



STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

ASSESSMENT REPORT MAY 2025

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
ANOG	Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance
AP	Active Partnership
BC	Bowls Club
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowling Association
CC	Cricket Club
CFA	County Football Association
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FE	Further Education
FF	Football Foundation
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HE	Higher Education
HC	Hockey Club
HCCC	Hertfordshire County Cricket Club
IRB	International Rugby Board
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plan
LMS	Last Man Stands
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
LP	Local Plan
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RFL	Rugby Football League
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
S106	Section 106 agreement
SBC	Stevenage Borough Council
TC	Tennis Club
TGR	Team Generation Rate
U	Under
WR	World Rugby

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1: Introduction

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been jointly commissioned by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), East Hertfordshire Council (EHC) and North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) to develop a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for each individual local authority area. The commission also encompasses an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy for each of the three councils.

This is the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) Assessment Report for Stevenage Borough Council. It presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) for "non-pitch" sports. The PPS Guidance details a 13-stepped approach, separated into five distinct sections:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach (1, 2 & 3).
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (4 & 5).
- ◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views (6, 7 & 8).
- ◀ Stage D: Develop the strategy (9 & 10).
- ◀ Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (11, 12 & 13).

ANOG guidance follows a similar process to the Sport England PPS Guidance, and this is split into three formal stages which are:

- ◀ Stage A – Prepare and tailor the approach.
- ◀ Stage B – Gather information on supply and demand.
- ◀ Stage C – Assessment – Bringing the information together.

Stages A to C are covered in this report, with Stage D covered in the subsequent strategy document.

1.2: Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach

The primary purpose of the PPOSS is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities meets the local and community needs of both existing and future residents across Stevenage. The Strategy is produced in accordance with national planning guidance and will provide a robust and objective justification for future sporting provision.

Section eight of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities, with Paragraph 103 stating that "planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate."

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Paragraph 104 sets three criterion that ensures existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) 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
- c) The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Paragraphs 106, 107, and 108 set the parameters for the designation of Local Green Space. Such spaces may include playing fields and playing pitches.

For the full national context, including for each of the sports covered please refer to Appendix 1.

Why the PPOSS is being developed

The PPOSS will form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. It will provide a strategic framework to ensure that the provision of outdoor playing pitches meets the needs of residents (both existing and future) and visitors to the Stevenage Borough Council area. It will also support those organisations, including the Council, involved in the delivery, provision and protection of outdoor sports facilities in the Borough. The Strategy will be produced in accordance with Sport England guidance and provide robust and objective justification for future playing pitch provision and enhancement throughout Stevenage.

In addition to this, the other key drivers for a new strategy are to:

- ◀ Improve our resident's health and wellbeing and increasing participation in sport.
- ◀ Support sports development programmes and changes in how the sports are played.
- ◀ Inform the development and implementation of planning policy linked to the National Planning Policy Framework.
- ◀ Assess planning applications, ensuring there is sufficient outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches provided on and off site as deemed appropriate.
- ◀ Monitor potential changes to the supply and demand due to capital programmes e.g., for educational sites.
- ◀ Identify and prioritise budgetary pressures to ensure the most efficient management and maintenance of playing pitch provision.
- ◀ Develop a priority list of deliverable projects which will help to meet any current deficiencies; provide for future demands and feed into wider infrastructure planning work.
- ◀ Assist in the prioritisation of internal capital and revenue investment.
- ◀ Provide evidence to help secure internal and external funding.

Local Plan context

The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan was adopted in 2019 and outlines the basis for the regeneration of our town centre, which includes plans for new homes, shops, offices, coffee bars, restaurants.

Maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan, will ensure that the allocations and policies applied continue to be appropriate, up-to-date and effective. Stevenage Borough Council confirms it is preparing a partial review of the 2019 Local Plan to take into consideration the changes to the planning system.

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The PPOSS will be an evidence base document for the Local Plan and will ensure that existing facilities are the most appropriate in terms of quantity, quality and location and consider how best to meet the additional needs generated by the planned housing and economic growth. Infrastructure priorities for the Local Plan are identified through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

Management arrangements

A project team from the Council has worked with KKP to ensure that all relevant information is readily available and to support the consultants as necessary to ensure that project stages and milestones are delivered on time, and to the required quality standard to meet Sport England guidance.

Further to this, a Steering Group has and will continue to be responsible for the direction of the PPOSS from a strategic perspective and for supporting, checking and challenging the work of the project team. The Steering Group is made up of representatives from SBC, Sport England, Active Herts and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs).

It will be important for the Steering Group to continue once the PPOSS has been finalised and adopted for several reasons, including a continuing responsibility to:

- ◀ Setting a strategic framework.
- ◀ Ensuring that the process is robust and meets the methodology requirements of the PPS Guidance as currently available.
- ◀ Preparing and signing off project management documents e.g., the project plan and project brief.
- ◀ Establishing the context and tailoring the approach.
- ◀ Setting club survey response targets.
- ◀ Assisting in the identification and engagement of those who should be consulted to gather the supply and demand of information.
- ◀ Check and challenge key finding, issues, solutions, recommendations and actions.
- ◀ Reviewing draft documents.

Scope

The following are the sports included within the scope:

- ◀ Athletics.
- ◀ Climbing.
- ◀ Cricket.
- ◀ Football.
- ◀ Football (Third generation (3G) pitches).
- ◀ Hockey (AGPs).
- ◀ Lawn bowls.
- ◀ Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs).
- ◀ Netball
- ◀ Rugby league.
- ◀ Rugby union.
- ◀ Tennis.
- ◀ Water sports.

Note, that whilst rugby league is within the scope of work, the sport is not identified as taking place within the Borough and no demand has been identified. As such it does not feature within the Assessment Report.

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Extent of the study area

The study area is the Stevenage Borough Council administrative area as seen in Figure 1.1 overleaf.

Due to the relatively compact size of the Authority, it has been determined that there is no requirement for further sub-division of the Borough into analysis areas. Given that several sports have just one club playing within the Borough travel times to access provision are generally within the boundaries.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Authority



Cross boundary issues have also been explored with neighbouring authorities to determine the level of imported and exported demand, recognising, for example, that people travel to and make use of facilities irrespective of administrative boundaries.

1.3: Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision

A clear picture of supply and demand for outdoor sports facilities in Stevenage needs to be provided to include an accurate assessment of quantity and quality. This is achieved through consultation with key stakeholders to ensure that they inform the subsequent strategy. It informs current demand, adequacy, usage, future demand and strategies for maintenance and investment for outdoor sports facilities.

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Gather supply information and views – an audit of playing pitches

Sport England's PPS Guidance uses the following definitions of a playing pitch and playing field. These definitions are set out by the Government in the 2015 'Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order'.¹

- ◀ **Playing pitch** – a delineated area which together with any run off area, is of 0.2ha or more, and is used for association football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, American football, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.
- ◀ **Playing field** – the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch.

Although the statutory definition of a pitch is one that meets a minimum size of 0.2ha, this PPOSS takes into account smaller size pitches that contribute to the supply side, for example, a site containing a mini 5v5 football pitch. This PPOSS counts individual grass pitches (as a delineated area) as the basic unit of supply. The definition of a playing pitch also includes artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

As far as possible the assessment report aims to capture all of the outdoor sports facilities within Stevenage; however, there may be instances, for example, on school sites or private sites where access was not possible and has led to omissions within the report. Where pitches have not been recorded within the report, including those which are disused or lapsed, they remain as pitches and for planning purposes continue to be so. Furthermore, exclusions of a pitch does not mean that it is not required from a supply and demand point of view.

Quantity

Where known, all outdoor sports facilities are included irrespective of ownership, management and use. Sites were initially identified using Sport England's Active Places web-based database, with the Council and NGBs supporting the process by checking and updating this initial data. This was also verified against club information supplied by local leagues.

For each site, the following details were recorded in the project database (which will be supplied upon completion of the project as an electronic file):

- ◀ Site name, address (including postcode) and location.
- ◀ Ownership and management type.
- ◀ Security of tenure.
- ◀ Total number, type and quality of outdoor sports facilities.

Accessibility

Not all outdoor sports facilities offer the same level of access to the community. The ownership and accessibility of provision also influences actual availability for community use. Each site is assigned a level of community use as follows:

- ◀ **Community use** - facilities in public, voluntary, private or commercial ownership or management (including education sites) recorded as being available for hire and currently in use by teams playing in community leagues.
- ◀ **Available but unused** - facilities that are available for hire but are not currently used by teams which play in community leagues; this most often applies to school sites but can also apply to sites which are expensive to hire.

¹ www.sportengland.org>Facilities and Planning> Planning Applications

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- ◀ **No community use** - facilities which as a matter of policy or practice are not available for hire or used by teams playing in community leagues. This should include professional club pitches along with some semi-professional club pitches, where play is restricted to the first or second team.
- ◀ **Disused** – provision that is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either.

Quality

The capacity of provision to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by their quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of provision affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of a sport. In extreme circumstances it can result in a facility being unable to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

It is not just the quality itself which has an effect on its capacity but also the quality, standard and range of ancillary facilities. The quality of both the outdoor sports facility and ancillary facilities will determine whether provision is able to contribute to meeting demand from various groups and for different levels and types of play.

The quality of all outdoor sports facilities identified in the audit and the ancillary facilities supporting them are assessed regardless of ownership, management or availability. Along with capturing any details specific to the individual facilities and sites, a quality rating is also recorded within the audit for each. These ratings are used to help estimate the capacity to accommodate competitive and other play within the supply and demand assessment.

In addition to undertaking non-technical assessments (using the templates provided within the guidance and as determined by NGBs), users and providers were also consulted on the quality and in some instances the quality rating was adjusted to reflect this.

Gather demand information and views

Presenting an accurate picture of current demand for outdoor sports facilities (i.e. recording how and when provision is used) is important when undertaking a supply and demand assessment.

Demand for outdoor sports facilities in the Borough tends to fall within the following categories:

- ◀ Organised competitive play.
- ◀ Organised training.
- ◀ Informal play.

Current and future demand for outdoor sports facilities is presented on a sport-by-sport basis within the relevant sections of this report.

In addition, unmet, latent, imported and exported demand for provision is also identified within each section. Unmet demand is known to currently exist but is unable to access sports facilities; latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better quality provision. Exported and imported demand refers to those sports users who are playing outside of their local authority of choice.

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A variety of consultation methods were used to collate such demand information. Firstly, face to face consultation was carried out with key clubs from each sport, thus allowing for the collection of detailed demand information and an exploration of key issues to be interrogated and more accurately assessed. For all remaining clubs, an online survey (converted to postal if required) was utilised.

Local sports development officers, county associations and regional governing body officers advised which of the clubs to include in the face-to-face consultation and Sport England was also included within the consultation process prior to the project commencing. Issues identified by clubs returning questionnaires were followed up by telephone or face to face interviews.

As key providers and users of outdoor sports facilities, educational establishments were also consulted. This involved face to face meetings with secondary schools and colleges and an online survey being sent to primary schools.

Future demand/population growth

For the purposes of this report, the current population figure used within the future demand calculations is 88,610. By 2043 the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand, the Stevenage population is projected to increase to 91,875. Both figures have been derived from the same source for consistency purposes (ONS 2018-based projections 2018-2043).

The PPOSS Strategy & Action Plan (Stage D) also contains housing growth scenarios to test what additional demand will be generated throughout the Local Plan period.

Future demand

Alongside current demand, it is important for the PPOSS to assess whether the future demand for playing pitches can be met. Using population projections, as well as likely participation growth informed through consultation, an estimate can be made of the likely future demand for playing pitches.

Team generation rates are used to provide an indication of how many people it may take to generate a team (by gender and age group) in order to help estimate the change in demand for pitch sports that may arise from any population change.

Future demand for pitches is calculated by adding the percentage increases to the population increases in each analysis area. This figure is then applied to the team generation rates and is presented on a sport-by-sport basis.

Other information sources that were used to help identify future demand, especially for non-pitch sports (where team generation rates are not applicable) include:

- ◀ Recent trends in the participation.
- ◀ The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate.
- ◀ Feedback from clubs on their plans to develop additional teams/attract additional members.
- ◀ Any local and NGB specific sports development targets (e.g. increase in participation).

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1.4: Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views

Supply and demand information gathered is used to assess the adequacy of playing pitch provision in Stevenage. It focuses on how much use each site could potentially accommodate (on an area-by-area basis) compared to how much use is currently taking place.

Understand the situation at individual sites

Qualitative pitch ratings are linked to a pitch capacity rating derived from NGB guidance and tailored to suit a local area. The quality and use of each pitch is assessed against the recommended pitch capacity to indicate how many match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket) a pitch could accommodate.

This is compared to the number of matches actually taking place and categorised as follows, to identify:

Potential spare capacity: Play is below the level the site could sustain.	
At capacity: Play is at a level the site can sustain.	
Overused: Play exceeds the level the site can sustain.	

As a guide, the FA, RFU and the ECB have set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its quality.

Table 1.1: Capacity of playing pitches in match equivalent sessions (MES)

Sport	Pitch type	Good	Standard	Poor
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Rugby league	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Rugby league	Junior pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Cricket	One non turf wicket	60 per season	60 per season	60 per season
Hockey	One AGP	4 matches per day	4 matches per day	0 matches per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a hard court with sports lighting is said to have capacity for 60 members, whereas a hard court without sports lighting has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). For bowls, the capacity of a green is thought to be 60 members, although this can vary depending on how active the membership is and how many teams are fielded.

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Develop the current picture of provision

Once capacity is determined on a site-by-site basis, actual spare capacity is calculated on an area-by-area basis via further interrogation of temporal demand. Although this may have been identified, it does not necessarily mean that there is surplus provision. For example, spare capacity may not be available when it is needed, or the site may be retained as a 'strategic reserve' to enable pitch rotation to reduce wear and tear.

Capacity ratings assist in the identification of sites for improvement/development, rationalisation, decommissioning and disposal.

Identify the key findings and issues

By completing Steps 1-5 it is possible to identify several findings and issues relating to the supply, demand and adequacy of outdoor sports provision in Stevenage. This report seeks to identify and present the key findings and issues prior to development of the Strategy and Action Plan for Stevenage.

Develop the future picture of provision (scenario testing)

Modelling scenarios to assess whether existing provision can cater for unmet, latent, exported and future demand is made after the capacity analysis. This will also include, for example, removing sites with unsecured community use to demonstrate the impact this would have if these sites were to be decommissioned in the future. The scenario testing generally occurs in the accompanying Strategy and Action Plan that follows on from this document and therefore does not form part of the Assessment Report.

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PART 2: FOOTBALL PITCHES

2.1: Introduction

The organisation primarily responsible for the development of football in Stevenage is Hertfordshire FA. It is also responsible for the administration, in terms of discipline, rules and regulations, cup competitions and representative matches, development of clubs and facilities, volunteers, referees, coaching courses and delivering national football schemes.

Facility development for football is largely the responsibility of the Football Foundation (FF), which is a charity, linked to and funded by the Premier League, The FA and the Government (via Sport England). Working in partnership with Hertfordshire FA, they help communities improve their local football facilities through grant funding.

This section of the report focuses on the supply and demand for grass football pitches, where formal demand is generally defined through five formats of play and five pitch types, linked to the age of teams and players. Please refer to the table below for more detail relating to this.

Table 2.1: Football grass pitch formats

Format/pitch type	Age range	Recommended pitch size (metres)	Recommended pitch size including runoff (metres)
Adult	U17s+	100 x 64	106 x 70
Youth 11v11	U15s-U16s	91 x 55	97 x 61
Youth 11v11	U13s-U14s	82 x 50	88 x 56
Youth 9v9	U11s-U12s	73 x 46	79 x 52
Mini 7v7	U9s-U10s	55 x 37	61 x 43
Mini 5v5	U7s-U8s	37 x 27	43 x 33

Part three captures supply and demand for third generation pitches (3G pitches) which are the preferred AGP (artificial grass pitch) surface type for football when FA accredited. In future, it is anticipated that there will be a growing demand for the use of 3G pitches for competitive football fixtures, especially to accommodate mini and youth football.

Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs)

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Game Strategy, the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project which has now been completed. As part of this, a LFFP has been produced for every local authority across England, with each plan being unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (the FA, Premier League and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)) and is delivered through the Football Foundation (FF) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP builds upon PPOSS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game. The LFFP also incorporates consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as under-represented communities. This includes those which may be key partners with regards to using football for behavioural change, plus groups which may be key drivers of FA priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football and disability football.

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The LFFP for Stevenage was produced in 2019 and an update is currently being delivered. As it is a 'live' document it should be updated following the completion of this study as an up-to-date supply and demand assessment may present findings and recommendations that need to be incorporated for investment purposes. LFFPs identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require potential funding through the FF.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to recognise that the LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential FF investment; it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS/PPOSS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. An LFFP does, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans.

Consultation

There is a total of 17 football clubs identified as playing in Stevenage. The larger clubs in the Authority were offered an opportunity to engage in face-to-face consultations to allow them to provide feedback in greater detail on issues relating to supply and demand. The remaining clubs were issued an online survey which was distributed jointly by KKP and Hertfordshire FA.

Through face-to-face interviews, survey responses and telephone interviews, a 75% team response rate (132/176 teams) has been achieved having consulted with 7/17 clubs as listed below:

- ◀ AFC Walkern.
- ◀ Bedwell Rangers.
- ◀ IMI Football Academy.
- ◀ Stevenage Borough Juniors.
- ◀ Stevenage FC Youth.
- ◀ Stevenage Starlets FC.
- ◀ Watton Youth.

The unresponsive clubs provide one or two teams.

2.2: Supply

The audit identifies a total of 84 grass football pitches in Stevenage across 35 sites. Of the pitches, 60 are available, at some level, for community use across 19 sites. All unavailable pitches are located at education sites, other than Stevenage FC (The Lamex Stadium) and Stevenage FC Training Ground both of which are managed by professional football club Stevenage FC.

Table 2.2: Summary of the number of all grass football pitches

Area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Stevenage	17	11	22	21	13	84

Of available pitches, 17 (20% of all available provision) are adult size which is, in part, due to youth 11v11 teams playing on adult pitches. This is not ideal for youth players at U13-U16 and is not in line with the FA Youth Review which outlines the correct pitch and goalpost sizes that are suitable for specific age groups.

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Table 2.3: Summary of the number of grass football pitches available to the community

Area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Stevenage	13	11	15	13	8	60

Of available pitches, 11 are of youth 11v11 size representing 18% of the available supply, which is low in relation to the proportion of youth teams playing within the Authority (64 teams – 36% of all teams). This issue often results in teams fast tracking youth sides to play on adult pitches given the relatively recent introduction of youth 11v11 pitches within football in England. In accordance with the FA Youth Review, u17s and u18s can play on adult pitches. The FA’s recommended pitch size for adult, youth and mini pitches can be seen in Table 2.1.

Of the 60 pitches (across 27 sites) located at education sites in Stevenage only 39 pitches (across 12 sites) are open to community use. This means that over half (66%) of schools allow community use of its pitches. The following schools do not provide community access to their respective pitches:

- ◀ Bedwell Primary School.
- ◀ Fairlands Primary School.
- ◀ Longmeadow Primary School.
- ◀ Martins Wood Primary School.
- ◀ Shephalbury Park Primary School.
- ◀ St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Primary School.
- ◀ St Nicholas CE School & Nursery.
- ◀ The Thomas Alleyne Academy.
- ◀ Trotts Hill Primary School and Nursery.
- ◀ Almond Hill Junior School.
- ◀ Broom Barns Primary School.
- ◀ Camps Hill Primary School.
- ◀ Lodge Farm Primary School.
- ◀ Roebuck Primary School & Nursery.

In most cases these sites do not allow community use due to the small number of pitches provided and suggest that it would not be worthwhile opening up the whole site. Furthermore, many of the schools listed do not have any other sporting provision that is open to community use. It is worthy of note that although The Thomas Alleyne Academy does not allow community use of its pitch onsite, its playing field located behind the school is available for community use.

Unused and disused site/provision

Playing field sites which have previously accommodated formal pitches are categorised as disused. A disused site is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. This can be for several reasons such as the site lacking the required infrastructure such as changing rooms and / or toilets to hold official sanctioned match play.

There are several sites which are disused in Stevenage, with no formal sports pitches on the site, but have previously accommodated football pitches. These are summarised in the table below.

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Table 2.4: Summary of Unused and disused sites/provision within Stevenage

Site ID	APP ID	Site name	Post code	Formerly provided?	Comments
7	6003781	Canterbury Park	SG1 4LW	2 x 11v11 2 x y11v11 1 x 7v7	Unused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.
8	6003782	Chells Park	SG2 0NY	2 x 11v11 2 x y11v11	Unused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.
12	6003783	Hampson Park	SG1 5EG	2 x y11v11 1 x 9v9 2 x 7v7	Unused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.
30	6003789	St Nicholas Park	SG1 4PE	1 x 11v11 2 x y11v11 1 x 7v7	Unused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.
-	-	Paul Mallaghan Playing Fields	SG1 5TF	3 x 5v5	Unused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.
-	-	Barnwell East School	SG2 9HQ	2 x y11v11	Disused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.
-	-	Former British Aerospace Sports Ground	-	-	Disused provision - Formerly identified as providing pitches.

There are currently 23 pitches across seven sites which are not currently marked out but have been in the past. As a breakdown this equates to five adult pitches, ten youth 11v11 pitches, four mini 7v7 pitches and three mini 5v5 pitches. All these pitches bar Barnwell East School and the former British Aerospace Sports Ground are managed by the Council and continue to be cut and maintained. However, they are no longer marked out and are now designated as open play parks. In theory, there is potential for the pitches located at these sites to be brought back into use in the future to alleviate any identified overplay.

SBC state that Canterbury Park and St Nicholas Park grass pitches were closed to football and rugby due to a reduction in demand/bookings. In addition, Chells Park was closed due to poor drainage and Hampson Park pitches were removed due to poor soil quality, and low levels of topsoil allowing stones and flint to be exposed. Although Paul Mallaghan Playing Fields was previously accessed by Stevenage Borough Juniors, the Council report no demand for the site has been expressed due to the pavilion layout, site size and parking issues.

The former British Aerospace Sports Ground, located between the A602 and Stevenage FC's Training Ground, formerly provided grass pitches for community use but has not been in active playing field use since 1998. The site is allocated for residential development under the HO4 allocation in the Local Plan.

In terms of ancillary provision on the unused and disused sites, four out of the seven offer some form of facility. Canterbury Park previously had a small pavilion, but this was demolished in 2020, and the site now has no ancillary provision. Chells Park currently has an old brick building on site, which is being accessed by Noah's Ark Nursery under a long-term lease with SBC. Hampson Park provides a brick building, which is operated as the Hampson Park Community Centre. St Nicholas Park has an old building that is also operated and open as a community centre. Paul Mallaghan Playing Fields has a small brick building on site; however, its availability is currently unknown. Barnwell East School and the Former British Aerospace Sports Ground have no ancillary provision on site.

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Security of tenure and management of sites

The table below highlights the management of pitches within Stevenage.

Table 2.5 Management position of grass football pitches

Total number of community use pitches	Sports club	Stevenage Borough Council	Education	Other
60	1	18	39	2

Most community accessible pitches in Stevenage are at educational sites, managing 39 grass pitches (65%). This is followed by the Council which manages 18 pitches (30%). There is one club managed site/pitch (Stevenage FC), and two privately managed pitches located on site (Valley Sports Academy). A breakdown of the management on a site-by-site basis can be found in Table 2.19.

The tenure of sites managed by the Council and sports clubs in Stevenage are classified as secure, i.e., unless known otherwise, there is a guarantee that pitches will continue to be provided over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

In the case of schools and academies which may allow community use, the provider is able to terminate community access at any time, unless a written community use agreement is in place.

Of education sites in the Authority, 12 are used for competitive football as listed below:

- ◀ Ashtree Primary School.
- ◀ Barclay Academy.
- ◀ Barnwell School (Middle).
- ◀ Barnwell School (Upper).
- ◀ Featherstone Wood Primary School.
- ◀ Giles Junior School.
- ◀ John Henry Newman School.
- ◀ Marriotts School.
- ◀ Moss Bury Primary School and Nursery.
- ◀ The Nobel School.
- ◀ The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields.
- ◀ Woolenwick Junior School.

In total, affiliated football use at education sites equates to 99 teams from nine clubs as detailed in the table below.

Table 2.6: Summary of football demand at education sites

Site ID	Site	Club accessing	Tenure position
1	Ashtree Primary School	Stevenage Borough Juniors	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.
2	Barclay Academy	Down and Under FC Fairlands Youth Niche FC	All clubs have been unresponsive to consultation attempts.
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	Stevenage Borough Juniors	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site. The site has a Community Use Agreement in place.

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Site ID	Site	Club accessing	Tenure position
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	Stevenage Borough Juniors	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site. The site has a Community Use Agreement in place.
10	Featherstone Wood Primary School	Shephall United FC	Club has been unresponsive to consultation attempts.
11	Giles Junior School	Bedwell Rangers	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.
13	John Henry Newman School	Stevenage Borough Juniors	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.
18	Marriotts School	Bedwell Rangers Watton Youth	Bedwell Rangers and Watton Youth have an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.
22	Moss Bury Primary School and Nursery	AFC Walkern	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.
36	The Nobel School	Bedwell Rangers	The Club has an annual agreement with the school to access the site but pay a weekly fee. The site has a Community Use Agreement in place.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Stevenage Starlets FC	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.
42	Woolenwick Junior School	Bedwell Rangers	The Club has an annual rental agreement with the school to access the site.

Outside of education sites, IMI Football Academy has an annual rental agreement with the Local Authority for grass pitches at Ridlins Wood Playing Field and Peartree Park.

AFC Walkern weekly hire several local authority pitches, including Shephalbury Park, Ridlins Wood Playing Field and Meadway Playing Field.

Stevenage FC Academy is owned by Stevenage FC, providing one senior 11v11 pitch, alongside seven small size 3G pitches. However, it's important to note the grass pitch is only accessible to the Stevenage FC youth teams, whereas the 3G pitches are available for wider community hire.

As for non-responding clubs, in most cases they access provision that is owned and managed by the Council. In such instances, it is safe to assume that the access to these sites is secured over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

A summarised position of each site accommodating demand is provided in the table below.

Table 2.7: Management position of grass football pitches

Site ID	Site name	Management	Club	Tenure agreement
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Local Authority	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Seasonal hirer of pitch and pavilion.
23	Peartree Park	Local Authority	Bedwell Rangers FC Broadhall Youth IMI Football Academy	Seasonal hirer of pitch.

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Site ID	Site name	Management	Club	Tenure agreement
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	Local Authority	AFC Walkern Broadhall Youth IMI Football Academy	Seasonal hirer of pitch.
26	Shephalbury Park	Local Authority	AFC Walkern Shephall United FC	Seasonal hirer of pitch.
21	Meadway Playing Field	Local Authority	AFC Walkern	Seasonal hirer of pitch.
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Private	Stevenage FC	Exclusive access of pitches and pavilion.
41	Valley Sports Academy	Private	Girls Pro FC	Seasonal hirer of pitch and portacabins.

Valley Sports Academy currently features two grass pitches and an 11v11 3G pitch. SBC is the landowner of the site and Stevenage FC will manage the pitches for the 2025/26 season as part of its ongoing commitment to expanding its facilities. The Club suggest the site will enhance provision for its women's and girls' section. Planned upgrades include the resurfacing of the existing 3G pitch, improvements to ancillary facilities, and enhancements to the car park. Additionally, the Club will review the accessibility of both the grass pitches and the 3G pitch for community use at the conclusion of the 2024/25 season.

Pitch quality

The quality of football pitches across Stevenage has been assessed via a combination of site visits using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA (carried out during November 2024). It has also been determined by PitchPower reports for three sites as well as user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (50-80%), Poor (<50%).

Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; often pitches lack the drainage and maintenance necessary to sustain levels of use. Pitches that receive little to no ongoing repair or post-season remedial work are likely to be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games they can accommodate each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality.

Conversely, well maintained pitches that are tended to regularly are likely to be of a higher standard and capable of taking a number of matches without a significant reduction in surface quality.

It should be noted that when the site assessments took place in November 2024, this was during a period of prolonged heavy rainfall which may have impacted upon the quality of pitches for the 2024/25 season.

The table below summarises the quality of pitches that are available for community use. In total, three pitches are assessed as good quality (5%), 35 as standard (58%) and 22 (37%) as poor.

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Table 2.8: Pitch quality assessments (community use pitches)

Pitch type	No. of good quality pitches	No. of standard quality pitches	No. of poor quality pitches
Adult	1	7	5
Youth 11v11	-	6	5
Youth 9v9	1	10	4
Mini 7v7	1	6	6
Mini 5v5	-	6	2
Total	3	35	22

Poor quality scores are generally a result of issues relating to natural drainage problems, and basic maintenance regimes. The pitch-by-pitch breakdown of quality can be seen in Table 2.19.

It is important to note that the lack of good quality pitches is likely due to most pitches within the Authority being located on educational and park sites. These pitches are commonly assessed as poor or standard quality due to receiving only basic maintenance, which typically consists of general grass cutting and, on educational sites, line marking as appropriate throughout the curricular year. When accounting for curricular use, extracurricular use, and community demand, obvious signs of wear and tear become apparent.

In addition, park pitches are also subject to club training sessions and informal community use, which contributes to accelerated deterioration not typically experienced on other site types. SBC states, further issues affecting pitch quality on council owned sites include damage caused by wildlife and unauthorised individuals such as metal detectorists digging holes.

Of the 20 unavailable pitches located at education sites, 80% (16 pitches) are poor quality, 20% are standard (four pitches) and there are no pitches assessed as good quality.

Table 2.9: Pitch quality club consultation findings

Site ID	Site name	Club	Maintenance responsibility	Consultation findings
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Sports Club and Local Authority	The Club confirms the pitches are of standard quality. It invested in improved maintenance, including verti-draining and aeration. As an open public space, the site is regularly used by dog walkers and recreational visitors, which can impact pitch quality. The maintenance of the pitches is a shared responsibility between the Club and the Council. The Council is responsible for cutting the grass, while the Club takes care of marking the pitches and owns the goals.
11	Giles Junior School	Bedwell Rangers FC	School	The Club accesses the grass pitches which are maintained by the school ground staff. Although, the Club has contributed to pitch improvements.
18	Marriotts School	Bedwell Rangers FC	School	The Club describes the pitches to be of standard quality but states that the maintenance is the responsibility of the school. However, the Club has also invested in the pitches to help improve their condition.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Maintenance responsibility	Consultation findings
23	Peartree Park	IMIFA	Local Authority	The Club reports that pitch quality is poor, with frequent waterlogging leading to match cancellations and the need to reverse fixtures. Additionally, the goals are often incorrectly positioned.
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	AFC Walkern	Local Authority	The Club states the pitches are poorly cut and maintained, alongside goals and line markings not being placed correctly.
26	Shephalbury Park	AFC Walkern	Local Authority	The Club reports issues with the overall quality of the pitches and the maintenance. It states the pitches are poorly cut, issues with holes in the surface and poor drainage, alongside heavily worn goal mouths.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Stevenage Starlets FC	School	The school is responsible for maintaining the pitches; however, drainage issues remain a concern. A PitchPower assessment was completed in December 2024, aiming to secure support for improving the surface and drainage.

SBC report that while the Council owned pitches are rested for a season where possible, and at the end of each season goals are removed and worn areas are levelled and seeded, the effectiveness of this maintenance is often compromised. This is due to the pitches being in public parks, both general park users and football clubs continue to use the pitches during rest periods, preventing new seed from properly establishing.

For a full breakdown of quality ratings at each site, please refer to Table 2.19.

The FA's Pitch Improvement Strategy

The FA has a general pitch improvement strategy which has been developed in partnership with the Grounds Management Association (GMA) to develop a grass pitch maintenance service that can be utilised by grassroots clubs with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and therefore the quality of pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice/practical solutions in a range of areas, with the simple aim of improving playing surfaces. The programme is designed to help clubs on sites that they themselves manage and maintain but can also be used to advise Local Authority maintained sites.

In addition, the FA's Strategy also aims to focus on developing improved maintenance with local authorities that can be utilised at local authority-maintained sites.

Further to the above, the Football Foundation and the FA has recently developed the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund that allows clubs and sports organisations to apply for grant funding for maintenance assistance, consumables and/or equipment. Local authorities are currently ineligible applicants through this fund; however, clubs, leagues and or charitable organisations using local authority sites can apply provided they have security of tenure and/or a proforma is in place.

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Pitch Advisory Service (PAS)

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation in football, the FA has made it a priority to work towards improving quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the Football Foundation Grass Pitch Improvement Programme. As part of this, grass pitches identified as having quality issues undergo a pitch inspection from a member of the Grounds Management Association (GMA, formerly Institute of Groundsmanship).

PitchPower

The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across the Country. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the FF's PitchPower app to carry out a free on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment.

The web app is open to access by all providers, including clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches. Applicants are required to submit a PitchPower assessment for each of their pitches as a condition of a grant funding application for FF grass pitch investment, such as the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (detailed later in this section).

PitchPower is less restricted by the seasonal window of in-season play than the non-technical assessments, instead being able to be undertaken at any time in the year, with assessments completed and submitted within one of three windows: July - October, November – March or April – June.

