whole.

## Summary of current situation

- 5.39 There appears, theoretically, to be reasonable access to sports hall provision in Stevenage and this is largely supported by the comments received from users, both individuals and clubs. However there are some pressures, particularly for club access to good quality sports hall space.
- 5.40 The demand for sports hall space is partially met through the use of the indoor bowls hall as a sports hall with roll-down mats in the A&LC. This meets a need in terms of sports hall sports such as badminton, but has a negative impact on indoor bowls itself and the quality of the facility if relatively poor when in "sports hall" mode.
- 5.41 The 8 court hall at the A&LC is used on occasion as an event venue for sport, hosting school badminton and other competitions. However its regular use as an arts and non-sport event complex reduces the availability for the site for sport, although this use does help to generate income which in turn supports the general sports and physical activity programmes in Stevenage.
- 5.42 The complexity of the business at the A&LC with both sport and other uses needs to be considered as part of any future proposals for the site or its replacement.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 5.43 At present there are no anticipated changes to the facility list used for modelling either for Stevenage or for any of the surrounding authorities, and the use of schools by the community is expected to continue largely as it does at present.

### Nortoft Calculator

- 5.44 The rate of provision scaled by hours provided by the FPM has been used to consider the current and future requirements in relation to sports halls both for growth in Stevenage of 5,300 dwellings and 8,200 dwellings (Figures 24a and 24b). The current population figure and the Stevenage projections used in this model are based on the figures supplied and agreed with Stevenage for the purposes of this Assessment and Strategy. It should be noted that this excludes the sports hall use of the indoor bowls centre at the Arts & Leisure Centre.
- 5.45 Comparisons have been made with Harlow as a CIPFA benchmark authority, and with Hertfordshire, the East of England Region (Eastern), and with the England



average (see Figure 23). The scaled by hours figure used as a starting point for Stevenage is taken from the FPM, but as noted above, is probably over generous.

*Figure 23: Nortoft Calculator- Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	23	0.27
National	16,317	0.30
East of England	1,862	0.31
Harlow	27	0.32

*Figure 24a: Nortoft Calculator and Sports Halls – 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.27	0	2	3	4	0.29
0.30	3	4	6	7	0.33
0.31	3	5	7	8	0.33
0.32	4	6	8	10	0.35

*Figure 24b: Nortoft Calculator and Sports Halls – 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.27	0	2	4	6	0.29
0.30	3	5	7	9	0.33
0.31	3	6	8	10	0.33
0.32	4	7	9	12	0.35

- 5.46 The first line of each of the tables is based on projecting forwards the current Stevenage rate of provision but with the added allowance for participation. The other lines consider what would be needed to bring Stevenage into line with the comparators, the East of England region average and the national average.

- 5.47 The Nortoft Calculator reflects the apparent shortage of sports hall space at the present time, which is almost another 4 court hall, if compared to Harlow in particular.
- 5.48 The calculator indicates the future need for facilities based upon both changes in the population within Stevenage and the anticipated growth in participation of 0.5% per annum. The key findings from the assessments are that:
- For a growth in Stevenage of 5300 dwellings:
    - One extra four court hall could be justified in 2014
    - A second 4 court hall will be required by around 2026
  - For growth in Stevenage of 8200 dwellings:
    - One extra four court hall could be justified in 2014
    - A second four court hall could be justified between 2021 and 2026
    - A third four court hall may be justified by 2031, or alternatively enhanced ancillary hall/studio space on existing sites.
- 5.49 These findings are based on the FPM model as the starting point and with the uncertainties identified in the above sub-section the current level of unmet demand for sports hall space needs further confirmation. However it is clear that the growth of Stevenage will mean that new sports hall provision will be required, at least a 4 court hall by 2026 and probably a further hall by 2031.

### Sports Facilities Calculator

- 5.50 To assess the demand for sports halls from new housing sites, Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) is the most appropriate and accurate tool. The following two tables in Figure 25 use the SFC with the main housing areas separately identified, and these provide an overview of the requirements generated by the housing schemes up to 2031. A participation rate of growth of 10% has been applied because the tool only uses 5% intervals and the agreed modelling rate is 8.5% up to 2031.
- 5.51 The value of the contribution is automatically generated by the SFC using Sport England cost information and is based on Q4 2013 figures for Hertfordshire. These are current prices, but give a feel for the likely sums that should be possible to generate from the new housing schemes, and which are fully justified by the amount of demand that the schemes will generate. See paragraph 4.22 of this report for more details about the SFC.
- 5.52 The population profile of 2031 used in the model is that provided and agreed with Stevenage Borough Council.

Figure 25: Sports Facility Calculator for Sports Halls

	Number of dwellings	Population at 2031 at housing multiplier of 2.28	Sports Halls (number badminton courts)	Sports Hall (£ value of contributions)
<b>5300 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	0.94	665,223
North	750	1710	0.52	369,568
South East	400	912	0.28	197,103
Town Centre	950	2166	0.66	468,120
Elsewhere in the borough	800	1824	0.56	394,206
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4250</b>	<b>9690</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>£2,094,220</b>

<b>8200 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	0.94	665,223
North	870	1984	0.61	428,786
South East	550	1254	0.38	271,017
Town Centre	3200	7296	2.23	1,576,825
Elsewhere in the borough	1180	2690	0.82	581,368
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7150</b>	<b>16302</b>	<b>4.98</b>	<b>£3,523,219</b>

5.53 The SFC suggests that the new growth in Stevenage alone will generate the need for:

- For 5300 dwellings: 3 badminton courts (but minimum provision should be a 4 court hall)
- For 8200 dwellings: one 5 court sports hall

## Summary of modelling findings

- 5.54 At present the FPM estimates that there are about 23 badminton courts available at peak time in the weekday evenings and weekends, enabling most people to reach a sports hall and to “satisfy” their demand. However the 23 courts is an overestimation of the level of supply because the A&LC 8 court hall is not as available as the model suggests, the hire policies of the Barnwell School and Thomas Alleyne School mean that their halls are also not filled to the capacity expected, and the indoor bowls hall (which is excluded from the FPM) does not fulfil all of the requirements of a sports hall, nor is it fully available.
- 5.55 The problems experienced by clubs in being able to book sports hall space, particularly at Marriotts however provides confirmation that the existing sports hall provision, particularly good quality space, is inadequate to meet the demand.
- 5.56 If all of the sports halls were running at the capacity expected by the FPM, then there may still be justification for an additional four court sports hall in 2014 if this was a large size hall suitable for futsal (so meeting Sport England size recommendations), and especially if this was located on a school site and provided on a block booking basis.
- 5.57 The growth in Stevenage and the planned for increase in participation means that with the lower levels of potential housing growth that one additional 4 court hall will be definitely be required by 2026, and a further 4 or 5 court hall may be needed by 2031.
- 5.58 As the proposals for the replacement leisure centre for the A&LC are developed, it is strongly recommended that detailed scenario testing is undertaken using the FPM model to confirm the sports hall options, and that the scenario testing should also include the alternative housing growth options.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 5.59 The Barclay School currently has no sports hall but their small size artificial grass pitch, grass pitches and old school gym are used by the community. The school is anxious to provide a 4 court sports hall on site for its curriculum use, and would be keen to include such a facility in its offer to the community. Should a new 4 court hall be developed on this site, it would be beneficial to make this the larger size in order to enable a wide range of community sports to take place, including futsal.
- 5.60 The adjacent Thomas Alleyne School also aspires to have a new 4 court sports hall as it currently only has an old school gym, plus a 3 court sports hall.
- 5.61 In the longer term, an additional sports hall will need to be provided as part of any new secondary school if one is developed in Stevenage. The value of the sports hall

on the new school site will largely depend on its location but would be expected to meet some community need.

- 5.62 The use of Sport England's scenario testing facility using their FPM model is recommended to test the alternative options for sports hall provision, including any replacement A&LC facility and potential new school sports hall locations.

## Development of a planning standard

- 5.63 The planning standards are derived from a synthesis of the findings from the modelling, consultation responses, and the policy decisions of the authority including in relation to the sports development objective of increasing activity levels.

### *Rate of provision per 1000*

- 5.64 The current rate of provision is calculated on the capacity of sports halls actually available in the peak period (the Sport England "scaled by hours" figure), rather than the total amount of facilities available. The modelling findings and consultation feedback shows that the existing rate of provision may be too low at 0.27 halls per 1000, and an increased rate of provision is likely to be required in the future.
- 5.65 The modelling findings of the SFC suggest that a rate of provision per 1000 for individual housing developments should be 0.31 per 1000, based on the population profile for 2031 and a participation rate of growth 10% over the period. How the monetary value of this rate of provision is used in Stevenage will be guided by the prioritised, costed facility project list.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 5.66 The majority of sports hall users in Stevenage will travel by car, and national research shows that sports halls have an approximate drive time catchment of up to about 20 minutes. Everyone in Stevenage lives within 10 minutes drive of a sports hall within Stevenage, but the 20 minutes drive time catchments includes other local authority areas, and a large number of other sports hall facilities. As local authority cross border developers contributions are unlikely to be achievable for sports hall provision, a formal planning standard of 10 minutes drive time is proposed, which covers the whole of Stevenage.
- 5.67 There should also be a geographical spread of halls available for community use, and the sites should be easy to reach by both public transport and sustainable transport (walking and cycling). A central location (east of the A1(M)) is therefore the preferred option for new facilities.
- 5.68 Where possible and appropriate, new sports hall provision, excluding a replacement leisure centre, should be on secondary school sites.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 5.69 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing bodies. This should apply to refurbishment proposals as well as new build.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Current supply and demand*

- 5.70 Sports halls are one of the primary sports facilities for communities because they can provide a venue for many different activities. There are currently a number of sports halls in Stevenage which are available to the community, with the largest being the 8 court hall at the Arts & Leisure Centre (A&LC). The A&LC also has an indoor bowls hall which is used part time for sports hall activities such as badminton. The other halls in Stevenage are mostly 4 court and are located on school sites, so available during evenings and weekends.
- 5.71 The sports halls at Marriotts and Nobel schools are particularly important for clubs such as basketball and cricket. The excellent hall at Marriotts which was designed as a larger than standard hall, is particularly well regarded by the clubs, several of whom are seeking more time for their activities.
- 5.72 The sports hall modelling for Stevenage using the Sport England Facilities Planning Model suggests that Stevenage has a lower rate of provision per 1000 of sports hall space than either the regional or national average, but that most of the potential demand is met. However the theoretical model does not fully take account of the use of the 8 court hall at the Arts & Leisure Centre for an extensive range of shows and concerts, the use of the indoor bowls hall at the A&LC for some sports hall activities, nor the lower intensity of use in practice of the Barnwell Sports Centre and the 3 court hall at Thomas Alleyne. The feedback from clubs suggests instead that there is some shortage of sports hall space, and particularly of good quality space.
- 5.73 The national governing body for the sport of badminton has identified Stevenage as a Priority 1 authority for the sport. However there are no specific projects identified nor specific funding allocated at this time.
- 5.74 It is known from the membership information held by the operators of the A&LC that 80% of the members using that facility are Stevenage residents, with a higher percentage amongst older people.
- 5.75 The important sports hall facilities for the community at Marriotts, Nobel and Barnwell schools have still to be secured by formal community use agreements,



and until these are confirmed, the community use on these school sites should be considered “at risk”.

- 5.76 There is also no community use agreement for the Thomas Alleyne School, and the old agreement at John Henry Newman was terminated by the school in 2013. There is no likelihood of reinstating community use of the sports hall at John Henry Newman School.
- 5.77 The Barclay School does not have a sports hall and would like to develop one on site to deliver its curriculum needs. This would be a 4 court hall, and the school would envisage expanding its current community use offer to include that facility. The Barclay School is located in the old town area of Stevenage, which has some of the least good access to sports hall space at the current time. A hall here would therefore benefit both the school and the community.
- 5.78 The sports hall surface at Nobel School has problems arising from its original construction, which impacts on the community use now and is likely to worsen. These issues will need addressing if the facility is to stay good quality.

#### Future requirements

- 5.79 The assessment of the future requirements for sports hall space in Stevenage indicates that additional four court sports hall space will be required up to 2031. One hall is may be justified now, and two further halls in the period up to 2031, one of which would need to be 5 courts if the housing growth is confirmed at the higher level. One hall could be provided by a commercial provider.
- 5.80 There is a current proposal, which is the highest priority of this Assessment and Strategy, to replace the A&LC with a new wet/dry leisure centre in a central location. This is in large part because of the high costs which will arise for its future maintenance, and the cost of retaining the A&LC generally. If the A&LC is replaced then a new 8 court hall should be provided. A new 8 court hall would be expected to be more intensively used for sport than is currently the case.
- 5.81 The complexities of sports hall provision within Stevenage and the surrounding areas are such that it is recommended that a scenario test using the Sport England FPM is undertaken which can be used to confirm both the options for the A&LC and other facilities, including potentially a new 4 court hall at The Barclay School and at any new secondary school, once its location is identified.
- 5.82 There will also be a need to retain the quality of the existing sports hall network. The works required will need to be kept under review and justified by conditions surveys on a rolling programme basis, particularly as the new facilities at Marriotts, Nobel and Barnwell age. At this time no conditions surveys are available for these facilities or the sports hall at Thomas Alleyne.

- 5.83 The sports hall surface at Nobel also needs urgent improvements due to issues during its construction.
- 5.84 In the long term, a further 4 court hall may be required to meet community needs, but this could be provided as part of a commercial site. The location would need to be confirmed at a later stage, but no developers contributions would be expected to be provide towards this facility.

### Recommendations

- 5.85 It is proposed that a replacement 8 court sports hall should be developed as part of a wet/dry leisure centre as the highest priority.
- 5.86 This should be supplemented by halls on school sites which are expected to be open to the community during evenings and weekends, in priority order:
- The Barclay School: 4 courts
  - New secondary school: 4 courts (with 5300 dwellings), or 5 courts (with 8200 dwellings)
  - Potentially a further 4 court sports hall elsewhere, which might be provided commercially
- 5.87 These sports hall options should be scenario tested using the Sport England FPM model which can be adjusted to reflect the actual usage of the existing and planned facilities, and the potential locations and size of the housing growth.
- 5.88 The sports hall at The Barclay School appears to be justified now because of the curriculum requirements of the school and the potential to meet some community needs, particularly if the hall was developed as a larger size 4 court hall which would enable it to cater for a range of activities, including futsal.
- 5.89 The phasing and size of the other facilities will depend on the speed and amount of housing growth in Stevenage.
- 5.90 The location of the new sports hall facilities should be east of the A1(M) and accessible by public transport, cycling and walking. The site should not be within Stevenage West because the area is insufficiently accessible to the existing population of Stevenage.
- 5.91 The existing network of halls with community use should be improved and refurbished as they age. The works will need to be based on detailed conditions surveys and feasibility studies to provide a costed programme of works during the period up to 2031. In the immediate future the sports hall surface at Nobel requires attention to address its original design/construction issues, and this needs to be resolved through the school.

- 5.92 The signing off of formal long term community use agreements in fulfilment of planning conditions should be concluded as soon as possible for Marriotts, Nobel and Barnwell schools.
- 5.93 The formal commitment to long term community use agreements should be a prerequisite for any public funding towards sports hall facilities at The Barclay and Thomas Alleyne schools.
- 5.94 The planning standards are proposed as:
- 0.31 badminton courts per 1000 (fully available to the community at peak time i.e. weekday evenings and weekends)
  - 10 minute drive time catchment
  - Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards.
- 5.95 Developers' contributions should be sought for all new housing growth.

## SECTION 6: SWIMMING POOLS

### Introduction

- 6.1 Swimming pools might be considered the most important sports facility type in Stevenage as they are used by most of the community, from the very youngest through to people in old age. This assessment considers only indoor pools which are open year round and excludes lidos and other outdoor pools which are only open during the summer months. This follows the best practice guidance provided by Sport England.
- 6.2 There are two swimming pool sites in Stevenage, the Stevenage Borough Council's Swimming Centre and the commercial David Lloyd centre.

### Pool design and activities

- 6.3 As with sports halls, the aspiration to make swimming as accessible as possible to the largest number of people possible would suggest that a network of small pools would be best. However, small pools limit flexibility in terms of the range of activities that can be undertaken, the ability to operate more than one activity at any time and the level of performance that can be accommodated. They can also be more expensive to operate relative to large pools. General community needs should ideally also be balanced with the wider sports development requirements, including support to clubs to offer opportunities in a wide range of pool-based activities such as:
- Swimming
  - Water Polo
  - Synchronised Swimming
  - Canoeing
  - Lifesaving
  - Diving
  - Sub Aqua
- 6.4 In general terms, the higher the level of performance, the greater the demands on pool size, depth and specific competition requirements (spectator capacity and specialist equipment). For example, a 25m x 6 lane pool can accommodate local/club level swimming galas but a 25m x 8 lane pool with electronic timing is required for county galas and league events.
- 6.5 Moveable bulkheads that can sub-divide pools and moveable floors that can vary water depth can significantly increase a pool's flexibility, but the design of any new pool will determine what activities can be accommodated.

- 6.6 The national governing body responsible for high performance swimming is British Swimming, and its guidance note, *Reasons for Pool Water Depths and Traditional Profiles*, provides a useful summary of the minimum depths of water for different activities (Figure 26).

*Figure 26: Pool depths for range of activities*  
(based on British Swimming, *Reasons for Pool Water Depths and Traditional Profiles*)

Activity	Minimum water depth				
	1.2m	1.5m	1.8m	2.0m	2.4m
Competition swimming (starting blocks)	x				
Teaching shallow dives and racing starts			x		
Synchronised swimming, low level training			x		
Synchronised swimming, advanced training			x		10x12m area
Water polo (for some or all of pool)			x		
Sub-aqua training		x			
Canoe practice		x			
Lifesaving and practice			x		
Octopush	x	x	x	x	

- 6.7 Teaching or learner pools provide the opportunity to offer a wide range of activities catering for the maximum number of users possible. Teaching pools can be maintained at a slightly higher temperature than main pools making them suitable for use by young children, non swimmers and those with a disability. They offer income generating potential not only through pool parties and other hirings, but also by reducing the impact on programming in the main pool. A teaching pool significantly enhances the local authority's ability to deliver its Learn to Swim programme and therefore it is seen as desirable that there should be at least one in each major centre of population.
- 6.8 A typical 25m x 6 lane pool is approximately 325m<sup>2</sup>. With the addition of a learner pool this would typically increase by 160m<sup>2</sup> giving a total water space area of 485m<sup>2</sup>.
- 6.9 In determining the best locations for new swimming pool provision a number of factors need to be considered. Ideally they should also be accompanied by other facilities such as a fitness suite to help ensure financial viability, or adjacent to school sites where both school and community use can be easily facilitated.

## Participation in swimming

- 6.10 Nationally over 2.8 million adults are swimming at least once a week, but the number of people swimming has fallen between 2007/08 and 2012/13, particularly amongst those from the lower socio-economic backgrounds. The age of swimmers is reasonably evenly split across adults, but more women swim (approx 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s) than men (1/3<sup>rd</sup>), and more of those in the higher socio-economic groups.

## Current provision

- 6.11 There are two swimming pool sites within Stevenage itself. The Stevenage Swimming Centre has two pools, the main pool is 33m x 12m, and the teaching pool is 12m x 7m. The David Lloyd Club at the leisure park has a pool which is 25m x 11m.
- 6.12 Outside of Stevenage there is a 25m x 4 lane pool just over the border at the Odyssey Health and Fitness club, and within a 20 minute drive of Stevenage there are number of other pools, including the new Inspire site at Luton.
- 6.13 Figure 27 shows the location and size of the swimming pools available for community use in Stevenage, as well as the main facilities in the surrounding authorities.

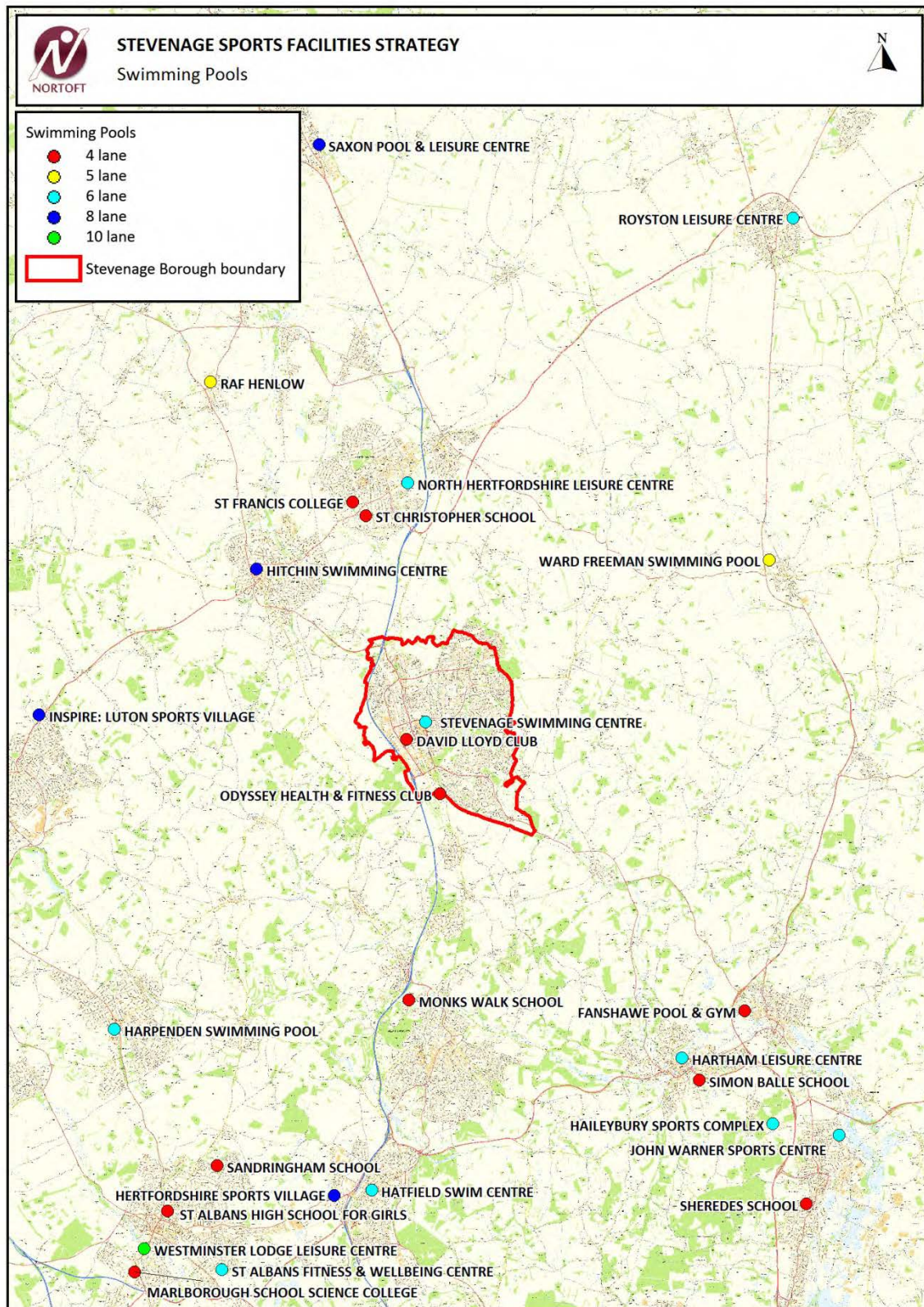
## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 6.14 There is community access to the Swimming Centre throughout the peak period and also at most times during the school day. The Swimming Centre had a throughput in the pool (excluding school use) of around 170,000 for the year ending March 2014. Of this the club use was around 26,000, and the learn to swim programme (Aqua Ed) accounted for around 57,500 visits from its around 1,100 participants. The number of swimming visits increased over the past 3 years, with the year ending March 2013 having around 155,000 visits excluding schools, and the year ending March 2012 having 148,000 visits. This is around a 15% increase in swimming visits over the past 3 years.
- 6.15 The separate fitness facilities at the Swimming Centre have also seen increased use, from around 15,700 visits for the year ending March 2013 to just under 17,000 for the year ending March 2014, i.e. a 10% increase.
- 6.16 The Swimming Centre provides an important facility for primary school swimming, and around 36,500 visits were made to the pool by school children in the year ended March 2014. These visits were both by schools within Stevenage and outside.
- 6.17 No throughput figures are available for either the David Lloyd pool or the Odyssey centre just over the border, as these are both commercial pools.



- 6.18 The results of the conditions survey and estimated costs of works to be done at the Swimming Centre are given in Section 2 of this report. In summary, the costs of the works and the other costs of maintaining the pool are so high that a priority in the strategy should be the replacement of the pool as part of a wet/dry leisure centre.

Figure 27: Swimming pool locations



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## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals and Students

6.19 The surveys of individuals and students in Stevenage underline the importance of swimming as an activity, and pools as important facilities.

- Swimming pools were the most used facility of those responding to both the individual survey and student survey.
- Swimming pools were considered the most important built facility for sport/active recreation for individuals, and third most important for students.

### Clubs

6.20 Three of the clubs using the Swimming Centre on a regular basis responded to the club survey and / or the draft Strategy. The key points made by the clubs were:

#### *Aqualina Synchronised Swimming Club*

6.21 This club draws most of its members from a catchment of around 20 minutes, with some of the members coming from Stevenage and others from the surrounding areas including as far away as Harpenden and Welwyn. The club has around 40 members in total with the majority being aged around 11-16 years, and it has a small waiting list for both juniors and minis (primary school). The club has grown over the past 5 years and would expect to continue to grow. The main issues impacting upon the ability to grow are the hire charges and lack of pool time at times which are suitable for the club. The club does not have any criticisms about the facility itself.

#### *Stevenage Dolphins*

6.22 This is a swimming club for people with disabilities with around 100 members across all of the age groups, from minis to veterans. Most of the members come from Stevenage. The club has grown in the past 5 years and the membership is expected to continue to grow. The club considers the Swimming Centre and its ancillary facilities to be of a high quality.

#### *Stevenage Sub Aqua Club*

6.23 This club has over 50 members, almost all of whom are adults, and the club attracts from a wide area including Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth and Welwyn. The club membership has stayed the same over the past 5 years and the club is not expecting to expand in the near future. The quality of the Swimming Centre and its ancillary facilities are considered satisfactory by the club. Should a new pool be developed, the club would prefer to have deeper water than the proposed 1.8 m, as this is better for their training.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 6.24 The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) is the England national governing body for swimming. Its Strategic Plan 2013-17 has six strategic objectives including relating to: increasing the number of schools providing quality swimming; maximising the water space available in order to attract, retain and grow the number of people taking part regularly in aquatics activities; building a sustainable club structure and network; and, increasing the size of the talent pool. The ASA does not have a national facilities strategy.
- 6.25 Detailed comments have been provided about swimming provision in Stevenage by the ASA at both national and regional level.
- 6.26 The national ASA facilities team would support the development of replacement pool for the Swimming Centre. They advise that the pool dimensions should be 25m x 8 lane with 0.9 – 1.8 m depth if there is no moveable floor, and 1 – 2m depth if there is a learner pool. The ASA have confirmed that any new pool would not need to be a formal competition pool, because there are other pools in the area which fulfil this function.
- 6.27 The ASA advises that the pool should be part of a wider wet/dry complex that is sustainable in design, energy efficiencies etc., and accommodate a minimum 100 fitness station suite and dance studios. The spectator seating should reflect the normal use of the pool, with up to 94 seats but with a wide pool deck to enable portable spectator seating for galas.
- 6.28 The ASA Hertfordshire Aquatic Officer has recently worked with SLL to develop an Aquatic Improvement Plan which has various sections including Learn to Swim, Marketing and Swimmers Pathways. The ASA for the East region confirm that they would be reluctant to lose any diving facilities, and would prefer to retain a minimum depth in the new pool of 2m. The justification is that Hertfordshire has recently lost the diving boards at St Albans and the boards at Hatfield may also be lost because they need substantial investment to make them safe.
- 6.29 In terms of future pool programming, the synchronised swimming club at Stevenage requires more pool time at a time appropriate to the club, there is a newly formed disability diving session taking place once a week, and water polo is a rapidly growing sport in the region, although there is no club in Stevenage at this time.
- 6.30 The ASA would welcome the opportunity to be involved and to support Stevenage Borough Council as the new leisure centre proposals come forwards.



## Modelling

- 6.31 A number of different modelling tools can be used to assess the current provision in Stevenage.

## Market Segmentation and sports development

- 6.32 The Sport England Market Segmentation analysis suggests that several of the segments currently enjoy swimming and find swimming appealing, particularly amongst women. This helps to confirm the importance of providing accessible swimming opportunities across Stevenage.
- 6.33 Swimming is an important and attractive activity for everyone in the community and is seen as an important life skill. Primary schools are required to arrange some swimming lessons for pupils, and the Stevenage Swimming Centre is used intensively for schools swimming, attracting schools from both within and outside Stevenage. Swimming pools are therefore seen as a high priority for the Borough to provide.

## Facilities Planning Model

- 6.34 The FPM is a national model developed by Sport England which has standardised parameters. The full report for 2014 for swimming pools is provided as Appendix 7. One of the key parameters is that it includes only those facilities within the borders of an authority in the calculation of the amount of sports facility space available to the community. In Stevenage, this means that the pool at David Lloyd is included as it is within the Stevenage boundary, but the pool at Odyssey is excluded, as this is in North Hertfordshire.
- 6.35 The FPM has a standardised format and the information on swimming pool capacity and demand are calculated on an authority wide basis. However the balance in supply and demand includes consideration the facilities which are potentially available to the authority's residents, up to about 20 minutes drive time, and also the demand arising from this wider area. Also built into the model are other considerations, for example relating to membership only commercial pools, and demographic factors such as levels of car ownership.
- 6.36 More details about the FPM are provided in the full FPM report, but the table below (Figure 28) highlights some of the most important parameters used in the model in relation to pools. In particular the accessibility criteria of 20 minutes travel time. This figure is not fixed as the formula behind the FPM uses a distance decay function, however 20 minutes drive time catchment area is generally considered a good "rule of thumb".

*Figure 28: Facilities Planning Model key parameters pools*

At one Time Capacity	0.16667 per square metre = 1 person per 6 square meters
Catchments	<p>Car: 20 minutes</p> <p>Walking: 1.6 km</p> <p>Public transport: 20 minutes at about half the speed of a car</p> <p>NOTE: Catchment times are indicative, within the context of a distance decay function of the model.</p>
Duration	60 minutes for tanks and leisure pools
Peak Period	<p>Weekday: 12:00 to 13:30, 16:00 to 22:00</p> <p>Saturday: 09:00 to 16:00</p> <p>Sunday: 09:00 to 16:30</p> <p>Total: 52 Hours</p>
Percentage of use taking place within the Peak Period	63%
Utilised capacity considered “busy”	70% = “comfort factor”

6.37 The FPM national assessment for 2014 gives a useful indication of the current supply and demand for swimming in Stevenage, and the following are the key points from the Sport England report:

- Overall there is too little swimming space in Stevenage to cater for the needs of the community, but 92% of the possible demand is able to be met because many residents are able to travel to pools outside of the Borough, such as Odyssey. This level of “satisfied demand” is similar to the national average and better than the East of England Region as a whole or Harlow.
- There is movement of swimmers both into and out of Stevenage, and there is a total **net export** of demand of about 885 visits per week in the peak period (evenings and weekends).
- Almost everyone with access to a car can reach a pool within 20 minutes, and there is no lack of pool capacity elsewhere.
- There are small amounts of unmet demand in several areas of the authority where people without access to a car live too far from a pool to walk within about 20 minutes.
- There is no justification in terms of demand at this time for any additional community swimming pool space.

6.38 The FPM’s estimate of throughputs at the pools in Stevenage and those pools within easy reach are given in Figure 29.



*Figure 29: Facility usage in and around Stevenage*

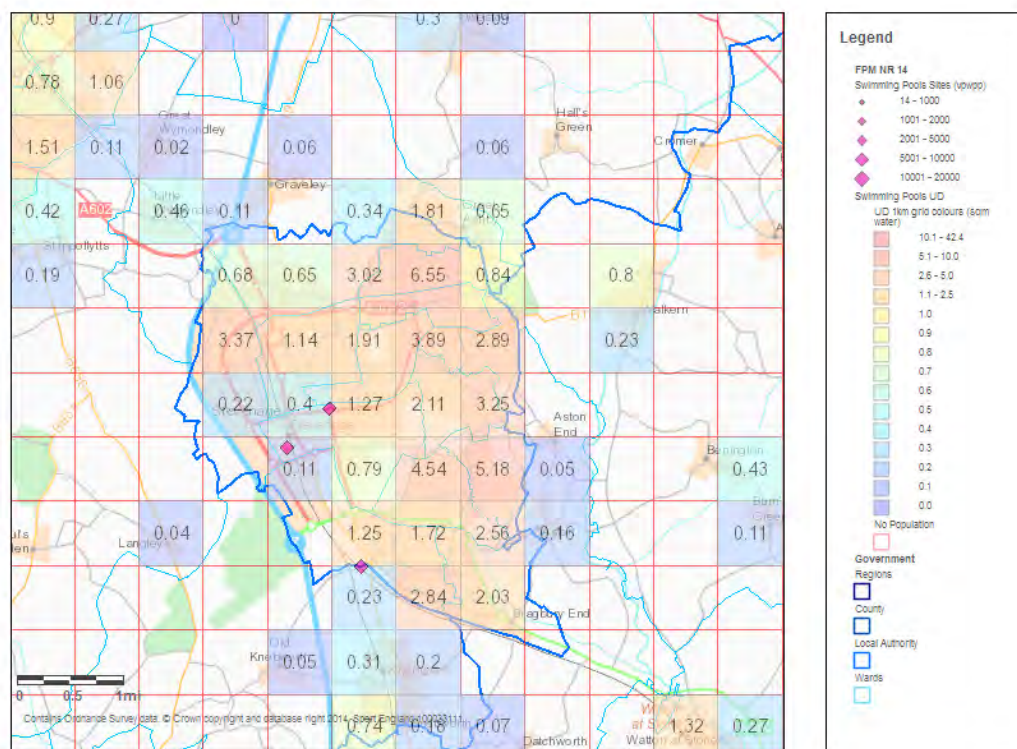
Facility	% capacity used	Annual Throughput
David Lloyd Club (Stevenage)	44%	87,374
Stevenage Swimming Centre	81%	263,496
Hitchin Swimming Centre, Hitchin	54%	195,411
Odyssey Health & Fitness Club (Knebworth)	53%	114,859
North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre, Letchworth (Main Pool)	40%	236,647
Hertfordshire Sports Village, Hatfield	50%	145,027
Hatfield Swim Centre, Hatfield (Main Pool)	50%	268,640
Inspire Luton Sports Village, Luton (Main Pool)	65%	555,426
Saxon Pool & Leisure Centre, Biggleswade (Main Pool)	63%	234,259

- 6.39 The Swimming Centre is therefore estimated by the FPM to be beyond the limit of what Sport England considers “busy”. However none of the other pools in this list other than the Inspire pool are nearing what Sport England consider as “busy” which is 70% use on average of the available capacity at peak time.
- 6.40 However the FPM results need to be considered with some caution because the estimated annual throughput at the Swimming Centre is significantly higher at around 263,500 visits that the actual total annual throughput which is about 170,000 visits. This may in part reflect the programming of the pool which has a strong clubs programme. There is a year’s waiting list for the learn to swim programme (Aqua Ed).
- 6.41 The implication of this difference is that there is probably a higher rate of unmet demand from the residents of Stevenage, and/or that more residents are travelling to pools elsewhere to swim, than the FPM suggests.
- 6.42 The FPM map of 2014 showing the pattern of unmet demand for swimming across Stevenage is given as Figure 30. This suggests that there is some unmet demand across much of the authority, with the areas least well provided for being the Pin Green/St Nicholas area and the Poplars/Shephall area.

Figure 30: Swimming pools – unmet demand

## Facilities Planning Model - National Runs - Swimming Pools 2014 Unmet Demand

Unmet Demand expressed as square metres of water (round to two decimal places). Data outputs shown thematically (colours) at either output area level or aggregated at 1km square (figure labels).



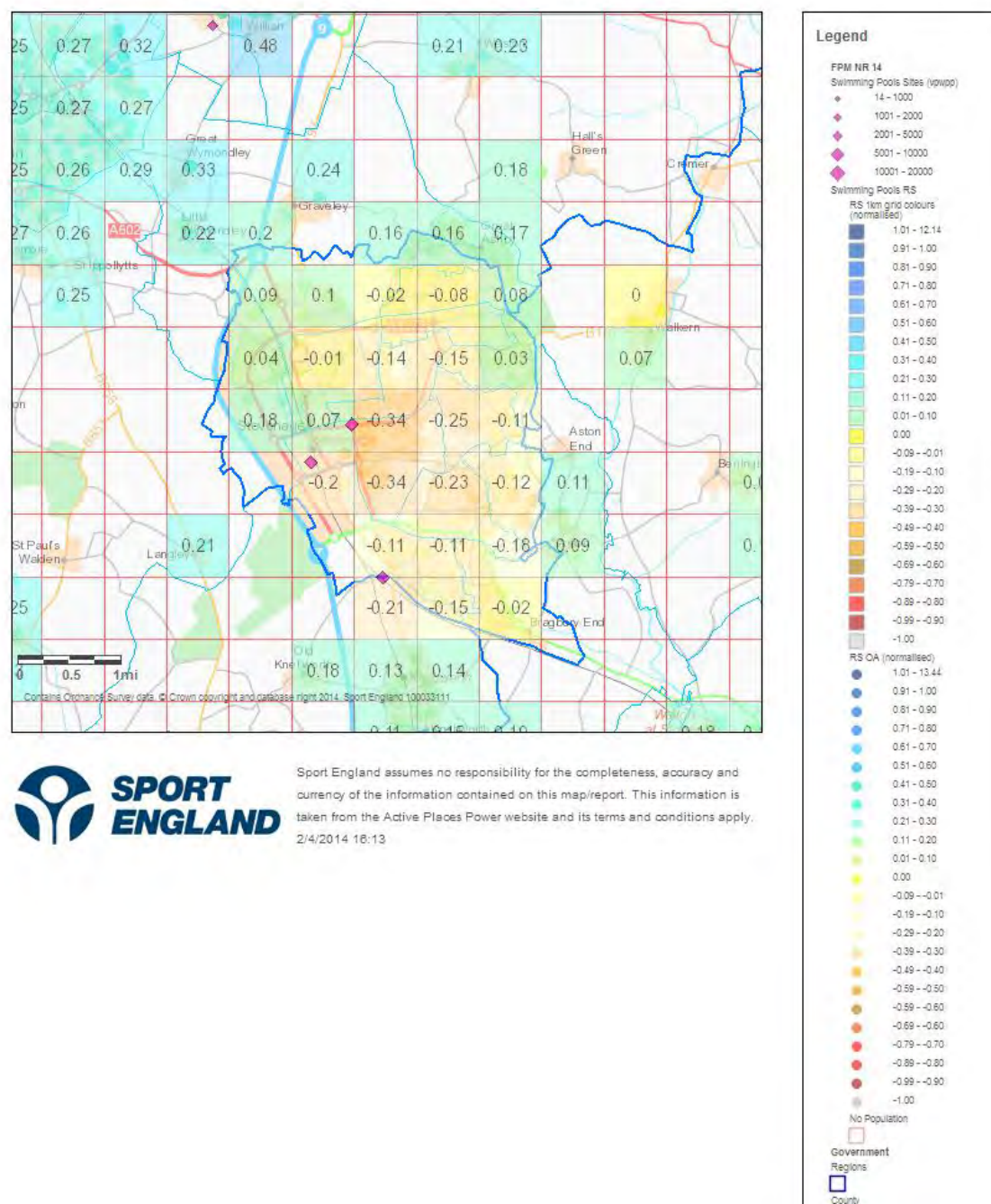
Sport England assumes no responsibility for the completeness, accuracy and currency of the information contained on this map/report. This information is taken from the Active Places Power website and its terms and conditions apply.  
2/4/2014 14:25

- 6.43 The next map (Figure 31) from the FPM provides an overview of the relative share of swimming pool space across the Borough. This suggests that, even though the pool is geographically close, the people living close to it have the least ability to swim. This may in part be a reflection of the cost of the activity and the relative deprivation of the area.

Figure 31: Relative Share of swimming pool space

## Facilities Planning Model - National Runs - Swimming Pools 2014 Relative Share

Share of water divided by demand made relative to the National Average for this run (1.14 sqm per visit per week). Data outputs shown thematically (colours) at either output area level or aggregated at 1km square (figure labels).



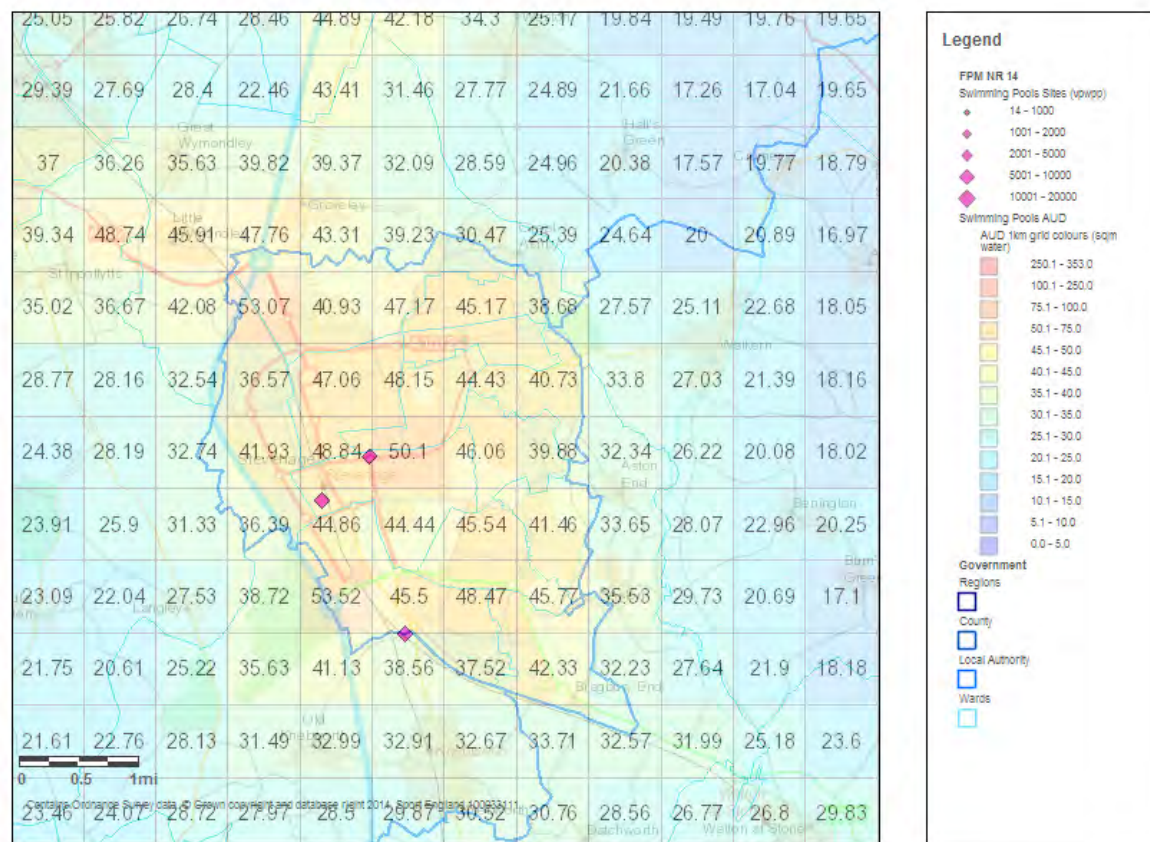


- 6.44 This is followed by a map showing the aggregated unmet demand for swimming pools in Figure 32. The orange colour on the map shows that although there is some unmet demand even added together, this is only around 50 sq m. To put this into context, a teaching pool is usually about 160 sq m.

Figure 32: FPM – aggregated unmet demand

## Facilities Planning Model - National Runs - Swimming Pools 2014 Aggregated Unmet Demand

Aggregated Unmet Demand expressed as square metres of water (rounded to two decimal places). Data outputs shown thematically (colours) at 1km square (figure labels).



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- 6.45 The FPM, which is the most accurate tool for assessing the supply/demand balance for swimming pools at the present time, therefore leads to the conclusion that although there is unmet demand for swimming, that no new pools are currently required. It is likely however that the levels of unmet demand are higher in Stevenage than the FPM suggests, particularly amongst those without access to a car and who therefore cannot reach a pool outside of the authority.

- 6.46 It should be noted that the FPM figures used in the Nortoft Calculator for water space (and scaled by hours provision) exclude Odyssey because it is over the border of the authority and this site is not included in the FPM information which is used as the starting point. The Odyssey site provides some additional swimming opportunities, but this is not a public pool with pay and play access, or does it have an extensive learn to swim programme or a range of pool based activities. Its location is also not easily accessible for people without access to a car.

### Comparator authorities' provision

- 6.47 Using the data available via the Facilities Planning Model, Sport England has provided comparisons with Harlow, which is one of the CIPFA comparator authorities, with Basildon, with the East of England region and with England as a whole. The key findings from this comparison are given below, however note should be made of the commentary above, that the FPM is probably over estimating the amount of use of the Stevenage Swimming Centre.

- The basic supply-demand balance shows that there is too little supply to meet demand. This is a similar situation as Harlow and the same situation as both England as a whole and the region. However Basildon has more space available than it needs to cater for its demand.
- The rate of “satisfied demand” in Stevenage is the same as the average for England, and better than that for the East of England Region and Harlow. Only provision at Basildon is better, at 95% satisfied demand.
- The pools in Stevenage meet only about 62% the demand. This is much lower than the averages for the East of England Region, Basildon or Harlow. Even Harlow which is next lowest, meets about 80% of its demand.
- All of the theoretically calculated unmet demand is due to people being outside the catchment of a pool, this being either about 20 minutes walk for those people without access to a car (90% of this unmet demand), or 20 minutes drive time. Theoretically there is no lack of capacity for swimming in and around Stevenage.
- Across the two sites in Stevenage, there is an average used capacity of around 67%, which is lower than in Harlow, but higher than the national and regional averages, and in Basildon.
- A quarter of the used capacity of the pools in Stevenage is estimated to be from people living outside of the authority. This is similar to the situation at Basildon but much higher than Harlow, where it is 15%.
- The Stevenage resident’s personal/relative share of swimming pool space is generally worse than elsewhere, but is better than Harlow.

## Summary of current situation

- 6.48 Ensuring reasonable access to a pool for everyone is an important issue in terms of the equality objectives of Stevenage, and means that the swimming provision must be primarily led by the public sector. The commercial sector pools will continue to have a role to play, but are unable to meet the needs of most of Stevenage's residents because of cost, accessibility, and programming.
- 6.49 At present there are two swimming pool sites in Stevenage, the Swimming Centre and David Lloyd. The FPM modelling suggests that the Swimming Centre is over full on average during the peak period, whilst the David Lloyd pool is running at less than half full. The Odyssey pool just over the border provides some additional water space and is estimated by the model to be running at about half full at peak time. Both the David Lloyd and Odyssey pools do not offer the same opportunities as the Swimming Centre, they are membership only, have a limited learn to swim programmes, do not provide for clubs or offer opportunities such as diving.
- 6.50 The FPM model estimated throughput for the Swimming Centre is however much higher than it is in practice, probably due to a combination of factors including the programming of the swimming pool which includes time for diving, syncro and events, the limited accessibility of the pool on foot, and the quality of the facility generally.
- 6.51 It is not clear from the evidence at hand whether this over estimation of usage at the Swimming Centre by the Facilities Planning Model reflects the true picture, and it is the view of Stevenage Borough Council leisure officers that there is insufficient capacity generally across the pool network in Stevenage and the surrounding areas to cater for all of the current swimming demand.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

- 6.52 The Nortoft Calculator in Figures 34a and 34b reflects the apparent "shortage" of swimming pool space at the present time, estimating this to be the equivalent of around 160 sq m, or about the equivalent of a 4 lane 20 m pool, when comparing it to the national and regional averages.
- 6.53 The Calculator indicates the future need for facilities based upon both the planned changes in the population within Stevenage and the anticipated growth in participation of 0.5% per annum. The Calculator suggests that with an increase of 5300 dwellings plus participation growth a minimum of 136 sq m of additional water space will be needed even if the lower rate of provision was retained in the long term. With an increase of 8200 dwellings, this would increase to nearly 200 sqm extra water space required, almost the size of a 25 m x 4 lane community pool.



*Figure 33: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	729	8.56
National	572,972	10.52
East of England	62,935	10.42
Harlow	699	8.28

*Figure 34a: Nortoft Calculator and swimming pools - 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Amount of additional water space required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
8.56	0	52	94	136	9.28
10.52	167	231	283	335	11.41
10.42	159	222	274	325	11.31
8.28	-23	27	68	108	8.99

*Figure 34b: Nortoft Calculator and swimming pools - 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Amount of additional water space required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,138)	2036 population (99,803)	
8.56	0	72	134	198	9.28
10.52	167	255	332	410	11.41
10.42	159	246	322	399	11.31
8.28	-23	46	106	168	8.99

- 6.54 The rate of provision per 1000, if it stayed approximately in line with 2014 but allowing for a 0.5% increase in demand each year, would need to be 9.28 sq m water space per 1000 by 2031. If the amount of water space was to increase to the national average, the water space rate of provision would be 11.31 sq m per 1000 by 2031. This would mean that the extra water space requirement by 2031 would be approximately a 25 m x 6 lane pool (325 m).

## Sports Facilities Calculator

- 6.55 To assess the demand for swimming pool space from new housing sites, Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) is the most appropriate and accurate tool. The following two tables in Figure 35 use the SFC with the main housing areas separately identified, and these provide an overview of the requirements generated by the housing schemes up to 2031. A participation rate of growth of 10% has been applied because the tool only uses 5% intervals and the agreed modelling rate is 8.5% up to 2031.
- 6.56 The value of the contribution is generated by the SFC using Sport England's Facility Costs quarter 4 2013 figures for Hertfordshire. These are current prices, but give a feel for the likely sums that should be possible to generate from the new housing schemes, and which are fully justified by the amount of demand that the schemes will generate.
- 6.57 The population profile of 2031 used in the model is that provided and agreed with Stevenage Borough Council.
- 6.58 The SFC suggests that the new growth in Stevenage alone will generate:
- For 5300 dwellings: one leaner pool approximately 7 x 16 m
  - For 8200 dwellings: one community pool 20 m x 4 lane (20 x 8.5m)
- 6.59 Developers' contributions could be in the region of £1.7m - £3m, depending on the level of housing growth, and assuming that contributions were successfully secured on all developments at the rate suggested by the SFC.

Figure 35: Sports Facility Calculator for swimming pool space

	Number of dwellings	Population at 2031 at housing multiplier of 2.28	Swimming pool space (square metres)	Swimming pools (£ value of contributions)
<b>5300 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	35.56	564,703
North	750	1710	19.75	313,724
South East	400	912	10.54	167,320
Town Centre	950	2166	25.02	397,384
Elsewhere in the borough	800	1824	21.07	334,639
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4250</b>	<b>9690</b>	<b>111.94</b>	<b>£1,777,770</b>

<b>8200 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	35.56	564,703
North	870	1983	22.91	363,993
South East	550	1254	14.49	230,064
Town Centre	3200	7296	84.29	1,338,556
Elsewhere in the borough	1180	2690	31.08	493,519
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7150</b>	<b>16302</b>	<b>188.33</b>	<b>£2,990,835</b>

## Summary of future requirements

- 6.60 The new housing growth will generate new swimming space needs, estimated to be around the equivalent of a new learner pool of approx 112 sq m at 5300 dwellings, or a slightly larger amount of water space for 8200 dwellings. Extra water space will be needed over and above this for the existing population, to allow for increased rates of participation.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 6.61 No new pools are currently planned in the town other than potentially a replacement pool for the Swimming Centre as part of a wet/dry leisure centre.
- 6.62 The Swimming Centre currently has 480 sq m of the water space in Stevenage. If it was to be replaced and to take account of the growth requirements, the area to be provided should be between 616 sq m and 678 sq m. This is the equivalent of a 25 m x 8 or possibly 10 lane pool with large teaching pool. The currently proposed design is for a standard profile main pool, with both a shallow and deep end, but with a moveable floor which could be used to make the whole pool the same,

shallow depth. There would also be need for a wide deck and some permanent seating plus space for removable seating. The pool should have electronic timing.

- 6.63 The depth of the proposed new pool is of concern to the Stevenage Sub Aqua Club and the regional ASA who both feel that a 1.8m pool would be much less useful than a deeper pool, as this will restrict both diving and sub aqua training. The option of developing a deeper pool should therefore be included as part of the first stage feasibility study for the new leisure centre.
- 6.64 In relation to the surrounding authorities, there are long term aspirations for North Hertfordshire to replace the pool at Letchworth, and Welwyn Hatfield hope to provide a pool in Welwyn. However these are at the earliest stages of planning and are not confirmed. This assessment has assumed that they are not likely to go ahead in the short-medium term, and that there would be minimal impact on the swimming pool needs in Stevenage.
- 6.65 As the proposals for a replacement pool moves forwards in Stevenage, the opportunity should be taken to model the proposals using FPM scenario testing. This would enable the current FPM modelling figures to be adjusted to reflect current usage levels more accurately, and the impact of a different location and other variables such as housing growth to be taken into account.

## Development of a planning standard

- 6.66 The planning standards are derived from a synthesis of the findings from the modelling, consultation responses, and the policy decision about the growth of participation. In Stevenage it also assumes that the current flow of swimming pool users across the borders of the authority will remain for the foreseeable future.

### *Standard for quantity*

- 6.67 A planning standard to be applied to new developments which simply reflects the level of current provision across the district would not be appropriate because the current provision is less than is known to be required to meet the needs of Stevenage. The amount of provision for swimming pool space needed for any new population will be determined by the number of people who will be living in the development, using the relevant population profile. The Sports Facility Calculator gives a required rate of provision of **11.55 sq m water space per 1000**. This should be the figure used as the basis for developer contributions which would be allocated towards the replacement leisure centre pool.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 6.68 The majority of swimming pool users in Stevenage will travel by car, and it is known from the post code mapping that the users of the Swimming Centre are drawn from the whole of Stevenage as well as the surrounding areas. This reflects Sport England research which shows that people will travel for up to 20 minutes by car to reach a pool. However this drive time catchment includes other local authority areas and other swimming pools. All Stevenage residents can reach the pool at Stevenage Swimming Centre within 10 minutes drive time. A formal planning standard of 10 minutes drive time is therefore proposed.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 6.69 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England, the ASA and other relevant national governing bodies.
- 6.70 The new replacement pool should have:
- 25 m x 8 or 10 lane main pool suitable for training and competition with electronic timing
  - 0.9 m to 1.8 m deep with a moveable floor up to 0.9 m as a minimum
  - 94 approx fixed seats with room for movable seats up to 250 people
  - Wide deck
  - Teaching pool minimum of 300 sq m with moveable floor

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Current supply and demand*

- 6.71 There are two pool sites in Stevenage, the Stevenage Swimming Centre which is a public pool and has a main pool and teaching pool, and the David Lloyd Centre which has one pool. There is also a pool at Odyssey just over the border which is 25m by 4 lane.
- 6.72 Swimming is one of the most popular activities amongst Stevenage residents of all ages now, and if local people are given the opportunity, would be **the** most popular activity in Stevenage. Good quality, accessible and affordable swimming facilities should help to raise the overall rates of participation in sport and physical activity in Stevenage, so should be the highest priority for public investment.
- 6.73 Sport England's Facilities Planning Model suggests that there is no need to provide for additional pool space in Stevenage at this time. The consultation with the community, clubs, general users, the operator and Stevenage Borough Council however suggests that some additional pool space is needed, and there appears to

be particular pressures on the learn to swim programme which has a year's waiting list, and some clubs and general users who need more pool time.

- 6.74 The feedback from the community and stakeholders and the actual (much lower) throughput of the Swimming Centre than the theoretical FPM suggests, indicates that access to swimming in Stevenage is not as easy or available as the FPM suggests. This may in part be a reflection of the programming of the pool which has a strong club element.
- 6.75 The commercial pools at David Lloyd and Odyssey are only available on a membership basis, with no pay and play. There are also no other aquatic activities on these sites, such as the disabled swimming group, syncro, or diving. They are not therefore the equivalent to a public pool which has the wider sports development objectives and accessibility policies.
- 6.76 The ASA as the national governing body for swimming strongly recommends that introductory diving opportunities are retained in the proposed new replacement pool, and that syncro and water polo should also be designed in, and these can be provided for in a pool with a depth of 1.8m. A separate large teaching pool which can help to deliver both the school swimming and the learn to swim programme is supported.
- 6.77 A deeper pool would however also be a preferred option for the sub aqua club and synchronised swimming, so the depth options for the pools should be considered at the first stage feasibility study on the proposed new pool.
- 6.78 The Stevenage pool currently offers a primary school swimming programme for both schools within and outside of Stevenage. The current support to the operators for the pool comes from Stevenage Borough Council, and the business plan for the pool may therefore need reviewing in terms of this support, which is primarily aimed at Stevenage's residents.

#### *Future requirements*

- 6.79 As Stevenage grows as a result of new housing, and the trend towards more swimming in the town continues, then additional water space will be required. The amount of new water space required to meet the demand arising from the new housing will be around 112 sq m for the growth of 5300 dwellings, or 188 sq m for growth up to 8200 dwellings.
- 6.80 The costs of maintaining the existing Swimming Centre are high compared to a modern wet/dry leisure centre, which in many places has proven, with the right design, location and facility mix to provide a significant surplus to the operator, or at the very least to be cost neutral. Given this situation and the need to plan for additional water space as Stevenage grows, a high priority should be the replacement of the Swimming Centre in a central and accessible location within Stevenage as part of a modern leisure centre.



- 6.81 The pool should be large enough to accommodate the additional water space required and its design should enable the pool to meet the needs of a range of pool activities.

### *Recommendations*

- 6.82 The new replacement pool should have:
- 25 m x 8 or 10 lane main pool suitable for training and competition with electronic timing. It should be designed to be 0.9 m - 1.8 m deep with a moveable floor across the whole pool and a minimum depth of 0.9 m.
  - 94 approx fixed seats with room for movable seats up to 250 people
  - Wide deck
  - Large teaching pool (up to 300 sq m) with moveable floor.
- 6.83 This proposal will need a detailed feasibility assessment to consider how it can be delivered, to confirm the site, and the detailed design including depth of pool. Sport England's FPM scenario testing should be used to help confirm the options.
- 6.84 The amount of commercial pool water space is expected to be retained and new/replacement/additional provision considered as necessary.
- 6.85 The current usage of the Swimming Centre for primary school swimming, particularly for those schools outside of the authority, should be reviewed in the light of the support provided by Stevenage Borough Council to the swimming pool.
- 6.86 The authority wide planning standards are proposed as:
- 11.55 sq m water space per 1000 (fully available to the community at peak time i.e. weekday evenings and weekends) for new housing developments
  - 10 minutes drive time catchment
  - Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards.
- 6.87 Developers' contributions should be sought in relation to all new housing growth.

## **SECTION 7:       ATHLETICS**

### **Introduction**

- 7.1      Participation in athletics which includes athletics field, athletics track, running track, running cross-country/road, running road, running ultra-marathon, and jogging has increased nationally during the period 2007/08 to 2013/14 from 1.6 million adults taking part at least once a week to 2.9 million. Athletics generally attracts more men (60%) than women (40%).
- 7.2      Research by Sport England has shown that about 10% of athletics activity takes place at a track, with 90% elsewhere.

### **Current provision**

- 7.3      There is one 8 lane synthetic athletic track at Ridlins Wood which is the home of the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Athletics Club. The athletics track is considered by Sport England as a strategic facility because it serves an area much wider than Stevenage itself.
- 7.4      Up to February 2013 the track was certified as Grade A, but was then downgraded to Grade B as some site improvements were required to bring it back to the Grade A certification. As at May 2014 the outstanding problem was a need to repair the small discus cage, including realignment and re-anchoring.
- 7.5      The track was built in 1994 and has a stand with integral changing rooms. The stadium is also used for changing for football in Ridlins Park.
- 7.6      The athletics track is managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council.

## Assessment of current supply/demand

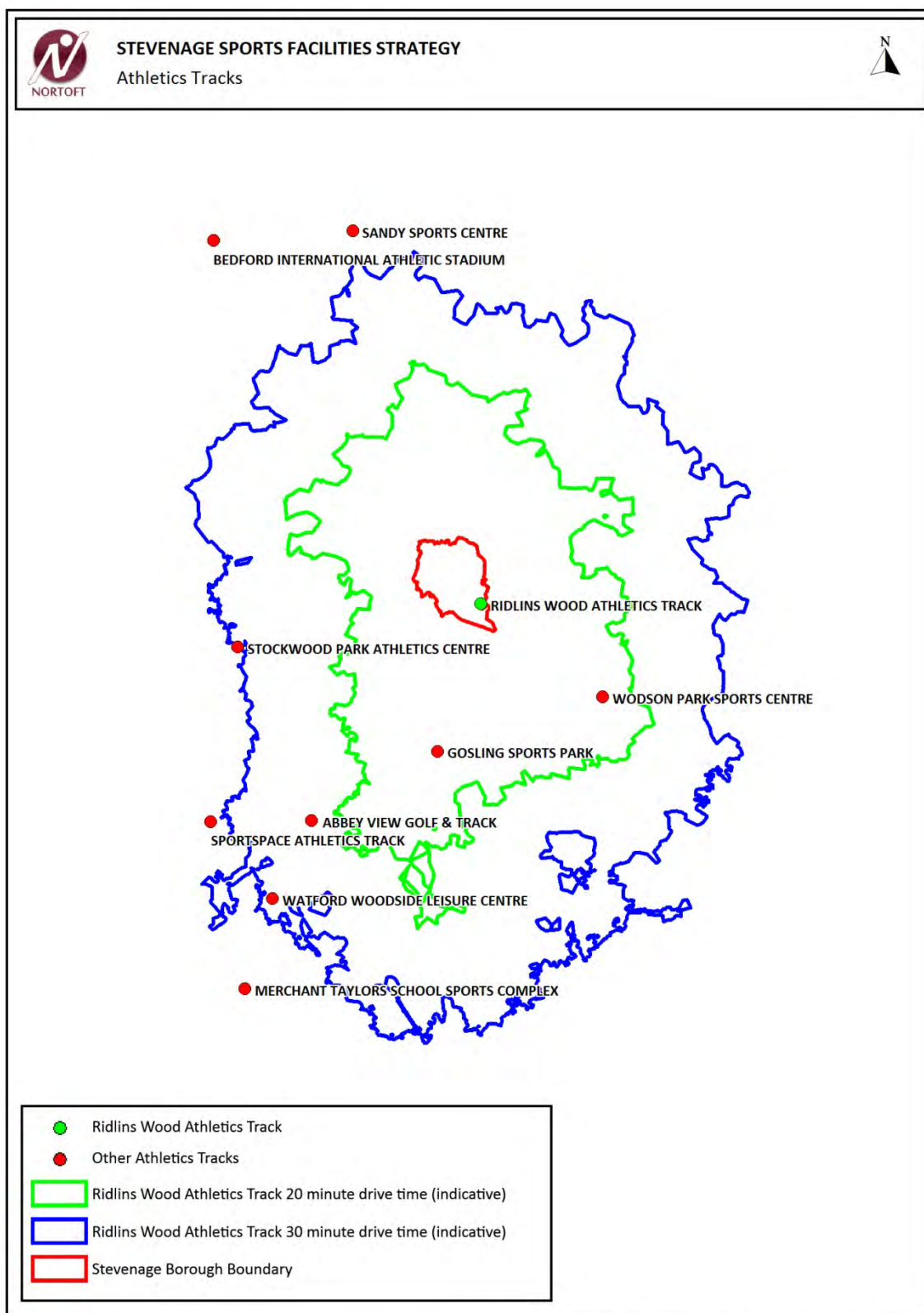
- 7.7 Figure 36 lists the athletic tracks in the Stevenage area and Figure 37 shows the location of the Ridlins Wood track, with both a 20 and 30 minute drive time around it. This demonstrates that the 20 minute drive time catchment of the Stevenage track covers both Wodson Park and Gosling Park, and that other tracks are within or close to the 30 minute drive time. This implies that the catchments of the athletics tracks in the Hertfordshire area significantly overlap.
- 7.8 The tracks within the 30 minute catchment have the following certification as at December 2013. Grade A tracks are suitable for competition and have no restrictions, whilst Grade B tracks have some safety or other issues and can only be used for league competition which do not have a full range of events.

*Figure 36: Track gradings within 30 minutes drive*

Track	Current Grade	Date that current certificate expires	Issue
Ridlins Wood, Stevenage	B	Feb 18	Steeplechase barrier tops required plus replacement/repairs to small discus cage [works now completed]
Abbey View Golf and Track (aka Westminster Lodge), St Albans	B	April 16	Pole vault unsafe. 6 lane track. No measurement survey
Gosling Park Stadium, Welwyn	B	July 13	6 lane track. Non adjustable steeplechase
Stockwood Park, Luton	A	March 16	
Woodside Stadium, Watford	A	April 18	
Wodson Park Sports Centre (aka Stuart Storey Athletic Track), Ware	B	June 17	Steeplechase water jump not usable

- 7.9 The track at Stevenage is primarily used by the athletics club, both for training and events. However it is also used by schools both from within and outside Stevenage. For the year ending March 2014 there were a total of 624 group bookings for the facility.
- 7.10 The year ending March 2014 saw an income from the track of around £18,000, but an expenditure on maintenance of £100,000, which is primarily staff time. This staff time was taken up mainly with: sweeping the track; sweeping around the sand pits; and strimming and mowing.

Figure 37: Athletics tracks locations



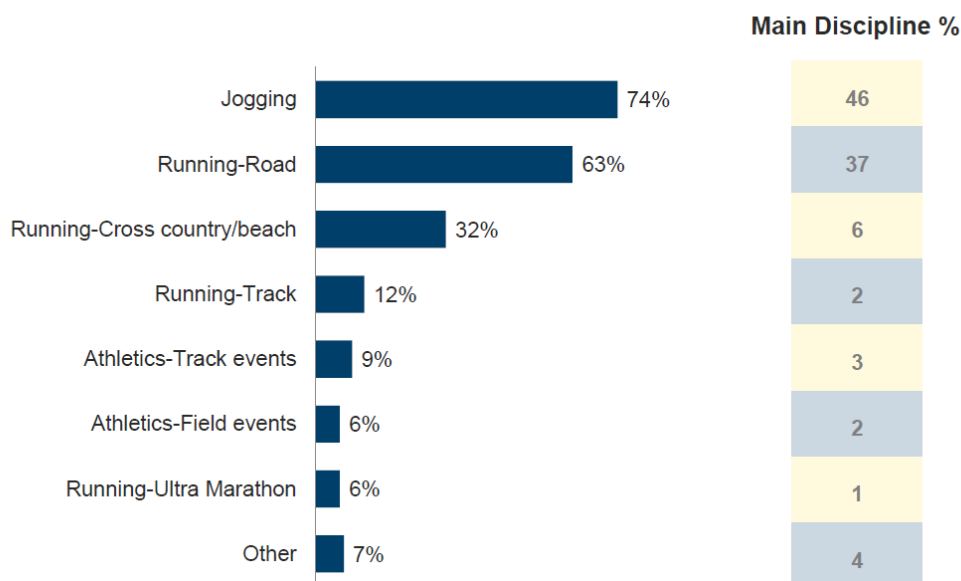
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right. 2014.

7.11 Sport England research considers the split between the different types of athletics activity and where it takes place. The results of the national level research published in 2012 are given in Figure 38.

**Figure 38: Athletics participation details**

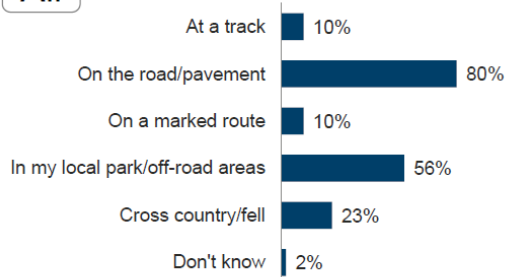
Source: Satisfaction with the quality of the sporting experience survey (SQSE 4)  
Results for Athletics: Trends 2009-2012, July 2012 (Sport England)

**Q. Thinking about Athletics, please state which disciplines you participate in:**

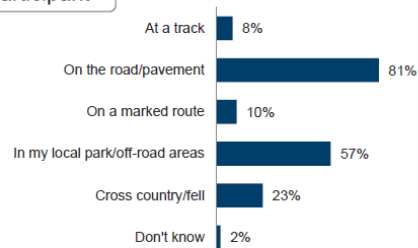


**Q. In what setting do you usually run?**

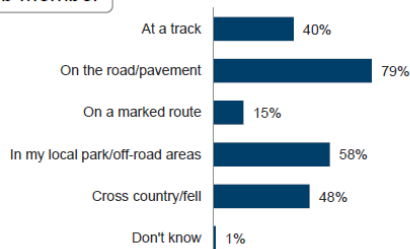
**All**



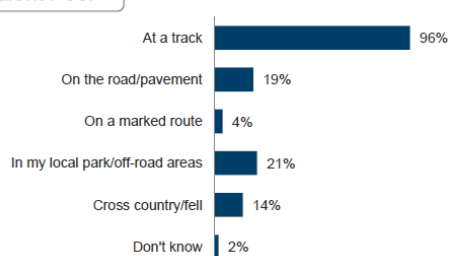
**Participant**



**Club Member**



**Talent Pool**



## Recent consultations

### Individuals and Students

- 7.12 Although the Individual and Student surveys in Stevenage were not large enough to give a statistical breakdown of the use of the traffic free routes, parks etc in the Borough, it is clear from the results that non track based athletics is important.
- 7.13 Both the surveys of individuals (over 16 years) and students (under 16 years) identified traffic free walking routes as the most important “facility” in Stevenage. About 40% of individual respondents said that they use the walking routes, and these are the second most used facility for students. About 67% of respondents to the individual survey took part in athletics including running and jogging at least once a week, and a further 33% took part at least once a month.
- 7.14 About 4% of individuals use an athletics track, and 45% of respondents to the survey felt that the current levels of athletics provision were “about right”.

### Clubs

- 7.15 The Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Athletics Club is the home club for Ridlins Wood which it uses between 3 and 6 times a week. The club currently has around 340 members of all age groups, with around 40% of members coming from Stevenage. The club also draws members from the surrounding areas including Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston. Most members will drive up to 30 minutes to reach the track, although the minis (primary age) this tends to be up to about 20 minutes. There is a school- club link established with Nobel School.
- 7.16 The club’s membership has increased over the past 5 years and the club expects this growth to continue. The club has a formal development plan and facility aspirations include: an outdoor gym, electronic timing, purpose built clubhouse and fitness area, and additional storage particularly for the disability equipment. The club feel that these facilities would help to retain the older young people who have more intensive training needs. The proposals have yet to be formalised or confirmed for viability.
- 7.17 The club feels that additional car parking and toilet facilities would also be of benefit when the site is used for competition.
- 7.18 A significant issue for the club is the need to have proof of the long term commitment of Stevenage Borough Council to the athletics track facility, for them to unlock external funding. This lack of formal commitment has effectively barred the club from any applications for significant amounts of external grant aid towards the ancillary facilities it desires on site. The larger the grant aid sought, the longer the term any site needs to have guaranteed community use. This can be for up to 20 years for the larger capital grants.



## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 7.19 There are two governing bodies overseeing athletics in England, England Athletics and UK Athletics. In relation to Stevenage, the latter is primarily responsible for facility accreditation.
- 7.20 England Athletics' Strategic Facilities Plan 2012-2017 has a number of sections and also identifies priority locations for England Athletics investment which are mainly large cities, and therefore does not include Stevenage. The key points from the England Athletics strategy are drawn out below.

### *Road and Off-Road Running*

- 7.21 The development and promotion of at least one measured running route in every town or city with a population of over 100,000 by 2017.
- 7.22 Although Stevenage falls below this population figure, the opportunities presented by the town's Fairlands Valley Park which is already used as a regular running venue by both clubs and individuals, plus the network of traffic free pedestrian routes suggests that the development of measured routes would be relatively easy to achieve. This would also help to support measures to increase general community participation in running and jogging within Stevenage.

### *Track and Field*

- 7.23 The facility priorities for 2012-2017 include the upgrading of field event facilities and equipment, clubhouse modernisation projects, access improvements for disabled athletes, and track floodlighting.
- 7.24 Although Stevenage is not identified as a priority area for its investment, the aspirations of the club fit with the project priorities identified, and if achieved may help the club to be more financially sustainable in the long term, through the attraction and retention of more members.

### *Indoor Facilities*

- 7.25 Training facilities are either purpose built or conversions or extensions to existing large halls, which can also be used for limited competition. Ideally these are co-located at tracks. Most indoor athletics training facilities, other than those used for elite and high performance training, now usually share space with other sports in order to generate revenue and maximise use. Purpose-built halls normally incorporate long straights of 80m to 100m with run-offs, whilst multi-purpose halls may include 80m straights as a maximum.

- 7.26 Sports halls are a key component of club athletics activity and are a vital resource, particularly during the winter months for circuit training and other forms of fitness training. Although multi-purpose, they provide indoor space for sports hall athletics, entry level activities for young people, and a range of other athletics training and learning programmes.
- 7.27 The athletic club's links to Nobel School effectively provides this indoor training opportunity, and the sports hall at the A&LC or its replacement used for sports hall athletics competitions.

#### *Facility and equipment budget costs*

- 7.28 Appendix 5 of the England Athletics Facilities Plan provides an indication of facility budget costs, based on UK Athletics, Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA), industry cost guidance, and Sport England Facility Costs.
- 7.29 Ridlins Wood was built in 1994, so the track is likely to require full resurfacing by 2020, with a 2012 estimated cost of £290,000. A new throws cage is estimated by the NGB to cost around £35,000, but the UK Athletics assessment in May 2014 appears to suggest that it is repairs that are required rather than a new cage.

#### *Additional comment from England Athletics*

- 7.30 England Athletics' view on the track at Stevenage is that whilst the NGB does not feel it generally necessary to build new tracks in the Hertfordshire area, they would like the existing track to be retained as it is well utilised by clubs, schools and the local community. England Athletics' notes that the club has more than 300 members, and is growing. Of particular importance is the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire's disability squad which is one of the largest in the south, and attracts athletes from a wide area.
- 7.31 The option of a community asset transfer of the site including the track to the club would be challenging given the club's current membership levels. However if the club was able to grow significantly and generate much more income from users, for example through the fitness gym, then there may be a more scope for the club taking over more responsibilities in the medium-longer term.

## **Modelling**

- 7.32 A number of tools have been used to assess the future needs for athletics tracks and the results are set out below. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model and Sports Facility Calculator are not available for athletics tracks.
- 7.33 It should be noted that this modelling is focussed on Stevenage itself and does not take into account the wider catchment area of the club, which includes in particular

but not exclusively North Hertfordshire. This approach has been adopted to the modelling because otherwise there would be a need to identify potential housing growth in North Hertfordshire and other neighbouring authorities, and this housing growth is yet to be confirmed.

- 7.34 It is not possible to do formal modelling on the non-track based athletics activities.

## Market Segmentation and sports development

- 7.35 The Market Segmentation information from Sport England suggests that athletics (including jogging etc) is an appealing sport for several of the largest Market Segments in Stevenage, although this is often considered the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> most attractive sport.
- 7.36 In relation to wider sports development, athletics are offered via schools, both outdoor, and as sports halls athletics.

## Comparator authorities' provision

- 7.37 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision for Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 39. This comparison suggests that the provision in Stevenage is more than some of the comparators but in line with others, reflecting the fact that athletics tracks are often in practice providing for more than one authority area, as at Stevenage.

*Figure 39: Athletics Tracks - comparator authorities*

Comparator	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	Number of athletics tracks (synthetic)	Provision per 1000
Stevenage	85,245	1	0.012
Gravesham	104,200	0	0.000
Harlow	84,409	1	0.012
Redditch	84,800	1	0.012
Wellingborough	76,900	0	0.000
Basildon	178,614	1	0.006
Hertfordshire	1,151,000	7	0.006
East Region	6,001,000	30	0.005
England	54,472,081	260	0.005

## Summary of current situation

- 7.38 Athletics in its widest sense is an important activity in Stevenage, with the majority taking place on traffic free routes and in the green spaces. A high proportion of Stevenage residents run, jog or do other athletics activities, though only a small proportion use the athletics track at Ridlins Wood.
- 7.39 The track at Ridlins Wood is 8 lane and is currently certified by UK Athletics as Grade B. The track is a sub-regional facility, providing opportunities for athletes from across Stevenage and also the adjoining areas. It is particularly important for disabled athletics. The site is also used for schools competitions, both for schools from Stevenage and outside.
- 7.40 The main user is Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club, and the site is managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

- 7.41 The Nortoft Calculator forecasts future need for facilities based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation of 0.5% per annum. Figures 41a and 41b show that the provision in Stevenage is well above the national average, simply reflecting that it has a track. It should be noted that this Calculator has not attempted to take account of the populations in the adjoining areas, from which the track also draws users.
- 7.42 Even with a growth of 8200 dwellings, no additional track space is required up to 2031.

*Figure 40: Nortoft Calculator - Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	1	0.01
National	260	0.00
East of England	30	0.00
Harlow	1	0.01

*Figure 41a: Nortoft Calculator results and athletics tracks - 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional tracks required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.01	0	0	0	0	0.01
0.00	-1	-1	-1	-1	0.01
0.00	-1	-1	-1	0	0.01
0.01	0	0	0	0	0.01

*Figure 41b: Nortoft Calculator results and athletics tracks - 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional tracks required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.01	0	0	0	0	0.01
0.00	-1	-1	-1	0	0.01
0.00	-1	-1	0	0	0.01
0.01	0	0	0	0	0.01

## Summary of future requirements

- 7.43 The modelling tools indicate that allowing for a 0.5% annual growth in participation in athletics there will be insufficient growth in demand even with the new housing at the higher level, to justify further formal athletics provision.
- 7.44 It should be noted however that if there was to be additional housing growth outside of Stevenage but within the catchment area of the track, particularly within a 20 minute radius, that there would be further pressures on the facility.
- 7.45 If the track regains its Grade A status, then it will be able to continue to host events, and be considered suitable for the whole range of school activities. As such it will be able to attract more usage and a higher level of revenue income.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 7.46 The existing track at Ridlins Wood should be fully maintained and the issues addressed which were identified by UK Athletics. An early reassessment should be sought to enable the track to be recertified at Grade A, which will enable the current club to expand and to hold a range of events in the future.
- 7.47 The Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club has a formal development plan and its facility aspirations include: an outdoor gym, electronic timing, purpose built clubhouse and fitness area, and additional storage particularly for the disability equipment. The club feel that these facilities would help to retain the older young people who have more intensive training needs, but have yet to formalise the proposals or to check their viability. Additional car parking and toilet facilities on the site would also be of benefit when the site is used for competition.
- 7.48 The track at Ridlins Wood is managed by Stevenage Borough Council. The opportunity to involve the club more in the management of the site over time should be actively explored as this may result in some cost savings. The option of linking the management of this site with a wider sport and leisure facilities contract, could also be considered.
- 7.49 In relation to wider athletics activity in Stevenage, the opportunity should be taken to support running, jogging etc on the traffic free routes in the town and within the parks and green spaces. England Athletics have developed and is promoting a measured route approach, which would be appropriate for Stevenage to support physical activity generally.

## Development of a planning standard

- 7.50 The assessment and analysis of the needs for Stevenage in relation to athletics suggests that the priorities are to retain and improve the existing Ridlins Wood Stadium and to support the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Athletics Club in its aspirations in relation to the ancillary facilities at the track, including improvements to the clubhouse, storage and gym/fitness facilities.
- 7.51 There would also be good reasons for support to other athletics non-track facilities, including measured routes, as promoted by England Athletics.

### *Standard for quantity*

- 7.52 The retention of the outdoor track at Ridlins Wood provides a planning standard of 0.01 tracks per 1000 up to 2031.
- 7.53 One or more measured courses utilising Fairlands Valley Park and the network of traffic free pedestrian routes.



7.54 This approach is justified because:

- The amount of athletics track provision at the present time meets the needs of the community into the long term.
- The success of the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Athletics Club in attracting new members, and providing for people with disabilities.
- There are significant numbers of people keen on athletics across Stevenage, though only some of these will use the track facilities.
- Measured running and walking routes will encourage further use of the open spaces in Stevenage, and they are already well used for both walking and running.

*Standard for accessibility*

- 7.55 There is a single athletics stadium site in Stevenage, Ridlins Wood which caters for most of the athletics track demand. The catchment is therefore the whole Borough and no specific accessibility standard is required.
- 7.56 The catchment of the track is in practice 30 minutes travel time by car, so there would be justification to seek developers' contributions towards the facility from both North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire Districts.

*Standard for design and quality*

- 7.57 The Grade A track certification should be retained.
- 7.58 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing body. This should apply to refurbishment proposals for the track, and any additional facilities on site. It will also apply to the measured routes.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 7.59 Stevenage hosts an active athletics club at Ridlins Wood with around 340 members, of which around 40% come from the Borough, with some are from the surrounding villages, from Hitchin and from Letchworth. The next nearest tracks are at Gosling Park and Wodson Park Sports Centre, both within a 20 minutes drive time, however given that there is a strong club at Ridlins End there is obviously local demand for this facility.
- 7.60 The 8 lane track in Stevenage is currently certified as Grade B, but only minor works were required as at May 2014 for the track to enable the track to be recertified to Grade A. This recertification visit by UK Athletics is not scheduled, so would be for Stevenage Borough Council to request.
- 7.61 The club would like to develop some ancillary facilities which they believe would help them retain existing members and increase their attractiveness to new members. These facility ideas need confirmation in terms of the details, and feasibility assessments to confirm their viability, but include: an outdoor gym; electronic timing; purpose built clubhouse/room with fitness area; and additional storage for equipment, particularly that associated with the disability athletics aspects of the club.
- 7.62 The site is managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council and receives significant deficit funding, which is challenging for the authority.
- 7.63 The athletics club uses the site on a hire basis, with no long term guarantee of use. This is an issue for the club who would like the opportunity to bid for external funds but cannot do so without a formal commitment by Stevenage Borough Council to the long term future of the site.
- 7.64 England Athletics has confirmed the importance of the track with its club to the local area, but Stevenage is not one of the national governing body's priority areas for investment.
- 7.65 In terms of the attractiveness of athletics to the residents of Stevenage, this type of activity is appealing to several of the largest market segment groups, though only about 10% of all athletics activity (which includes jogging/running) probably takes place at the track itself. The existence of traffic free pedestrian routes and the opportunities for running in parks and open spaces, is therefore also important in Stevenage.

### *Future requirements*

- 7.66 The demand for athletics will increase up to 2031 with more housing in Stevenage and a growing interest in the activities. However this growth will not be sufficient to justify the development of an additional athletics track. Instead the existing track and its ancillary facilities should be enhanced to increase its capacity in order to meet the expected additional demand. The ancillary facilities would enable the track to cater for more people because some of the activities including fitness training, coaching feedback etc. could then take place away from the track itself.
- 7.67 There is a need for Stevenage Borough Council to commit to the long term future of the track, so that external investment can be unlocked.
- 7.68 There will be a need to resurface the track in the future, probably around 2020. If possible the track should be retained throughout at Grade A certification standard to enable the club to offer the widest range of athletics training and events, though other tracks in the sub-region are more likely to be able to cater for the larger events.
- 7.69 At present the club would be unlikely to be in a position to take on the site under any Community Asset Transfer arrangement. There may however be ways in which the club could become more involved in the site, and if the club is able to grow further, perhaps take on a more significant management role. The proposals of the club for improved ancillary facilities should therefore be explored, and detailed feasibility studies should be undertaken to confirm the details and costs, and anticipated benefits.
- 7.70 There is also a clear need to support the non-track based athletics activity in the authority, and England Athletics is supporting a measured route approach. Although Stevenage is not a priority authority for these for NGB funding, the opportunities presented by Stevenage's open spaces, Fairlands Valley Park, and the traffic free pedestrian and cycle routes could be a good way of encouraging more active use of these outdoor spaces.

### *Recommendations*

- 7.71 The existing 8 lane track at Ridlins Wood should be retained.
- 7.72 Whilst the costs of maintaining the track are relatively low, then the track should be maintained at a Grade A level to enable the club to offer the widest range of activities safely to their members, to allow the track to generate income from events, and to enable the widest sports development offer. This situation should be reviewed in 2019 prior to the decision to refurbish the track which is due in around 2020.

- 7.73 Any outstanding works which are required to regain the Grade A certification should be undertaken, and an early visit by UK Athletics for the formal recertification should be requested.
- 7.74 Improve the ancillary facilities on the site to help the club to attract and retain members, and to enable the site to cater for more demand in the longer term. These ancillary facilities need to be confirmed through a feasibility check, including the costs and benefits.
- 7.75 Review the management arrangements for the track, and provide a long term commitment to the site so that external grant aid can be attracted.
- 7.76 Develop measured walking and running routes in association with England Athletics and other partners, utilising Fairlands Valley Park and traffic free routes elsewhere in Stevenage.
- 7.77 The authority wide planning standard is proposed as:
- 0.01 tracks per 1000 up to 2031.
  - One or more marked routes utilising Fairlands Valley Park and the network of traffic free pedestrian routes across Stevenage.
  - 30 minutes travel time catchment for the athletics track.
  - The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing body. This should apply to the track refurbishment proposals as well as new build of any ancillary facilities.

## SECTION 8: FITNESS FACILITIES

### Introduction

- 8.1 This section primarily considers indoor fitness facilities but it also refers to the outdoor fitness facilities provided in parks and open spaces in Stevenage. Additionally, in this section is the consideration of studio space, which are multi-purpose rooms used for a range of fitness activities and dance, and which are usually an integral part of any leisure centre or commercial fitness site.
- 8.2 The provision of health and fitness facilities (typically including fitness stations) is potentially a key element in achieving increased participation in physical activity. However there is no simple way of assessing participation in individual gym and fitness activities, nor the spaces they need. One method in relation to indoor facilities is to analyse the provision per 1000 people of the fitness facilities which have a number of 'stations'. A station might be for example a single treadmill. In relation to outdoor fitness/green gym facilities, there are no formalised or standardised methodologies which enable modelling on their expected use.
- 8.3 The Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) encourages equipment and facilities to be fully accessible to people with a range of disabilities.
- 8.4 There are no National Governing Bodies for fitness and gym activities.

### Participation in fitness activities

- 8.5 Indoor gyms and studios attract all socio-economic groups and a wide spread of ages. However, there are more women users than men, and most people are aged under 45 years. The more expensive private sector clubs usually provide for the more affluent, whilst local authority facilities and commercial pay-and-play facilities provide for a wider social range, albeit with less facility investment or lower intensity staffing.
- 8.6 The Sport England Active People Survey concludes that the top activity in Stevenage is gym (including activities such as fitness classes), with fitness/conditioning as the fifth most undertaken activity (includes weight training, running machines, cross training and circuit training). The rates of participation in gym activities in Stevenage are above both the regional and England average rates.

## Current provision

- 8.7 There are currently 10 indoor health and fitness sites with fitness stations available to the community in Stevenage, plus a private staff only facility at Glaxo SmithKline. There are also 12 studios, mainly on the same sites. Figure 42 lists the sites and facilities and Figures 43 and 44 show their location, together with those close to Stevenage in the adjoining authorities. Odyssey Health and Fitness, which is just over the border and has 80 fitness stations and 1 studio.
- 8.8 Of the indoor fitness stations available for community use within Stevenage (564 stations) about 40% are available on a pay and play basis, with the remainder available for registered members only. About 77% of the provision is commercial. The private fitness gym at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) which has 50 stations, has access restricted to the GSK staff.
- 8.9 At present there are no IFI accredited facilities in Stevenage and the nearest ones are in Watford and Luton.

*Figure 42: Fitness facilities - current provision available to the community*

Site Name	Number of Stations	Studio	Ownership Type	Access Type
ACTIVE4LESS (STEVENAGE)	40	1	Commercial	Pay and Play
BARCLAY SCHOOL	0	1	Community school	Club / sports organisations
BARNWELL SPORTS CENTRE	0	2	Community school	Club / sports organisations
CHANGES GYM	27	0	Commercial	Registered Membership use
DAVID LLOYD CLUB (STEVENAGE)	99	1	Commercial	Registered Membership use
FIT4LESS (STEVENAGE)	96	2	Commercial	Registered Membership use
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	13	2	Community school	Pay and Play
NOBEL SCHOOL	13	1	Community school	Club / sports organisations
PUMPED GYM	80	0	Commercial	Pay and Play
STEVENAGE ARTS & LEISURE CENTRE	92	2	Local Authority	Pay and Play
STEVENAGE SWIMMING CENTRE	9	0	Local Authority	Registered Membership use
TRUGYM STEVENAGE	95	1	Commercial	Registered Membership use



Figure 43: Indoor fitness station facilities in Stevenage

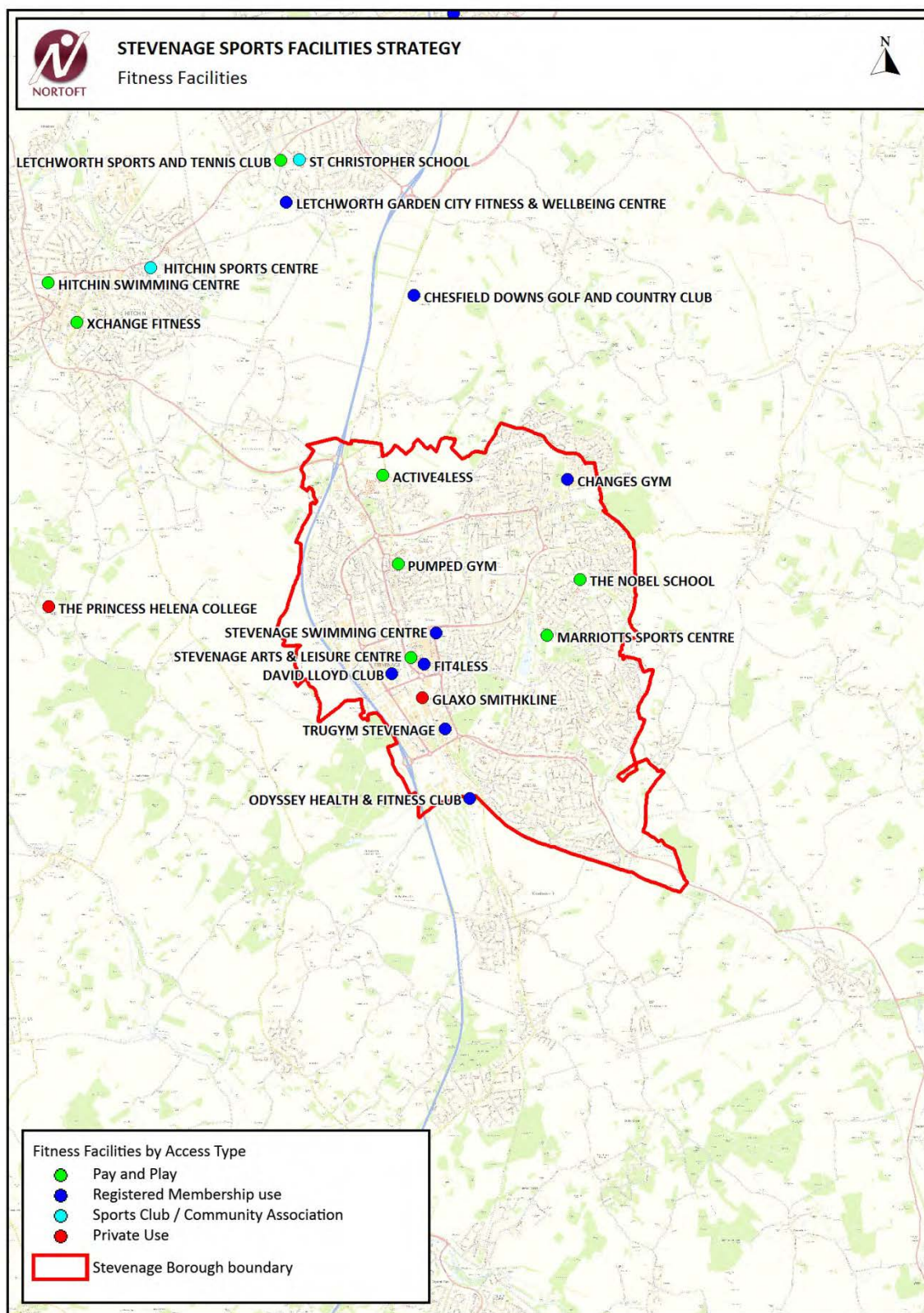
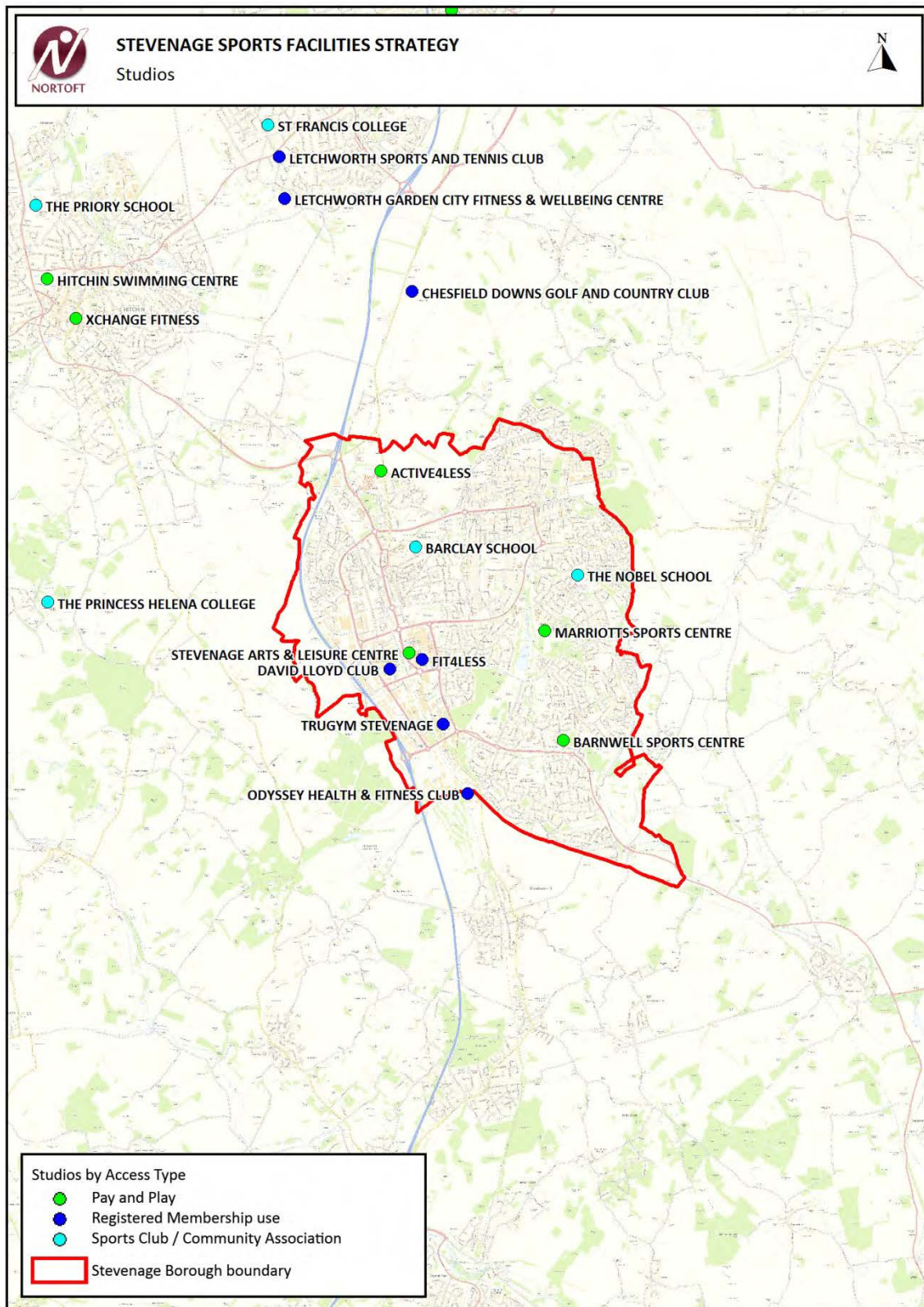


Figure 44: Indoor fitness facilities – studios



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- 8.11 Some of the parks have outdoor gym equipment. There is relatively new equipment at the Town Centre Gardens and at Shephalbury Park, and older equipment at St Nicholas and Hampson parks. This equipment is accessed on an informal basis and is maintained by Stevenage Borough Council. It enhances the experiences of users of the parks, and helps general levels of fitness provision.

## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 8.12 Health and fitness facilities are often co-located with other sports facilities because as a net income earner, they can support the financial viability of other facilities, particularly swimming pools.
- 8.13 There is no easy way of assessing the balance in supply and demand, however as a high proportion of the fitness gyms with fitness stations and studios are based at commercial sites, it can be assumed that the demand for facilities balances the supply.
- 8.14 The only information about throughput which is available on usage is from SLL for the A&LC and the Swimming Centre, because the information elsewhere is commercially sensitive. The A&LC has around 79,000 visits for fitness gyms for the year ending March 2014, and a further around 42,000 visits for classes over the same period. The fitness gym usage at the Swimming Centre was around 12,000 for the year ending March 2014 and fitness classes attracted around 5,000 over the same period. Overall there has been a 30% increase in fitness visits between the year ending March 2013 and March 2014.
- 8.15 In terms of geographical location, it is notable that although there are a number of indoor fitness sites within easy reach of Stevenage within North Hertfordshire, there are none in East Hertfordshire. Also notable is the location of most of the registered members gyms, which except for Changes Gym are located close to the main road arteries of the town and within easy reach of the motorway junctions.
- 8.16 There are no user statistics for the outdoor fitness gym equipment.

## Recent consultations

### *Individual survey and student survey*

- 8.17 Both the individual survey of adults and the student survey confirmed the high importance of indoor gym and fitness provision across the age groups. There was some demand for more indoor provision accessible to young people under the age of 16. More details of the surveys and the findings are provided in Section 3 of this report.

*SLL survey, August 2011*

8.18 SLL conducted a small (50 respondents) survey in the town in August 2011 to specifically explore the option of developing more health and fitness provision at the Arts & Leisure Centre. Of those surveyed, about 40% had used the fitness facilities at the A&LC with a similar percentage having used other gyms. The reasons why people did not use the A&LC in descending order were:

- Lack of time
- Location
- No interest
- Cost
- Car parking
- Lack of knowledge about it
- Cleanliness

8.19 Gym/fitness and workout classes were the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most likely to interest those surveyed, with swimming being the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 8.20 Indoor fitness gym and related activities appeal to a number of the largest market segment groups in Stevenage, and will include activities such as: gym, step machine, yoga, pilates, body combat, gym running, aerobics, and exercise bike. This level of interest will help to justify further health and fitness provision within the borough.

### Comparator authorities' provision

- 8.21 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision which is available for community use for Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 45.

*Figure 45: Indoor fitness stations and studios - comparator authorities*

Comparator	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	Number of health and fitness stations	Number of studios
Stevenage	85,245	564	12
Gravesham	104,200	404	11
Harlow	84,409	591	10
Redditch	84,800	634	5
Wellingborough	76,900	363	8
Basildon	178,614	1234	18

- 8.22 Stevenage has a median amount of indoor fitness station provision when compared to the benchmark authorities, but the amount of studio space is higher per 1000 in Stevenage than its comparators. This level of provision is most likely to reflect the nature of Stevenage, and the number of commuters coming into the Borough for work. This is in part evidenced by the high percentage of the fitness facilities that are close to the town centre and the main employment area.
- 8.23 In addition to the indoor facilities within the boundaries of Stevenage, the commercial centre at Odyssey just over the border, has 80 fitness stations. This facility is likely to draw its members from both Stevenage and elsewhere.

## Summary of the current situation

- 8.24 There is a reasonably high level of provision for indoor health and fitness in Stevenage and this is likely to reflect the demand from both Stevenage's residents and commuters. The level of provision is approximately in line with those of the benchmark authorities.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

- 8.25 The Nortoft Calculator forecasts future need based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation. In this version of the model the level of indoor fitness provision in terms of the number of fitness stations in Stevenage is compared to the CIPFA benchmark authorities and also to the Hertfordshire average (Figures 46 and 48). It is clear that the amount of provision varies significantly between the authorities and that Stevenage has towards the higher level of provision.
- 8.26 Figures 47a and 47b are based on the 564 fitness stations within the Stevenage boundary, and Figures 49a and 49b include the site at Odyssey, bringing the starting point to 644 stations.
- 8.27 If the indoor facilities within the Stevenage boundary alone are considered, then the existing rate of provision is 6.62 stations per 1000. Over the period up to 2031 around 105 additional stations would be required for 5200 extra dwellings, and a further 153 would be needed for 8200 extra dwellings. The standard, based on the current one but with a 0.5% per annum increase to allow for increased rates of participation, would be 7.18 stations per 1000.

*Figure 46: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	564	6.62
East of England	31,874	5.31
Hertfordshire	7,300	6.34
Gravesham	404	3.88
Harlow	591	7.00
Redditch	634	7.48
Wellingborough	363	4.72



*Figure 47a: Nortoft Calculator and fitness facilities - 5300 dwellings  
(Facilities within the Stevenage boundary)*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional stations required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
6.62	0	40	73	105	7.18
5.31	-111	-79	-53	-27	5.76
6.34	-24	15	46	77	6.88
3.88	-234	-210	-191	-172	4.21
7.00	33	75	110	144	7.60
7.48	73	119	155	192	8.11
4.72	-162	-133	-110	-87	5.12

*Figure 47b: Nortoft Calculator and fitness facilities – 8200 dwellings  
(Facilities within the Stevenage boundary)*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional stations required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
6.62	0	55	104	153	7.18
5.31	-111	-67	-28	11	5.76
6.34	-24	30	76	123	6.88
3.88	-234	-201	-173	-144	4.21
7.00	33	91	142	194	7.60
7.48	73	136	190	246	8.11
4.72	-162	-122	-88	-53	5.12

Figure 48: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	644	7.56
East of England	31,874	5.31
Hertfordshire	7,300	6.34
Gravesham	404	3.88
Harlow	591	7.00
Redditch	634	7.48
Wellingborough	363	4.72

Figure 49a: Nortoft Calculator and fitness facilities - 5300 dwellings (Including Odyssey)

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional stations required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
7.56	0	46	83	120	8.20
5.31	-191	-159	-133	-107	5.76
6.34	-104	-65	-34	-3	6.88
3.88	-314	-290	-271	-252	4.21
7.00	-47	-5	30	64	7.60
7.48	-7	39	75	112	8.11
4.72	-242	-213	-190	-167	5.12

Figure 49b: Nortoft Calculator and fitness facilities - 8200 dwellings (Including Odyssey)

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional stations required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
7.56	0	63	118	174	8.20
5.31	-191	-147	-108	-69	5.76
6.34	-104	-50	-4	43	6.88
3.88	-314	-281	-253	-224	4.21
7.00	-47	11	62	114	7.60
7.48	-7	56	110	166	8.11
4.72	-242	-202	-168	-133	5.12

- 8.28 If the Odyssey site is included with its 80 fitness stations, the existing rate of provision for the Stevenage residents rises to 7.56 stations per 1000. If this rate of provision is extrapolated up to 2031 and increased by 0.5% per annum, this would bring the rate of provision up to 8.2 stations per 1000, with a requirement for new facilities being an additional 120 stations for the lower housing growth rate, and 174 stations for the higher rate of growth.
- 8.29 Given that a 100-150 station gym is not unusual, this probably means one or two extra fitness facility site(s) may need to be developed in the period up to 2031.
- 8.30 Of the two Nortoft Calculator model approaches, with and without the inclusion of Odyssey, that without is likely to be more accurate in relation to assessing the future needs of Stevenage, as the rate of provision of indoor fitness facilities is already high, well above the Hertfordshire average.
- 8.31 If Odyssey is included in the figures, then the current rate of provision is goes even further above the rates of provision of all of the other comparators. Given the demographics and socio-economic characteristics of Stevenage, this very high rate of provision does not seem to match with the needs of the Stevenage residents alone. It is therefore likely to be reflecting the needs of commuters to an even greater extent.
- 8.32 For the purposes of assessing the future needs of the residents of Stevenage, the version of the Nortoft Calculator which excludes Odyssey therefore appears the most appropriate approach.

### Summary of future requirements

- 8.33 The future demand for both indoor fitness facilities and studios is likely to remain strong and additional provision will be needed as Stevenage grows. This is likely to be in the order of around 77-123 extra fitness stations, and 2-4 extra studio spaces.
- 8.34 However as the fitness market fluctuates reflecting economic prosperity and fitness trends, and is likely to be led by the commercial sector, this should be a considered as a guide rather than a specific target for the period up to 2031.

### Meeting the needs of the future

- 8.35 No new indoor fitness gyms are currently definitely planned, however if the A&LC and Swimming Centre are replaced by a single wet/dry leisure centre then at least the same amount of fitness gym provision (approx 100 stations) should be included as the current total, and ideally increased to 150, given the known latent demand at the A&LC and the increased throughput of users in recent years. There would also be justification for increasing the current total number of studio type spaces in the new facility.

## Development of a planning standard

- 8.36 The following standards are proposed based on the assessment and analysis in above in relation to indoor health and fitness provision. No specific standards are appropriate for the provision of outdoor gym equipment in parks.

### *Standard for quantity*

- 8.37 The proposed rate of provision for indoor fitness facilities is 6.88 stations per 1000 for the period up to 2031.
- 8.38 This approach is justified because:
- Although the amount of provision in Stevenage is relatively high compared to the county average and some of the benchmark authorities, this will reflect the high level of commuting in to the Borough as well as the interest in the activities by residents. A rate of provision based on that of Hertfordshire is most likely to reflect the requirements of residents.
  - The market segmentation analysis suggests that the take up of fitness and gym facilities is high in Stevenage and will continue to be so.
  - The policy on sports participation is to increase the rates of participation by 0.5% per annum.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 8.39 A 10 minute drive time catchment is appropriate for indoor fitness facilities.
- 8.40 This is justified because the current user catchment map for the A&LC demonstrates that the site draws its users from across the town.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 8.41 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England. This should apply to refurbishment proposals as well as new build.
- 8.42 The area for each indoor fitness station is taken to be an average of 5 sq m. It is appropriate that developers should be asked for a contribution towards the building cost for the health and fitness space, but not the equipment which is often supplied on a contract basis.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 8.43 Stevenage has relatively high level of indoor fitness gym provision compared to the Hertfordshire average though it is in line with the some of the benchmark authorities. This rate of provision reflects the fact that Stevenage has a significant commuter inflow and also a large proportion of the population regularly taking part in fitness and gym activities.
- 8.44 Some of the parks also have outdoor gym equipment. There is relatively new equipment at the Town Centre Gardens and at Shephalbury Park, and older equipment at St Nicholas and Hampson parks. This equipment is accessed on an informal basis and maintained by Stevenage Borough Council. It enhances the experiences of users of the parks, and helps general levels of fitness provision. There are no specific user statistics available for the use of this equipment.
- 8.45 The feedback from the surveys of individuals and students confirm that indoor fitness and gym activities are important to residents, and the market segmentation information confirms that indoor fitness/gym activities will remain amongst the top two most important activities in the borough.
- 8.46 At the present time there are no accredited Inclusive Fitness Initiative sites in Stevenage and there is also some demand for gym access by those under 16 years. The development of an IFI centre should be a priority on the grounds of equality of access, but the provision of gyms for young people can be more difficult because of child protection issues and the need for some adapted equipment, which can make them unviable on a commercial basis.

### *Future requirements*

- 8.47 The modelling suggests that for the Stevenage population alone and using the rate of provision for Hertfordshire as at 2031 for both the number of fitness stations and number of studios, around 77-123 indoor additional fitness stations would be required and 2-4 studio spaces would be needed in the period up to 2031, depending on the level of housing growth, changes in the economic climate, and trends in fitness.

### *Recommendations*

- 8.48 The additional indoor fitness provision should be met in the large part by increasing the total amount of gym/fitness provision currently provided at the A&LC and Swimming Centre (101 stations in total) at the proposed replacement wet/dry leisure centre. At least 150 stations should therefore be provided at the new replacement leisure centre. This provision will also help to subsidise other facilities at the leisure centre, particularly the pool. The new leisure centre should also have more studio spaces.

- 8.49 The new replacement leisure centre could be the site for an IFI accredited gym, but if a replacement centre does not go ahead, an IFI site could be developed at either the Swimming Centre or Arts & Leisure Centre. A second IFI site could be developed at Marriotts, because of its geographical location, the existence of a gym with staffing during the day, and the fact that Lonsdale School is adjacent.
- 8.50 Indoor gym provision for young people should also be explored in more depth. The preferred locations are either the replacement wet/dry leisure centre or Marriotts, because they have appropriate staffing levels on site.
- 8.51 The remainder of the expected additional indoor fitness provision needed to cater for both residents and commuters up to 2031, would be expected to be provided via commercial operators or other partners. The exact level of future provision will in practice reflect the demand, and the trends in indoor fitness provision.
- 8.52 No specific planning standards are required for the outdoor fitness gym equipment provided in parks.
- 8.53 The planning standard proposed is:
- 6.88 indoor fitness stations per 1000 for new housing developments
  - 10 minute drive time catchment
  - The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England. This should apply to both new facilities and refurbishment.
- 8.54 The delivery priorities are:
- New facilities:
    - 150+ station gym at the proposed replacement wet/dry leisure centre
    - IFI gym integrated into the new leisure centre, or in either the A&LC or Swimming Centre if replacement facility is not developed
    - Approx 30-70 fitness stations provided by the commercial sector, at one or more sites
  - The other priorities are, following a detailed condition survey and feasibility studies for:
    - Potential for IFI equipment and accreditation at Marriotts Sports Centre.
    - Young person's gym at either the replacement leisure centre, or Marriotts



## SECTION 9: INDOOR BOWLS

### Introduction

- 9.1 National level research demonstrates that bowls is one of the very few sports which primarily attracts older people (55 years plus), and that it draws the largest proportion of its players from the higher socio-economic groups. Stevenage has an aging population and there is expected to be an increase of between about 7,000 and 9,000 extra people aged over 55 years between 2014 and 2031, depending on the number of new dwellings over the period. The current number of people aged 55+ years is just under 22,000, so the percentage increase is more than 130% if the housing growth is 5300 dwellings, and up to 140% with a housing growth of 8200 dwellings.
- 9.2 Indoor bowls greens normally have multiple rinks, but these can vary in number. Two is probably the smallest usable size, but the larger sites often have 8 rinks or more.