As well as the completion of other supporting information such as detail of volunteer training and what maintenance equipment is available, the assessment requires the taking of images and a single soil sample at each assessment site. There are three assessment sites for adult and youth pitches at each goal area and the centre circle, whilst for mini pitches there are two sites at the centre circle and one goal area.

The PitchPower assessments use a new five step Performance Quality Standard (PQS) rating system developed by the GMA, with the FF and Sport England agreeing alignment with the capacity guidance within the existing PPS Guidance. This alignment is shown in the table below.

Table 2.10: Equivalent PPOSS quality rating for pitch Performance Quality Standard (PQS) ratings

PQS rating	PPOSS quality rating
Poor	Poor
Basic	Standard
Good	Good
Advanced	Good
High	Good

The following sites have received an existing PitchPower report, the equivalent PPOSS quality ratings for which have been accepted and applied within the audit and analysis.

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Table 2.11: PitchPower report results

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	PitchPower rating	PPOSS rating
5	Bedwell Primary School	Youth 9v9 x 1	Poor	Poor
5	Bedwell Primary School	Youth 7v7 x 1	Poor	Poor
13	John Henry Newman School	Adult 11v11 x 1	Basic	Standard
13	John Henry Newman School	Youth 11v11 x 1	Basic	Standard
13	John Henry Newman School	Youth 9v9 x 1	Basic	Standard
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Youth 11v11 x 1	Poor	Poor
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Youth 9v9 x 2	Basic	Standard
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Mini 7v7 x 1	Poor	Poor
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Mini 5v5 x 1	Basic	Standard

Football Foundation (FF) Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GMPF)²

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation in football, the FA has made it a priority to work towards improving quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the GPMF. As part of this, grass pitches identified as having quality issues by the GMA via PitchPower assessment can apply to access funding to improve pitches to good quality or sustain them at good quality. Once a PitchPower grass pitch assessment report has been produced for the site, eligible organisations can then apply for grant funding support through the FF Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund, a fund offering six-year tapered grants to help eligible organisations such as clubs and leagues enhance or sustain the quality of their grass pitches. The fund is a key part of the FF's Grass Pitch Improvement Programme - an ambition to deliver 20,000 quality grass pitches by 2030. If a site is categorised as 'poor' or 'basic' then organisations can apply for funding to enhance pitch quality, whilst clubs with good or standard quality pitches can also apply for a lower level of funding to sustain quality.

All applicants must have the landowners permission (as a minimum) and have received a PitchPower Pitch Assessment Report, with the fund currently open to football clubs (excluding stadia pitches used for National League System play), leagues, education establishments and parish and town councils.

Ancillary facilities

Similar to football pitches, the quality of ancillary facilities in Stevenage has been assessed via a combination of site visits and user consultation.

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for rugby clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

² [Link to the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund](#)

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Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ✦ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
- ✦ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
- ✦ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.
- ✦ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

As a result of the above, those ancillary facilities that do not meet the above criteria, cannot be rated anything higher than standard quality for the purposes of this document. Additional context behind the rationale is provided below.

The table below presents a quality summary of provision at sites which provide dedicated changing rooms and pavilions. Education sites are not included in the list.

Table 2.12: Summary of ancillary facility quality

Site ID	Site name	Management	Ancillary facility quality
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Local Authority	Poor
21	Meadway Playing Field	Local Authority	Standard
23	Peartree Park	Local Authority	Standard
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	Local Authority	Good
26	Shephalbury Park	Local Authority	Poor
32	Stevenage FC (The Lamex Stadium)	Private	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Private	Good
34	Stevenage FC Training Ground	Private	Good
41	Valley Sports Academy	Private	Poor

King George V Playing Fields has an old brick clubhouse on-site, assessed as poor quality. However, SBC and club consultation confirms the provision is not accessed by any clubs.

Meadway Playing Field is managed by the Council, it provides an old, bricked building of standard quality providing a changing room and toilet. The site also provides a good level of car parking. However, the building is due to be demolished as part of the development of a new access road to serve West of Stevenage residential development which has recently been approved. A new pavilion will be built on site to replace the demolished building.

Peartree Park provides standard quality ancillary provision, however, SBC confirm this has been decommissioned due to boiler and water issues.

Ridlins Wood Playing Field is managed by the Council and provides access to good quality ancillary provision which is located at the athletic track which neighbours the football pitches.

Shephalbury Park pitches Field is managed by the Council and is serviced by poor quality ancillary provision. The site has two joint metal conditioners, providing poor changing and toilet provision. SBC confirm the temporary ancillary provision has been decommissioned.

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Local authority sites, including King George V Playing Fields, Meadway Playing Field, Peartree Park, Ridlins Wood Playing Field, and Shephalbury Park, are all equipped with ancillary facilities. However, club consultation and information from the SBC confirms that Ridlins Wood Playing Field is the only site with ancillary provision available for hire and the remaining facilities are not accessible to clubs, as they remain locked and unavailable for use.

Stevenage FC (The Lamex Stadium) and Stevenage FC Training Ground are owned by the sport club and provide good quality ancillary provision. However, the sites are not available for community use.

The Stevenage FC Academy has seven small size 3G pitches which are available for community use alongside one adult pitch which is serviced by good quality ancillary provision. The site provides two changing rooms, showers, toilets and a small café within the facility.

Valley Sports Academy is a privately managed site and has poor ancillary provision, the site provides two small portacabins located next to the 3G pitch. The portacabins include an office and toilets, however, the site provides no dedicated changing provision.

Consultation with clubs across the Authority also raise the following points regarding ancillary provision.

Table 2.13: Summary of ancillary provision points raised through consultation with clubs

Site ID	Site name	Club	Overall building quality	Changing room quality ³	Aspirations / further context
1	Ashtree Primary School	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Standard	Standard	The Club reports the school provides access to toilets but no changing facilities.
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Standard	Standard	The Club reports the school provides access to toilets but no changing facilities.
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Standard	Standard	The Club reports the school provides access to toilets but no changing facilities.
13	John Henry Newman School	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Standard	Standard	The Club reports the school provides access to toilet but no changing facilities.
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Stevenage Borough Juniors	Poor	Poor	The Club notes that while the site has changing facilities, the Club currently do not access the facilities with a lease to access the provision ending last year. Previously, food and drink were available at the site, but this service was discontinued. The Club would welcome the return of these amenities.
18	Marriotts School	Bedwell Rangers FC Watton Youth	Poor	Poor	The site provides two changing rooms and an official's room. The school states there have been antisocial behaviour issues causing damage to the pavilion.
21	Meadway Playing Field	AFC Walkern	Standard	Standard	The Club has no access to the ancillary provision onsite.

³ Including changing areas, toilets and showering facilities.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Overall building quality	Changing room quality ³	Aspirations / further context
23	Peartree Park	Bedwell Rangers FC	Standard	Standard	Site provides one changing room with showers and toilets, The Club is unable to access these facilities which is a frustration, especially for the girl's teams. The Council confirm the ancillary provision has been decommissioned.
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	AFC Walkern IMI Football Academy	Good	Good	The Club can hire the ancillary provision by the athletic track, by choose not to.
26	Shephalbury Park	AFC Walkern	Poor	Poor	The Club has no access to the ancillary provision onsite. This led to the girls' team moving to another site with access to toilets and changing provision. The Council confirm the ancillary provision has been decommissioned.
36	The Nobel School	Bedwell Rangers	Standard	Standard	The Club reports the school provides access to toilet but no changing facilities.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Stevenage Starlets FC	Standard	Standard	The Club reports the school provides access to toilets but no changing facilities.

Football League System

The National League System (NLS) is a series of interconnected leagues for adult men's football clubs in England. It begins below the Football League at Step 1 (the National League) and comprises of six steps with various leagues at each level and more leagues lower down the pyramid than at the top. The step system has a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the steps, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

Clubs playing within the NLS must adhere to ground grading requirements set out by the FA. The higher the level of football being played the greater the requirements. Clubs cannot progress into the league above if the ground grading requirements do not meet the correct specifications. Please refer to the FA website⁴ for the full specifications for each.

In Stevenage, there are no clubs which compete in the NLS. Stevenage FC resemble the highest performing club within is currently competing within the English Football League One (tier three of the English football pyramid). The Club owns the Lamex Stadium, Stevenage FC Academy and Stevenage FC Training Ground.

Women's National League System

Correspondingly there is a Women's National League System similar to the adult men's which provide structure to the women's game. This ranges from Tier 1 to Tier 6 with each Tier requiring differing ground grading requirements.

⁴ <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/ground-grading>

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Although women's clubs still need to meet ground requirements set out by the FA these differ from the men's National League System. Ratings range from grade A to C each with differing minimum requirements. Tier 1 and 2 in the Women's National League System is akin to Tier 3 and 4 of the men's National League System, although not exactly the same. The system is also hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

There are no women's teams in the Authority currently competing within the WNLS. Stevenage FC women's team currently compete in the Tier 6 of the WNLS. However, the Club play home games within North Hertfordshire at the Hertfordshire FA Community Football Centre.

2.3: Demand

Through the audit and assessment, 176 teams from 17 clubs are identified as playing in Stevenage. This consists of 12 (7%) adult men's, one adult women's, 80 (45%) youth boys', 17 (10%) youth girls' and 66 (38%) mini mixed teams as shown below.

Table 2.14: Summary of competitive teams currently playing in Stevenage

Stevenage	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Total	13	65	32	39	27	176

Youth 11v11 football is the most prominent format of play (45%), whilst adult football has the fewest number of teams (7%).

Walking football

Walking football⁵ is an alternate version of football than the format which is governed by The Walking Football Association. The sport has picked up popularity in recent years and has a typical demographic of over 50s for men and over 40s for women. It provides a less physically demanding version of the usual game due to the rules not allowing for any contact or fast-paced movement thus providing a more inclusive game for participants.

Whilst the game is governed by The Walking Football Association, and it provides competitive structures through national cup competitions. Much of the activation work undertaken nationally for this activity type is promoted by professional football club community organisations or by leading community grassroots football clubs.

Stevenage FC Foundation run walking football sessions across Ware, Stevenage and Letchworth, delivering around five to six sessions a week. Within Stevenage, the Foundation deliver two sessions a week at Stevenage FC Academy on the small size 3G pitches. The sessions are aimed at 40+ year old men and woman.

Women's and girls' demand

There are 19 dedicated women/girls' teams across three clubs playing in Stevenage, representing 11% of the total number of teams. These are provided at the following clubs:

- ◀ AFC Walkern.
- ◀ Bedwell Rangers.
- ◀ Fairlands Youth.
- ◀ Stevenage Starlets FC.

⁵ <https://thewfa.co.uk/who-plays-walking-football/>
<https://thewfa.co.uk/womens-walking-football/>

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There are a further 39 teams currently classified under a mixed age range of U10s and U9s that will progress into junior girls' teams if they continue playing for a further two years.

It's also worthy of note that Stevenage FC Women have a first team alongside a development team which play home games in North Hertfordshire at Hertfordshire FA Community Football Centre.

The FA currently has a drive to increase women's and girls' participation as part of its Inspiring Positive Change Strategy. As such, it is imperative that sufficient facilities become suitable for female access, particularly in relation to toilets and appropriate changing facilities.

Exported/ imported demand

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of the study area, despite being registered in Stevenage. Likewise, imported demand is demand from neighbouring authorities accessing pitches in Stevenage to play competitive matches.

A consultation with the Hitchin Sunday League reveals that, across its three divisions comprising 27 teams, eight of the participating clubs are based in Stevenage. However, due to the limited availability of adult football pitches within Stevenage, all these clubs rely on facilities in North Hertfordshire to host their matches.

The affected clubs include Lads Speak Out FC, All Saints United, Queen Herts Rangers FC, Down and Under FC, Niche FC, Coach and Horses FC, Cronies FC, and FUWU FC. While Down and Under FC and Niche FC occasionally access facilities at Barclays Academy, most of their matches are still played outside Stevenage.

Both the league and the clubs have expressed significant frustration over the lack of suitable adult pitch provision within Stevenage. Ideally, these clubs would prefer to play their matches locally if the necessary facilities were available. Currently eight Stevenage-based clubs export demand to North Hertfordshire.

IMI Football Academy states the Club has two teams currently travelling to Hitchin in neighbouring authority North Hertfordshire. Also stating another team will be moving to games at Hitchin for the season 2025/26 due to lack of good quality grass and 3G pitches.

AFC Walkern states several of its teams' access grass pitches at Walkern Sports and Community Centre based in East Hertfordshire. The Club has an annual rental agreement to access the site. The Club moved its under 11 girls' team to Walkern Sports and Community Centre from Shephalbury Park to provide access to toilets. This is due to no ancillary provision being provided at local authority sites in Stevenage, where AFC Walkern currently plays most of its games.

Stevenage FC Women have a first team alongside a development team which export demand to play home games in North Hertfordshire at Hertfordshire FA Community Football Centre. It is not fully known why but may be a result of a lack of appropriate facilities in Stevenage.

Imported demand on grass football pitches has been identified by Watton Youth an East Hertfordshire based club, however, four of the clubs' teams including two under 12s and two under 11 teams access provision at Marriott School as the four teams home ground. These four teams have been included as Stevenage teams as there is not thought to be an issue with this.

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Latent demand

Latent demand refers to potential demand; clubs that would like to field more teams but currently do not do so. This can be for a variety of reasons including a lack of pitches, appropriate facilities, and qualified coaches. Clubs that report latent demand relating to facilities and the reasons provided for this latent demand can be seen below.

Table 2.15: Latent demand summary

Club	Need for more match pitches	Need for more/better training facilities	Need for better/more appropriate changing provision
AFC Walkern	X	X	X
Bedwell Rangers	X	X	X
IMI Football Academy	X	X	X
Stevenage Borough Juniors	X	X	X
Stevenage Starlets FC	X	X	-
Watton Youth	-	-	-

As can be seen in the table above, the greatest issue identified is the need for additional 3G pitches located within Stevenage and the need for greater access to match grass pitches with four clubs identifying both points as an issue. This is further explored in the following 3G pitch section.

Unmet demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to pitches. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch, or when a league or club has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league, or when squad sizes are above what is recommended. Unmet demand for grass pitches has been expressed by IMI Football Academy, as the Club confirms having teams training that cannot play competitive fixtures due to a lack of facilities in Stevenage.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined via several ways, including through participation increases and by using population forecasts. In addition, the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan contains housing growth scenarios that will estimate additional demand that could arise from housing developments across Stevenage.

Club aspirations

There are five clubs which report aspirations to increase the number of teams they provide, as detailed below.

Table 2.16: Potential team increases identified by clubs

Club	Future demand	Pitch size	Match equivalent sessions ⁶
AFC Walkern	-	-	-
Bedwell Rangers	-	-	-
IMI Football Academy	-	-	-

⁶ Two teams require one pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, 0.5 pitches can therefore be seen in the table where there is latent demand for one team.

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Club	Future demand	Pitch size	Match equivalent sessions ⁶
Stevenage Borough Juniors	-	-	-
Stevenage Starlets FC	3 x U14 girls' teams	Youth 11v11	1.5
Stevenage Starlets FC	3 x U11 girls' teams	Youth 9v9	1.5
Stevenage Starlets FC	3 x U7 girls' teams	Mini 7v7	1.5

AFC Walkern, Bedwell Rangers, IMI Football Academy and Stevenage Borough Juniors have all expressed a desire to expand the number of teams they provide albeit are unable to quantify this. Stevenage Starlets express an ambition to add nine more teams as summarised below.

The total future demand expressed by the clubs listed above amounts to 4.5 match equivalent sessions per week (as two teams equates to one match equivalent session per week playing on a home and away basis).

Broken down by pitch type this amounts to 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week on youth 11v11 pitches, 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week on youth 9v9 pitches, and 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week on mini 7v7 pitches.

However, it is important to note that most clubs consulted with suggest there is a lack of grass and 3G pitches available to accommodate future demand. Therefore, clubs may not express aspirations to increase, due to a lack of grass pitches available to accommodate this growth. Bedwell Ranger currently has a waiting list of 1,000 players, as the Club are unable to accommodate these players due to a lack of provision.

Population increases

Based on population projections, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can estimate the likely additional demand for grass football pitches that will arise from any growth. This is by using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, with team generation rates then established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

The current population figure used within the future demand calculations is 88,610. By 2043 the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand, the Stevenage population is projected to increase to 91,875. The table below shows the number of new teams that are forecasted to be generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions that this will require.

Table 2.17: Team generation rates (2043)

Age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population - rounded figure	Match equivalent session per week ⁷
Adult Mens (18-45)	1:1084	0.59	1	0.5
Adult Women's (18-45)	1:17499	0.04	0	0
Youth Boys (12-17)	1:47	1.84	2	1
Youth Girls (12-17)	1:196	0.41	0	0
Youth Boys (10-11)	1:47	0.96	1	0.5
Youth Girls (10-11)	1:203	0.22	0	0

⁷ Two teams require one pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, one team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on their relevant pitch type.

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Age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population - rounded figure	Match equivalent session per week ⁷
Mini Mixed (8-9)	1:61	1.44	1	0.5
Mini Mixed (6-7)	1:87	0.99	1	0.5

As seen above, based on population projections, it is forecasted that there will be an increase in football demand equivalent to one adult, three youth boys, and two mini teams.

Notwithstanding the above, it must be noted that this predicted level of growth is exclusively based on future population forecasts and does not account for societal factors or changes in the way people may wish to play sport.

Similarly, they cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focus towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools. For example, there is a focus on developing female participation within Stevenage and nationally which, as mentioned previously, is likely to lead to more women's and girls' teams in the future and therefore increase demand for pitches.

FA Wildcat centres

FA Wildcat centres work with County FA qualified coaches to deliver local weekly sessions, which provide opportunities for girls aged five to 11 to develop fundamental skills and experience football in a safe and fun environment.

In Stevenage, there is currently no Wildcat sessions being delivered within the Authority. However, Wildcat sessions are delivered within both North and East Hertfordshire.

In light of The FA's aspirations to increase female participation in football by 50% (Inspiring Positive Change) and the establishment and foreseen future effect of the Wildcats programme, it is likely that the growth in affiliated women's and girl teams may exceed that shown through population growth. However, this is not able to be quantified through the Wildcats programme due to it being dependent on the localised success of the programme.

FA Squad Girls

FA Squad Girls is a non-competitive FA initiative targeted at young girls aged 12 to 14 designed to develop skills and build confidence, whilst encouraging girls to play their way. It acts as the continuation of the FA Wildcats centres by keeping girls in the sport once over the age of 11. Squad Girls aims to support individuals in a range of skills from building a team identity to mastering technical skills.⁸

Future demand summary

Future demand in this report will be applied via the application of team generation rates. This equates to the growth of one adult, two youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 mixed and one mini 5v5 team.

The growth in teams outlined through club aspirations is scenario tested in the accompanying Strategy and Action Plan, equating to nine additional teams which have been quantified. The Strategy also contains a housing growth scenario that will estimate the additional demand for football arising from housing development.

⁸ <https://www.EnglandFootball.com/play/youth-football/Squad-Girls-Football>

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2.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affect the playing experience and people's enjoyment. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times. As a guide, The FA has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without it adversely affecting its quality.

The following ratings were used in Stevenage:

Adult pitch quality	Match equivalent sessions per week	Youth pitch quality	Match equivalent sessions per week	Mini pitch quality	Match equivalent sessions per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 2.19 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play to determine a capacity rating as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

Education sites

To account for curricular/extra-curricular use of education pitches it is likely that the carrying capacity at such sites will need to be adjusted. The only time this would not happen is when a school does not use its pitches, and the sole use is community use. The adjustment is typically dependent on the amount of play carried out, the number of pitches on site and whether there is access to an on-site AGP.

In some cases, where there is no identified community use, there is little capacity to accommodate further play. Internal usage often exceeds recommended pitch capacity, which is further exacerbated by basic maintenance regimes that may not extend beyond grass cutting and line marking.

In Stevenage, one match equivalent session per week of demand has been attributed to each pitch based at school sites to account for curricular demand. This is based on consultation and the expectation that all pitches are in use, as well as experience of how school sites use pitches from other strategies both locally and nationally. In instances where a school site is open to community use and has a club accessing its provision, demand from curricular use has been discounted.

Informal use

Most football pitches in the area are located within open access sites. As such, these pitches are subject to informal use in the form of dog walkers, unorganised games of football and exercise groups. Informal use is not accounted for in the capacity analysis on the basis that it cannot be quantified on a site-by-site basis. However, it can be expected at popular sites such as King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage), that there will be a higher level of demand on each pitch (from informal use) over and above that identified.

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Peak time

Spare capacity can only be considered as actual spare capacity if pitches are available at peak time. In Stevenage, peak time for adult is Saturday afternoon, and youth 11v11 is Sunday morning whereas it is Saturday morning for all remaining pitch types, as most teams across all age groups play at this time.

In the table overleaf, please note that, on occasions, spare capacity in the peak period is identified despite the pitch being played to capacity or overplayed or more spare capacity is identified in the peak period than what exists overall. This is because most of the use on those particular pitches occurs outside of the peak period, therefore the identified spare capacity at peak time should not be utilised over and above overall capacity unless quality improvements are made that increase overall capacity.

A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of play. Any pitch not meeting this criterion is therefore not considered to have additional capacity, although it may have capacity outside of peak time.

There may also be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to the already low carrying capacity of the pitches. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn will aid the improvement of pitch quality.

Furthermore, any pitches with unsecured tenure are not considered to have actual spare capacity as no further play should be encouraged on such sites given that future access cannot be guaranteed.

The table below identifies the way capacity balance is represented in Table 2.19.

Table 2.18: Capacity balance examples

Spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of capacity balance
1	Highlighted in green with a number denotes that the pitches have actual spare capacity at peak time.
-	With a dash, this indicates that the pitch is unavailable in the peak period. If it were to be made available, actual spare capacity could exist.
0	Highlighted in orange with a zero, this indicates the pitch is played to capacity, either overall or during the peak period.
1	Not highlighted by with a value, this indicates that the pitch has spare capacity in the peak period; however, capacity has been discounted. This may be due to unsecure tenure and/or poor pitch quality.
1	Highlighted in red with a number denotes that the pitches are overplayed and have no spare capacity across the week. This includes at peak time, despite any availability at peak time which may exist.

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Table 2.19: Football pitch capacity analysis

Site ID	Site	Active Places ID	Postcode	Clubs accessing site	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch size ⁹	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity ¹⁰ (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
1	Ashtree Primary School	6003752	SG2 9JQ	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
1	Ashtree Primary School	6003752	SG2 9JQ	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
2	Barclay Academy	1204616	SG1 3RB	-Down and Under FC -Niche FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Adult	2	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity.
2	Barclay Academy	1204616	SG1 3RB	- Fairlands Youth	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	3	4	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
2	Barclay Academy	1204616	SG1 3RB	- Fairlands Youth	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	2	Standard	2.5	8	5.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
2	Barclay Academy	1204616	SG1 3RB	-Fairlands Youth	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
2	Barclay Academy	1204616	SG1 3RB	- Fairlands Youth	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	2	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	1203794	SG2 9XT	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	1203794	SG2 9XT	-Stevenage Borough Juniors - AFC Walkern	Yes	School	Secure	Youth 11v11	2	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	1203640	SG2 9SW	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Secure	Adult	2	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
10	Featherstone Wood Primary School	30006641	SG2 9PP	-Shephall United FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	2	Standard	1.5	8	6.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
10	Featherstone Wood Primary School	30006641	SG2 9PP	-Shephall United FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
11	Giles Junior School	30006275	SG1 4JQ	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	2	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
13	John Henry Newman School	1041570	SG1 4AE	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
13	John Henry Newman School	1041570	SG1 4AE	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
13	John Henry Newman School	1041570	SG1 4AE	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.

⁹ Pitch sizes in brackets denotes overmarked pitches.

¹⁰ Based on pitch quality The FA recommends a maximum number of match equivalent sessions to be accommodate per pitch type. Please refer to Section 2.4 for the full breakdown.

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Site ID	Site	Active Places ID	Postcode	Clubs accessing site	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch size ⁹	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity ¹⁰ (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	6003784	SG1 3LR	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	3	2	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	6003784	SG1 3LR	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Mini 5v5	2	Standard	4	8	4	-	No actual spare capacity.
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	6003784	SG1 3LR	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Mini 7v7	2	Standard	1.5	8	6.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	6003784	SG1 3LR	-Stevenage Borough Juniors	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
18	Marriotts School	1204546	SG2 8BL	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	School	Unsecure	Adult	2	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
18	Marriotts School	1204546	SG2 8BL	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
18	Marriotts School	1204546	SG2 8BL	-Bedwell Rangers -Watton Youth	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
18	Marriotts School	1204546	SG2 8BL	-Bedwell Rangers -Watton Youth	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	3.5	2	1.5	-	Overplayed by 1.5 MES.
21	Meadway Playing Field	224677	SG1 2HP	AFC Walkern	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Adult	2	Poor	1	2	2	1	No actual spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
22	Moss Bury Primary School And Nursery	225358	SG1 5PA	-AFC Walkern	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
22	Moss Bury Primary School And Nursery	225358	SG1 5PA	-AFC Walkern	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
23	Peartree Park	223465	SG2 9UA	- Broadhall Youth	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	No actual spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
23	Peartree Park	223465	SG2 9UA	- IMI Football Academy	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Youth 9v9	2	Poor	1	2	1	1	No actual spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	222681	SG2 9LX	-	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	0	1	1	1	No actual spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	222681	SG2 9LX	-AFC Walkern -Broadhall Youth - IMI Football Academy	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Mini 7v7	2	Poor	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
25	Ridlins Wood Playing Field	222681	SG2 9LX	-Broadhall Youth	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	No actual spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.

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Site ID	Site	Active Places ID	Postcode	Clubs accessing site	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch size ⁹	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity ¹⁰ (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
25	Ridlings Wood Playing Field	222681	SG2 9LX	-Broadhall Youth - IMI Football Academy	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	No actual spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
26	Shephalbury Park	20001871	SG2 8NP	-AFC Walkern -Shephall United FC	Yes	Local Authority	Secure	Youth 11v11	2	Poor	2.5	2	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
33	Stevenage FC Academy	1068598	SG2 8BS	-Stevenage FC	Yes	Professional Sports Club	Unsecure	Adult	1	Good	3	3	-	-	Used at capacity. Exclusively used by Stevenage Youth F.C Youth teams
36	The Nobel School	1103171	SG2 0HS	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	School	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
36	The Nobel School	1103171	SG2 0HS	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	School	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	1040971	SG1 3BE	-Stevenage Starlets FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	1040971	SG1 3BE	-Stevenage Starlets FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	1040971	SG1 3BE	-Stevenage Starlets FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	3.5	1	2.5	-	Overplayed by 2.5 MES. Overmarked by senior rugby pitch
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	1040971	SG1 3BE	-Stevenage Starlets FC	Yes	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	2	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity.
41	Valley Sports Academy	1041630	SG2 9BN	-Girls Pro FC	Yes	Private	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Good	1	6	5	-	No actual spare capacity.
41	Valley Sports Academy	1041630	SG2 9BN	-Girls Pro FC	Yes	Private	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Good	0	4	4	1	No actual spare capacity due to proposed management change.
42	Woolenwick Junior School	30011009	SG1 2NU	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
42	Woolenwick Junior School	30011009	SG1 2NU	-Bedwell Rangers	Yes	Local Authority	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
5	Bedwell Primary School	30010235	SG1 1NJ	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
5	Bedwell Primary School	30010235	SG1 1NJ	-	No	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Used at capacity.
9	Fairlands Primary School	30006431	SG1 3JA	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	2	Poor	2	2	-	-	2 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Used at capacity.
9	Fairlands Primary School	30006431	SG1 3JA	-	No	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Used at capacity.
17	Longmeadow Primary School	30007719	SG2 8LT	-	No	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Used at capacity.

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Site ID	Site	Active Places ID	Postcode	Clubs accessing site	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch size ⁹	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity ¹⁰ (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
20	Martins Wood Primary School	30010237	SG1 5RT	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
20	Martins Wood Primary School	30010237	SG1 5RT	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
20	Martins Wood Primary School	30010237	SG1 5RT	-	No	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Used at capacity.
27	Shephalbury Park Primary School	30007785	SG2 8AX	-	No	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	2	Standard	2	4	2	-	2 MES of demand attributed to curricular use No actual spare capacity.
28	St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Primary School	30004278	SG2 8QJ	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
29	St Nicholas CE School & Nursery	30005872	SG2 0PZ	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
32	Stevenage FC (The Lamex Stadium)	6010152	SG2 8RH	Stevenage F.C	No	Professional Sports Club	Unsecure	Adult	1	Good	0.5	3	2.5	0.5	0.5 MES of demand attributed to Stevenage F.C use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to site exclusively available for Stevenage F.C.
34	Stevenage FC Training Ground	30004982	SG2 8WN	Stevenage F.C	No	Professional Sports Club	Unsecure	Adult	3	Good	0	9	9	3	Actual spare capacity discounted due to site exclusively available for Stevenage F.C.
37	The Thomas Alleyne Academy	1003840	SG1 3BE	-	No	School	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Used at capacity.
40	Trotts Hill Primary School and Nursery	30006277	SG1 5JD	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
47	Almond Hill Junior School	-	SG1 3RP	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
48	Broom Barns Primary School	-	SG1 1UE	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
49	Camps Hill Primary School	-	SG2 0LT	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
50	Lodge Farm Primary School	-	SG2 0HR	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.

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Site ID	Site	Active Places ID	Postcode	Clubs accessing site	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch size ⁹	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity ¹⁰ (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
51	Roebuck Primary School & Nursery	-	SG2 8RF	-	No	School	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.

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Actual spare capacity

To determine 'actual spare capacity', each site with 'potential capacity identified in Table 2.19 has been reviewed. A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of the game. Any pitch not meeting this criterion has consequently been discounted.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to their already low carrying capacity. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn, can aid the improvement of pitch quality.

Unless tenure is considered secure through the operator, school sites that are currently available for community use but unused are also not considered to have actual spare capacity as the full availability of these pitches cannot be relied upon in the long term.

The table below identifies actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across Stevenage. It totals 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across one pitch at King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage).

Table 2.20: Summary of actual spare capacity

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (sessions)
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Mini 7v7	1	0.5

Actual spare capacity has been aggregated by area and by pitch type below.

Table 2.21: Summary of actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions)

Stevenage	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5
Total	-	-	-	0.5	-

In addition to the above, it is worthy of note that nine match equivalent sessions per week of potential spare capacity at community use sites has been discounted due to either sites having unsecure tenure or poor pitch quality.

Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it can sustain (which can often be due to reduced quality). Once pitches become overplayed, their ability to accommodate match fixtures deteriorates due to issues relating to wear and tear and a difficulty in recovering after match play.

In total, six pitches across as five sites are identified as being overplayed. Total overplay equates to six match equivalent sessions per week.

In the main, overplay is driven through a mixture of two elements. Firstly, poor quality which reduces carrying capacity and secondly due to high demand, usually due to the site's popularity in terms of location and/or facilities provided.

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Table 2.22: Summary of overplay (match equivalent sessions per week)

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (sessions)
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Adult	1	1
18	Marriotts School	Youth 11v11	1	0.5
18	Marriotts School	Youth 9v9	1	1.5
26	Shephalbury Park	Youth 11v11	2	0.5
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields	Youth 11v11	1	2.5

Table 2.23: Summary of overplay (match equivalent sessions per week)

Area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Stevenage	1	3.5	1.5	-	-	6

2.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the current demand and future demand balance (i.e. spare capacity taking away overplay) in each of the analysis areas for each pitch type, based on match equivalent sessions per week.

Total future demand in Stevenage accounts for population growth. As a reminder, growth from population increases equates to one adult, two youth 11v11 teams, one youth 9v9 teams, one mini 7v7 mixed teams and one mini 5v5 team. Future demand from club ambitions is included as a scenario in the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan.

Adult pitch analysis

On an Authority wide basis, there is currently an insufficient capacity of adult provision to accommodate for both existing and future demand.

Table 2.24: Supply and demand balance of adult pitches (match equivalent sessions per week)

Area	Actual spare capacity ¹¹	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	-	1	1	0.5	1.5

Youth 11v11 pitch analysis

Table 2.25: Supply and demand balance of youth 11v11 pitches (match equivalent sessions per week)

Area	Actual spare capacity ¹²	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	-	3.5	3.5	1	4.5

The current picture is that there is an insufficient supply of provision of youth 11v11 pitches in Stevenage to accommodate existing demand. This is largely caused by The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Fields contributing to 2.5 match equivalent sessions per week of overplay.

¹¹ In match equivalent sessions per week

¹² In match equivalent sessions per week

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Youth 9v9 pitch analysis

Table 2.26: Supply and demand balance of youth 9v9 pitches (match equivalent sessions per week)

Area	Actual spare capacity ¹³	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	-	1.5	1.5	0.5	2

There is insufficient supply of youth 9v9 pitches in Stevenage to accommodate current demand caused by 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week of overplay being identified. Once accounting for future demand, match equivalent sessions per week of overplay is slightly increased to 2.

Mini 7v7 pitch analysis

Table 2.27: Supply and demand balance of mini 7v7 pitches (match equivalent sessions per week)

Area	Actual spare capacity ¹⁴	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	-

The table above shows that there is sufficient supply on mini 7v7 pitches in Stevenage to accommodate current and future levels of demand.

Mini 5v5 pitch analysis

Table 2.28: Supply and demand balance of mini 5v5 pitches (match equivalent sessions per week)

Area	Actual spare capacity ¹⁵	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	-	-	-	0.5	0.5

The table above shows that there is sufficient supply on mini 5v5 pitches in Stevenage to accommodate current levels of demand. Due to no actual spare capacity nor overplay, when factoring in future demand of 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week, there will be an insufficient supply of mini 5v5 pitches.

2.6: Conclusion

For each football pitch type, it is evident that the overall position is broadly an insufficient supply of grass pitches in the Authority. This is largely due to shortfalls of adult and youth pitches. With only mini 7v7 pitches having sufficient supply to accommodate current and future demand.

Currently, youth 11v11 pitches have the most significant shortfalls, while adult, youth 9v9, and mini 5v5 pitches have minor shortfalls. There is sufficient supply on mini 7v7 pitches in Stevenage to accommodate current and future levels of demand. In part, this is due to a large amount of mini demand accessing 3G pitches.

When accounting for future demand of three match equivalent sessions per week, new shortfalls emerge on mini 5v5 pitches and shortfalls on adult, youth 11v11, and youth 9v9 and are exacerbated.

¹³ In match equivalent sessions per week

¹⁴ In match equivalent sessions per week

¹⁵ In match equivalent sessions per week

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As there is a limited amount of actual spare capacity across all pitch types and coupled with there being a lack of good quality pitches, both improving pitch quality and increasing pitch availability should be considered. However, it is likely that quality improvements to existing provision will only create a limited amount of additional capacity. Instead, there may be the need for access to more pitches as a means of addressing the shortfalls identified. However, this is further explored in the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan. There is also the potential for sites to reconfigure pitch layouts to increase the number of youth pitches, given the role that 3G pitches have in accommodating mini demand.

Table 2.29: Summary of supply and demand in Stevenage (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity ¹⁶	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	-	1	1	0.5	1.5
Youth 11v11	-	3.5	3.5	1	4.5
Youth 9v9	-	1.5	1.5	0.5	2
Mini 7v7	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	-
Mini 5v5	-	-	-	0.5	0.5

Football – grass pitch summary

- ◆ The current supply of football provision is insufficient in accommodating football demand on adult, youth 11v11, and youth 9v9 pitches.
- ◆ Comparatively, mini 5v5 pitches are showing no actual spare capacity or overplay and are currently sufficiently meeting demand.
- ◆ There is sufficient supply on mini 7v7 pitches to accommodate current and future levels of demand.
- ◆ Future demand through team generation rates creates a further three match sessions of demand which exacerbates existing shortfalls on adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches and creates shortfalls on mini 5v5 pitches.

Grass football pitch supply:

- ◆ The audit identifies a total of 84 grass football pitches across 35 sites. Of these, 60 are available, at some level, for community use across 19 sites.

Grass football pitch quality:

- ◆ Of the 60 pitches which offer community use, three pitches are assessed as good quality, 35 as standard quality and 22 as poor quality. Pitch quality ratings have been further evidenced by PitchPower assessments that have taken place at three sites.

Affiliated football demand:

- ◆ Through the audit and assessment, 176 teams from 17 clubs are identified as playing in Stevenage. This consists of 12 adult men's, one adult women's, 80 youth boys', 17 youth girls' and 66 mini mixed teams.
- ◆ 14 teams are identified as exporting demand outside the Borough into neighbouring authorities, due to lack of grass and 3G provision. Four teams are currently importing demand into Stevenage from East Hertfordshire.
- ◆ Future demand equates to the growth of one adult men's, three youth boys, and two mixed mini teams. Club growth ambitions of nine teams have been discounted.
- ◆ The PPOSS Strategy & Action Plan contains a housing growth scenario that will estimate the additional demand for football arising from housing development.

Supply vs demand analysis conclusions:

- ◆ There is insufficient supply of provision in Stevenage to accommodate demand on adult, youth 11v11, and youth 9v9.
- ◆ Future demand creates new shortfalls for mini 5v5 pitches.
- ◆ There is sufficient supply on mini 7v7 pitches in Stevenage to accommodate current and future levels of demand.

¹⁶ In match equivalent sessions per week

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PART 3: THIRD GENERATION TURF (3G) PITCHES

3.1: Introduction

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard tested and approved by the FA for inclusion on the FA 3G Pitch Register. As such, in addition to training demand, a growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play, providing that the performance standard meets FIFA quality requirements.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22', which provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. The artificial surface standards identified in Regulation 22 allows matches to be played on surfaces that meet the required standard, meaning full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts, can take place.

Many test contractors offer reduced rates through efficiency savings to carry out multiple performance tests in the same session, therefore providers seeking 3G pitch compliancy for a number of sports would be recommended to consider this opportunity. Other sports that are known to use 3G pitches for training and match play include rugby league, American football and lacrosse.

EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy advises that 3G pitches should not be used for hockey matches or training and that they can only be used for lower level hockey (introductory level) as a last resort when no sand-based or water-based AGPs are available.

Table 3.1: 3G type and sport suitability

Surface	Category	Comments
Rubber crumb	Long Pile 3G (60mm with shock pad)	Rugby surface – must comply with World Rugby regulation 22 and/or RFL Community Standard, requires a minimum of 60mm pile.
Rubber crumb	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	Preferred football surface. Suitable for non-contact rugby union/league practice or play.
Rubber crumb	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	Acceptable surface for some competitive football, able to be used for low level curricular hockey.

It should be noted that the FA generally refers to 3G pitches as 3G football turf pitches, though this term is not adopted in this PPOSS as 3G pitches can be and are used for other sports including rugby union, rugby league, lacrosse and American football, amongst others.

3.2: Supply

An 11v11 3G pitch is considered by the FA to measure at least 91 x 55 metres, and for the purposes of this report, all pitches measuring this size and above will be considered as 11v11 size. Pitches of this size threshold are able to accommodate all formats of competitive football. Anything measuring below than this is considered small sided due to its inability to accommodate such activity.

On the above basis, there are three 11v11 size 3G pitches provided in Stevenage located at as many sites, those being John Henry Newman School Marriotts Sports Centre and Valley Sports Academy.

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John Henry Newman School AGP has recently undergone construction and was converted from a sand filled AGP to a 3G funded by the Football Foundation (FF). The conversion was completed in May 2025, and is now in operation.

There are also nine small sided 3G pitches within the Authority located at three sites. All 3G pitches are serviced by sports lights and are open to community use, other than the pitch at Larwood School. The pitch is available for community use but is not sports lit, therefore access midweek depends on current hours of light.

Table 3.2: 3G pitch supply summary

Site ID	Site	Active Places ID	Postcode	Community use?	Pitch size	Surface type	Number of pitches	Sports lit?
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	1203794	SG2 9XT	Yes	40m x 30m	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	1	Yes
13	John Henry Newman School	1041570	SG1 4AE	Yes	100m x 60m	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	1	Yes
15	Larwood School	30005919	SG1 5BZ	Yes	30m x 16m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	No
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	1051993	SG2 0AN	Yes	90m x 52m	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	1	Yes
33	Stevenage FC Academy	1068598	SG2 8BS	Yes	30m x 20m	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	4	Yes
33	Stevenage FC Academy	1068598	SG2 8BS	Yes	40m x 23m	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	3	Yes
41	Valley Sports Academy	1041630	SG2 9BN	Yes	106m x 72	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	1	Yes

Management

The management and availability of sites is summarised in the table below.

Table 3.3: 3G pitch operator and opening times breakdown

Site ID	Site	Community use?	Pitch size	Operator	Opening times
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	Yes	40m x 30m	School	18:00-19:00 midweek 08:00-19:00 weekends
13	John Henry Newman School	Yes	100m x 60m	School	17:00-22:00 midweek 17:00-19:00 Friday 9:00-18:00 Weekends
15	Larwood School	Yes	30m x 16m	School	15:30-20:00 midweek (depending on lighting due to no sports lighting) 08:00-20:00 weekends
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	Yes	90m x 52m	School	18:00-21:00 midweek 10:00-16:00 Saturday 10:00-13:00 Sunday

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Site ID	Site	Community use?	Pitch size	Operator	Opening times
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Yes	30m x 20m	Professional Sports Club	14:00-22:00 midweek 9:00-17:00 Friday 9:00-16:00 Saturday 10:00-18:00 Sunday
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Yes	40m x 23m	Professional Sports Club	14:00-22:00 midweek 9:00-17:00 Friday 9:00-16:00 Saturday 10:00-18:00 Sunday
41	Valley Sports Academy	Yes	106m x 72	Private	17:30-21:00 midweek 08:30-16:00 weekends

In summary, the 3G pitches across Stevenage all have good availability at peak times. However, it's important to note Larwood School small size 3G pitch is not sports lit, therefore midweek usage varies depending on the time of year and light hours.

AFC Walkern recently funded sports lighting on the small sided 3G pitch at Barnwell School (Middle). This provided exclusive midweek training for the Club. However, the Club states the pitch is only accessible midweek between 18:00 to 19:00 due to a planning agreement for noise restrictions with the neighbouring houses.

Whilst not large enough to accommodate adult match play, smaller size provision can be used to accommodate youth and mini matches, in addition to training demand, providing that they are on the FA 3G Pitch Register, of an adequate size and with appropriate run-off areas.

As mentioned in the football section of the report, Stevenage FC will take over management of the 3G and grass pitches at Valley Sports Academy for the 2025/26 season. Stevenage FC states that it plans to use the facilities to continue to grow its women and girls' section, alongside resurfacing the 3G pitch, improving ancillary provisions and upgrading the car park. The Club will review community access to both the grass pitches and the 3G surface after the 2024/25 season.

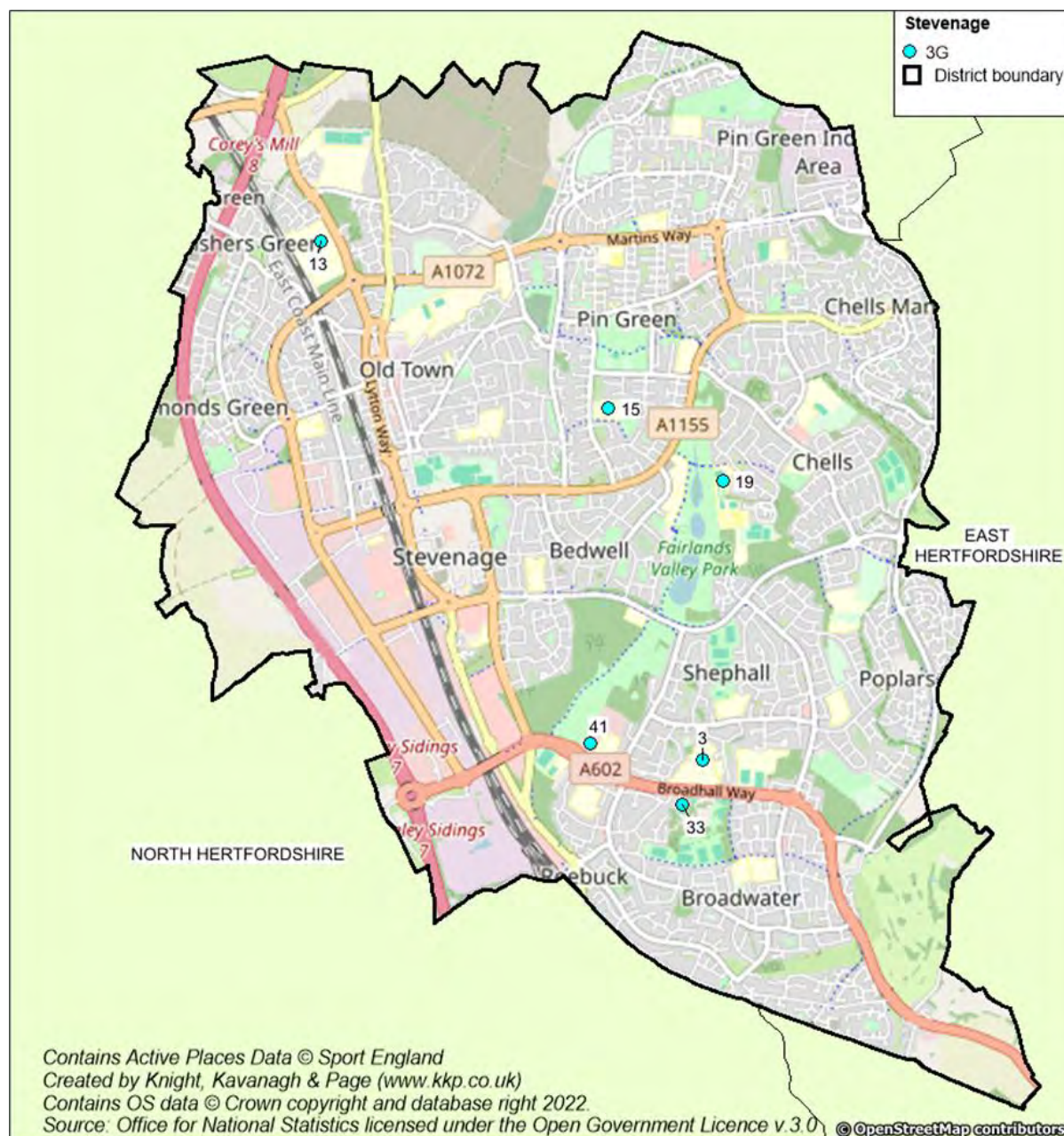
Potential future provision

King George V Playing Field currently has disused tennis courts on site. The FF and FA have plans to develop these courts and install a PlayZone, with sports lighting. SBC have been given an award letter and hope the PlayZone will be developed over the 2025/26 season. PlayZones are safe, inclusive and accessible outdoor facilities that bring communities together through recreational forms of football and a range of other sports.

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Figure 3.1 identifies all 3G pitches servicing Stevenage. For a key to the map, see Table 3.2.

Figure 3.1: 3G pitches servicing Stevenage



FA 3G Pitch Register

In order for competitive matches to be played on 3G pitches, the pitch should be FIFA or IMS tested and approved and added to the FA Pitch Register, which can be found at: <https://footballfoundation.org.uk/3g-pitch-register>.

In the case of Stevenage, there are four pitches on the FA 3G Pitch Register. The provision located at Stevenage FC accreditation has expired. Provision at both Larwood School and Valley Sports Academy are not registered. John Henry Newman School 3G conversion is currently under construction therefore accreditation type is unknown.

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Table 3.4: Accreditation of provision

Site ID	Site	Accreditation type	Accreditation expiry
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	FA approved	31/05/27
15	Larwood School	Not accredited	-
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	FA approved	31/05/27
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Expired	22/11/23
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Expired	22/11/23
41	Valley Sports Academy	Not accredited	-

World Rugby (WR) compliant pitches

To enable 3G pitches to accommodate competitive rugby union matches, WR has developed the Rugby Turf Performance Specification. This is to ensure that the surfaces can replicate the playing qualities of good quality grass pitches, provide a playing environment that will not increase the risk of injury and are of an adequate durability.

The specification included a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G pitch used for any form of competitive rugby must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance.

In the case of Stevenage, there is no WR compliant 3G pitch located in the authority.

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of a 3G pitch usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. It is therefore recommended that pitch replacement funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, ongoing repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

Taking the above into account, the quality of 3G pitches across Stevenage have been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (60-79%), Poor (<60%). The quality ratings assigned to the sites also consider the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

The quality of 11v11 size 3G provision is two good, and one poor quality pitches within the Authority.

The 3G pitch at Marriott Sport Centre is of good quality, having been resurfaced in 2023 following the end of its lifespan. The sports lit facility is heavily utilised by a range of football teams for both training and competitive matches. Bedwell Rangers is a key user of the site, accessing both the 3G pitch and the grass pitches for training and fixtures. As the school operates under PFI contract, the current sports lighting system is not LED. However, the school has confirmed that when lighting replacement is required, it will transition to an LED system.

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John Henry Newman conversion from sand filled AGP to 3G was completed May 2025, and is therefore good quality.

The poor quality 3G pitch is at Valley Sports Academy which was built in 2009 and is due for a resurface. Under the new management of Stevenage FC, the Club has ambitions to resurface the pitch.

The quality of the small size 3G provision equates to, seven good, one standard and one poor quality pitch.

The seven good quality small size 3G pitches are located at Stevenage FC Academy, and all provision was resurfaced in October 2024 and is serviced by sports lighting. The site is heavily used by Stevenage FC youth section, alongside a wide range of local football clubs for training provision and commercial leagues.

The small size 3G pitch located at Barnwell School (Middle) is of a standard quality and was built in 2020. The site has recently installed new goals and sport lighting in October 2024. AFC Walkern recently funded the sports lighting to allow it exclusive usage of the 3G pitch for midweek training during the winter period.

The poor quality small size 3G pitch is located at Larwood School and is past its lifespan due to being built in 2008. The site provides no sport lighting so is limited to community use midweek.

Table 3.5: Age and quality of 3G pitches in Stevenage

Site ID	Site	Pitch type	Year installed or resurfaced	Quality
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	40m x 30m	2020	Standard
13	John Henry Newman School	100m x 60m	2025	Good
15	Larwood School	30m x 16m	2008	Poor
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	90m x 52m	2013 / 2023	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	30m x 20m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	30m x 20m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	30m x 20m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	30m x 20m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	40m x 23m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	40m x 23m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
33	Stevenage FC Academy	40m x 23m	2010 / 2014 / 2024	Good
41	Valley Sports Academy	106m x 72m	2009	Poor

Ancillary facilities accompanying 3G pitches

Marriotts Sports Centre, part of the Marriott School, offers standard quality ancillary facilities, including two well-equipped changing rooms with toilets and showers. Conveniently located next to the 3G pitch, the Sport Centre is a standalone building, ensuring easy access to its amenities. The ancillary facilities are available for community use on weekday evenings and throughout the weekends.

John Henry Newman School offers standard quality ancillary providing, providing access to toilets but no access to changing facilities.

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Valley Sport Academy site provides two small portacabins located next to the 3G with toilets, office and storage. However, Stevenage FC will be taking over the management at the end of the 2024/25 season and has aspiration to develop the ancillary provision, similar to the facilities at Stevenage FC Academy.

Stevenage FC Academy small sided 3G pitches is serviced by good quality ancillary provision. The site provides two changing rooms, showers, toilets and a small café within the facility.

Barnwell School (Middle) provides standard quality ancillary provision including changing rooms and toilets but no shower provision. The changing facilities are available to hire during community use hours for both midweek and weekend usage.

3.3: Demand

The following table summarises the availability of all 3G pitches in Stevenage which are available for community use. In addition, it records the availability of provision within the peak period. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours a week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00). This equates to a peak time midweek available usage of 18 hours and a peak time weekend usage of 16 hours.

Table 3.6: Availability and capacity of provision summary

Site ID	Site	Management	Opening times	Total hours available during peak period
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	School	18:00-19:00 midweek 08:00-19:00 weekends	Site is at 80% capacity during the peak period.
13	John Henry Newman School	School	17:00-22:00 midweek 17:00-19:00 Friday 9:00-18:00 Weekends	Site is at 100% capacity during the peak period
15	Larwood School	School	15:30-20:00 midweek (depending on lighting due to no sports lighting) 08:00-20:00 weekends	Site is at 100% capacity during the peak period.
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	School	18:00-21:00 midweek 10:00-16:00 Saturday 10:00-13:00 Sunday	Site is at 100% capacity during the peak period.
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Professional Sports Club	14:00-22:00 midweek 9:00-17:00 Friday 9:00-16:00 Saturday 10:00-18:00 Sunday	Site is at 100% capacity during the peak period.
33	Stevenage FC Academy	Professional Sports Club	14:00-22:00 midweek 9:00-17:00 Friday 9:00-16:00 Saturday 10:00-18:00 Sunday	Site is at 100% capacity during the peak period.
41	Valley Sports Academy	Private	17:30-21:00 midweek 08:30-16:00 weekends	Site is at 100% capacity during the peak period.

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Football demand

The FA considers high quality 3G pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development. The pitches can support intensive use and as such are great assets for football use. Primarily, such facilities have been installed for social use and training, however, they are increasingly used for competition, which The FA wholly supports.

Getting access to good quality, affordable training facilities is a problem for many football clubs throughout the country. In the winter months, midweek training is only possible at sports lit facilities, with 3G provision preferred by the FA and most clubs.

Across Stevenage, five of the clubs that responded to consultation report that they require additional access to 3G provision to accommodate further demand. However, only IMI Football Academy reports that it has four teams unable to training due to lack of 3G provision, which represents a level of unmet demand. The clubs expressing this demand and sites presently used are summarised in the following table.

Table 3.7: Current training facilities of clubs reporting unmet/latent pitch demand

Club name	Site ID	Sites currently used	Surface
IMI Football Academy Stevenage Starlets FC	2	Barclay Academy	Sand filled
AFC Walkern	3	Barnwell School (Middle)	3G
Bedwell Rangers	11	Giles Junior School	Sand dressed
Bedwell Rangers Stevenage Borough Juniors Watton Youth	19	Marriotts Sports Centre	3G
Stevenage Borough Juniors Stevenage Starlets FC	33	Stevenage FC Academy	3G
AFC Walkern Bedwell Rangers	36	The Nobel School	Sand dressed
Stevenage Starlets FC	41	Valley Sports Academy	3G

IMI Football Academy, Bedwell Rangers, and Stevenage Starlets are currently all using sand-based AGPs to accommodate their training. IMI Football Academy states the provision at Barclays isn't suitable for football in the winter period and the surface can be dangerous when it freezes.

In May 2025, the 11v11 3G pitch at John Henry Newman was successfully converted from a sand-dressed AGP. Bedwell Rangers and Fairlands Youth have both expressed interest in becoming partner clubs. Additionally, Stevenage Borough Juniors, which currently utilise the grass pitches on-site, may also be interested in accessing the 11v11 3G pitch.

No unmet or latent 3G pitch demand has been identified for any other sports.

Exported/imported demand

Three clubs which responded to consultation state they have teams that export demand outside of Stevenage. Bedwell Rangers, Stevenage Starlets and Stevenage Borough Juniors currently access provision in East Hertfordshire at Round Diamond Primary School for training, accessing the site's 11v11 3G pitch. However, it's important to note Round Diamond Primary School is located just outside of Stevenage, therefore teams do not have far to travel so it's not seen as an issue.

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In terms of imported demand, as mentioned in Part 2 of this report, Watton is an East Hertfordshire based club, however, four of its teams including two under 12s and two under 11 teams, access provision at Marriott School and Marriot Sport Centre as the four teams home ground. Therefore, the four teams of Watton Youth have been included as Stevenage teams within this report due to playing all home games within the authority, but the Club is based in East Hertfordshire.

Future demand

As set out in Part 2 of this report, potential football team growth from population increases equates to six football teams. If this growth was realised, and if all additional teams wanted to train on 3G provision, it could increase the level of 3G provision required. This is factored into the supply and demand analysis below. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the projections do not account for the potential for future demand to be higher, which could be the case particularly if growth trends continue, if housing growth targets are met, or if club aspirations are realised. Potential further increases are therefore subject to scenarios in the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan.

In addition, no rugby union demand currently accesses 3G pitches (with non-suitable for such activity).

Football supply and demand analysis

The FA considers high quality 3G pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development, with the pitches considered to be great assets on account of being able to support intensive use during inclement weather. Primarily, such facilities have been installed for social use and training; however, they are increasingly being used for competition, which the FA wholly supports.

Training demand

To quantify the 3G pitch shortfall for football, the FA has established a training model, which suggests that one 11v11 3G pitch can accommodate 38 affiliated teams (with capacity built in for other forms of demand). It also has an aspiration for all teams to train once per week on a 3G pitch, although it is recognised that nationally some activity may need to be retained on sand-based pitches to ensure the sustainability of them. For the model, in addition to 11v11 pitches being included, some smaller size pitches can also be incorporated as nationally many are suitable for accommodating training demand, especially larger ones.

To calculate their contribution, a pitch large enough to cater for youth matches (but not adult) is considered to be the equivalent of half a 11v11 size pitch (0.5 pitches), whilst a pitch that is large enough for mini matches (but not youth or adult) is the equivalent of quarter of a 11v11 size pitch (0.25 pitches). Any pitch smaller than this is discounted, as well as any pitches that are unavailable for community use.

The contribution each pitch makes towards the modelling is summarised in the table below. This then informs the proceeding modelling tables.

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There are 176 teams currently identified as playing within Stevenage, which gives a theoretical need for five 11v11 3G pitches. There are currently three 11v11 size pitches available to community use. However, it is important to note that the 11v11 3G pitch at Valley Sport Academy is currently available for community use, but due to the management change to Stevenage FC, the accessibility of the pitch is set to be reviewed at the end of the 2024/25 season. Therefore, the pitch has been discounted from the current supply, leaving two 11v11 3G pitches available for community use in Stevenage.

The 3G pitch at Valley Sport Academy is also poor quality and has exceeded its expected lifespan. With the upcoming management change, Stevenage FC expresses ambitions to resurface the pitch, which would significantly improve its quality.

John Henry Newman School 11v11 pitch has recently undergone construction and was converted from a sand filled AGP to a 11v11 3G surface in May 2025, therefore has been included within the current supply and as good quality.

No small sided 3G pitches have been included within the FA training model. Barnwell School (Middle) has been excluded due to a planning restriction that limits pitch access to just one hour per day midweek (6–7pm), making it insufficient to meet demand. Larwood School's pitch has also been discounted as it is too small to host mini matches and is of poor quality. Lastly, the seven small-sided 3G pitches at Stevenage FC Academy have been excluded from the supply due to the absence of run-off areas, rendering them unsuitable for mini match play.

Therefore, the total supply of 11v11 3G pitches equates to two within Stevenage.

Table 3.8: Small sided 3G pitch supply inclusion in the FA training model

Site ID	Site	Quantity of small-sided pitches	Pitch size	Contribution towards total 11v11 3G pitch supply
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	1	40m x 30m	0
15	Larwood School	1	30m x 16m	0
33	Stevenage FC Academy	4	30m x 20m	0
33	Stevenage FC Academy	3	40m x 23m	0

The table below considers the number of 11v11 size 3G pitches required if every team was to remain training within Stevenage. As can be seen, once small-sided provision has been discounted there is a shortfall of three 11v11 3G pitches across Stevenage.

This figure discounts Valley Sport Academy 11v11 3G pitch due to the management change to Stevenage FC for the 2025/26 season.

Table 3.9: Current demand for 3G pitches in Stevenage (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Stevenage	Current number of teams	Full size 3G requirement	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Theoretical shortfall
Total	176	5	2	3

The table below examines what the need for 3G pitches is based on future demand identified in the football section of this report (Part 2: Football Pitches). The current population figure used within the future demand calculations is 88,610. By 2043 the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand, the Stevenage population is projected to increase to 91,875, which equates to the growth of a further six teams.

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Table 3.10: Future demand for 3G pitches in Stevenage (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Stevenage	Future number of teams ¹⁷	Full size 3G requirement ¹⁸	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Theoretical shortfall
Total	182	5	2	3

Based on the above, once accounting for future demand, the overall shortfall remains at two 11v11 3G pitches across Stevenage.

The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan explores how future demand through trend based affiliated demand also impacts the need for 3G pitches.

Football match play demand

Improving grass pitch quality is one way to increase the capacity at sites but given the cost of doing such work and the continued maintenance required (and associated costs), alternatives also need to be considered that can offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. The substitute to grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches for competitive matches, providing that the pitch is FA registered, sports lit and available for community use during the peak period, and the location does not have an impact on other pitch sports.

The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan explores scenarios for the 3G pitch requirement for further competitive match play.

3.4: Conclusion

In conclusion, there is an insufficient supply of 11v11 size 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future football training demand based on the FA training model in Stevenage.

From a rugby union perspective, no demand was identified by Stevenage Town RUFC for access to a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch. The Club's current site has two senior sport lit grass rugby pitches which adequately accommodate its training and match play demand.

Given the high demand for football, Stevenage only has three 11v11 3G pitches, and supply of Valley Sports Academy has been discounted due to a forthcoming management change, leaving two 11v11 3G pitches available for community use in Stevenage. The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan explores potential sites for installing new 3G pitch provision.

¹⁷ Future demand based on participation increases and TGRs as per the football section of the report.

¹⁸ Figure rounded up to the nearest whole number.

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3G pitch summary

Supply:

- ◀ There are three 11v11 size 3G pitches within Stevenage all of which are available for community use, located at Marriotts Sports Centre, John Henry Newman School and Valley Sports Academy. All pitches are serviced by sports lights and open to community use.
- ◀ There are an additional nine small size sports lit 3G pitches located at three sites, all of which are open to community use, however, only eight are sports lit.
- ◀ One of the three 11v11 size 3G pitches are on the FA 3G Pitch Register meaning only Marriott Sport Centre can accommodate competitive matches.
- ◀ John Henry Newman School was converted in May 2025 from a sand filled AGP to a 3G surface.
- ◀ There is no World Rugby compliant 3G pitch provision in Stevenage. However, no demand is identified either.

Quality:

- ◀ The 11v11 size 3G pitches at Marriot Sport Centre and John Henry Newman are of a good quality, whilst Valley Sports Academy is of a poor quality, which requires a resurface.
- ◀ The seven small-sided pitch at Stevenage FC Academy are of a good quality whilst the pitch at Barnwell School (Middle) is of a standard quality. The small-sided pitch at Larwood School is of a poor quality.
- ◀ The ancillary provision at Marriott Sport Centre is of a standard quality, John Henry Newman School provides standard quality provision and Valley Sport Academy has poor ancillary provision, however, Stevenage FC will take over management at the end of the 2024/25 season, with plans to enhance the facilities. Stevenage FC Academy has good quality ancillary provision. Barnwell School (Middle) provides standard quality facilities.

Supply vs demand analysis:

- ◀ With 176 football teams from Stevenage affiliated clubs, there is a need for five 11v11 size 3G pitch equivalents to service current levels of demand. Accounting for future demand from population projections, the need remains the same.
- ◀ With two 3G pitches within Stevenage, there is the need for an additional three full size pitch equivalent to be built.
- ◀ The current shortfall of three full-size 3G pitch in Stevenage, includes discounting Valley Sport Academy pitch from supply due to the management change to Stevenage FC for the 2025/26 season. Alongside discounting all small sided 3G provision. However, the supply accounts for the recent conversion of John Henry Newman School's AGP to a 3G surface.

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PART 4: RUGBY UNION PITCHES

4.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is split into four areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions, of which Stevenage falls into the south region.

The RFU governs a variety of formats and programmes, including 15-a-side, 10-a-side, 7-a-side and Tag rugby as well as the Touch Union. Its aim is to increase and retain participation within the game, with facilities needing to be appropriate, affordable and accessible in order to enable this.

The rugby union playing season operates from September to May, with senior men's fixtures being held on Saturday afternoons whilst ladies, juniors and mini fixtures are held on Sundays.

Consultation

There is one rugby union club based in Stevenage, Stevenage Town RUFC. The Club was consulted with via an online survey giving a 100% response rate to inform the following section.

Table 4.1: Summary of consultation

Club name	Responded?
Stevenage Town RUFC	Yes

4.2: Supply

Rugby union in England (as specified by the RFU) is played in the following formats and as such these references are used throughout this section to refer to supply (pitch types) and demand (team types).

Table 4.2: Rugby union age group and pitch format definitions

Team reference	Age group	Team type	Max dimensions (metres)
Senior men	Over 18 years old	Senior	100x70 (with posts at either end)
Senior women	Over 18 years old	Senior	100x70 (with posts at either end)
Age grade boys	U13s – U18s	U13s*, U14s, U15s, U16s, U18s (as dual age band w/U17s)	100x70 (with posts at either end) *90x60 (with posts at either end)
Age grade girls	U12s – U18	U12 (Single age band) U14s (as dual age band w/U13s), U16s (as dual age w/U15s), U18s (as dual age band w/U17s)	100x70 (with posts at either end)

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For age grade mixed rugby (for children aged between U7 through to U12) there is no requirement for rugby posts to be provided for competitive play. However, in most cases nationally, play of this type takes place on senior pitches which are overmarked for such activity. The audit only identifies dedicated, line marked pitches with accompanying posts. The dimensions for age grade mixed rugby are detailed in the table below.

Table 4.3: Rugby union pitch dimensions

Team type (ages)	Team reference	Maximum pitch dimensions (metres) ¹⁹
Under 7	Age grade mixed	20 x 12
Under 8	Age grade mixed	45 x 22
Under 9	Age grade mixed	60 x 30
Under 10	Age grade mixed	60 x 35
Under 11	Age grade mixed	60 x 43

Based on the above criteria, there is a total of four rugby union pitches identified within Stevenage across four sites. All pitches are available for community use.

Table 4.4: Supply of all rugby union pitches

Site ID	Site	Community accessible?	No. of senior pitches
35	Stevenage Town RUFC	Yes	2
36	The Nobel School	Yes	1
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Field	Yes	1

Training areas

Sports lit training areas are dedicated sections of playing field which are used for the specific purpose of accommodating midweek training demand away from formal pitches (which allows them to retain exclusive use for match purposes).

These areas constitute formal playing field, despite not accommodating any formal pitches, and are important for accommodating demand from clubs.