### Participation in bowls

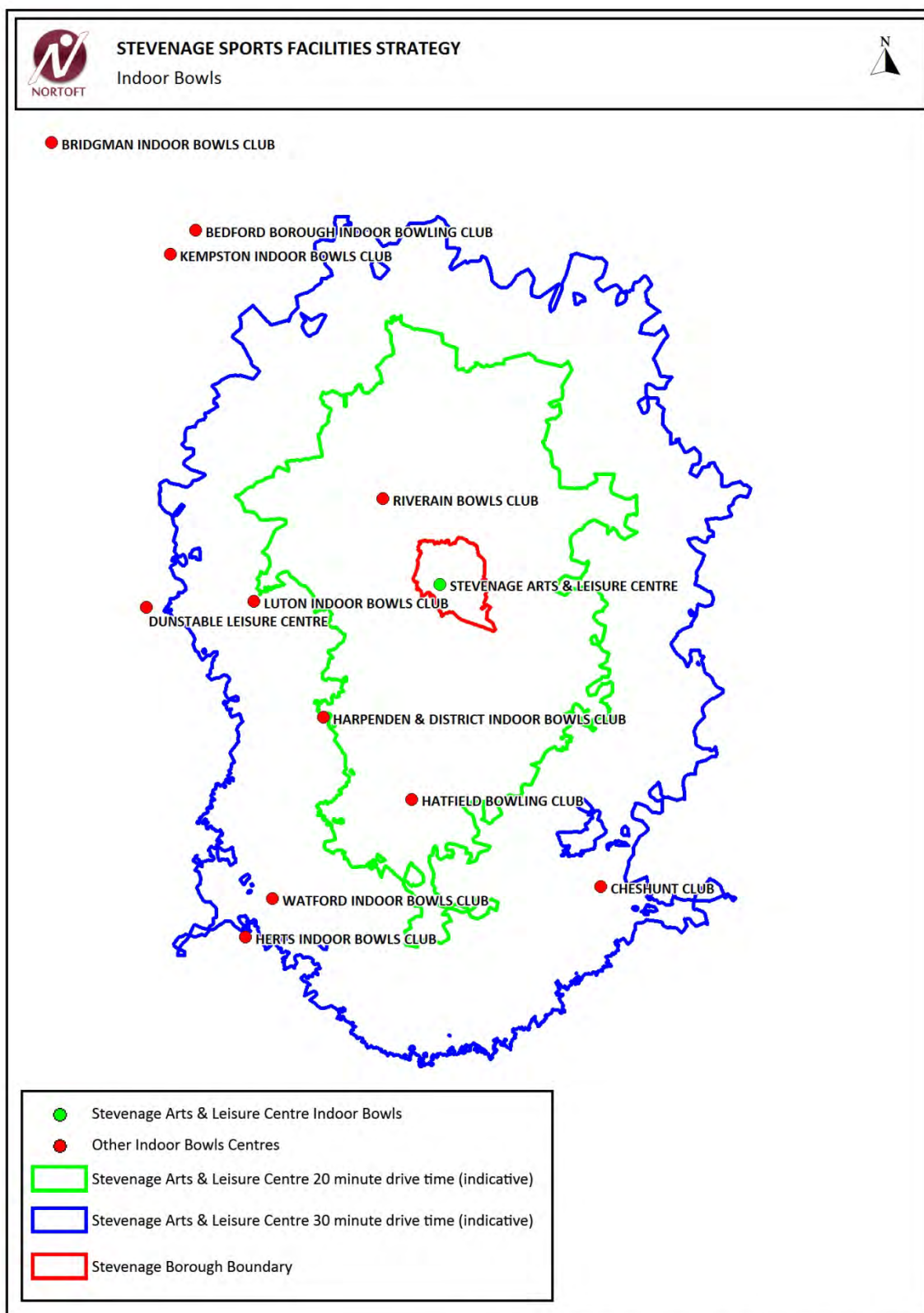
- 9.3 Sport England estimates that nationally about 264,000 adults take part in bowls at least once a week, but there is no specific split between indoor bowls and outdoor.
- 9.4 Indoor bowls is not universally popular throughout England. There are significant regional variations in the provision of indoor bowls centres (IBCs) across the country. Historically, indoor bowls has proved more popular in areas of England where the outdoor game is 'flat green' rather than 'crown green', and the bowling in Stevenage is flat green.

### Current provision

- 9.5 There is one specialist indoor bowls site in Stevenage at the Arts & Leisure Centre (A&LC). The location of the A&LC and the other indoor bowls centres within both a 20 minute and 30 minute drive from the A&LC site, are identified in Figure 50.
- 9.6 The sites closest to Stevenage are:

Riverain	8 rinks
Hatfield	4 rinks
Harpenden	4 rinks

Figure 50: Indoor Bowls



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## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 9.7 The A&LC has six rinks with an estimated use of between 8,500 and 9,000 bowls uses for the year ending March 2014. The facility tends to be used on a seasonal basis, with less use in the summer months when much of the bowls activity moves outside. In the winter the demand peak period is mainly at weekday evenings and weekend evenings, which clashes with the demand from other activities which also use the hall. There is also use during the daytime. The other activities which take place in the bowls hall include badminton, with the green being covered with a roll-out badminton surface. This causes some problems with the bowls surface quality.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

- 9.8 The individuals survey had a small number of returns from people stating that they used the indoor bowls centre.

### Clubs

- 9.9 There are three indoor bowls clubs using the A&LC; the Stevenage Senior Citizens Indoor Bowls Club, the Stevenage Leisure Centre Indoor Bowls Club and Stevenage Leisure 50s Indoor Bowls Club. It is estimated that there are around 280 players in total.
- 9.10 The Stevenage Leisure Centre Indoor Bowls Club responded to the club survey. They currently have about 90 members, all aged over 45 years. Most of the members come from Stevenage but some come from the areas around Stevenage including Datchworth and Baldock. The club has a sports development plan but the club membership has fallen over the past 5 years and the club does not expect to grow in the next 5 years. The main issues affecting their expansion are the hire charges, the quality of the surface, the general cleanliness of the A&LC, poor lighting, and cancelled bookings. The Bowls Club finds it very difficult to book the facility, and do not feel that the management of the A&LC addresses the facility quality problems that they have raised. The availability and cost of car parking is also an issue for regular users.
- 9.11 This trend in the membership of the Stevenage Indoor Bowls club is at odds with the increasing membership of Riverain where the club now has about 1000 members and the site is running very close to full at peak time. It therefore seems likely that if the problems can be overcome at the A&LC in relation to bowls, that the membership levels would increase.

- 9.12 However, the facility approach towards bowls elsewhere with combined sites offering both indoor and outdoor bowls appears to be more favoured generally, and sites such as Riverain and Hatfield Bowls Club are good examples. An option if the A&LC is redeveloped, is therefore to consider if it would be possible to locate an indoor bowls centre close to the existing greens at King George V playing fields (KGV).
- 9.13 Whichever option is followed in the future (the improvement of the existing facility, replacement of the indoor bowls hall as part of the new leisure centre, or new indoor bowls facility possibly at KGV), it will be critical to have an active sports development programme to attract large numbers of new players, and with a new focus on younger players.

## **National Governing Body comments and strategies**

- 9.14 The national governing body for indoor bowls is the English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA) which forms part of the Bowls Development Alliance (BDA). For the period 2013-2017 the BDA has secured funding from Sport England to: grow participation across the adult population aged 55+ years; to provide excellent sporting experiences for existing participants in order to retain membership levels, and; to grow participation of those who have disabilities. It is not clear what financial or other support would be available from the national governing body for any project in Stevenage, but any financial contribution would be likely to be relatively small, particularly as Hertfordshire is not currently one of their priority areas.
- 9.15 The Development Manager of EIBA has offered to support discussions between the indoor bowls clubs and independent bowlers with SLL and Stevenage Borough Council to explore how the current situation and the quality of the facility can be improved. The EIBA officer visited the A&LC in 2011 and was concerned at that time about the relatively poor quality of the facility, and he is not aware of any improvements since to support more bowls use.

## **Modelling**

### **Market Segmentation and sports development**

- 9.16 The Market Segmentation analysis from Sport England suggests that bowls is only participated in by one of the larger market segments in Stevenage. This reflects the characteristics of the sport, which primarily attracts older people despite efforts to attract a higher number of younger players. However the sport of bowls is likely to become increasingly well supported over time in Stevenage, given the significantly aging population.

## Comparator authorities' provision

- 9.17 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision for Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 51. It is clear that even though all of the benchmark authorities are within flat green bowls areas, only some have their own indoor bowls centre.

*Figure 51: Indoor bowls - comparator authorities*

Comparator	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	Number of indoor bowls centres
Stevenage	85,245	1
Gravesham	104,200	0
Harlow	84,409	1
Redditch	84,800	0
Wellingborough	76,900	1
Basildon	178,614	0

## Summary of current situation

- 9.18 The indoor bowls centre at the A&LC was developed as an integral part of the original building. Over time and with the pressures to balance the finances, the use of the indoor bowls centre has become increasingly in favour of other sports such as badminton, and non-sport events.
- 9.19 The bowls use itself has not been closely monitored by SLL but the estimated use of the bowls hall for bowls was around 8,500-9,000 for the year ending March 2014. The views of the national governing body and the clubs are that this bowls use is depressed due to; the relatively poor quality of the venue, the inability to play bowls for much of the peak time, and inherent issues with the centre including lack of easily accessible car parking which restricts usage, particularly by people with disabilities and older people.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

- 9.20 The Nortoft Calculator forecasts future need for facilities based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation. The following tables (Figures 52, 53a and 53b) compare Stevenage to both Hertfordshire and the CIPFA authorities.
- 9.21 Stevenage's current rate of provision in terms of the number of rinks of indoor bowling space is in line with the average for the East of England region, and approximately with Wellingborough. Redditch and Gravesham have no provision, and the rate of provision in Stevenage is higher than that of Hertfordshire as a whole.

*Figure 52: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	6	0.07
East of England	395	0.07
Hertfordshire	40	0.03
Gravesham	0	0.00
Harlow	9	0.11
Redditch	0	0.00
Wellingborough	6	0.08

*Figure 53a: Nortoft Calculator and indoor bowls - 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional rinks required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.07	0	0	1	1	0.08
0.07	0	0	0	1	0.07
0.03	-3	-3	-3	-2	0.04
0.00	-6	0	0	0	0.00
0.11	3	4	4	5	0.12
0.00	-6	0	0	0	0.06
0.08	1	1	2	2	0.08



*Figure 53b: Nortoft Calculator and indoor bowls - 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional rinks required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.07	0	1	1	2	0.08
0.07	0	0	1	1	0.07
0.03	-3	-3	-2	-2	0.04
0.00	-6	0	0	0	0.00
0.11	3	4	5	6	0.12
0.00	-6	0	0	0	0.06
0.08	1	1	2	2	0.08

9.22 The Nortoft Calculator suggests that, based on the current rate of provision and with the lower rate of housing growth, that only one extra rink is needed up to 2031, and that 2 rinks would be required for the higher rate of growth.

9.23 However this calculator does not take into account the change in the age balance of the population with its extra 7,000-9,000 older people by 2031, so may in fact underestimate the level of demand by that time, since bowls is predominately a sport played by people aged over 55 years.

### Sports Facilities Calculator

9.24 Normally the Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) is not used authority wide, but it is useful in the case of Stevenage because of the compact size of the authority. However the findings need to be considered in the light of the facts that; the SFC takes no account of any cross border movement of players; and that it will underestimate the potential demand from Stevenage for indoor bowls because it averages the take up across the country, from both the flat green areas and crown green.

9.25 The SFC (see Figure 54) suggests that the total demand for indoor bowls across Stevenage by 2031 will be 7 rinks under either of the housing growth scenarios. This is similar to the Nortoft Calculator findings.

- 9.26 The demand linked to the specific housing areas and the potential value of the contributions is given below. The new growth will therefore generate additional demand for around one extra rink, and there is a clear justification for contributions to be collected towards an indoor bowls facility.
- 9.27 The SFC suggests that a provision per 1000 rate should be 0.08 rinks per 1000 by 2031 to cater for additional demand.
- 9.28 The estimated value of the contributions from the new housing is based on the Sport England Sports Facilities Cost Fourth Quarter 2013 figures, tailored automatically via the SFC to Hertfordshire.

*Figure 54: SFC and indoor bowls*

	Number of dwellings	Population at 2031 at housing multiplier of 2.28	Indoor bowls (number rinks)	Indoor bowls (£ value of contributions)
<b>Demand across the whole of Stevenage by 2031 (both housing scenarios)</b>			<b>7</b>	
<b>Demand from new housing</b>				
<b>5300 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	0.24	75,233.0
North	750	1710	0.06	18,332.0
South East	400	912	0.07	22,291.0
Town Centre	950	2166	0.17	52,942.0
Elsewhere in the borough	800	1824	0.14	44,582.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4250</b>	<b>9690</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>£213,380</b>

<b>8200 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	0.24	75,233.0
North	870	1984	0.15	48,493.0
South East	550	1254	0.10	30,650.0
Town Centre	3200	7296	0.56	178,329.0
Elsewhere in the borough	1180	2690.4	0.21	65,749.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7150</b>	<b>16302</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>£398,454</b>

## Summary of future requirements

- 9.29 The modelling suggests that there is likely to be justification to increase the current rate of provision (6 rinks) to a 7-8 rink indoor facility by 2031, depending on the housing numbers. However, the main issue in Stevenage is the multi-use nature of the indoor bowls centre, which restricts its capacity, both because of the time limitations on bookings and the quality of the facility. With improvements to the existing facility, the rate of use could be much higher. Therefore, the retention of 6 rinks in Stevenage appears likely to be adequate to meet future demand.
- 9.30 There are also a number of other indoor bowls centres within a 20-30 minute area which may absorb some of this future demand from Stevenage, although Riverain is already running close to full at peak times, and other centres are well used. With the increasingly older populations plus more housing in these surrounding areas, all the existing bowls provision is likely to face increasing demand.
- 9.31 The current rate of provision is 0.07 rinks per 1000 which is in line with the comparator authorities, where they have this facility type. However, the SFC suggests that a higher rate of provision is needed given the older age profile expected by 2031. This is a rate of 0.08 rinks per 1,000.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 9.32 There is an active proposal to replace the A&LC with a wet/dry leisure centre. Whether indoor bowls provision is taken into the new centre, replaced elsewhere, or not replaced will be a key decision. This report provides part of the evidence required to make this decision, but a more detailed feasibility study will be required as the leisure centre proposals progress.

## Development of a planning standard

- 9.33 The following standards relate to specialist indoor bowls facilities and are based on the findings from this assessment.

### *Standard for quantity*

- 9.34 The proposed standard for indoor bowls centres is 0.08 rinks per 1000 for new housing.
- 9.35 This is justified because:
- Although the amount of specialist indoor bowls provision in Stevenage is approximately in line with the benchmark authorities where they have such

provision, the population in Stevenage is expected to age significantly in the period up to 2031, with between 7,000 and 9,000 extra people aged 55 years plus.

- The current rate of provision is 0.07 rinks per 1000.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 9.36 A 10 minute drive time catchment is appropriate for the specialist indoor bowling rink in Stevenage.
- 9.37 This is justified by the mapping of the home locations of the A&LC member users aged 60+ years (see Figure 10), and the fact that most of the Stevenage Leisure Centre Indoor Bowls Club members are from across Stevenage.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 9.38 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the National Governing Body. This should apply to refurbishment proposals as well as new build.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Current supply and demand*

- 9.39 At the present time the provision for indoor bowls is via the 6 rink bowls hall at the A&LC, and there were about 8,500-9,000 visits each year for bowling over the past 3 years. The current facility is not fully available for indoor bowling and there are a number quality issues which impact upon its use.
- 9.40 There are three bowls clubs, but the membership of the Stevenage Indoor Bowls Club is gradually declining. The club considers that this largely due to the problems experienced with the current provision, including the quality of the bowls surface, lighting, and difficulties in booking evenings and weekends.
- 9.41 The declining membership at Stevenage is at odds with other clubs such as Riverain and Hatfield, but these successful clubs have both indoor and outdoor greens which are fully available and are used by members all year round. Having a site which has both indoor and outdoor bowls provision would therefore be likely to be a better option for Stevenage, than the split site provision which is currently the case.
- 9.42 Participation information shows that bowls is primarily a sport for people over 55 years, so is not a major activity in Stevenage at the present time. However the

demographics indicate that there will be an increase of between 7,000 and 9,000 people over 55 years within the town by 2031. The demand for bowls, including indoor bowls, is therefore expected to rise.

#### *Future requirements*

- 9.43 The assessment suggests that the current provision in Stevenage is in line with the East of England region average, though above that for Hertfordshire as a whole. There will be a continuing need for a total of 6 rinks of indoor bowling space in the period up to 2031, assuming any new facility can be dedicated to bowling and is of good quality.
- 9.44 This provision may be as part of the new wet/dry leisure centre, but a better option may be a new bowls hall sited close to the existing greens at the King George V playing fields. This would enable an unrestricted high quality club offer throughout the year. However the options and costs for this would need to be confirmed through a detailed feasibility study.
- 9.45 If the new leisure centre is not progressed, then the quality and programming issues for the existing bowls hall should be addressed.

#### *Recommendations*

- 9.46 If the new replacement leisure centre is developed then a new indoor bowls hall should be separately provided, located if possible adjacent to the existing bowls greens at King George V playing fields. It should have 6 rinks. A full feasibility study including management options should be undertaken to confirm this proposal.
- 9.47 If the replacement leisure centre is not developed then the quality and programming issues for the bowls hall need to be addressed.
- 9.48 The planning standards are proposed as:
- 0.08 rinks per 1000 for new housing
  - 10 minute drive time catchment
  - The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing body. This should apply to both new facilities and refurbishment.

## SECTION 10: OUTDOOR BOWLS

### Introduction

- 10.1 National level research demonstrates that bowls is one of the very few sports which primarily attracts older people (55 years plus). There are two clubs in Stevenage, Stevenage Town Bowls Club which uses the King George V bowls greens, and Three Horseshoes which uses Shephalbury.
- 10.2 All three bowls greens are flat green, rather than crown green. Flat green bowling is the dominant discipline in the southern areas of England, whilst crown green tends to be the discipline found from north Midlands northwards.

### Participation in bowls

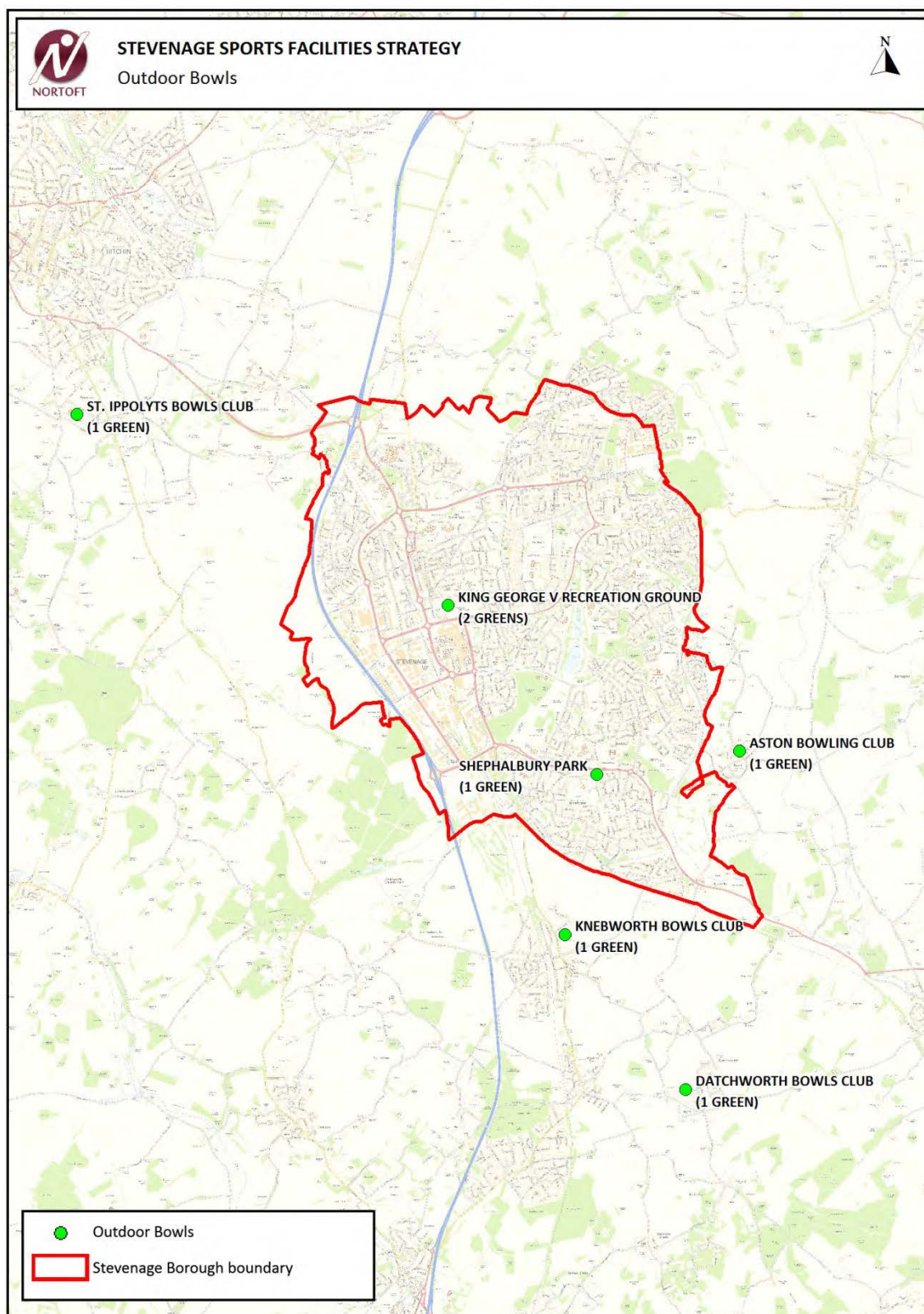
- 10.3 Bowls primarily attracts the older age groups and those from the higher socio-economic groups. Sport England estimates that around 312,000 people take part in any form of bowling at least once a month.
- 10.4 Stevenage has an aging population and there is expected to be an increase of between about 7,000 and 9,000 extra people aged over 55 years between 2014 and 2031, depending on the number of new dwellings over the period. The current number of people aged 55+ years is just under 22,000.

### Current provision

- 10.5 There are 3 outdoor bowling greens on 2 sites in Stevenage, one is at Shephalbury Park with 6 rinks and is used by the Three Horseshoes Bowls Club, and two, each with 6 rinks, are at King George V (KGV) ground and are used by the Stevenage Town Bowls Club. Both greens sites are currently managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council.
- 10.6 The bowling greens at KGV are leased to the Stevenage Town Bowls Club on a 20 year lease, but the pavilion is owned by the club. The Shephalbury site is used by the club there on a hire basis.
- 10.7 Outside of Stevenage the nearest bowls clubs are based at: Aston, Datchworth, Knebworth and St Ippolyts.
- 10.8 The bowling greens in and around Stevenage are mapped in Figure 55.



Figure 55: Outdoor bowls sites



## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 10.9 The location of the two clubs in Stevenage plus those outside the authority mean that everyone in the borough with access to a car can reach a bowls site within 10 minutes drive.
- 10.10 The Stevenage Town Bowls Club currently has about 100 members, and the Three Horseshoes Club is reported by the Hertfordshire Bowls governing body as having 42 members. The Stevenage Town Bowls Club has stated that there is no waiting list, so the club has some spare capacity.
- 10.11 The total number of bowls clubs members across the two sites with the three greens is therefore an average of 41 members per green, which is more than the average number of members at Aston, Knebworth and St Ippolyts but less than the number at Datchworth, which has 52 members. The Stevenage Borough Council site management records for 2013-14 suggest that the existing greens are not being used to their full extent.
- 10.12 The quality of the greens at KGV has improved over recent times and the Stevenage Town Bowls Club reports increasing membership. The main issue on this site is the lack of car parking which restricts the ability to hold matches and causes clashes with cricket. There is also a wish to install floodlights.
- 10.13 In practice and according to Stevenage Borough Council, in 2013 4 rinks were actually used at Shephalbury and a total of 8 rinks were used at King George V ground. There were 745 rink bookings across the three greens ending March 2014, with a total income of £13,392 and expenditure of £85,317. Most of this expenditure relates to staff time for mowing, trimming edges, cutting the surrounds, irrigation by hand and moving rink markers.

## Recent consultations

- 10.14 Stevenage Town Bowls Club members are mostly from Stevenage and travel for up to 30 minutes to reach the KGV site. The club has increased its membership over the past 5 years and expects to grow further in the next 5. The club uses the site both day times and evenings all week, and throughout the year.
- 10.15 Members from the Three Horseshoes Club at Shephalbury attended one of the focus group meetings which were held to support the consultation work on the strategy. They had concerns about the quality of that green, and felt that it restricted their ability to attract new members.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 10.16 The main national governing body for flat green bowls is Bowls England, which was formed by the unification of the English Bowling Association and the English Women's Bowling Association.
- 10.17 The Bowls England Strategic Plan 2014-17 sets out its structure and the organisational links with the Bowls Development Alliance, which is the body recognised by Sport England for the development of the sport, particularly at the grass roots level. The objectives of the strategic plan are the promotion of the sport, the recruitment of members, and their retention.
- 10.18 The Bowls Development Alliance identifies "hot spot" areas for focussing their sports development work. Stevenage was identified as such as part of Hertfordshire in 2011-13, but is not identified for the period 2013-15. The hot spot areas are identified based on criteria including whether an area has a high population of the target age group of 55 years and over, and there is known latent demand.
- 10.19 No specific comments have been received from the national governing bodies in relation to the Assessment and Strategy for Stevenage.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 10.20 The Market Segmentation analysis from Sport England suggests that bowls is participated in by only one of the larger market segments in Stevenage, and they are of retirement age. This reflects the characteristics of the sport, which primarily attracts older people. In relation to the wider sports development initiatives, although bowls as a sport continually attempts to attract younger players, the majority are still retired.

### Summary of current situation

- 10.21 Bowling is a sport that mainly attracts older people, and the two sites with the three greens in Stevenage are used by two clubs. There is some spare capacity as the rinks are not utilised to their fullest extent.
- 10.22 The sites are managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council. The bowling greens at KGV and Shephalbury Park have the same maintenance regime, but the KGV

greens are of better quality. The club playing at KGV has a growing club membership, but the club at Shephalbury Park has not grown in the same way.

- 10.23 The club at KGV suffers from a lack of car parking which impacts upon the ability of the club to hold matches and grow further. The club would also like to install floodlights to extend the playing period and season.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 10.24 There are no Sport England standard tools to compare bowling green provision across authorities, so consideration needs to be given to the level of current provision in Stevenage and whether the demographic change will result in a need for more or fewer facilities.
- 10.25 The number of people aged 55+ years in Stevenage is expected to increase by around 130% or 140% by 2031, reflecting both the housing growth and the overall aging population. If the current average membership per green is extrapolated from the current average of 41 members per green, this might give a membership of between 53 and 57 players per green by 2031. If a participation increase of 0.5% pa is applied, this might give a total demand per green of between 58 and 62 players by 2031.
- 10.26 As costs of developing and maintaining bowls greens is high there is a need to make these facilities as cost neutral as possible, by increasing membership as high as sustainably possible. If there is some spare capacity to cater for more members if existing greens and ancillary facilities can be maintained at a good standard, this may be the most cost effective way of continuing to provide for bowls in Stevenage.

## Nortoft Calculator

- 10.27 The number of outdoor bowling greens is not recorded on Sport England's Active Places database, so it is not possible to compare levels of provision in Stevenage with elsewhere. However, it is possible to use the Nortoft Calculator as a guide to future needs by using the existing level of provision as the starting point. Figures 57a and 57b show that with if the current access to bowls is retained, there will be a need for one additional bowling green site by 2031 if there were to be 5300 dwellings, or by 2026 if there was to be 8,200 dwellings.
- 10.28 This figure does not however take into account the changing number of older people in Stevenage, which is expected to increase by between 7,000 and 9,000 in the period up to 2031, depending on the level of housing growth. The key issue is then whether the existing facilities are being used to capacity, or if they are able to absorb more members.

*Figure 56: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	3	0.04

*Figure 57a: Nortoft Calculator and outdoor bowls - 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional greens required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.04	0	0	0	1	0.04

*Figure 57b: Nortoft Calculator and outdoor bowl - 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional greens required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.04	0	0	1	1	0.04

## Summary of future requirements

- 10.29 The modelling suggests that with the new housing growth in Stevenage that one additional green would be required between 2026 and 2031. However it is known that there is some spare capacity at present, so retaining the 3 existing greens should be sufficient to meet future needs.
- 10.30 The two separate sites at KGV and Shephalbury Park should be kept as this enables two separate clubs to remain established in Stevenage. The priority will be to ensure that these clubs can attract and retain more members as the population in Stevenage grows, by ensuring that their sites are good quality.
- 10.31 A proportion of the maintenance costs of the bowling green sites is basic grounds maintenance, so more direct involvement in some of aspects of the maintenance by the clubs themselves should be explored with the view to reducing the costs to Stevenage Borough Council.



## Meeting the needs of the future

10.32 No future bowls greens are planned in Stevenage.

## Development of a planning standard

10.33 The following standards are therefore proposed.

### *Standard for quantity*

10.34 A rate of provision per 1000 based on the current number of sites, up to 2031 should be 0.03 greens per 1000.

### *Standard for accessibility*

10.35 A drive time catchment of 10 minutes is appropriate as everyone has access to a bowls green within this time.

### *Standard for design and quality*

10.36 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing body.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

10.37 Bowling is a sport that mainly attracts older people, and there are two sites with three greens in Stevenage. The sites are managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council. The bowling greens at King George V (KGV) playing fields and Shephalbury Park have the same maintenance regime, but due to the innate site characteristics, the KGV site is better quality. The club playing at King George V has a growing club membership, but the club at Shephalbury Park has not grown in the same way.

10.38 The club at the King George V ground suffers from a lack of car parking which impacts upon the ability of the club to hold matches and grow further. The club would also like to install floodlights to extend the playing period and season.

### *Future requirements*

10.39 The bowls club membership per green is similar to those over the border of the authority, but there is some spare capacity to cater for more members if the greens



can be maintained at a good standard and the ancillary facilities are both available and good quality.

- 10.40 The two sites at KGV and Shephalbury should be retained as this supports the opportunity for two separate clubs in Stevenage. The priority will be to ensure that these clubs can attract and retain more members as the population in Stevenage grows, by ensuring that their sites are good quality.

### *Recommendations*

- 10.41 The two sites with the three outdoor greens should be retained at KGV and Shephalbury Park. The overriding priority is to maintain and improve the quality of the sites so that the clubs can attract and retain their members.

- 10.42 The delivery priorities are improvement/refurbishment, based on future detailed technical conditions surveys and feasibility studies to provide a costed programme of works are:

- King George V
  - Floodlighting
  - Car park
- Shephalbury
  - Quality of green and bowls pavilion

- 10.43 The planning standard is proposed as:

- 0.03 greens per 1000
- 10 minutes drive time catchment
- Design and quality standard to meet Sport England guidance and that of the national governing body.

## **SECTION 11: INDOOR TENNIS**

### **Introduction**

- 11.1 Indoor tennis facilities tend to be strategically located and often serve a wider than local catchment. They are important recreational facilities for casual play but are often equally important for training and the development of elite tennis players, and for higher level competitions. Indoor tennis centres usually have a number of courts indoors (4, 6 or 8) and often associated outdoor courts.

### **Participation in tennis**

- 11.2 Sport England's Active People Survey suggests that nationally around 840,600 adults over 16 years play tennis at least once a month, but tennis participation has decreased slightly during the period 2007/08 to 2013/14. The sport attracts more men (60%) than women (40%), and the higher socio-economic groups.
- 11.3 Tennis participation across Hertfordshire in general is relatively high, and this is the case in parts of Stevenage, such as the area around Lister Tennis Club. However the percentage of people currently playing tennis in much of Stevenage is lower, see Figure 58.

### **Current provision**

- 11.4 There is one indoor tennis site within Stevenage which is at the Lister Tennis Club which is open every day and all day. This community club leases its site from Stevenage Sports Club Limited on a 25 year lease, dated from January 2014.
- 11.5 There are a number of other indoor tennis facilities within a 20 minute catchment of Stevenage, shown on the map in Figure 59. These include 8 mini courts at Odyssey and Gosling Sports Park with 17 indoor courts.

Figure 58: Tennis participation rates in Stevenage

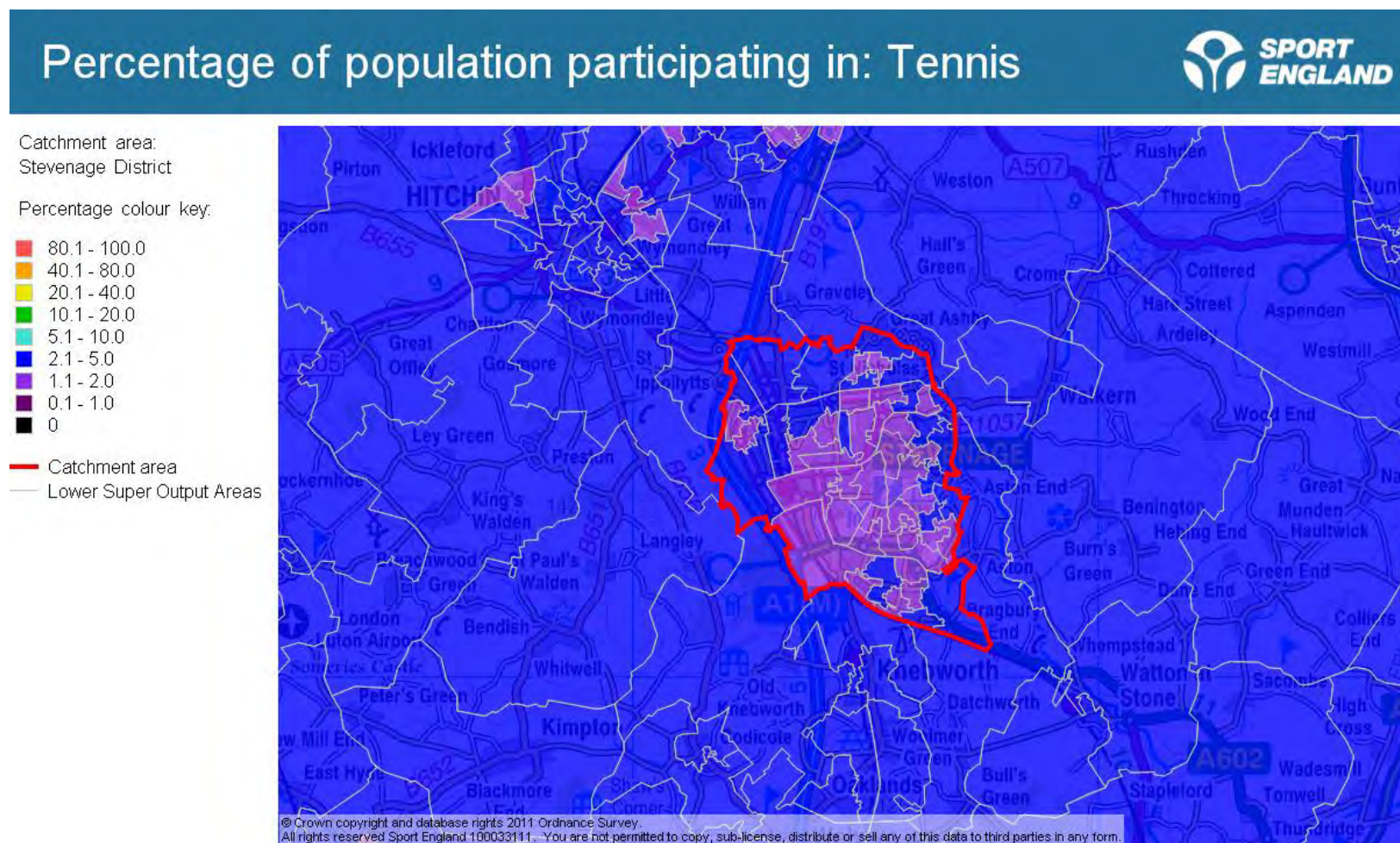
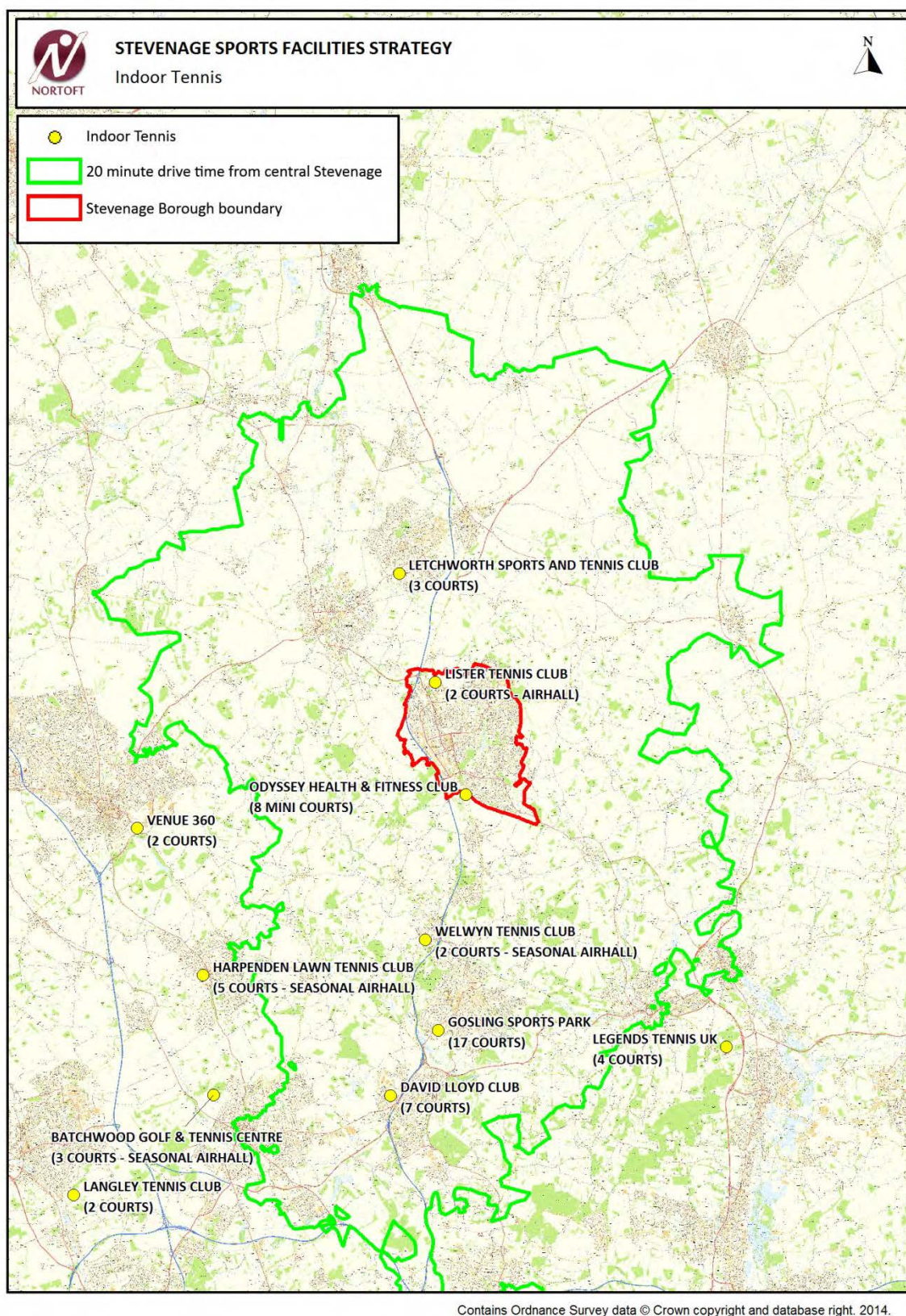




Figure 59: Indoor Tennis locations



## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 11.6 The facility at Lister Tennis Club is an air hall which was built in 1994 with 2 courts. According to the club, the courts in the dome are in good condition, and the dome itself is of reasonable quality but aging.
- 11.7 However there are an increasing number of problems with the fans, which require significant works. The club has a recent estimation for the cost of both replacing the fan with new drive gear of around £2,300, with a optional additional cost of replacing the existing motor with a more energy efficient one of 5.5 kw at around £500.00.
- 11.8 The ancillary facilities at the club are poor quality as the changing provision and club house is smaller than the club requires, and there are major problems with lack of car park space in the shared car park.
- 11.9 The two courts in the air hall at Lister Tennis Club are managed by the club itself and are primarily used for the club's members, however they are also made available to other clubs in the area, and have use from Wymondley, Datchworth, Hitchin, Weston and Ashwell. The bookings sheets from the club for mid-September 2014 for the air hall courts shows that they are fully booked out between 16.00 and 22.00 every weekday evening, and from 8.00 to 18.00 at weekends. There was also an average of around 3 hours use of the indoor courts during weekday daytimes.
- 11.10 The Lister Tennis Club operates three outdoor courts on the same site and during the winter months the demand for the indoor courts increases whilst the use of the outdoor courts reduces.
- 11.11 Outside of Stevenage, there are a large number of indoor courts available to the community, including Gosling Sports Park with 17 courts. According to the LTA advice (paragraph 11.20) this network of provision has sufficient capacity to meet demand at peak time, and there may actually be surplus capacity.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

- 11.12 The surveys of individuals provided very little information about the relative importance of the indoor tennis facilities at Lister Tennis Club as only one person responding said that they used indoor tennis courts.

### Club

- 11.13 Lister Tennis Club responded to the club survey and also provided detailed additional information about the club and site.

- 11.14 Having been closed during 2013, the club reopened in January 2014 and currently has a membership of around 250 members, of which about 73% are under 16 years. Although the mini players (under 11s) drive for up to about 10 minutes to reach the club, all of the other players drive for up to 20 minutes. Most of the membership is drawn from Stevenage itself or the surrounding villages, with some members also being drawn from other places including Hitchin and Letchworth.
- 11.15 The club currently has a waiting list for the under 16 age groups. The adult membership still needs to rebuild as it is much lower than before the club closed in 2013. Given the speed that the club has rebuilt since January 2014, the club anticipates continuing to grow in the next 5 years.

## **National Governing Body comments and strategies**

- 11.16 The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the national governing body for tennis.
- 11.17 The LTA is committed to growing the sport to ensure that more people are playing tennis more often at first class tennis facilities, with high quality coaching programmes and well organised competition. The LTA's overall aim for the period 2011-2016 is to ensure that, as far as practicably possible, the British population has access to and are aware of the places and high quality tennis opportunities in their local area. In relation to indoor tennis, the NGB's aspiration is that everyone should have access to indoor courts within a 20 minutes drive time. The mapping in Figure 59 shows that everyone with access to a car can reach a number of alternative indoor tennis venues within 20 minutes.
- 11.18 The LTA's general guide for club membership numbers and facility requirements are: 60 members for a floodlit court, and 200 members for an indoor court. Community tennis venues can accommodate significantly higher numbers.
- 11.19 The LTA estimates that the costs of maintaining an air hall is around £20,000 per annum for a 3 court hall. The two court hall at Lister Tennis Club would be somewhat less expensive, but of a similar order.
- 11.20 In relation to the Lister Tennis Club and its indoor courts within the wider facility network in Hertfordshire, it is the LTA's view that:
- At the present time there is more than sufficient capacity within a 20 minute drive time in relation to indoor courts to cater for any displaced demand from the Lister Tennis Club, if the indoor courts were not retained on the current site.
  - The LTA has recently invested in community courts in Batchwood, St Albans which is approximately 30 minutes drive time from Stevenage.
  - Part of the reason for the spare court capacity is the cost of indoor court hire.



#### 11.21 In relation to Lister Tennis Club itself:

- Stevenage is not a priority area for LTA investment, so no grant aid support would therefore be available under the current programmes either for improvements on the current site, or towards any potential relocation.
- The Lister Tennis Club at its present membership size only justifies 4 floodlit outdoor courts. However, taking into account the growth of the Lister Tennis Club since January 2014 and the general participation levels of tennis in Hertfordshire, a membership target of 400 should be realistic.
- A membership level of 400 would justify 2 indoor courts plus 3 floodlit outdoor courts. This level of membership would be largely dependent on the club having an effective coaching and sport development programme.

## Modelling

11.22 A number of different modelling tools can be used to assess the current provision in Stevenage.

## Market Segmentation and sports development

11.23 The Market Segmentation analysis suggests that tennis in Stevenage is not a sport currently played to any significant extent by any of the larger market segment groups in the town. A small number of people may be interested if more/better opportunities were available, but only as a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> level activity.

11.24 The characteristics of tennis as a sport suggest that it is not generally well supported by people on lower incomes. The hire cost of indoor tennis courts is usually high, so are not accessible to many with limited disposable incomes. Indoor tennis provision is not therefore a priority for Stevenage Borough Council in terms of raising rates of participation within the more deprived areas.

## Comparator authorities' provision

11.25 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision for Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 60. It is clear that only Harlow has a high level of indoor courts, and the provision of this facility type is variable, with some authorities having none.

*Figure 60: Indoor tennis - comparator authorities*

Comparator	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	Number of indoor tennis courts
Stevenage	85,245	2
<b>Gravesham</b>	104,200	2
<b>Harlow</b>	84,409	7
<b>Redditch</b>	84,800	0
<b>Wellingborough</b>	76,900	0

## Summary of current situation

- 11.26 There is one indoor tennis site in Stevenage, an air hall with 2 courts at Lister Tennis Club. This is of reasonable quality but is aging. The club also has 3 floodlit outdoor courts. Outside the boundary of Stevenage, Odyssey has 8 mini courts indoors, but elsewhere there are another 28 courts within a 20 minute drive time of Stevenage.
- 11.27 The Lister Tennis Club currently has about 250 members, mostly minis and juniors. The club was closed during 2013 and is now rebuilding its membership base, and expects to continue to grow in the next few years.
- 11.28 The current membership is below that which the LTA would expect to be needed to justify two indoor court provision, but the indoor courts at Lister Tennis Club were fully booked in September 2014, during weekdays and weekends during the peak period, much of the time with coaching. The courts are also made available and are used by other nearby tennis clubs. This level of use is expected to continue through to the summer of 2015, and suggests that the existing facilities should be retained.
- 11.29 However the demographics of Stevenage suggest that tennis is not a particularly popular sport in the borough and is unlikely to become so in the future. Significant public investment in the indoor tennis facility is therefore unlikely to result in significant increases in overall participation rates in sport and physical activity in Stevenage.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

11.30 The Nortoft Calculator forecasts future need for facilities based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation. The following tables (Figures 61, 62a and 62b) compare Stevenage to both Hertfordshire and the CIPFA authorities. The provision of indoor tennis facilities is very variable across the benchmark authorities but the rate of provision in Stevenage is lower than the average for the East of England region, or Hertfordshire.

11.31 The Nortoft Calculator suggest that no additional indoor tennis courts will be required in the period up to 2031 for either housing growth scenario in Stevenage, the 5300 dwellings or the 8200 dwellings if the current rate of provision per 1000 is retained, even with an allowance for increased participation. However if compared to the Hertfordshire average, a further 4 courts might be justified in the period up to 2031. If compared to the East of England average, then one additional court may be justified in the period up to 2031.

*Figure 61: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	2	0.02
East of England	186	0.03
Hertfordshire	63	0.05
Gravesham	2	0.02
Harlow	7	0.08
Redditch	0	0.00
Wellingborough	0	0.00

*Figure 62a: Nortoft Calculator and indoor tennis – 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.02	0	0	0	0	0.03
0.03	1	1	1	1	0.03
0.05	3	3	3	4	0.06
0.02	0	0	0	0	0.02
0.08	5	6	6	6	0.09
0.00	-2	-2	-2	-2	0.00
0.00	-2	-2	-2	-2	0.00

*Figure 62b: Nortoft Calculator and indoor tennis – 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.02	0	0	0	1	0.03
0.03	1	1	1	1	0.03
0.05	3	3	4	4	0.06
0.02	0	0	0	0	0.02
0.08	5	6	6	7	0.09
0.00	-2	-2	-2	-2	0.00
0.00	-2	-2	-2	-2	0.00

## Summary of future requirements

11.32 The limited provision of indoor tennis courts in Stevenage is not out of step with its comparator authorities although it is less than the average level of provision for the East of England region and Hertfordshire. The growth of Stevenage under either the 5300 or 8200 dwelling option justifies at most one additional court to meet the needs of Stevenage residents up to 2031.

## Meeting the needs of the future

11.33 The existing facility at the Lister Tennis Club will require investment. The estimated costs obtained by the Club of replacing the air hall with a double skin air hall but covering 4 courts rather than 2 on the existing site is around £200,000 plus VAT, plus changes to the court surface if required. This appears to be a cheaper option than the Sport England's costed Indoor Tennis Centre of traditional construction which, as at quarter 4 of 2013 was estimated to be around £1.98m for 3 courts, with an additional £645,000 per court.

11.34 There would also be a requirement to improve the clubhouse and car parking.

11.35 In relation to the clubhouse, the club considers that there are three possible alternatives on the current site, but these have not been explored to date:

- Provision of a portacabin to extend the changing rooms
- A conservatory type structure to extend the social area overlooking the courts
- Replacement and extended clubhouse.

- 11.36 The club has also been actively exploring the opportunity to relocate to Chells Park in discussion with their landlord, Stevenage Sports Club Limited, should the site be developed for other purposes in the future. The current lease agreement explicitly requires provision of a surface to Sport England standards for tennis of an area equal to the current area occupied by the tennis club, with conduits for floodlighting and services. This total area is greater than 6 tennis courts. The agreement does not include the provision of indoor courts or the erection of floodlights.
- 11.37 The club's agreement with the landlord allows the club to use the funding for building these new courts as match funding for grant applications and to use the equivalent funding in an upgraded facility. It is anticipated that the club would share clubhouse facilities with the other sports on the new site, rather than having a separate building.
- 11.38 The club's agreement with the landlord would not therefore provide a like-for-like replacement on a new site nor directly meet the needs of the club at its current size with floodlit courts.
- 11.39 Even though the modelling outcomes and current membership of the club do not appear to justify replacement of the indoor tennis provision, and there is sufficient provision within the appropriate drive time, the LTA believes that there may be potentially sufficient planning justification for a minimum of a like for like replacement with the existing facility i.e. 2 indoor and 3 floodlit outdoor courts. This would provide an air hall as a replacement facility. However, the LTA's preferred design would be a frame construction because it is less expensive than a "traditional" building but is better than an air hall because:
- The facility would be more secure (more vandal-proof) than an air hall.
  - The running costs are significantly lower.
  - The costs are not as high as traditional construction.
- 11.40 It is noted that as the cost of a frame construction is around £200,000 per court, i.e. double the cost of an air hall. This would be unlikely to be considered a "like for like" replacement and the additional costs for a frame would need to be met by the club or other external organisation.
- 11.41 The LTA's views on the planning justification for retaining the existing facility mix, should the club be relocated, have been discussed and agreed with Sport England.
- 11.42 The club would need to find external funding to bring the facilities up to the standards that it requires, but without Stevenage Borough Council, the LTA or Sport England support, this may be difficult to achieve.

## Development of a planning standard

- 11.43 The planning standards are derived from a synthesis of the findings from the modelling, consultation responses, and the policy decision about the growth of participation. Planning standards for indoor tennis are not specifically required for new developments as the existing number of indoor courts is proposed to be retained, and this is not a sport which is a high priority for investment via Stevenage Borough Council.
- 11.44 However should there be a proposal for Lister Tennis Club to be relocated, there is a clear justification for the developer to replace the facility on at least a like-for-like basis, to meet the second bullet point in the National Planning Policy Framework test set out in Paragraph 74, below:

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

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

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 11.45 There is one indoor tennis site in Stevenage, an air hall with 2 courts at Lister Tennis Club. This is of reasonable quality but is aging. The club also has 3 floodlit courts. Outside the boundary of Stevenage, Odyssey has 8 mini courts indoors, but elsewhere there are another 28 courts within a 20 minute drive time of Stevenage. This level of existing provision of indoor courts in the Stevenage area of Hertfordshire means that there is currently some spare capacity.
- 11.46 Rates of provision of indoor tennis in Stevenage and across the benchmark authorities are variable, from a high level of provision in Harlow, to none in Redditch or Wellingborough. The level of provision in Hertfordshire generally is high because of the large number of courts elsewhere, particularly around Welwyn. Stevenage's current amount of provision is similar to that of the East of England region as a whole.



- 11.47 The Lister Tennis Club currently has about 250 members, of which a high proportion are juniors. This is lower than in previous years, in part caused by earlier uncertainties over the future of the site.
- 11.48 The demographics of Stevenage suggest that tennis is not a particularly popular sport in the borough and is unlikely to become so in the future. Public investment in the indoor tennis facility is therefore unlikely to result in significant increases in participation rates in sport and physical activity in Stevenage.

### *Future requirements*

- 11.49 The LTA as the national governing body would normally expect that there would need to be around 200 club members per indoor court at a site for it to be viable for a new facility.
- 11.50 However the indoor courts at Lister Tennis Club are well used and the LTA considers that a 400 member target is not unrealistic for this club, so long as there is a strong sports development and coaching programme.
- 11.51 On this basis, if the club was required to relocate, then there is planning justification for a like-for-like replacement facility, comprising 2 indoor courts, 3 floodlit outdoor courts, club house and car parking. This view is shared by Sport England.

### *Recommendations*

- 11.52 The decision about the future of the air hall on the existing site will need to be made by Lister Tennis Club itself, and public investment should not be a priority for it.
- 11.53 In principle, and should the Lister Tennis Club be proposed to be relocated, a like-for-like replacement of the existing facilities; 2 indoor courts, 3 floodlit outdoor courts, clubhouse and car parking should be a prerequisite to the development of the current site. Additional space should also be made available adjacent to the proposed new tennis facility to enable the future development of additional courts. The proposals for any replacement facility should be discussed and agreed with the club, the LTA and Sport England.
- 11.54 If possible under the relocation scenario, the air hall should be upgraded to a steel frame which would have the advantage of being more secure and have lower running costs than an air hall.
- 11.55 Any relocation proposal should be based on linked planning applications: for the development of the existing site for non-sport use; and the development of the

replacement site. This will help to ensure that the new site is fully available for sport prior to the closure of the existing site.

- 11.56 Any planning application for relocation of the club and the new facilities to be provided will require justification. This will include (but not exclusively):
- 5 year sports development plan for the club
  - current business plan including detailed club accounts
  - facility proposals for the relocation site, including clubhouse and car parking
  - forecast 5 year business plan for relocated club including draft accounts and facility programming
  - clubhouse design and quality proposals
  - car parking provision
  - confirmed or anticipated additional funding should this be required.
- 11.57 A planning standard for indoor tennis is not proposed for new housing developments.

## **SECTION 12: OUTDOOR TENNIS COURTS**

### **Introduction**

- 12.1 Outdoor tennis in Stevenage is a relatively small sport, and most of the community play is at the Lister Tennis Club, details about which are provided in the section on indoor tennis courts.
- 12.2 This section of the Assessment and Strategy primarily looks at dedicated tennis courts, following the approach taken by Sport England. This is because courts on school sites and elsewhere tend only to be available for community use during the summer months, with the courts being converted to netball and other sports for much of the rest of the year. For this reason, multi-use courts (MUGAs) are mainly considered in a separate section of this assessment.

### **Participation in tennis**

- 12.3 The national statistics from Sport England do not differentiate between tennis played indoors and outdoors. Information about tennis participation is provided within the Indoor Tennis section (paragraph 11.2).

### **Current provision**

- 12.4 There are currently 2 dedicated tennis court sites available to the community for tennis in Stevenage with a total of 8 outdoor courts. These are:
- 3 outdoor floodlit courts at Lister Tennis Club, resurfaced in July 2014
  - 5 open access courts at Shephalbury Park.
- 12.5 There were previously 4 courts at King George V playing field but these now have no nets or fencing, and are poor quality. They have therefore been excluded from this assessment.
- 12.6 There are tennis courts marked out at both Marriotts and Nobel schools, and available for community use in the summer term.