Stevenage Town RUFC has two sports lit pitches available on-site, but the site currently has no dedicated training areas. As a result, the floodlit pitches are utilised for both matches and training sessions.

Changes in provision

Stevenage Town RUFC reports that its long-term plan is to relocate but has been unable to identify a site. The Club also expressed interest in accessing Ridlins Wood Playing Field.

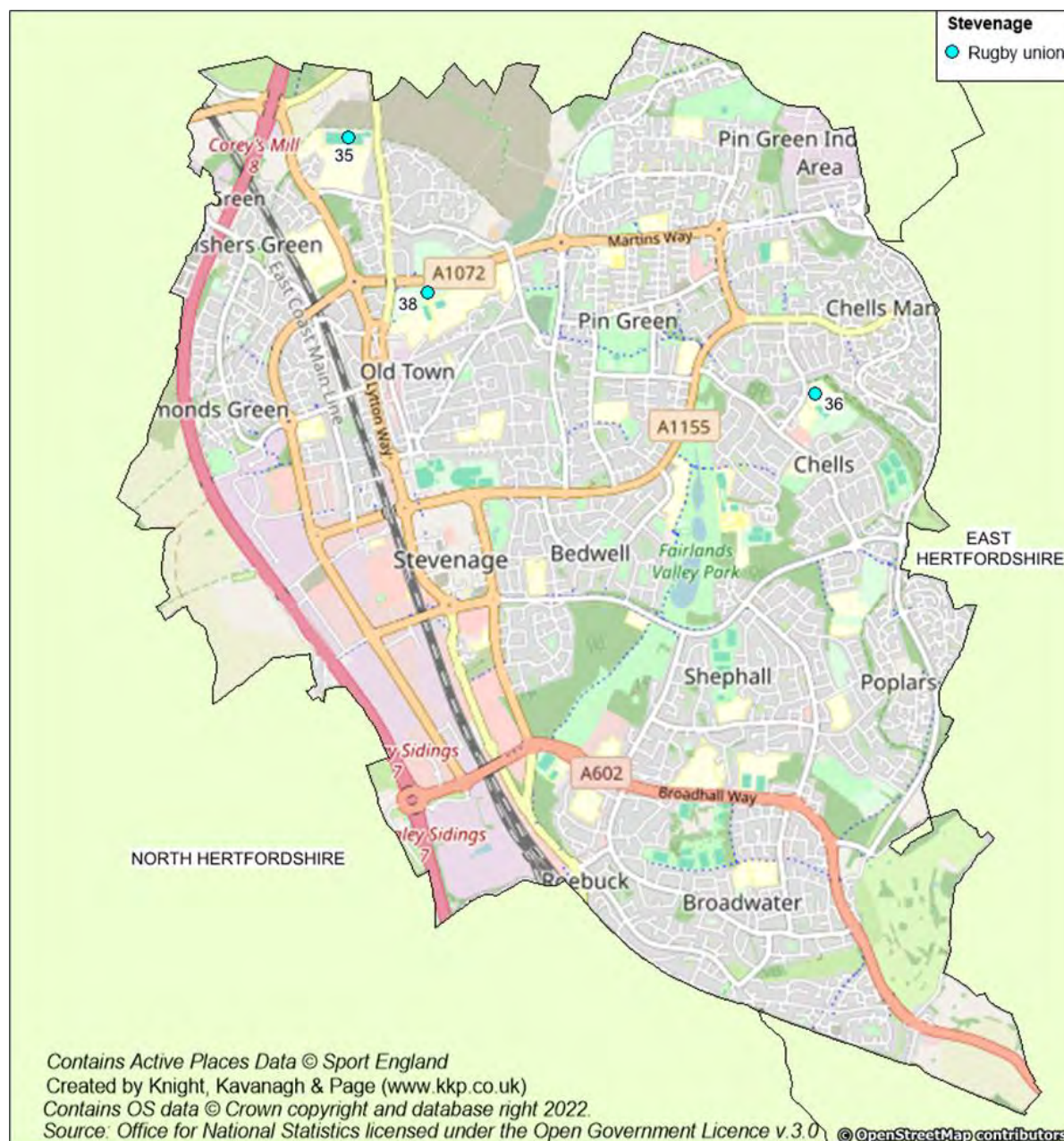
John Henry Newman previously provided a senior rugby pitch, however, that is now marked out as an adult 11v11 football pitch.

¹⁹ Recommended run off area for all pitch types requires five meters each way and a minimum in-goal length of six metres.

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See Figure 4.1 for a map of all pitches within Stevenage.

Figure 4.1: Rugby union pitches



Security of tenure

Security of tenure refers to the rights of occupation on playing field and infrastructure. Clubs and stakeholders generally fall into the bracket of owner-occupier, tenant or licensee.

The table below identifies the current tenure position of the rugby union club based on information collated during the consultation. As can be seen, Stevenage Town RUFC operates with unsecure tenure.

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Table 4.5: Rugby union clubs security of tenure

Club	Tenure arrangement	Secure?
Stevenage Town RUFC	Stevenage Town RUFC has an informal user / provider agreement with Stevenage Sports Club Limited, the owner of the site. However, the Club has no formal lease or long-term arrangement in place.	No

Pitch quality

The quality of rugby pitches has been assessed via a combination of site visits (carried out during November 2024) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

The methodology for assessing rugby pitch quality looks at two key elements: the maintenance programme and the level of drainage on each pitch. An overall quality based on both drainage and maintenance can then be generated. The agreed rating for each pitch type also represents actions required to improve pitch quality. A breakdown of actions required based on the ratings can be seen below:

Table 4.6: Definition of maintenance categories

Category	Definition
M0	Action is significant improvements to maintenance programme
M1	Action is minor improvements to maintenance programme
M2	Action is no improvements to maintenance programme

Table 4.7: Definition of drainage categories

Category	Definition
D0	Action is pipe drainage system is needed on pitch
D1	Action is pipe drainage is needed on pitch
D2	Action is slit drainage is needed on pitch
D3	No action is needed on pitch drainage

Table 4.8: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

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

The figures are based upon a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the last eight years and a slit drained system at 1m centres that has been installed in the last five years.

Based on the above criteria, of those pitches there is no good quality, three standard and one poor quality senior pitches.

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Stevenage Town RUFC accesses two standard quality sport lit pitches that are maintained by the Club. It states that the quality of the pitches has decreased over the last few seasons. Issues include, poor subsoil conditions, damage to the pitches caused by rabbit holes and difficulties maintaining pitches due to lack of volunteers and funding.

The quality of pitches within Stevenage has been determined through a combination of non-technical site assessments, consultation with the Club regarding its maintenance regimes and quantity of usage.

Please refer to Table 4.9 overleaf for a breakdown of pitch quality.

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Table 4.9: Site quality ratings at rugby union sites

Site ID	Site name	Club	Community use?	Number of senior grass pitches	Number of junior grass pitches	Sports lighting?	Non-technical assessment score	Quality rating
35	Stevenage Town RUFC	Stevenage Town RUFC	Yes	2	-	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
36	The Nobel School	-	Yes	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Field	-	Yes	1 (Overmarked by Youth 11v11)	-	No	M1/D0	Poor

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Ancillary facilities

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for rugby clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ◀ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation
- ◀ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance
- ◀ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision
- ◀ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

As a result of the above, those ancillary facilities that do not meet the above criteria, cannot be rated anything higher than standard quality for the purposes of this document. Additional context behind the rationale is provided below.

Table 4.10: Ancillary provision feedback

Club	Ancillary position	Overall rating
Stevenage Town RUFC	<p>Stevenage Town RUFC has two changing rooms, each with a communal shower area, as well as an official's changing room and a customer toilet. The facilities also include a kitchen, bar, clubroom, and storage containers. However, over the past year, the Club has faced issues with vandalism, including damage to vehicles and break-ins to the storage containers.</p> <p>The Club highlights that the showers are outdated and not fit for purpose. It lacks separate changing spaces for women and girls and is of overall poor quality. Additionally, the changing rooms have no heating, which causes issues during the winter months.</p> <p>Its main priority is to upgrade the changing facilities to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p>	Poor

4.3: Demand

Demand for rugby pitches in Stevenage falls within the categories of organised competitive play and organised training.

Competitive play

In Stevenage there is one rugby union club, Stevenage Town RUFC. The Club has four teams, this consists of one veteran men's, one senior men's, one U14s boys, and one mixed U7s teams.

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Table 4.11: Demand summary

Club	Senior men's	Senior women's	Age grade boys (U18-U13)	Age grade girls (U18-U13)	Mixed age grade (U7-U12)
Stevenage Town RUFC	2	-	1	-	1

Training demand

Throughout the country, many rugby teams train at its home ground on match pitches. As a result, usage is concentrated which reduces the capacity for match play on these pitches and means they are more likely to be overplayed. A key factor in determining the extent of training on match pitches is the presence of sports lighting.

Full details of each of the clubs training schedules are detailed in the table below. The match equivalent sessions for training relates to the demand which takes place on grass pitches only, unless otherwise stated.

Table 4.12: Training demand summary

Club	Midweek training requirements	Match equivalent sessions (MES) on match pitches
Stevenage Town RUFC	Thursday evenings is senior men's training. Junior training is Wednesday evening. Minis training is Sunday morning. Sessions are held at the clubs two standard quality floodlit pitches.	1.75 MES total 1 MES from two senior men's team 0.5 MES from one junior team 0.25 MES from one mini team

World Rugby (WR) compliant pitches

To enable 3G pitches to accommodate competitive rugby union matches, WR has developed the Rugby Turf Performance Specification. This is to ensure that the surfaces replicate the playing qualities of good quality grass pitches, provide a playing environment that will not increase the risk of injury and are of an adequate durability.

The specification includes a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G pitch used for any form of competitive rugby must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance. The compliancy standard is known as to as WR Regulation 22 (WR22).

There are no WR22 3G pitches in Stevenage and as such the Club does not access any 3G pitches or report demand to do so.

Nationally, clubs identify the use of 3G pitches for training as a method of protecting the match pitches and providing a high-quality surface for full contact practice. Competitive play continues to take place on grass pitches for the most part, however, the use of 3G pitches for the fulfilment of competition fixtures does take place regularly in some areas if suitable provision is available, particularly on sites where Rugby 365 pitches have been provided. Further detail on use of 3G pitches can be found in Part 3: Third Generation Turf Pitches.

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Touch

To actively encourage participation in rugby union clubs may provide alternative offers to traditional club competition. Touch rugby is one possible format which clubs can use; touch rugby is non-contact rugby sessions, during which participants compete in teams to score tries, following similar laws to traditional rugby union formats. Clubs, schools or community organisation can establish their own touch rugby sessions or can become hosts of Touch Union²⁰ sessions.

Touch Union sessions are 90 minutes long and combine music, fitness and rugby skills. Sessions are of mixed gender, ability and age and are based on touch rugby being a social activity.

Within Stevenage there is no touch rugby currently being delivered.

Walking rugby

Walking rugby is a slower game of touch rugby that is accessible for disability groups and older participants, generally aged 55 years and above.

The game is less physical than traditional rugby, but the general aim remains the same, with passing and scoring laws applying; and tackling involves a two-handed touch to the waist or below. Sessions for over 55's are an opportunity for participants to become physically active and for others to re-engage with rugby at a less strenuous pace.

Within Stevenage there is no walking rugby currently being delivered.

Exported/imported demand

Exported demand refers to existing demand which is transferred outside of the study area; whilst imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities in Stevenage due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based.

In terms of exported demand, Stevenage Town RUFC under 18s team merged with Letchworth Garden City RFC due to low numbers and now access provision within Letchworth Garden City. No imported demand was identified.

Unmet/latent demand

Unmet demand is existing demand at clubs which is not able to access sufficient supply of pitches for match play or training. It is usually expressed, for example, where a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch or where a league or club operates a waiting list. Consultation did not highlight any potential unmet demand.

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision. Consultation did not highlight any potential latent demand.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and using population forecasts.

²⁰ <https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/ways-to-play/the-touch-union>

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Participation increases

During consultation with Stevenage Town RUFC, the Club was asked how it would like to grow over the next three to five years (over the lifespan of the PPOSS). As such, it reports future demand ambitions of an additional senior men's team, one senior women's team, and add one mini team.

Population increases

Based on population projections, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can estimate the likely additional demand for grass rugby pitches that will arise from any growth. This is by using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, with team generation rates then established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

The current population figure used within the future demand calculations is 88,610. By 2043 the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand, the Stevenage population is projected to increase to 91,875. The table below shows the number of new teams that are forecasted to be generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions that this will require.

Table 4.13: Team generation rates (2043)

Age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population	Peak time	Match equivalent session per season ²¹
Senior Mens (19-45)	1:15812	0.04	0	Saturday	-
Senior Women's (19-45)	-	-	-	Sunday	-
Junior Boys (13-18)	1:3300	0.04	0	Sunday	-
Junior Girls (13-18)	-	-	-	Sunday	-
Mini Mixed (7-12)	1:7126	0.04	0	Sunday	-

Based on future projections, there will be no growth in demand for rugby through to 2043.

It is important to note that population growth is exclusively applied to current team numbers and does not account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as coaching activity within schools linking to local clubs or specific RFU targets.

The RFU is focused on actively exploring opportunities to assist with the transition between late junior years and senior rugby with a specific focus on growing the senior game with the addition of adult teams (both men's and women's). This area has a strategic focus from the RFU and is being facilitated by encouraging casual play and midweek senior matches, along with touch rugby and cross pitch 7s. The RFU recognises the pressures on participation in the traditional forms of the game at this time and by offering alternative match times and formats then clubs may be able to retain a larger number of players.

With the women's rugby World Cup scheduled to be held in England in 2025, there is an expectance that there will likely be a growth in women's and girls' demand due to increased awareness and initiatives aimed at establishing a legacy for the event.

²¹ 2 teams require 1 pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, 1 team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions on their relevant pitch type.

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Future demand summary

Future demand is based on population projections which equates to no growth in demand for rugby through population increases to 2043. The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan takes into account future club ambitions of one adult men's, one adult women's, and one mixed age grade aspirational growth.

The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan also contains a housing growth scenario that will estimate the any demand for rugby union pitches arising from housing development.

4.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly accommodate competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing rugby. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times. To enable an accurate supply and demand assessment of rugby pitches, the following assumptions are applied to site by site analysis:

- ◀ All sites that are used for competitive rugby matches (regardless of whether this is secured community use) are included on the supply side.
- ◀ Use of school pitches by schools increases demand by one match equivalent session, unless school activity levels are known.
- ◀ All competitive play is on senior size pitches (except for where age grade specific pitches are provided).
- ◀ U13 teams generally play on a 90 x 60m pitch and play 13 vs 13.
- ◀ From U14 upwards, teams generally play 15 v15 and use a full pitch.
- ◀ Mini teams (U6-U12) play on half of a senior pitch i.e. two teams per senior pitch or a dedicated mini pitch. See RFU Age Grade Rugby Guidance for more details.
- ◀ For senior and youth teams the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis (assumes half of matches will be played away).
- ◀ For mini teams playing on a senior pitch, play per week is set at 0.25 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis and playing across half of one senior pitch.
- ◀ Senior men's rugby generally takes place on Saturday afternoons.
- ◀ Senior women's rugby generally takes place on Sunday afternoons.
- ◀ Junior rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- ◀ Mini rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- ◀ Training that takes place on club pitches is reflected by the addition of match equivalent sessions to current usage levels.

As a guide, the RFU has set a standard number of matches that each pitch should be able to accommodate, set out below.

Table 4.14: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

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

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Capacity is based upon a basic assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme ascertained through a combination of the quality assessment and consultation. This guide, however, is only a very general measure of potential pitch capacity. It does not account for specific circumstances at time of use and it assumes average rainfall and an appropriate end of season rest and renovation programme.

The peak period

In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established for all types of rugby. For senior teams, it is Saturday PM, with senior women's teams playing on Sunday afternoons. Peak time for mini and junior rugby is Sunday AM.

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Table 4.15: Capacity table for rugby union pitches

Site ID	Site name	Community use?	Security of tenure	Number of pitches	Non-tech score	Quality rating	Sports lit?	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Training equivalent sessions (per week)	Pitch capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Comments
35	Stevenage Town RUFC	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D1	Standard	Yes	1	1	2	-	Pitch is used at capacity from Club demand of Stevenage Town RUFC
35	Stevenage Town RUFC	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D1	Standard	Yes	0.75	0.75	2	0.5	Pitch has spare capacity of 0.5
36	The Nobel School	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	-	-	2	2	Un-used pitch has spare capacity.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Field	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	-	-	1.5	1.5	Un-used pitch has spare capacity.

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Actual spare capacity (pitches)

There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as actual spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Furthermore, there are some rugby union pitches across the authority at education sites that are unused by clubs despite being reported as available. Whilst these may theoretically provide some spare capacity, it would not be reasonable to equate this as actual spare capacity as school usage itself is likely to limit what additional activity should take place on the provision. Moreover, the nature of club rugby generally means that clubs are generally unwilling to utilise secondary venues, making community use unlikely. It is also unlikely that clubs would have security of tenure at education sites, even if they were to access them, with usage more likely to be ad hoc.

In addition, any pitches that are used by clubs to capacity at peak time or that are poor quality are not considered to have actual spare capacity. As such, the table below ascertains whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be used to accommodate an increase in play on a site-by-site and pitch-by-pitch basis. This is regarding senior demand.

For age grade rugby, ascertaining actual spare capacity can be unclear with regards to the programming of matches as it can vary from week to week. This is because junior and mini sections tend to enter cup competitions or play organised friendly fixtures, with clubs arranging for several of their age groups to play those from another club all at once, either at home or away. Then when fixtures are not scheduled, clubs will generally hold training sessions, which means that clubs may require use of home pitches for consecutive weeks, or not at all for the same time period.

Given the above, it is generally assumed that no pitches used by age grade teams have significant actual spare capacity for an increase in demand. However, it is acknowledged that some capacity does exist during weekends when the pitches are not in use.

Table 4.16: Summary of spare capacity on pitches

Site ID	Site	No of pitches	Potential Spare capacity (MES)	Actual Saturday Spare capacity (MES)	Comments
35	Stevenage Town RUFC	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
36	The Nobel School	1	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
38	The Thomas Alleyne Academy Playing Field	1	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.

When reviewing all potential spare capacity on senior pitch types, three sites have potential spare capacity, however, this is discounted due to unsecure tenure at two of the sites. The Nobel School has a secure tenure due to having a community use agreement in place but as mentioned above, due to the pitch being on an educational site its unlikely to accommodate rugby club demand, therefore actual spare capacity has been discounted.

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Overplay

There is no overplay present on any of the sites within the area. This is due to the limited demand within Stevenage Town RFC meaning two pitches can adequately accommodate all demand.

4.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the overall spare capacity for senior rugby union pitches based on match equivalent sessions per week.

The analysis is undertaken for play on senior pitches only. In the instance of Stevenage, the analysis results are the same for the peak time modelling for Saturday afternoons (senior men's rugby peak time) and Sundays (when it is the peak time for mixed aged grade rugby and junior/colts' teams). This is due to an overall limited amount of spare capacity for additional play throughout the Authority.

Future demand is based on population projections which shows no growth in demand for rugby through to 2043. The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan takes into account club ambitions.

Table 4:17: Summary of supply and demand balance on rugby union pitches

Area	Actual spare capacity ²²	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Stevenage	-	-	-	-	-

The table above shows that there is sufficient supply of provision to accommodate existing demand, however there is also no actual spare capacity due to the unsecure tenure for Stevenage Town RFC.

4.6: Conclusion

Based on the supply and demand analysis, it is evident that there is sufficient supply of pitches in Stevenage to accommodate for both current and anticipated future levels of demand.

The priority for rugby union in Stevenage is to ensure that pitches are of suitable quality to meet demand, and ancillary infrastructures are of a good quality which supports the long-term development of rugby union across the local area.

²² In match equivalent sessions
May 2025

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Rugby union summary

- ◀ There is sufficient level of senior rugby union provision in Stevenage to accommodate current and future demand.

Pitch supply:

- ◀ There is a total of four rugby union pitches in Stevenage across three sites. All pitches across three sites are open to community use.
- ◀ There is no WR compliant 3G pitch located within Stevenage.

Pitch quality:

- ◀ In terms of quality of pitches, there is no good quality, three standard quality and one poor quality pitches which are available for community use.
- ◀ Stevenage Town RUFC provides two standard quality floodlit pitches, whereas the other two pitches are on educational sites and are not floodlit.

Ancillary provision quality:

- ◀ Stevenage Town RUFC is the only site to provide changing facilities.
- ◀ The two senior pitches are serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.
- ◀ The site provides two changing rooms, each with a communal shower area, as well as an official's changing room and a customer toilet. The facilities also include a kitchen, bar, clubroom, and storage containers.
- ◀ The Club has ambition to upgrade the facilities to be more fit for purpose subject to funding.

Demand:

- ◀ In Stevenage there is only one rugby union club, Stevenage Town RUFC. The Club has four teams, this consists of one veteran men's, one senior men's, one under 14s boys, and one mixed under sevens teams.
- ◀ Future demand from club ambitions equates to one adult men's, one adult women's, and one mixed age grade team.
- ◀ Future demand through population projections did not result in any growth in teams.

Supply and demand analysis:

- ◀ There is an overall sufficient supply of provision to cater for both current and future demand.

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PART 5: ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (HOCKEY)

5.1: Introduction

Competitive league hockey matches and training can only be played on sand filled, sand dressed or water based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). Although competitive, adult and junior club training cannot take place on 3G pitches, 40mm pitches may be suitable at introductory level, such as school curriculum low level hockey. England Hockey's (EH) Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as seen below.

Table 5.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey

Category	Surface	Playing Level	Playing Level
England Hockey Category 1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	Essential International Hockey - Training and matches	Desirable Domestic National Premier competition Higher levels of EH Player Pathway Performance Centres and upwards England
England Hockey Category 2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Essential Domestic National Premier competition Higher levels of player pathway: Academy Centres and Upwards	Desirable All adult and junior League Hockey Intermediate or advanced School Hockey
England Hockey Category 3	Sand based surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Essential All adult and junior club training and league Hockey EH competitions for clubs and schools Intermediate or advanced schools hockey	EH competitions for clubs and schools (excluding domestic national league)
England Hockey Category 4	All 3G surfaces	Essential None	Desirable Lower level hockey (Introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

In addition to the above pitch types, EH reports that it is currently trialling a different multi-sport surface in order to better accommodate lower levels of hockey demand on a pitch that is also suitable for other sports such as netball and tennis. The surface type, known as Gen 2²³, is a versatile surface that will ensure that the sports do not need to compromise on the playing experience; it will be a sand dressed synthetic turf with a compatible shock pad. The concept is designed to provide facilities, including schools, with a dynamic surface which reduces the amount of space required and enables the provision to be utilised to its full potential.

For senior teams, a full-size pitch for competitive matches must measure at least 91.4 x 55 metres excluding surrounding run-off areas, which must be a minimum of two metres at the sides and three metres at the ends.

²³ [Deliver - Developing Your Project | England Hockey](#)

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EH's preference is for four-metre side and five-metre end run offs, with a preferred overall area of 101.4 x 63 metres, though a minimum overall area of 97.4 x 59 metres is accepted.

It is considered that a hockey pitch can accommodate a maximum of four matches on one day (peak time) provided the pitch has sports lighting training is generally midweek and also requires access to a pitch with sports lighting.

Club consultation

There is one Stevenage based hockey club, Stevenage HC. The Club was consulted through a face-to-face consultation to inform the following section.

Table 5.2: Summary of consultation

Club name	Responded?
Stevenage Hockey Club	Yes

5.2: Supply

There is one full size hockey suitable artificial grass pitches (AGPs) in Stevenage located at The Nobel School. The site is available for community use and has sports lighting.

John Henry Newman School AGP has recently undergone construction and was converted from a sand filled AGP to a 3G surface funded by the Football Foundation. The conversion was completed in May 2025, and is now in operation.

Table 5.3: Summary of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	Community use?	No. of pitches	Size (metres)	Sports lighting?
36	The Nobel School	Yes	1	102m x 63m	Yes

There are also two small sided AGPs provided at Barclay Academy and Giles Junior School. Barclay Academy is open to community use during the evenings, weekends and school holiday. The AGP is managed by a commercial operator. Giles Junior School AGP is also open for community use and managed internally by the school. Given that the small size AGPs are not suitable for formal hockey use these have been discounted from any analysis in terms of need.

Table 5.4: Summary of small size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	Community use?	Quantity of provision	Size (metres)	Sports lit?
2	Barclay Academy	Yes	1	59m x 37m	Yes
11	Giles Junior School	Yes	1	42m x 22m	No

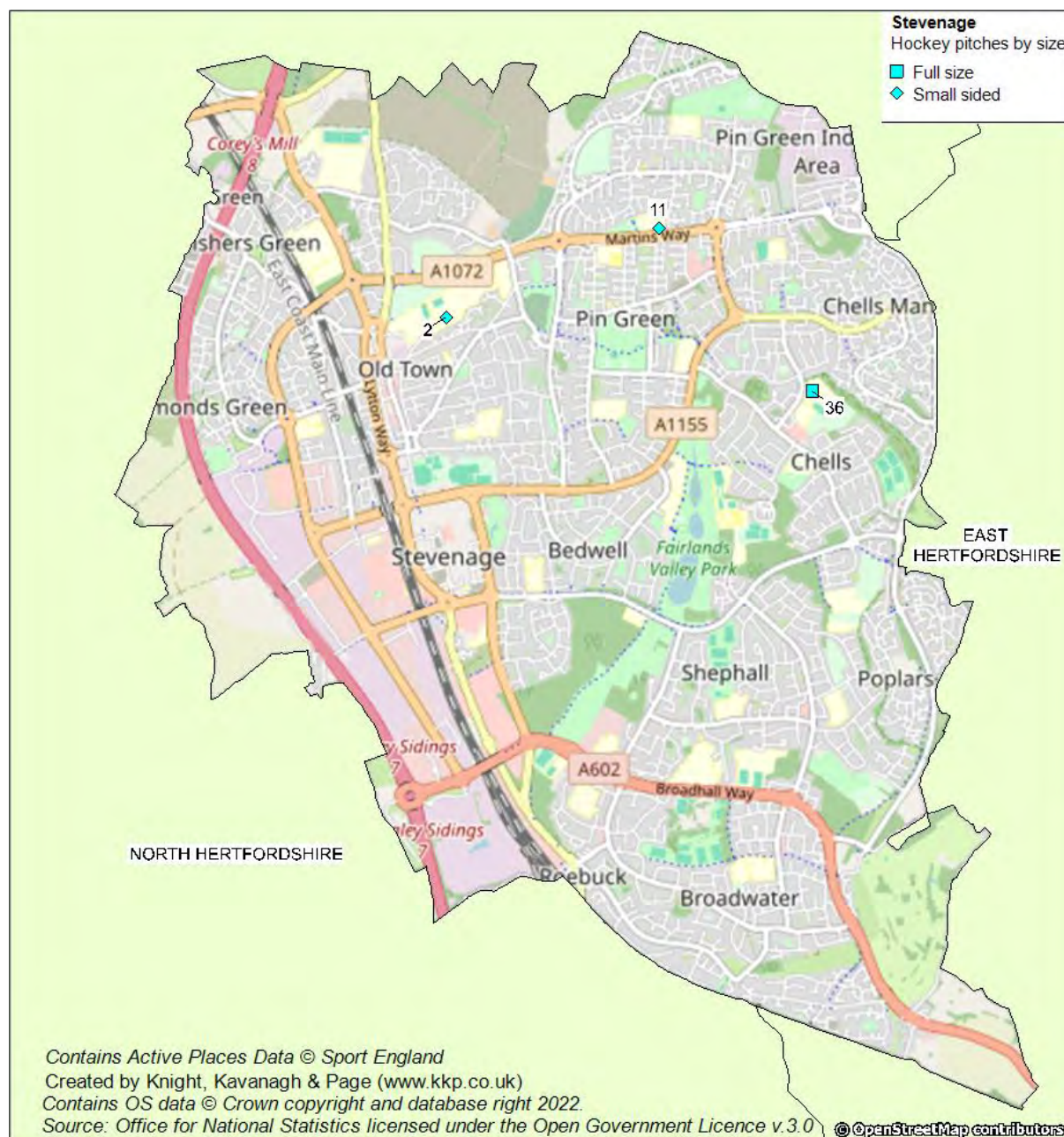
Future supply

Consultation with England Hockey, clubs and schools within the Authority did not raise any development plans to install new AGP provision.

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A map of hockey provision is provided in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Location of full size AGPs



Management and availability

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model applies an overall peak period for artificial grass pitches of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

The table below identifies the availability of AGP provision in Stevenage. The Nobel School opens its facilities for 42 hours per week, which is over the Sport England Facilities Planning Model peak time.

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Table 5.5: Management and availability (full size pitches)

Site ID	Site name	Management	Availability	Total hours available in peak period
36	The Nobel School	School and commercial	Open to community use 17:00-22:00 Monday to Thursday 17:00-19:00 Friday 08:00-18:00 weekends	42

Security of tenure

Stevenage HC accesses The Nobel School site for matches and training. The Club has no long-term tenure to access The Nobel School but has used the site for several years and is on good terms with the school staff. The Nobel School also has a Community Use Agreement.

Quality

Taking the above into account, the quality of hockey suitable artificial grass pitches has been assessed via a combination of site visits in November 2024 (using non-technical assessments as determined by EH) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (60-79%), Poor (<60%). The quality ratings assigned to the sites also consider the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

It is considered that the carpet of an artificial grass pitch usually lasts for approximately ten years, and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. The table overleaf summarises the quality of artificial grass pitches in Stevenage.

Table 5.6: Summary of quality

Site ID	Site name	Surface type	User	Quality rating	Built/resurfaced
36	The Nobel School	Sand dressed	Stevenage HC	Standard	1994 / 2012

Consultation with Stevenage HC and The Nobel School staff confirms the pitch at the school is of a standard quality but has deteriorated in quality in recent years. However, the pitch benefitted from an upgrade to LED sports lights in 2022. The surface has now exceeded its expected lifespan of 10 years, leading to a decline in overall quality.

Ancillary facilities

The term ancillary facilities relate to built facility infrastructures at sites. Typically, this includes (but is not limited too) clubhouses, changing rooms, showers, car parking and toilet facilities.

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Stevenage HC utilises ancillary facilities at both The Nobel School and Stevenage Cricket Ground. At The Nobel School, the Club has access to standard-quality changing rooms adjacent to the AGP. Additionally, the Club shares the ancillary facilities at Stevenage Cricket Ground with Stevenage Town CC, which is located approximately a five-minute drive from the school. The cricket ground provides Stevenage HC with access to good quality changing rooms, along with a bar, kitchen, and communal space. In the long term, both the hockey and cricket club aim to further develop the kitchen area.

5.3: Demand

Competitive play

There are currently nine teams playing at Stevenage which as a breakdown is four senior men's and five senior women's teams.

The Club also features a junior section consisting of 30 members across a range of ages which focus exclusively on training, without participating in competitive games.

As can be seen below, Stevenage access one site on a weekly basis for its match play and training demand.

Table 5.7: Hockey demand by club

Club	Senior men's teams	Senior women's teams	Junior teams	Site accessed
Stevenage HC	4	5	-	The Nobel School

Imported demand

Imported demand refers to teams which originate outside of Stevenage, accessing facilities within the area for its home fixtures and/or training needs, normally because its pitch requirements cannot be met, which is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities. In the case of Stevenage, there are no known instances of imported demand.

Exported demand

Exported demand refers to teams which originate within the Stevenage, accessing facilities outside the area for its home fixtures and/or training needs, normally because its pitch requirements cannot be met, which is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities. There are no known instances of exported demand from Stevenage HC.

Training demand

Access to artificial grass pitches for midweek training is important to sustain and grow all formats of hockey.

Stevenage HC accesses The Nobel School for both midweek and weekend training sessions. Currently, the Club has access to three hours of midweek training spread across two days. Consultation with The Nobel School confirms that the facility is also used for football throughout the week, which may have impacted the overall availability of training slots for hockey.

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Table 5.8: Training demand summary

Site ID	Site	Club	Club training schedule
36	The Nobel School	Stevenage HC	- Tuesday 17:30-19:00 : Senior men's training - Wednesday 17:30-19:00 : Senior woman's training - Sunday 9:30-11:00 : Junior training

Future demand

Growing participation is the number one aim within EH's Strategic Plan and key drivers include working with clubs, universities and schools, regional and local leagues, developing opportunities for over 40s and delivering a quality programme of competition. Growth in participation will not only come from the traditional 11 a side game but from the informal, recreational ways to play hockey such as small-sided hockey, which can be played at any time during the week or at weekends.

It remains a desire from EH to increase participation within the club/ league-based game, not all future demand may be realised entirely as new formalised teams playing at peak time. Some clubs may decide to offer pay and play opportunities to participants or offer small-sided formats such in a bid to increase participation and club memberships by providing a different hockey offer.

Increased demand from new participants will lead to a requirement for increased capacity on available artificial grass pitches at peak time, but also midweek and on Sundays to deliver other formats of hockey activity. At present, it is not necessarily clear as to what format this may take or when it is likely to take place, however, there will be a requirement for access to increased capacity on artificial grass pitches across the area. This should be considered when assessing demand for artificial grass pitches in the future, as not only will they be needed for peak match play times and midweek training to accommodate increased participation within the formalised hockey environment, but also throughout the week and at non-peak times to offer wider opportunities for play.

Unlike other pitch sports, EH do not use team generation rates to determine future demand and instead likes to understand growth by participation, rather than dedicated teams. As such, team generation rates have not been used to calculate future growth for hockey in Stevenage. However, the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan includes the use of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator which will forecast additional demand for hockey arising from new housing developments.

From Stevenage HC perspective, the Club report no future demand due to struggling to currently fill four senior men's teams and had a decline in teams over the last few years. However, the Club has ambitions to gain an additional ten junior members to participate in junior training sessions.

Back to hockey and walking hockey

Back to Hockey sessions are currently not being delivered within the authority. Stevenage HC stated in consultation they have previously held Back to Hockey within the Clubs junior sessions. Walking hockey sessions are not currently held in the Authority.

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EH Player Pathway

The Player Pathway (PP) is the junior talent development pathway. It encompasses the whole of the hockey landscape which includes club and school activity as well as the PP Development Centres (DCs). The purpose of the PP is to provide development opportunities for young people, which is fair, equitable and consistent. It is to ensure that a suitable level of coaching and competition is offered for people at the appropriate stage of their development and to maximise the chance they have of fulfilling their potential whether that potential is as a club or international player, coach or official. The PP can be accessed by playing at school, a local club or attending one of the local centres. There is one entry point into the PP centres which is at DC level. The first time a player accesses the player pathway they must enter at DC level.

To enter an Academy Centre (AC) players must be nominated by their DC coaches, school or must display a consistent high performance at club level. This is a PP into higher performance hockey.

Development Centres (DCs) and Academy Centres (ACs)

DCs and ACs are local training centres for the U13 to U17 age groups. DCs are open to any hockey player who has been nominated by their club, school or coach, with ACs open to any player who has been nominated by a DC coach. After attending a DC, an AC is the next step on the player pathway. Included in the DCs/ACs are Goalkeeper (GK) Academies, which provide specific coaching sessions for goalkeepers.

Stevenage does not host an England Hockey's Talent Academy, with the nearest located at University of Cambridge Athletics Centre.

Peak time demand

Most men's and women's hockey teams currently play matches on a Saturday which is therefore the peak time for use of artificial grass pitches for competitive play.

5.4: Supply and demand analysis

The PPS Guidance suggests that a sports lit pitch is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions on a Saturday with teams playing in a home and away format, as such this equates to one artificial grass pitch being able to cater for eight "home" teams. Teams play matches on home and away formats and therefore one team requires 0.5 match sessions per week on its "home" artificial grass pitch. On this basis, a pitch can cater for eight teams from a home club (with four playing away on the home vs away rotation) with each pitch considered to have a total capacity equating to four match equivalent sessions in the peak period.

Therefore, with one full size accessible AGPs provided in Stevenage, there is the potential to accommodate eight Saturday teams. The table overleaf considers the actual amount of hockey usage that is accommodated and any spare capacity available.

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Table 5.9: Supply analysis of peak time (Saturday) pitch access

Site ID	Site name	Number of pitches	Site user	Current hockey use in peak period (MES)	Spare capacity?	Comments
36	The Nobel School	1	Stevenage HC	5	No	Site is accessed by nine teams from Stevenage HC on Saturdays. Although this goes beyond the recommended four matches, the site does manage to accommodate five fixtures. Sunday accommodates junior training for 30 members.

The Nobel School is accessed by Stevenage HC for five home matches per week on a home and away basis, concluding there is no spare capacity. However, the AGP could accommodate some junior fixtures on a Sunday. It should also be noted that the pitch is assessed as standard quality and has gone beyond its current lifespan, so is likely to require replacement/refurbishment soon.

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5.5: Conclusion

There is one sports lit community accessible full size AGP within the Authority, alongside two small size AGPs, one available for community use and equipped with sports lighting, while the other closed to the community.

Stevenage HC is the sole hockey club within the Authority, comprising nine senior teams and a dedicated junior training section. The Club currently utilises the AGP at The Nobel School twice midweek for training, hosts up to five matches on Saturdays, and runs junior sessions on Sunday mornings. The pitch is used to capacity on a Saturday but there is potential spare capacity on a Sunday for junior fixtures to be accommodated instead of training and for some additional usage.

As identified earlier, the pitch is assessed as standard quality and has just passed its recommend lifespan. While it remains of an acceptable standard at present, its condition is beginning to deteriorate. Given the high level of usage due to already exceeding peak demand and the expected decline in pitch quality, it is essential to protect and improve this facility. However, The Nobel School confirms it does not have a sinking fund in place to resurface the AGP.

The conversion of John Henry Newman's pitch to a 3G surface may reduce some of the football demand on The Nobel School AGP (through transfer of demand), but it will also leave The Nobel School as the only full size hockey suitable AGP within the Authority. Further to this, the Nobel School is played to capacity for hockey on a Saturday albeit has some spare capacity on a Sunday to accommodate future demand expressed to grow its junior section/teams.

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Hockey summary

- It is determined that there is sufficient access to hockey suitable provision within Stevenage to support current demand. However, the AGP at The Nobel School is standard quality and deteriorating and will need improvement soon.
- Stevenage HC report no future demand due to struggling to currently fill four senior men's teams and had a decline in teams over the last few years. However, the Club has ambitions to gain an additional ten junior members to participate in its junior training sessions.

Pitch supply:

- There is one full size hockey suitable AGP in Stevenage.
- The Nobel School is available for community use and has sports lighting.
- There are also two small sided AGPs provided at Barclay Academy and Giles Junior School. However, neither site accommodates any hockey usage, only football demand.
- Both sites are open to community use, however, only Barclays Academy AGP is sports lit.

Pitch quality:

- The full-size pitch at The Nobel School is of a standard quality, however, is beginning to deteriorate in quality due to last being resurfaced in 2012. The AGP pitch at John Henry Newman is of poor quality, however, currently only accommodates football demand.

Affiliated demand:

- There is one hockey club currently playing within Stevenage, being Stevenage HC.
- Stevenage HC has four senior men's and five senior women's. The Club also features a junior section consisting of 30 members across a range of ages which focus exclusively on training, without participating in competitive games.

Supply and demand analysis conclusions:

- Based on current levels of demand, there is a sufficient supply of provision to accommodate existing demand.
- While there is sufficient provision for hockey, it's crucial to protect The Nobel Schools pitch due to the loss of provision at John Henry Newman and deteriorating pitch quality at The Nobel School.
- With no future demand expressed there is the need to protect all provision to ensure the long-term sustainability of hockey in the Authority.

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PART 6: CRICKET PITCHES

6.1: Introduction

Hertfordshire County Cricket Club (HCCC) is the main governing and representative body for Cricket within Stevenage. Working closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), HCCC is responsible for the management and development of every form of recreational cricket for men, women and children. HCCC is currently working with the ECB on delivering its recently refreshed Strategy, 'Inspiring Generations', which has been live since 2020. See Appendix One: Sporting Context for more details.

For adult cricket in Stevenage there are three main offerings: Saturday, Sunday and midweek cricket. The youth league structure tends to be club-based matches which are played mid-week, although some matches are also played on Sundays.

Consultation

One cricket club has been identified as playing within Stevenage. Stevenage Cricket Club took part in a face-to-face consultation at its site, equating to a 100% response rate.

6.2: Supply

In total, there are two natural turf cricket squares across two sites. There are also six standalone non-turf pitches in Stevenage, all of which are on education sites and are not available for community use.

Table 6.1: Summary of grass wicket cricket sites

Site ID	Site name	No. of squares
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	1
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	1

Stevenage Cricket Club uses both the cricket square as its main site and the neighbouring square at King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage).

Non-turf pitches (NTPs)

There are six standalone NTPs across five sites in Stevenage. Each site contains one NTP other than John Henry Newman Catholic College which has two standalone NTPs. All five sites do not open its NTP to community use.

- ◀ Marriotts School.
- ◀ The Nobel School.
- ◀ John Henry Newman x 2.
- ◀ Thomas Alleyne Academy.
- ◀ Larwood School.

From a school perspective, NTPs provide a reliable cricket offer, without the need for specific cricket preparation to be taken on natural turf playing field. In many instances, schools do not have the resource or expertise to prepare natural turf wickets so NTPs provide a resource to ensure cricket can remain a key element of curricular sport.

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Disused provision

Playing fields which have previously accommodated formal pitch provision are categorised as disused. A disused site is a playing field which is not being used by any users and is not available for community hire either. Comparably an unused site is land that continues to be accessible as open space but no longer has pitches marked. In Stevenage there are two unused sites identified.

Shephalbury Park and Peartree Park both formerly hosted two grass cricket squares in 2000. Both sites have since transitioned into areas primarily used for football pitches and open playing field. King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage) also formerly hosted two grass cricket squares meaning one square has fallen out of use.

During the site assessment of Saint Nicholas Park, the standalone NTP (non-turf pitch) was found to be disused, showing signs of overgrowth, wear, and damage.

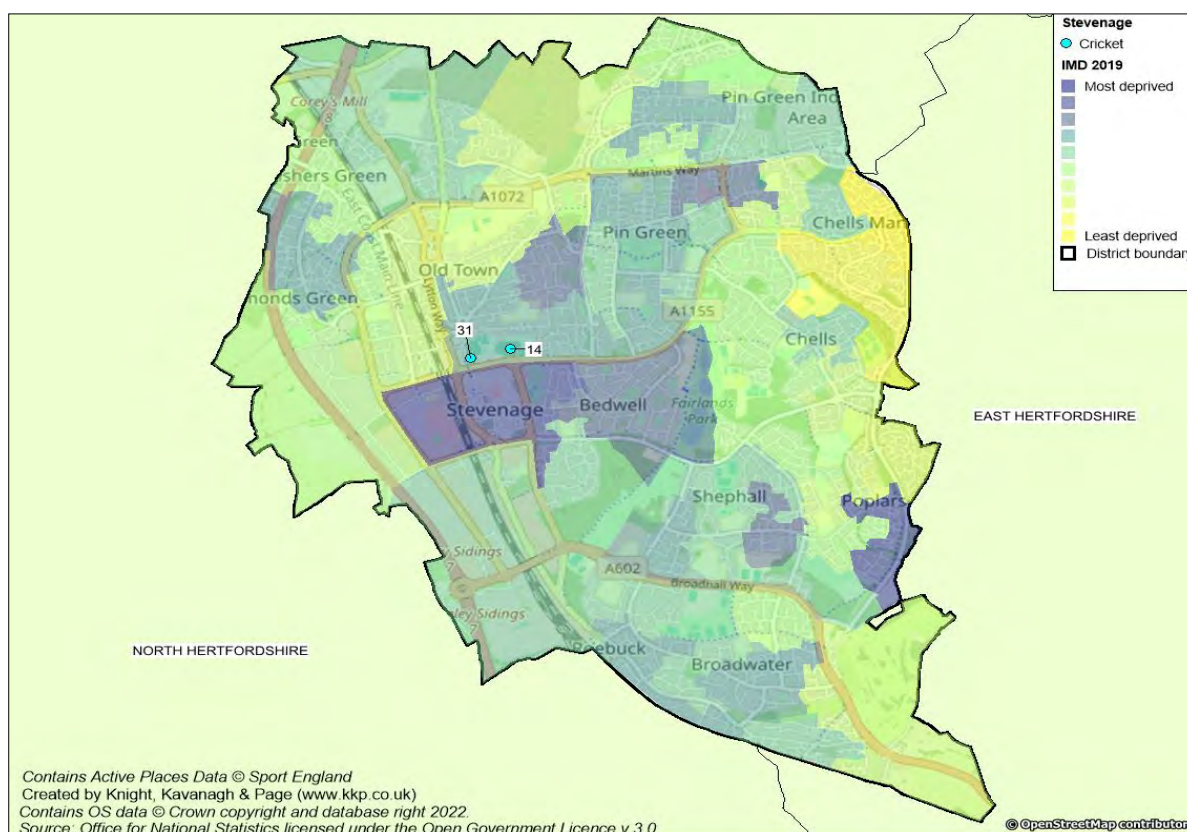
Potential future supply changes

New cricket provision has been proposed within the West of Stevenage housing development. Initially the site is outlined to develop an NTP and a new pavilion designed to accommodate cricket usage. The project has been designed to allow a fine turf square in the longer term if there is sufficient demand.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

Within Stevenage it has been identified that two sites lie within an area of deprivation with this being King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage) and Stevenage Cricket Club. Stevenage CC access both sites.

Figure 6.1: Location of cricket sites against IMD



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The map below shows the location of all cricket squares currently servicing Stevenage. For a key to the map, see Table 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Location of grass cricket squares within Stevenage

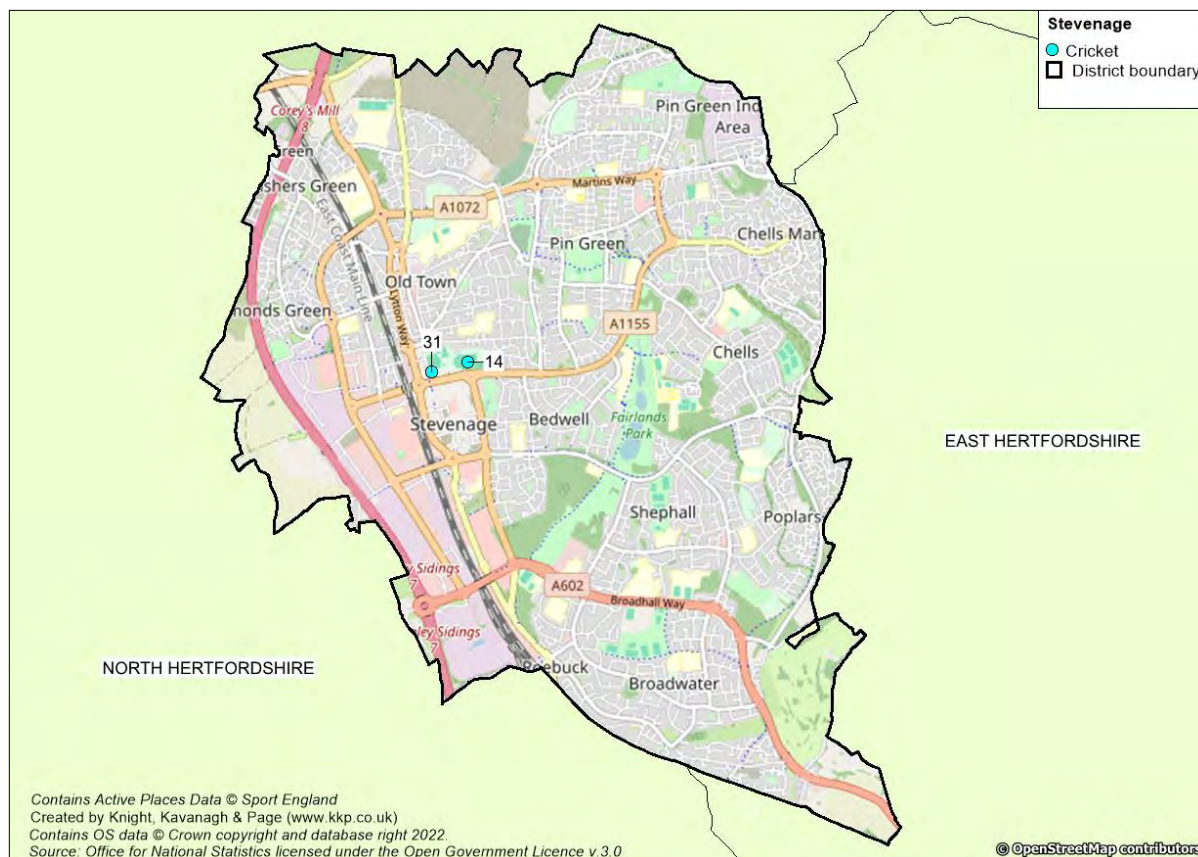


Table 6.2: Key to map of grass cricket squares (community accessible)

Site ID	Site name	Community use?	No. of squares	No. of wickets	No. of NTPs
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Yes	1	9	-
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	Yes	1	14	-

Security of tenure

Table 6.3 outlines the tenure agreement of Stevenage Cricket Club at the two sites it accesses.

Table 6.3: Summary of club tenure arrangements

Club	Site	Tenure	Security of tenure	Management
Stevenage CC	Stevenage Cricket Club	Club has a lease with Stevenage Borough Council until 2041	Secure	Sports Club
Stevenage CC	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	No tenure in place but Club states it has accessed the square for many years.	Unsecure	Council

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Stevenage Cricket Club uses both the cricket square at its main site (Stevenage Cricket Club) and the neighbouring square at King George V Playing Fields as a secondary venue. The Club confirms it has a secure lease in place from Stevenage Borough Council for its self-managed site, Stevenage Cricket Club. However, the Club has no formal tenure at King George V Playing Fields as it is an open space owned by the Council. Despite this, the Club has accessed the square for several years and sees no reason why it would be relocated.

Pitch quality

The quality of cricket pitches has been assessed via a combination of site visits conducted in August 2024 (using non-technical assessments as determined by the ECB) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (50-79%), Poor (<49%).

Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous. As an example, if a square is poor quality, a ball can bounce erratically on a wicket and become a danger to players.

The quality of a cricket square is assessed by considering factors such as evidence of the wicket being rolled, the wicket being correctly cut, evidence of cover usage, evidence of maintenance and the presence of line markings. Comparatively, an outfield is assessed on the provisions grass length, quantity of weeds, evenness of the surface, level of undulations, damage to the surface and evidence of dog fouling.

With regards to maintenance of provision, all clubs consulted with confirm they have maintenance responsibility for the pitches.

The audit of community available grass wicket cricket squares in Stevenage found one to be good quality and one to be standard quality. The site-by-site breakdown of this is shown in the table below.

Table 6.4: Quality ratings for community available grass wicket squares

Site ID	Site	No. of squares	Pitch quality
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	1	Standard
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	1	Good

Stevenage Cricket Club has a good quality cricket square and outfield with good grass coverage and an even surface. The site is well-kept by the Club, featuring standard-quality site screens and covers. The Club reports a minor issue with the outfield mower, although it remains functional, and confirms that the roller is adequate for its needs. During consultation, it also reports it is considering outsourcing its grounds maintenance but has not yet reached a final decision on this matter.

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King George V Playing Fields provides a cricket square that is of a standard quality. The site features acceptable grass coverage and length but has an uneven surface, with occasional issues such as litter, dog fouling, and broken glass. The square is located within an open access playing field, with the Council responsible for maintaining the outfield while Stevenage Cricket Club manages the square itself. In consultation, the Club reports that the Council’s maintenance is adequate, although regular recreational use by the public is common due to its open-access nature. The site has no covers and site screens.

Ancillary facilities

Ancillary provision refers to the accompanying building to a site that is accessed as changing facilities and a social space if applicable. All sites were assessed during non-technical site assessments and further evidenced was gained via consultation. Quality ratings were determined by assessing matters such as the condition of the building, the quantity and quality of changing rooms and the social space offering.

Table 6.5: Quality ratings for community available ancillary facilities

Site ID	Site	Club	Ancillary provision quality
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Stevenage CC	Poor
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	Stevenage CC	Good

The clubhouse at Stevenage Cricket Club is a shared facility with Stevenage Hockey Club, although hockey matches are held at a different site with AGP provision. The clubhouse is jointly managed by a sports trust representing both clubs. On-site amenities include home and away changing rooms, each equipped with showers, as well as toilets, a bar, and a social area. The Club confirms it invested into refurbishing its bar in 2024. The clubhouse was assessed as of a good quality.

King George V Playing Fields has an older brick clubhouse on-site, assessed as poor quality. When using King George V Playing Fields, Stevenage Cricket Club uses its own clubhouse facilities on the neighbouring site due to the close proximity of the two locations.

Ball strike issues

During consultations no ball striking issues were identified, and Stevenage CC does not have any issues meeting league requirements.

Training facilities

Access to cricket nets is important, particularly for pre-season/winter training. Stevenage Cricket Club has on-site fixed practice nets, featuring a four-lane setup installed in 2008. Despite being on the original surface, the nets and surfaces remain in good playing condition. In contrast, King George V Playing Fields does not offer fixed practice nets.

Several educational sites within the Borough, including Thomas Alleyne Academy, Marriotts School, Barclays Academy, and Barnwell Middle School, have fixed training nets. However, these are not accessible for community use.

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Indoor facilities

Whilst the PPOSS only considers outdoor playing pitches, a cricket training programme includes accessing indoor net facilities over winter months in preparation for the start of the season. As such, Stevenage Cricket Club hires indoor nets at Marriotts School, and states that finding availability to indoor training facilities is a challenge.

6.3: Demand

There is one cricket club playing in Stevenage providing 12 teams across senior and junior cricket. When broken down this equates to seven senior men's and five junior boy's teams. There are currently no women's or girls' teams within the Authority.

Table 6.6: Summary of teams by club

Club	Senior male	Senior female	Junior boys'	Junior girls'
Stevenage CC	7	-	5	-

Participation trends

During consultation, Stevenage Cricket Club indicates that its number of teams has remained stable in recent years.

Imported/exported demand

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of the study area, despite being registered in Stevenage. Likewise, imported demand is demand from neighbouring authorities accessing pitches in Stevenage to play competitive matches.

The only instance of exported demand for competitive fixtures is Stevenage Cricket Club using the cricket square at Graveley Cricket Club (North Hertfordshire) throughout the season for its fifth Saturday team. This site is only a six-minute drive from Stevenage Cricket Club's home ground, and its use is based solely on a goodwill arrangement, as the Club holds no formal tenure at Graveley Cricket Club. The Club accesses the site as both Stevenage Cricket Club and King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage) are already used in the peak period.

Additional activity

The ECB run several initiatives across the Country which results in additional cricket demand and use of cricket facilities. Whilst these do not generally utilise grass wickets, they can impact upon availability when sessions are being held due to use of cricket outfield, making squares unusable during these periods. The most relevant initiatives currently being delivered are detailed below.

All Stars cricket

In partnership with the ECB and Chance to Shine, cricket clubs can register to become an ECB All Stars Cricket Centre. Once registered, a club delivers programmes which introduce cricket to children aged from five to eight. Subsequently, this may lead to increased interest and demand for junior cricket at clubs. The programme seeks to achieve the following aims:

- ◀ Increase cricket activity for five- to eight-year-olds in the school and club environment.
- ◀ Develop consistency of message in both settings to aid transition.

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- ◀ Improve generic movement skills for children, using cricket as the vehicle.
- ◀ Make it easier for new volunteers to support and deliver in the club environment.
- ◀ Use fun small-sided games to enthuse new children and volunteers to follow and play the game.

Dynamo's cricket

A key development area for the ECB in delivering on the outcomes of 'Inspiring Generations' will be the Dynamos programme for 8–11-year-olds. It plans on building on the significant growth of the All-Stars programme and will develop the pathway to retain juniors which progress.

Where All Stars seeks to engage children in cricket activity and learning the skills, Dynamo's seeks to engage children in learning how to play, introducing a modified softball format as competitive progression with a view to eventual transition through to hardball cricket.

The programme is strongly linked to The Hundred, a short format competition which also launched in 2022. The table below details the 2024 participation figures.

Table 6.7: Summary of All Stars and Dynamos participation

Club	All Stars participation figures (2023)	Dynamos participation figures (2023)
Stevenage CC	39 participants	0 participants

Stevenage Cricket Club has a total of 39 All Stars participants and doesn't deliver Dynamos sessions.

Softball cricket

Softball is an ECB initiative aimed at women and girls to increase female participation in cricket.

The aim of softball cricket sections is enjoyment and participation, without pads, a hardball, a heavy bat and limited rules. Sessions are generally played on the outfield of a square and follow a festival format with each session running for a maximum of two and half hours, shorter than traditional formats.

Stevenage Cricket Club does not deliver women's softball sessions.

Chance to Shine is a national charity that aims to give all children the opportunity to play, learn and develop through cricket. It believes that cricket can help to develop the personal, social and physical skills of the 500,000 children that are worked with every year.

It works in schools to provide children with their first experience of cricket, whilst it has also developed Chance to Shine Street. This is a format of the sport played with a tapeball, targeting children and young adults in inner-city areas and with matches lasting just 20-minutes. Broom Barns Primary School in Stevenage has received a whole school Chance to Shine programme

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through club ambitions and using population forecasts. In addition, the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan contains housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for cricket arising from housing development plans within Stevenage.

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Population growth

Based on population projections, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can estimate the likely additional demand for grass rugby pitches that will arise from any growth. This is by using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, with team generation rates then established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

The current population figure used within the future demand calculations is 88,610. By 2043 the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand, the Stevenage population is projected to increase to 91,875. The table below shows the number of new teams that are forecasted to be generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions that this will require.

Table 6.8: Summary of population growth

Age group	Current population per sport age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population	Peak time	Average games for age group	Match equivalent session per season ²⁴
Men (18-55yrs)	21,884	3,647.39	0.22	0	Saturday	10	0
Women (18-55yrs)	22,431	-	-	-	Sunday	10	0
Boys (7-18yrs)	6,892	1,378.49	0.18	0	Midweek	4	0
Girls (7-18yrs)	6,460	-	-	-	Midweek	4	0

The table shows there is no anticipated future growth through population growth projections.

Participation growth

Following consultations with Stevenage CC, the Club outlines its ambition to expand by introducing two additional teams, an under 15 junior boys' team and a junior girls' team.

Table 6.9: Future demand expressed by clubs (in teams)

Club	Senior men's	Senior women's	Junior boys	Junior girls
Stevenage CC	-	-	1	1

Future demand summary

In summary, future demand calculated using population projections identifies no growth in demand across the Authority. A scenario exploring how future demand through club ambitions will impact the supply and demand analysis is included in the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan.

Peak time demand

An analysis of match play identifies that peak time demand for senior cricket in Stevenage is Saturday, although there is one team that play Sunday. As such, both are considered within the supply and demand analysis later in the section. For junior cricket, peak time is midweek.

²⁴ 2 teams require 1 pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, 1 team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions on their relevant pitch type.

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6.4: Capacity analysis

Capacity analysis for cricket is measured on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis. This is due to playability (as only one match is generally played per square per day at weekends or weekday evening) and because wickets are rotated throughout the season to reduce wear and tear and to allow for repair.

The capacity of a square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. This section of the report therefore presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive match equivalent sessions per season per square that is available and that currently takes place.

For good quality squares, capacity is five matches per grass wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not deemed safe for play. The number of matches played by each team has been derived from consultation with the clubs. Where consultation was not possible, or where the level of play was not made clear, an assumption has been made that all senior teams play between 10 and 12 home matches per year and all junior teams play between four and eight matches per year depending on their age and level of competition.

The above is used to allocate capacity ratings as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

The capacity analysis assumes that all clubs rotate the wickets evenly. However, this may not be the case at all sites, with central wickets potentially used more commonly than outer wickets that are closer to a boundary, especially for senior matches. The idea of this is to showcase what the capacity is or could be if best practice is followed for the whole square, rather than doing it on a wicket-by-wicket basis.

Please note that NTPs have been discounted from the table overleaf. No NTPs are recorded as accommodating more than 60 matches per season; therefore, all NTPs are considered to have spare capacity. This translates to actual spare capacity for junior cricket as peak time is midweek, whereby non-turf wickets are more commonly used, and matches can be played on a variety of days.

The capacity analysis assumes that all clubs rotate their wickets evenly. However, this may not be the case at all sites, with central wickets potentially used more commonly than outer wickets that are closer to a boundary, especially for senior matches. The idea is to showcase what the capacity is or could be if best practice is followed for the whole square, rather than doing it on a wicket-by-wicket basis.

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Spare capacity

The table below explains the difference between the potential spare capacity referenced in Table 6:11 in the final three columns (Saturday, Sunday and midweek).

Table 6.10: Spare capacity examples

Potential spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of spare capacity
No	Means the pitch is played to capacity within this peak period and therefore cannot accommodate any further demand.
Yes	Not highlighted, it means there is spare capacity to accommodate further demand within this designated peak period; however, this is discounted due to the pitch already being in full use at the time, played to capacity or being overplayed (so it should not accommodate any additional demand).
Yes	Highlighted in green, it means there is actual available spare capacity within this peak period which can be utilised.

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Table 6.11: Capacity analysis of community available grass cricket squares

Site ID	Site name	Club user	No. of squares	Square quality	No. of grass wickets	Capacity (MES per season)	Actual play (MES per season)	Capacity rating (MES per season)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Saturday)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Sunday)	Potential spare capacity for junior cricket? (Midweek)
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Stevenage CC	1	Standard	9	36	20	16	No	Yes	Yes
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	Stevenage CC	1	Good	14	70	61	9	No	No	Yes

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Actual spare capacity

A square is only considered to have actual spare capacity if it is available for further usage during a particular peak period, has security of tenure and is at least standard quality. Using the capacity analysis, this section considers the level of actual spare capacity available for each playing format.

Actual spare capacity for Saturday and Sunday demand is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (ten matches for Saturday and eight matches on a Sunday) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per day).

Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that the actual spare capacity on Saturdays, Sundays and during midweek should not be viewed collectively as utilising it across different days may result in overplay. For example, a site with ten match equivalent sessions of spare capacity per season theoretically has capacity for one additional senior team and two additional junior teams; however, it does not have capacity for both. As such, this needs to be taken into consideration on a site-by-site basis as and when demand grows.

Saturday cricket

There is no actual spare capacity for Saturday cricket at either site in Stevenage, as both sites already accommodate two teams each. This is what has caused Stevenage Cricket Club to export its fifth Sunday mens team into North Hertfordshire as there is no actual spare capacity for Saturday demand.

Sunday cricket

Similar to Saturday cricket, a square on a Sunday is only considered to have actual spare capacity if it is not already used by two teams at this time, has secure tenure and is not over, at, or close to capacity. Taking this into consideration, both sites in Stevenage have potential capacity to accommodate further demand.

Table 6.12: Summary of actual spare capacity for Sunday cricket by site

Site ID	Site name	Club user	Capacity rating (MES)	Number of additional teams that could be accommodated in the peak period	Actual spare capacity required for additional teams in the peak period (MES)
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Stevenage CC	16	2	16
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	Stevenage CC	9	0	8

For Sunday cricket, actual spare capacity is provided on one square, as can be seen by Table 6.12, totalling 25 match equivalent sessions per season.

At King George V Playing Fields, due to currently having no Sunday teams accessing the site, there is spare capacity to accommodate two teams to use the site. Stevenage Cricket Club already has two Sunday cricket teams currently and therefore does not have spare capacity for an additional Sunday team.

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Sunday capacity provides capacity for additional senior men’s demand to be accommodated outside of the peak period but still within a competitive format. Moreover, it provides peak time availability for senior women’s cricket (both hardball and softball) and for some junior demand, particularly older age groups.

Junior cricket (midweek)

For midweek cricket, most squares with spare capacity have actual spare capacity for an increase in demand. This is because matches can be spread across numerous days, meaning capacity is not limited to two teams. Moreover, the presence of junior wickets at certain sites, as well as NTPs, provide further capacity that is generally not available to senior demand.

For a square to have actual spare capacity for midweek cricket, it must have secure tenure, not be overplayed and have more than four match equivalent sessions of spare capacity as this is the average number of matches an additional junior team would play. However, a square is not considered to have capacity for an increase in demand if it is already used by six midweek teams or more as availability is then assumed to be limited (on average, clubs are able to play fixtures on three nights per week, with other nights reserved for other activity such as All Stars and Dynamos).

Actual spare capacity for midweek demand is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by juniors’ teams (four) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per day for three days of play per square that is available).

Taking the above into consideration, both squares in Stevenage have potential capacity to accommodate further demand during midweek.

Table 6.13: Summary of actual spare capacity for midweek cricket by site

Site ID	Site name	Club user	Capacity rating (MES)	Number of additional teams that could be accommodated in the peak period	Actual spare capacity required for additional teams in the peak period (MES)
14	King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage)	Stevenage CC	16	4	16
31	Stevenage Cricket Club	Stevenage CC	27	1	4

For midweek cricket, actual spare capacity is provided on two squares, totalling 20 match equivalent sessions per season.

King George V Playing Fields currently hosts no midweek junior cricket, providing spare capacity to accommodate up to four junior teams. Stevenage Cricket Club, which already accommodates five junior teams, has a maximum capacity for six teams; therefore, it has spare capacity for only one additional junior team.

Overplay

Overplay translates to a site accommodating more demand than it can sustain. While it is possible to sustain certain minimal levels of overplay providing that a regular, sufficient maintenance regime is in place, a resolution is recommended to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on quality over time.

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There is no overplay at either site within Stevenage.

6.5: Supply and demand analysis

Consideration must be given to the extent to which current provision can accommodate current and future demand for both senior and junior cricket. This section therefore looks at actual spare capacity on grass wicket squares considered against overplay and identified future demand. Match equivalent sessions for future demand are calculated using the average number of matches played per season (ten matches for Saturday, eight matches on a Sunday and four matches for midweek junior teams).

As previously presented, future demand is calculated using population forecasts and team generation rates (using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator). On this basis, it has been forecasted that Stevenage will see no growth in teams between now and 2043.

Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Saturday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance during the peak period for senior men's cricket (Saturday). For actual spare capacity, please note that this is converted from the number of match equivalent sessions identified above to the number of match equivalent sessions that could feasibly be utilised by a growth in demand. This is calculated by using Actual spare capacity for Saturday and Sunday demand is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (ten matches for Saturday and eight matches on a Sunday) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per day).

Table 6.14: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Saturday)

Area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	0	0	-	-	-

As seen in the table above, due to no actual spare capacity or overplay being identified, Saturday demand is at capacity.

Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Sunday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance for Sunday cricket, which is peak time for senior women's demand but also relevant to some senior men's and junior teams.

Table 6.15: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Sunday)

Area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	16	0	16	-	16

There is overall current spare capacity amounting to 16 match equivalent sessions per season. This is due to Kings George V Playing Field having capacity to accommodate two Sunday teams. No future demand is identified through population growth, meaning no change takes place to the future capacity analysis.

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Junior cricket supply and demand analysis (midweek)

For the junior supply and demand analysis, actual spare capacity equates to the total number of additional junior teams that could be fielded on each available square (on the assumption that one square can accommodate six midweek teams), multiplied by four (the average number of matches a junior team plays). This is because junior demand at peak time is not limited to one day, although some capacity should be reserved for activity such as All Stars and Dynamos cricket.

Table 6.16: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for junior cricket

Area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Stevenage	20	-	20	-	20

There is currently overall spare capacity for midweek cricket amounting to 20 match equivalent sessions per season. This is due Kings George V Playing Fields currently accommodating no junior cricket midweek, therefore have spare capacity for four teams. In addition, Stevenage Cricket Club currently have five junior teams' midweek, therefore have spare capacity to accommodate one additional team. No future demand is identified through population growth, meaning no change takes place to the future capacity analysis.

6.6: Conclusion

In summary, the broad position in Stevenage is there is sufficient supply to accommodate current demand. However, there is no spare capacity to accommodate exported or future demand on Saturdays (peak time for adults) due to both sites in Stevenage currently accommodating two teams each.

No overplay has been identified at either site within Stevenage.

There is sufficient provision to accommodate all current Sunday and midweek demand that has been identified. With actual spare capacity identified to accommodate two additional teams on Sunday at King George V Playing Fields (Stevenage).

There is also sufficient provision to accommodate junior cricket midweek, with actual spare capacity to create five additional teams within the Borough across both sites.

The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan considers the role in which disused provision could potentially play in accommodating exported/future demand.

A scenario exploring how future demand, through club aspirations of one junior boy's and one junior girls' team will affect the future capacity analysis is included in the accompanying Strategy & Action Plan. It can also consider the impact of a new square within the Authority will have upon the exported demand and potential to accommodate more match play.

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Cricket – supply and demand summary

- ◀ The broad position in Stevenage is there is an insufficient stock of supply for peak time senior cricket. This is due to Stevenage Cricket Club having to export its fifth Saturday mens team to North Hertfordshire due to the lack of available squares within Stevenage.
- ◀ There is no overplay at either site within Stevenage.
- ◀ Sunday and Midweek demand continues to display actual spare capacity.

Cricket – supply summary

- ◀ In total, there are two active grass wicket squares in Stevenage both of which are open to community use.
- ◀ There are six standalone NTPs identified, all of which are at school sites and are not available for community use.
- ◀ Stevenage CC has a lease agreement in place with Stevenage Borough Council for its home site and rents its secondary site Kings George V Playing Field, however, reports no concerns regarding its continued access to the square.
- ◀ The audit of community available grass wicket cricket squares found Stevenage Cricket Club to be good quality, and Kings George V Playing Field (Stevenage) to be standard quality.
- ◀ Stevenage Cricket Club has good quality ancillary provision with a recent refurbishment, whereas Kings George V Playing Field is serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.
- ◀ Stevenage Cricket Club has sufficient training facilities with access to a four lane fixed practice net, which has an adequate surface.

Cricket – demand summary

- ◀ There is one club in Stevenage providing 11 teams across senior and junior cricket. When broken down this equates to seven senior men's and six junior boys' teams.
- ◀ Stevenage CC offers the All-Stars programme, with 39 participants, however, no Dynamos sessions.
- ◀ Within the Borough there are no women or girls' teams.
- ◀ Club aspirations equate to the potential growth of one junior boy's and one junior girls' team.
- ◀ The only instance of exported demand for competitive fixtures is Stevenage CC which uses the cricket square at Graveley Cricket Club throughout the season, located in the North Hertfordshire District.

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PART 7: TENNIS COURTS

7.1: Introduction

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the organisation responsible for the governance of tennis. It has recently restructured its strategic approach to target several national focus areas, with a priority on developing the sport at park sites and removing key barriers to participation in park and club sites.

In Stevenage, the LTA is working with Stevenage Borough Council to improve access to provision in parks. More detailed information on the LTA's ClubSpark, Play Tennis App and Gate Access are set out later in the report.

Consultation

There is one tennis club based in Stevenage. A face-to-face consultation was conducted with Lister Tennis Club, therefore resulting in a response rate of 100%.

7.2: Supply

There are 36 tennis courts identified in Stevenage across eight sites. Of these, 25 courts are available to community use, while 11 courts are unavailable for community use.

Note that courts are classified as being available for community use if they are deemed to be easily accessible to the general population, either via pay and play or through a membership at a club, or a combination of both.

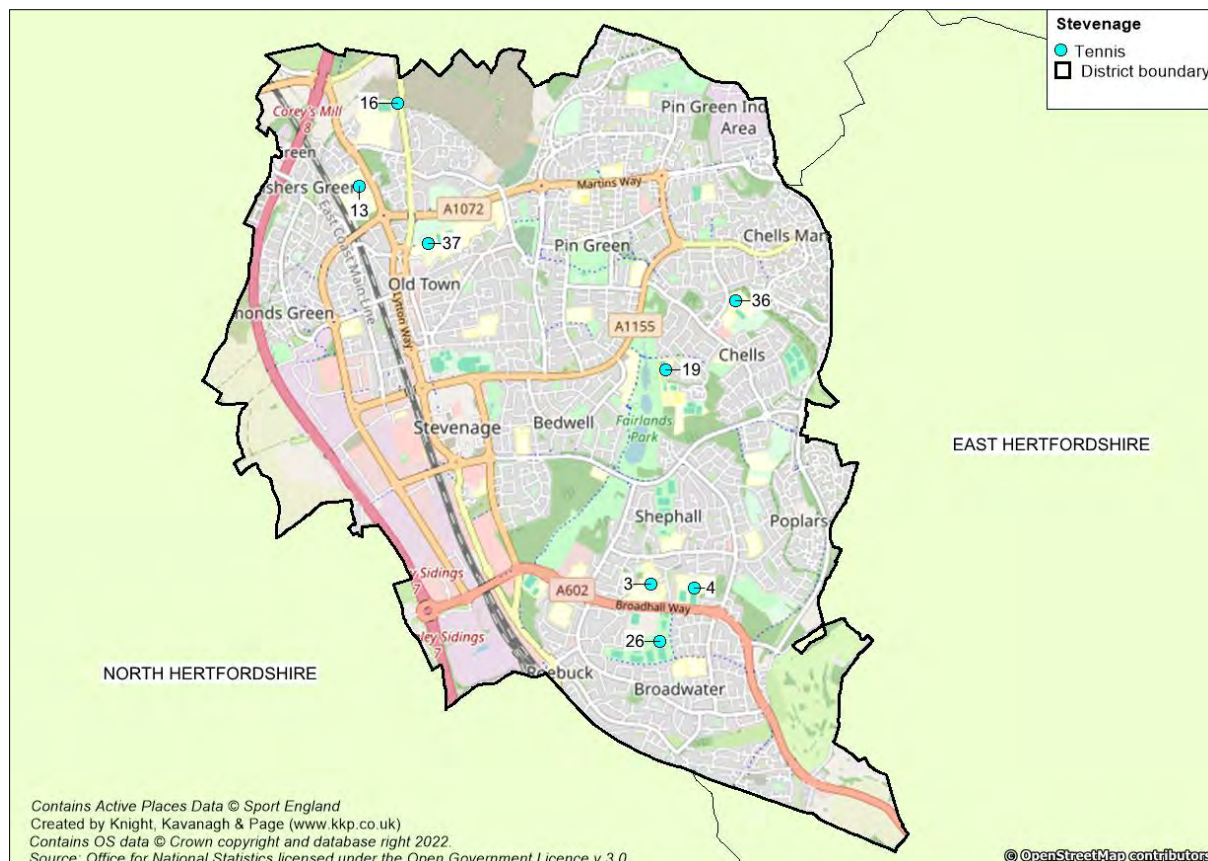
Table 7.1: Summary of the number of courts available for community use

Site ID	Site name	No. of courts	Community use?
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	3	Yes
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	4	Yes
13	John Henry Newman School	5	Yes
16	Lister Tennis Club	3	Yes
16	Lister Tennis Club	2 (domed)	Yes
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	3	Yes
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	3	No
26	Shephalbury Park	5	Yes
36	The Nobel School	4	No
37	The Thomas Alleyne Academy	4	No

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Figure 7.1 below shows the location of the courts servicing Stevenage. For a key to the map, see Table 7.2.

Figure 7.1: Overview of tennis court locations



Disused provision

There is one site within the Borough with disused tennis courts. The concrete courts at King George V Playing Fields have sustained significant damage, rendering them unusable. The damage appears to be caused by a vehicle, as large sections of the concrete have been pulled up across several courts alongside tire marks. There is no fencing or barriers around the court, allowing a vehicle to access the area, leading to the current condition. The FA and FF are planning to install a PlayZone on the disused courts and will look to install floodlighting at Shephalbury Park to cover the loss of the courts at King George V Playing Fields. Alongside potentially installing padel provision next to the PlayZone.

Potential future changes to supply

Lister Tennis Club currently operates under a lease agreement with a private landlord, with approximately 10 years remaining. The Club aims to extend this lease to secure its future at the current site. However, the landlord has expressed an interest in potentially redeveloping the site in line with a nearby housing development. The same landlord owns additional facilities on the premises, including a rugby club and a gym, each of which operates under separate lease agreements.

Barnwell Upper is an educational facility, with four poor quality courts currently available for community use. Barnwell Upper has expressed ambitions to convert its four courts into an artificial grass pitch (AGP). However, at this time, the educational site has no concrete plans currently to proceed with this process.

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Table 7.2: Summary of tennis courts in Stevenage

Site ID	Site name	Management	Community use?	No. of courts	Sports lit?	Court type	Court quality
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	Education	Yes	3	No	Macadam	Good
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	Education	Yes	4	No	Macadam	Poor
13	John Henry Newman School	Education	Yes	5	Yes	Macadam	Standard
16	Lister Tennis Club	Sports Club	Yes	2	Yes	Polymeric	Good
16	Lister Tennis Club	Sports Club	Yes	1	Yes	Polymeric	Standard
16	Lister Tennis Club	Sports Club	Yes	2 (domed)	Yes	Polymeric	Standard
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	Education	Yes	3	Yes	Macadam	Standard
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	Education	No	3	No	Macadam	Standard
26	Shephalbury Park	Council	Yes	5	No	Macadam	Good
36	The Nobel School	Education	No	4	No	Macadam	Standard
37	The Thomas Alleyne Academy	Education	No	4	No	Macadam	Poor

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Management

The table below highlights the management of tennis courts within Stevenage.

Table 7.3: Tennis courts by management type (all courts)

Community use?	No. of club	No. of Council	No. of education courts	No. of other
Available	5	5	15	-
Unavailable	-	-	11	-
Total	5	5	26	-

Most available tennis courts in Stevenage are located at educational sites (26) the rest are split between Council or sport club sites (five). It is important to note that 11 courts are unavailable for community use at education sites.

Security of tenure

Lister Tennis Club has a lease agreement with a private landlord which states has roughly 10 years remaining. The Club is looking to extend this agreement and feels the site is at risk of being redeveloped.

Court type

Within Stevenage, 31 (86%) outdoor tennis courts have a macadam surface, 20 of which are available for community use. The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is ten years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels.

There are five (14%) outdoor tennis courts with a polymeric surface at Lister Tennis Club. The estimated lifespan of such provision is similar to that of a macadam surface, although the cost of maintenance is generally higher due to the courts do not drain as well.

There is one air dome site in Stevenage located at Lister Tennis Club, the site has two polymeric courts covered by an air dome all year round.

Sports lighting

Courts with sports lighting enable use throughout the year and are identified by the LTA as being a key priority for growing participation nationally. The LTA reports that sports lighting allows for a 35% increase in available court time on an annual basis.

In Stevenage, 13 of the 36 tennis courts is serviced by sports lighting, representing 36% of the provision. The courts with sports lighting are located at:

- ▶ John Henry Newman School.
- ▶ Lister Tennis Club.
- ▶ Marriotts Sports Centre.

Access to sports lighting enables clubs to accommodate more members and can therefore be beneficial. Stevenage Borough Council confirms it is an ambition to install sports lighting to the courts at Shephalbury Park.

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Overmarking

Tennis courts, particularly within schools, are often overmarked by netball, basketball and/or football markings. Courts that are over marked tend to receive higher levels of use which can be detrimental to quality over time, as well as creating capacity issues if there is community demand from more than one sport.

Overmarking of tennis courts is identified at six sites, as seen below. All courts showing overmarking's are educational sites. All overmarked courts are lined with netball markings.

- ◀ Barnwell School (Middle).
- ◀ Barnwell School (Upper).
- ◀ John Henry Newman School.
- ◀ Marriotts Sports Centre.
- ◀ The Nobel School.
- ◀ The Thomas Alleyne Academy.

Quality

The quality of tennis courts has been informed through non-technical site assessments and consultation with providers to assign each court a rating of good, standard or poor. Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness, and evidence of any inappropriate use (e.g., vandalism and/or littering).

The table below outlines the quality of all tennis courts in Stevenage, regardless of availability.

Table 7.4: Summary of quality of tennis courts

Community use?	Good	Standard	Poor
Available	10	11	4
Unavailable	0	7	4
Total	10	18	8

In total, 10 courts are assessed as good quality (28% of all provision), 18 as standard quality (50%) and eight as poor quality (22%).

The courts assessed as poor quality are located at the following sites:

- ◀ Barnwell School (Upper)
- ◀ The Thomas Alleyne Academy

Issues recorded at these sites include the presence of moss, worn line markings, loose gravel and damage to the posts and nets with maintenance also considered to be basic and infrequent at these sites. This leads to further deterioration in quality.

In the case of Lister Tennis Club, two of the courts are of a good quality having been resurfaced two years ago. However, one of the courts is of a standard quality due to a root encroachment, impacting the flatness of the surface, alongside leaves impacting the grip of the surface.

Lister Tennis Club also has two indoor courts of standard quality located within an air dome that was constructed in 1995. The Club reports that the air circulation system motor requires upgrading, and it is looking to address this in the near future. As both courts are covered by an air dome they will also feature within the Indoor Sports Needs Assessment Report.

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The Club highlights the need for additional support with cleaning and maintenance of both the indoor courts and the dome structure. As part of its future development plans, the Club aspires to use the dome for hosting external events.

Shephalbury Park provides the only council managed courts within the Authority. The courts are of a good quality after having been resurfaced in 2023 through funding from the LTA and the Council. The courts are bookable through the online ClubSpark booking system operated by the National Tennis Association (NTA) on behalf of the Council and are maintained by Stevenage Borough Council.

Renovation fund²⁵

The LTA has secured a £22 million investment fund to be put into public tennis courts across Britain, together with an £8.5 million investment from the LTA. This will see thousands of public park tennis courts that are in poor or unplayable condition improved for the benefit of local communities.

The LTA's ambition is to drive participation across park tennis sites, as well as ensuring the future sustainability of these facilities. As well as paying for the refurbishment of public park courts, the new investment will also pay for the implementation of sustainable operating models for the facilities, with specialist programmes and support to ensure courts are both affordable and utilised.

Ancillary provision

Ancillary provision refers to the accompanying building to a site that is accessed as changing facilities and a social space if applicable. All sites were assessed for its ancillary provision quality during non-technical site assessments and further evidenced by consultation responses. Quality ratings were determined by assessing matters such as the condition of the building, the quantity and quality of changing rooms and the social space offering.

Table 7.5: Ancillary quality breakdown

Club	Facility as a whole	Changing facilities	Car parking
Lister Tennis Club	Standard	N/A	Good

Lister Tennis Club accesses a standard quality pavilion which includes a kitchen, social space, and restroom facilities. Whilst the pavilion lacks designated changing rooms, it adequately serves the needs of the Club.

Parking facilities are shared with the neighbouring Stevenage Town Rugby Club; however, the car park sufficiently accommodates current usage levels. Overall, the Club's facilities meet existing demand, and there are no immediate plans for expansion or refurbishment.

For non-club courts, the ancillary provision at most sites provides changing facilities and/or toilets, they are not specific for tennis and are generally too far away from the courts to be realistically used. Often, the facilities predominately service football/cricket pitch users and therefore are not readily available or suited to tennis court users. For instance, Shephalbury Park has five park courts that are not serviced by any ancillary provision. The site does provide dedicated changing rooms for the bowls club (Three Horseshoes Bowls Club) and football demand based at the site.

²⁵[Link to investment plans](#)

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Insight from the LTA indicates good quality ancillary facilities such as toilets, changing rooms and cafes encourage players to visit community available provision and stay for extended periods of time. Therefore, a potential way to increase usage of such provision would be to invest in suitable ancillary amenities, which can then also provide a source of income.

7.3: Demand

Competitive tennis

Lister Tennis Club reports that it has a total of 100 members. As a breakdown, this equates to 30 senior and 70 junior members.

Latent demand

Latent demand for tennis nationally is reported to be high by the LTA, which has an insight tool that suggests that 18% of the five million players that pick up a racket each year would play more often if key barriers such as poor promotion of opportunities to get on court, unclear booking journeys (especially those that are 'offline') and low-quality facilities were addressed.

On this basis, there is a potential opportunity in Stevenage Borough Council and other providers to understand if such barriers exist locally and if so, address such barriers, whilst also bettering understanding of court usage.

Sport England's Segmentation Tool²⁶ enables analysis of the percentage of adults that would like to participate in tennis but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 1,475 people within Stevenage resembling 1.6% of the Borough's population. As a comparison, the national average for people wanting to play tennis but are not currently doing so is 1.75%, putting Stevenage directly in line with the national figures.

The highest latent demand is 'settling down males' which equates to 156 people wanting to play tennis that currently are not.

Imported/exported demand

Exported demand refers to tennis players accessing courts outside of the study area, despite being registered in Stevenage. Likewise, imported demand is demand from neighbouring authorities accessing courts in Stevenage to access tennis provision.

In terms of exported demand, the Odyssey Health Club, located in the neighbouring authority of North Hertfordshire, offers four sports lit artificial turf courts. Although the facility is situated just outside the Stevenage boundary, the sites' location means that these courts effectively serve non-club tennis demand for Stevenage residents. As a result, the courts enhance the overall provision of sports lit tennis courts available to the local authority.

Lister Tennis Club did not report any imported demand from neighbouring authorities. However, it is important to acknowledge that non-club tennis participation within Stevenage may still occur due to the town's proximity to surrounding authorities and the provision located at park sites.

²⁶ [Sport England Segmentation Information](#)

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Future demand

Lister Tennis Club did not express and future demand ambitions. The Club feels well-positioned to manage and balance demand effectively with its existing membership base, ensuring that resources and facilities meet current needs comfortably. The Club confirms its main priority for the future is ensuring it can continue to access its existing site rather than growing its membership base.

Away from club-based demand, it is considered that all remaining future demand will be picked up via the latent/unmet demand noted above and attracted to non-club and particularly local authority courts.

The Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) is an interactive tool which allows its user to help quantify the additional demand for key community sports facilities created by a new population. The SFC has been used to quantify how many new tennis courts would be needed to account for ONS based population projection rather than the growth associated with new housing developments in the district and therefore will not fully account for housing growth. The calculation results show that there is a need for an extra 0.32 tennis courts in Stevenage at a cost of £37,274.

Informal tennis

The LTA has developed a package of support for local authorities to grow the use of tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The three initiatives are ClubSpark, Play Tennis App and Gate Access, which are further detailed below.

ClubSpark – Improving the booking process

ClubSpark is a flexible and simple venue management platform with multiple products and applications to help venues, local authorities and coaches manage their sport. ClubSpark is a tool that is offered for free as part of LTA venue registration and allows administrators to manage all functions at their venue(s), including:

- ◀ Managed website - create and manage a mobile friendly website tailored to LA/club requirements to promote events and activities.
- ◀ Managed coaching – set up coaching lessons and courses online.
- ◀ Membership management - improve membership engagement by making it easier for the venue and for members to pay, renew and keep in touch (includes online payments, direct debits and the monitoring of revenue streams; membership modules can also be used to take season ticket payments for venues operating a non-traditional annual facility fee).
- ◀ Organise payments - set the way payments are taken, whether it's immediate pay and play, or bookable as part of a membership package.
- ◀ Court bookings – reduced administration for managing bookings; give staff, coaches, members and the general public access to book and pay for courts, classes or other resources online.
- ◀ Scheduling - set unique booking and price rules to suit the venue and enable lights to switch on/off automatically when linked to the LTA Premium Gate Access system.
- ◀ Book and pay remotely - customers can make bookings and payments for a venue anytime, anywhere via the real-time booking app.
- ◀ Reporting - ClubSpark allows administrators to view reports highlighting income, court usage, revenue and number of members and season ticket holders; this allows for identification of trends and patterns and evidence to demonstrate participation levels and impact.

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Within Stevenage, both Lister Tennis Club and Shephalbury Park utilise the ClubSpark booking system.

Play Tennis App

The Play Tennis app is a newly launched court booking tool designed to make it easier for players to find and book courts. With this app, players can reserve a court, sign up for classes, and connect with other local players through the new Communities feature. Its main goal is to simplify the journey to the court. Features like biometric login and support for Google and Apple Pay, allows booking a court to be done in just a few taps.

The Play Tennis app offers several benefits that help boost local tennis participation and court usage. It enables players to connect with others in their area, forming an engaged community through group chats for example, for sessions like 'Barclays Free Park Tennis' to encourage regular participation. The app can also support coaching within smaller groups, making it easier to organise informal training sessions. By promoting court availability and facilitating player's needs, the app helps increase court bookings and overall usage of tennis courts.

Gate Access

The LTA has developed two gate access systems that work in association with ClubSpark to secure courts and to allow access to booked customers only. Members of the public can book a court online (making payment if required) and receive a 4-digit access code via email to enter using a courtside keypad. The gate access system then allows entry for the time booked if a correct code is entered.

There are two gate options available: SmartAccess Premium and SmartAccess Lite. The demands and needs of users plus the setup of the venue determines the most appropriate system for each site.

Nationally, the LTA report that in the last three years, sites with a gate access system installed have attracted 64,841 unique players, leading to 609,671 courts being booked. This has generated income of over £1 million.

Barclays Local Tennis League

The leagues offer competitive yet informal opportunities for local residents of all skill levels to meet new people and improve their game. With over 200 mixed singles and doubles leagues running year-round at park and public courts nationwide, adults aged 18 and over can enjoy accessible, community-based competition close to home.

Within the authority, residents can access Stevenage Tennis League at Shephalbury Park.

Barclays Free Park Tennis

Barclays Free Park Tennis is a nationwide programme offering free, inclusive tennis sessions every weekend at local park courts. Open to all ages and abilities, the sessions provide a fun, social environment to enjoy tennis, meet new people, and stay active. Equipment is provided, and trained volunteers lead each one-hour session with engaging games and exercises designed to improve skills and fitness. Whether new to the game or looking to get back on the court, Barclays Free Park Tennis offers a welcoming and accessible way to play, with no cost and no need for a playing partner.

In Stevenage, this programme will begin in June 2025, providing the residents with opportunities to participate in informal tennis.

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LTA Big Tennis Weekend

The LTA Big Tennis Weekend is an LTA initiative which all registered venues can access. Clubs and venues can sign up to host open days, which are free of charge, and create a relaxed and welcoming environment for those new to tennis to participate. This in turn can potentially lead to the clubs attracting new members.

The LTA hosts three dedicated weekends a year (in May, July and September) that are the UK's biggest public tennis events. Furthermore, venues can run additional events outside these dates and will benefit from their events being promoted on the national LTA campaign website. All clubs running an open day are asked to promote a follow-on offer to all attendees, such as a reduced rate introductory membership or a number of free coaching sessions, to encourage people to continue playing after the event.

No sites in Stevenage currently host or are scheduled to host a Big Tennis Weekend.

LTA Youth Programmes

LTA Youth has superseded the former initiative of Mini Tennis as the new LTA flagship delivery programme. The initiative is tailored towards delivering a fresh, fun approach to coaching tennis for kids aged 4-18.

The programme is made up of an LTA Youth Start introductory course, followed by five stages that give young players the chance to practice and develop at an appropriate level. The five stages can be seen below:

- ◆ Blue Stage: Children improve balance, agility and co-ordination through fun games. This stage teaches the fundamental basics of tennis.
- ◆ Red Stage: Children practice overarm serves, volleys and learn how to serve. Play takes place using soft ball and on small courts.
- ◆ Orange Stage: Children are taught tactics, problem solving and guides to sportsmanship and leadership.
- ◆ Green Stage: Children play on a full-sized court. Sessions are spent fine tuning and developing techniques.
- ◆ Yellow Stage: Children play on a full-sized court using regular tennis balls. Players are encouraged to explore different play styles allowing them to choose their own approach.

LTA Youth can be found at Lister Tennis Club, hosting all five stages.

Padel tennis

Padel is a form of tennis that is easy to play, fun and sociable. It is played mainly in a doubles format on an enclosed court about a third of the size of a tennis court and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities as it is not power dominant. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although players serve underhand and the walls are used as part of the game, with the ball allowed to bounce off them.

As of the end of 2023, 129,000 people reportedly play padel more than once a year in England, which represents a significant increase compared to 2021 data when the number was 15,000. This exemplifies the continued growth of the sport and the need to ensure that such demand is being adequately catered for. One of the LTAs key strategies is to find new ways to grow participation and padel is an innovative format of tennis that is fun, flexible, easy to play and extremely sociable.

The LTA Padel Provision Calculator indicates a demand for seven padel courts within Stevenage to meet local needs. However, there are currently no padel tennis courts in

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Stevenage, however, the closest available provision is indoor courts at Gosling Sports Park located 13 miles away and outdoor courts at Old Owens Sports Club located 21 miles away. There are also two outdoor padel courts located at Bishops Stortford Sports Trust and utilised by Bishops Stortford Lawn Tennis Club. The site is located 24 miles from Lister Tennis Club.

The Council are in the early stages of considering Padel court provision on the site of the disused tennis courts at King George V Playing Fields alongside the PlayZone development. Given the rapid growth of padel as a sport and the identified demand, strategic investment in padel provision should be considered to enhance local access and support Stevenage residents' participation in this emerging sport.

7.4: Supply and demand analysis

Club tennis

The LTA suggests that a non- sport lit hard court can accommodate 40 members whereas a hard court with sports lighting can accommodate 60 members. Courts covered with an air dome can also accommodate 100 members.

Using the above figures, the table below analyses whether courts currently in use by clubs are sufficient to meet current and future demand. However, it must be noted that this should only be used as a guide as capacity can vary from site to site depending on how the demand operates and the programmes of use in place. Some clubs can comfortably operate over capacity guidance, whilst others may have pressures without theoretically being over capacity.

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Table 7.6: Capacity analysis (club courts)

Site ID	Site	Club users	Current demand (members)	Future demand (members)	No. of courts	Sports lighting?	Capacity (members)	Current capacity balance	Future capacity balance
16	Lister Tennis Club	Lister Tennis Club	100	0	5 (two domed courts)	Yes	380	280	280

As seen in the table above, the courts at Lister Tennis Club currently have spare capacity for a further 280 members. This position is unchanged in the future as the Club has not expressed any future growth ambitions. If the capacity analysis only assessed the outdoor courts provided, the Club would still have spare capacity for a further 80 members, before accessing its indoor domed courts.

Non-club tennis

As no non-club courts are identified as having any capacity issues, priority should be placed on improving quality of non-club courts to an adequate standard for promoting and increasing informal play, particularly at publicly available sites accommodating multiple courts and adequate ancillary facilities. Linked to this, the utilisation of LTA schemes at suitable sites should also be considered, as should the establishment of the other various initiatives supported by the NGB.

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7.5: Conclusion

To conclude, the overall supply of non-club tennis provision in Stevenage is sufficient to meet demand.

It is also essential to consider the provision of four floodlit artificial turf courts located just outside Stevenage, within the neighbouring authority of North Hertfordshire. Due to the site's close proximity to the Stevenage boundary, these courts contribute to local tennis accessibility and play a role in meeting the demand for tennis facilities within the area.

When factoring in club courts, the courts at Lister Tennis Club are currently meeting demand with potential spare capacity, however, the Club expresses no ambitions to expand its current members. Given that the courts are of a good and standard quality, these are likely to withstand increased usage. The Club feels its current challenges are to secure the long-term access to its site rather than increase its membership base.

The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan further explores the challenges for tennis within Stevenage, specifically regarding the tenure agreement of Lister Tennis Club.

Tennis – supply and demand summary

- ◀ For club-based tennis, Lister Tennis Club currently has spare capacity for 280 members. Due to the Club having no ambitions to expand members, the future capacity is also 280 members.
- ◀ Away from clubs, although no courts are identified as having any capacity issues, precedence should be placed on improving the supply in ways that can attract and better accommodate more users.

Tennis – supply summary

- ◀ There are 36 tennis courts identified in Stevenage across eight sites. Of these, 25 courts are available to community use, while 11 courts are unavailable for community use.
- ◀ Most available tennis courts in Stevenage are educational sites (26) the rest are split between SBC sites (5) or sports club sites (5). It's important to note 11 courts are unavailable for community use at education sites.
- ◀ The most common court surface is macadam, with 31 (86%) courts identified across seven sites, followed by a polymeric surface of which there are five (14%) courts at one site.
- ◀ In total, 13 of the 36 tennis courts is serviced by sports lighting, representing 36% of the provision.
- ◀ In total, 10 courts are assessed as good quality (28% of all provision), 18 as standard quality (50%) and eight as poor quality (22%).
- ◀ There is air dome provision at Lister Tennis Club, which facilitates two standard quality indoor courts.
- ◀ Lister Tennis Club accesses a standard quality dedicated ancillary provision.
- ◀ Lister Tennis Club has a lease agreement with a private landlord. The Club would like to extend its current agreement and raises concerns about the long-term access of its site.

Tennis – demand summary

- ◀ There is one tennis club in Stevenage, Lister Tennis Club reports that it has a total of 100 members. As a breakdown, this equates to 30 senior and 70 junior members.
- ◀ Lister Tennis Club has expressed satisfaction with its current membership level and has no current ambitions to grow members.
- ◀ Away from clubs, it is considered that all local authority courts available for community use in Stevenage have spare capacity for a growth in demand, although this is difficult to quantify as use is not always recorded due to the open access nature of many sites.
- ◀ Lister Tennis Club and Shephalbury Park utilise ClubSpark.
- ◀ LTA Youth can be found at Lister Tennis Club which hosts all five stages of the program.
- ◀ There are currently no padel tennis courts within Stevenage.

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PART 8: NETBALL COURTS

8.1: Introduction

England Netball is the governing body for the sport across England. Levels of participation are quickly increasing, with over 100,000 affiliated members and at least 1 million women and girls playing during a typical week. Its aim is to provide its members and partners with the best possible service and experience in sport.

Consultation

Demand for netball takes place through the Herts Indoor Netball League, the Stevenage Netball League and the Play Netball Stevenage League. Consultation with the Stevenage Indoor Netball League and England Netball has taken place to inform the following section.

8.2: Supply

In total, there are 26 outdoor netball courts located across seven sites in Stevenage. Of these, 15 courts across four sites are open to community access, representing 58% of all outdoor courts. Tables 8.2 and 8.3 below, outline the total supply of provision within Stevenage with these mapped in Figure 8.1.