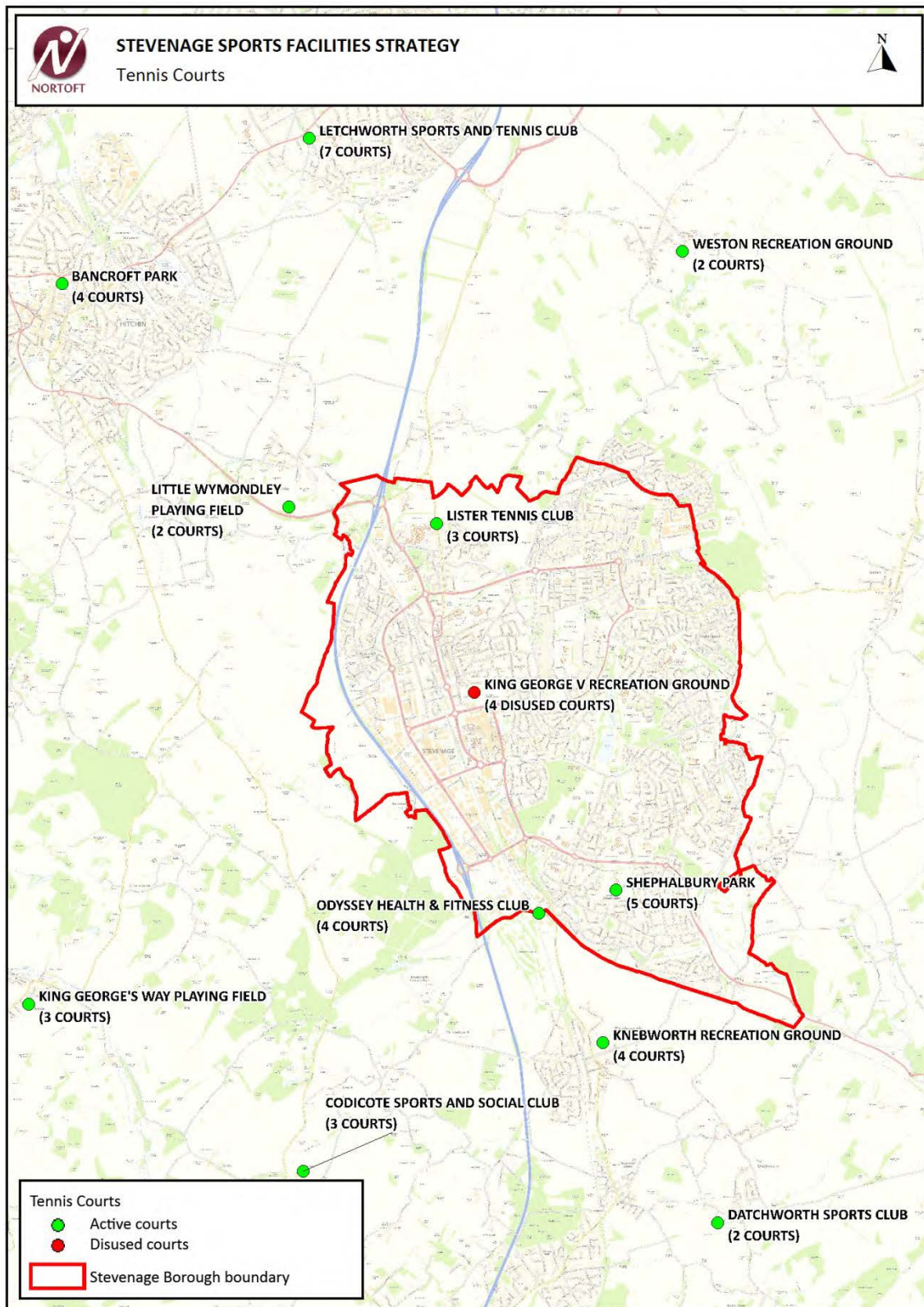
### **Assessment of current supply/demand**

- 12.7 The Lister Tennis Club is a community membership club with 3 recently resurfaced tennis courts. The courts are available for member use but the club also hires out the courts to other tennis clubs if they are available. The outdoor tennis courts are adjacent to the indoor courts in the air hall. The floodlights are of moderate quality, but the main problem is the inadequate fencing because this is neither high

enough nor strong enough to hold windbreaks, which limits play because the club is located in a very windy location.

- 12.8 The Shephalbury Park site was designated as a Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) “Beacon” site in 2011, and at that time there was a joint sports development programme between Stevenage Borough Council and a group of coaches called the Stevenage Tennis Centre.
- 12.9 Since then the coaching has ceased (with none in 2014), and the 5 courts are now in moderate-poor condition. There is no club resident and the site has free and open access at all times. There are no user statistics for the site, but anecdotally they appear to only be used lightly, and in the summer months.
- 12.10 Marriotts School has 6 tennis courts marked out on its two multi use games areas (MUGAs) which are available for tennis hire by the community, and are used to a limited extent during the summer months. One of these areas is a Type 1 MUGA which is the preferred surface for tennis, but the other is a Type 3 polymeric surface which is suitable, but not the preferred surface for tennis. However the areas are in practice used extensively for other sports such as netball and football in the winter months, so tennis is not really available during this period. For this reason they are excluded from the latter modelling.
- 12.11 There are new hard courts at Nobel School but these have significant problems with the surface and cannot be used regularly by the community. They are technically available during the summer months, and some limited tennis coaching has taken place on site as a joint initiative with Lister Tennis Club during the summer term. Again, these are excluded from the latter modelling.
- 12.12 There are also moderate quality hard courts at Barnwell and at John Henry Newman schools but these are not available for community use, and are unlikely to become so. The courts at John Henry Newman were previously part of the community use contract, and for the last full year of operation had 8000 visits recorded for netball, but none for tennis.
- 12.13 In addition to these facilities, the Odyssey club just over the border has 4 good quality outdoor courts, and there are a number of other sites just over the boundary of Stevenage, well within the 10 minute off peak drive time from the centre of Stevenage.
- 12.14 The dedicated tennis court sites are mapped in Figure 63. Every part of Stevenage can reach a tennis court within 10 minutes drive time, although not to an LTA accredited club, or a free or pay and play site.

Figure 63: Outdoor tennis provision- dedicated sites



## Recent consultations

### Individuals

- 12.15 The surveys of the clubs and individuals provide only limited information about the importance and issues associated with outdoor tennis. In the individuals survey, 7 people said that they played tennis outside, of which 6 played on a monthly basis and one played weekly. They were generally of the view that there were too few courts.

### Clubs

- 12.16 Lister Tennis Club has provided detailed information about the club, see paragraph 11.15 on in the Indoor Tennis section. The club has a growing membership and the indoor courts at the site are well used. The outdoor courts were resurfaced in July 2014 and are now of high quality, though the fencing and floodlights need upgrading. The club house needs expansion and upgrading, as does the car parking which is shared and insufficient.
- 12.17 The club's Chairman/manager has indicated that the club would not wish to re-establish coaching at Shephalbury, but would like to explore stronger links at Nobel School if the court quality there can be improved. The club has no interest in relocating or helping to re-establish tennis at the King George V playing fields.
- 12.18 Lister Tennis Club is not currently accredited as a Clubmark club with the Lawn Tennis Association, and only a proportion of their members are registered with the LTA.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 12.19 The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the national governing body for tennis and is committed to growing their sport to ensure that more people are playing tennis more often at first class tennis facilities, with high quality coaching programmes and well organised competition. Their overall aim for the next 5 years (2011-2016) is to ensure that, as far as practicably possible, the British population has access to and are aware of the places and high quality tennis opportunities in their local area.
- 12.20 In summary the LTA objectives are:
- Access for everyone to well maintained, high quality tennis facilities which are either free or pay as you play.
  - A Clubmark accredited place to play within a 10 minute drive of their home.



12.21 Only projects that will increase the number of adults and juniors participating and competing on a regular basis will be supported for funding. The tennis provider will also need to:

- be a registered place to play.
- have a proven leadership team in place.
- have a robust business plan showing financial sustainability.
- be Clubmark accredited. New sites can be Beacon accredited and working towards Clubmark, but must be able to become Clubmark accredited within 6 months of application.
- have the required level of partnership funding.
- provide a long term security of tenure i.e. freehold or leasehold with minimum of 21 years and the ability to assign the lease.

12.22 Each project will be individually assessed for funding, and the levels of potential capital funding are:

#### *Outdoor Projects*

The applicant should provide a minimum of 25% of the project cost, which can comprise both of the applicants' own funds and external partnership funding.

#### *Clubhouse Development Projects*

The LTA will allocate a maximum of £100,000 loan only funding for clubhouse projects that will provide a measurable impact on British tennis. The applicant should provide a minimum of 50% of the project cost, which can comprise both of the applicants' own funds and external partnership funding.

Note: All places to play are expected to provide a sinking fund for ongoing court maintenance.

12.23 The current distribution of tennis clubs in and around Stevenage does not fully meet the LTA's aspiration of having a clubmark accredited place to play within 10 minutes drive time, but everyone can have access to a dedicated tennis court within this drive time.

12.24 The LTA Tennis Development Manager advises that the LTA's general guide for club membership numbers and facility requirements are: 60 members for a floodlit court, and; 200 members for an indoor court. Community tennis venues can accommodate significantly higher numbers.

12.25 The LTA consider that the site at Shephalbury has the potential for developing a significantly larger tennis programme which could provide tennis to a wider section of the local community, and is currently the best site to do so. The LTA would therefore be disappointed to see the courts disappear unless an alternative site with at least a similar number of courts was to be established. However at this time, the LTA's priority is the re-establishment of tennis via the membership club at

Lister, and potentially the establishment of community tennis at Nobel School if construction problems on the courts can be overcome.

- 12.26 The LTA are aware of the possibilities of reintroducing tennis at King George V playing fields, but the proposals have not been sufficiently developed for them to comment on effectively, and are unlikely to be a high priority.
- 12.27 In relation to Lister Tennis Club itself, the LTA advises that Stevenage is not a priority area for LTA investment, so no grant aid support would therefore be available under the current programmes either for improvements on the current site, or towards any potential relocation.
- 12.28 Should the Lister Tennis Club be relocated, then the LTA believes that there would be planning justification for a minimum of a like for like replacement with the existing facility, i.e. 2 indoor and 3 floodlit outdoor courts (see paragraph 11.21 on). This view is shared by Sport England.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 12.29 The Market Segmentation analysis suggests that tennis in Stevenage is not a sport currently played to any significant extent by any of the larger market segment groups in the town. A small number of people may be interested if more/better opportunities were available, but only as a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> level activity.
- 12.30 The characteristics of tennis as a sport suggest that it is not generally well supported by people on lower incomes. Outdoor tennis provision is not therefore a high priority for the borough in terms of public investment or for raising rates of participation in the more deprived areas.

### Comparator authorities' provision

- 12.31 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision for Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 64. It is clear that both Gravesham and Harlow have a high level of outdoor court provision, but that the provision of this facility type is variable, with Redditch having none, and Wellingborough a similar level of provision as Stevenage.

*Figure 64: Indoor tennis - comparator authorities*

Comparator	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	Number of indoor tennis courts
Stevenage	85,245	8
<b>Gravesham</b>	104,200	18
<b>Harlow</b>	84,409	14
<b>Redditch</b>	84,800	0
<b>Wellingborough</b>	76,900	7

## Summary of current situation

- 12.32 The three outdoor courts at the community club, Lister Tennis Club, have recently been resurfaced but there is a need to improve the fencing, floodlights and clubhouse, which could be achievable on the existing site. There is also a need for more car parking as the existing parking is shared and insufficient at peak times. At this time the Lister Tennis Club has not achieved LTA Clubmark accreditation.
- 12.33 The current membership of the Lister Tennis Club is around 250, which is rebuilding numbers following the reopening of the club in January 2014. The LTA feel that a membership target of 400 would not be unrealistic at this time.
- 12.34 The open access 5 court facility at Shephalbury Park which was accredited as an LTA Beacon site is now open access and of moderate-poor quality. There was no tennis coaching on the site in 2014 and Lister Tennis Club is unlikely to wish to be involved again here in the future. This is not now a priority site for LTA investment.
- 12.35 Just over the border of Stevenage there are 4 courts at Odyssey. There were also 4 courts at King George V playing field, but these are now disused.
- 12.36 The Sport England Market Segmentation information suggests that tennis has lower levels of participation across much of Stevenage than the area around Lister Tennis Club itself or the surrounding areas of Hertfordshire. Significant investment in tennis is therefore unlikely to increase overall levels of physical activity across much of the borough.
- 12.37 The good quality multi use games area courts at Marriotts are part of the existing community use agreement, and Nobel's are part of the proposed community use agreement. Both could offer more community tennis, particularly in the summer months when tennis is the main school sport, but the quality of the courts at Nobel require attention.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

12.38 The Nortoft Calculator forecasts future need for facilities based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation. The following tables (Figures 65, 66a and 66b) compare Stevenage to both Hertfordshire and the CIPFA authorities.

12.39 The provision of dedicated tennis courts in Stevenage is currently at a higher rate per 1000 than either the East of England region or Hertfordshire averages, similar to Wellingborough, but lower than either Harlow or Gravesham.

*Figure 65: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	8	0.09
East of England	202	0.03
Hertfordshire	50	0.04
Gravesham	18	0.17
Harlow	14	0.17
Redditch	0	0.00
Wellingborough	7	0.09

*Figure 66a: Nortoft Calculator and outdoor tennis – 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.09	0	1	1	1	0.10
0.03	-5	-5	-5	-5	0.04
0.04	-4	-4	-4	-4	0.05
0.17	7	8	9	9	0.19
0.17	6	7	8	9	0.18
0.00	-8	-8	-8	-8	0.00
0.09	0	0	1	1	0.10

Figure 66b: Nortoft Calculator and outdoor tennis – 8200 dwellings

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.09	0	1	1	2	0.10
0.03	-5	-5	-5	-4	0.04
0.04	-4	-4	-4	-3	0.05
0.17	7	8	9	11	0.19
0.17	6	8	9	10	0.18
0.00	-8	-8	-8	-8	0.00
0.09	0	1	1	2	0.10

- 12.40 If the current access to courts is retained for Stevenage, then there would be a need for one extra court by 2021 under either housing growth scenario. However if the level of provision was dropped to that of the Hertfordshire average, only 4-5 courts in total would be required up to 2031.

### Summary of future requirements

- 12.41 The number of outdoor tennis courts in Stevenage is high compared to the average for the region or Hertfordshire, and against some of the benchmark authorities. Of the 8 existing dedicated tennis courts, 5 are at Shephalbury and are only lightly used and receive limited management and maintenance. The other 3 courts are club managed and are of good quality.
- 12.42 The market segmentation findings suggest that Stevenage residents are not likely to play tennis to a high level of participation. Therefore major public investment in tennis is not likely to generate significant long term gains in the overall objective of increasing rates of activity amongst the whole community.
- 12.43 The geographical spread of the tennis courts means that everyone in Stevenage can access a open access tennis court within 10 minutes, and if Lister Tennis Club was to achieved LTA Clubmark accreditation, then the LTA's aspiration that everyone should have access to an LTA accredited club within 10 minutes drive time, would also be largely met.
- 12.44 There does not appear to be any strong desire by the LTA or the community in Stevenage to retain all of the courts at Shephalbury for open access tennis. However there is scope for more use of the MUGAs at Marriotts and Nobel schools during the summer months.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 12.45 The most important site for tennis provision in Stevenage is the Lister Tennis Club with its three outdoor courts. The club has a new 25 year lease for its site, but there is a clause in the lease to enable the landlord to develop the site and provide for alternative provision elsewhere. There are therefore two future options for Lister Tennis Club:
- Retain the existing site. Replace the fencing and floodlighting for the outdoor courts and expand the clubhouse to provide for additional changing and social space. Seek to expand the car parking on Stevenage Town RFC site or elsewhere. Possibly convert the indoor courts to outdoor or even convert more of the outdoor courts to indoor, depending upon the strength and financial viability of the club.
  - Relocate to Chells Park or alternative venue. If the club was to relocate the current lease agreement explicitly requires provision of a surface to Sport England standards for tennis of an area equal to the current area occupied by the tennis club, with conduits for floodlighting and services. This total area is greater than 6 tennis courts. The agreement does not include the provision of indoor courts or the erection of floodlights.
- 12.46 The club's agreement with the landlord would not therefore provide a like-for-like replacement on a new site nor directly meet the needs of the club at its current size with floodlit courts, although it would provide a larger site overall. The club would need to find external funding to provide floodlights, but no support would be available from Stevenage Borough Council, the LTA or Sport England.
- 12.47 The main sports development priority should be to work with Lister Tennis Club to become an LTA accredited Clubmark club and to grow its membership.
- 12.48 For the purposes of sports development and equality of opportunity, three of the courts should be retained and improved at Shephalbury Park, on the open access principle behind the Beacon site designation. However the long term future of these courts should be kept under review if the proposed improvements on the site do not result in increased levels of use.
- 12.49 There is no requirement to bring the disused courts at King George V back into tennis use.
- 12.50 If the hard court quality at Nobel School can be improved, this may enable stronger school-club links and regular tennis coaching on site during the summer term.



## Development of a planning standard

- 12.51 The planning standards are derived from a synthesis of the findings from the modelling, the current uptake of the tennis opportunities, the Lawn Tennis Association's comments, and the policy decision about the growth of participation at 0.5% per annum.

### *Standard for quantity*

- 12.52 The current rate of provision of dedicated outdoor tennis courts available to the community appears to be higher than either the East of England region or Hertfordshire average provision. The courts at Shephalbury are not fully used and it is proposed that the number of courts on this site is reduced to three, with the other two redeveloped as a MUGA. This would give a total of 6 dedicated tennis courts, or a current rate of provision of 0.07 courts per 1000. If this rate is increased by 0.5% per annum and the increase in population applied, the requirement may be for up to 7 courts by 2031 with 5300 dwellings, or 8 courts if there were to be 8200 dwellings. This gives a rate of provision of 0.08 courts per 1000.
- 12.53 Developers' contributions should be directed in the short-medium terms towards the improvement of the existing tennis court sites, particularly the 3 retained courts at Shephalbury.
- 12.54 Should the two indoor courts at Lister Tennis Club be converted to outdoor courts, this standard would change to 0.10 outdoor courts per 1000.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 12.55 The standard for accessibility is 10 minutes drive time.
- 12.56 Developers' contributions should therefore be used to support provision within a 10 minute catchment area of a housing scheme.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 12.57 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the Lawn Tennis Association. This should apply to refurbishment proposals as well as new build.

### Relocation of Lister Tennis Club

- 12.58 If the Lister Tennis Club is relocated, there is a clear requirement on the developer to replace the facility on at least a like-for-like basis, to meet the second bullet point in the National Planning Policy Framework test set out in Paragraph 74, below:

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

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

- 12.59 In terms of the outdoor courts provision, this means that three of the new courts should be floodlit as part of the planning condition.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 12.60 There are two dedicated tennis court sites available to the community in Stevenage, with a total of 8 courts. One site with 3 courts is the home of Lister Tennis Club and these courts are good quality and floodlit, although investment is required in the fencing, floodlights, clubhouse and car park. The other is the open access 5 court facility at Shephalbury Park which was previously accredited as an LTA Beacon site, but is now open access and of moderate-poor quality and there is no club playing there. Just over the border of Stevenage there are 4 courts at Odyssey. There are also 4 courts at King George V playing field, but these are disused.
- 12.61 The market segmentation findings suggest that interest in tennis in Stevenage is relatively low and only a small number of people responded to the survey saying that they played tennis.
- 12.62 The LTA as the national governing body has an aspiration that everyone should have access to a clubmark accredited club within 10 minutes drive, as well as to either an open access, or pay and play court within the same drive time. The Lister Tennis Club is not currently accredited by the LTA, and Stevenage is not a priority area for LTA financial support.
- 12.63 There appears to be a relatively high number of dedicated outdoor tennis courts in Stevenage compared with the average across the East of England region or Hertfordshire, and if the courts at Odyssey are taken into consideration, there appears to be a significant surplus of supply over demand for tennis in the borough.

- 12.64 The school MUGA at Nobel would be useful for community tennis and school-club links during the summer term, but the surface is poor and needs attention to make them useful for community tennis. There is also a need to confirm the community use agreement for this site.
- 12.65 The two MUGAs at Marriotts are also available for tennis during the summer months, but are only relatively lightly used by the community.

### *Future requirements*

- 12.66 The modelling suggests that the rate of provision for dedicated courts (excluding Odyssey) is more than double the average provision for Hertfordshire, and if the Hertfordshire rate of provision was to be followed in Stevenage, that there would still only be a need for a total of 4 courts with the lower housing growth option or 5 with the higher growth option by 2031.
- 12.67 For the purposes of sports development and equality of opportunity, it is proposed to retain both the club site at Lister Tennis Club and 3 of the courts at Shephalbury Park, the latter on the open access principle behind the 2011 Beacon site designation. This would give a total of 6 courts within Stevenage.
- 12.68 A sports development priority should be to work with Lister Tennis Club to become LTA accredited. If this club does not retain its indoor courts, the option of converting them to outdoor should be considered in the medium-longer term.
- 12.69 If the Lister Tennis Club relocates because of development by the landlord of the existing site for housing, then the minimum condition on the planning permission should be the development of 3 floodlit outdoor courts plus two indoor, with clubhouse and car parking. Any new facility should meet design standards of the LTA and Sport England.
- 12.70 There is also a need to improve the quality of the remaining Shephalbury courts to make them good enough for community use.
- 12.71 Given the current surplus of tennis provision in Stevenage, there is no requirement to bring the disused courts at King George V back into use. These courts should be used for an alternative purpose.

### *Recommendations*

- 12.72 If Lister Tennis Club remains on the current site, there is a need to retain the 3 outdoor floodlit plus either the two indoor courts or their conversion to outdoor floodlit courts. Improvements are needed to the clubhouse and car parking but these should be the club's responsibility.

- 12.73 If the Lister Tennis Club is proposed to be relocated, a like-for-like replacement of the existing facilities is justified in planning policy terms, including at minimum either 3 floodlit outdoor and 2 indoor courts, or 5 floodlit outdoor courts, with clubhouse and car parking. Achievement of this like-for-like replacement should be a formal planning condition linked to the proposed development. The proposals for any replacement facility should be discussed and agreed with the club, the LTA and Sport England.
- 12.74 The Lister Tennis Club should work towards LTA accreditation and increasing its membership levels, and both the LTA and Stevenage Borough Council should include the club in their sports development support work, to help achieve this.
- 12.75 Three of the tennis courts at Shephalbury Park should be retained and resurfaced to encourage community tennis use. These are the priority for Stevenage Borough Council investment. In the longer term and after the site has been improved, the tennis use should be monitored and the future of tennis on this site kept under review.
- 12.76 The other 2 courts at Shephalbury Park should be converted into an open access MUGA, to improve provision for young people in the area.
- 12.77 The quality of the hard courts at Nobel School should be addressed and community tennis enabled during the summer months. The community use agreement needs to be confirmed at this site.
- 12.78 The disused courts at King George V should be used for purposes other than tennis which support the wider sports and recreation uses of the playing fields.
- 12.79 The proposed planning standard and priorities for investment will require review once the future of Lister Tennis Club is clearer.
- 12.80 The planning standard is proposed as:
- 0.08 dedicated outdoor tennis courts per 1000 in relation to new housing
  - 10 minutes drive time catchment
  - Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards.

## **SECTION 13: SQUASH**

### **Introduction**

- 13.1 Squash courts are often part of leisure centres but are also provided commercially in many places. Stevenage has both types of provision.

### **Participation in squash**

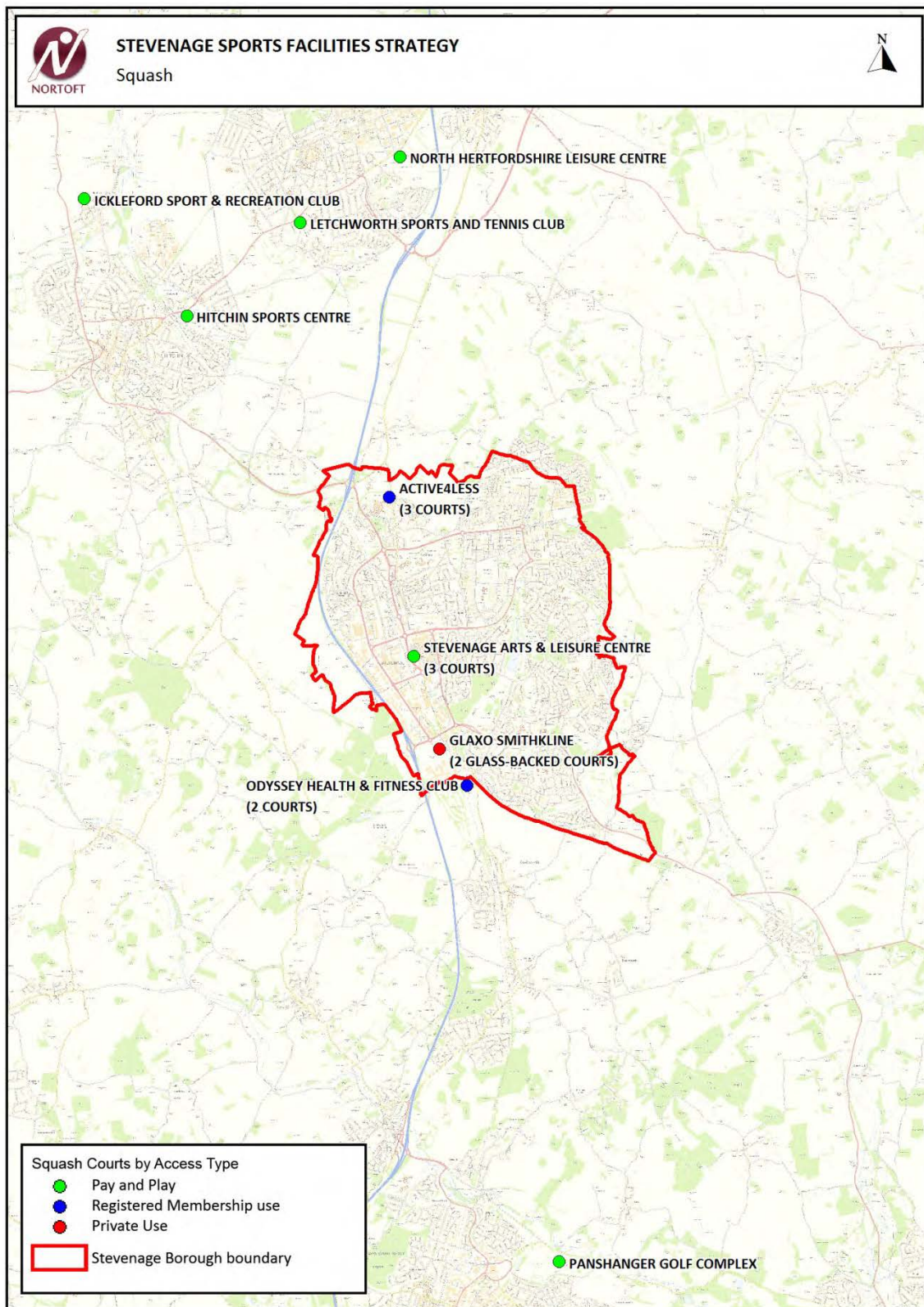
- 13.2 Nationally Sport England estimates that around 370,100 people play squash or racketball at least once a month, but there has been a gradual decline since 2007. Sport England research in 2009 gave an overview of the participants playing at least once a week, and this showed that about 87% of the players are male, with the peak numbers being amongst those aged between 35 and 64 years. A high proportion of players are from the most affluent socio-economic groups.

### **Current provision**

- 13.3 There are currently 6 squash courts in Stevenage which are accessible to the community; 3 standard courts at the Arts & Leisure Centre (A&LC) which are available on a pay and play basis, and 3 standard courts at Active4Less which are available to registered members. Additionally there are 2 glass backed courts at GlaxoSmithKline which are private.
- 13.4 Just over the border of Stevenage are 2 courts at Odyssey, and there are also a number of courts in Hitchin and Letchworth.
- 13.5 The courts in Stevenage and its surrounding area are mapped in Figure 67.



Figure 67: Squash court locations



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## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 13.6 The A&LC was originally built with 6 squash courts, but now has 3 which are available for hire 7.00-22.00 weekdays, and 8.00- 18.00 at weekends. They are booked for 105 hours per week, and are generally full from Monday-Friday 17.00 – 22.00. There are no squash leagues or ladders in place, but the site is used by three non affiliated squash clubs; Stevenage Leisure Squash, CPI Squash and Fil Router. The courts are also available to the Fitness members at no charge.
- 13.7 The A&LC squash use for the year ending March 2014 was 8,770. Squash use of the A&LC peaked in the year ending 2012, when there were 9,986 users, up from 6,274 in 2009. The income is around £10,500 per year.
- 13.8 The conditions survey of the A&LC of 2013 suggests that there is a need for works to be undertaken to the ceilings, walls, floors and lighting of the squash courts as part of a general need for refurbishment. The costs of these works are estimated to be around £60,000, and they are identified as a relatively low priority (priority 3), though really needed attention in Year 2 of the building works cycle.
- 13.9 There is no information about the condition of the courts at Active4Less, but it is known that they were built in 2000 and were refurbished in 2011. The site is commercially owned by Stevenage Sports Club and is located between the rugby club pitches and the rugby clubhouse on North Road. Active4Less is home to Stevenage Squash Club and has achieved a Silver Charter Award as a centre of excellence.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

- 13.10 Out of the respondents to the individual survey, 21 people played squash or racketball least once a month, and of these more than half both lived and worked in Stevenage. Of those expressing an opinion, more than 75% felt that there was “about the right amount” of squash court provision, but 23% felt that there was too little. However only 7 people felt that the squash courts were either very important or important to them.

### Clubs

- 13.11 Three clubs responded to the club’s survey, and the key points from their responses are given below.

### *Stevenage Leisure Squash Club*

- 13.12 This non-affiliated club has 26 adult members, with most being “veterans”. The majority come from Stevenage itself, but a small number are from the surrounding villages and St Neots. The club has a development plan and a small waiting list (less than 5 people). It is restricted from growing because of the limited number of club nights available at the A&LC. The club comments that recent works on the courts have improved them significantly, but that the lighting and the changing facilities require attention.

### *CPI Squash Club*

- 13.13 This non-affiliated club has 15 members, all considered to be “veterans”, who mostly live more than 30 minutes away. The club plays at the A&LC. Membership levels in the club have fallen over the past 5 years and the club is not anticipating growing in the future. Their biggest issue is the recruitment of new members. The club would like to see further repairs taking place of the squash courts, and also mentioned lighting as a key issue.

### *Fil Router*

- 13.14 The Fil Router non-affiliated club only has 3 members, all of whom are “veterans”. The club does not have a waiting list and does not anticipate growing in the future. They use the A&LC, and they comment that the courts sometimes have holes in the walls and that the lighting needs attention.

## **National Governing Body comments and strategies**

- 13.15 The national governing body is England Squash and Racketball, and its Strategy 2008-13 was broad brush. The strategy has yet to be updated but it made no relevant specific facility comments. It does state that the NGB would oppose the closure of squash courts.
- 13.16 No specific comments have been received from the NGB in relation to the Stevenage strategy.

## **Modelling**

### **Market Segmentation and sports development**

- 13.17 None of the largest market segments in Stevenage are attracted to squash as a sport. Investment in squash provision is therefore of lower priority compared to other activities which have a broader appeal.

## Comparator authorities' provision

- 13.18 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision for Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 68. This suggests that the level of provision in Stevenage is approximately in line with similar authorities elsewhere.

*Figure 68: Squash - comparator authorities*

Comparator	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	Number of squash courts
Stevenage	85,245	6
Gravesham	104,200	7
Harlow	84,409	8
Redditch	84,800	5
Wellingborough	76,900	8
Basildon	178,614	13

## Summary of current situation

- 13.19 There are 6 squash courts available to the community in Stevenage, and information about 3 of them is available because they are located at the A&LC. The A&LC courts are fully booked Monday – Friday evenings. The level of demand for the courts has fallen slightly since the peak in 2012, and is around 9000 visits per annum. Although the squash courts at the A&LC are fully booked, there are no leagues or ladders operating, and the limited time slots made available to the non-affiliated clubs mean that they have difficulties in catering for new members.
- 13.20 The courts at the A&LC are in reasonable condition but some works are required in terms of general refurbishment, and improvements need to be made to the lighting.
- 13.21 The 3 courts at Active4Less are on the Stevenage Sports Club site at North Road, co-located with Stevenage Town RFC and Lister Tennis Club. These courts are now 15 years old, but were refurbished in 2011. The Stevenage Squash Club is based there and it offers coaching for both juniors and adults.
- 13.22 The 2 courts at Odyssey, just over the border of Stevenage are standard courts.
- 13.23 There is no information on the usage of the commercial sites but it can be assumed that demand approximately equals the provision because the facilities are viable.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

- 13.24 The Nortoft Calculator forecasts future need for facilities based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation. The following tables (Figures 69, 70a and 70b) compare Stevenage to the East of England region, Hertfordshire, and the CIPFA authorities.
- 13.25 Stevenage's current rate of provision in terms of the number of squash courts within Stevenage itself is similar to Gravesham and higher than Redditch, but lower than the other comparators. However if the 2 courts at Odyssey were also included, this would increase the current rate of provision in Stevenage to 0.09 courts per 1000, close to the regional, Hertfordshire and Harlow averages.

*Figure 69: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	6	0.07
East of England	526	0.09
Hertfordshire	119	0.10
Gravesham	7	0.07
Harlow	8	0.09
Redditch	5	0.06
Wellingborough	9	0.12

*Figure 70a: Nortoft calculator and squash courts – 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.07	0	0	1	1	0.08
0.09	1	2	2	3	0.10
0.10	3	3	4	4	0.11
0.07	0	0	0	1	0.07
0.09	2	3	3	4	0.10
0.06	-1	-1	0	0	0.06
0.12	4	5	5	6	0.13

Figure 70b: Nortoft calculator and squash courts – 8200 dwellings

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional courts required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.07	0	1	1	2	0.08
0.09	1	2	3	3	0.10
0.10	3	4	4	5	0.11
0.07	0	0	1	1	0.07
0.09	2	3	4	4	0.10
0.06	-1	0	0	0	0.06
0.12	4	5	6	7	0.13

## Summary of future requirements

- 13.26 The existing 3 courts at the A&LC are reported to be well used, and it can be assumed that the courts at Active4Less and Odyssey probably have limited spare capacity. The modelling suggests that 1-2 additional squash courts will be required by 2031, depending on the rate of housing growth, and this seems justified based on the current levels of provision and usage. This is the equivalent of 0.08 courts per 1000 by 2031.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 13.27 If the A&LC is replaced with a new wet/dry facility, then there is a clear justification to include the provision of 3 squash courts in the new facility. If the A&LC is not replaced, then the existing courts require refurbishment, with a particular focus on new lighting.
- 13.28 The squash courts at the A&LC and any replacement facility, could potentially play a stronger role in supporting sports development generally. This may include more club time for the largest club, and possibly the reintroduction of squash ladders and leagues.
- 13.29 The Active4Less site is potentially within the proposed development area at North Road. It is not known what the proposals are for their replacement, but there appears to be justification to retain a 3 court squash facility.

## Development of a planning standard

13.30 The following standards are based on the findings from this assessment.

### *Standard for quantity*

13.31 The proposed standard for squash courts is 0.08 courts per 1000 for new housing.

13.32 This is justified because further squash provision will be required in the period up to 2031 to cater for the increase in population in Stevenage.

### *Standard for accessibility*

13.33 A 10 minute drive time catchment is appropriate for squash.

13.34 This is justified by the mapping of the home locations of the A&LC member users, and the fact that most of the Stevenage Leisure Squash Club members are from Stevenage.

### *Standard for design and quality*

13.35 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the National Governing Body. This should apply to refurbishment proposals as well as new build.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

13.36 There are 6 squash courts available to the community in Stevenage. Three of the courts are at A&LC, and three at Active4Less at North Road. There are also two courts at Odyssey, just over the border.

13.37 The A&LC courts are well used, with around 9000 visits per year, which has been reasonable stable over the past 3 years. This is better than the national picture which has seen squash decline. Three small clubs use the courts at A&LC, but restrictions on club time mean that the largest of them is unable to increase its membership. At the present time there are no leagues or squash ladders, so it would appear that there could be opportunities for more sports development initiatives which would help to attract and retain players.



- 13.38 The commercial courts at Active4Less are co-located with Stevenage Town RFC and Lister Tennis Club at North Road. The courts are 15 years old but were refurbished in 2011. The site is home to the affiliated Stevenage Squash Club.

#### *Future requirements*

- 13.39 Based on the high level of usage of the A&LC courts and the assumption that the courts at Active4Less and Odyssey are likely to be well used, there is an estimated need for 1-2 additional squash courts in the period up to 2031, depending upon the level of housing growth. The potential location of these additional courts and the demand for them, should be kept under review because the current level of demand is not sufficient to justify additional courts being provided at this time as part of a replacement leisure centre. There are no immediately obvious alternatives because schools do not find squash courts an attractive facility as they cannot be used by a whole class at one time.
- 13.40 The existing 6 courts worth of provision need to be retained, even if the A&LC is replaced, and the Active4Less site is developed.

#### *Future requirements*

- 13.41 If the new replacement leisure centre is developed then 3 squash courts should be provided as part of the new facility as a flexible space with moveable walls
- 13.42 If the replacement leisure centre is not developed then the existing courts require some refurbishment, and improved lighting.
- 13.43 The 3 squash courts at Active4Less should be retained, or replaced with appropriate 3 court provision at a suitable location if the current site is developed.
- 13.44 The potential location of the two additional courts should be kept under review.
- 13.45 The planning standards are proposed as:
- 0.08 courts per 1000 for new housing
  - 10 minute drive time catchment
  - The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing body. This should apply to both new facilities and refurbishment.

## **SECTION 14: DEDICATED GYMNASTICS CENTRE**

### **Introduction**

- 14.1 This section of the Assessment and Strategy considers the dedicated gymnastics provision at Marriotts School where there is a gymnastics hall in addition to the sports hall.

### **Participation in gymnastics**

- 14.2 The Sport England Active People Survey estimates that around 72,700 adults over the age of 16 take part in gymnastics or trampolining. However a high proportion of gymnastics participation is by young people under the age of 16, which are not captured by these statistics. British Gymnastics, the national governing body, states that the peak participation rate is at 9 years old.

### **Current provision**

- 14.3 There is one specialist gymnastics centre in Stevenage which is part of Marriotts School. The centre was opened in 2002 following investment of around £2m from Sport England. The gymnastics hall is a dedicated gymnastics and trampolining facility catering for beginners to elite athletes and is a dual use facility. The facility has a formal community use agreement in place, which is proposed to be incorporated into the new community use agreement for all of the sports facilities on the site, and which is proposed to run to 2023.
- 14.4 The specialist gymnastics centre acts as a sub regional facility with the next nearest specialist facility being the Hertford Gymnastics Academy.

### **Assessment of current supply/demand**

- 14.5 The Marriotts Gymnastics Club estimate that there are a total of about 60-70,000 visits per year to the gymnastics centre by members of the main clubs, including the trampoline acrobatics and freestyle clubs.
- 14.6 The current membership of the Marriotts Gymnastics Club is 450 minis (primary school), 150 juniors (11-16 years) and 100 seniors (over 16 years). The club reports that their combined waiting list for pre-school and school age gymnasts is in excess of about 600.
- 14.7 Stevenage Sports Acrobatics Club have around 50 minis, 50 juniors and 7 seniors, and their waiting list is usually around 30-40 individuals, mainly minis and juniors.
- 14.8 The dedicated gymnastics centre is in overall good condition.

## Recent consultation findings

- 14.9 The gymnastics provision at Marriotts did not appear as a significant facility in either the individual survey or student survey.

### Clubs

#### *Marriotts Gymnastics Club*

- 14.10 The club draws its membership from a wide area, with some users coming from as far away as Cambridge, and the older participants travelling at least 30 minutes to reach the site. The school has a school-club link in place with Marriott School.
- 14.11 The club anticipates growing in the next 5 years following membership increases in the last 5. The main issue holding back this expansion is a lack of facilities.

#### *Stevenage Sports Acrobatics*

- 14.12 This club again draws members from both Stevenage and the surrounding area, with the primary age children travelling by car up to around 10 minutes to the site, and the over 16s travelling up to 20 minutes. The club does not have a formal school-club link in place.
- 14.13 As with the Gymnastics Club, the club's membership has increased in the past 5 years and is expected to continue to increase in the next 5. The main issue is the lack of facilities/access to the facilities.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 14.14 British Gymnastics is the national governing body for gymnastics and trampolining. Their Facility Strategy 2013-17 identifies dedicated gymnastics centres as crucial for the sport, but there are no specific proposals for Stevenage. No comment was made by British Gymnastics on the Stevenage Assessment and Strategy.
- 14.15 British Gymnastics' Facilities Strategy identifies that the main barrier to increasing membership at clubs is simply an inability to provide for more sessions at an available venue. The response of the national governing body is both to develop new dedicated gymnastics venues, and also to support the setting up of satellite venues in non-dedicated facilities, such as schools and community centres. This is because many of the activities developed by British Gymnastics do not require specialist facilities.
- 14.16 The Facilities Strategy provides an overview of the role of dedicated and non-dedicated gymnastics facilities, see Figure 71.

*Figure 71: Role of Dedicated and non-dedicated gym facilities*

Dedicated gymnastics centres	Non dedicated gymnastics facilities
Purpose built or converted buildings which are dedicated for gymnastics use. They have equipment permanently laid out (i.e. doesn't have to be stored away at the end of each session) and a proportion of it will be permanently fixed in place.	Typically sports halls, school gymnasiums or community centres etc.
A dedicated gymnastics facility will probably have pitted areas for landing under/around equipment.	Equipment has to be put out and stored away for each session
Dedicated facilities are generally run by clubs as a business.	Non-dedicated facilities generally cater for introductory and recreational level gymnastics
They may be able to accommodate every level of the gymnast pathway depending on equipment and coaches but will probably focus on one or two disciplines.	Non-dedicated facilities may be able to cater for multiple activities/disciplines where storage and/or equipment allow
Dedicated facilities can usually accommodate more than one discipline (e.g. women's artistic and rhythmic).	Generally non-dedicated facilities cater for introductory and recreation level participation. Non-dedicated facilities are able to cater for some of the activities (rather than disciplines) to a high standard of participation. The standard of the gymnastic activity taking place is of a low level.
The level of gymnastics taking place in a dedicated gymnastics centre tends to be of a higher standard as the gymnast will have access to international standard equipment.	

## Modelling

- 14.17 There are no modelling tools which are appropriate to assess dedicated gymnastic provision in Stevenage.

## Summary of current situation

- 14.18 The dedicated gymnastics provision at Marriotts is well liked by the clubs using it, and the demand exceeds the available space, resulting in waiting lists for the clubs. There is a need to find additional non-specialist space which can provide for some of the latent demand.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 14.19 As Stevenage grows there will be a gradual increasing need for gymnastics and trampolining, some of which will need to be in the specialist centre, but other activity could be provided for at non-specialist centres.

### Meeting the needs of the future

- 14.20 The primary requirement is to extend access to non-specialist facilities in Stevenage, including during the school day. This may in part be provided for by the proposed new leisure centre, but other community hall sites or possibly converted business premises or warehouses around Stevenage could also meet this need, particularly if secure storage was made available. No specific proposals are currently known.
- 14.21 In the longer term, expansion of the specialist gymnastics centre at Marriotts or potentially the development of a second dedicated gymnastics centre in Stevenage may be required. A detailed feasibility study and viability assessment would be essential if this long term option was to be pursued.

## Development of a planning standard

- 14.22 A formal planning standard is not required because no new dedicated gymnastics facilities are proposed in the short-medium term. As part of the review of this Assessment and Strategy, the need for further dedicated gymnastics centre provision should be specifically considered and planning standards proposed, if appropriate.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Current supply and demand

- 14.23 There is one dedicated gymnastics centre at Marriotts School which is well used and in good condition. It has an existing community use agreement.
- 14.24 The centre provides for both gymnastics and trampolining, and the clubs have waiting lists, particularly the Marriotts Gymnastics Club. There is therefore a need for additional gymnastics space in Stevenage, particularly for the pre-school and junior school age groups.

### Future requirements

- 14.25 In the short-medium term, the need is for access to multi-function hall and studio space where equipment can be set out for use particularly by pre-school and primary school children. The pre-school access needs to be during the school day, and is therefore unlikely to be provided for on a dual use site. The proposed leisure

centre could have access during the day, as could some community centres, or potentially a converted business premises or warehouse.

- 14.26 Additional storage space at community centre type venues may help support the introduction of gymnastics.
- 14.27 In the longer term, and if the need and viability can be justified by the clubs, consideration could be given to extending the specialist gym at Marriotts or seeking a second dedicated gymnastics centre site elsewhere.

### *Recommendations*

- 14.28 Retain the existing specialist gymnastics centre at Marriotts as a dual use facility.
- 14.29 Support one or two community centres, or potentially the conversion of a business premises or warehouse, to enable the provision of gymnastics both during the school day and for after school sessions. For community centres this may be require additional secure storage on site.
- 14.30 In the longer term, explore the option of extending the existing facilities at Marriotts, or developing a second dedicated gymnastics centre elsewhere in Stevenage.



## SECTION 15: GOLF

### Introduction

- 15.1 This section of the report considers golf and the ways in which it is played. There is one golf site in Stevenage, which is owned by Stevenage Borough Council.
- 15.2 Golf makes a contribution of around £3.4 billion per annum to the English economy. Golf also occupies an important position in the English sporting landscape. It is the fifth largest participation sport in the country and has about 675,000 members belonging to around 1,900 golf clubs.
- 15.3 Like many other sports in England, golf faces some serious challenges, and the number of golf club members has been declining since 2004. This in turn has put a financial strain on many golf clubs that are reliant on membership income. Overall participation in golf has also been declining steadily since 2007 due to lifestyle shifts and competition from other sports.

### Golf design and activities

- 15.4 There are a number of ways in which golf is played, from the standard 18 hole golf course in a variety of landscapes, to shorter Par 3 courses, driving ranges, pitch and putt courses, and even crazy golf. The main sporting facilities are considered to be full courses, short course/ par 3 courses, and driving ranges, and these are the focus of this golf Assessment and Strategy.

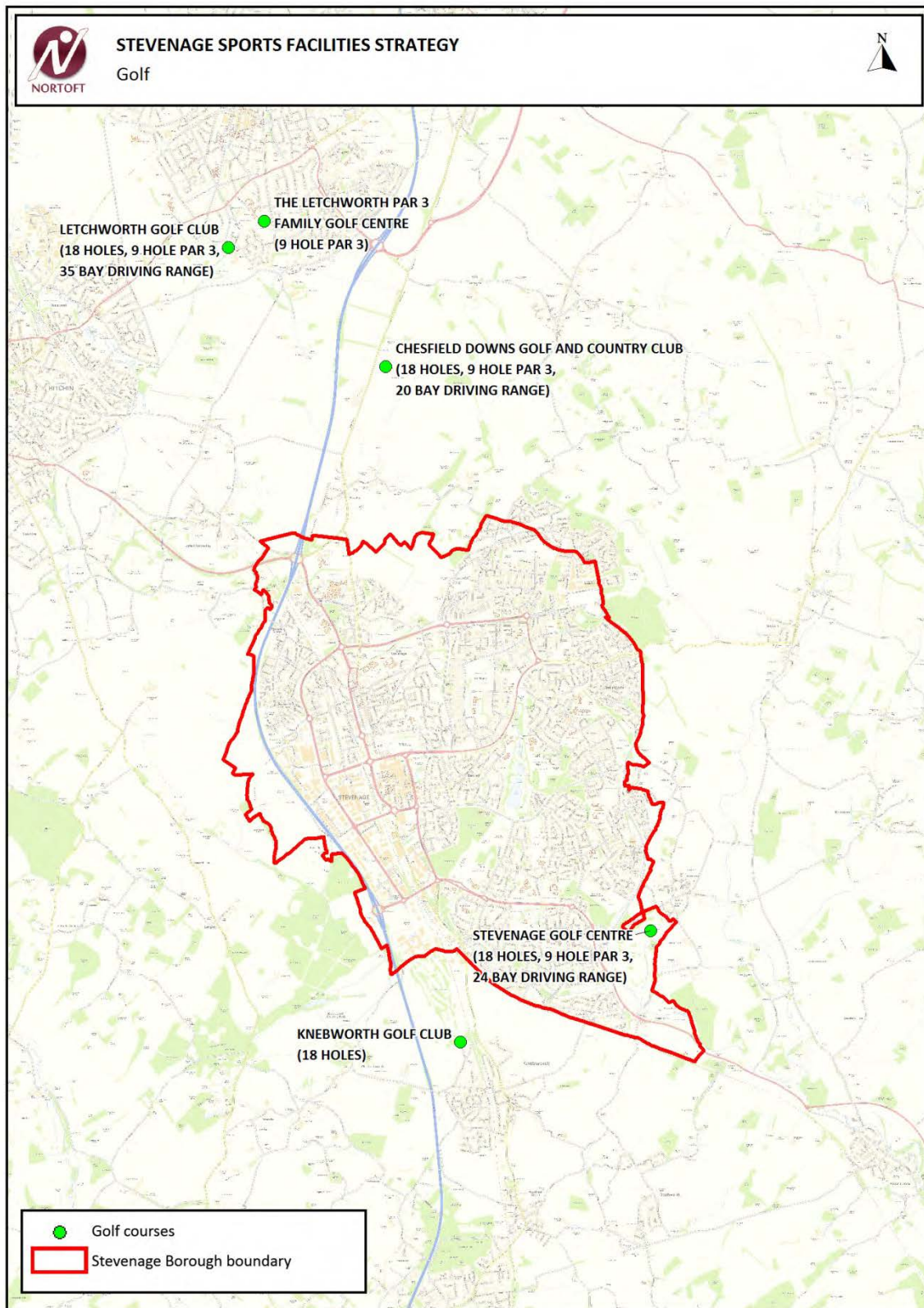
### Participation in golf

- 15.5 The Sport England statistics for participation in golf shows that amongst adults around 1.12m take part in golf at least once a month. Men's participation is about four times greater than that of women. Nationally the rate of participation in golf fell between 2007 and 2014. The highest rates of participation are amongst those aged 55 years plus, and amongst the more affluent socio-economic groups (NS SEC 1-4).

### Current provision

- 15.6 There is one golf course in Stevenage, The Stevenage Golf Centre which has a standard 18 hole course, a 9 hole par 3 course, and 18 driving range bays. The golf course is owned by Stevenage Borough Council and managed by SLL as part of the multi-facility contract.
- 15.7 Golf courses in and around Stevenage are mapped in Figure 72. The ones outside Stevenage include: Knebworth, Chesfield Downs, Letchworth Golf Club and Letchworth Par 3 Family Golf Centre.

Figure 72: Golf in and around Stevenage



## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 15.8 Golf is a sport which attracts a significant proportion of Stevenage residents but many of the golfers are older people who use the sport as a form of exercise and as a social opportunity. There are some younger people taking part, but further work and new golf opportunities will be needed to encourage more to take up the sport. This may mean that the Golf Centre will need to develop new golf related facilities.
- 15.9 The Stevenage Golf Course and site appear to be generally of a high standard for a public facility, although the irrigation system is known to be beyond its useful life. Stevenage Borough Council is therefore currently reviewing the options to replace the system to ensure that the greens are irrigated effectively and also to improve water efficiency. The works should be completed before April 2016.
- 15.10 For the year ending March 2014 the site had around 7,200 visits to the Par 3 course, over 18,000 to the main course, and 4,500 to the golf driving range. In addition there were about 1,500 visits by the golf society. The events/functions/conference facility had over 10,000 users.

## Recent consultation findings

- 15.11 The individuals survey had 37 respondents (9%) saying that they regularly play golf, either on a weekly or monthly basis. 29 of these felt that there was about the right amount of golf provision, and for 6 people the golf course was the sports facility that they used most often. The reasons given for using the Golf Centre were; that it is the only course, the person is a member, and that it is very friendly. Four of the 6 individuals using the golf course felt that it needs improvement.
- 15.12 Over 60% of the respondents taking part in golf were male, and most considered themselves to be “professional” in terms of their work. This suggests that the Stevenage course is attracting a similar group of people to the national pattern for golf.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 15.13 Sport England recognises 4 national governing bodies for golf: The Golf Foundation, the Ladies Golf Union, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, and England Golf. Of these, England Golf is the most relevant in relation to golf participation in Stevenage.
- 15.14 The national England Golf Strategic Plan 2014-17 aims to increase golf participation, to increase the number of members of clubs, to strengthen clubs generally, and to support talented golfers. There no specific facility proposals and no specific references to Stevenage.

- 15.15 The national governing bodies for golf did not provide any comment on the Assessment or Strategy.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 15.16 The Market Segmentation information from Sport England suggests that golf is a sport which appeals to four of the largest market segments in Stevenage. With the exception of older men who are unemployed, none of these market segment groups are likely to be high priorities for sports development initiatives, in part because they are already relatively active.
- 15.17 However as the objectives of sports development within the borough are to increase rates of participation in sport and physical activity especially amongst young people, Stevenage Borough Council, via SLL, may wish to encourage new forms of golf aimed at younger people.

### Summary of current situation

- 15.18 The Stevenage Golf Centre with its standard 18 hole course, 9 hole par 3, and driving range meets the needs of Stevenage residents, though it is likely to draw users from outside the authority too. Everyone living in Stevenage with access to a car has access to an 18 hole course, Par 3 course, and driving range within 20 minutes, either within the borough, or over the boundary.
- 15.19 The site and course is generally in good condition, though the irrigation system needs urgent attention and the centre needs rewiring.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 15.20 Although the Nortoft Calculator could be used to help guide future provision of golf, the sport is much more likely to respond to economic conditions and will change to reflect patterns of demand.
- 15.21 In practice there are no sufficiently large undeveloped open space areas in Stevenage which could be made into new golf courses, so new provision within the borough is unlikely, even in the long term.
- 15.22 Although comparisons could be made with other courses in surrounding areas, the decision about the retention of a golf centre in Stevenage should be one based on accessibility to the community and the opportunity for a range of sports and activities in Stevenage.

- 15.23 Over time the expectations for golf change, and it will be important for the golf centre to respond to these in order to keep the facility as viable and vibrant as possible.

### Summary of future requirements

- 15.24 No other golf courses are likely to be developed in Stevenage even in the long term because of the lack of available undeveloped space.
- 15.25 The golf course provides a valuable sports opportunity for a significant proportion of the residents of Stevenage, and should be retained.

### Meeting the needs of the future

- 15.26 Golf is primarily provided via the commercial sector, so the development of courses outside of Stevenage will reflect a combination of demand and appropriate site opportunities. At this time no new golf courses are planned in Stevenage or the surrounding area. However the existing golf centre should be well placed to meet the needs of Stevenage into the long term.
- 15.27 The golf course management will be reviewed at the conclusion of the current contract with SLL. At that time the management of the golf centre could be separately market tested, recognising that golf is not usually a core activity for many leisure providers, and leisure is not the core activity of commercial golf providers.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 15.28 The Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre is the only golf facility in the borough. It provides an important sports opportunity for many, and although improvements can be made, the golf facilities are generally of good quality.
- 15.29 The site is currently managed by SLL as part of their wider Stevenage leisure contract, which runs up to 2023.
- 15.30 Golf is a sport which attracts a significant proportion of Stevenage residents, though few of those taking part in golf would be seen as a high priority in terms of sports development. The majority are elderly, although there are some younger people taking part.

### *Future requirements*

- 15.31 No other golf courses are likely to be developed in the borough, even in the long term, because of the lack of available undeveloped space.
- 15.32 When the management of the golf centre is reviewed in the future, the potential operators should include commercial golf management companies.

### *Recommendations*

- 15.33 The Stevenage Golf Centre should be retained with a range of golf opportunities which provide for as wide a range of participants as possible. The mix of golf provision on the site may need to change over time to reflect trends in the sport and to encourage new participation.
- 15.34 The priority is therefore to support both the sports development opportunities at the golf centre and to encourage the golf offer to evolve over time to ensure that the facility remains viable.
- 15.35 The management of the centre should be separately market tested when the management contract is reviewed.
- 15.36 High priority projects for the Golf Centre include the replacement of the irrigation system and rewiring of the centre.



## SECTION 16: MULTI USE GAMES AREAS

### Introduction

- 16.1 This section of the Assessment and Strategy considers those controlled Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) on intensively managed sites with no informal access. These facilities are located on school sites and are primarily used by the schools themselves for a range of activities including football, hockey, netball and tennis. In terms of community use, the main uses are for netball and football.

### MUGA design and activities

- 16.2 Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) are outdoor areas which are normally enclosed by a fence, usually about 3 metres high. They are at least the size of a tennis court and have some form of all-weather surface. There are five distinct types of MUGA as set out in *A Guide to the Design, Specification & Construction of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA)* by Sport England and the Sports and Play Construction Association. As can be seen from the following table (Figure 73), these different MUGAs surfaces are appropriate for different sports. In Stevenage, the most important uses of MUGAs are netball and football, and all of the MUGAs are of the Type 1/2, with the exception of the Type 3 surface on one of the two MUGAs at Marriotts.

Figure 73: MUGA types

MUGA type	Surface	Main sport/s for this type of MUGA
Types 1 and 2	Open Textured Porous Macadam	Tennis, netball
Type 3	Polymeric: plastics, rubbers and synthetic resins	Netball
Type 4	Polymeric: plastics, rubbers and synthetic resins	Football
Type 5	Artificial grass pitch, sand filled or dressed	Hockey, 5 a side

### Participation in netball and football

- 16.3 According to the Sport England research, netball as a sport has seen participation increase nationally during the period 2007/08 to 2013/14 due to an upsurge of interest amongst young people under the age of 25 years. However the sport is still relatively small, with around 156,000 people taking part each week nationally,

compared to swimming, athletics, cycling and football with over 2 million people each. This sport is nearly entirely female and is played by the higher socio-economic groups and students.

- 16.4 There is one Netball England accredited club based in Stevenage, Stevenage Storm, playing out of Marriotts Sports Centre.
- 16.5 Football as a sport is estimated to be played by around 2.84M adults at least once a month, but the Sport England statistics do not break this down between the sport played on grass, on artificial grass pitches or on MUGAs. MUGAs are most likely to be used for training, particularly by mini and junior teams.

## Current provision

- 16.6 Every secondary school and some primary schools have Multi Use Games Areas, and at the present time only the two separate and differently surfaced MUGAs at Marriotts are used by the community on a regular basis, for football (Type 3) and netball (Type 2). This school has a confirmed community use agreement.
- 16.7 Nobel School would like to encourage community tennis use of their MUGA (Type 1), and would like to floodlight the facility. The facility has however problems with its surface due to its original construction, which make it unsuitable for community tennis. There is also a need to confirm the community use agreement for this site.
- 16.8 There is one primary school with a community use agreement for its MUGA, Fairlands Primary School. It advertises the availability of the MUGA on its web site, but no formal regular sports use appears to be taking place on the facility.

## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 16.9 The two separate MUGAs at Marriott School are well used by the community and should form part of the community use agreement (CUA). However the CUA is still to be finalised, so these facilities are potentially “at risk” for the community.
- 16.10 The Nobel School MUGA has some identified potential use for community tennis, if the surface could be improved, but there does not appear to be specific latent demand for any other sport for this MUGA. It might however provide a local opportunity as a kick-about area or potentially for netball, if this sport expands in the future.
- 16.11 The MUGA at Thomas Alleyne School is in moderate condition and the school would potentially like to convert it to a 3G pitch. The other school MUGAs at Barnwell and John Henry Newman are not available for community use, and The Barclay School does not have a fenced court area which could be considered a MUGA, although it does have a small size artificial grass pitch, which has a Type 5 surface.

- 16.12 The John Henry Newman School site with its macadam surface was previously used for netball, with over 8,000 uses per year. These courts are now closed to community use, and this appears to have been transferred elsewhere successfully. The courts and ancillary facilities at John Henry Newman are poorer quality than those at Marriotts, so would be unlikely to attract the netball club back.

## Recent consultations

### Individuals

- 16.13 None of the findings from the individual or student survey were specific to MUGAs.

### Clubs

#### *Stevenage Storm Netball Club*

- 16.14 Stevenage Storm Netball club, the only accredited netball club in the borough responded to the club survey about both their facilities at Marriotts, and their aspirations and issues.
- 16.15 The club currently has about 140 members, about half of which are juniors. The remaining 50% is reasonably evenly split between minis and seniors. Most of the members come from Stevenage, with some also being drawn from the surrounding villages. The club has a formal development plan and school club links. The club does not have a waiting list and expects to grow over the next 5 years, with the main issues affecting the expansion being a lack of volunteers and the recruitment of members.
- 16.16 Stevenage Storm uses the 3 netball courts on the Type 3 MUGA area at Marriotts, plus access to the sports hall. The courts are used year round 1-2 times per week on weekday evenings. There are no booking pressures, and the club confirms that it is their preferred location.
- 16.17 The club considers that the site is very well maintained though there can be issues in wet and icy weather when the pitches become slippery. The changing facilities are high quality and fully meet the needs of the club. The main issue is a lack of secure storage for the club's equipment.

#### *Football clubs*

- 16.18 Some of the football clubs are seeking more training space on artificial grass pitches, but the preferred surface is 3G rather than sand filled or sand dressed.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 16.19 The most relevant national governing body is England Netball. Its Whole Sport Plan 2013-2017 concentrates on increasing participation and performance and there are no specific facility recommendations for Stevenage.
- 16.20 The Football Association (FA) current national facilities strategy does not consider MUGAs, and no additional comment has been provided by the FA on this type of facility during the course of this Assessment and Strategy.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 16.21 Netball is too small a sport for the Market Segmentation analysis to identify, but it is known that the sport is primarily attractive to young women, aged under 25 years who are either in the higher socio-economic groups or students.
- 16.22 The sport in Stevenage is important for participation because it attracts women who are generally less active than men, but the sport is not reaching those in the lower socio-economic groups so is therefore of medium priority for any future investment in Stevenage.
- 16.23 In relation to football, the FA does not specifically consider the game on MUGAs, though the Marriott's School football MUGA is well used by the community.

### Other modelling

- 16.24 There are no requirements for modelling of this facility type on managed sites in Stevenage.

### Summary of current situation

- 16.25 There is a high level of potential provision on school sites but little or no latent demand.
- 16.26 The facilities at Marriotts School are not yet secured for community use via a community use agreement, so this is a priority for action. There is also a need for more secure storage space for the community clubs on that site.
- 16.27 The Nobel School MUGA is not used by the community because of surface problems, and this would need to be formally secured through a community use agreement. The MUGA does not have floodlights so is of limited community value during the winter months.

## Assessment of and meeting future needs

- 16.28 The two MUGAs at Marriotts School are proposed to be part of the community use agreement, and if this is signed then the facilities should meet most of the needs of the community up to 2031.
- 16.29 If the Nobel School MUGA surface quality issues can be improved then the site may be able to develop community use for tennis in the summer months. The community use agreement on this site also needs to be confirmed.
- 16.30 Giles Junior School will be developing a type 5 MUGA (artificial grass pitch) which will be open to the community from January 2015, but will not be floodlit. In practice this MUGA is likely to have limited community benefit as the main demand is really for floodlit sites with 3G surface.

## Development of a planning standard

- 16.31 No further MUGA facilities are required so a planning standard is not required.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 16.32 There are a number of managed Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) in Stevenage, all on school sites. The only site used by the community on a regular basis is Marriotts with its two differently surfaced MUGA areas, which are currently used by the community for netball and football. However these facilities are not yet secure for community use because the community use agreement is outstanding.
- 16.33 There is one netball club in Stevenage, the Stevenage Storm club. They recently moved to Marriotts where they have good quality facilities and plenty of space to expand. Their main issues are developing their volunteer base and having secure storage.
- 16.34 The football use is primarily for training, particularly for the mini and junior teams.

### *Future requirements*

- 16.35 The relatively small size of netball as a sport means that even with future growth of Stevenage at 8200 dwellings, the club is unlikely to outgrow its facility at Marriotts. If a new club developed there are opportunities for the sport at Nobel, though this would require floodlights to be installed. There are therefore no priorities for future specific investment in relation to this sport which require formal planning standards to be adopted, but there is a need for additional secure storage.

16.36 There are no specific needs for football in relation to MUGAs as these are not the preferred surface for community clubs for either matches or training.

### *Recommendations*

16.37 No planning standard is required.

16.38 The existing level of community access to MUGAs should be retained.

16.39 The delivery priority is:

- Secure community use at Marriotts through the signing of the draft community use agreement.
- Improved secure equipment storage at Marriotts to support community use of the MUGA.
- Complete the community use agreements for Nobel School.



## SECTION 17: YOUTH PROVISION

### Introduction

- 17.1 This section of the Assessment and Strategy specifically considers provision for young people through open access Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and skate parks. These are both primarily local venues for young people, who usually access them on foot or by bike and on an informal and free of charge basis. These facilities provide an important social focus for young people. MUGAs and skate parks (or wheels parks) are often developed on separate sites as alternative provision but are sometimes provided together. For this reason this facility section of the report considers open access MUGAs and skate parks together.
- 17.2 The methodology in this section is different from that of the larger built sports facilities for several reasons:
- Open access MUGAs are not used formally for sport, though some sports development and play scheme activities may be sited on, or close to them.
  - Information on MUGAs and skate/wheels parks is not collected nationally, so comparison with other authorities is difficult.
  - Skate/wheels parks vary widely in their design and level of challenge they offer, and therefore their catchment.
  - There are no statistics on usage at national level, within benchmark authorities or within Stevenage itself.

### MUGAs, skate parks and wheels parks design

- 17.3 The MUGAs are outdoor areas which are normally enclosed by a fence, usually about 3 metres high and at least the size of a tennis court. They have some form of all-weather surface, usually tarmac. Details about the different surfaces and uses are provided in paragraph 16.2.
- 17.4 Not included in this assessment are the more informal outdoor basketball type hard courts, which often only have one hoop and no fencing, which will be addressed in the Stevenage Play Strategy work.
- 17.5 The nature of skate parks can vary greatly, from a single half pipe which is attractive mostly to the younger age ranges, up to large specially designed areas of concrete and metal which provide a wide range of challenges for all ages and abilities. An example of a large facility is Stoke on Trent's Central Forest Park. This spans over 3200 sq m and offers street-style skating, including handrails and steps.
- 17.6 Wheels parks can also be designed in a variety of ways depending upon the type of use envisaged. These could be simply a stone chip covered BMX track, or a multi-

purpose park, for example the Cyclopark in Kent, which provides for BMX biking, skateboarding and mountain biking.

- 17.7 The larger and more challenging skate parks and wheels parks will attract users from a wide area, but still also act as a local facility, particularly for the older “young people”. An analogy might be a 50m swimming pool, which attracts people from a very wide area for specialist swimming, but also provides the swimming opportunities for the local population.

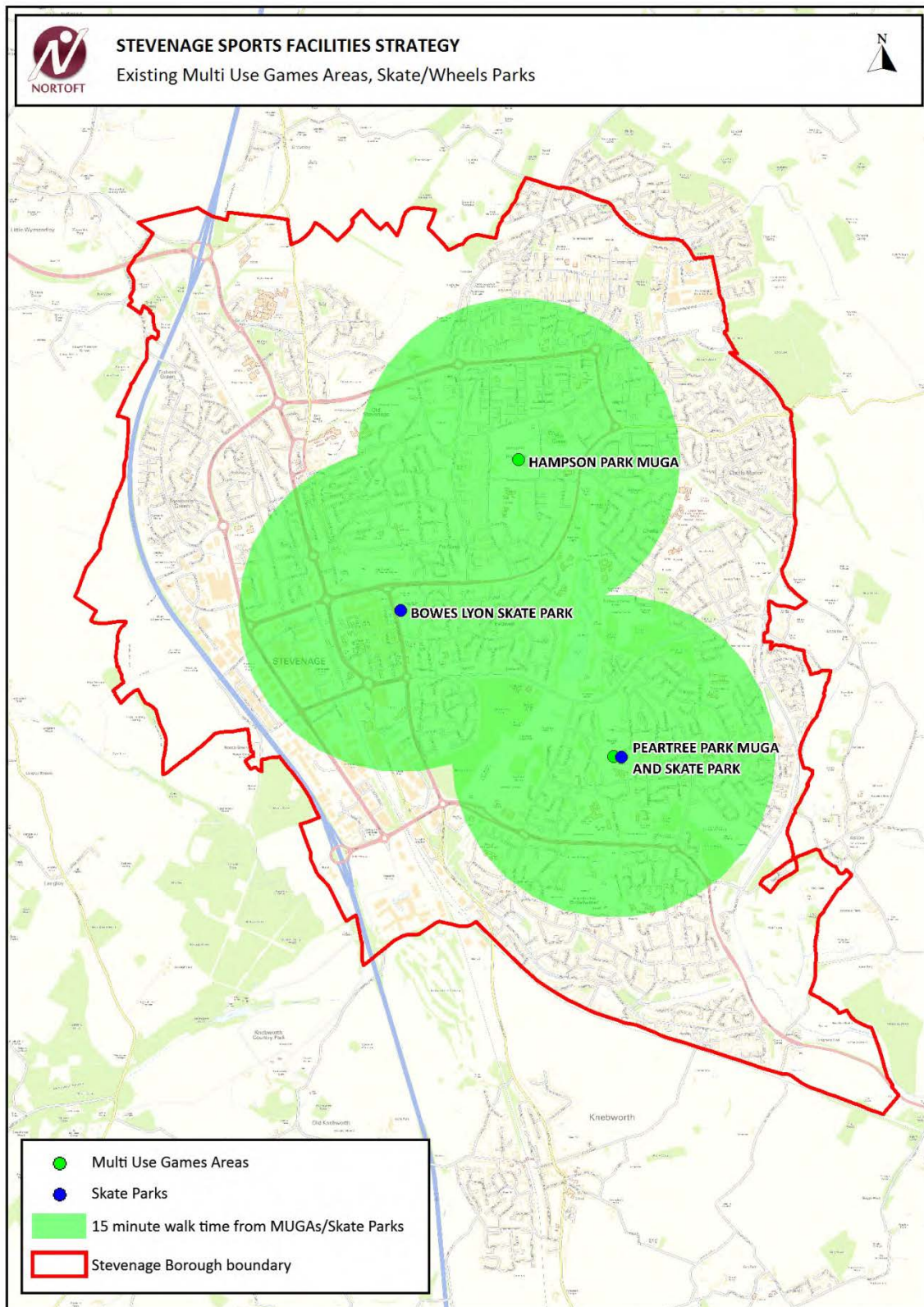
## **Current provision**

- 17.8 There are two open access Type 1 multi use games areas (MUGAs) and two skate park facilities in Stevenage, these are mapped in Figure 74 below. The two MUGAs are located in town parks at Hampson Park and Peartree Park and are managed by the Stevenage Borough Council’s Parks team. They are both of reasonable quality and appear to be well used.
- 17.9 The skate park at the rear of Bowes Lyon Hall is of concrete bowl construction and is relatively small. It is old, showing wear and tear, and is no longer really fit for purpose due to the changing nature of wheeled sports. The second existing skate park is at Peartree Park, which is a small collection of skate ramps which was designed to be attractive to younger and beginner skaters. Therefore although it is of reasonable quality, it does not provide a significant challenge to many potential users.

## **Assessment of current supply/demand**

- 17.10 The users of skate parks and open access MUGAs are mostly young people, and they access the facilities largely on foot or by cycle. A 15 minute walk catchment for these local youth provision facilities is appropriate, equating to a catchment radius of around 1.2 km.
- 17.11 The map in Figure 74 shows the 15 minute radius from the three existing youth provision sites, at Hampson Park, Peartree Park and Bowes Lyons. It is clear that although the central area of Stevenage is well provided for, there “gaps” in provision around the edges of Stevenage.

Figure 74: MUGAs and Skate Park locations – current



## Recent consultations

- 17.12 The individuals and students survey both identified skate parks as a high priority for teenagers due to the lack of good facilities in the town. There is a desire for both more facilities generally, and for one larger skate park which can offer a range of challenges for wheeled sports. This larger facility would attract users from a much wider area.
- 17.13 There are no formal sports clubs in Stevenage which are relevant to open access MUGAs or skate parks. Skateboarding is a recognised sport by Sport England, but there is no recognised national governing body, from which comments could be sought.

## Market Segmentation and sports development

- 17.14 The Sport England market segmentation tool is based on surveys of people aged 16 years and over. It is not therefore relevant to the groups who are most likely to use the local open access MUGAs and skate parks, who are primarily young teenagers.
- 17.15 The open access MUGAs and skate parks in Stevenage provide for informal recreation. There are very few formally organised activities based on the sites, therefore they are not usually considered as part of the traditional sports facilities network, contributing to specific sports development objectives.

## Modelling

- 17.16 The geographical spread of open access MUGAs and skate parks in Stevenage, together with their quality, accessibility and attractiveness is more important than a quantitative rate of provision. Modelling a quantitative provision is not therefore particularly valuable or relevant for this facility type, although a standard of provision based on a provision per 1000 basis is required in order to provide justification for developers' contributions.

## Assessment of Future Needs

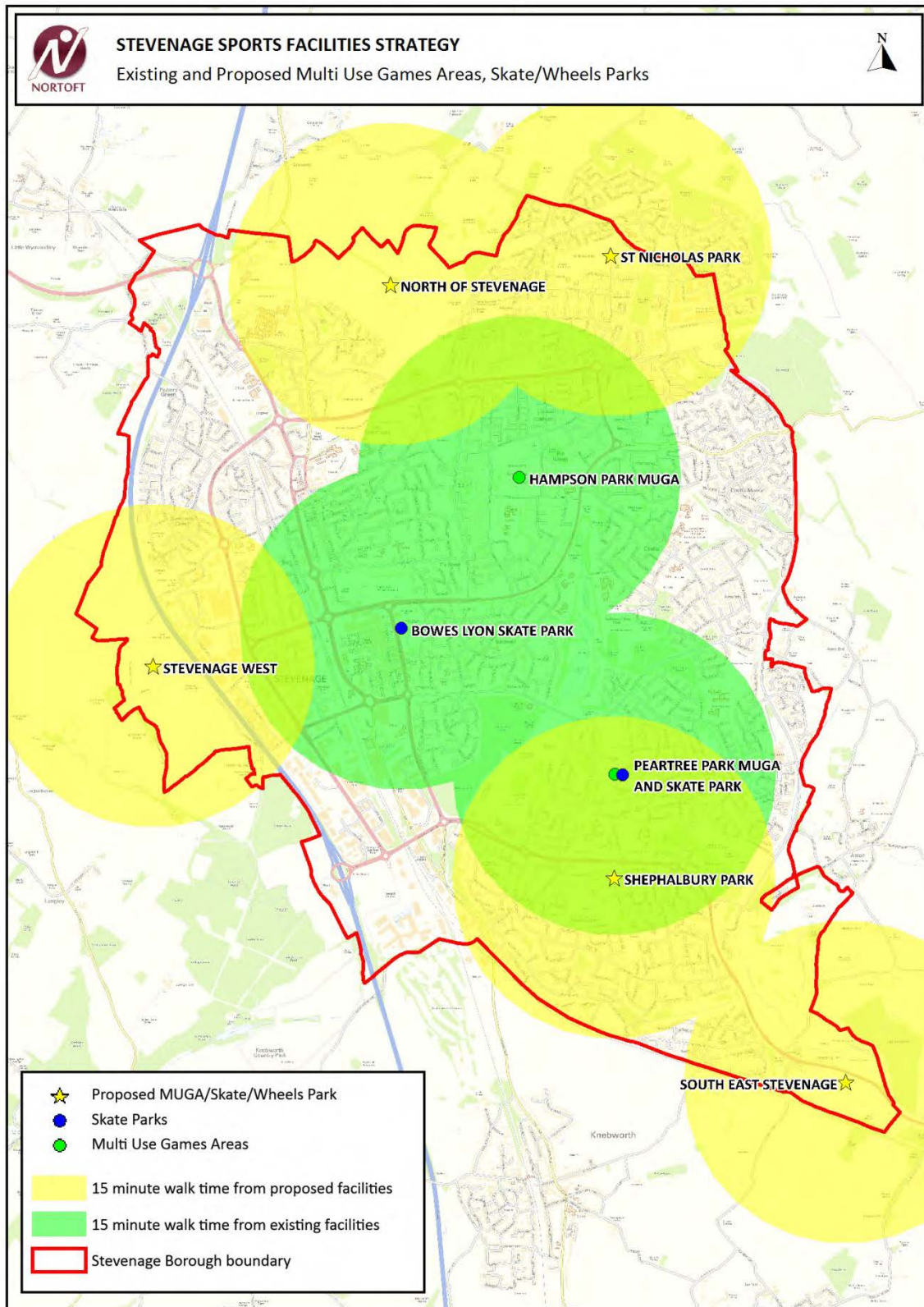
- 17.17 The new housing areas proposed in Stevenage West, North of Stevenage and South East Stevenage will all be outside the 15 minute walk time catchment (1.2 km) area of the existing youth facilities.
- 17.18 The proposed housing in the town centre area and at least some of the infill development elsewhere in the borough will be within the existing catchments of youth facilities, but there will be a need here for larger and better facilities to cater for more users. In particular, the priority will be to develop a new large skate/wheels park.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 17.19 The 2 tennis court site at Shephalbury Park is significantly underused and this would be a good site for a new MUGA as the site is already available and it is sited in an appropriate environment. The location means that there would be some overlap with the catchment of Peartree Park, but is it sited on the other side of Broadhall Way from the existing facility.
- 17.20 Stevenage Borough Council has recently committed to providing a new purpose built skate or wheels park facility at Hampson Park. Work on the design is yet to be started and it is likely that this will be a partnership approach between local skaters, Stevenage Borough Council, and a specialist skate or wheels park design company.
- 17.21 These two facilities will enhance the existing provision and extend the area to the south which has access to a youth facility within 15 minutes, but further provision is required to meet the needs of Stevenage residents living or proposed to be living elsewhere. It is therefore proposed that new open access MUGA or skate park provision should be provided at St Nicholas Park, and also in association with Stevenage West, Stevenage North and South East Stevenage. The proposed network of provision is mapped at Figure 75.
- 17.22 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England in relation to MUGAs. However it will also be essential to take into account the views of local young people expressed through the planning process and other mechanisms to determine the most appropriate facility mix, design and location. This in turn will determine the cost of each facility, which can range from about £5000 for the simplest provision through to £120,000 for a Multi Use Games Area as per Sport England specifications, or up to around £250,000 for a medium size high quality wheels park. A larger or more complex wheels park may be much more expensive.



Figure 75: Youth provision, proposed network





## Development of a planning standard

### *Standard for quantity*

- 17.23 It is proposed that there should be 8 sites with youth provision, which may either be an open access MUGA and/or a skate park.
- 17.24 This would give a rate of provision of 0.8 sites per 1000 as at 2031.
- 17.25 The value of developers' contributions for youth provision requires a clear baseline. As youth facilities can vary significantly in design and subsequently cost, it is proposed to use the value of a MUGA as the starting point for the assessment of the level of contributions expected because this has a clearly identified cost, set down in the Sport England Facilities Costs guidance, which is regularly updated.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 17.26 The minimum standard for accessibility is an open access MUGA, skate park or similar youth provision within 15 minutes walk.
- 17.27 Developers' contributions should be used to support provision of either new or enhanced youth facilities at the closest facility.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 17.28 It is proposed that one of the new skate/wheels parks will be designed to be larger and more challenging, and to provide for a range of wheeled activities. The design of this requires further confirmation.
- 17.29 The general planning standard for MUGAs is the design and quality standard set down in the Sport England guidance for MUGAs, and to best practice standards in relation to skate park provision. Account should be taken of the views of local residents, particularly young people in relation to the details of the planned provision. The standards to apply to both new build and refurbishment.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 17.30 The feedback from the consultation work associated with this Assessment and Strategy has shown that open access MUGAs and skate parks are seen as important local facilities for young people. These facilities are sometimes provided together, but more often are provided as alternatives, with the local decision being made in

consultation with local young people. The nature of skate parks also varies widely, from simple half pipes to complex parks with varying challenges and degrees of difficulty. The larger and more challenging skate or wheels parks will attract users from a wide area, but still also act as a local facility. An analogy might be a 50m swimming pool, which attracts people from a very wide area for specialist swimming, but also provides the swimming opportunities for the local population.

- 17.31 Stevenage currently only has three sites; Hampson Park with a MUGA, Bowes Lyon with an aging skate park, and Peartree Park with both a MUGA and a skate park. The informal nature of these facilities means that they need to be accessed on foot and by cycle, so 15 minute walk time is appropriate for this type of provision. Based on this accessibility of 15 minutes, there are clear gaps in the existing network of provision around the edges of Stevenage.

### *Future requirements*

- 17.32 There is a need to provide more youth provision via open access MUGAs and skate / wheels parks in locations which will enable most young people to reach a facility within 15 minutes walk. The priority sites are Shephalbury Park and St Nicholas Park plus as the new housing is developed; Stevenage West, North of Stevenage and South East Stevenage.
- 17.33 In developing skate park, wheels park, and MUGA provision, there should be a specific objective of involving local young people to refine the details of the proposed provision.
- 17.34 The proposal for a skate or wheels park to be developed at Hampson Park seems to be well supported by feedback from the consultation. This facility is expected to be much more challenging than the smaller local skate parks and attract people from a wide area. The range of activities to be provided for and the design is still to be confirmed. The capital and maintenance cost of the facility will depend upon the final design, and Stevenage Borough Council is leading on the current feasibility work.

### *Recommendations*

- 17.35 There is a need to retain the facilities/site for young people in terms of the open access MUGAs and skate park provision, and to enhance this network.
- 17.36 The priorities for investment which are based on the need to provide a improved network of accessible facilities are:
- new open access MUGA at Shephalbury Park on the site of the double tennis court
  - new open access MUGA or skate park provision at St Nicholas Park
  - new open access MUGA or skate park provision as part of new housing developments at Stevenage West, North of Stevenage and South East Stevenage.

- 17.37 A new wheels sports/skate park in Stevenage should be developed to provide a greater range of challenging opportunities for young people. The preferred location is Hampson Park. The range of activities to be provided for and the design of the park requires confirmation. This will in turn determine the cost of the proposal.
- 17.38 The existing skate park at Bowes Lyon should be retained and improved.
- 17.39 The planning standard is proposed as:
- 0.08 MUGA / skate park per 1000 population for new developments.
  - Open access MUGA, skate park or other youth provision within 15 minutes walk.
  - For MUGAs design and quality standard to meet Sport England guidance for MUGAs.
  - For skate parks and wheels parks the design should reflect current best practice.
  - The proposed large skate or wheels park should be designed primarily for the more experienced users, whilst other sites could be designed to provide for less experienced.
  - The design should take account of the views of local residents, particularly young people.
- 17.40 Developers' contributions should be sought in relation to all new developments at a rate based on the cost of a MUGA.

## **SECTION 18: WATER SPORTS, CLIMBING AND HIGH ROPES AT FAIRLANDS VALLEY PARK**

### **Introduction**

- 18.1 Fairlands Valley Park is probably the most important open space in Stevenage. The lake is used for introductory sailing, rowing, canoeing and angling, and there is a short high ropes course with climbing tower at the Water Sports Centre. The park is also extensively used as a venue for walking, running, cycling, fitness and many different informal activities.

### **Current provision**

- 18.2 The main lake at Fairlands Valley is around 5 ha in size. The site offers introductory experiences for sailing (Royal Yachting Association (RYA) levels 1 and 2), rowing and canoeing, which are available to the community on a pay and play basis, plus a short high ropes course and climbing tower. Angling is also provided on the main lake, and model boating takes place on the Millennium Lake.
- 18.3 Outside of Stevenage and located at Welwyn, is the Stanborough Park facility, which is around 15 minutes' drive time from Fairlands Valley and which is managed by Welwyn Hatfield Leisure Limited on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. There are two lakes available for sailing and canoeing on that site, both of which are larger than the Fairlands Valley lake, giving a total water area of over 13ha. The lakes are therefore able to cater for higher level sailing, up to RYA Level 4.
- 18.4 The nearest RYA sailing club to Stevenage is at Arlesey, about 14 miles drive from Fairlands Valley. The nearest canoe clubs are the Baldock and District Canoe Club, the Hertfordshire Canoe Club at Luton, the Lee Valley club, and St Albans and Hertsmere. These clubs offer introductory sessions, training and the ongoing ability to participate.
- 18.5 The nearest high ropes experience outside of Stevenage is close to Ware, and within 18 minutes drive time of Fairlands Valley Park. The ropes course is part of a larger adventurous activity site which includes activities such as archery, clay pigeon shooting and paintballing. The charges at the Ware venue are much higher, about double the cost of the Stevenage experience.
- 18.6 The nearest indoor climbing centre is at Hertfordshire Sports Village, approximately 20 minutes drive from Fairlands Valley Park. This facility offers a range of climbing experiences and although the induction session is more expensive than at Stevenage, the standard charge for a climbing session is about 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the charges at Fairlands Valley Park. This facility also has the advantage in that climbing can be offered during the winter months, and whatever the weather.

## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 18.7 The current water sports, climbing and ropes course usage is dominated by education, which accounted for 95% of the visits for the year ending March 2014. The majority of these visits are from schools and education services outside of Stevenage.
- 18.8 The non-school usage was around 400 visits for the same period. Therefore, although the site is offering community opportunities for sailing, canoeing and climbing, the site usage by the community is very low. The site and its facilities are too restrictive for significant progression of individuals beyond the basic introduction to water sports or high ropes/climbing.
- 18.9 The water sports, high ropes use, and outdoor climbing are all very seasonal, with much lower levels of demand during the winter months. As the facilities are outdoors, they are also not available during the winter evenings.
- 18.10 The Fairlands Valley Water Sports Centre including the climbing and high ropes facility are managed by SLL, as part of the multi-facility contract.
- 18.11 Fairlands Valley Park also acts as an important venue for a range of other outdoor sport and physical activity, including walking, running, jogging and keep fit. This use goes on independently from the Water Sports Centre. The angling use of the lake is also largely independent of the Water Sports Centre.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

- 18.12 Fairlands Valley Park is used by a very high percentage of the Stevenage community. The individual survey respondents who visited Fairlands Valley used it for a range of activities which are mostly informal, or for children's play. However, none of the respondents had used the water sports or climbing facilities there.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 18.13 The Royal Yachting Association, British Canoe Union and Amateur Rowing Association are the national governing bodies for sailing, canoeing and rowing respectively. They have been given the opportunity to comment about the activities in Fairlands Valley and on the draft Strategy, but no views have been received. None of their strategies have specific recommendations which impact on Stevenage.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 18.14 The Sport England Market Segmentation analysis suggests that two of the market segmentation groups, which are both of retirement age, occasionally take part in angling. None of the larger market segment groups have an interest in sailing, canoeing or rowing, so significant investment to improve the “offer” of water sports in Stevenage would be unlikely to attract many more adult users from within Stevenage itself, even if the physical constraints could be overcome.
- 18.15 In relation to the other physical activity uses of Fairlands Valley Park, a high proportion of the adult residents in Stevenage are interested in keep fit, cycling, and athletics (including running and jogging). The park has an important role in providing a large area of open space for these activities, some of which operate through organisations and groups, but others are wholly individual.

### Summary of current situation

- 18.16 The water sports provision at Fairlands Valley Park is at the introductory level for sailing, rowing and canoeing. The size of the lake means that more challenging experiences which are needed to retain participation are difficult to provide, particularly compared with the larger water areas outside of Stevenage. The take up by the community of the water sports experiences is therefore low.
- 18.17 The use of the climbing tower and high ropes course by the community is also low, for a number of reasons but including the fact that they are not available during winter evenings because they are outdoors, and the fact that this type of experience tends to be a one-off.
- 18.18 The Water Sports Centre is, however, a well used by schools and educational services, mainly by small groups from outside of Stevenage. It is, therefore acting as a strategic facility for this purpose.
- 18.19 The other sporting and physical recreation uses of Fairlands Valley Park are mostly on an informal basis and include walking, running, jogging, keep fit, cycling and children’s play. There is also angling on the lake. These uses are very largely separate from the Water Sports Centre.



## Assessment of Future Needs

- 18.20 As Stevenage's population grows there will be a continuing need for adventurous physical activity and sporting experiences. The size and nature of Fairlands Valley Park and its lake however restricts the opportunities which can be offered on the site, and the take up by the community is likely to remain at low levels for the water sports.
- 18.21 The concept of a high rope course as an adventurous opportunity is good, but the existing facility may require an improved focus with more innovative ways of operating the facility and with some additionality to improve both usage and income. Such a facility is most likely to be used by the community as a one-off experience rather than for regular participation, and its commercial success will therefore depend on how the facility competes against similar venues elsewhere.
- 18.22 The climbing element of the existing high ropes tower facility is not likely to be able to compete against indoor climbing opportunities elsewhere for regular users, not least as it is closed after dark and is restricted during adverse weather conditions. There is not therefore likely to be any significant increase in demand for this facility in the future.
- 18.23 The very significant education use of the Water Sports Centre, and the fact that many of the user organisations are located outside of Stevenage, make it a strategic facility in this respect. It would therefore be appropriate to review the current provision at the Water Sports Centre, and how it is funded.

## Conclusions and recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 18.24 Fairlands Valley Park is the premier open space in Stevenage, providing for a wide range of informal and sporting activities. The lake hosts the Water Sports Centre which offers introductory water sport sessions, climbing and a high ropes experience. The lake is also used for angling.
- 18.25 The sporting opportunities are provided by Stevenage Borough Council via SLL, and are primarily taken up by education, and a high percentage of the users are from outside Stevenage. In this respect, the Water Sports Centre is acting as a strategic facility.
- 18.26 Conversely the use of these facilities by the local community is very low and is also seasonal, with limited demand during the winter months, in part because the facilities are closed after dark.

- 18.27 Although the number of water sports opportunities in this part of Hertfordshire is relatively restricted, the Stanborough Lakes at Welwyn is able to offer more challenging water sports courses because it has two larger lakes. The sailing and canoeing clubs outside of Stevenage but within about 20 minutes drive time are also able to offer introductory sessions, ongoing training and greater opportunities to participate in water sports than the site at Fairlands Valley.
- 18.28 There are competing high ropes experiences outside of Stevenage, and the climbing element of the high ropes tower is not able to compete with indoor climbing sites such as the one at the Hertfordshire Sports Village.

### *Future requirements*

#### *Community use*

- 18.29 As Stevenage grows there will be a continuing need to provide adventurous and challenging activities for the Stevenage community. However the size of the lake and nature of Fairlands Valley Park means that there is unlikely to be any significant increase in the demand for the water sport activities from the community on this site in the future.
- 18.30 In relation to the climbing tower element of the high ropes course, this competes against indoor climbing facilities which are available year round and 24/7, and are cheaper for regular climbers. No significant increase in community use is therefore anticipated in the future.
- 18.31 The high ropes course competes directly with commercial providers, but the offer at the Water Sports Centre is much more restricted in terms of scope and size of the site. The future success of this facility would depend upon it being able to compete in what is effectively a tourism market. Unless there can be an improved focus with innovative ways of operating the facility with some additionality in order to increase use and income, it is not envisaged that there will be a significant increase in community usage in the future.
- 18.32 The informal use of Fairlands Valley Park and the angling use of the lake are likely to experience an increase in demand as Stevenage grows, as the Park is seen as the premier green space. This use would be largely unaffected by the future direction of the Water Sports Centre itself.

#### *Education use*

- 18.33 The Water Sports Centre's primary users are education establishments from outside of Stevenage and drawn from the state sector. The future of this use will depend upon the ability of the site to offer low prices, and the continuing support of the education authorities and individual schools who use the facility.

## *Recommendations*

- 18.34 The future of the Water Sports Centre needs to be reviewed in light of the significant imbalance between the educational use, primarily from establishments outside of Stevenage, and the leisure use by the community. This review should take into account the strategic role that the facility is playing in terms of education support and the current funding arrangements for the facility.

## **CHAPTER 3: PLAYING PITCHES**

### **SECTION 19: INTRODUCTION TO AGP AND GRASS PITCHES**

#### **Introduction**

- 19.1 This section of the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy considers playing pitches. It follows the Sport England methodology Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance 2013 and has been adapted to reflect the assessment structure adopted for the other sports facility types in Stevenage, both indoor and outdoor.
- 19.2 The assessment and the development of the future priorities for investment have been derived following the close involvement of local clubs and leagues, Sport England, the Football Association at both regional and county level, Hertfordshire Cricket Board and the English Cricket Board, the Rugby Football Union, England Hockey, and Stevenage Borough Council.
- 19.3 The main first part of this section relates to artificial grass pitches for football, hockey and rugby. The second section focuses on grass pitches for football, cricket and rugby.

## SECTION 20: ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES

### Introduction

- 20.1 Stevenage appears, at first glance, to be well supplied with artificial grass pitches, but this section of the report identifies some significant issues which will require addressing.
- 20.2 In terms of demand from sports, community hockey is now solely played on artificial surfaces, football is increasingly using these pitches for training and matches and there is strong growth in small sided versions of the game, and rugby has just started using artificial surfaces for matches although the preferred surface for the community game is natural grass.
- 20.3 Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) are often considered revenue generators so can be an important source of income for schools, clubs and leisure centres. However all too often insufficient money is set aside to re-carpet the pitch at the end of its lifespan (often about 10 years) so issues arise in terms of maintaining and retaining the facility, particularly in areas where demand for AGPs is largely already satisfied and there is limited “latent” demand for AGP space.

### Pitch design and activities

- 20.4 There are three main types of AGPs: sand based/sand filled; 3G; and water based. These pitches can withstand high levels of use if they are maintained carefully, but are only really of value to the community if they are floodlit to enable evening use.
- **Sand dressed/sand filled (sand based)** pitches have a short pile, which is most suited to hockey but can be used for football and non-contact rugby training. This is the most common surface for school sites, and the longest established.
    - The sand dressed pitches are England Hockey Board (EHB) Category 2 pitches and are approved for hockey within the FIH global/national parameters
    - The sand-filled (sand based) surfaces are EHC Category 3 surfaces within the FIH national parameter
  - **3G or rubber crumb** which has a long pile and is the preferred surface for football and rugby (with enhanced specification), but has limited use for hockey as an EHB Category 4 pitch.
  - **Water based** pitches have a specialist hockey surface but can also be used for football and non-contact rugby training. There are no water based AGPs in or around Stevenage. These are EHB Category 1 pitches.
- 20.5 The demand for AGPs is one of the fastest growing of all sports facilities, and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are responding to this with ‘new’ surfaces and new competition rules. AGPs are also vital for many clubs for training, even if matches are played on grass. The guidance from Sport England and the NGBs

(‘Selecting the Right Artificial Surface’, 2010) provides more detail on the types of surface and their expected use (see Figure 76). However this advice may now soon be superseded by emerging policy from England Hockey (EH), the Football Association (FA), and Rugby Football Union (RFU) which may put much more emphasis on sports specific surfaces rather than shared surfaces.

- 20.6 From the 2014/15 season a 3G pitch which appears on the FA’s national register can be used for match play in all competitions at the FA’s National League system Step 7 and below including Womens and Youth Football. These pitches are tested by the FA every three years and can either be “approved” as meeting the FA’s (lower) or the Federation Internationale de Football Association’s (FIFA) (higher) standards.
- 20.7 The majority of community demand for AGP time comes from football training and the small-sided senior game. The small-sided game is often unaffiliated and run independently from the Football Association, either on full sized pitches which have been divided up, or on small sized pitches. Of the two, the small sided pitch complexes can be more attractive to adult players, particularly where they are supported by high quality ancillary facilities.
- 20.8 The cost of hiring artificial surfaces sometimes prohibits use by mini and junior teams.
- 20.9 AGPs are seen as a major benefit for schools, both in the public and independent sectors. Many schools therefore have aspirations for AGPs as do the higher and further education sectors.

## Current provision

- 20.10 Within Stevenage there are currently 12 artificial grass pitches of various types and sizes. These are listed in Figure 77 and mapped in Figure 78.
- 20.11 The pitches which were built in very recent years at Marriotts, Nobel and The Barclay schools are in good condition, as are the commercial pitches at Stevenage Football Club Academy which have recently been realigned and refurbished. The single large size pitch at the Football Akademy is in reasonable condition, but has poor ancillary facilities, including changing and car parking.
- 20.12 None of the 3G pitches in Stevenage have achieved the FIFA 1 star performance criteria which would allow matches to be held on them.
- 20.13 The sand filled pitch at John Henry Newman had some remedial works done on the pitch in 2012, but has issues with overhanging vegetation, fencing and floodlighting. This pitch will require resurfacing within about 5 years.



Figure 76: AGP surfaces and use by sport

Pitch type	Rubber crumb type			Sand type		Water type
Category	Long Pile 3G (65mm with shock pad)	Long Pile 3G <sup>1</sup> (55-60mm)	Short Pile 3G <sup>1</sup> (40mm)	Sand Filled <sup>1</sup>	Sand Dressed <sup>1</sup>	Water based <sup>1</sup>
						
Comments on sports surfaces	Rugby surface	Preferred football surface	Acceptable surface for some competitive football and hockey	Acceptable surface for competitive hockey and suitable for football training	Preferred surface for competitive hockey and suitable for football training	High level competitive hockey and suitable for football training if pitch irrigated
Sport						
Hockey			 <sup>2</sup>	 <sup>2</sup>	 <sup>2</sup>	 <sup>2</sup>
Rugby League	 <sup>3</sup>	 <sup>3</sup>	 <sup>4</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>
Rugby Union	 <sup>6</sup>	 <sup>7</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>	 <sup>5</sup>
Football	 <sup>8</sup>	 <sup>8</sup>	 <sup>8</sup>	 <sup>9</sup>	 <sup>9</sup>	 <sup>9</sup>
Key	 Not suitable for use  Surface for modified games/training on but not suitable for serious training / competition  Surface for training/recreational use  Surface for training and for some competition  Surface for competition and training  Surface for competition and training (regional / national)  Surface for high level competition/training (national/international)			<sup>1</sup> Shockpad optional: often needed to meet appropriate performance requirements <sup>2</sup> Surface must comply with FIH Standard (insitu tested) <sup>3</sup> RFL currently evaluating surface standard - see their website for latest information <sup>4</sup> No full contact <sup>5</sup> Can only be used for Tag and Touch Rugby / Handling skills <sup>6</sup> Surface must comply with IRB type 22 with enhanced HIC requirement <sup>7</sup> RFU currently evaluating surface standard - see their website for latest information <sup>8</sup> Surface must comply with FIFA 1 star or IATS equivalent approval required <sup>9</sup> Surface must comply with BSEN 15330-1 (2007)		
Note:	All users should refer to the individual NGB guidance, available on line, for specific information on the preferred categories					

Figure 77: AGPs in Stevenage

Site Name	Facility Sub Type	Size	Dimensions (m)	Build date	Date refurbished (n/a for new facilities)	Sports lighting	Management Type	Hours available for community use
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Sand Filled	Small AGP	37 x 59	2013	n/a	✓	School/College/University (in house)	26
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	Sand Filled	AGP	60 x 100	1992		✓	School/College/University (in house)	10
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	51.5 x 96	2013	n/a	✓	Private Contractor (PPP/PFI)	59
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	23 x 40	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	9.5
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	23 x 40	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	9.5
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	23 x 40	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	9.5
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	20 x 30	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	13.5
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	20 x 30	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	13.5
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	20 x 30	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	13.5

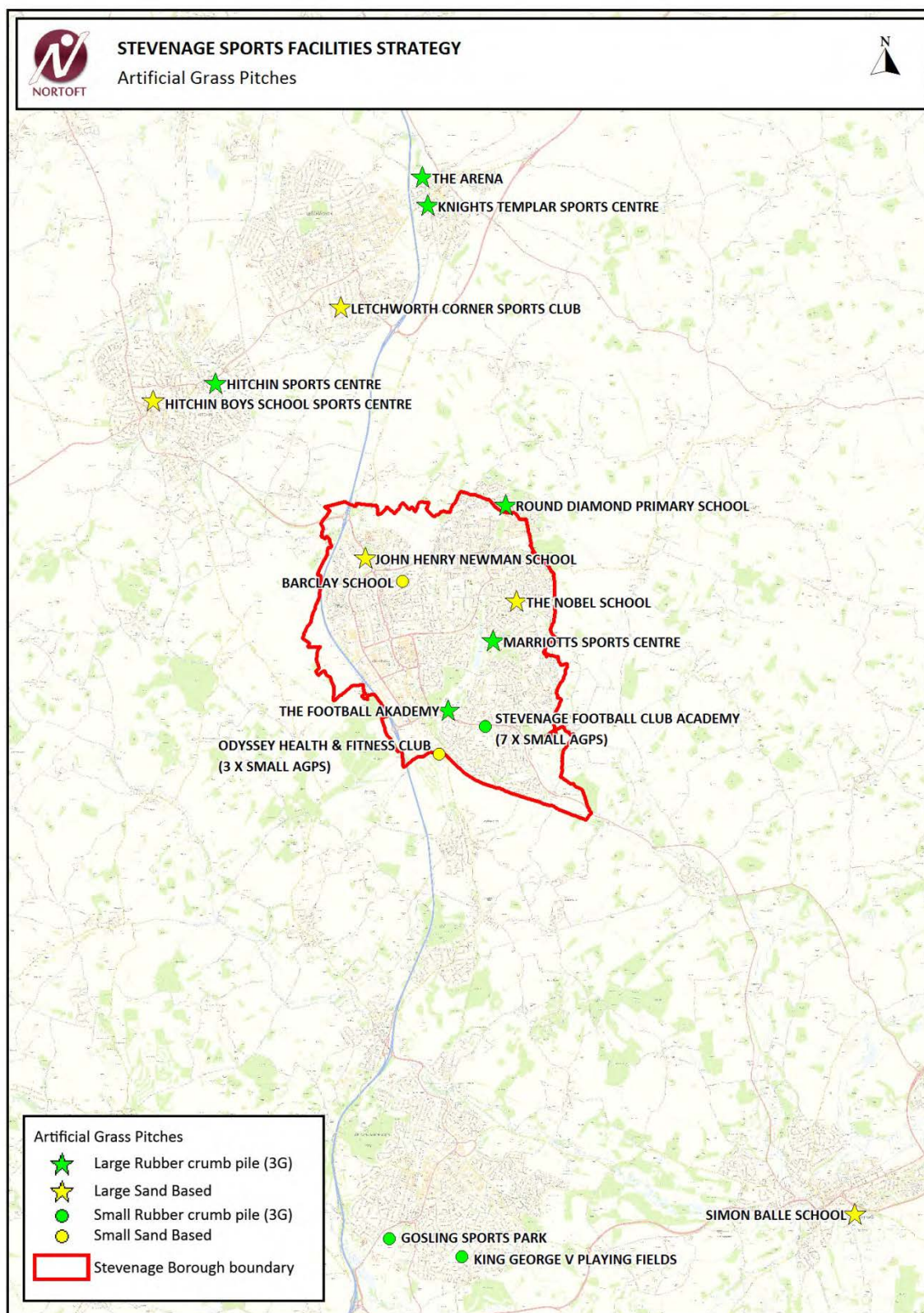
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	20 x 30	2013	n/a	✓	Commercial Management	13.5
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	AGP	71 x 108	2009		✓	Commercial Management	91
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Sand Dressed	AGP	63 x 102	2013	n/a	✓	School/College/University (in house)	21

**Sites outside of Stevenage**

Round Diamond School	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Small AGP	48 x 76	2002	2006	✓	School/College/University (in house)	30
Odyssey	Sand Filled	Small AGP	16 x 36	1983 (?)		✓	Commercial Management	91
Odyssey	Sand Filled	Small AGP	16 x 36	1983 (?)		✓	Commercial Management	91
Odyssey	Sand Filled	Small AGP	16 x 36	1983 (?)		✓	Commercial Management	91



Figure 78: Artificial Grass Pitches



- 20.14 Of the pitches in Stevenage, only The Barclay pitch has a formal signed Community Use Agreement (CUA). The CUAs for Marriotts and Nobel schools are outstanding as at November 2014. The John Henry Newman pitch has just been made available for use by Stevenage Hockey Club on an informal, unsecured basis.
- 20.15 Outside the authority boundary, Round Diamond Primary School in Great Ashby has a small size 3G pitch which is in reasonable condition and is used by a number of Stevenage clubs. This pitch has not been refurbished since 2006 and is due for re-carpeting around 2016-17. However the floodlights need more urgent attention as are now 12 years old and needing replacement.
- 20.16 The three small sand based AGPs at Odyssey appear to have been converted from other uses, are non-standard in size (approx 16 m x 36 m), have moderate quality fencing and relatively poor quality surface. These pitches are used however by at least one football club for training.
- 20.17 The nearest FIFA approved pitches are at Hertford and St Albans, and there is an FA approved pitch at Royston.

## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 20.18 All of the AGPs in Stevenage are outside of the control of Stevenage Borough Council, and several are commercial in nature. It is not therefore possible to obtain usage information.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals and students

- 20.19 The individual survey suggests that about 17% of respondents had used AGPs, and although most respondents feel that they were not particularly important for them, more than 20% of the respondents feel that there is too little provision. The result of the student surveys were similar in that AGPs were the 5<sup>th</sup> most used facility, but felt to be the highest priority for more provision.

### Clubs

#### *Football*

- 20.20 Of the football clubs responding to the surveys about 2/3<sup>rd</sup> would like more training time on 3G pitches and/or cheaper provision. Some use sites outside of Stevenage including the Round Diamond School and Odyssey for training. There is therefore some outstanding need, probably reflecting the fact that most of the 3G provision in Stevenage is commercial.

## *Hockey*

- 20.21 There are two hockey clubs based in Stevenage, one is a single team club which is work-based, the MBDA club, and the other is the Stevenage Hockey Club which is the main community club with around 225 members of all ages, of which about 180 are playing members.
- 20.22 The Stevenage Hockey Club which is an accredited club, is expecting to grow over the next few years. At the end of the 2013 season they were facing a significant problem with a lack of pitch space. The club uses Nobel School as their main base, training there two nights per week and using the site for both matches and training at the weekends. However there is insufficient capacity at Nobel for the club's matches on a Saturday, and there was also a need to provide for Sunday training sessions elsewhere, as the pitch at Nobel is not available on Sundays.
- 20.23 Both the Stevenage Hockey Club and MBDA club now use John Henry Newman School on an unsecured basis. The site at John Henry Newman was previously used by the Stevenage Hockey Club but closed in September 2013 when the school withdrew from the previous community use agreement. The pitch at John Henry Newman requires some remedial work on the surrounding trees and on security fencing, but is in reasonable condition. It is however anticipated that the surface of the pitch will need to be replaced in around 3-5 years. There is also a need to upgrade the floodlighting if evening sessions are to be held on the site.
- 20.24 If the John Henry Newman pitch cannot be secured long term for community use then Stevenage Hockey Club would wish to be involved in the development of a full size hockey surface AGP elsewhere, but location to be confirmed.
- 20.25 Both the Stevenage Hockey Club and MBDA use the clubhouse at Ditchmore Lane as their social base.

## *Rugby*

- 20.26 Stevenage Town RFC have an aspiration for an International Rugby Board Regulation 22 rugby specific AGP which might also be FIFA accredited to enable football matches to be played. The preferred location is Chells Park.

## **National Governing Body comments and strategies**

### *Hockey*

- 20.27 England Hockey's document The Right Pitches in the Right Places is the governing body's facilities strategy. It suggests that there should be a number of steps in assessing hockey provision including an assessment of supply and demand, the strategic considerations, the type/level of use, and how much use for each type of



pitch and standard of play. Nationally over 80% of the total current pitch provision is on education sites (schools and FE or HE).

20.28 England Hockey has a capital investment programme running up to spring 2016 which is for both refurbishments and new AGPs. The programme is already fully committed for the period but Hockey England is aware of the problems being faced by the clubs locally and would like to explore opportunities for improved/additional provision, and this may include improvements at John Henry Newman School. However any funding would need to be linked to securing long term hockey use of the site.

20.29 The critical issue for England Hockey is the securing of long term of the hockey use at both Nobel and John Henry Newman schools via formal community use agreements. Without the agreements there would be a risk to community hockey, and a need for additional hockey AGP provision in Stevenage.

20.30 The criteria and additional guidance provided by England Hockey in relation to their project funding are useful pointers for any application for support in Stevenage.

- Criteria
  - The project will be either looking to refurbish an existing, or build a new pitch
  - Project must demonstrate community engagement, which is reflected in the club users affiliation numbers OR be able to demonstrate how investment would lead to an increase in participation
  - Must include programmes which concentrates on participation of 14-25 year olds in particular
  - Must offer value for money against other submissions (NB, 2009-2013 funding saw a 35% contribution to the capital costs from England Hockey)
  - ClubsFirst Accreditation, or working with a club who holds a current accreditation and a five year development plan
  - Must sign up to the terms and conditions of the award
- Further guidance
  - Value for money is a must – England Hockey will be looking for at least 50% partner funding, but in many cases projects are able to offer up to 65% partner funding.
  - Secure funding – England Hockey may award funding via a conditional award if it helps projects to secure other funding, but applicants with secured funding are more likely to be supported.
  - Raising the satisfaction of players, coaches, volunteers and officials is important – the project should demonstrate this will be achieved
  - Raising participation (for new pitches in particular) will be key - recent projects are seeing hundreds of additional playing members within the first 12 months - resources need to be available to encourage increased participation.

- 20.31 England Hockey has confirmed that the governing body supports the recommendations of this Assessment and Strategy for Stevenage.

### *Football*

- 20.32 The Football Association's National Facilities Strategy of 2013 places heavy emphasis on the development of new AGPs and on the re-carpeting of some of the existing AGPs to 3G from sand filled/dressed. The objective is to give every team the opportunity to at least train on a 3G pitch, and the FA estimate that the equivalent of one large size 3G pitch is needed for every 60 teams in an area.
- 20.33 With the number of pitches already available in Stevenage and its surrounding area, Stevenage is a medium - low current priority for funding for AGPs from the Football Foundation, which is the sister organisation to the FA and manages the grant aid programme for football. However the FA and Football Foundation may be able to consider support from 2016 onwards.
- 20.34 This said, the FA is aware that there is an unmet need for affordable training AGP facilities for youth football in Stevenage, as voiced at the football clubs meeting in March 2014. The commercial facilities at the Football Academy and Stevenage Town FC Football Academy are primarily aimed at the adult market who can afford to pay higher fees for league and recreational play, rather than a training need for minis and juniors. The FA feel that there is a shortage of affordable 3G pitch provision in the town of around 1 pitch taking into account both the new demand from the housing growth in Stevenage and the demand from clubs in the surrounding areas.
- 20.35 If a new pitch was to be developed then the FA would encourage the provider to be guided by the pricing policy of the FA which is focussed around partner clubs rates, which helps to ensure cheaper training opportunities for youth teams.
- 20.36 At this time no specific site or partner has come forwards where a new full size football 3G pitch could be considered. The FA advise that although the proposed 3G pitch at Chells Park linked to Stevenage Town RFC could offer some opportunities for training, that it is likely that the training times for rugby and football would clash, reducing the actual availability of football clubs to use the site.
- 20.37 The FA has confirmed that they are supportive of the recommendations in this Assessment and Strategy for Stevenage in relation to AGP provision.

### *Rugby*

- 20.38 The National Facilities Strategy 2013-2017 from the Rugby Football Union (RFU) sets the criteria for the County Board investment strategies. One of the priorities for investment includes "Increase the provision of artificial grass pitches that deliver wider game development outcomes".

20.39 The RFU strategy states:

“The use of artificial grass pitches and in particular IRB 22 compliant surfaces has the potential to offer wider opportunities for the growth of the game, particularly when taken in the context of those communities that do not have access to natural turf facilities or when natural turf facilities are unavailable or unusable. Artificial grass pitches can offer a quality playing surface throughout the year, allowing for increased opportunities for training and match competition at all levels and ages. In a wider context and when delivered against a strategic setting such as a school, college or university site, they enhance curricular activity, opportunities for intra-mural social and competitive rugby and provide quality playing opportunities for the wider community.

Previous strategic investment in artificial grass pitches that deliver wider game development outcomes remain valid and investment will continue into sites that service a number of rugby partners at a local level.”

20.40 The RFU would consider investment into a project in Stevenage where a tangible outcome can be achieved, the main premise for any project to be considered for funding is to work towards the following outcomes:

- Grow the game (14-24 year age group is a particular emphasis)
- Increase the experience of all rugby users
- Create a financially viable club moving forward.

20.41 The RFU advise that an International Rugby Board Regulation 22 rugby specific AGP in Stevenage would require a robust business case and usage plan to ensure its viability and perhaps a joint compliant surface suitable for football matches and meeting FIFA accreditation standards should be considered. This would help to achieve maximum revenue and sports development outcomes. The RFU also strongly recommends that the proposal should include, together with Stevenage Town RFC, another partner(s) such as a school, college, university or other Rugby Club.

## Modelling

- 20.42 A number of different modelling tools can be used to assess the current AGP provision in Stevenage.

## Market Segmentation and sports development

- 20.43 The use of AGPs is primarily by young men for football, and there is also use to a lesser extent by both men and women for hockey, and some use for rugby training. Only some of the dominant market segments in Stevenage are therefore likely to use these facilities on a regular basis.
- 20.44 This market segmentation information suggests that where AGPs are to be considered for investment, the priority should be joint use facilities with secondary schools. This is because stand-alone AGPs are unlikely to attract high levels of use from the adult community during working hours, as the main community users are also of working age.

## Facilities Planning Model

- 20.45 The Sport England Facilities Planning Model for AGPs currently considers only large size pitches. However as Stevenage only has two full size pitches available for community use but there are nine small size pitches, the FPM modelling is not particularly appropriate in this case to assess the supply/demand picture. Sport England has therefore recommended that other modelling approaches and consultation findings are used for the Stevenage assessment rather than the FPM results.
- 20.46 The key parameters (Figure 79) used in the FPM however provide a useful guide to the ways in which AGPs are used. The key points to note are: the dominance of football overall, the much higher percentage of male users than female, and the rapid fall off in users with age.