Table 8.1: Summary of the number of courts

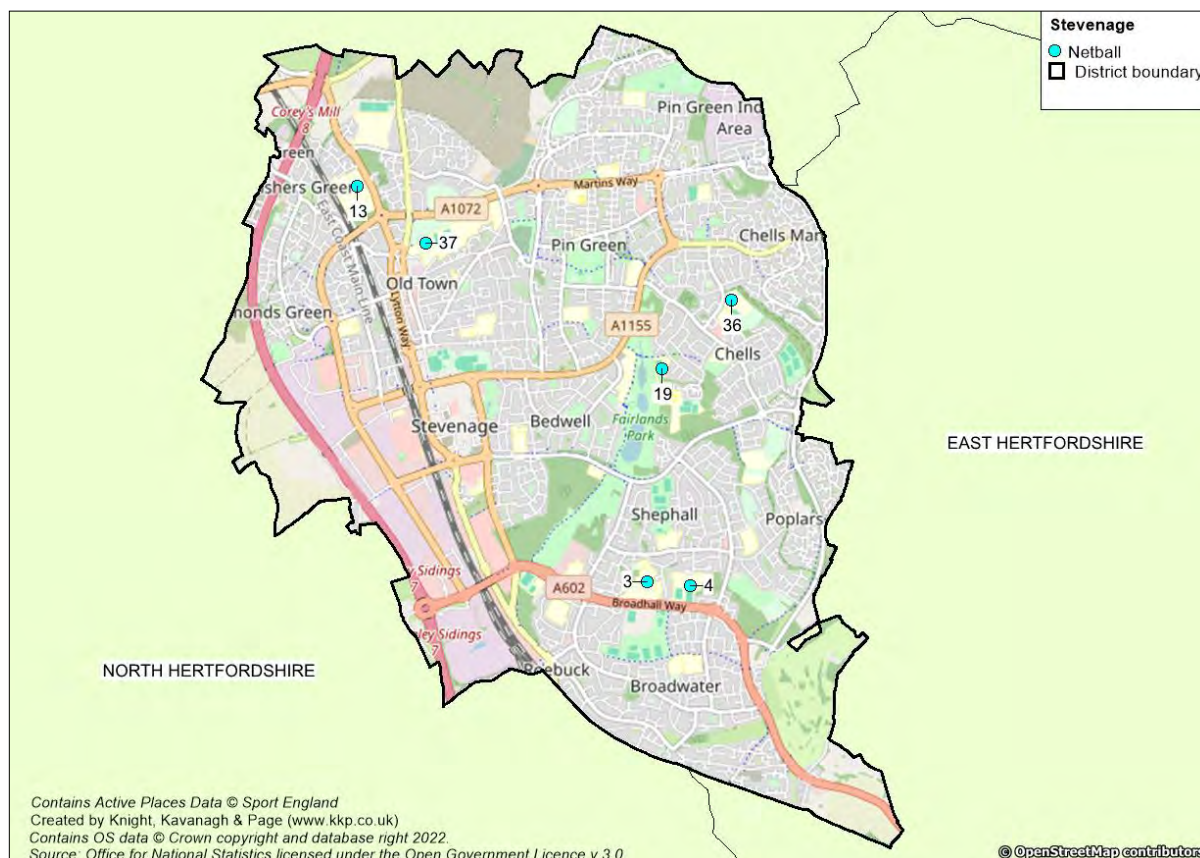
No. of courts available for community use	No. of courts unavailable for community use
15	11

Table 8.2: Summary of supply

Site ID	Site name	Community use?	Management	No. of courts	Sports lit?	Court type
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	Yes	Education	3	No	Macadam
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	Yes	Education	4	No	Macadam
13	John Henry Newman School	Yes	Education	5	Yes	Macadam
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	Yes	Education	3	Yes	Macadam
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	No	Education	3	No	Macadam
36	The Nobel School	No	Education	4	No	Macadam
37	The Thomas Alleyne Academy	No	Education	4	No	Macadam

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Figure 8.1: Netball court locations



Disused provision

There are two sites within the Borough with disused netball courts. The concrete netball courts at King George V Playing Fields have sustained significant damage, rendering them unusable. The damage appears to be caused by a vehicle, as large sections of the concrete have been pulled up across several courts alongside tire marks. There is no fencing or barriers around the court, allowing a vehicle to access the area, leading to the current state of disrepair. This has resulted in the courts being disused.

The St Nicholas Park car park previously accommodated netball training, however, it has no netball markings and is primarily used as car park.

Stevenage Borough Council confirms it is exploring converting the disused courts at King George V Playing Fields into a 3G PlayZone in 2025. With potentially neighbouring padel courts.

Future supply

Barnwell Upper School has four poor quality courts currently available for community use. The school has expressed ambitions to convert the four courts into an artificial grass pitch (AGP) long term.

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Overmarking

Whilst it does help with usage levels and sustainability, an issue for netball nationally is that many of its courts are dual use tennis courts. This limits accessibility (especially during the summer when tennis nets are often permanently in place) and can impact on quality due to higher levels of wear and tear.

In Stevenage, overmarking of netball courts is identified at six sites, as seen below. All sites showing overmarking's are educational sites. All overmarked courts are lined with tennis markings.

- ◀ Barnwell School (Middle).
- ◀ Barnwell School (Upper).
- ◀ John Henry Newman School.
- ◀ Marriotts Sports Centre.
- ◀ The Nobel School.
- ◀ The Thomas Alleyne Academy.

Surface type

Across Stevenage, all 26 courts have a macadam surface. The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is 10 years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels.

Management

The table below highlights the management of netball courts within Stevenage.

Table 8.3: Netball courts by management type (all courts)

Community use?	No. of club courts	No. of Council	No. of education courts	No. of 'other' courts
Available	-	-	15	-
Unavailable	-	-	11	-
Total	0	0	26	0

All available courts in Stevenage are operated by education sites, with 14 being available for community use.

Security of tenure

The security of tenure position of the Play Netball league is unknown as the league has not been consulted with. However, its known that leagues based at education or local authority sites, generally don't operate with any security of tenure and block book fixtures on an annual basis.

Quality

The quality of netball courts across Stevenage has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

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The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments are as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (70-80%), Poor (<70%).

Maintaining high court quality is an important aspect of netball and therefore the non-technical assessment (and consultation agreements) assesses several factors which evidence court quality. The criteria for the non-technical assessment consists of; court surface grip underfoot, damage to a court surface, line markings, evidence of moss/lichen, slope of courts, disability access, fencing and courts being of an appropriate size.

As can be seen in the table below, most netball provision in Stevenage are standard quality. To summarise, of the 26 courts, three are good quality (12%), 15 are of a standard quality (58%) and eight poor quality courts (31%). The poor-quality courts provided are deemed so due to issues such as poor grip underfoot, damaged surfaces and a general need for surface replacements.

Table 8.4: Quality summary

Site ID	Site name	No. of courts	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Quality
3	Barnwell School (Middle)	3	Yes	No	Good
4	Barnwell School (Upper)	4	Yes	No	Poor
13	John Henry Newman School	5	Yes	Yes	Standard
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	3	Yes	Yes	Standard
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	3	No	No	Standard
36	The Nobel School	4	No	No	Standard
37	The Thomas Alleyne Academy	4	No	No	Poor

8.3: Demand

There is one Netball Club within Stevenage, Stevenage Storm Netball Club, however the Club did not respond to consultation requests. Desk research indicates that it has a large junior and senior section and competes in the Herts Netball Association Senior & Junior League, utilising both indoor and outdoor courts. It also delivers its own Back to Netball sessions to encourage new players into the sport. It is actively recruiting new players of all abilities. It accesses the sports hall at Marriotts Sports Centre on Wednesday evenings for club nights.

Demand for netball takes place in the Stevenage Indoor Netball League, the Herts Indoor Netball League and the Play Netball Stevenage League. Only the Play Netball Stevenage League takes place on outdoor courts, as the Herts Indoor Netball League and the Stevenage Netball League take place on indoor courts. Analysis into the two indoor leagues within Stevenage will be provided in the Indoor Built Facility Report.

The Stevenage Play Netball League is based on Monday and Tuesday evenings from 19:00-21:00 at Marriotts Sports Centre. The site provides five standard quality outdoor sports lit courts, with three courts open to community use. A consultation with the school staff confirmed the courts were last resurfaced 13 years ago and they are slippery due to the fallen leaves from the overhanging trees.

The Stevenage Junior Netball League formerly accommodated the junior demand within the Authority. The League accessed the outdoor courts at The Nobel School for fixtures. Consultation with The Nobel School confirmed the courts are no longer open to community use and efforts to consult with the league were unsuccessful. England Netball has confirmed that the league is no longer operating.

Further details regarding indoor netball will be included in the Indoor Built Facility Report.

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Play Netball

Play Netball is Britain's largest social netball league provider and arranges fixtures, league tables, umpires, netballs and bibs so players can focus on playing. People can join as individuals to find a team, a group to join the same team or produce their own team of 7 or 10 people.

Play Netball fixtures within Stevenage are held at Marriotts Sport Centre on the three standard quality, sports lit macadam courts. Fixtures take place on Monday and Tuesday evenings from 19:00pm to 21:00pm. The Monday league has one division with six teams, and the Tuesday league also has one division with four teams. It accommodates senior demand and has between eight to 14 weeks during a season dependent upon how many clubs are in each division.

Back to Netball and walking netball

Back to Netball sessions are running across England and provide women of all ages a welcoming re-introduction to the sport. Sessions cover the basics of the game including passing, footwork and shooting and finish with a friendly game. Since its creation in 2010, over 60,000 women have taken part.

There are one Back to Netball session being delivered in Stevenage, with Stevenage Storms delivering sessions. Outside the authority the closest session being delivered is 13 miles away in neighbouring authority East Hertfordshire at The Sele School. Sessions are also delivered at Bishop Hatfield Girls School located 17 miles in Welwyn Hatfield Borough.

Walking netball has evolved from a growing demand of walking sports e.g., walking football. It is a slower version of the game and has been designed so that anyone can play regardless of age and fitness level and therefore offers opportunities for older adults to participate and enjoy.

There is one walking netball sessions delivered in Stevenage at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre on Wednesday between 11:30 and 12:30pm on the centre's indoor courts. Other walking netball sessions delivered outside the authority are delivered at St Christopher School (North Hertfordshire), North Herts Leisure Centre (North Hertfordshire), Royston Leisure Centre (North Hertfordshire) and Furzefield Leisure Centre (Hertsmere).

Unmet/latent demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to pitches. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league.

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in netball but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies significant latent demand amounting to 254 people (0.28%) within Stevenage. As a comparison, the national average shows 1.29% of the population would like to participate in netball but is not currently doing so, making Stevenage somewhat below the national average.

England Netball identify that Hertfordshire is a successful region for netball. Given that the Stevenage Play Netball league runs with four divisions and the Authority also has two successful indoor leagues, this emphasises the large demand for the sport within Stevenage.

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Imported/exported demand

Imported demand is teams entering Stevenage to access facilities for netball, whilst exported demand is clubs choosing to access provision outside the area. There are no known instances of imported or exported demand for outdoor Netball. It should be known that there being several successful leagues across neighbouring authorities such as Welwyn and Hatfield League (Welwyn Hatfield Council), the Heritage Netball League (Bedfordshire) and the Bishop Stortford Netball League (East Hertfordshire), meaning it is possible that some demand may be exported out of the Authority.

Future demand

As the Stevenage Play Netball League has not been consulted with the future demand ambitions of the league are unknown.

8.4: Supply and demand analysis

Table 8.5: Summary of existing sports lit community use supply

Site ID	Site name	No. of courts	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Quality
13	John Henry Newman School	5	Yes	Yes	Standard
19	Marriotts Sports Centre	3	Yes	Yes	Standard

As can be seen in Table 8.7 there are only eight sports lit, community use netball courts within Stevenage provided at John Henry Newman School and Marriotts Sports Centre. All eight courts are assessed as standard quality.

8.5: Conclusion

To conclude, demand for netball is met through accessing both the outdoor courts at Marriotts Sports Centre and the indoor sports hall at Stevenage Leisure Centre and John Henry Newman School. Given some of the quality issues raised for the outdoor courts at Marriotts Sports Centre, the site should consider resurfacing the courts during the lifespan of the PPOSS as a means of enhancing court quality.

As the future demand ambitions of the Stevenage Play Netball League are unknown, the leagues growth should be monitored to ensure it can continue to accommodate its demand with the three sports lit courts provided.

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Netball – supply and demand summary

- ◀ It is determined that there is an adequate supply of outdoor netball provision in Stevenage.
- ◀ The Authority should consider installing sports lights to accessible non-sports lit courts as a means of providing suitable training facilities to clubs.

Netball – Supply summary:

- ◀ In total, there are 26 outdoor netball courts located across seven sites in Stevenage. Of this total provision, 15 courts across six sites are community accessible.
- ◀ Of the 15 available courts, three are good quality, eight are standard and four are poor quality.
- ◀ Marriotts Sport Centre three sport lit standard quality courts are accessed by Play Netball League.

Netball – Demand summary:

- ◀ There is one netball club, Stevenage Storm Netball Club, which competes in the Herts Netball Association Senior & Junior League and holds club nights at Marriotts Sports Centre on Wednesday evenings.
- ◀ Outdoor demand for netball within Stevenage takes place in the Play Netball Stevenage League.
- ◀ The Play Netball Stevenage league operates with two separate divisions and accesses the three outdoor sports lit courts at Marriotts Sports Centre.
- ◀ There are also two indoor leagues operating within the Authority, those being the Stevenage Netball League at John Henry Newman School and the Herts Indoor Netball League at Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre.
- ◀ England Netball, and Sport England's Segmentation Tool outlines that there are somewhat low levels of unmet demand for Stevenage with only 0.28% of the Borough identified as wanting to participate but not currently doing so.

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PART 9: ATHLETICS

9.1: Introduction

As a Governing Body, UK Athletics is responsible for developing and implementing the rules and regulations of athletics, including everything from anti-doping, health and safety, facilities and welfare, to training and education for coaches and officials as well as permitting and licensing.

Locally, the sport is governed through England Athletics, which is the development and membership body for athletics and running clubs in England. It has a National Head of Clubs and Participation as well as a team of five Club support managers across the Country, with one of these covering activities in Stevenage as part of the south region.

Consultation

There are two formal athletics clubs in Stevenage, Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club and Fairlands Valley Spartans. Both clubs responded to the consultation via an online survey, resulting in a response rate of 100% as seen below.

Table 9.1: Consultation responses

Club name	Club response?
Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club	Yes
Fairlands Valley Spartans	Yes

Consultation with Everyone Active operating the track at Ridlins Wood Athletics Track and North Herts Road Runners (North Hertfordshire) has also informed the following section.

9.2: Supply

There is one formal athletic track provided in Stevenage. Ridlins Wood Athletics Track provides a fully sports-lit, community accessible eight lane 400-metre track, featuring facilities equipped for all track and field throwing and jumping events. The stadium is fully accessible.

Both Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club and Fairlands Valley Spartans access Ridlins Wood Athletics Track.

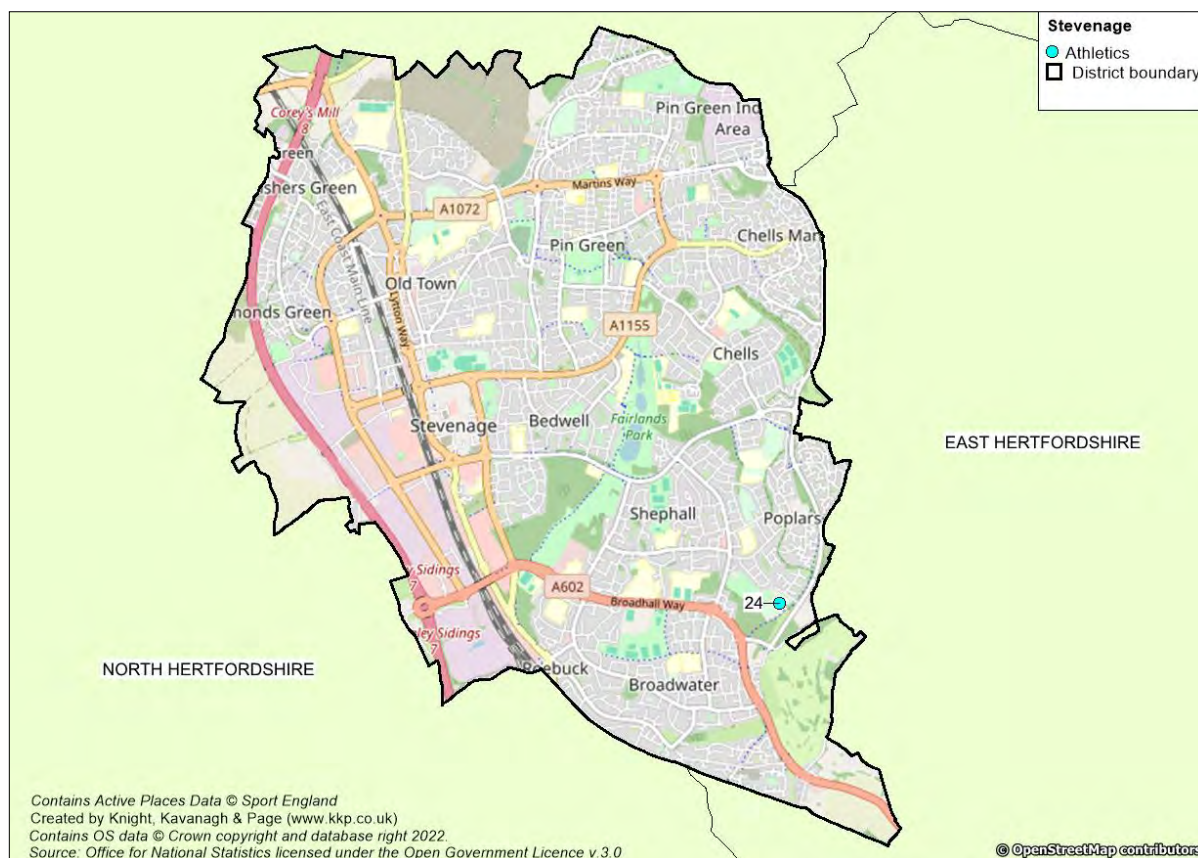
Table 9.2: Summary of athletics tracks in Stevenage

Site ID	Site	Surface	Club	Length	Sports lighting?	Community use?
24	Ridlins Wood Athletics Track	Polymeric	Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club Fairlands Valley Spartans	400 metres	Yes	Yes

Please see figure 9.1 for a map highlighting the location of the provision within Stevenage.

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Figure 9.1: Location of athletics provision in Stevenage



Management

The athletics provision located at Ridlins Wood Athletics is managed and maintained by Everyone Active on behalf of Stevenage Borough Council. Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club pay a rental fee to Everyone Active to access the site.

Consultation with Everyone Active confirms that Ridlins Wood Athletics Track offers limited pay-and-play access only on Saturdays, from 11:00am to 12:00pm and 12:00pm to 1:00pm, at a cost of £5 per session. Beyond these casual usage hours, the track is primarily available for club and school usage through block bookings. Any additional individual bookings outside of the designated pay-and-play hours would be subject to higher block booking rates.

Currently, the facility is occupied by clubs and schools on weekday evenings (Monday through to Thursday) and throughout the day on Saturdays and Sundays. This schedule results in limited usage during the day in midweek and no usage on Fridays. While there has been some interest from the public in extending the track's pay-and-play hours, Everyone Active has indicated that demand has not been sufficient to justify an expansion of these hours.

Quality

Key factors impacting upon the quality ratings include the condition and age of the track surface, the prominence of the line markings and any signs of wear and tear or unofficial use.

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The Ridlins Wood Athletics Track was last resurfaced in 2010 and has been assessed as a standard quality. A site assessment revealed that the track provides adequate grip and standard quality line markings. The track is serviced by LED sports lighting which was installed in November 2023.

England Athletics states the last formal specialist track inspection was carried out in 2019 and that a reinspection is now due. It stresses the need for Stevenage Borough Council to commission a reinspection of the track to give an up-to-date assessment of the surface and lifecycle.

Overall, the site assessment concluded that while the track maintains a standard quality, it appears somewhat worn and aged, indicating that a respray may be necessary during the lifespan of the PPOSS.

Supporting the findings of the site assessment, an online survey conducted by Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club provides further insight into the track's condition. Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club reports there has been a slight decline in the quality of the track over the past season, though it remains functional and in use. The Club emphasises that the track is regularly deep cleaned and well maintained.

TrackMark

TrackMark is UK Athletics' quality assurance scheme for outdoor track and field athletics facilities. A venue that achieves TrackMark is recognised by UK Athletics as having well managed, compliant facilities that are accessible to participants of all abilities. From 2021, venues that actively choose not to pursue accreditation are not eligible to apply for a competition licence at any level.

In October 2022, the Ridlins Wood Athletics Track in Stevenage successfully retained its TrackMark accreditation after meeting the criteria for track, field, ancillary facilities, operations, sports lighting, and competition grading. This accreditation expires in October 2025, with advisors recommending a professional cleaning of the track prior to the next renewal assessment. The report also estimated that resurfacing will be necessary by 2025, aligning with both the recent site assessment and feedback from the Club consultation. England Athletics further stresses the surface now being somewhat dated.

As England Athletics looks to ensure there is one 400m athletics track within each Local Authority, it is important that Stevenage Borough Council looks to resurface the track. The Authority confirms it has requested for financial support from North Hertfordshire District Council towards the resurfacing of the track.

Ancillary facilities

The Ridlins Wood Athletics Track features an on-site pavilion, owned by Stevenage Borough Council and is managed by Everyone Active on behalf of the Council. The pavilion includes three changing rooms, showers, toilets, a kitchen, covered spectator seating, and an equipment storage area.

The recent site assessment states these facilities are of good quality. This assessment is further supported by feedback from Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club which also states the ancillary facilities are of a good quality. However, the Club notes a shortage of storage space for its equipment, highlighting a need for additional storage capacity. The Council also states the toilets/drainage is unable to accommodate usage levels during large meetings.

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Alternative provision

England Athletics is adopting a new approach to facility planning that can enable local councils to install new athletics provision at a much more affordable cost than a traditional 400m synthetic track.

What is an ActiveTrack?²⁷

- ◀ An all weather macadam fitness loop.
- ◀ Multi-use: walking, jogging, running and cycling.
- ◀ Length of track tailored to spatial requirements.
- ◀ Low level solar lighting columns or built in 'cats eye' reflectors.

Where is an ActiveTrack suitable?

- ◀ Parks, open space and new build housing estates.

Who is an ActiveTrack targeted for?

- ◀ A facility for everyone.
- ◀ Attracts users of all ages and abilities across a wide variety of activities (runners, joggers, walkers (particularly the elderly), cyclists and wheelchair users).

Why is an ActiveTrack suitable?

- ◀ Capital and revenue costs.
- ◀ Fully accessible.
- ◀ Encourages communities and families to participate in sport and movement.
- ◀ Flexible design to complement existing infrastructure (e.g. playing pitches).
- ◀ Environmentally sympathetic to benefit local biodiversity and ecology.

There is currently no play, compact, mini, or active tracks identified within Stevenage. There are also no known plans to instal such provision within the Authority.

9.3: Demand

There are two athletics clubs in Stevenage, of which both participated in the consultation through an online survey.

Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club currently has a membership base of 628, comprising 166 senior male, 184 senior female, and 278 junior members.

Over the past three years, the Club has experienced an increase of approximately seven senior and veteran members, attributed largely to members returning after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, over the last five years, junior memberships have grown by approximately 25 members. This growth can be attributed to the Club's successful holiday programmes over the past three years, its active involvement in school development events, and the increased interest generated by the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club uses Ridlins Wood Athletics Track four times per week, with sessions scheduled for 90 minutes on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings, as well as on Sunday mornings. In addition to regular training, the Club hosts two open competitions and five home league matches at the track annually. Given the Club's involvement in cross-country and road-running activities, not all 628 members require access to the Ridlins Wood Athletics Track facilities.

²⁷<https://www.englandathletics.org/news/thirsk-and-sowerby-harriers-benefit-from-a-new-activetrack-for-all-the-community/>

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Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club provided feedback indicating that it considers both Stevenage Borough Council and Everyone Active could better support the volunteer-run club by promoting the facility and increasing the pay and play opening hours to the local community. The Club believes that with additional support, local community participation in athletics would increase, and believes that many residents are currently unaware of the site.

Fairlands Valley Spartans currently has 258 members, comprising 137 senior male and 121 senior female members. The Club reports that its membership numbers have remained stable, with no increase or decrease over the past three years.

Training sessions are held five times per week, with one session taking place at Ridlins Wood Athletics Track on Saturday mornings for approximately two hours. The remaining four sessions involve cross-country and road running activities, which do not require track access.

Consultation via a phone call with Everyone Active indicates that in addition to regular usage by Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club, Ridlins Wood Athletics Track is also utilised occasionally by other local running clubs and schools. Stevenage Striders, Garden City Runners, and Royston Runners each use the track approximately once a month on weekday evenings. Furthermore, the Hertfordshire Schools Athletics Association accesses the track for combined events from April to June, three times per week, between 4:00pm to 6:00pm. The track is also booked for school sports days, though less frequently, with usage occurring about once a month during the summer season.

Wider consultation conducted reveals that North Herts Runners, a club outside the authority, accesses Ridlins Wood Athletics Track three times a month on Saturday mornings. During these sessions, it shares the facility with Fairlands Valley Spartans.

ParkRun

ParkRun is a series of 5k runs held on Saturday mornings in areas of open space around the UK, with 768 events now operating across the Country. They are open to all, free, and are safe and easy to take part in. Runners must first register online in order to access a printed barcode which gives them access to all ParkRun events.

In Stevenage, two ParkRun events are held each week. The events are known as Stevenage ParkRun and Stevenage Junior ParkRun. Details of which are outlined in the table below.

Table 9.3: Stevenage ParkRun statistics

Park Run	No. of times held	Average attendance
Stevenage	371	317
Stevenage Junior	305	50

Stevenage Parkrun takes place at Fairlands Valley Park, where as Stevenage Junior ParkRun takes place at Hampson Park. Junior ParkRun is a shorter route of 2k for ages between 4 to 14 years old.

Run Together

Run Together is an official England Athletics recreational running project which aims to get the whole nation running. Its aim is to provide fun, friendly, supportive and inclusive running opportunities for everyone, regardless of ability and availability. It believes that running is more fun and easier to become part of a lifestyle when shared with others.

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In Stevenage, Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club deliver a Run Together session once a week on a Thursday evening at Ridlins Wood Athletics Track as part of the Club's normal training evening but non-members can come along. A key focus for England Athletics is increasing demand for participation in initiatives such as Run Together, therefore it's crucial to see Ridlins Wood Athletics Track being utilised for this initiative.

Other running events

Stevenage hosts several annual running events, such as Stevenage half Marathon/Marathon, ATW Stevenage Winter Half Marathon and 10k and Stevenage Race for Life 5k and 3k.

Couch to 5k

Couch to 5k is a national health initiative promoted by the National Health Service (NHS) to encourage absolute beginners get into running as part of establishing and maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle including regular exercise.

The plan consists of three runs per week and a day of rest in between, with a different schedule for each of the nine weeks to completion. It starts with a mix of running and walking, to gradually build up fitness and stamina, in order to create realistic expectations and a sense of achievability to encourage participants to stick with it. The end goal of the plan is for the participant to be able to run 5k.

Through the Couch to 5k plan the NHS particularly promotes the health benefits of running and regular exercise which underpin the initiative, such as improved heart and lung health, weight loss and possible increases in bone density which can help protect against bone diseases such as osteoporosis. This also includes mental benefits of running through goal setting and challenge setting, which can help boost confidence and self-belief. Furthermore, running regularly has been linked to combating depression.

It is believed that an increase in people running through the Couch to 5k plan may increase interest and possibly have a knock-on effect of leading to increased demand at running groups and clubs as people may wish to continue develop their running further.

In Stevenage, Stevenage Striders running group deliver Couch to 5k programmes at Hampson Park.

Latent demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in athletics but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies significant latent demand amounting to 1,773 people (2%) within Stevenage. As a comparison, the national average shows 3.04% of the population would like to participate in athletics but is not currently doing so, making Stevenage slightly below the national average.

Future demand

Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club expresses an aspiration to grow membership to a further 12 male, 13 female and 25 junior members in the next few years. In addition, the Club also currently has 40 people on a waiting list to join.

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9.4: Supply and demand analysis

With one dedicated athletics facility in Stevenage, that being a standard quality track at Ridlins Wood Athletics, supply is sufficient as to meet the identified demand in the Borough. However, with Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club having a waiting list of 40 individuals and plans to increase its membership by an additional 50 members, future demand may surpass existing capacity.

However, it's important to factor in, Ridlins Wood Athletic Track is a key strategic facility that serves the athletic needs of both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. With no dedicated athletic track provision in North Hertfordshire, local clubs rely on Ridlins Wood to meet training and competition requirements. As a result, the facility plays a crucial role in supporting demand across both authorities, attracting members from clubs in both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

Ridlins Wood Athletic Track, assessed as a standard-quality facility, subject to up-to-date reinspection by a TrackMark approved consultant, and was last resurfaced in 2010. England Athletics recommends resurfacing by 2025 to maintain standards. While no clubs have reported barriers to participation due to the track's current condition apart from an identified decline in quality along with patch work on the track required yearly. Therefore, ongoing maintenance is essential to ensure the site continues to meet current demand. Further investigation into the resurfacing requirements will be crucial to support sustained usage and accessibility.

9.5: Conclusion

Stevenage currently has one 400 metre athletics track; therefore, it can be determined that the site adequately caters to accommodate the existing levels of demand. However, given the future growth projections of the Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club and the tracks anticipated end-of-life in 2025, it is essential to prioritise the investigation of resurfacing options to ensure continued usability. Additionally, exploring opportunities to increase public and club access of the facility, along with enhanced promotion to raise local awareness of its availability, will be crucial to supporting both current and future community needs and demand.

If the existing athletics track cannot be resurfaced during the lifespan of the PPOSS, residents should be encouraged to access nearby alternative athletics provision such as the tracks at Wodson Park Sports Centre (East Hertfordshire), Stockwood Park (Luton), Gosling Sports Park (Welwyn and Hatfield) and Sandy Sports Centre (Central Bedfordshire). However, a priority for the Authority should be to preserve the quality of the Ridlins Wood Athletic Track to service the residents of Stevenage and align to the England Athletics goal of all local authorities being serviced by a 400m track.

Currently, there are no identified play, compact, mini, or active tracks within Stevenage, nor are there any known plans for installation. As Ridlins Wood Athletic Track is the only dedicated athletic facility within the authority and serves a wider authority demand, consideration should be given to the development of additional track provisions, such as play, compact, mini, or active tracks, to enhance accessibility and participation in athletics.

It is worth highlighting that England Athletics will reassess Ridlins Wood Athletic Track TrackMark accreditation in 2025, by its expiry date in October 2025, which is same year the estimated resurface is predicted.

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Away from the Ridlins Wood Athletic Track, priority should also be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in Stevenage and the events that are being held.

Athletics – supply and demand summary

- ◀ The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet current demand.
- ◀ Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club has a waiting list of 40 individuals and plans to increase its membership by an additional 50 members, future demand may surpass existing capacity.
- ◀ Ridlins Wood Athletic Track estimated end of lifespan is in 2025, therefore it's crucial the track is continued to be maintained and a resurface is further investigated to ensure the track continues to meet the current demand of usage.

Athletics – supply summary

- ◀ There is one purpose-built athletics track in Stevenage, provided at Ridlins Wood Athletic Track.
- ◀ Ridlins Wood Athletics Track provides a fully sports-lit, community accessible eight lane 400-metre track, featuring facilities equipped for all Track & Field throwing and jumping events. The stadium is fully accessible.
- ◀ The Ridlins Wood Athletics Track was last resurfaced in 2010 and has been assessed as a standard quality. It is serviced by good quality ancillary facilities.

Athletics – demand summary

- ◀ There are two athletics clubs in Stevenage, of which both participated in the consultation through an online survey.
- ◀ Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club currently has a 40 people on a waiting list to join the Club.
- ◀ The Couch to 5K programme is delivered in Stevenage by the staff at Stevenage Striders running group deliver at Hampson Park.
- ◀ There are two Park Run events held each week at as many venues across Stevenage.

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PART 10: LAWN BOWLS

10.1: Introduction

All bowling greens in Stevenage are flat greens. Bowls England is the NGB for flat green bowls with overall responsibility for ensuring effective governance. Regionally, flat green bowls is administered by the Norfolk County Bowling Association.

The flat green bowling season generally runs from May to September.

Crown green bowling is another version of bowls played in England, governed separately by The British Crown Green Bowling Association (BCGBA). This format of the sport is played predominately in the North of England and there is a no presence of this locally.

Consultation

There are two bowls clubs identified as currently using outdoor bowling greens in Stevenage. Of these, only Three Horseshoes Bowls Club has responded to consultation, resulting in a response rate of 50%. The unresponsive club has been contacted via email and telephone on several occasions.

Table 10.1: Summary of consultation

Club name	Club response?
Stevenage Town Bowls Club	No
Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Yes

10.2: Supply

There are three bowling greens identified in Stevenage across two sites, with Stevenage Town Bowls Club providing two greens. There are 12 rinks provided at Stevenage Town Bowls Club and six rinks provided at Three Horseshoes Bowls Club.

Figure 10.1 shows the location of all bowling greens currently in Stevenage. For a key to the map, see Table 10.2.