Figure 79: FPM AGP parameters

	Parameter	Comments
Participation -% of age band	0-15    16-24    25-34    35-44    45-54    55+	
	Male    3.37    7.72    4.93    2.71    1.26    0.17	
	Female    3.16    2.70    0.94    0.46    0.18    0.07	
Frequency – Visits Per Week in the Peak Period	0-15    16-24    25-34    35-44    45-54    55+	Football    75.2% Hockey    22.7% Rugby    2.1%
	Male    1.81    1.67    1.27    1.06    1.07    0.97	
	Female    1.02    1.45    1.34    1.31    1.21    1.32	
Peak Period	Monday-Thursday                    = 17.00 – 21.00 Friday                                    = 17.00 – 19.00 Saturday                                = 9.00 – 17.00 Sunday                                    = 9.00 – 17.00  Total Peak Hours per week = 34 hrs Total number of slots                = 26 slots  Percentage of demand in peak period = 85%	Mon-Friday = 1 hr slots to reflect mixed use of activities –training, 5/7 a side & Informal matches  Weekend = 2 hrs slots to reflect formal matches.
Duration	Monday - Friday        = 1 hr Saturday & Sunday = 2 hrs	
At one time capacity	30 players per slot Mon to Fri; 25 players per slot Sat & Sun 30 X 18slots = 540 visits 25 X 8slots = 200 visits Total = 740 visits per week in the peak period	Saturday and Sunday capacity to reflect dominance of formal 11-side matches i.e. lower capacity
Catchments	Overall catchment for all users 82% travelling 20 minutes or less during week – within a distance decay function of the model Users by travel mode 81% Car borne 15% Walk 4% Public Transport	

## FA model for 3G AGP provision

- 20.47 Another approach to the assessment of the supply and demand for 3G AGPs is the model that the FA have developed based on their aspiration that each football team should have access at least one hour a week for training purposes to a 3G AGP of any size. To this end they have developed their own model to calculate the amount of 3G AGP pitch space required. The FA assumes in their model that the 3G AGPs are available from 6pm-10pm midweek and 9am-5pm on weekends, and that 3G pitches are available for club training on the following national model basis (Figure 80).

*Figure 80: FA national AGP model and assumed training hours*

Pitch size and nature	Number of hours assumed available for club training per week for this type of pitch
Full size pitch with community use at evenings and weekends	56
Community club stadia pitch	46
Multi Use Games Area	18
Commercial 5 a side centres	10
Pro club indoor and outdoor facilities	0

- 20.48 The FA model identifies how many more hours are required in each local authority to potentially provide every affiliated club with the opportunity to train for one hour per week. Based on the number of affiliated teams in Stevenage (120), the FA is therefore seeking 120 hours of training time on 3G AGPs.
- 20.49 The table in Figure 81 considers the number of hours the pitches in Stevenage are currently available for training, based on the FA national model. In total and estimating that the large 3G pitch at the Valley Academy is available for 10 hours per week for training, this gives a total of 136 training hour slots. There is therefore theoretically, sufficient 3G pitch provision at the present time to meet the needs of football in Stevenage. However this excludes the pitch at Great Ashby, which is just over the border of Stevenage and will have 18 hours per week availability according to this model.
- 20.50 Conversely on the demand side, the FA model does not take into account the affordability of 3G pitch provision, particularly for mini and youth training, as the hire charges at the commercial venues are high. This affordability for minis and juniors issue is a significant factor for Stevenage and suggests that further additional full size affordable 3G pitch may be required, beyond that suggested by the modelling. However the FA also advises that the adult 3G market is probably sufficiently catered for at this time.
- 20.51 In the longer term, it is estimated that there will be 141-145 teams by 2021, 144-151 by 2026, and 147-153 teams by 2031 (see Playing Pitch Strategy for



methodology). If so, there will be a need for around 31-33 additional training slots, or 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of a large size 3G AGP which is fully available to the community at peak time.

Figure 81: FA national model applied to the 3G provision in Stevenage

Site Name	Facility Sub Type	Management Type	Pitch Type	Current provision based on FA model (number of slots)
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Sand Dressed	School/College/University (in house)	Small AGP	0
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	Sand Filled	School/College/University (in house)	Full size AGP	0
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Private Contractor (PPP/PFI)	AGP (u 16 size)	56
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Small AGP	10
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Commercial Management	Full size AGP	10
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Sand Dressed	School/College/University (in house)	Full size AGP	0
TOTAL				136

## Comparator authorities' provision

- 20.52 Using the data available on Active Places it is possible to compare the general levels of facility provision within Stevenage with its CIPFA benchmark authorities, see Figure 82. It is clear that Stevenage overall has a much higher number of pitches, both small and large size than any of the comparator authorities. None of the authorities has a water based pitch.

*Figure 82: AGPs - comparator authorities*

Nearest Neighbour	Population at 2014 (ONS figure, at 2012)	AGPs (sand filled or sand dressed )	AGPs (sand filled or sand dressed ) small	AGP (3G)	AGP (3G) small
Stevenage	85,245	2	1	1	8*
Gravesham	104,200	0	2	0	4
Harlow	84,409	1	1	2	0
Redditch	84,800	3	0	0	0
Wellingborough	76,900	3	0	0	0
Basildon	178,614	3	0	0	6

\* Includes Marriotts School which is slightly smaller than full size

## Summary of current situation

- 20.53 The theoretical models suggest that there is sufficient 3G AGP provision to meet the needs of football in Stevenage, however the feedback from clubs, supported by the FA, is that there is too little affordable training space, particularly for minis and juniors.
- 20.54 The reopening of John Henry Newman School sand filled pitch for hockey club use means that there is potentially sufficient capacity to cater for both matches and training, assuming that the sand dressed pitch at Nobel also remains. However the use at John Henry Newman has only been re-established as from September 2014, and is on an unsecured basis. The community use agreement at Nobel School has also yet to be signed.
- 20.55 There is no specific requirement for a rugby specific 3G pitch, either of training or match quality, although this is an aspiration of Stevenage Town RFC.

## Assessment of Future Needs

### Nortoft Calculator

- 20.56 The Nortoft Calculator compares the provision per 1000 figure for the large size AGPs, but does not differentiate between AGP types. For Stevenage the number of pitches used in the model is four; Marriotts (which is slightly less than full size), Nobel, the Football Academy and John Henry Newman.
- 20.57 The Calculator helps to forecast the future need for large size pitches based upon both changes in the population and the anticipated growth in participation (at 0.5% pa). The findings in Figures 84a and 84b suggest that, purely in numerical terms, the 4 existing large size pitches are adequate up to 2026 under either growth scenario, there would be a need for one additional pitch around 2026, again under either growth scenario.
- 20.58 This analysis however also excludes the 8 small sized pitches in Stevenage, because the comparator information from Sport England - the national, regional and Harlow comparators also excludes these smaller size pitches.

*Figure 83: Nortoft Calculator – Comparator rates of provision*

Area	Current supply	Current rate of provision
Stevenage	4	0.05
National	1,523	0.03
East of England	167	0.03
Harlow	2	0.02

*Figure 84a: Nortoft Calculator and AGP's – 5300 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional pitches required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (88,210)	2026 population (90,774)	2036 population (93,191)	
0.05	0	0	1	1	0.05
0.03	-2	-1	-1	-1	0.03
0.03	-2	-1	-1	-1	0.03
0.02	-2	-2	-2	-2	0.03

*Figure 84b: Nortoft Calculator and AGP's - 8200 dwellings*

Comparator rates of provision	Number of additional pitches required in Stevenage, based on increased population levels, to match rates of provision (plus assumed 0.5% increase in participation per year)				Rate of provision including participation increase
	2014 population (85,201)	2021 population (90,414)	2026 population (95,414)	2036 population (99,803)	
0.05	0	0	1	1	0.05
0.03	-2	-1	-1	-1	0.03
0.03	-2	-1	-1	-1	0.03
0.02	-2	-2	-2	-1	0.03

### Sports Facilities Calculator

- 20.59 To assess the demand for artificial grass pitch space from new housing sites, Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) is the most appropriate and accurate tool. The following two tables use the SFC with the main housing areas separately identified and these provide an overview of the requirements generated by the housing schemes up to 2031. A participation rate of growth of 10% has been applied because the tool only uses 5% intervals and the agreed modelling rate is 8.5% up to 2031.
- 20.60 The value of the contribution is generated by the SFC using Sport England's Facilities Costs Fourth Quarter 2013 figures, tailored for Hertfordshire. These are current prices, but give a feel for the likely sums that should be possible to generate from the new housing schemes, and which are fully justified by the amount of demand that the schemes will generate.
- 20.61 The population profile of 2031 used in the model is that provided and agreed with Stevenage Borough Council.

Figure 85: Sports Facility Calculator for AGPs

	Number of dwellings	Population at 2031 at housing multiplier of 2.28	AGP (number pitches)	AGP (£ value of contributions for sand based)
<b>5300 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	0.1	86,268
North	750	1710	0.06	47,926
South East	400	912	0.03	25,561
Town Centre	950	2166	0.07	60,707
Elsewhere in the borough	800	1824	0.06	51,122
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4250</b>	<b>9690</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>£271,584</b>

<b>8200 dwelling option (including 1,050 sites already committed)</b>				
Stevenage West	1350	3078	0.1	86,268
North	870	1983.6	0.07	55,606
South East	550	1254	0.04	35,146
Town Centre	3200	7296	0.24	204,486
Elsewhere in the borough	1180	2690.4	0.09	75,393
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7150</b>	<b>16302</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>£456,899</b>

20.62 The SFC suggests that the new growth in Stevenage alone will generate demand for:

- For 5300 dwellings: 0.32 of a large size pitch
- For 8200 dwellings: 0.54 of a large size pitch

## Summary of future requirements

20.63 The modelling suggests that overall there is sufficient supply of AGP space in Stevenage and on its immediate borders now and potentially even in the long term for football, however there is a lack of *affordable* 3G space for football training, particularly for mini and junior players. There is therefore some justification for additional affordable 3G pitch provision in the short-medium term, but the quantity of demand would need to be confirmed through a detailed business plan, if a 3G pitch proposal was to come forwards. In the longer term, there will be need for a further 3G pitch provision in the period up to 2031.

20.64 The reopening of the John Henry Newman pitch, if resurfaced in due course for hockey and secured for community use, together with the hockey surface pitch at Nobel School, should meet the needs of hockey into the long term. A further hockey specification pitch does not appear justified at this time simply to meet the



needs of community hockey. Should a community pitch be proposed it would require a detailed feasibility study to confirm viability, particularly in light of the largely satisfied football training market in Stevenage.

- 20.65 The hockey clubhouse is currently at Ditchmore Lane, so this may need review by the clubs themselves as the clubs become more established at the two school sites.
- 20.66 A rugby specification 3G pitch is not required to deliver community rugby, though would be an enhancement for Stevenage Town RFC and is being promoted as part of the relocation proposal to Chells Park.
- 20.67 The priority is in relation to the AGPs on school sites, as the critical requirement is the securing of sufficient levels of community use through the formalisation of the community use agreements at Nobel School and John Henry Newman. If this community use is not secured, or not secured with sufficient numbers of hours, then again additional AGP provision may be required.
- 20.68 If new AGPs are proposed to be built on existing grass pitches, the loss of the grass pitches and the impact upon the grass playing field stock should also be given detailed consideration, both in relation to summer and winter sports. This would be particularly important for those sites which have formal community use agreements for their grass pitches.

### Meeting the needs of the future

- 20.69 Thomas Alleyne School wish to explore the development of a 3G pitch, possibly on their hard court area. This would be separate from, but immediately adjacent to the sand based small size AGP at The Barclay School.
- 20.70 Stevenage Town RFC have an aspiration for an International Rugby Board Regulation 22 rugby specific AGP which might also be FIFA accredited to enable football matches to be played. If developed, then there is some potential for use for football training and matches, especially if the hire rates are suitable for minis and juniors, and training and match times do not clash with those of the rugby teams.
- 20.71 The FA consider that a full size 3G pitch on a non-commercial site is needed because the only full size 3G pitch in Stevenage is commercial, and the hire charges are usually too high for mini and junior football training. The FA might consider support to a project from around 2016 but no potential proposals have yet emerged. It is likely that the site would need to be either school based or club based, where the operation can be on a not-for-profit basis.
- 20.72 There are some medium-long term proposals for AGP provision in the areas around Stevenage, including a 3G pitch at Richard Hale School, Hertford, and a sand dressed pitch at Blueharts Hockey Club, Hitchin. These pitches may reduce

demand from outside teams based outside of Stevenage for 3G pitch training for football, and also for hockey.

## Development of a planning standard

- 20.73 The planning standards are derived from a synthesis of the findings from the modelling, consultation responses, and the policy decision about the growth of participation.

### *Standard for quantity*

- 20.74 The Sports Facility Calculator estimates that the rate of provision of 0.03 large size pitches per 1000 would be required for new developments. It is therefore proposed that this figure should be the planning standard for new developments. Developers' contributions should be sought and an average SFC value for sand and 3G AGPs should be used as the basis for developers contributions.

### *Standard for accessibility*

- 20.75 Sport England research has shown that the majority of hockey users will travel up to around 30 minutes to reach a hockey pitch. As the priority for AGP provision in Stevenage is for hockey and developers' contributions should be collected for this purpose, a catchment area of 30 minutes should be used.
- 20.76 The catchment for football use of 3G pitches is usually around 20 minutes, but given the network of AGPs in Stevenage, a 10 minute catchment time is appropriate as this covers all of Stevenage.

### *Standard for design and quality*

- 20.77 The quality and design of facilities should reflect current best practice, including design guidance from Sport England and the national governing bodies. This should apply to refurbishment proposals as well as new build.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Current supply and demand*

- 20.78 AGPs are an important part of the facility network in Stevenage. 3G pitches are the preferred surface for football, and sand filled pitches the preferred surface for hockey. Rugby can use 3G pitches if they are also designed with a shock pad. The pitches in Stevenage currently provide for football training, and hockey matches plus training. There are no 3G pitches in Stevenage which meet the FA requirements for match pitches, nor rugby specification 3G pitches.
- 20.79 Overall there is theoretically a good level of provision for football although clubs would value more 3G space and at a lower cost, particularly for mini and junior players. These age groups struggle to afford the hire charges at the commercial venues. As the amount of provision available for football club training on 3G pitches meets the Football Association's recommended level of provision, future investment in further 3G pitches by the Football Foundation would not be a priority in the short-medium term, but may be so after 2016. The FA would then potentially support a full size 3G pitch coming forwards for grant aid on a not-for-profit business plan.
- 20.80 This relatively high level of provision for adult football training is important in considering the viability of any future AGP developments where these are on community sites, and particularly if the surface proposed is sand based as these are less attractive for football use, which would normally be seen as the main income generator.
- 20.81 The main issue relates to the securing of community use on the school sites as there are currently no community use agreements at Marriotts, Nobel or John Henry Newman schools. Without these agreements in place, there is no long term security of community use and/or the hours of use can be significantly shortened.
- 20.82 Generally the AGPs in Stevenage are fairly new although the pitch at John Henry Newman requires some remedial works, and the refurbishment of the pitch is expected to be required within about 3-5 years.
- 20.83 Outside of the authority, the Round Diamond pitch will be re-carpeted around 2016/17, and a sinking fund is in place for this. The floodlights on this site however need more urgent attention as they are reaching the end of their lifespan.
- 20.84 The small sand based pitches at Odyssey are of poor quality and of non-standard size. There appears to be some limited use by football clubs for training. This is a commercial facility and replacement of the pitches would be the responsibility of the operator.

### *Future requirements*

- 20.85 The modelling for the future training needs of football is based on the number of teams forecast using the Sport England Team Generation Rate approach. This shows that there will be some increase in demand for training space up to 2031. However, with the existing access to 3G pitches within Stevenage and at Round Diamond School in Great Ashby, there is theoretically almost sufficient space to meet the long term needs of the sport.
- 20.86 However the affordability of the large size 3G pitches for mini and junior training in Stevenage is a key issue, together with the fact that the only full size pitch is a commercial facility. The FA is therefore keen to explore the development of a further full size 3G pitch with a provider on a not-for-profit basis. The FA may be able to offer some grant aid support from 2016 onwards.
- 20.87 A second hockey pitch in Stevenage would be required for community use if the hockey surface pitch at John Henry Newman cannot be secured in the long term. However the viability of a stand-alone community hockey pitch is questionable because it is unlikely to attract significant levels of community football usage. The future options for a second hockey specification AGP in Stevenage, including alternative sites would therefore require more detailed consideration, and viability assessments.
- 20.88 In the longer term, there will be a need to support the maintenance and replacement of the carpets of the AGP facilities at Marriott, Nobel and The Barclay schools, although their business plans should already include a sinking fund for their replacement.
- 20.89 An International Rugby Board Regulation 22 rugby specific AGP which might also be FIFA accredited to enable football matches to be played, is an aspiration of Stevenage Town RFC. If a pitch can be developed independently this would be welcomed but would need to demonstrate its viability in the long term to attract RFU investment. This viability assessment will need to take into account the already largely saturated market for adult football training, which elsewhere would be expected to be a major income generator. However if the pitch was also designed to be FIFA or even FA accredited, then football matches could also be hosted and this would be a unique “offer” in Stevenage.
- 20.90 If other potential providers of AGPs come forwards, for example school sites where the main purpose is to meet the curriculum needs, this can be welcomed but the schools should demonstrate the ability to meet the carpet replacement costs. Any school would also need to demonstrate that, if there is formalised community use of the grass pitches, this use would be unaffected or enhanced.

## *Recommendations*

- 20.91 The existing amount of provision in the AGP network should be retained.
- The 3G pitch at Marriotts should be retained and community use secured via a community use agreement, with high levels of community use Monday-Friday evenings and at weekends during term time, and throughout the day during school holidays. The pitch should be re-carpeted with 3G surface by 2023.
  - The sand filled pitch at John Henry Newman should be retained and re-carpeted in 2017/2018 as a sand-filled hockey specific surface.
  - Community use should be secured via a formal community use agreement (CUA for Monday-Friday evenings and at weekends during term time, and throughout the day during school holidays.
  - The sand dressed pitch at Nobel should be retained in the long term as a hockey pitch, and community use secured via a community use agreement, with high levels of community use Monday-Friday evenings and at weekends during term time, and throughout the day during school holidays. Re-carpet pitch to hockey surface in 2023.
  - The sand-filled small size pitch at The Barclay School should be retained, but the surface type could be changed when re-carpeted in 2023, if required.
  - The commercial facilities, though they are not priorities for public investment.
- 20.92 Assuming the John Henry Newman School signs a CUA, there is a need for some remedial works on the pitch to bring it up to community use standards, and there will be a need to replace the carpet around 2017-2019. The actual remedial works and their costs require confirmation.
- 20.93 If the John Henry Newman School pitch is not secured for community use for hockey, then the second option is for a stand-alone hockey specification pitch elsewhere, but the site would need to be confirmed. A full feasibility check would be required to confirm viability.
- 20.94 An International Rugby Board Regulation 22 compliant 3G rugby AGP is an aspiration of Stevenage Town RFC but would be a low priority for Stevenage Borough Council grant aid. It is recognised that the proposal may be of significant benefit to the club and create a facility to grow the game of rugby union, so when the project has developed a detailed feasibility study showing viability in the draft business plan, an approach should be made to the RFU for possible financial support. The business plan will also need to show that the pitch would not negatively impact upon the use of other AGPs within Stevenage, and that the pitch would benefit more than one partner.
- 20.95 In the medium term, the development of a large size 3G pitch on a not-for-profit basis and which can act as a venue for mini and junior football training should be actively considered. However no specific site or partners have yet been identified.

- 20.96 If other potential AGP providers arise, particularly on school sites, these should be welcomed. Any new AGPs should be floodlit to enable community use and meet Sport England or the relevant NGB design specifications, including dimensions. The proposals should not adversely impact on grass playing field use by the community where this is subject to a formal community use agreement.
- 20.97 The planning standards are proposed as:
- 0.03 large size AGPS per 1000 (fully available to the community at peak time i.e. weekday evenings and weekends) for new housing developments
  - 30 minutes drive time catchment
  - Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards.
- 20.98 Developers' contributions should be sought for all new housing growth towards artificial grass pitch provision, based on the costs of developing full size sand based AGPs.



## SECTION 21: GRASS PLAYING PITCHES ASSESSMENT PROCESS/METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

- 21.1 The assessment in this section of the report considers the sports of football, cricket and rugby. The needs of hockey are specifically addressed in the artificial grass pitch section of the report as community hockey is now solely played on artificial surfaces.
- 21.2 There are no other grass pitch based sports in or on the immediate boundaries of Stevenage which have separate sites or specific requirements, and which therefore require separate attention in this Assessment. Outside of Stevenage there is both a lacrosse club and a rugby league club based in Hitchin.

### Methodology

- 21.3 The methodology for the assessment follows the requirements of the Sport England Playing Pitch Guidance of 2013 ([www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/playing-pitch-strategy-guidance/](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/playing-pitch-strategy-guidance/)). The ten step approach in the Guidance is copied below, and this Assessment and Strategy addresses Steps 1-8 (see Figure 86)

Figure 86: Sport England approach to developing a playing pitch strategy



- 21.4 All of the clubs involved in football, cricket and rugby have been consulted using the national governing body (NGB) club survey questionnaires contained within the guidance. The football clubs consultation was supplemented by a separate meeting of the key clubs and football league representatives, together with Hertfordshire FA. Meetings and follow up discussions were also held with the cricket and rugby club.
- 21.5 Each pitch site used by the community has been visited and assessed using the non-technical pitch survey templates contained in the guidance. Views on the quality of the sites have also been sought from the pitch providers/managers and from the users. Primary school sites which are not used by the community but are available have also been included in the database but have not been visited.
- 21.6 The emerging findings and priorities were discussed with the NGBs, with the key clubs and with Stevenage Borough Council. The initial priorities for investment are for a period of 5 years, but there are also some longer term proposals to guide the future provision linked with the proposed new housing in Stevenage.

## Modelling

- 21.7 This assessment is based on the population numbers, locations and demographics set out in earlier sections of the Stevenage Borough Council Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy, and the growth target of each of the sports of cricket, rugby, and football have been agreed by the relevant national governing body as 0.5% increase per annum.
- 21.8 Stevenage's compact nature and excellent road communications means that it is possible to drive anywhere within Stevenage within 10 minutes. Given the nature of the sports and the way in which most clubs draw their members from across Stevenage, it was agreed by the NGBs, Stevenage Borough Council and Sport England that the borough should be treated as a single unit rather than assessed using sub-areas.
- 21.9 There is significant cross-boundary movement of players, mainly outwards to clubs over the borders in North and East Hertfordshire, for example to Datchworth RFC and Knebworth Park Cricket Club. It was agreed with each of the NGBs that the current memberships of the various clubs would be assumed to continue.
- 21.10 The detailed modelling, including the sites list capacity assessments, is provided within each sports section below. The development of quantitative standards is summarised here as Figure 87.

*Figure 87: Development of provision per 1000 standards*

Step 1	Identify the number of teams for each relevant age group for each sport e.g. the number of boys aged 10-15 years
Step 2	Identify using Stevenage demographic information the number of individuals in each relevant age group for each sport e.g. the number of boys aged 10-15 years
Step 3	Calculate the number of teams per 1000 for each relevant age group for each sport, known as the Team Generation Rate (TGR)
Step 4	Apply a multiplication factor to the TGR rate at 0.5% pa for 2016, 2021, 2026 and 2031
Step 5	Using the whole authority demographic profiles for 2016, 2021, 2026 and 2031, apply to a population of 1000
Step 6	Apply the forecast TGR rates to the forecast 1000 population for 2016, 2021, 2026 and 2031 to identify the number of teams which would be expected to be generated for each age group within each sport
Step 7	Calculate the amount of playing field space that would be required to meet the needs from the 1000 population for each sport at 2016, 2021, 2026 and 2031.
Step 8	Using the site quality information, review the outcomes of Step 7 and increase the amount of area required if the pitches are of poorer quality and unlikely to be improved, or reduce if the pitches are of high quality.

## Playing pitches on schools sites

- 21.11 There are number of school sites which have benefited from development, through the Building Schools for the Future programme or otherwise, and these schools have or are expected to have Community Use Agreements (CUAs) for their pitches. There are also a number of schools which are used by the community on an informal basis, plus a small number which have formal CUAs for their pitches, but where there is no use in practice.
- 21.12 The latest position in relation to the schools with or proposed to have community use with formal agreements is given in the table below (Figure 88).

Figure 88: Schools and community use

School	Secondary/ primary	Formal CUA	Community use of pitches & comments
Barnwell (Collenswood)	Secondary		Used and significant capacity to increase following closure of school of school, but long term future for community use is uncertain.
Barnwell (Middle and West)	Secondary	Draft	Football pitches (junior and senior) included in CUA but not yet in use.  May have capacity issues as school has no other pitch space.
John Henry Newman	Secondary		Artificial pitch used by Stevenage Hockey Club. Will require resurfacing in about 5 years.  No community use of grass pitches.
Marriotts	Secondary	Draft	3G AGP well used by community but is not full size.  Grass football pitches used to capacity by community but not used by school.
Nobel	Secondary	Draft	AGP is home to Stevenage Hockey Club.  Grass pitches not yet in use. May have capacity issues with amount of school demand.  Stevenage Cricket Club would wish to explore use of grass playing fields for summer use.
The Barclay	Secondary	✓ for AGP only	Small size sand based artificial grass pitch with floodlighting. Extensive community use.  Adult use of football pitches but pitches of moderate quality and changing provision poor.
Thomas Alleyne	Secondary		Occasional and irregular use by cricket and football.
Almond Hill Junior	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement
Brooms Barn	Primary	✓	No community use
Camps Hill	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement
Fairlands	Primary	✓	No community use

Featherstone Wood	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement
Lodge Farm	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement
Longmeadow	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement
Mossbury	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement
Roebuck	Primary	✓	No community use
Shephalbury Park	Primary		Used by the community but no formal agreement

- 21.13 Where the school sites have no formal CUAs for the use of their pitches, this use cannot be considered secure. This is a significant issue because there is intensive community use of most of the school artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and for some of the grass pitches, particularly providing for minis and junior teams, who often favour school sites. This is because of child protection issues, and the fact that these sites do not suffer from unofficial use, informal use, damage to the playing surface, dog fouling, and are often cheaper to hire. The common lack of changing provision on school sites is not an issue for mini and junior teams as they usually only require basic wash facilities.
- 21.14 The only current usage of grass pitches on school sites is for football, as the quality of school sites is too poor for cricket use (although there may be future opportunities at Nobel school), and rugby is focussed on the club site. Some schools have said that their grass pitches are potentially “available” but the potential capacity is difficult to assess as the schools responding have tended to be unrealistic in their expectations about what their playing fields could withstand in terms of community use, or have not been able to quantify the potential.
- 21.15 Where schools are not interested in community use, a number of reasons have been given, including; that the grass pitches are already heavily used by the school, and that there would be a requirement for the school site supervisor to open up and lock up again after community use, making any hire uneconomic.

## SECTION 22: FOOTBALL

### Introduction

- 22.1 Football is the largest pitch based sport in Stevenage. Most of the game is still on grass pitches for matches but the majority of the winter training takes place in Stevenage on artificial grass pitches (AGPs). The demand for and use of AGPs for football is addressed in the AGP section above, so the following part of the Assessment and Strategy focuses on grass pitches.
- 22.2 It should be noted that this Assessment and Strategy refers only to community football. Stevenage FC and their associated Academy, have their own development plans, exclusive use and responsibilities for the management of the grass pitches at the Lamex Stadium, at the Stevenage FC Academy on Broadhall Way, and at Aston Lane.

### Pitch sizes and age groups

- 22.3 In 2012 the Football Association (FA) developed a new set of recommended pitch sizes, pitch markings and goal post sizes for different age groups, and these were set out in The FA Guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions (2012). The FA has since been working with leagues and with pitch providers to try to ensure that all matches are now played on the “recommended” size pitch. The pitch dimensions, taken from the FA Guide are:

*Figure 89: FA recommended pitch sizes*

Type	Type	Recommended size without runoff (metres)		Recommended size including runoff (meters)		Area of pitch with runoff (hectares, rounded)
		L m	W m	L m	W m	
Min Soccer U7/U8	5v5	37	27	43	33	0.14
Mini Soccer U9/U10	7v7	55	37	61	43	0.26
Youth U11/U12	9v9	73	46	79	52	0.41
Youth U13/U14	11v11	82	50	88	56	0.49
Youth U15/U16	11v11	91	55	97	61	0.59
Youth U17/U18	11v11	100	64	106	70	0.74
Over 18 (adult age)	11v11	100	64	106	70	0.74

- 22.4 A primary purpose of the pitch audit in Stevenage was to confirm the amount of playing field area currently used for football and to assess the quality of sites. This information could then be used to identify options and priorities for investment.



- 22.5 The majority of pitches are provided by Stevenage Borough Council and the specific pitch sizes / markings for each site were provided by them. For the season 2013/14 only some of the pitches were marked out at the FA recommended sizes.
- 22.6 In terms of the overall assessment, it was agreed to consolidate the pitch sizes into mini, junior/youth (u15/16), and adult including the youth u17/18 size. It should be noted that the pitch area selected for the Assessment for minis is the larger size, whilst that for the junior/youth (u15/16) is the middle of the pitch size range, that of the u13/u14s). The youth u17/u18 and over 18 pitch sizes are the same (see Figure 90 for details), and are termed in this Assessment and Strategy as “adult”.

*Figure 90: Pitch sizes used in Assessment and Strategy*

Age group	Type	Referred to in the assessment as	Recommended size without runoff (metres)		Recommended size including runoff (meters)		Area of pitch with runoff (hectares, rounded)
			L m	W m	L m	W m	
Min Soccer U7/U8	5v5	Mini	55	37	61	43	0.3
Mini Soccer U9/U10	7v7						
Youth U11/U12	9v9	Junior/ Youth	82	50	88	56	0.5
Youth U13/U14	11v11						
Youth U15/U16	11v11						
Youth U17/U18	11v11	Adult	100	64	106	70	0.7
Over 18 (adult age)	11v11						

## Participation in football

- 22.7 Nationally around 2.8 million people take part in football at least once a month. Around 92% of participants are male, and about 35% are aged under 24 years, with only about 1% of players aged over 45 years. There has been a slight decrease in the number of people playing football of any type since 2007, from 7.58% of adults over 16 years playing once a month, to 6.39%.
- 22.8 During the 2013/14 season there were 110 teams playing football in Stevenage. In addition there are 31 teams playing outside the authority but who draw a significant number of members from Stevenage. It has been estimated that these equate to 10 team equivalents across the age groups, and these have been included within the team generation rate modelling. The list of football teams playing in Stevenage is given in Appendix 8, and those included in the modelling but playing outside of the authority in Appendix 9.
- 22.9 The pattern of participation in the authority is similar to many places, with the highest number of teams being boys’ teams drawing on those aged between 10 and 15 years. There is also a strong mini team sector, but the community adult football team numbers are not as strong. There are 6 girls teams, but only 1 ladies

team in the borough. For the purposes of this Assessment and Strategy, the women's team is assumed to consist entirely of Stevenage residents so that the assessment of provision is not underestimated, however it is known that the team draws players from a wide area. Figure 91 provides a summary of the team numbers for the 2013/14 season, which is also used as the baseline for the modelling.

*Figure 91: Stevenage football teams 2013-14 season*

	Age	Team age group	Number of teams
Mini-soccer 6-7 yrs - mixed	6 -7 yrs	u7 & u8	15
Mini-soccer 8-9 yrs - mixed	8 -9 yrs	u9 & u10	22
Youth football 9 v 9 - boys	10-11yrs	u11 & u12	20
Youth football 9 v 9 - girls	10-11yrs	u11 & u12	3
Youth football 11 v 11 boys	12-15 yrs	u13 & u16	28
Youth football 11 v 11 girls	12-15 yrs	u13 & u16	3
Men's football	16-45yrs	u17 +	28
Women's football	16-45yrs	u17 +	1

- 22.10 The peak demand time, which is the time at which most matches are played, is notably different between the age groups. The minis are the most evenly spread over the weekend, with some playing on Saturday mornings and others on Sundays. At the junior/youth level however, about 92% of the boys' matches take place on Sunday mornings, with the much smaller number of girls' matches on Saturday mornings. Almost all of the men's games are played on Sunday mornings. (See Figure 92). It should be noted that the number of teams in Figure 91 do not match the number in Figure 92 because the latter is considering the peak time demand only.

*Figure 92: Temporal demand*

	Total in or wishing to play in Stevenage			
	Number teams playing at the peak time (for their age group)	Kick off time (Peak time in bold)	Pitch size	% games being played in the peak time on this pitch size
u 7/u8 mixed	15	Sat am	Mini	60%
u9/u10 mixed	22	<b>Sun am</b>		
u11/u12/u13/u14/15/u16 boys	45	<b>Sun am</b>	Junior	91%
u11/u12/u13/u14/u15/u16 girls	3	Sat am		
men	28	<b>Sun am</b>	Adult	76%
women	1	Sun pm		

## Current provision

- 22.11 Figure 94 lists all of the main pitch sites used for football in Stevenage, both the grass pitches and the artificial pitches used for football, with a summary of their security of use, quality and any key issues. The sites are mapped in Figures 95, 96 and 97. Excluded from this table are those primary schools which have a very small playing field area, or which do not allow any community use and the disused playing field area at Bragbury End.
- 22.12 During the 2013/14 football season there were 21 adult grass pitches, 22 junior grass pitches and 15 mini grass pitches either in secure community use, or due to come into secure community use (denoted by \* in the table). These are the pitch numbers used in the modelling. A number of unsecured sites are also listed; these are available for use, but cannot be included in the modelling.
- 22.13 The sites for football in Stevenage used by community teams are very largely council pitches in parks, but some are school sites. The Paul Mallaghan site on Epsom Close is however managed by Stevenage Borough Juniors. There is also a commercial complex called the The Football Academy.
- 22.14 Chells Park was taken out of use for the season 2013/14 for football, although rugby training continued on the site. The future of use of Chells Park is uncertain as it is a possible location for Stevenage Town RFC. If so, all of the grass pitches now back in football use for the season 2015/16 would be converted to rugby use.
- 22.15 The quality standard for each pitch has been assessed through a site visit (using the required guidance templates), discussion with relevant pitch manager (Stevenage Borough Council grounds maintenance team, or school), and confirmed through the “check and challenge” process with the FA and the local football teams and clubs.
- 22.16 The key outcome of these discussions about the quality of the pitches for football in Stevenage is that they are agreed to be mainly of “standard” quality, enabling two matches/match equivalent sessions to be played per week on average across the season. The parks pitches are each effectively managed on a similar maintenance regime, resulting in some variations in the actual quality of the pitches across the town. This has resulted in some specific quality issues, for example the clubs playing at Hampson Park are concerned with rising flints, although the site is considered in general to be of “standard” quality, and a recent agronomist report for Peartree Park identified some parts of the pitches to be dangerous due to uneven ground.
- 22.17 The estimated carrying capacity for each of the pitches is derived from the agreed quality standard for each pitch and the Guidance criteria for pitch carrying capacity, a copy of which is given below in Figure 93.

*Figure 93: Pitch carrying capacity for football*

Agreed pitch quality rating	Adult football	Youth football	Mini soccer
	Number of match equivalent sessions a week		
Good	3	4	6
Standard	2	2	4
Poor	1	1	2

- 22.18 It should be noted that this Playing Pitch Guidance criteria from Sport England does not specifically take into account the impact of weather on the football season, such as snow cover or frozen ground. This will have an impact on both the number of matches which are able to be played on a pitch, and often the length of the season if postponed matches are rescheduled. It is therefore important to retain some “spare capacity” in the pitch stock generally to enable flexible management of sites and bookings.
- 22.19 Almost all of the pitches in the parks suffer from dog fouling, which is of major concern to the clubs. The pitches on enclosed sites such as schools, do not experience this problem, and therefore these sites are attractive to the clubs, even if other aspects are less attractive, for example a lack of or poor quality changing.
- 22.20 The quality of the changing and ancillary provision on each site has also been assessed using the guidance templates.
- 22.21 Not specifically included in the modelling which assesses the carrying capacity of pitches during the winter months is the impact of summer training and informal use on some of the parks pitches, particularly at Ridlins, Meadway and St Nicholas. This use causes problems with the tight window of summer renovation works and may result in damage to reseeded areas of the pitches. This means that the pitches going into the winter months are less fully recovered, so impacting upon their carrying capacity.

Figure 94: Football sites in Stevenage season 2013-14

\* Note: Those site marked \* have a draft Community Use Agreement but this is yet to be signed. The sites are: Barnwell School, Marriotts School and Nobel School.

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
ALMOND HILL JUNIOR SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	Poor changing	2	Both grass pitches and sand dressed AGP used for community football. Pitches slope.
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	Poor changing	2	
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	Poor changing	2	
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Poor changing	AGP	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	2	School closed. Significant short-medium term opportunities for football and poss cricket
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	2	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (MIDDLE)	Community school	Junior Football	Available, Not used	Secured*	Standard	No changing	1	New school arrangements. Extent of community use capacity needs confirmation.
BARNWELL SCHOOL (MIDDLE)	Community school	Junior Football	Available, Not used	Secured*	Standard	No changing	1	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (WEST)	Community school	Adult Football	Available, Not used	Secured*	Standard	No changing	1	
BROOM BARNS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	4	

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
BROOM BARNS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	4	
CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 5v5	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	Some pitch issues but otherwise good site
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	
CHELLS PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	1	Future use of site to be determined, may go to rugby. Pitches poor quality.
CHELLS PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	1	
CHELLS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	1	
FAIRLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	4	
FEATHERSTONE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	Pitches have some issues with rising flints.
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	4	Proposed site for improved youth facilities (skate park etc)
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	4	
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	Voluntary Aided School	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Standard	No changing	2	No community use of pitches.



Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	Voluntary Aided School	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Standard	No changing	2	
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	Well used site with further potential. Needs improved pavilion and car parking. Possible asset transfer to Community Interest Company.
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	2	
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
LONGMEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	AGP (youth size)	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	3G AGP intensively used.
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	New pitches coming into full use Sept 15. Capacity should be high but will need reviewing in 2016. No school use in 2013/14.
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Junior Football 11v11	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	
MEADWAY PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	Site likely to be lost

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
MEADWAY PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	to road development
MOSSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
MOSSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	Managed for football by Stevenage Borough Juniors.
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	One of senior pitches has more slope than FA recommendations. Works required to improve ground evenness.
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	2	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	Site had major investment to improve pitches. Good but requires high level of on-going maintenance. Small area of site proposed to be lost to development
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	4	(doctor surgery)
ROEBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	4	
ROEBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	4	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	Changing provision in portacabins
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
SHEPHALBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
SHEPHALBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	2	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Small AGP	Available & Used	Secured	Good	Good	AGP	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Private	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Good	Good	3	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING GROUND	Private	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Standard	Good	2	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING GROUND	Private	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Standard	Good	2	
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING GROUND	Private	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Standard	Good	2	
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Commercial	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	Good pitches but poor changing and car parking
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Commercial	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	2	
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Commercial	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	4	
THE LAMEX STADIUM	Local Authority	Adult Football	Not available	N/A	Good	Good	3	Stadium
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available, Not used	Secured*	Standard	Good	2	Pitches still in establishment period. Pitch sizes and extent of community use still to be determined.
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Community school	Junior Football	Available, Not used	Secured*	Standard	Good	2	
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	2	Occasional bookings only
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	Academy	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	2	Occasional bookings only

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Pitch Type	Community use category	Security of community use (* see note)	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Agreed Current Carrying Capacity for Community Use	Comments
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Poor	No changing	1	Poor quality playing fields and not used by school. Poor access and no changing. No significant opportunities for community sport.
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Poor	No changing	1	
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Poor	No changing	1	
WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	
WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	4	

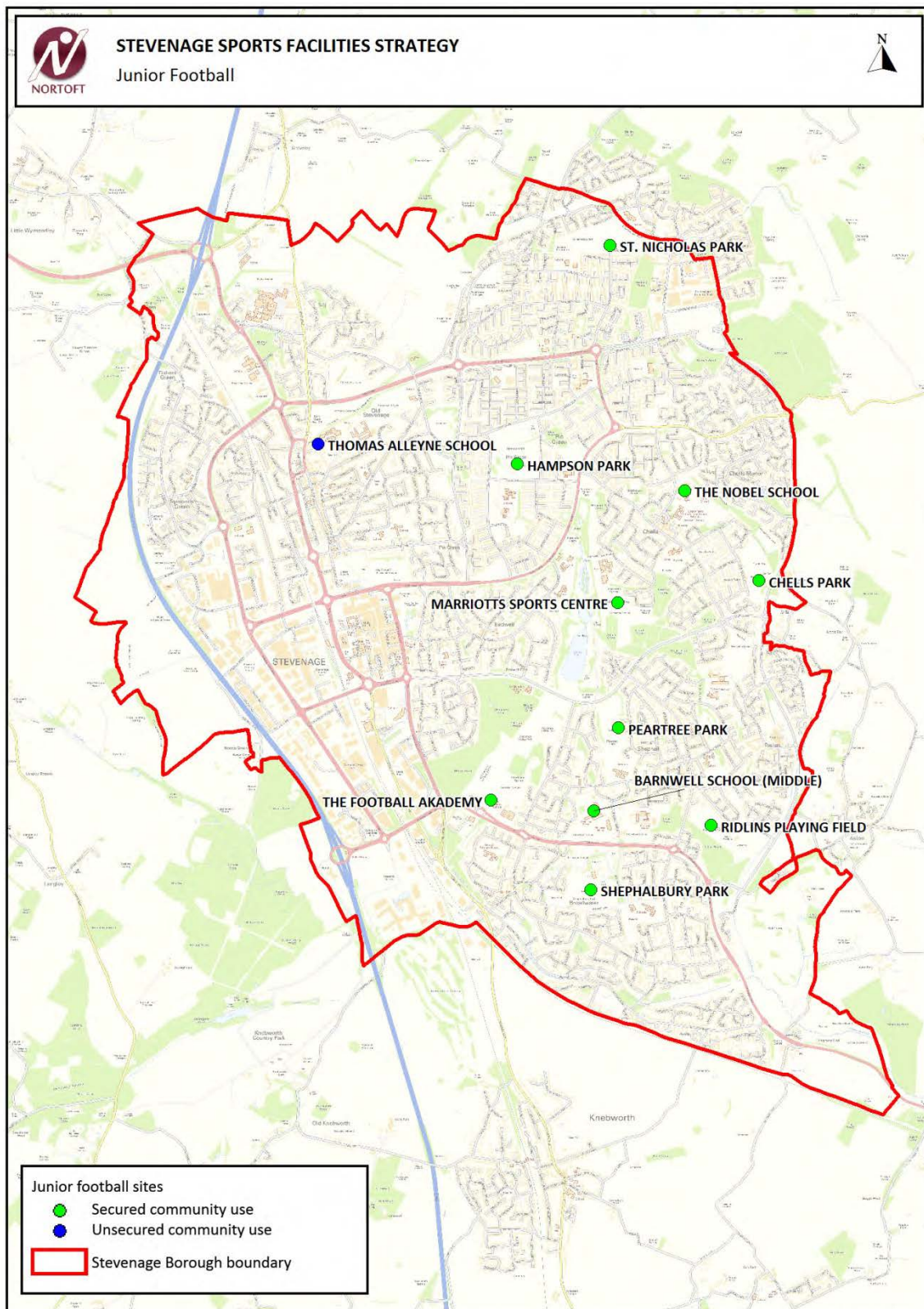


Figure 95: Adult pitch sites season 2013-14





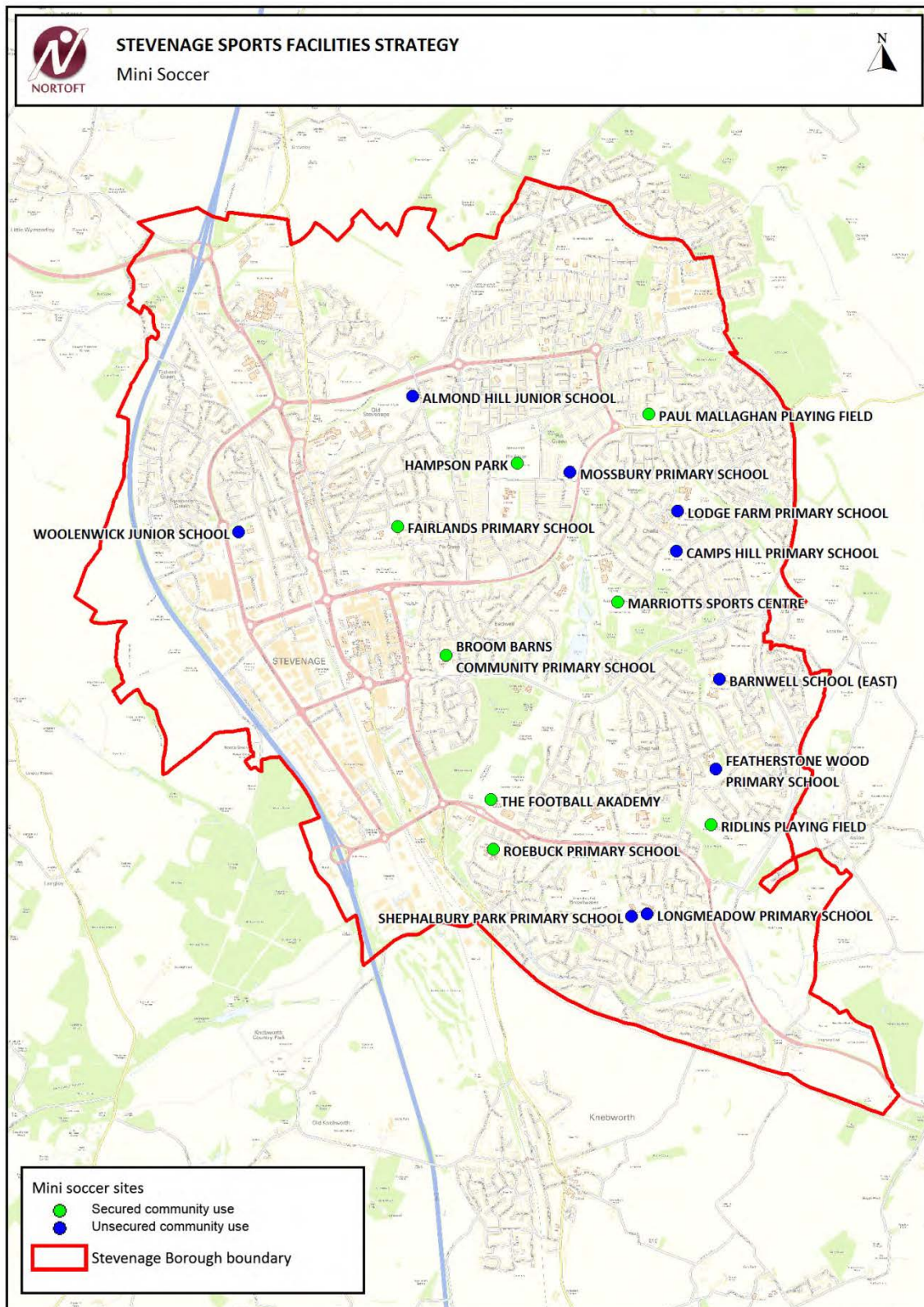
Figure 96: Junior football pitch sites season 2013-14



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Figure 97: Mini Soccer pitch sites season 2013-14



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## Assessment of current supply/demand

### Recent consultation findings

#### Individuals

- 22.22 The Individual's survey showed that grass pitches used by adults were the 11<sup>th</sup> most used of all of the facility types in Stevenage, behind the other main sports facility types such as swimming pools and sports halls. 49 respondents played football at least once a month. Of those expressing an opinion about the amount of grass pitch provision in Stevenage, about 80% felt the level of provision was "about right".

#### Clubs

- 22.23 All of the clubs involved in football were consulted using the national governing body (NGB) club survey questionnaires contained within the guidance, and many were also included in the web based survey of clubs circulated by Sport Stevenage. The list of clubs in Appendices 8 and 9 is also the consultation list for the project.
- 22.24 Direct returns from the clubs to the survey totalled around 60% of all teams playing in Stevenage, and this consultation was supplemented by a meeting involving Hertfordshire FA, the senior, junior and mini leagues in Stevenage, and the major clubs.
- 22.25 Almost all of the clubs responding to the consultation draw their membership from within Stevenage. None of the club returns indicated a waiting list from individuals, which suggest that there is no, or very little latent/unmet demand.
- 22.26 The club returns, additional information from the FA, and web research has demonstrated that there are no significant winter training demands for grass pitches, as almost all training in Stevenage takes place on AGPs. The requirement in terms of grass pitch capacity is therefore directly related to matches.
- 22.27 Several of the club returns confirmed the booking information collected as part of the research, showing that a number of teams were playing for the season 2013/14 on pitches that did not match the FA recommended pitch sizes.
- 22.28 Two clubs responding to the survey indicated that they wanted to relocate back to Stevenage from outside the borough.
- 22.29 Almost all of the clubs with mini and/or junior sections anticipate growing in the next 5 years. However some of the adult only clubs e.g. MBDA are not anticipating growing in the future.

22.30 The large meeting of the key clubs and football league representatives together with Hertfordshire FA in March 2014 saw a lively debate and some shared ideas began to emerge, in particular:

- the idea of further concentrating adult football into a fewer number of sites, which can be priorities for pitch improvements and good quality changing.
- the concept of an umbrella body for football in Stevenage which can begin to take more responsibility and greater organisation for the game generally.

22.31 The discussion also recognised:

- both the advantages of school sites for minis and juniors/youth (site security, cleanliness, price, and size of pitches), and also the problems, in particular a lack of security even over a single season.
- that there was too much adult pitch provision, but too little mini and junior provision in the parks.
- a need to retain a mix of pitch provision; parks sites, school sites, private sites.
- the need for additional 3G AGP training space (ideally full size pitches), though this would not be a county priority for FA and therefore for Football Foundation support.
- the cost of the existing AGP provision, which meant that it was not always affordable to minis and juniors.
- that although the pitch and changing room quality was “standard” on most sites, it was better than in some other areas of Hertfordshire.
- concerns about parks sites, in particular: goal post quality on some sites, litter, and dog fouling.

22.32 The initial priorities for investment in sites were identified at the meeting as follows, but it was recognised these would need to be confirmed as the strategy work progressed:

- King George V playing fields – pitch sizes and confirmation of the sports to be provided on site.
- Hampson Park – pitch improvements to reduce stone (flints), possibly new changing, or junior/mini use only.
- Canterbury Way Park - pitch improvements to reduce stone (flints).
- Chells Park – improvements to pitches, convert rugby pitch to football, provide changing sufficient for 4 adult pitches.
- Peartree Park – pitch improvements.
- Shephalbury Park – convert to mini/junior use, with basic wash facilities.
- Paul Mallaghan Playing Field, Epsom Close – pitch improvements.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 22.33 The Football Association (FA) is the national governing body for football in England, and its local association is the Hertfordshire Football Association. Both the FA regional and Hertfordshire officers have been closely involved with the development of the Stevenage Assessment and Strategy, and have actively supported the consultation with the clubs and leagues, and in the sites “check and challenge” process. They have also provided comments on the draft Assessment and Strategy.
- 22.34 There is no specific facility strategy for Hertfordshire, but this Stevenage report will inform the FA’s own future priorities for investment via their sister body, the Football Foundation.
- 22.35 The recommendations of the Assessment and Strategy have been agreed with Hertfordshire FA and with the FA.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 22.36 The Market Segmentation tool from Sport England suggests that 5 of the larger market segments in Stevenage take part in football, most of which are male, but with one female group also taking part (stretched single mums). However given more sporting opportunities generally in Stevenage, it seems likely that interest in football would wane, with fewer market segments taking part, and little female interest.
- 22.37 This potential reduction in football participation may be reflecting both the current Stevenage and national picture, where the involvement in football by adults is gradually declining, particularly where the sport is played on grass. If the costs of hiring 3G pitches falls, then there may be more migration of mini and junior teams to artificial surfaces, reflecting a trend already seen in the adult market.

### Playing pitch model

- 22.38 In considering the balance between the supply and demand for football pitch space in Stevenage, there are two elements and the assessment is based on the season 2013-14:
- Pitch capacity - the ability of natural grass pitches to provide for matches, training and other activity over a week or over a season. This is most often determined by their quality.
  - Pitch availability at peak times – the number of pitches required for football at the different FA recommended pitch sizes, in order to cater for matches.

- 22.39 The Sport England Guidance sets out the required approach towards modelling of grass pitch sports, using Team Generation Rates, the temporal demand for the sport (the number of matches at peak time), and the availability of pitches of the required size. Although the model requires consideration of training for grass pitches, this does not need to be taken into account in Stevenage because almost all winter training already takes place on artificial grass pitches (AGPs). The AGP requirements for football are specifically addressed in the AGP section of this report.
- 22.40 The Guidance does not provide a specific approach to the assessment of the impact of summer training on winter pitches. This is important in Stevenage where some of the parks pitches are regularly used throughout the summer on an unofficial basis.
- 22.41 The consultation with the clubs, FA and Stevenage Borough Council has not identified informal or casual use of the grass pitches during the winter months as a significant issue on any site. This is possibly because of the large amount of existing open space within Stevenage, and the fact that Fairlands Valley tends to be the main attraction for informal play and recreation, as well as organised activities such as fitness classes.

#### Pitch capacity across the week

- 22.42 Each marked out football pitch on each site has been assessed for its total carrying capacity for football across the week, based on the pitch quality and the pitch size (see paragraph 22.17). The take up of this carrying capacity has then been estimated by considering the usage made of each pitch by the community and, where appropriate by the school. Where schools have not provided details of their pitch use, the assumed level of use on primary school sites is half of the available pitch capacity.
- 22.43 Figure 98 provides an assessment of the carrying capacity of the pitches across Stevenage for football as at 2013/14. It is clear that there is potential spare capacity at most sites in terms of total usage (shaded green) and that there are only three sites where there is or is likely to be over use; the grass pitches at Marriotts School, Longmeadow Primary School, and the private commercial site of The Football Academy (shaded red). Those sites which appear to have a balance in supply and demand are shaded orange.
- 22.44 Where schools or private sites do not allow community use these have been coloured orange, similarly where the schools use plus the community use would appear to be already using a site to capacity.
- 22.45 The high level of use of school pitches by mini teams and also by some of the juniors/youth teams, means that there is in practice spare capacity at the Stevenage Borough Council parks sites, i.e. the junior/youth pitches are used less



than twice a week, or less than 4 times a week for mini pitches. The use of the school sites by mini and junior/youth teams is primarily because of: better site security, clean pitches (no dog fouling) and often because they are also cheaper to hire. However few of the school sites used by football currently have secure community use.

Figure 98: Balance in pitch capacity across the week, season 2013-14

Site shading: green = spare capacity; orange = balance in supply/demand; red = overuse

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
ALMOND HILL JUNIOR SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	1	4	4	2	3	1.5	3.5	0	U11 team playing on mini pitch. Assumed level of school use.
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Adult Football	3	2	6	3	2	1	4	2	Adult teams playing on site but in future school will need to mark to junior/youth
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Adult Football		2							
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Adult Football		2							
BARNWELL SCHOOL (EAST) COLLENSWOOD	Adult Football	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	4	Also has unused rugby pitch which can be converted to football
BARNWELL SCHOOL (EAST) COLLENSWOOD	Adult Football		2							
BARNWELL SCHOOL (EAST) COLLENSWOOD	Mini Soccer	1	4	4	0	2	1	3	3	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (MIDDLE)	Junior Football	2	2	2	4	0	0	2	0	New school arrangements. Pitches part of

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
BARNWELL SCHOOL (MIDDLE)	Junior Football		2							draft CUA but new high levels of school demand may make pitches not available
BARNWELL SCHOOL (WEST)	Adult Football	1	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	
BROOM BARNS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	2	4	8	4	0	0	4	4	Assumed level of school use.
BROOM BARNS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							
CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer 7v7	2	4	8	4	0	0	4	4	Assumed level of school use.
CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer 5v5	2	4							
CANTERBURY PARK	Adult Football	4	2	8	0	6	3	5	5	5 adult, 1 junior playing on adult pitch
CANTERBURY PARK	Adult Football		2							
CANTERBURY PARK	Adult Football		2							
CANTERBURY PARK	Adult Football		2							

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
CHELLS PARK	Adult Football	2	1	2		0	0	0	2	Not in use 2013/14.
CHELLS PARK	Adult Football		1							
CHELLS PARK	Junior Football	1	1	1		0	0	0	1	
FAIRLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	1	4	4	2	0	0	2	2	Assumed level of school use.
FEATHERSTONE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	1	4	4	2	2	1	3	1	2 junior teams. Assumed level of school use.
HAMPSON PARK	Junior Football	3	2	6	0	6	3	3	3	
HAMPSON PARK	Junior Football		2							
HAMPSON PARK	Junior Football 9v9		2							
HAMPSON PARK	Mini Soccer 7v7	2	4	8	0	0	0	8	8	
HAMPSON PARK	Mini Soccer 7v7		4							

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	Adult Football	2	2	4	4	0	0	4	0	
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN SCHOOL	Adult Football		2							
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Adult Football	3	2	6	0	5	2.5	3.5	3.5	3 adult, 2 junior teams playing on adult pitches
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Adult Football		2							
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Adult Football		2							
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	3	4	12	6	1	0.5	6.5	5.5	Assumed level of school use.
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							
LONGMEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	1	4	4	2	6	3	5	-1	Assumed level of school use.
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Adult Football	1	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	No use by school of grass pitches in

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Junior Football 11v11	2	2	4	0	11	5.5	-1.5	-1.5	2013/14. Review of use in 2016 once pitches fully established and level of school use is clearer.
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Junior Football 9v9		2							
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Mini Soccer 7v7	1	4	4	0	1	0.5	3.5	0.5	
MEADWAY PLAYING FIELD	Adult Football	2	2	4	0	3	1.5	1.5	2.5	2 adult, 1 junior girls playing on adult pitches. Site may be lost to development.
MEADWAY PLAYING FIELD	Adult Football		2							
MOSSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	2	4	8	4	3	1.5	5.5	2.5	Assumed level of school use.
MOSSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Mini Soccer	3	4	12	0	4	2	10	10	
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Mini Soccer		4							

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Mini Soccer		4							
PEARTREE PARK	Adult Football	3	2	6	0	4	2	4	4	
PEARTREE PARK	Adult Football		2							
PEARTREE PARK	Adult Football		2							
PEARTREE PARK	Junior Football 9v9	2	2	4	0	0	0	4	4	
PEARTREE PARK	Junior Football 9v9		2							
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Adult Football	2	2	4	0	1	0.5	3.5	3.5	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Adult Football		2							
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Junior Football	2	2	4	0	5	2.5	1.5	1.5	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Junior Football 9v9		2							
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Mini Soccer 7v7	3	4	12	0	9	4.5	7.5	7.5	



Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Mini Soccer 7v7		4							
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Mini Soccer 7v7		4							
ROEBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	2	4	8	4	0	0	8	4	Assumed level of school use.
ROEBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Adult Football	2	2	4	0	2	1	3	3	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Adult Football		2							
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Junior Football	3	2	6	0	5	2.5	3.5	3.5	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Junior Football 9v9		2							
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Junior Football 9v9		2							
SHEPHALBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	2	4	8	4	4	2	6	3	Assumed level of community use.

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
SHEPHALBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Junior Football	4	2	8	0	2	1	7		
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Junior Football		2							
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Junior Football		2							
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Junior Football 9v9		2							
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB ACADEMY	Adult Football	1	3	3	3	0	0	3	0	No community use
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING GROUND	Adult Football	3	2	6	6	12	6	0	0	No community use
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING GROUND	Adult Football		2							
STEVENAGE FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING GROUND	Adult Football		2							

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Junior Football	2	2	4	0	9	4.5	-0.5	-0.5	1 adult, 8 junior teams playing on junior pitches
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Junior Football		2							
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Mini Soccer	1	4	4	0	1	0.5	3.5	3.5	
THE LAMEX STADIUM	Adult Football	1	3	3	3	0	0	3	0	No community use
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Adult Football	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	Pitches still to come into use. Assumes full use by school and no community capacity.
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Junior Football	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	Adult Football	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	Junior Football 9v9	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	Occasional use by community.
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD (BURYMEAD)	Adult Football	3	1	3	0	0	0	3	3	No use by school and little/none by community. Poor site with no access.

Site	Pitch Size in 2013/2014	Number of pitches	Individual pitch carrying capacity	Total carrying capacity for pitch size	Use by school/private	Total number of community teams playing 2013/14 as home venue	Community demand per week (No. of community teams / 2)	Total demand (school/private + community)	Balance: total supply total demand.	Comments
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD (BURYMEAD)	Adult Football		1							
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD (BURYMEAD)	Adult Football		1							
WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL	Mini Soccer	2	4	8	4	2	1	7	1	Assumed level of school use.
WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL	Mini Soccer		4							

## Peak time capacity

- 22.46 Only a proportion of pitches in Stevenage were marked out to the recommended FA pitch sizes for the season 2013-14. It was therefore agreed that for the purposes of the strategy that the assessment should be made on the basis of a combined mini pitch area of 0.3 ha, a combined junior/youth pitch area of 0.5 ha, and an adult pitch size of 0.7 ha.
- 22.47 The modelling (in Figures 99 and 100) suggest that at peak time for the season 2013-14 there was:
- A surplus of 10 mini pitches, an area of 3.1 ha
  - A shortage of junior/youth pitches of 3 pitches, an area of 1.4 ha
  - A surplus of 10 adult size pitches, an area of 7 ha.
- 22.48 The future scenarios of the 5300 and 8200 housing options are provided in Figures 99 and 100 and the findings are discussed below (para 22.53 onwards).

## Summary of current situation

- 22.49 The views of the football clubs, the FA and outcomes of the modelling are similar, in that:
- Overall there is a “surplus” of grass pitch space for football in Stevenage at peak times, but although there is a current surplus of grass pitch space for adults and minis, there is a shortage of junior/youth pitches.
  - There is more than sufficient total carrying capacity for football across the different pitch sizes in Stevenage.
  - The pitches in parks are rated as “standard” but there are some specific needs, for example improvements on the pitches at Canterbury and Peartree Parks.
  - In 2013/14 only a proportion of junior/youth pitches were marked out according to the FA recommended pitch sizes.
  - There is a very high peak in demand, with about 92% of the boys junior/youth matches plus all of the men’s community game on Sunday mornings.
- 22.50 The potential capacity of many pitches in Stevenage, an average of 2 matches/match equivalents per pitch for adults and for juniors/youth, is not therefore taken up, and many pitches are only used once a week throughout the season.
- 22.51 The parks pitches all suffer from dog fouling and are considered less secure for the mini and junior/youth games. School sites can therefore be a preferred option, but not all of the school sites are used, even if they are technically available via a community use agreement.
- 22.52 The ex Barnwell School site at Collenswood is now unused by the school.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 22.53 The modelling summarised in Figures 99 and 100, suggests that there is overall sufficient playing field space in *secure* (or will be secure) community use for football to cater for matches at the peak times up to 2031, even with up to 8200 additional dwellings. This figure excludes the pitches used on school sites currently but which are used on an unsecure basis. However the lack of capacity for juniors will remain the case up to 2031, primarily caused by the exceptionally high peak demand at match times.
- 22.54 These findings were based on an assessment of future pitch needs following the methodology set out in the Sport England Guidance, including Team Generation Rates, forecast demographics for Stevenage, and a forecast growth in the game of 0.5% per annum across the age groups. It also assumes that the high junior/youth peak time demand remains.
- 22.55 By 2031 the current playing field space in *secure* community use will be largely taken up if the current league pattern stays in place and no changes were made to the pitch size mixture. The current deficit in pitch space marked out for juniors/youth will have worsened, but there will still be a significant surplus of adult pitch space and some surplus of mini pitch space. However if the surplus adult pitches were to be remarked to juniors/youth, then there would be sufficient capacity in the long term for all of the age groups, even if the high peak time demand continued and Chells Park was converted to rugby.
- 22.56 There are also sites which are used in practice but which do not have any long term security of use (or proposed as such), mainly on school sites and are therefore not included in this modelling total: 9 adult pitches, 1 junior/youth pitch, 14 mini pitches.
- 22.57 If the peak times for matches for juniors/youth and adults could be more broadly spread over the weekend rather than all kick-offs being at the same time, then; the peak time demand for pitches would be significantly reduced; there would be more scope to mark out pitches of different size, and there would be less overall pitch space needed. This in turn would enable further concentration of resources onto fewer pitch sites, and the potential for improved quality through more intensive maintenance. This would also mean that the pitches at Meadway and Chells Park would not need to be re-provided elsewhere, so long as the football pitches on the remaining sites were maintained to a standard which allows a minimum of two games per week to be played.
- 22.58 There is a proposal to change the existing football pitches at Chells Park to rugby. If this proposal were to go ahead then the displaced football teams would need to be provided with alternative accessible football pitch space and changing to at least the same quality as that at Chells.

- 22.59 This technical assessment does not take into account the impact of informal summer training on several of the parks pitches, which makes their management challenging because the pitches are unable to recover effectively between the football seasons. However, despite this, the quality of most of the pitches is still “standard” in terms of the modelling.
- 22.60 The modelling does not either take into account the impact of severe weather, which may makes sites unplayable at times during the season. This means that the total amount of pitch space allocated or available to the sport should be more than the theoretical minimum.



Figure 99: Football up to 2031 - 5300 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group					Minimum number of pitches required if used at maximum capacity (@ 4 senior or junior/youth teams, 8 mini)					Peak time number of pitches required for matches					Number of pitches which are both available and in secure community use	Playing pitch area in secure use (hectares)	Balance in provision in secure community use (number of pitches)					Playing pitch area required to meet demand at peak time: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha					Balance in pitch area available in secure use. In hectares: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha				
	Age Groups	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031			2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
Mini-soccer 6-7 yrs mixed	6-7 yrs	37	40	46	44	45	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	15	4.5	10	10	9	10	9	1	2	2	2	2	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.8
Mini-soccer 8-9 yrs mixed	8-9 yrs																																
Junior/ Youth football boys	10-15yrs	48	48	57	61	62	14	14	16	17	18	25	25	30	32	32	22	11	-3	-3	-8	-10	-10	12	12	15	16	16	-1.4	-1.5	-3.8	-4.8	-5.1
Junior/ Youth football girls	10-15yrs	6	6	7	8	8																											
Men’s football	16-45yrs	28	28	30	30	31	7	7	8	8	8	11	11	12	12	12	21	14.7	10	10	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	9	7	7	6	6	6.2
Women’s football	16-45yrs	1	1	1	1	1																											
TOTAL PITCH AREA Hectares																		30.2						12.0	12.1	13.7	14.2	14.5	8.7	8.5	5.5	4.5	3.9
TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA (@ 150% OF PITCH AREA) Hectares																		45.3						18.0	18.1	20.5	21.3	21.8	13.0	12.8	8.2	6.7	5.8

Note:

Pitch sizes as The FA Guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions, 2012

Adult: 0.7 ha; Junior/youth combined size: 0.5 ha; Mini combined size: 0.3 ha

Figure 100: Football up to 2031 - 8200 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group					Minimum number of pitches required if used at maximum capacity (@ 4 senior or junior/youth teams, 8 mini)					Peak time number of pitches required for matches					Number of pitches which are both available and in secure community use	Playing pitch area in secure use (hectares)	Balance in provision in secure community use (number of pitches)					Playing pitch area required to meet demand at peak time: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha					Balance in pitch area available in secure use. In hectares: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha				
	Age Groups	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031			2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
Mini-soccer 6-7 yrs mixed	6 -7 yrs	37	41	47	46	47	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	15	4.5	10	10	9	9	9	1	2	2	2	2	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.7
Mini-soccer 8-9 yrs mixed	8 -9 yrs																																
Junior/ Youth football boys	10-15yrs	48	49	59	64	65	14	14	17	18	18	25	25	30	33	33	22	11	-3	-3	-8	-11	-11	12	13	15	16	17	-1.4	-1.7	-4.2	-5.5	-5.7
Junior/ Youth football girls	10-15yrs	6	6	7	8	8																											
Men’s football	16-45yrs	28	29	31	32	32	7	8	8	8	8	11	11	12	13	13	21	14.7	10	10	9	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	7	7	6	6	5.9
Women’s football	16-45yrs	1	1	1	1	1																											
TOTAL PITCH AREA Hectares																		30.2						12.0	12.4	14.1	14.9	15.1	8.7	8.0	4.7	3.2	2.9
TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA (@ 150% OF PITCH AREA) Hectares																		45.3						18.0	18.6	21.2	22.4	22.6	13.0	12.0	7.0	4.8	4.3

Note:

Pitch sizes as The FA Guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions, 2012

Adult: 0.7 ha; Junior/youth combined size: 0.5 ha; Mini combined size: 0.3 ha

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 22.61 The priorities for the future are to improve the quality of both pitches and of the ancillary facilities. The adult game is required to have changing available, so the adult game needs to be concentrated onto those sites with the better changing provision, or scope to provide changing provision to a standard which meets the FA requirements. The junior/youth game should also ideally be provided with changing, particularly to encourage girls' teams, but changing will not be required on every playing field site. Minis rarely use formal changing facilities, but do need basic wash facilities.
- 22.62 There are currently a number of school sites used by the community on an unsecured basis. On the one hand, this impacts upon the demand for the Stevenage parks pitches, but on the other the sites may be closed without notice. It will therefore be important to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the medium-longer term for football in Stevenage, by retaining in principle the pitch stock in parks, even if not all of the pitches are regularly marked or maintained.
- 22.63 The pitches in the parks need to utilise the available space and take into account considerations such as land features, paths, parks furniture and trees, as well as the availability or otherwise of changing. The draft proposals table in Figure 101 should therefore be considered as a starting point for discussions by a new Football Development Group which will support the delivery of the strategy. This group should comprise of football club and league representatives, the FA, Stevenage Borough Council Parks/Grounds Maintenance and a school(s).
- 22.64 The costs/benefits/opportunities for improvements to the parks pitches require a technical agronomist assessment, and this should be a first stage priority for the delivery of this playing pitch Assessment and Strategy.
- 22.65 Also important in the longer term will be the potential for the football leagues to spread the kick-off times and days to better maximise the use of the pitches, and to reduce the overall amount of pitch space needed. In turn this should enable more intensive management of fewer pitch sites. If this can be achieved, then there is sufficient capacity across Stevenage as a whole to cater for football into the longer term, even if Chells Park was to be converted to rugby use.
- 22.66 Retaining the Collenswood playing fields for junior and mini football would provide a high quality venue for one or more large clubs, who could also potentially take over its management. There would however be a need to provide wash facilities and for appropriate site security and access measures to enable use. As the long term future of the site is still however uncertain, it cannot presently be considered secure for community use.
- 22.67 There is a proposal to asset transfer the King George V (KGV) playing fields to a Community Interest Company which includes representatives of Stevenage Borough Juniors, Stevenage Cricket Club and Stevenage Hockey Club. This proposal

still requires further development but may require Stevenage Borough Council to consider prior to transfer, both the quality of the existing pavilion on the KGV site to make it suitable for a large junior/youth football club, and the lack of car park space.

- 22.68 The pitch site at Meadway is expected to be lost to a road development when Stevenage West is built out. The pitches on the site are of standard quality but there is good community changing and the site is well liked by users. There will be a need to relocate the clubs using the site to an alternative site of at least as good quality, both in terms of pitches and ancillary facilities. The playing field area does not however need replacing as there is sufficient playing pitch space elsewhere in the borough.
- 22.69 The site at Bragbury End does not have current community use but was previously playing fields. Again the findings of the assessment suggest that the playing field area does not need replacing as there is sufficient playing pitch space elsewhere in the borough. However developers' contributions should be sought towards the improvements at the existing sites in Stevenage.
- 22.70 At this time there are no further council playing fields other than potentially the KGV site which could be considered as options for direct management by the clubs. The Collenswood site is not a public open space and might be considered for club management if confidence can be given to the club(s) about their future.
- 22.71 The FA and the league representatives would be interested in supporting Stevenage Borough Council in the allocation of sites to clubs and teams on regular basis, and in working with Stevenage Borough Council to agree the future priorities for investment. This should be via a Football Development Group which meets at least every 6 months.
- 22.72 The pitches on school sites which are used on an unsecured basis currently play an important role in meeting the needs of football. However partially because of this provision, there are too many parks pitches marked out (at a cost to Stevenage Borough Council), particularly for minis. The adult provision on school sites is likely to reduce as schools remark their pitches to the new FA recommended pitch sizes. However there is no reason why the provision of mini pitches on the school sites should not continue, although this situation may change quite quickly on an individual site basis, especially if a school considers that its pitches require resting, or other issues arise. It is therefore proposed that the overall availability of pitches and demand in Stevenage should be kept under regular review. This should be part of the role for the Football Development Group.

## Development of a planning standard

- 22.73 The planning standards for playing fields needs to cover all of the grass pitch sports of football, cricket and rugby. Planning standards are therefore developed at the end of this report section on grass pitches.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Current supply and demand

- 22.74 Overall there is sufficient pitch space for football in Stevenage in secure community use to cater for the current match demand, even if the two clubs currently located outside of Stevenage were relocated back to the town. However there is an imbalance between the pitch types marked out, with too few junior/youth pitches, and too many adult pitches.
- 22.75 At the present time there is a “surplus” of pitch space on legally secure (or proposed to be secure) community use sites, both at peak time and across the week as a whole. There is also a very high peak in the demand for grass match pitches with about 92% of the boys junior/youth matches plus all of the men’s community game being played on Sunday mornings. This means that some of the pitches are only being played on once a week.
- 22.76 Most of the pitches are located in parks, and are managed in house by Stevenage Borough Council. Most of these sites have access to changing provision, but not all is of good quality. Informal use over the summer months has a significant impact on the ability of the management team to rejuvenate the pitches over the summer months, particularly at Ridlins, Meadway and St Nicholas.
- 22.77 The parks pitches all suffer from dog fouling and are generally considered less secure for the mini and junior/youth games. The parks pitches are also sometimes more expensive than school sites.
- 22.78 School sites play an important role in meeting some of the football demand, and on school sites there are currently 14 mini pitches in use by the community, plus 9 adult pitches and 1 junior/youth. This level of provision has an impact on the demand for the pitches in parks, leaving some unused, and many underused. However there is too little junior/youth provision overall, which means that several teams were not playing on the FA recommended pitch sizes for the season 2013/14. The number of junior/youth pitches on secondary school sites is likely to increase in the future as schools remark to the new FA recommended pitch sizes, with a reduction of adult pitches.
- 22.79 The ex Barnwell School site at Collenswood is now closed and the pitches have no school use.

- 22.80 The pitches at the Barnwell Middle and West sites were used less for curriculum use in 2013/14 than from September 2014, because the schools relocated /merged in September, following the closure of the Collenswood site.
- 22.81 The pitches at Marriotts and Nobel schools during the 2013/14 season were still being established, and there was no or very little school use during that time.

### Future requirements

- 22.82 There is potentially sufficient playing field space overall already in *secure* community use for football up to 2031, even with up to 8200 additional dwellings. However there the lack of match time capacity for juniors which will remain the case up to 2031. This is primarily caused by the very high peak demand at the match times for boys playing at the junior/youth ages and men. The problem could be largely resolved by remarking some adult pitches to junior/youth use, but this will also require the correct size goal posts to be provided.
- 22.83 There is currently a surplus of *secure* mini pitch provision in Stevenage, and this does not significantly change up to 2031 even with the higher dwelling numbers. This situation is exacerbated because a number of teams actually use school sites in preference to the parks pitches, which means that there are a number of pitches which are being use to less than their potential carrying capacity.
- 22.84 If the peak times for matches for juniors/youth and adults could be spread across more of the weekend, this would have a number of advantages: there would be more scope to mark out pitches of different sizes; there would be less overall pitch space needed; and it would enable higher levels of maintenance to be achieved on the remaining sites. This would also mean that Chells Park could potentially be remarked for rugby as long as any displaced football teams were provided with alternative accessible football pitch space and changing of at least the same quality as that at Chells.
- 22.85 The number of adult size pitches available at school sites is likely to reduce over time as schools remark their pitches to the FA recommended pitch sizes. There is therefore to be a need to meet all of the adult size pitch requirements within the parks.
- 22.86 The high number of mini pitches currently available at schools but on an insecure basis will continue to impact on the demand for football pitch space in parks. However as these sites are unsecure, either the provision needs to be brought into secure community use via community use agreements, or the provision needs to be kept under a 6-monthly review. If the level of provision on the school sites remains, then there will continue to be much less requirement for parks pitches to be marked out and managed for mini football, than if all the demand needed to be met in the parks.

- 22.87 The draft site proposals list suggests the remarking of some sites and projects for the improvement of both pitches and changing provision. The proposals provide a minimum guarantee playing field space to meet the needs of football at the level in 2013/14, i.e. it uses those sites with secure community use only.
- 22.88 The opportunities, costs and benefits of works to the pitches in the parks require a more detailed technical assessment by a specialist agronomist. This needs to be a first priority for the delivery of the Assessment and Strategy.
- 22.89 The level of community use of the grass pitches on the school sites at Marriotts, Nobel, Barnwell and The Barclay will need to be kept under review. The newly established pitches at Marriotts and Nobel had little school use in 2013/14 but this may change with the curriculum demands. The new merged size of the Barnwell School may mean that the pitches on this site are used to capacity by the school itself. At The Barclay School the pitches will need to be remarked to junior/youth to meet the curriculum needs, but the size of the school and provision of an AGP may mean that the use of the grass pitches remains relatively light.
- 22.90 It is proposed that a Football Development Group for Stevenage should be established should comprise of football club and league representatives, the FA, Stevenage Borough Council Parks/Grounds Maintenance and a school(s). This group can then consider the draft site proposals contained within this report.
- 22.91 If the draft site proposals are confirmed, it is likely that the number of pitches in the parks will be taken out of regular football use as a result. However there will still be a requirement to retain the pitch areas in the parks to enable their re-establishment should this be needed in the future.
- 22.92 There is no requirement to provide for additional football playing field space as Stevenage grows. Playing field space in Stevenage West is therefore proposed to be used for cricket. Elsewhere the priority will be to use developers' contributions towards improving the existing provision.

## Recommendations

- 22.93 It is expected that not all of the currently marked out football pitches will be required in the short-medium term, but in the longer term most of the space is likely to be needed again for football pitches, as Stevenage grows. Therefore the existing amount of playing field area for football in Stevenage parks should be retained with the exception of Meadway and Chells Park. Any proposals coming forwards for the permanent development of playing field areas in secure community use will be required to re-provide the existing provision elsewhere, in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 73 and 74.



- 22.94 Stevenage Borough Council should support the introduction of the FA recommended pitch sizes, but also the development of new leagues for junior boys and men, in order to spread the peak demand.
- 22.95 There should be support and encouragement to those schools with community use for its retention, particularly in relation to minis and juniors. Where possible, this use should be secured via community use agreements.
- 22.96 Stevenage Borough Council and the FA together with the local leagues should establish a Football Development Group. This should review the needs of football in Stevenage at least every 6 months, including and in particular:
- Commission a specialist agronomist report for the pitches in the parks to assess the costs/benefits and options for each site.
  - Review and confirm the draft priorities list contained in this Assessment and Strategy, including site improvements for pitches (based on the agronomist report) and changing.
  - The continued availability or otherwise of pitches on school sites, both on the secondary schools and primary schools where this use is unsecured. The need for football pitches in parks can then be reassessed, and pitches only marked out if required.
  - The allocation of parks pitches to clubs and teams.
  - The development of new leagues or more flexible kick-off times to maximise the use of pitches.
- 22.97 Stevenage Borough Council parks provision should aim, in conjunction and with the support of the proposed Football Development Group to:
- Further concentrate adult football onto a smaller number of sites with good quality pitches and changing which meets the FA standards.
  - Review the provision and demand for mini pitches, and if appropriate and there is the opportunity to do so, remark some sites to junior/youth size.
  - Provide at least one additional site for juniors/youth with good quality changing and clubhouse.
  - Provide basic wash facilities and secure storage at other playing field sites.
  - Provide new goal posts of the FA recommended sizes appropriate for the pitch size.
- 22.98 The costs/benefits and opportunities for improvements to the pitches in the parks should be subject to further technical assessment by a specialist agronomist.
- 22.99 Apply planning standards to all new housing developments and allocate developers' contributions towards the improvement of the existing facilities on parks sites and schools where there are formal signed Community Use Agreements.
- 22.100 Mitigate for the loss of the Meadway site at a value equivalent to the provision of the same number and size of the pitches lost plus the cost of replacement ancillary

facilities. The funds should be allocated towards site improvements across Stevenage, based on a costed prioritised list of works.

- 22.101 Should Chells Park change to rugby use then the displaced football teams should be provided with alternative accessible football pitch space and changing within Stevenage to at least the same quality. The decision about the relocation and improvements required should be made by Stevenage Borough Council in conjunction with the proposed Football Development Group. To enable the relocation at the proposed alternative site, the costs of any improvements required should be met by either the developer of the former rugby club site or Stevenage Borough Council.

*Figure 101: Site by site proposals for football*

Proposals to meet pitch peak time requirements for grass pitches (based on Figures 99 and 100):

As at 2014, the minimum requirement is for: 11 adult pitches, 25 junior/youth, 5 mini

Table coloured as per proposed pitch size. In some places this is a change from the 2013-14 pitch mix. The objective is to provide in secure community use sufficient pitches to meet the community football demand. Rows that are coloured are the sites of primary importance for the delivery of football in Stevenage. Rows left uncoloured are of secondary importance but remain part of the football network and should be retained, unless specifically identified.

Where there are no specific proposals, the final column is left blank.

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
ALMOND HILL JUNIOR SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	Poor changing	School pitches will need to be remarked to junior/youth sizes for curriculum, so convert use to junior/youth. Some capacity on pitches, assume max of 1 match per week. Formalise use of pitches (CUA) and invest in site.
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	Poor changing	
BARCLAY SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	Poor changing	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	Confirm community use. Focus for minis, juniors/youth football. Remarking site will increase number of

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	pitches available. Needs basic wash facilities and confirmed access arrangements to site including car parking.
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (COLLENSWOOD)	Community school	Senior rugby	Not available, not used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (MIDDLE)	Community school	Junior Football	Available, Not used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	No requirement for rugby pitch but explore option of football sharing with cricket. Assumes long term retention of some community use, but extent would need to be confirmed once future of site known. Requires car parking and basic wash facilities.
BARNWELL SCHOOL (MIDDLE)	Community school	Junior Football	Available, Not used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
BARNWELL SCHOOL (WEST)	Community school	Adult Football	Available, Not used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
BROOM BARNS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	New school arrangements. Extent of community use capacity needs confirmation. Assumes maximum of one match per week per pitch but pitch quality will need to be kept under review.
BROOM BARNS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	
CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer 5v5	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	Retain as at present.

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	
CANTERBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	
CHELLS PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	Assumed to go to rugby. If not, retain as mixed pitch size site but improve pitch drainage.
CHELLS PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	
CHELLS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	
FAIRLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	
FEATHERSTONE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	Site has poor changing, so not suitable for adults. Improve pitches to reduce flints.
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
HAMPSON PARK	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	Changing reasonable but needs some attention. Less priority if being used for

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	juniors/youth. Change site to juniors/youth. Remarking pitches will increase number available.
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Standard	
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
LODGE FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
LONGMEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	New pitches coming into full use Sept 15. Capacity should be high but will need reviewing in 2016. No school use in 2013/14. Retain as proposed but review use in 2 years.
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Junior Football 11v11	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
MARRIOTTS SPORTS CENTRE	Community school	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
MEADWAY PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	Site likely to be lost to road development. Excluded from these proposals.
MEADWAY PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
MOSSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
MOSSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	Improve pitches.
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
PAUL MALLAGHAN PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	Improve goal mouths and centre circles to improve evenness. Retain changing at good quality. Review site options to consider if slope on adult pitch 5 can be improved through realignment.
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Poor	Good	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
PEARTREE PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	Retain as at present.
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
RIDLINS PLAYING FIELD	Local Authority	Mini Soccer 7v7	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	



Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
ROEBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	
ROEBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available, Not used	Secured	Standard	No changing	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	Changing provision in portacabins, so priority for future investment in changing provision. Retain mix of pitches as at present but keep under review depending on demand.
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Adult Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
SHEPHALBURY PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Poor	
SHEPHALBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
SHEPHALBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	Retain as at present.
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
ST. NICHOLAS PARK	Local Authority	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Secured	Standard	Good	
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Commercial	Junior Football	Available & Used	Commercial	Standard	Poor	Good pitches but poor changing and car parking.
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Commercial	Junior Football	Available & Used	Commercial	Standard	Poor	

Site Name (inc. any alias)	Ownership Type	Currently marked out pitch type	Community use category	Security of community use	Agreed pitch quality rating	Quality of ancillary facilities	Proposals
THE FOOTBALL AKADEMY	Commercial	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Commercial	Standard	Poor	
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Community school	Adult Football	Available, Not used	Unsecured	Standard	Good	Pitches still in establishment period. Pitch sizes and extent of community use still to be determined.
THE NOBEL SCHOOL	Community school	Junior Football	Available, Not used	Unsecured	Standard	Good	
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	Occasional bookings only
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL	Academy	Junior Football 9v9	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	Occasional bookings only
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Poor	No changing	Poor quality playing fields and not used by school. Poor access and no changing. No significant opportunities for community sport. Assumes becomes open space only.
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Poor	No changing	
THOMAS ALLEYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD	Academy	Adult Football	Available & Used	Unsecured	Poor	No changing	
WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	If possible, secure community use through formal agreement.
WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL	Community school	Mini Soccer	Available & Used	Unsecured	Standard	No changing	

## SECTION 23: CRICKET

### Introduction

- 23.1 There is one main cricket club in Stevenage, based at the cricket club site adjacent to the King George V ground.

### Participation in cricket

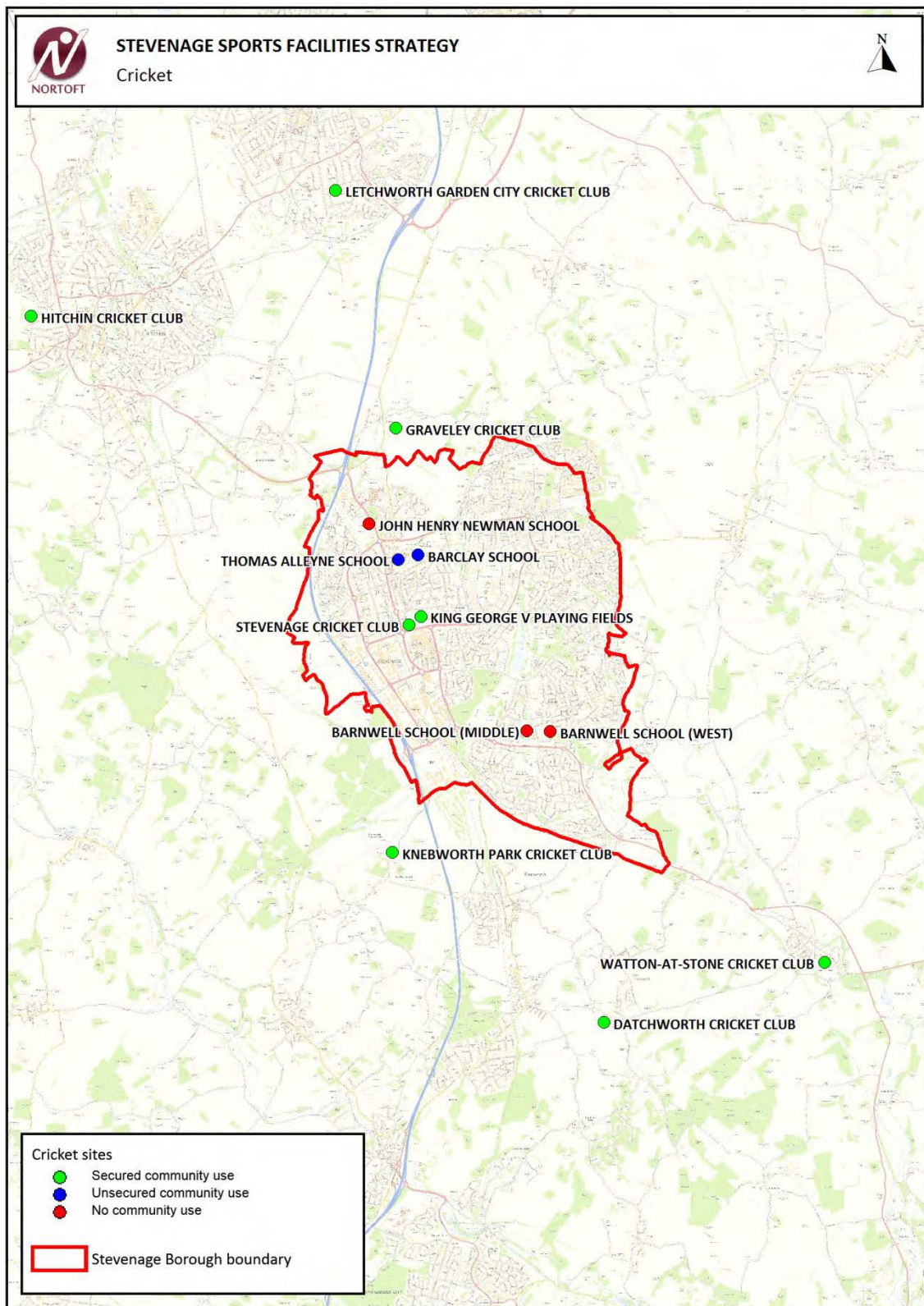
- 23.2 The Sport England Active People Survey research suggests that about 354,000 adults over 16 years play cricket at least once a month during the cricket season. Of those playing cricket regularly, about 93% are male, and 7% are female. About 66% of the adult players are aged 16-34 years, with 29% aged between 35-54 years, and only 5% aged 55 years and over.
- 23.3 Stevenage Cricket Club is the main club in Stevenage and has around 230 members. Most are drawn from Stevenage though the club also attracts some players from the surrounding areas. The club has increased its membership over the past 5 years and expects to continue this trend. The club currently has 9 adult men's teams, one girls' team, and 7 junior boys' teams. Previously the club had a ladies team.
- 23.4 There is one other cricket club playing occasionally in Stevenage, the Dynamics Hatfield Cricket Club which draws its members from a wide area including Stevenage, Hatfield and Welwyn. It has one adult Sunday team which plays on an infrequent basis.
- 23.5 The peak demand for cricket is Saturday afternoon, with 60% of the adult matches taking place at that time. Four of the Stevenage Cricket Club adult teams play on Sundays, plus the occasional match of the Dynamics Hatfield Cricket Club. There are no set days for the juniors, which play every day except for Saturdays.

### Current provision

- 23.6 There are three main cricket grounds (pitches) used by the community in Stevenage, one at Stevenage Cricket Club, and two at the adjacent King George V playing fields.
- 23.7 The ground at Stevenage Cricket Club is of excellent quality and is used by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> teams, plus the women's team. It has 14 natural turf strips, and good quality practice nets, which will however need some improvements before the 2015 season. The pavilion is reasonable quality but the car parking is limited. The cricket club site is on a long term lease (35 years) to Stevenage Cricket Club from Stevenage Borough Council.

- 23.8 The adjacent King George V (KGV) has two grounds (pitches) which are used both for matches and training, and are marked out in the summer months. The bottom ground is used by three of the Stevenage Cricket Club teams plus the Dynamics Hatfield club. The square has 9 strips and is reasonable quality, but the outfield is uneven and the pitch suffers from dog fouling.
- 23.9 The other KGV ground is at the top of the playing field. This is used on an occasional basis by the Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> teams. Both the cricket square and outfield are uneven and suffer from dog fouling. A further major problem is that a desire line (path) runs across the site from the north east corner of the KGV site to the town centre corner, causing issues with other users of KGV.
- 23.10 The KGV playing fields are also used for football, so this causes issues in relation to overlapping seasons and also reduces the quality of the outfields.
- 23.11 The club manages all of the cricket grounds, both on their site and on KGV during the summer, and all are in secure community use.
- 23.12 The club also has the occasional use of Thomas Alleyne School's ground with its artificial turf strip. The club provided support to the school for the development of both the artificial strip and the nets, but the level of use of this site is less than the club had anticipated.
- 23.13 There are moderate-poor quality school cricket pitches at John Henry Newman, The Barclay, and Barnwell schools, but none of these are available for community cricket. It is proposed to establish a pitch at Nobel School if there is sufficient area, but this is still to be confirmed. A cricket pitch had also previously been marked out at Collenswood School.
- 23.14 The cricket sites in Stevenage and the surrounding area are mapped in Figure 102. Of most importance in the surrounding area is the Knebworth Cricket Club which is in the process of relocating but is proposed to retain, as at present, two cricket grounds. It has a number of both adult and junior teams. The Graveley Cricket Club to the north is a small adult club running two teams on a single ground. To the south of Stevenage is Datchworth Cricket Club which has five adult teams playing from a single ground site, and the Watton-at-Stone Cricket Club with two adult teams on a single ground site. None of the cricket clubs or sites outside Stevenage are expected to change significantly in the future, other than the relocation of Knebworth Cricket Club, which will have no net impact on Stevenage.

Figure 102: Cricket sites



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## Assessment of current supply/demand

23.15 For the purposes of clarity the following definitions are used in this report.

Term	Definition
Ground	The whole pitch area including the cricket square and outfield
Square/table	The fine turf area which is specially mown and managed to give a high quality set of strips (often 6, 9 or 12 strips)
Strip	Single strip of natural turf or artificial turf on which the wickets are placed at either end for a single match
Wicket	The collective name for the 3 stumps and the bails placed at each end of the strip
Site	The ground plus ancillary facilities such as the club house/pavilion, car parking etc

23.16 The peak time requirements for cricket need to drive this assessment because this determines overall how many grounds are required.

23.17 The maximum number of grounds which were required by the Stevenage Cricket Club in 2014 to provide for matches being played at the same time, was three. With the three grounds at the Stevenage Cricket Club and KGV sites, this suggests that, in numerical terms, there is sufficient space now to meet all of the needs of cricket in Stevenage. However because of the poor quality of the KGV pitches, particularly the top pitch, sites outside Stevenage need to be used, and the club is currently using St Christopher School in Letchworth.

23.18 For junior cricket there is a further issue because their strip length is different from those of the adult games. If the natural turf strips are used for the junior game, it cannot be reused for the adult game. Sites with junior teams therefore significantly benefit from an artificial grass strip which does not have the same problems, but there are no artificial strips available in Stevenage.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

23.19 Two of the respondents for the individual's survey played cricket once a week and 6 played the sport at least once a month.

### Clubs

23.20 The travel distance of cricket players to Stevenage Cricket Club is known from the club survey, which shows that most of the junior players travel up to 10 minutes to the site whilst the adults travel up to 20 minutes. This suggests that, as all of

Stevenage is within 10 minutes drive time of the club site, that the effective catchment is the whole of the borough.

- 23.21 The Stevenage Cricket Club does not have any waiting list.
- 23.22 The club had previously invested in the cricket facilities at Thomas Alleyne School which has an artificial strip and nets. However the school has not responded very positively to requests for use by the club in either 2013 or 2014.
- 23.23 Due to the lack of good quality space within Stevenage, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Saturday teams use the St Christopher School in Letchworth. The club is therefore interested in exploring the development of a new site, and have initially identified Shephalbury Park or Nobel School as their preferred options.
- 23.24 The Stevenage Cricket Club manages both its own site and the KGV pitches during the summer. The club is part of the Parks for Life Community Interest Company and would be keen to continue the management work on the KGV site as long as they remain on site.
- 23.25 The Knebworth Park Cricket Club also responded to the clubs survey. Some of their members come from Stevenage but most are from the surrounding villages, with a catchment travel time of around 20 minutes. This club has 210 members and is currently seeking to relocate within Knebworth. They do not have a waiting list for members.

## **National Governing Body comments and strategies**

- 23.26 The input of Hertfordshire Cricket Board (HCB), and also England Cricket Board (ECB) as the national governing body for cricket, has been primarily via Stevenage Cricket Club. The club has been directly involved with the development of the recommendations.
- 23.27 The recommendations in the Assessment and Strategy have the support of the club, HCB and the ECB.

## **Modelling**

### **Market Segmentation and sports development**

- 23.28 Cricket is a relatively small sport and is not one which is played regularly by any of the larger market segment groups in Stevenage, and is not one which really appeals to the larger market segments, even if the opportunities were to be made available. This suggests that the growth in cricket over the next few years is likely to be relatively slow compared to some other sports, and that it is a lower priority for public investment than some other activities.



## Playing pitch model

- 23.29 The Sport England guidance sets out the required approach towards modelling of grass pitch sports, using Team Generation Rates, the temporal demand for the sport (the number of matches at peak time), and the availability of pitches of the required size. This section provides a detailed assessment of cricket using this methodology. It uses as the baseline for the supply of grounds the grounds in Stevenage currently used by the cricket clubs; Stevenage Cricket Club and KGV.
- 23.30 For the purposes of modelling, it is assumed that 15% of juniors play each day with the exception of Saturdays.
- 23.31 The peak time requirement in 2014 is for 3 grounds, so theoretically there is sufficient capacity, but the quality of the existing grounds on the KGV site are insufficient to meet the needs of Stevenage Cricket Club.
- 23.32 In terms of the number of strips required to cater for the demand, the calculation is based on an average of 4 matches per strip in any one season, excluding artificial turf strips. This is based on the advice of English Cricket Board. The total number of strips available in Stevenage is 14 on the cricket club site, plus 9 on KGV bottom pitch, plus 4 on the top pitch, giving a total of 27, or provision for 108 matches. The total match demand in 2014 was for 59 strips, so the theoretical strip capacity easily meets the demand in 2014 (a surplus of 49 strip capacity).
- 23.33 The consultation with Stevenage Cricket Club and Stevenage Borough Council has not identified informal or casual use of the grass pitches on the KGV site as a significant issue, and the cricket club site itself is closed. As a whole, Stevenage does not appear to have significant or regular casual cricket in parks, which is often associated with the Asian game. This may largely reflect the demographics of Stevenage. No specific allowance has therefore been included within the modelling for the casual game.

## Summary of current situation

- 23.34 There are three cricket grounds in Stevenage which are available and used for community cricket, at the Stevenage Cricket Club and at KGV playing fields. The ground at the Cricket Club site is of excellent quality. There are reasonably good quality practice nets on site which are intensively used and will need some remedial work during the winter 2014-15 to keep them high quality. The car parking on the site is however limited and the clubhouse is aging.
- 23.35 The KGV pitches are poorer, with the bottom pitch better than the top pitch. The pitches are usable for the lower levels of play but are not suitable for the higher league levels nor for the training of the better junior teams. Consequently the club is using sites outside of Stevenage even though there are theoretically enough grounds to cater for cricket's needs within the town.

- 23.36 There are no pitches on school sites of sufficient quality for community cricket nor available for use. There are school cricket pitches at John Henry Newman, Thomas Alleyne, The Barclay, and Barnwell schools, and it is proposed to establish a pitch at Nobel School if there is sufficient area. A cricket pitch has also previously been marked out at Collenswood School.
- 23.37 At the present time there is one girls' team but no ladies team.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 23.38 The modelling is summarised in Figures 103 and 104 in terms of grounds, and Figures 105 and 106 in terms of number of strips, suggest that there is overall sufficient playing field space in secure community use for cricket up to 2031 if there is a housing growth of 5300 dwellings. With 8200 additional dwellings there will be a need for an additional ground by 2026. There are a sufficient number of strips on the existing sites even in the long term, but this is of less importance than the number of grounds available.
- 23.39 These findings were based on an assessment of future pitch needs following the methodology set out in the Sport England guidance, including Team Generation Rates, forecast demographics for Stevenage, and a forecast growth in the game of 0.5% per annum across the age groups. The modelling does not include provision for a ladies team, however as the women's matches are on a Sunday, the peak time requirement for Saturdays is unaffected. If a women's team was to be re-established at Stevenage Cricket Club, the future proposals for cricket provision would be sufficient to meet their needs, in addition to the rest of the club.

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 23.40 The club is interested in exploring the development of a new site, and have initially identified Shephalbury Park or Nobel School (with an artificial strip) as their preferred options. However there are potential issues with both of these sites. Shephalbury Park will continue to be used intensively for football, with improved changing provision, and there would be significant issues with both the overlapping season with cricket and the quality of any cricket outfield because the pitches would need to overlap, even if the cricket square could be protected. The Nobel School site would probably only be available during the summer term and summer holidays, and again the pitch quality may be insufficiently good.
- 23.41 In the short term, the Collenswood site should be considered if the nature of the site there is good enough for the required level of cricket play by the club. The site would need to be shared with mini and junior football and a full technical assessment in conjunction with ECB would be needed to confirm whether this is an option for the future. This site could be developed with an artificial strip to help cater for junior use.

- 23.42 If neither the Collenswood site nor Nobel School are realistic options, improving the short term quality of the KGV pitches might be considered. However a decision would be needed as to whether the pitches on this open parks site have the potential to reach the required quality, prior to any significant investment.
- 23.43 A better long term alternative would be the development of a dedicated double ground site at Stevenage West as a specialist cricket ground.

Figure 103: Cricket grounds – 5300 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group						Peak time pitch requirement (total number of grounds) on Saturdays					Number of grounds available and used	Balance in the number of cricket grounds available and used compared with demand at peak time					Area of cricket grounds required to meet demand at peak time in hectares (based on 9 strips) @ 1.3 ha					Area currently available to cricket in secure use, hectares @ 1.3 ha per	Balance in area available in secure use. In hectares:										
	Age Groups	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	Peak time	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031						
Junior cricket - boys	7-18yrs	7	7	8	8	9	Sat pm (60%) of seniors	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	4	0	0	0	0	0						
Junior cricket - girls	7-18yrs	1	1	1	1	1																													
Men's cricket	18-55yrs	10	10	10	10	10																													
Women's cricket	18-55yrs	0	0	0	0	0																													
		18	18	19	20	20																													

Figure 104: Cricket grounds – 8200 dwellings

	Age Groups	Number of teams within age group					Peak time	Peak time pitch requirement (total number of grounds) on Saturdays					Number of grounds available and used	Balance in the number of cricket grounds available and used compared with demand at peak time					Area of cricket grounds required to meet demand at peak time in hectares (based on 9 strips) @ 1.3 ha					Area currently available to cricket in secure use, hectares @ 1.3 ha per ground	Balance in area available in secure use. In hectares:				
		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
Junior cricket - boys	7-18yrs	7	7	8	9	9	Sat pm (60%) of seniors	3	3	4	4	4	3	0	0	-1	-1	-1	3.9	3.9	5.2	5.2	5.2	4	0.0	0.0	-1.3	-1.3	-1.3
Junior cricket - girls	7-18yrs	1	1	1	1	1																							
Men's cricket	18-55yrs	10	10	11	11	11																							
Women's cricket	18-55yrs	0	0	0	0	0																							
		18	18	20	21	21																							

Figure 105: Cricket strips – 5300 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group					Peak time	Minimum total number of strips required to provide for 26 weeks of matches @ average 4 matches per strip (assumes juniors play on senior grounds)					Peak time strip/ground requirement on Saturdays					Capacity: number of strips in secure community use	Capacity: number of strips in secure community use: @ 4 uses per season	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)
																				Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of strips)
		Age Groups	2014	2016	2021	2026		2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026			2031	2014	2016	2021	2026
Junior cricket - boys	7-18yrs	7	7	8	8	9	Sat pm(60%) of seniors	59	59	63	64	65	3	3	3	3	3	27	108	50	49	45	44	43
Junior cricket - girls	7-18yrs	1	1	1	1	1																		
Men's cricket	18-55yrs	10	10	10	10	10																		
Women's cricket	18-55yrs	0	0	0	0	0																		
		18	18	19	20	20																		

Figure 106: Cricket strips –8200 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group					Peak time Senior only	Minimum total number of strips required to provide for 26 weeks of matches @ average 4 matches per strip (assumes juniors play on senior grounds)					Peak time strip/ground requirement on Saturdays					Capacity: number of strips in secure community use	Capacity: number of strips in secure community use: @ 4 uses per season	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of	Overall balance in provision for secure sites (number of	
								2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031			2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014
Age Groups	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014		2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014			2016	2021	2026	2031		
Junior cricket - boys	7-18yrs	7	7	8	9	9	Sat pm(60%) of seniors	59	59	67	69	69	3	3	4	4	4	27	108	50	49	41	39	39	
Junior cricket - girls	7-18yrs	1	1	1	1	1																			
Men's cricket	18-55yrs	10	10	11	11	11																			
Women's cricket	18-55yrs	0	0	0	0	0																			
		18	18	20	21	21																			



## Development of a planning standard

- 23.44 The planning standards for playing fields needs to cover all of the grass pitch sports of football, cricket and rugby. Planning standards are therefore developed at the end of this report section on grass pitches.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Current supply and demand

- 23.45 There is one large cricket club operating in Stevenage, the Stevenage Cricket Club, which is based at the Stevenage Cricket Club ground adjacent to the King George V playing fields. The club currently has about 230 members and draws most of them from Stevenage though it also attracts some from players from the surrounding areas. The club has increased its membership over the past 5 years and expects to continue this trend. The club currently has 9 adult men's teams, one girls' team, and 7 junior boys' teams. Previously the club had a ladies team.
- 23.46 There are three cricket grounds in Stevenage which are available and used for community cricket, at the Stevenage Cricket Club and at KGV playing fields. The ground at the cricket club site is of excellent quality and there are good quality practice nets on site. The KGV pitches are poorer, with the bottom pitch better than the top pitch. The pitches are usable for the lower levels of play but are not suitable for the higher league levels nor for the training of the better junior teams. Consequently the club is using a site outside of Stevenage.
- 23.47 There are no pitches on school sites of sufficient quality for community cricket nor available for use. There are school cricket pitches at John Henry Newman, Thomas Alleyne, The Barclay, and Barnwell schools, and it is proposed to establish a pitch at Nobel School if there is sufficient area. A cricket pitch has also previously been marked out at Collenswood School.

### Future requirements

- 23.48 Overall, there is, theoretically, sufficient playing field space in secure community use for cricket up to 2031 if there is a housing growth of 5300 dwellings. With 8200 additional dwellings there will be a need for an additional ground by 2026. However the quality of the King George V playing fields is a significant issue and is unlikely to be easily resolvable because of its use as a shared site with football, and the fact that it is well used public open space.
- 23.49 The club is interested in exploring the development of a new site, and have initially identified Shephalbury Park or Nobel School as their preferred options. However there are potential issues with both of these sites because Shephalbury Park is proposed to be continued to be used for football, and the Nobel School site would

only be available during the summer term and summer holidays, and only if the pitch quality and size is sufficient.

- 23.50 In the short term, the Collenswood site should be considered as a second site for the club if the nature of the site there is good enough for the required level of cricket. However the site would need to be shared with mini and junior football and a full technical assessment in conjunction with England Cricket Board would be needed to confirm whether this is an option for the future. This site would also require appropriate access, car parking, and changing/basic wash facilities. The long term future of the Collenswood site is uncertain, so cannot be considered a long term option for meeting the needs of cricket in Stevenage.
- 23.51 A better alternative would be the development of a double ground site, potentially at Stevenage West (or other suitable site), as a specialist cricket ground.

### Recommendations

- 23.52 It is recommended that the amount of playing field space in secure community use for cricket retained as it is at present.
- 23.53 The priorities for investment are:
- Retaining and as required improving the quality of the existing facilities on the Stevenage Cricket Club site, including the practice nets, car parking and clubhouse.
  - In the short-medium term, retaining the pitches on KGV.
  - Developing a cricket pitch with artificial strip at Nobel School, if practical.
  - Developing Collenswood as a cricket venue shared with football for the short-medium term. This is potentially as a venue for junior cricket with an artificial strip, but appropriate access, car parking, and changing facilities will be needed.
- 23.54 Investigate the potential of developing an additional double ground site in Stevenage West (or other suitable site) as a specialist cricket facility. This site should not be part of general open space provision and should be fenced.
- 23.55 Apply planning standards to all new housing developments. The funds generated should be allocated towards existing sites to improve their quality and the development of the Stevenage West site.

## SECTION 24: RUGBY

### Introduction

- 24.1 There is one rugby club in Stevenage which is based behind the Lister Hospital in the north of the town.

### Participation in rugby

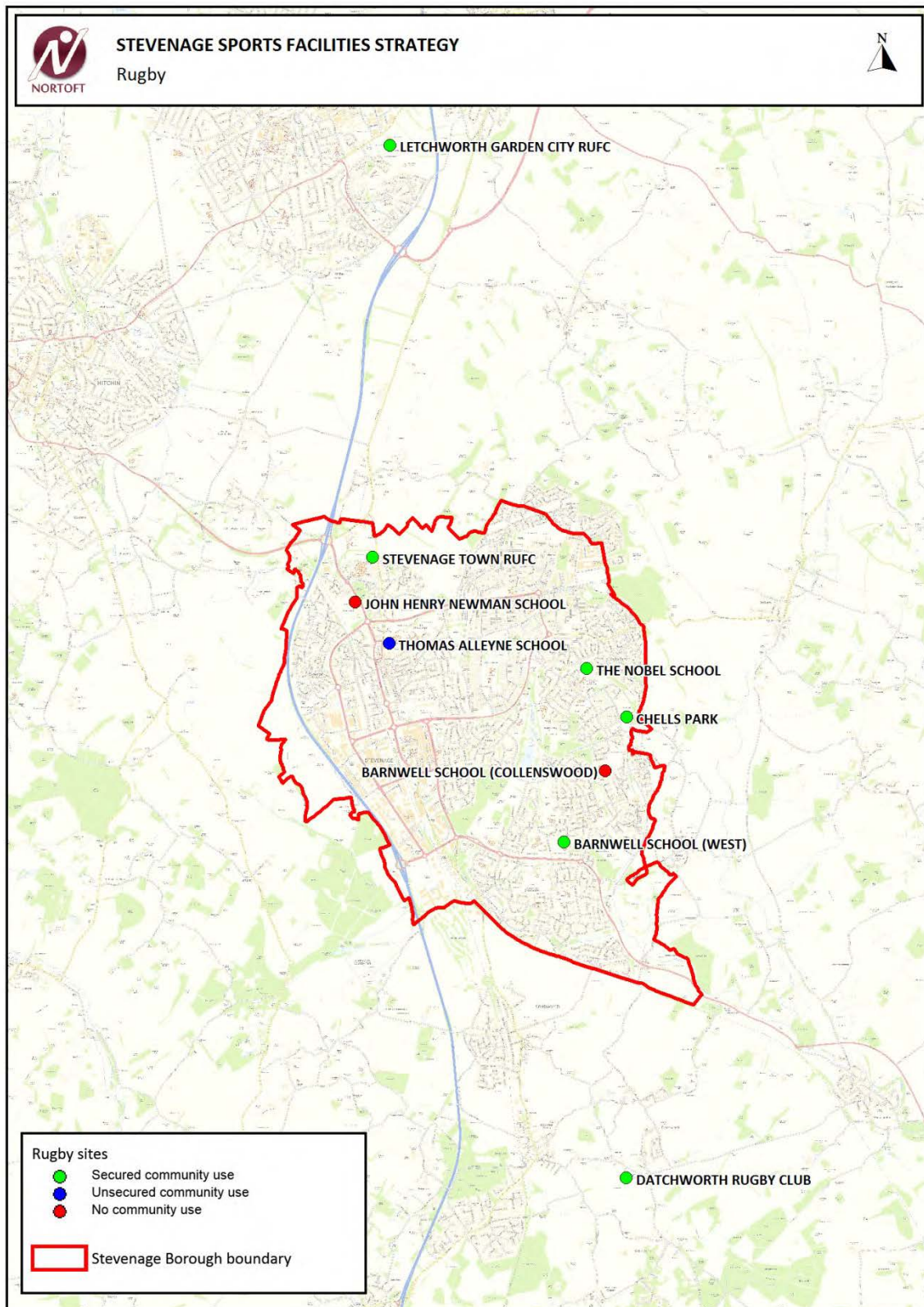
- 24.2 National participation in rugby once a month for people aged 16+ years is around 264,000 according to the latest Active People Survey information from Sport England, and the number has slightly decreased since 2007-08. Earlier research from Sport England for the period ending October 2009, showed that around 95% of the participants are male. The sport is mainly played by younger people, with about 84% being under the age of 34. The take up across the socio economic groups is approximately even, with a slight weighting to the NS SEC9 group which includes students, and to the more affluent groups. There are high rates of club membership for this sport, which reflects the way in which the sport is played.
- 24.3 Stevenage Town RFC had, for the season 2013/14, 3 senior teams, 2 junior teams and 6 age groups at u7-u12 which mainly played friendly festivals.

### Current provision

- 24.4 The Stevenage Town RFC site is located close to Lister Hospital. It is a 2 pitch site and there are no separately marked out mini/midi pitches. The site including the pitches and club house is owned by a private company limited by shares, Stevenage Sports Club Limited. The club uses the site on an occupational license basis but has no security of tenure.
- 24.5 The club's junior teams also use a single pitch at Chells Park which is owned and managed by Stevenage Borough Council. The changing provision on this site is good but is not currently available to the junior rugby players using the site because it is used for adult football, which is at the same time.
- 24.6 Additionally in Stevenage are five other sites, all at secondary schools. The pitch at Thomas Alleyne has been used on an occasional basis by Stevenage Town RFC, but this use is not secure and there is no changing available. The draft community use agreements for Nobel and Barnwell schools include a rugby pitch on both school sites, but there is no current community use of the sites. Furthermore, until the curriculum use at both schools is established, it is unclear if there would be any capacity on the pitches to withstand additional use by the community.
- 24.7 There is no community use of the pitch at John Henry Newman, nor has there been community use of the now disused school site at Collenswood.

- 24.8 Outside of Stevenage, there are two main rugby union clubs, Datchworth RFC and Letchworth Garden City RFC. Datchworth has 3 pitches plus a floodlit training pitch. Letchworth has 3 pitches but no floodlighting.
- 24.9 The sites for rugby union in and around Stevenage are mapped in Figure 107.
- 24.10 The quality standard for each pitch in Stevenage has been assessed through site visits (using the required Sport England guidance templates), feedback from Stevenage Town RFC, and discussions with Rugby Football Union (RFU), Stevenage Borough Council, and the schools.
- 24.11 The quality of the pitches on the Stevenage Town RFC site are assessed by the club as being poor. Pitch 1 is pipe drained and Pitch 2 has natural but inadequate drainage. The pitches have minimal maintenance, with fertilizer and weed killer once a year, and chain harrowing once a month. The club records that its multi-slitter and flail mower were stolen. Pitch 1 is able to be used an average of 1.75 matches or match equivalents per week, and Pitch 2 only for an average of 0.5 matches or match equivalents per week. The regular water logging of the site is considered by Stevenage Town RFC to be caused primarily by the clay subsoil and sloping / undulating surface.
- 24.12 The changing facilities and car parking at the Stevenage Town RFC site are considered as poor by the club. The building was a temporary structure which is now close to the end of its economic life, with the showers and changing being of inadequate quality.

Figure 107: Rugby pitch sites



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## Assessment of current supply/demand

- 24.13 The peak match demand for rugby is either Saturday afternoon for senior men, or Sunday mornings for juniors, and minis/midis, but just as important is the impact of training for rugby, which at Stevenage Town RFC is on the grass pitches. Both are therefore taken into account in the modelling, reflecting the requirements of Sport England's Playing Pitch guidance.
- 24.14 In the wider context, Datchworth RFC is an important provider of rugby opportunities for Stevenage. Within its approximately 375 playing membership, about 45% of the adults, 22% of the juniors, and 38% of the mini/midi members are drawn from Stevenage. Letchworth Garden City RFC has about 240 playing members, of which about 30% live in Stevenage across each of the age groups.
- 24.15 Further away is Hitchin RFC which has around 830 playing members using a 4 pitch site. There are only a small number of men and boys from Stevenage, but the club runs female teams and about a third of the women's team is from Stevenage, and about 15% of the under 19s.
- 24.16 All of these clubs have good facilities, and Datchworth has recently received funding from the RFU to expand. It is therefore expected that the current memberships of these clubs will remain stable, and continue to draw players from Stevenage at approximately the same level as at present. For this reason, the main focus of the Stevenage Assessment and Strategy is on the specific needs of the Stevenage Town RFC.
- 24.17 Previous stages of the Local Plan have identified the Stevenage Town RFC site for potential development. However the current planning position is that the existing site is not identified in the emerging Local Plan as being "required" for development. The onus would therefore be on the club itself to justify relocation, to an alternative site either within or outside of the authority area. The costs of relocation would need to be met largely by the club or developer.

## Recent consultation findings

### Individuals

- 24.18 There were a small number of respondents to the individual survey, five of whom played rugby once a week, and two played the sport at least once a month. This is too small a number for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the returns.

### Clubs

- 24.19 Stevenage Town RFC responded to the club survey. This club has seen the same number of adult teams, a decrease in junior teams and an increase in mini teams in the past 3 years, but the club expects to grow in the next 5 years, and hopes in the

future to have an additional senior team, two junior boys' teams and a colts team (age u17 - u18).

- 24.20 The club has been actively considering the option of relocating and has explored a number of alternative sites in the last few years. The costs of relocating would be expected to be met by the reinvestment value of the existing site being developed either for housing and/or the expansion of the hospital. The freehold of the site is owned by individuals connected to the club, but not the club itself.
- 24.21 A long term option of a split site would be difficult for the club to sustain for a number of reasons, including loss of income from players and their supporters from use of a non-club site, the management of the teams, and the cost of site maintenance.

## National Governing Body comments and strategies

- 24.22 The RFU National Facilities Strategy 2013-2017 summary provides an overview of the facility priorities for the sport. The detailed specific investment decisions are made by the RFU County Board, together with the Regional Development Officer and with support from the RFU Facilities Team. Each scheme is assessed against the specific needs of the club, within the context of the national priorities. The justification for funding in the summary is provided as:

*There is a continuing need to invest in community club facilities, in order to:*

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

*The priorities for investment are:*

- Increase the provision of integrated changing facilities that are child-friendly and can sustain concurrent male and female activity at the club.
- Improve the quality and quantity of natural turf pitches (this includes support for enhanced pitch maintenance programmes).
- Improve the quality and quantity of floodlighting.
- Increase the provision of artificial grass pitches that deliver wider game development outcomes.
- Social, community and catering facilities, which can support diversification and the generation of additional revenues.
- Facility upgrades, which result in an increase in energy-efficiency, in order to reduce the running costs of clubs.
- Pitch furniture, including quality rugby posts and pads.



- 24.23 The RFU Model Venues and the Activity vs Facility Continuum continue to be the most appropriate tools to interpret and support the delivery of the National Facility Strategy at a local level. At this time, Stevenage Town RFC would be a Model Venue 1 (MV1) as it has 3 senior teams, a limited mini and youth section, and no female teams. The MV1 facility elements would be expected to include 1-2 pitches, a floodlit grass training area (at least 60 x 40m), 100 car park spaces, and 2-4 changing rooms.
- 24.24 If Stevenage Town RFC grows as the club anticipates, with an extra senior team plus full u7-u18 programme, then the club would move to Model Venue 2 status. A club at this level would normally be expected to have 2-5 grass pitches of which 2 would be floodlit, 100-200 spaces car park plus coach park, and a club house with social space in addition to changing.
- 24.25 The existing site and ancillary facilities currently fall short of the MV1 facility expectation, but could largely potentially be met on site with significant investment. There would be insufficient space for the club if it was to increase its number of teams, as the club hopes.
- 24.26 In general terms, the RFU is therefore supportive of Stevenage Town RFC in trying to improve both its playing and ancillary facilities. The County Board RFU strategy acknowledges the wish of the club to move but does not make any commitments.
- 24.27 The RFU have advised that national governing body investment could be considered to support the aspiration of the club to relocate including possibly towards grass pitches, lighting, the clubhouse and changing rooms. However a decision will only be made once a full scheme is available for RFU consideration.

## Modelling

### Market Segmentation and sports development

- 24.28 Rugby is a relatively small sport and is not one which is played regularly by any of the larger market segment groups in Stevenage, and is not one which really appeals to the larger market segments, even if the opportunities were made available. This suggests that the growth in rugby over the next few years is likely to be relatively slow compared to some other sports, and that it is a lower priority for public investment than some other activities.

### Playing pitch model

- 24.29 The Sport England guidance sets out the required approach towards modelling of grass pitch sports, using Team Generation Rates, the temporal demand for the sport (the number of matches at peak time), and the availability of pitches of the required size. This section provides a detailed assessment using this methodology.

It uses as the baseline for the supply of grounds the 2 pitches at Stevenage Town RFC and the single pitch at Chells Park. The school pitches at Nobel and Barnwell have been excluded because it is unclear if there will sufficient be carrying capacity on the pitches to host community rugby over and above the demands made by the schools.

- 24.30 The pitch at Thomas Alleyne has been excluded because it is used on an occasional basis only, and there is no security of use.
- 24.31 As the location of the Stevenage Town RFC pitches on North Road is not easily accessible from housing, there does not appear to be any significant levels of casual use of the site, so no allowance has been built into the model for this type of use of the rugby pitches.
- 24.32 There are currently no girls or women's teams at Stevenage Town RFC and the modelling assumes that this situation continues into the future. If teams are established, then there would be capacity within the proposals to meet the needs of their game. However with a strong girls and women's section at Hitchin RFC, it seems likely that women and girls demand at Stevenage Town RFC will remain relatively small.
- 24.33 At the present time there is more than sufficient capacity overall across the authority to cater for the maximum number of matches at peak time.
- 24.34 However as there are no separately marked out mini/midi pitches, the 12 years and under ages play on ½ senior size pitches. If two matches are played consecutively for these age groups, then the peak time requirement for pitch space is 1 senior pitch. The mini/midi age groups do not usually train other than on Sunday mornings, when they either have matches or train.
- 24.35 The most important issue for rugby is the impact of training on the pitch quality/capacity. For the season 2013/14 the amount of training plus other rugby uses of the pitches equates to around 158% of the matches. The total demand for senior pitch space (including matches and training) in Stevenage for the season 2013/14 is for 5.7 sessions per week, whilst the capacity of the current site with its relatively poor quality pitches plus Chells is estimated to be only 4.25 sessions (match equivalents) per week. The deficit in capacity is almost the equivalent of one extra senior pitch.
- 24.36 From a club management and sustainability point of view, a split site (North Road and Chells or a school site) is difficult for any club to sustain.

## Summary of current situation

- 24.37 There are currently 3 rugby pitches used by the only rugby club located in Stevenage, the Stevenage Town RFC. Two of the pitches are located on the Stevenage Town RFC site on North Road, but the quality of the pitches and ancillary facilities is poor. One pitch is used at Chells Park for juniors and the changing on this site is good although not currently available for rugby.
- 24.38 With the current quality of the pitches at the Stevenage RFC site, there is insufficient pitch capacity to withstand all of the demands from the club, including training, although 3 pitches can cater for the match requirements even at peak time.
- 24.39 Reliance on school rugby pitches to meet community need is not realistic as the school sites at Nobel and Barnwell are likely to have insufficient capacity on their pitches to cater for community use in addition to school use. This view should however be kept under consideration because the pitch at Nobel school has only just been established, and the new school arrangements at Barnwell have only started in September 2014.
- 24.40 A split site for the Stevenage Town RFC is not ideal from either a sports development or club finance point of view.
- 24.41 The ownership of the club site (Stevenage Sports Club Limited) and the management of the club is intertwined with the landowner. At the present time, the club occupies the North Road site on an occupational license, and hires the pitch at Chells on an annual basis.
- 24.42 The current export of rugby players from Stevenage to Datchworth, Letchworth Garden City, and Hitchin RFCs is likely to continue into the longer term as these clubs are well established and have generally good facilities. The focus for consideration should therefore be the needs of the Stevenage RFC.

## Assessment of Future Needs

- 24.43 This section provides a summary of the detailed assessment. The assessment has been based on a 0.5% growth in participation across each of the age groups, and both of the growth options for Stevenage, at 5300 and 8200 dwellings have been tested.
- 24.44 With the increase in the proposed population and the increase in rates of participation, the number of teams in the mini and junior age groups are expected to increase in the period up to 2031, but there is unlikely to be much change in the adult game, see Figure 108.

Figure 108: Rugby team growth

		Number of teams within age group				
5300 dwellings		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
Mini/midi -rugby - mixed	7-12yrs	4	4	5	5	5
Junior rugby - boys	13-18yrs	2	2	2	2	2
Junior rugby - girls	13-18yrs	0	0	0	0	0
Men's rugby	19-45yrs	3	3	3	3	3
Women's rugby	19-45yrs	0	0	0	0	0

8200 dwellings						
Mini/midi -rugby - mixed	7-12yrs	4	4	5	5	5
Junior rugby - boys	13-18yrs	2	2	2	2	3
Junior rugby - girls	13-18yrs	0	0	0	0	0
Men's rugby	19-45yrs	3	3	3	3	3
Women's rugby	19-45yrs	0	0	0	0	0

- 24.45 At the present time there is more than sufficient capacity overall across the authority to cater for the maximum number of matches at peak time. Even by 2031 there will be sufficient space for matches if the sport grows its participation at a rate of 0.5% pa across each of the age groups, which ever housing growth option is taken in Stevenage. The club itself hopes to grow though the addition of 1 senior team, 1 colts team and 2 boys teams in the next 5 years, which is more than the theoretical modelling suggests based on the current numbers of teams.
- 24.46 Figures 109 and 110 model the total demand of rugby in Stevenage, both matches and match equivalents (training). These are based on the assumption that each of the 3 existing pitches are improved to allow 2 matches/match equivalent sessions per week. The outcome of this modelling suggests that there is likely to still be excessive wear on the existing pitches, even if the club grows at the slower rate.
- 24.47 Alternatively if the pitches at North Road were substantially upgraded and drained, the pitches there might be able to cater for 3 matches/match equivalent sessions per week each. If so, and with the Chells pitch providing for two sessions, then there may be sufficient capacity even in the long term, depending on the growth in the number of teams. Alternatively if a training pitch could be made available (grass or AGP) then much of the pressure on the grass pitches would be released.
- 24.48 If an AGP was to be developed which could cater for all adult and colts training, and some of the minis, then a total of 3 grass pitches catering for 2 matches per week, plus the AGP would meet the needs of the club up to 2031, whatever the housing growth options in Stevenage and cater for a higher rate of growth within the club then the theoretical model assumes. Any AGP would need to be floodlit with training quality lights, and one grass pitch should be floodlit with match quality lights.

Figure 109: Rugby pitch balance with 5300 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group					Number of matches per week					Match equivalent for training /other uses (at 158 % of match requirement as for 2016 - 2031 for seniors/juniors)					Total weekly demand on pitches = number of matches + match equivalents					Amount of pitch capacity sessions available (source: club return plus Chells at 2)
		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	
Mini/midi - rugby - mixed	7-12yrs	4	4	5	5	5	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0
Junior rugby - boys	13-18yrs	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3.2	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.3	5.7	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.0	4.3
Junior rugby - girls	13-18yrs	0	0	0	0	0																
Men’s rugby	19-45yrs	3	3	3	3	3																
Women’s rugby	19-45yrs	0	0	0	0	0																
																	6.2	6.9	7.3	7.5	7.6	4.3

Amount of pitch capacity at 2 matches/training sessions per week [improved pitch quality]	Overall actual balance in capacity sessions (pitches)					Overall balance in pitches at 2 sessions per pitch					Overall balance in pitches at average of 2 sessions per pitch (3 pitches total)				
	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
6	-1.9	-2.7	-3.0	-3.3	-3.4	-1.0	-1.3	-1.5	-1.6	-1.7	-0.2	-0.9	-1.3	-1.5	-1.6

Figure 110: Rugby pitch balance with 8200 dwellings

		Number of teams within age group					Number of matches per week					Match equivalent for training /other uses (at 158 % of match requirement as for 2016 - 2031 for seniors/juniors)					Total weekly demand on pitches = number of matches + match equivalents					Amount of pitch capacity sessions available (source: club return plus Chells at 2)
		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	
Mini/midi - rugby - mixed	7-12yrs	4	4	5	5	5	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0
Junior rugby - boys	13-18yrs	2	2	2	2	3	2.50	2.51	2.61	2.73	2.76	3.15	3.96	4.12	4.32	4.36	5.7	6.5	6.7	7.0	7.1	4.25
Junior rugby - girls	13-18yrs	0	0	0	0	0																
Men’s rugby	19-45yrs	3	3	3	3	3																
Women’s rugby	19-45yrs	0	0	0	0	0																
																	6.2	7.0	7.4	7.7	7.8	4.25

Amount of pitch capacity at 2 matches/training sessions per week [improved pitch quality]	Overall actual balance in capacity sessions (pitches)					Overall balance in pitches at 2 sessions per pitch					Overall balance in pitches at average of 2 sessions per pitch (3 pitches total)				
	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
6	-1.9	-2.7	-3.1	-3.5	-3.5	-1.0	-1.4	-1.6	-1.7	-1.8	-0.2	-1.0	-1.4	-1.7	-1.8

## Meeting the needs of the future

- 24.49 There appear to be two main options available for rugby in Stevenage. Both of these require significant feasibility work including technical assessment of the costs of the pitch and other works required. Option 1 would potentially require support from Stevenage Borough Council and the RFU, plus others as grant aid. Option 2 would be mainly funded through the sale of the existing site though there may be some uplift through grant aid from the RFU.

### *Option 1*

- 24.50 The first option would be to undertake significant improvements on the existing site to increase the quality of the pitches and also improve the quality of the club house. The single pitch at Chells Park could be retained, although access to the changing provision would potentially remain an issue if the main changing space is being use by adult football players at the same time. Alternatively the option of using a pitch at Thomas Alleyne school might be explored if long term security of use and access to changing at the school can be achieved. There would be benefit of exploring the option of developing a rugby standard 3G training pitch on or close to the existing club site to relieve the training pressures on the pitches themselves; however there are no obvious site options for this.
- 24.51 The costs and potential benefits of making improvements to the existing pitches would need to be confirmed by a specialist agronomist. This would confirm how much additional play could be provided for on the existing playing field area.

### *Option 2*

- 24.52 Develop new multi pitch site for rugby with 3 grass pitches (1 of which would be floodlit), new clubhouse, car parking etc. This site should ideally have no established or very limited informal use as open space. Chells Park is a preferred option at this time and the apparent advantages of this site are:
- it appears to be large enough.
  - it is not fully surrounded by housing, so floodlighting of pitches may be possible, although could be difficult to achieve.
  - The “surplus” capacity in relation to football playing pitch space means that conversion to rugby would not be a problem.
  - there is changing and car parking on site.
- 24.53 The disadvantages of the Chells Park site would appear to be:
- the current adult football use would need to be moved elsewhere (onto existing parks pitch sites), with good quality changing space and car parking.
  - the pitches may need additional drainage.
  - the site is a well used public open space so there will be greater conflicts with other users and problems with dog fouling etc.



- houses are close to the site on two sides, and there may be housing in the future on a third side.
- the car park space is limited even for rugby use alone.

24.54 A rugby specific AGP on a new club site would be of benefit to the club but its long term viability would need to be confirmed thorough a detailed business plan.

24.55 It is likely that the existing grass pitches at the Chells site may need some additional works to enable them to withstand rugby use at the level of intensity envisaged. This will need to be confirmed by a specialist agronomist.

## Development of a planning standard

24.56 The planning standards for playing fields needs to cover all of the grass pitch sports of football, cricket and rugby. Planning standards are therefore developed at the end of this report section on grass pitches.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Current supply and demand

24.57 There are currently 3 rugby pitches used by the only ruby club located in Stevenage, the Stevenage Town RFC. Two of the pitches are located on the Stevenage Town RFC site on North Road, but the quality of the pitches and ancillary facilities is poor. One pitch is used at Chells Park, for juniors and the changing on this site is good although is currently not available for rugby use because it is used for adult football.

24.58 With the current quality of the pitches at the Stevenage RFC site, there is insufficient pitch capacity to withstand all of the demands from the club, including training, although 3 pitches can cater for the match requirements, even at peak time.

24.59 No reliance can be placed on school rugby pitches which might be part of future Community Use Agreements, as at Nobel and Barnwell. The pitches on these sites seem likely to have insufficient capacity to cater for both community use and the school demands, so although technically may be available, are unlikely to be so in practice.

24.60 The current export of rugby players from Stevenage to Datchworth, Letchworth Garden City, and Hitchin RFCs is likely to continue into the longer term as these clubs are well established and have generally good facilities. The focus for consideration should therefore be the needs of the Stevenage RFC itself.

## Future requirements

- 24.61 With the increase in the proposed population and the increase in rates of participation, the number of teams in the mini and junior age groups are expected to increase in the period up to 2031, but there is unlikely to be much change in the adult game. According to the theoretical model, even by 2031 there will be sufficient space for matches if the sport grows its participation at a rate of 0.5% pa across each of the age groups, which ever housing growth option is confirmed for Stevenage. If the club grows faster than this, more space than is currently available will be required.
- 24.62 The impact of training on the grass pitches however also needs to be taken into account, and if the existing pitches are improved to enable them to withstand 2 matches/match equivalent sessions per week, there is likely to still be excessive wear across the existing 3 pitches (2 on North Road and 1 at Chells Park).
- 24.63 Alternatively however, if the pitches at North Road were substantially upgraded and drained and then managed more intensively, the pitches there might be able to cater for 3 matches/match equivalent sessions per week each. If so, and with the Chells pitch providing for two sessions, then there may be sufficient capacity for both matches and training, even in the long term.
- 24.64 If a training pitch could be made available (grass or AGP), then much of the pressure on the grass pitches would be relieved because it could cater for all adult and colts training, plus some of the minis, and meet the needs of the club up to 2031. The training pitch would need to be floodlit for the rugby use, with training quality lights. It could be either a grass pitch or AGP, but an AGP could withstand more use. One grass pitch should also be floodlit to match quality.
- 24.65 There are two options potentially available for the future:
- Invest in and upgrade the current site
  - Relocate the club to an alternative site, potentially Chells Park.
- 24.66 Both of these options will require further feasibility work to confirm the best option for rugby in Stevenage, and the most viable route. This will include detailed specialist agronomist reports.
- 24.67 The current personal links between the Stevenage Town RFC and its current landowner, Stevenage Sports Club Limited will require clarity at all stages. The club must be in a position to negotiate effectively with its landowner. The RFU and Sport England are likely to require this to be specifically addressed if a relocation option is taken forwards.

## Recommendations

- 24.68 A site for community rugby should be retained in Stevenage with a minimum of three grass pitches plus training space which may be either grass or an artificial surface, and in achieving this, two alternative options should be explored. Both options will require significant feasibility work including technical assessment of the costs of the pitch and other works required, and a full business plan demonstrating how the capital costs can be met, and long term viability.
- 24.69 Option 1 is to undertake significant improvements on the existing Stevenage Town RFC site to increase the quality of the pitches and also improve the quality of the club house and other ancillary facilities, including car parking. Any investment in the site would need to be linked to a formal long term (minimum of 20 years) community use agreement. The Chells Park single rugby pitch should be retained, or the junior use possibly moved to Thomas Alleyne School if security of use here can also be achieved. Both the Chells Park site and Thomas Alleyne school site would also require access to the (existing) changing. There would be benefit of exploring the option of developing a rugby standard 3G training pitch on or close to the existing club site, to relieve the training pressures on the pitches themselves.
- 24.70 Option 2 is to develop new multi pitch site for rugby with 3 grass pitches (1 of which would be floodlit), new clubhouse, car parking etc. A grass training pitch or alternatively a rugby specific (IRB 22 standard) artificial grass pitch on a new club site would be of benefit to the club. The currently preferred option is understood to be Chells Park where the development would potentially lead to a multi-sport complex.
- 24.71 Any relocation proposals would need to demonstrate long term viability, but a single site for the club would be likely to be a more long term sustainable solution than retaining the existing split sites. Option 1 would potentially require support from Stevenage Borough Council and the RFU, plus others as grant aid. However, the ability of the club to attract sufficient capital for the works needed seems challenging, and would also require long term security of use of the North Road site.
- 24.72 If the existing site is developed and Option 2 is pursued, then the developer would be expected to fully meet the costs of relocation, including pitch works and clubhouse. However the RFU may consider an application for support where the facilities would lead to substantial improvement or expansion, compared to the existing provision.
- 24.73 Any site for relocation should have no established, or very limited informal use as open space, and other uses such as football will need to be able to be moved elsewhere.

## Planning standards for grass playing fields

24.74 A key output of the grass playing pitch section of Assessment and Strategy is the development of proposed planning standards for Stevenage for the period up to 2031. These standards are required to both guide developers' contributions in Stevenage prior to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and in the longer term as part of the CIL justification. There are three elements to the proposed standards:

- Quantity – a rate of provision of a facility per 1000 people, based on a combination of the current amount of provision, the policy principle of increasing participation rates by 0.5% per annum across all sports, plus the findings from various modelling, and wide ranging consultations.
- Accessibility standard – based on the catchment area for each facility type.
- Quality standard – for both new build and refurbishment.

24.75 The grass playing pitch assessment has demonstrated that:

- Overall there is sufficient playing field space for football in Stevenage up to 2031, but not all of the space is needed currently. There is also a need to improve the quality of pitch sites. The high level of pitch demand is largely because of the current structure of the leagues, with most boys' and men's football taking place on a Sunday morning.
- For cricket, although there are a sufficient number of grounds, the quality of these and the problems both with the overlap of football and informal use means that there is, in practice, insufficient provision, and teams are needing to play outside of Stevenage.
- For rugby, the poor quality pitches on the existing site and the constraints on that site mean that the club is having to use a pitch elsewhere, currently at Chells Park. There are two options, either to significantly improve the pitch quality at the existing club site to enable it to withstand the levels of use better, or to relocate the club onto a new site with 3 grass pitches (one floodlit) and floodlit training area which could be either grass or a rugby specification artificial grass pitch.

### *Standard for quantity*

24.76 It is recommended that the sports should usually be separately provided for to reduce conflicts and to ensure quality. The provision per 1000 standards are therefore based on separate provision for each sport. The KGV site and potentially Collenswood are the exceptions as these provide/would provide both for football and cricket in the short-medium term.

- 24.77 The proposed playing field standard of provision per 1000 is based on the amount of pitch area required for each of football, cricket and rugby, with an additional allowance for the ancillary facilities including pavilion/clubhouse, car parking etc. For football and rugby this is taken to be 150% of the pitch area alone, and for cricket, 2ha per site.
- 24.78 Figures 112 and 113 show the amount of demand for playing field space as at 2014 and forecast demand under the different housing scenarios for 5300 dwellings and 8200 dwellings for the period up to 2031. These figures also show the current percentage demand and supply of area of the playing fields between the sports of football, cricket and rugby. This balance shows that overall there is relatively too high a proportion of space devoted to football, and too little for cricket. The rugby figure assumes that the pitch provision is of standard quality, so given the current poor quality site, the actual area needed is greater than that shown for 2014.
- 24.79 This quantity standard is based on an assumption that the pitches, on average, will be of 'standard' quality across Stevenage up to 2031.
- 24.80 They are calculated as follows, see Figure 111:

*Figure 111: Provision per 1000 playing field space*

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2031</b>
5300 dwellings population at	85,201	88,210	90,774	93,191
Area of playing fields required	50.0	55.8	57.5	58.5
Provision per 1000 playing field space	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.63</b>
8200 dwellings population at	85,201	90,414	95,138	99,803
Area of playing fields required	50.0	57.0	59.5	60.1
Provision per 1000 playing field space	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.60</b>

- 24.81 The required standard for the quantity of provision for playing field area is therefore proposed as:
- At 5300 dwellings: 0.63 ha per 1000 for the period up to 2031
  - At 8200 dwellings: 0.60 ha per 1000 for the period up to 2031

Figure 112: Developing playing field standards for 5300 dwellings

Demand	Football: playing pitch area required to meet demand across the week in hectares: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha						Area of cricket grounds required to meet demand at peak time in hectares (based on 9 strips) @ 1.3 ha, with 2ha per site					Rugby overall playing pitch area required @ 1.23 ha senior, at an average of 4 sessions per mini and 4 sessions for senior sites					TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA REQUIRED INCL ANCILLARY				
		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
	Mini	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7															
	Junior	12.4	12.5	14.8	15.8	16.1															
	Senior	7.7	7.7	8.2	8.3	8.5	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.08	3.46	3.64	3.76	3.81					
TOTAL PITCH AREA Hectares		21.5	21.7	24.7	25.7	26.3	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	3.8	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.7					
TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA in hectares (@ 150% OF PITCH AREA), for football and rugby, 2 ha per site for cricket																					
% of playing field area for this sport		64.62%					24.02%					11.36%					50.0	50.9	55.8	57.5	58.5

Supply	Football: playing pitch area available in secure community use in hectares: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha		Area of cricket grounds available in hectares (based on 9 strips) @ 1.3 ha, with 2ha per site	Rugby: overall playing pitch area available @average 0.36ha mini/midi, and 1.23 ha senior	TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA AVAILABLE INCL ANCILLARY
		2014	2014	2014	2014
	Mini	4.5		0.00	
	Junior	11.0			
	Senior	14.7	3.9	3.7	
TOTAL PITCH AREA Hectares		30.2	3.9	3.7	37.8
TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA in hectares (@ 150% OF PITCH AREA), for football and rugby, 2 ha per site for cricket		45.3	6.0	5.54	56.8
% of playing field area for this sport		79.7	10.6	9.7	

Figure 113: Developing playing field standards for 8200 dwellings

Demand	Football: playing pitch area required to meet demand across the week in hectares: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha						Area of cricket grounds required to meet demand at peak time in hectares (based on 9 strips) @ 1.3 ha, with 2ha per site					Rugby overall playing pitch area required @ 1.23 ha senior, at an average of 4 sessions per mini and 4 sessions for senior sites					TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA REQUIRED INCL ANCILLARY				
		2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031
	Mini	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.8															
	Junior	12.4	12.7	15.2	16.5	16.7															
	Senior	7.7	8.0	8.5	8.8	8.8	3.9	3.9	5.2	5.2	5.2	3.08	3.50	3.68	3.85	3.90					
TOTAL PITCH AREA Hectares		21.5	22.2	25.5	27.0	27.3	5.1	5.1	6.8	6.8	6.8	3.8	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.8					
TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA in hectares (@ 150% OF PITCH AREA), for football and rugby, 2 ha per site for cricket		32.3	33.3	38.3	40.4	41.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	5.67	6.45	6.79	7.10	7.19	50.0	51.8	57.0	59.5	60.1
% of playing field area for this sport		64.62					24.02					11.36									

Supply	Football: playing pitch area available in secure community use in hectares: Mini (u10): 0.3 ha; Junior (u11-u16): 0.5 ha; Senior (16+ yrs): 0.7 ha		Area of cricket grounds available in hectares (based on 9 strips) @ 1.3 ha, with 2ha per site		Rugby: overall playing pitch area available @average 0.36ha mini/midi, and 1.23 ha senior		TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA AVAILABLE INCL ANCILLARY
		2014		2014		2014	2014
	Mini	4.5				0.00	
	Junior	11.0					
	Senior	14.7		3.9		3.7	
TOTAL PITCH AREA Hectares		30.2		3.9		3.7	37.8
TOTAL PLAYING FIELD AREA in hectares (@ 150% OF PITCH AREA), for football and rugby, 2 ha per site for cricket		45.3		6.0		5.54	56.8
% of playing field area for this sport		79.7		10.6		9.7	



- 24.82 Developers' contributions from new housing should contribute towards the improvement of existing playing field sites and the development of a new double pitch cricket site, located at Stevenage West. Except for the Stevenage West development where the developers' contribution will also include playing field space, the value of the contributions from housing developments across Stevenage will be the equivalent value of the area of pitches that would otherwise be provided by the development. This will be calculated using the latest Sport England facility cost information.
- 24.83 It is clear that the costs of the works required on playing field sites is more than can be generated from developers' contributions alone, so the priority list will also inform other external partners including Sport England and the national governing bodies in relation to their grant aid.
- 24.84 There is also a requirement for developers to contribute towards the cost of clubhouses/pavilions and ancillary facilities at playing field sites. This requirement is based on the following assumption:
- Football: 1 x 4-team changing room pavilion for 3 ha pitch space
  - Cricket: 1 x clubhouse per 2 ha ground
  - Rugby: 1 x 4 team changing room clubhouse for 4 ha pitch space
- 24.85 The rate of cost per 1000 is based on a 4 team changing room and club room using traditional construction, with the cost reference base being the latest Sport England facility cost information on their web site.

#### *Standard for accessibility*

- 24.86 The accessibility standards are based on the consultation feedback from clubs. It is clear that many clubs draw their membership from across the whole of Stevenage.
- 24.87 The proposed accessibility standard is a therefore drive time of 10 minutes.

#### *Standards for quality*

- 24.88 There is now an extensive set of sports facility design advice available from Sport England and the major national governing bodies of sport. The planning policies for Stevenage in relation to the quality standards for sports facilities should therefore refer back to this guidance, both for design and layout. However there are specific aspects of design which should be taken into account in the policy framework.

## **Multi-pitch sites**

- 24.89 The most useful sites for football development and the best for efficient long term maintenance are those which are ideally at least the equivalent of 4 senior pitches in area, or a minimum playing field size of 4.5 ha where all of the site is usable. New sites should therefore be developed with this minimum size in mind.
- 24.90 The most useful sites for cricket development and the best for efficient long term maintenance are those which are at least the equivalent of 2 pitches in area. The development of multi-pitch sites is therefore supported.
- 24.91 The most useful sites for rugby are those which are multi-pitch and cater for all ages, usually linked to a club.

## **Football - pitches sized to meet needs**

- 24.92 The new FA recommended pitch sizes should be provided.

## **Changing Facilities**

- 24.93 For football, all senior sites should have good quality changing facilities that meet FA guidelines. Whilst changing facilities for minis and juniors is a desirable rather than an essential FA requirement, all mini/junior sites (not associated with senior pitches) should ideally have at least access to basic toilet/wash facilities.
- 24.94 For cricket and rugby all sites should have good quality changing and club house facilities that meet the national governing body guidelines.

## **Grass Pitch Quality**

- 24.95 All pitches should be well-drained and well-maintained, avoiding over-use. The pitch quality guidelines are those provided by Sport England and the relevant National Governing Body, but each site will have its own specific maintenance requirements.
- 24.96 Pitches should be allowed to fully recover at the conclusion of the season. Significant extensions to the playing season into late spring/early summer for football and rugby should be avoided if possible.
- 24.97 Conflict by booking out sites for other activities during the closed season should be avoided. Where this is not possible consideration should be given to developing alternative sites.
- 24.98 Cricket pitches should be allowed to fully recover at the conclusion of the season and sites should not be shared with other sports or used for informal recreation. If sites are shared the cricket square should be protected, particularly at the start of the cricket season when there is often an overlap with winter sports.

24.99 All new sites should be located in areas not prone to flooding.

24.100 All new sites should be drained and laid out in accordance with the NGB guidelines.

### **Floodlighting**

24.101 Most rugby clubs and some football clubs also require at least some floodlit grass training area which is away from the pitches. The RFU consider floodlighting as a high priority, particularly where the club is large and has limited scope for training.

### **Site Security**

24.102 Where possible, and where they are not public open space, sites should be secured (fenced) to reduce/prevent unofficial use of pitches, vandalism of changing facilities and dog fouling.

### **Enshrining quality in planned provision**

24.103 The quality of new playing fields, particularly those which are provided in relation to new development, should be guided by a clear set of planning criteria.

## CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION

### SECTION 25: DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

#### Planning standards

- 25.1 A key output from the Assessment and Strategy is the development of proposed standards, particularly for new developments. The justification and details behind each of these planning standards are contained within the relevant assessment sections of the report. There are some facilities where a formal standard of provision is not required, so these do not appear in the table in Figure 114.
- 25.2 These standards will be used to both justify the new provision and developers' contributions under the existing S106 planning arrangements as individual planning application come forwards, and to justify new provision set out in the Stevenage Infrastructure Development Plan and future projects, to be funded under the Community Infrastructure Levy arrangements.

*Figure 114: Proposed planning standards for new housing developments*

Facility type	Proposed planning standards for new developments		
	Quantity per 1000 population	Accessibility	Quality
Sports Halls	0.31 badminton courts <b>fully available</b> at peak time	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body standards
Swimming pools	11.55 sq m water space <b>fully available</b> at peak time	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body standards
Squash courts	0.08 courts	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body standards
Artificial Grass Pitches (full size)	0.03 large size AGPs <b>fully available</b> at peak time	30 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards
Athletics tracks	0.01 tracks	30 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards
Fitness facilities	6.88 stations <b>fully available</b> at peak time	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England standards
Indoor bowls	0.08 rinks	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards

Outdoor tennis courts	0.08 dedicated community outdoor courts	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards
Youth Facilities	0.08 open access MUGA	15 minute walk	<p>Design and quality standard for MUGAs to meet Sport England guidance for MUGAs, and reflect local best practice. However account should be taken of the views of local residents, particularly young people in relation to the details of the planned provision.</p> <p>On some sites and with the agreement of Stevenage Borough Council, the MUGA requirement may be met instead by the provision of a skate or wheels park.</p> <p>Skate park design to reflect local needs.</p>
Outdoor bowls greens	0.03 green	10 minutes by car	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards
Grass Playing Fields (football, cricket, rugby)	0.63 ha @ growth of 5300 dwellings 0.60 ha @ growth of 8200 dwellings	<p>10 minutes drive time for football and cricket</p> <p>20 minutes drive time for rugby</p>	Design and quality standard to meet Sport England and the relevant national governing body standards

*Note: \* fully available at peak time means open to community use in the evenings and weekends.*

## Planning policies

25.3 In principle the planning policies contained in the Stevenage Local Plan should reflect the approach of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to the provision of sport and recreation facilities, particularly:

### Para 70

To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as .... sports venues...) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
- Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

### **Para 73**

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

### **Para 74**

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

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

### **Para 81**

Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

## Para 89

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

.....

- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

.....

## Para 204

Planning obligations are expected to only be applied where they meet all of the following tests:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

25.4 National Planning Practice Guidance states:

*“ Policies for seeking obligations should be set out in a development plan document to enable fair and open testing of the policy at examination. Supplementary planning documents should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development and should not be used to set rates or charges which have not been established through development plan policy”.*

25.5 The key findings and recommendations of this Assessment and Strategy therefore need to be set out as part of the new Local Plan.



## Priorities for Action

- 25.7 Stevenage Borough Council and its partners will treat this Assessment and Strategy as a rolling document and will aim to undertake a number of action points arising from it. The first priority for implementation will therefore be an action plan which is led and coordinated by Stevenage Borough Council on an interdepartmental basis, and will involve the key stakeholders. This will be based around the project specific proposals set out in Figures 115 and 116 which have been widely consulted upon with appropriate parties e.g. sports representatives, users, and providers. These proposals:
- Set out sport and site specific actions, with clear priorities;
  - Indicate who is responsible for the delivery of each action and facility priority, how it can be delivered, and who else can help with its implementation;
  - Provide challenging but realistic and deliverable actions;
  - Provide an indication of the resource implications of each action, including where possible any associated financial costs, and how these resources could be secured;
  - Set a timescales for the delivery of each action.
- 25.8 In relation to the pitches (natural and artificial turf) a key delivery group is the proposed Football Development Group which will comprise Stevenage Borough Council, the Football Association, league and club representatives, and school representatives.
- 25.9 Where the primary need is for the improvement of pitches or ancillary facilities, these have not been costed because it will depend upon the specific factors at each site. Sites that require pitch improvements will require inspection by specialist sports turf agronomists to determine improvements and costs. However reference can be made to the costs schedule produced by Sport England as part of their Protecting Playing Fields programme. Copies of these are provided as Appendix 8, or see <http://www.sportengland.org/funding/our-different-funds/protecting-playing-fields/budget-costs/>.
- 25.10 Where football pitches on parks sites are taken out of use for the immediate future because there is a “surplus” playing field space, it will be important that the sites should still be maintained in a way that they can easily be brought back into use in the future when demand has increased.
- 25.11 Figure 115 provides the project specific priorities for built facilities excluding artificial grass pitches. Figure 116 provides the project specific priorities for both artificial grass and natural grass pitches.

## Phasing

- 25.12 Large housing site proposals for Stevenage may generate major new demand for local facilities. Specific phasing of facility provision is therefore required for some facility types.

Figure 115: Site specific proposals – built facilities excluding pitches

Facility / Site	Project elements	Partners and potential funding sources. [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority H = High M = Medium L = Low
Undertake further conditions surveys as needed and feasibility studies for the four council leisure centre sites, and confirm costs of works to be undertaken.					
New town centre leisure centre	<p>8 court hall</p> <p>25 m x 8 lane pool teaching pool, diving boards, 94 permanent seats plus 250 removable</p> <p>150+ station fitness gym, including IFI equipment and possibly under 16s gym</p> <p>3 squash courts as flexible space with moveable walls</p> <p>Studios/multi-purpose activity rooms</p> <p>Indoor bowls hall (subject to feasibility study)</p>	Stevenage Borough Council, SLL	2017/2020	£12-15m	H

Facility / Site	Project elements	Partners and potential funding sources. [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority H = High M = Medium L = Low
King George V Recreation Ground  (see also Playing Pitches)	Complete works to pavilion	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	Cost to be confirmed based on condition survey	H
	Provide additional car parking on site	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	£10,000	M
	Consider development of indoor bowls centre (6 rink) (see also below)	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Indoor Bowls Club, Stevenage Town Bowls Club	2017/18	£1.75m	M
	Floodlighting for bowls greens	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Town Bowls Club	2015/16	£50,000	L
	Consider transfer management to Parks for Life subject to feasibility study and robust Business Plan.	Stevenage Borough Council, Community Park Life partners	2015/16		M
	Review management of bowling greens to increase volunteer input.	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Town Bowls Club	2015/16		M

Facility / Site	Project elements	Partners and potential funding sources. [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority H High M = Medium L = Low
Ridlins Wood Athletics Track	Following a feasibility study and business case to confirm the proposals, provide ancillary facilities to support increased club use; an outdoor gym, electronic timing, purpose built clubhouse/clubroom, fitness area, additional storage particularly for the disability equipment	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage & North Herts Athletics Club, England Athletics	2015/16	Costs dependent on feasibility study	M
	Maintain to Grade A accreditation if viable.	Stevenage Borough Council	Ongoing		H
	Review management arrangements for track and provide security of use to club	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club	2015/16	Link to feasibility study	M
	Refurbish track	Stevenage Borough Council, UK Athletics	2020	£290,000	H
Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre	Replace irrigation system	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	Costs to be confirmed	H
	Rewire Golf and Conference Centre	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16		H
	Review management contract	Stevenage Borough Council	2022/23		H

Facility / Site	Project elements	Partners and potential funding sources. [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority H High M = Medium L = Low
Fairlands Valley Park Water Sports Centre	Review use and future of Water Sports Centre and funding arrangements	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16		H
Indoor bowls hall	Undertake a detailed feasibility study to confirm the size, location, design, cost and viability of a new indoor bowls centre if the A&LC is to be replaced. Options to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement leisure centre</li> <li>• KGV</li> </ul>	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	£10,000	H
	Replace indoor bowls centre	Stevenage Borough Council, Lottery, other external grant aid tbc	2021	£1.75m	M
Lister Tennis Club	If retained on existing site: a minimum of either 3 floodlit outdoor courts plus 2 indoor; or 5 floodlit outdoor courts	Lister Tennis Club			
	If relocated, retain facilities on a like-for-like basis; 2 indoor courts and 3 floodlit courts plus clubhouse and car parking.	Developer	Phase with development	Developer contribution	H
The Barclay School (see also Playing Pitches)	4 court hall (large size) designed to cater for futsal. Community Use Agreement extended	The Barclay School, Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council	2013/17	£2.62	M
New secondary school	4 or 5 court sports hall	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council	2026	£2.62-2.8m	L

Facility / Site	Project elements	Partners and potential funding sources. [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority H High M = Medium L = Low
Marriotts School (see also Playing Pitches)	Establish Community Use Agreement	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Marriotts School	2014/15		H
	Provide improved storage for community clubs	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Marriotts School	2014/15	Costs to be confirmed depending on option	L
	Refurbish facilities as required	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Marriotts School	2020-2031	Costs to be confirmed, based on community use agreement terms	M
Nobel School (see also Playing Pitches)	Establish Community Use Agreement	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Nobel School	2014/15		H
	Address construction issues in relation to sports hall and MUGA	Hertfordshire County Council, Nobel School	2014/15		H
	Refurbish facilities as required	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Nobel School	2020-2031	Costs to be confirmed, based on community use agreement terms	M
Barnwell School	Establish Community Use Agreement	Hertfordshire County Council, Barnwell School	2014		H



Facility / Site	Project elements	Partners and potential funding sources. [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority H High M = Medium L = Low
(see also Playing Pitches)	Refurbish facilities as required	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Barnwell School	2020-2031	Costs to be confirmed, based on CUA terms	M
Shephalbury Park (see also Playing Pitches)	Bowling green and clubhouse. Review management to increase volunteer input.	Stevenage Borough Council, Three Horseshoes Bowling Club	2015/16		M
	3 tennis courts – retain and improve	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	Cost to be confirmed based on condition survey	L
	2 tennis court area – convert to open access MUGA	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	£100,000	M
Open access MUGAs and skate parks	New open access provision at:	Stevenage Borough Council			
	Hampson Park: Wheel /skate park	Stevenage Borough Council	2016/17	Costs dependent on design	H
	St Nicholas Park: MUGA or skate park	Stevenage Borough Council	2015/16	£125,000	M
	Stevenage West: MUGA or skate park	Developer	Phase with development	£120-125,000	H
	Stevenage North: MUGA or skate park	Developer	Phase with development	£120-125,000	H
	Bragbury End: MUGA or skate park	Developer	Phase with development	£120-125,000	H

Figure 116: Site specific priorities for pitches

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Stevenage Borough Council pitch sites	Football	Appoint agronomist to undertake surveys of all parks pitches.	SBC	2016-17	To be confirmed following detailed brief	H
Almond Hill Junior School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Almond Hill School	2016/17		L
Barnwell School (East) Collenswood	Football, possibly cricket	<p>Retain playing field for junior and mini football use once school has closed. Provide basic hand wash and toilet facilities and secure the site.</p> <p>Explore the options for a cricket pitch in association with Stevenage Cricket Club with artificial turf strip.</p> <p>Explore management of site being transferred to club(s).</p> <p>The long term future of this site is uncertain should the school be re-established.</p>	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Football Association, Football Foundation, Football club (tbc), Stevenage Cricket Club, English Cricket Board, Lottery	2014/15	Cost to be confirmed following decision about site	H

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Barnwell School (Middle)	Football	Retain for football.  Complete formal Community Use Agreement for football.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council/Barnwell School	2014		H
Barnwell School (West)	Football, (Rugby)	Retain for football but the rugby pitch is not needed for community rugby.  School site has formal Community Use Agreement for football and rugby.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Barnwell School	2014		H
Bragbury End south of the brook (formally BAE sports ground)	Disused	Disused pitch site previously part of BAE Sports Ground. Site not required for sport.  Contributions from housing on this site should be allocated toward the costed priorities within this Playing Pitch Strategy.		2015/16		
Brooms Barn Community Primary School	Football	Site not currently used by the community but has formal community use as part of a planning condition.				

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Camps Hill Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Camps Hill School	2016/17		L
Canterbury Park	Football	Council site. Retain for football.  Improve pitches and ancillary facilities	Stevenage Borough Council	2017/18	See para 25.9	H
Chells Park	Football, Rugby	Confirm future use of site.  Potential location for 3G AGP for rugby, grass rugby pitches and tennis.	If converts to rugby: developer of existing Stevenage Town RFC site, Rugby Football Union.  If remains football: Stevenage Borough Council	2016/17	Cost dependent on outcome of feasibility studies.  Pitch works, see para 25.9	H
Fairlands Primary School	Football	Site not currently used by the community but has formal Community Use Agreement as part of a planning condition.				
Featherstone Wood Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Featherstone Wood Primary School	2016/17		L

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Hampson Park	Football	Council site. Retain for football. Improve pitches.	Stevenage Borough Council	2017/18	See para 25.9	M
John Henry Newman RC Secondary School	Hockey	Support introduction of community hockey by undertaking urgent works to improve artificial grass pitch.	John Henry Newman, Stevenage Hockey Club, England Hockey, Stevenage Borough Council	2014	£130-150,000	H
		Establish Community Use Agreement		2014/15		H
		Re-carpet AGP to sand dressed pitch for hockey		2019		H
		Grass pitches at this site are not used by the community and not required for community use at this time.				
King George V Playing Fields (see also built facilities in relation to bowls)	Football, Cricket	Council site. Retain all football pitches and cricket pitches unless or until alternative cricket sites are developed.  Improve quality of pavilion and increase car parking.  Consider transfer of site to CIC	Stevenage Borough Council	2016/17	See para 25.9	H
Lodge Farm Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Lodge Farm Primary School	2016/17		L

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Longmeadow Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Longmeadow Primary School	2016/17		L
Marriotts Sports Centre (see also built facilities section)	Football	Retain 3G AGP. Refurbish as required.  Retain grass pitches for football.	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Marriotts School	2020-31	Costs to be confirmed, based on community use agreement terms	M
Meadway Playing Field	Football	Council site. Site is likely to be lost in the future as access to Stevenage West development will be through the site. Retain for football in the meantime but not a priority site for investment.  If lost to development, contributions towards improvements at other pitch sites will be required.	Stevenage Borough Council, Developer	Phased with development	Value of playing field and ancillary facilities	H

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Mossbury Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Mossbury Primary School	2016/17		L
Paul Mallaghan Playing Field	Football	Retain for football.				
Pear tree Park	Football	Council site. Retain for football. Improve pitches.	Stevenage Borough Council	2017/18	See para 25.9	M
Ridlins Playing Field	Football	Council site. Retain for football.				
Roebuck Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Roebuck Primary School	2016/17		L
Shephalbury Park	Football, Cricket	Council site. Improve pitches.	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Cricket Club	2017/18	See para 25.9	M
Shephalbury Park Primary School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Shephalbury Park Primary School	2016/17		M
St. Nicholas Park	Football	Council site. Retain for football. Improve pitches.	Stevenage Borough Council	2017/18	See para 25.9	H



Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Stevenage Cricket Club	Cricket	Good quality site, retain for cricket. Improve nets, car parking and clubhouse.	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Cricket Club	2015/16	Costs dependent on conditions survey findings	M
Stevenage Football Club Academy (Bragbury End north of brook)		Private site used by Stevenage FC only.				
Stevenage Town RFC	Rugby	Feasibility study on options for club; remain on existing site with substantially improved pitches and clubhouse or re-locate (potentially to Chells Park) with grass pitches and 3G AGP.  Timing of improvements/relocation dependent on outcome of feasibility study.	Developer, Rugby Football Union	Feasibility 2014/15	Cost dependent on outcome of feasibility studies.	H
Stevenage West	Cricket	Investigate the potential development of dedicated double ground cricket site within the new development area.	Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Cricket Club, England and Wales Cricket Board	Phased with development	£1,085,000	H

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
The Barclay School (see also built facilities in relation to sports hall)	Football	Used by the community but unsecured. Changing provision poor.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, The Barclay School	2016/17	£255,000 dependent on design	M
		Formalise use through Community Use Agreement  Improve changing provision as part of sports hall development. AGP refurbishment		2020	£50,000	M
The Football Akademy	Football	Good site, retain for football. Commercial provider				
The Lamex Stadium		Private site used by Stevenage FC only.				
The Nobel School (see also built facilities section)		Establish community use agreement	Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Nobel School	2014/15		H
	Hockey	Address construction issues on AGP.  Refurbish facilities as required	Hertfordshire County Council, Nobel School  Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Nobel School	2014  2020-2031	Costs to be confirmed.  Costs to be confirmed, based on community use agreement terms	H  M

Site	Community Sports	Project/Comments	Partners and potential funding sources [Stevenage Borough Council includes developers' contributions]	Date	Estimated cost	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
	Football	Retain for football.				
	Cricket	Explore option of use of playing fields for cricket during summer months, including artificial turf strip	Stevenage Cricket Club, Nobel School, ECB	2015	See para 25.9	
Thomas Alleyne School Main site	Football, Cricket, Rugby	No regular use by any sports on grass pitches and no community use agreement.				
Thomas Alleyne School Burymead	Football	Poor quality site. Close to community football and retain for school use only.				
Woolenwick Junior School	Football	Retain for football. Explore formalisation of community use.	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Woolenwick Junior School	2016/17		L
Site to be confirmed	Football	Development of a full size 3G pitch for football, on a not-for-profit basis	Stevenage Borough Council, Football Association, Football Foundation, partner site tbc	2018/19	£885,000	M

## Funding

- 25.13 It is important to ensure that all of the available resources are carefully targeted and tailored to meet the needs of the whole community so any initial capital investment and long term revenue commitments can be fully justified.
- 25.14 The proposals arising from the strategy are likely to be funded and supported by a range of partners and new facility provision might be via a mix of public and private sources. There are likely to be an increasing number of innovative partnership arrangements over the next few years both in relation to capital and revenue projects, and consideration should be given by the Council to exploring all of the available options to enable the delivery of the strategy's proposals.
- 25.15 There are some major projects planned in this strategy, such as a new wet/dry leisure centre and this will require significant capital funding. All of the sports facilities will however need ongoing revenue commitment, and there is likely to be a need for substantial investment to refurbish/replace facilities during the strategy period.
- 25.16 Funding sources and programmes vary significantly over time, and there is limited benefit in exploring in detail all of the funds available at this point. As each facility is considered, a variety of options for funding will need to be explored by the Council and the potential developers of each project. These might include, in no particular order:
- Mixed development – perhaps delivering community sports facilities as part of a wider regeneration scheme;
  - Developers' Contributions – by locking the strategy into planning policy;
  - Land disposals and partial land development – where agreed as surplus to need;
  - Partnership delivery and joint funding - by working with key partners such as schools;
  - Partnership funding - with major sports clubs and their National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Football Foundation and others;
  - Sport England/UK Sport funds;
  - Lottery Funds;
  - Government funding.

## Procurement and management

- 25.17 The nature and process of the procurement of the facilities covered by this strategy and their long term management will fundamentally depend upon the type and scale of facility. It is likely that many sports and recreation facilities will increasingly become the responsibility of a sports club(s), but the leisure centres are likely to remain the Council's responsibility, either directly or indirectly.

## Review and Monitoring

- 25.18 There should be an annual review of the Assessment which will help to maintain the momentum and commitment to the Strategy's implementation. This will also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed. If significant changes emerge, then an interim update of the Assessment and Strategy should be undertaken.
- 25.19 There should be full review of the Assessment and Strategy if there are very significant changes in the supply and demand for the facilities in Stevenage. For example; the development of the proposed replacement leisure centre, the loss of strategically important sports facilities within or outside of Stevenage, and significant changes to the football league structure which impacts upon the demand for pitch space.
- 25.20 There should be a full review of the Assessment and Strategy within 5 years to take account of:
- Anticipated housing growth within Stevenage and on its boundaries;
  - General changes in participation and attractiveness of individual sports;
  - Technical changes to sport facility requirements;
  - The development of new or loss of existing facilities since the strategy was completed;
  - Facilities developed or lost to community use within the adjacent authorities;
  - Cross-boundary co-ordination between local authorities;
  - Facility investment decisions by the Council and its partners.

## GLOSSARY

3G	3rd Generation artificial grass pitch (rubber crumb)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
APP	Active Places Power
BSF	Building Schools for the Future
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Cricket ground	The whole pitch area including the cricket square and outfield
Cricket square/table	The fine turf area which is specially mown and managed to give a high quality set of strips (often 6, 9 or 12 strips)
Cricket strip	Single strip of natural turf or artificial turf on which the wickets are placed at either end for a single match
Cricket wicket	The collective name for the 3 stumps and the bails placed at each end of the strip
CUA	Community Use Agreement
FA	Football Association
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IPPS	Interim Planning Policy Statement
KGV	King George V playing fields
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NGB	National Governing Body of Sport
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OS	Ordnance Survey
RFC	Rugby Football Club
RFU	Rugby Football Union
SFC	Sports Facilities Calculator
SLAA	Strategic Land Availability Assessment
SLL	Stevenage Leisure Limited
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document



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