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Figure 10.1: Location of bowling greens in Stevenage

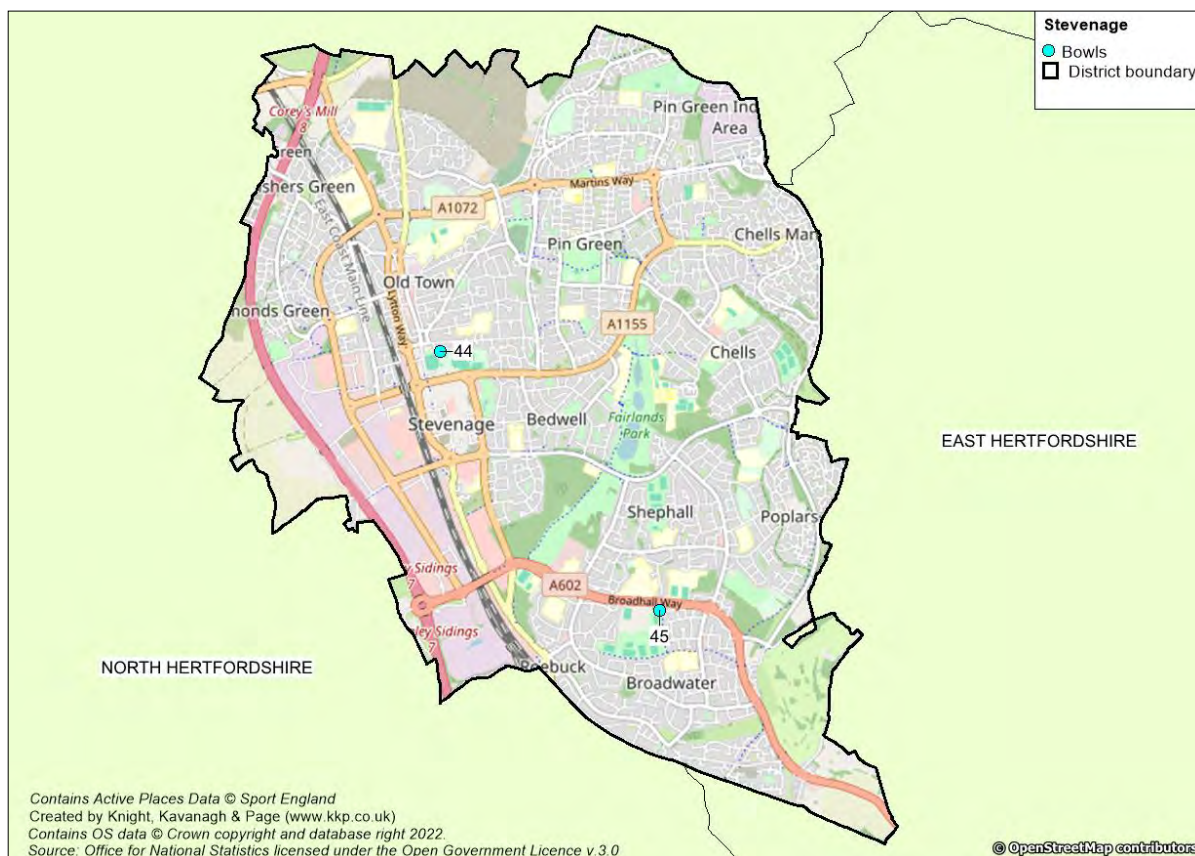


Table 10.2: Location of all bowling greens

Site ID	Site name	Associated club	No. of greens
44	Stevenage Town Bowls Club	Stevenage Town BC	2
45	Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Three Horseshoes BC	1

Disused provision

Through site visits, it was found that there is one disused green at Saint Nicholas Park. The area has since been repurposed as a designated space for dog training activities.

Security of tenure

The table below highlights the tenure position of clubs which have responded to consultation. Three Horseshoes Bowls Club tenure is rental year to year, with no issues being raised with the current agreement. Stevenage Borough Council confirms that Stevenage Town Bowls Club has an unsigned lease agreement with the Council.

Table 10.3: Summary of club tenure arrangements

Site ID	Site	Club	Tenure
45	Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Three Horseshoes BC	Club have an annual rental agreement with Stevenage Borough Council

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Quality

The quality of bowling greens in Stevenage have been assessed via site visits (using non-technical assessments) to apply a rating as follows:

- ◀ Good.
- ◀ Standard.
- ◀ Poor.

For bowling greens, the non-technical assessment considers several attributes of the site including the surrounding hard surfaces to the green, disability access, evenness, grass coverage and signs off unofficial use.

Table 10.4: Summary of bowling green quality

Site ID	Site name	Club	No. of greens	Quality
44	Stevenage Town Bowls Club	Stevenage Town BC	2	Good
45	Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Three Horseshoes BC	1	Good

All three bowling greens were assessed as being of good quality. Site visits found minor signs of wear on the Stevenage Town Bowls Club green; however, these were not significant enough to impact the overall quality of the green which is maintained by the Council.

Three Horseshoes Bowls Club reports that its green is maintained by the Council. The Club expresses satisfaction with the quality of the Council's upkeep, commending it for its efforts and noting no issues with the maintenance level and states the site is kept in a good condition.

Ancillary provision

Both clubs have access to ancillary facilities and the quality was assessed during the site visits. Both clubs are accompanied by good quality ancillary provision as shown in the table below.

Table 10.5: Summary of club ancillary provision

Site ID	Site name	Club using site	Quality
44	Stevenage Town Bowls Club	Stevenage Town BC	Good
45	Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Three Horseshoes BC	Good

Three Horseshoes Bowls Club has a small clubhouse, with a kitchen, toilets and access to parking via Shephalbury Park car park. The Club expresses it does not have any current development plans for the ancillary facilities.

Regarding Stevenage Town Bowls Club, a site assessment found the facilities to be of good quality, with sufficient parking available for members and a large wooden building servicing both greens. The Authority confirms the building has a bar and changing rooms both of which are deemed of a good quality.

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Sports lighting

None of the greens provided in Stevenage are serviced by sports lighting, and Three Horseshoes Bowls Club expresses no interest in fitting sports lighting during consultation.

Greens with sports lighting offer opportunities to access provision for training and matches during evenings outside of the summer months. However, they are relatively uncommon across the country, meaning the levels identified in Stevenage are comparative to the national picture of sports lighting supply and should not be of any particular concern.

10.3: Demand

There are two outdoor bowling clubs in Stevenage.

Three Horseshoes Bowling Club total membership equates to 40 members, with all senior members. The Club states that the total number of members has slightly decreased over the last few years, but it is always looking to grow members.

Membership information regarding Stevenage Town Bowls Club is unknown due to the Club being unresponsive to consultation requests.

Pay and play

Pay and play refers to the opportunity for residents to turn up to existing facilities and access them on a casual, commitment free basis. Three Horseshoes Bowls Club (which was responsive to consultation) do not offer pay and play with the general rationale being that there is nobody on site able to collect fees.

Play Bowls and Bowls Bash

Play Bowls²⁸ is a new product designed to assist clubs in attracting more casual, pay and play participants. Clubs are now able to sign up to the scheme, with booking slots for access then able to be secured and paid for via the Play Bowls website. The aim is for this to help the sport become much more accessible whilst making it easy for clubs to evolve and manage the demand from the casual audience. Bowls Bash²⁹ offers a shortened format normally played in teams of two, with players delivering 30 bowls each per match.

Both schemes are being delivered across the country as a means of growing participation for lawn bowls.

Latent demand

Latent demand refers to potential demand; clubs that would like to gain more members but currently do not do so. This can be for a variety of reasons including a lack of provision, appropriate facilities, and qualified coaches. Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to provision. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already playing for a club but is unable to access a match green, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league.

²⁸ <https://play-bowls.com/>

²⁹ <https://www.bowlsengland.com/bowlsbash/>

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Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in bowling' but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 136 people or 0.15% within Stevenage. As a comparison the national average shows that 0.16% of the population is looking to play lawn bowls but is not currently doing so.

Notwithstanding the above, Three Horseshoes Bowls Club reports that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision available and that no potential members are being turned away due to capacity issues.

Future demand

For bowls it is more appropriate to consider population changes for persons aged 65 and over. Office of National Statistics population projections (2018-2031), identify there is a continuous increase in the numbers of persons aged 65+. There was an increase of +8.4% (+1,160) in the first period and numbers will continue to rise to +23.5% (+3,136) between 2018 and 2031. While the age group represented 15.2% of Stevenage's population in 2018 it is projected to be 18.4% of the total by 2031 - almost one fifth of the population.

Due to this age band being the most likely to play bowls, it can be said that demand for bowling greens in Stevenage is likely to increase with additional pressure placed on the existing stock of provision. In addition, consultation with Three Horseshoes Bowls Club identified the Club aspire to increase the existing memberships. Details of this are provided in the table below.

Table 10.6: Future demand aspirations

Site name	Club	Future demand aspiration (members)	Method to increase membership
Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Three Horseshoes BC	Looking to increase members, unknown on exact figure	Host open days

10.4: Supply and demand analysis

The capacity of a bowling green is very much dependent on the leagues and the day that they operate. A green may have no spare capacity in the afternoon or evening when a popular league operates but may be underused for the rest of the week.

However, in many cases, greens are used during the afternoons by club members which bowl socially, with access a potential issue during peak times if membership is particularly high.

Bowls England has no specific guidance on bowling green capacity, stating that it can vary from site-to-site and from club-to-club. However, as a guide, it states that any green used by at least 20 members is generally considered to be sustainable, whilst any green operating with a membership of over 60 may need additional resource to ensure that it is meeting its required level of demand.

Therefore, capacity ratings for bowling greens in Stevenage are classified as follows:

Within capacity range	Membership ensures green is sustainable without capacity issues
Outside capacity range	Membership is below or above the recommended capacity range

Following this, the table below highlights the level of usage each green in Stevenage receives, where the information is known. Where no membership information is known,

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further communication is required with clubs to fully understand their needs and any potential capacity or sustainability issues.

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Table 10.7: Bowling green supply and demand analysis (where membership figures are known)

Site ID	Site name	Club name	No. of greens	Total membership	Current capacity (members)	Future capacity (members)
45	Three Horseshoes Bowls Club	Three Horseshoes BC	1	40	20	20

The table above shows that Three Horseshoes Bowls Club is operating within a sustainable capacity range. The future capacity is unknown, as the Club states it is always looking to grow members but did not provide a specific figure. The Club states, the total number of memberships have slightly decreased over recent years. Given the amount of spare capacity and the Club not specifying a growth figure it is expected it will be able to accommodate its potential future growth.

As detailed earlier, Stevenage Town Bowls Club membership is unknown due to the Club being unresponsive to consultation requests, therefore no capacity analysis can be run for this site.

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10.5: Conclusion

Three Horseshoes Bowls Club reports no capacity issues. The current capacity of Stevenage Town Bowls Club is unknown. However, both greens are assessed as good quality and with a disused bowling green at Saint Nicholas Park, it is likely that current supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Three Horseshoes Bowls Club currently has no development plans for the green or its ancillary facilities. The Club reports no issues with the tenure and expresses satisfaction with the maintenance provided by the Council, noting that the site is kept in good condition. Additionally, the Club has identified no operational challenges at this time and is looking to grow members through open days.

The Authority states it considers there may be an oversupply of provision with three greens useable in the Borough. The accompanying Strategy & Action Plan explores the potential use of existing provision and possible consolidation of greens to accommodate demand for lawn bowls.

Bowls – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Three Horseshoes Bowls Club reports no capacity issues. The current capacity of Stevenage Town Bowls Club is unknown. However, both greens are assessed as good quality and with a disused bowling green at Saint Nicholas Park, it is likely that current supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Bowls – supply summary

- ◀ There are three bowling greens in Stevenage provided across two sites, with two greens provided at Stevenage Town Bowls Club.
- ◀ There is one disused bowling green within Stevenage, at Saint Nicholas Park, which is now used as a dog training area.
- ◀ Three Horseshoes Bowls Club is deemed to have security of tenure; Stevenage Town Bowls Club current tenure is unknown due to it being unresponsive to consultation.
- ◀ There are no greens in Stevenage that are serviced by sports lighting.
- ◀ Of the bowling greens in active use, all three are assessed as good quality.
- ◀ Ancillary provision across both sites in Stevenage are assessed as good quality.

Bowls – demand summary

- ◀ There are two bowls clubs in Stevenage.
- ◀ Three Horseshoes Bowls Club total membership equates to 40 members, with all being senior members.
- ◀ Due to a predicted increase in persons aged 65 and over (to 2033), demand is likely to increase for greens over the coming years.
- ◀ Three Horseshoes Bowls Club states it's always looking to grow members but didn't provide a specific figure.
- ◀ Three Horseshoes Bowls Club report that existing memberships can be accommodated for on the current level of provision and that no potential members are being turned away, suggesting that there is no latent or unmet demand.

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PART 11: GOLF

11.1: Introduction

Golf is the fifth largest participation sport in England, with around 730,000 members belonging to one of 1,800 affiliated clubs and a further two million people playing independently outside of club membership. There are an estimated 3,000 golf courses across the Country, with approximately 90 designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest because apart from the intensively managed trees and greens they have other habitats with high wildlife value. Many other courses also exist within designated Heritage Coast sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or listed Historic Parklands.

Nationally, the sport is governed by England Golf. Its role includes providing competitions for players of all ages and abilities, identifying and developing the most talented golfers, maintaining a uniform system of handicapping, administering and applying the rules, and introducing new golfers via its initiatives such as 'Get into Golf'.

Consultation

The section was informed via consultation with England Golf, which has provided information relating to all facilities and clubs within Stevenage.

11.2: Supply

There are three different types of golf facilities recognised by Sport England and governed by England Golf, as defined in the table below. Facilities such as pitch and putt courses and miniature/crazy golf courses are not included as these are not considered to be traditional formats of the game and are not comparable offerings.

Table 11.1: Definitions of golf facilities

Facility type	Description
Standard	A standard par course, with a minimum of 9 holes but normally associated with 18-hole courses; many 9-hole courses have different tee boxes which allow the provision to be played as an 18-hole course. Some courses provide 27 holes, with any two loops of 9-holes played to make up an 18-hole round.
Par 3	Shorter length of holes than a standard course, with no hole longer than Par 3. Most likely to be a 9-hole course although 18-hole offerings do exist. Does not include pitch and putt courses, which are even shorter offerings and are not considered to be a traditional version of the sport.
Driving Range	Includes covered and uncovered driving range bays but not practice areas within golf courses; ranges are based on the hiring of balls, with users not required to retrieve, whereas practice areas are generally for members to use with their own balls (although a growing number have dispensers). Does not include 'entertainment' ranges or virtual offerings, although some driving ranges have expanded to also provide these features.

Within Stevenage, there is one golf venue that provides facilities conforming with the above definitions, as identified in Table 11.1 and Table 11.2 below.

Table 11.2: Golf facilities within Stevenage

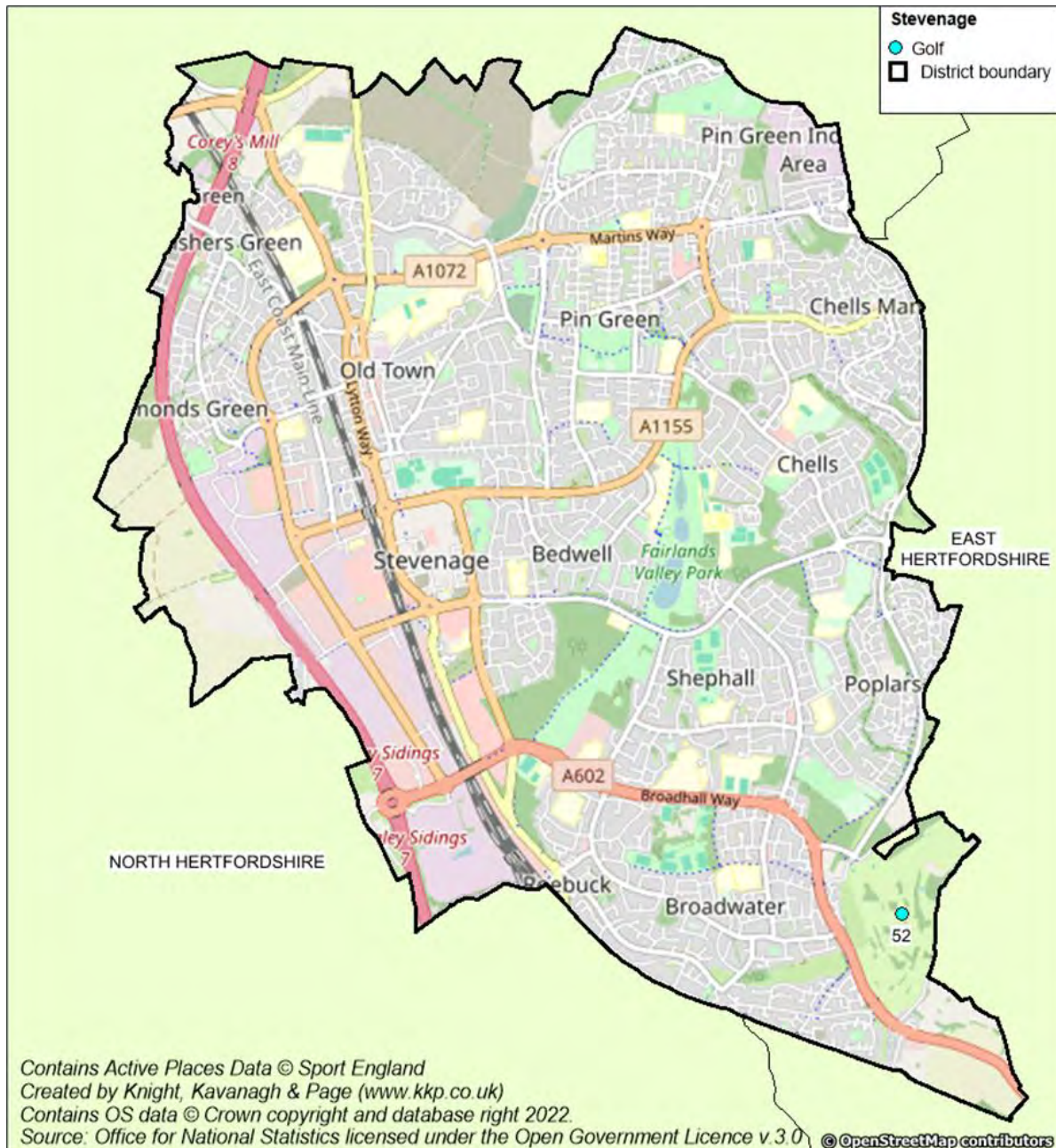
Site ID	Site name	Postcode
-	Stevenage Golf Club	SG2 7EL

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Within the Stevenage there is one affiliated club operating from a single affiliated facility, the Stevenage Golf & Conference Centre. This facility offers a standard 18-hole course as well as a 9-hole par-3 course.

Figure 11.1 below highlights the location of all golf provision in Stevenage.

Figure 11.1: Location of golf provision in Stevenage



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Standard hole golf courses

Stevenage Golf Club provides a standard hole golf course, consisting of 18 holes, stretching across 6,364 yards in total.

Table 11.3: Summary of standard hole provision in Stevenage

Site ID	Site name	Holes	Par	Yardage ³⁰		Slope rating
-	Stevenage Golf Club	18	72	6364	6165 5637	71

There are no standard hole 9-hole courses in Stevenage. Nationally, many 9-hole courses are shorter than the front or back nine of an 18-hole course, primarily to attract and cater for a different userbase.

Slope ratings

Slope ratings are new to golf across the World. The intention is for them to allow the handicap system to reflect course difficulty and the difference in difficulty for all players compared to scratch golfers. In effect, this enables each player to have a handicap that will vary from course-to-course, depending on difficulty, as well as a general handicap.

The maximum slope rating is 155, whereas the minimum is 55. The standard difficulty is considered to be 113.

Par 3 golf holes

Most commonly, Par 3 provision is used by beginner and casual players, although they are also frequented by more traditional golfers wanting to practice their short game. Stevenage Golf Club course provides a 9-hole Par 3 provision.

Driving range bays

Stevenage Golf Club provides a 22 undercover, sports lit driving range. The site offers a pay and play rate. Nationally, many driving range providers are updating their facilities with such provision in a bid to increase demand. Others also seek the installation of automatic tees or entertainment systems such as TopTracer and FlightScope. These allows for users to simulate playing on courses across the world and provides ball tracking and statistical feedback. Such technology is offered at Stevenage Golf Club.

Table 11.4: Summary of driving range bays

Site ID	Site name	No. of bays provided	Ball Tracking technology?
-	Stevenage Golf Club	22	Yes

Management and ownership

There are three main types of ownership and management models of golf facilities in England: members clubs, proprietary clubs, and municipal facilities. Each of these is summarised in the table below.

³⁰ White denotes Championship tees, yellow denotes men's tees and red denotes ladies' tees.

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Table 11.5: Types of ownership and management of golf facilities

Management type	Description
Members	Traditionally owned by members and run by committees. They are likely to hire caterers and green staff. Most members' clubs offer some level of pay and play and encourage golf societies but are mostly focused on membership numbers.
Proprietary	Owned or managed by businesses or individuals, these can include country club type facilities at the high end of the golfing market alongside more localised facilities. Many have clubs operating within them but can also take a much more relaxed attitude to dress and traditions of golf. Pay and play opportunities tend to be a key feature of the business plan.
Municipal	These are generally owned by a local authority, although in a growing number of instances, management has been contracted and externalised to private companies. Due to a lack of financial viability, many have closed across the Country in recent years and many that remain are under threat.

It is recognised that members clubs and visitors to such clubs are normally expected to dress appropriately, have a registered handicap certificate (a certificate issued by the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU)) and be familiar with the rules and etiquette of the game. This is not uncommon at some proprietary clubs, but municipal courses tend to be more relaxed with regard to dress codes and do not require people to have handicaps, making golf much more accessible.

Consequently, municipal courses are, in many instances, seen as entry level facilities, with players using them before having the confidence to move on to a members' or high-end proprietary club (although many people can and do stay attached to a particular course). They also tend to offer a more affordable golfing experience.

The business model for members clubs tends to rely heavily on income through membership subscriptions and use of ancillary facilities, rather than from pay and play usage, although attention has somewhat switched at many sites in recent years due to demand falling. The same can be said for some proprietary clubs, although, in general, more emphasis is placed on supplementing regular activity with green fee sales.

Conversely, municipal sites have always been heavily reliant on visitors even though membership packages are normally available (often in the shape of season tickets). On occasion, these can be linked to access to other local authority operated sports facilities, such as leisure centres and swimming pools.

Despite the above generalisations, each golf facility, regardless of management type, will have its own processes in terms of how much focus is placed on membership and pay and play usage, or whether it equally encourages both. There is no correct way to run a site. A club that focuses on members has guaranteed income, but this can often deter more casual players or nomadic golfers through, for example, a lack of peak time availability.

In contrast, a site that depends on visitors can struggle to be viable if there are spells of inclement weather during summer months and can discourage people that want to be part of a club environment. On the other hand, more income can be brought in through regular users compared to what would be the case had they been part of a membership scheme.

In Stevenage, the golf club is a municipal site.

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Table 11.6: Summary of ownership/management in Stevenage

Site ID	Site name	Management type
-	Stevenage Golf Club	Municipal

Pricing

A key issue for the wider golf population is whether golf courses are available to the general population at a price point which is accessible to the majority of residents. Better quality courses tend to cost more to use, whilst 18-hole provision is generally more expensive to access than 9-hole provision.

Nationally, over the past few years, many facilities have altered their pricing structures to allow for discounts following a previous decline in golf membership. England Golf has positively encouraged this as its view is that clubs are more likely to experience growth when flexible packages are available. For instance, some now offer five and/or six-day memberships (whereby members can access the course on specific days but not on one or both weekend days), whilst others provide discounts that are no longer limited solely to junior players (e.g. discounts for those aged 18-21 and 21-30 or for those aged 65 and over). In the past, it was common for clubs to have membership waiting lists, but this has become rarer. That being said, a rise in demand following the Covid-19 pandemic has tested this and resulted in capacity pressures, with a third of clubs now thought to have waiting times before new members can join.

England Golf reports that the average cost of a full adult membership across the Country is currently £901. Stevenage Golf Club operates just below this figure with costs of £892.50 per year. Green fees are available at Stevenage Golf Club. Pricing for weekday access is £35.00, and weekend prices are £40.00.

Table 11.7: Pricing structures at golf facilities within Stevenage

Site ID	Site name	Joining fee	Full membership (per year)	Green fee (per round) ³¹	
				Weekday	Weekend
-	Stevenage Golf Club	-	£892.50	£35 (18 holes)	£40 (18 holes)

Quality

There are no official national or county golf facility rankings. Generally, the better course quality and supporting infrastructure is, the higher the joining/membership and green fees are likely to be. Some sites gain status through hosting county, national and international golf events and some tend to feature in ranking articles put together by golf magazines.

In terms of golf course quality at Stevenage Golf Club, it is relatively good across the site, with no significant issues identified.

The ancillary facilities at Stevenage Golf Club are also generally good. The clubhouse offers a lounge that serves food and drinks, alongside a function room which is available for event hire.

³¹ Where more than one course is provided, the price displayed is for the larger course.

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Golf clubs often need such revenue sources to operate effectively and the provision of a good quality, well equipped clubhouse is a key opportunity to provide a secondary income stream. This emanates from a variety of sources including bar and catering income from members and visitors as well as venue hire for special occasions including weddings, christenings and funerals.

From a golfing perspective, given the current emphasis on increasing levels of female and junior golf membership across the Country, it is also imperative that ancillary provision can adequately cater for all types of members e.g. by providing gender specific changing facilities.

11.3: Demand

Around 2004, participation in golf began declining; however, recent signs show that the reduction has not only levelled off, but that demand has started to increase, especially following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, both in 2020 and 2021. As one of the first sports to be allowed on both occasions, people have been able to play whilst maintaining social distancing and England Golf has provided very clear guidance as to how this should manifest itself (e.g. by not allowing the flag to be taken out or rakes to be used). Some courses have reported a near doubling of usual demand compared to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting that a significant opportunity now exists to retain increased participation in the long-term. An opportunity now exists for this to represent a long-term increase in demand, although to what level is unclear as retention may in some instances be challenging as more and more users return to normal working/living conditions.

Membership

Stevenage Golf Club membership figures are not available.

Pay and play

Whilst pay and play usage has generally increased across England in recent years, usage figures at the sites within Stevenage are not known as it is not something that is tracked by England Golf. The golf club in Stevenage provides green fee rates and pay and play is available at the site's driving rate.

Relative demand

Nationally, England Golf utilises a figure of 3.5 million people that are considered to be regular golfers, with this defined as those that have played on a standard-length course at least twice within the last 12 months. Using this, it is able to indicate how much demand exists per facility within a catchment area before then comparing this to a national benchmark.

Within the formula, it calculates the participation number in an area by establishing what proportion of the population is likely to be golfers, which can then be used to determine the number of participants per facility. This can then be compared to the national rate, with an index created for comparison purposes. Using 100 as the average, anything below this suggests that an area has either low demand or a high facility count, whereas anything above provides evidence that an area has high demand and/or a low level of provision.

The calculations for the catchment area for the Stevenage area can be seen via the image below, as provided by England Golf.

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Figure 11.2: Regular golfer demand index calculations for Stevenage

Diagram 1 – Regular Golfer Demand Index Calculation



Diagram 2 – Regular Golfer Demand Index Calculation for Stevenage Authority



As shown, the index rating for the catchment area (280) is well above the national benchmark (100). This therefore indicates the authority is doesn't provide enough facilities to meet the demand of those in the authority who play golf regularly.

Unmet demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to golf facilities. This could be reflected via a waiting list at a club, although it is likely that people on a waiting list are still playing golf elsewhere, either via membership of another club or through pay and play access. As such, no unmet demand in Stevenage is present due to having no waiting list at the golf club.

Latent demand

Latent demand is demand for golf that is not currently being realised. This could be for numerous reasons, such as time constraints, financial reasons and a lack of suitable, available provision.

Whilst the reasoning for the latent demand is unknown and is likely to be varied, the data does show relatively high demand which would significantly increase membership and/or pay and play usage across facilities if realised. England Golf is supportive of clubs that proactively target new audiences in an attempt to tap into such demand i.e. through developing a variety of golfing offers, coaching programmes and a range of membership options.

In addition, England Golf has a mapping tool that enables an assessment of potential demand within a 20-minute drive time of each golf facility, with the population broken down into nine golfing segments. These segments are defined to help provide an indication as to what type of golfing offer each would be most likely to access. They are:

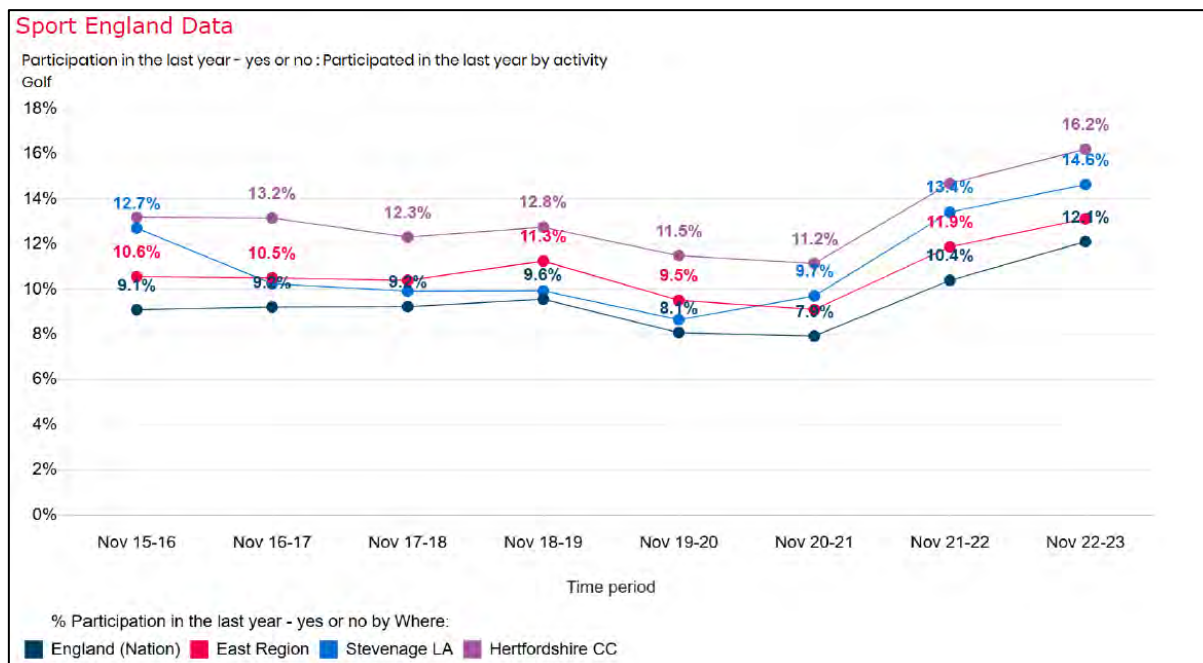
- ◀ Relaxed members.
- ◀ Older traditionalists.
- ◀ Younger traditionalists.
- ◀ Younger fanatics.
- ◀ Younger actives.

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- ◀ Late enthusiasts.
- ◀ Occasional time pressed.
- ◀ Social couples.
- ◀ Casual fun.

For Stevenage Golf Club, demand from each of the segments is relatively evenly split across the nine segments; the highest demand is from “casual fun” (9,990 people), whilst the lowest is from “older traditionalists” (8,727 people).

Figure 11.3: Sport England participation data



According to Sport England data, golf participation is at its highest level since data collection began in 2015. Between 2021 and 2022, participation grew by over 2%, with approximately 4.8 million people engaging in the sport during that period.

In Stevenage, golf remains slightly more popular than both the national and regional averages. In 2023, 14.6% of the local population took part in the sport, reflecting a nearly 5% increase over the previous two years. While Stevenage has historically seen strong participation in golf, the current rate is the highest recorded for the authority since 2019.

Future demand

England Golf has an aim to increase membership of clubs nationally; however, after reaching its previous target, it no longer has a fixed goal in terms of growth. Nationally, many clubs, especially the most established ones, will be happy to retain current demand levels, whilst others will be open to growing and some considerably so. In that regard, England Golf reports that many providers are proactively targeting new audiences through coaching programmes and a wider range of membership and playing options.

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11.4: Supply and demand analysis

With one golf facility in Stevenage, there is low amount of supply in the authority, however, that one facility offers variety in the types of golf offered. Particularly given the variance of the facility with 18-hole standard course, 9-hole Par 3 course and a driving range all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with both members only and pay and play usage being offered at a reasonable price. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for. The regular golf demand figure is high due to their being only one facility, with golfers likely to also look at options within East and North Hertfordshire authorities.

11.5: Conclusion

To conclude, with one golf course in Stevenage, which operates as a standard 18-hole course as well as a 9-hole par-3 course and providing a covered driving range, it can be determined that there is adequate provision to accommodate all types of golfers.

However, with only being one golf course to accommodate the identified levels of golf demand within the Authority, this could see regular golfers accessing provision in neighbouring authorities such as East and North Hertfordshire.

The venue should be protected and supported, including the driving range provision, particularly given the recent membership increases reported by England Golf.

To protect and support the facilities, England Golf offers assistance, primarily through a variety of tools that can be used to better understand the local market. There may also be opportunities for some clubs across the area to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways where appropriate to collectively cater for all types of players.

Golf – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Stevenage has insufficient supply of provision due to only being one golf course to accommodate the identified levels of golf demand within the Authority.
- ◀ In Stevenage, golf remains slightly more popular than both the national and regional averages. In 2023, 14.6% of the local population took part in the sport, reflecting a nearly 5% increase over the previous two years. While Stevenage has historically seen strong participation in golf, the current rate is the highest recorded for the authority since 2019.

Golf – supply summary

- ◀ There is currently one golf site in Stevenage.
- ◀ This facility offers a standard 18-hole course as well as a 9-hole par-3 course.
- ◀ Stevenage Golf Club provides a 22 undercover, floodlit driving range.
- ◀ In Stevenage, the golf club is a municipal run site.
- ◀ In terms of quality, it is relatively good in Stevenage with a range of facilities available for players of differing abilities.

Golf – demand summary

- ◀ Stevenage Golf Club membership figures are not available.
- ◀ No unmet demand in Stevenage is present due to having no waiting list at the golf club.
- ◀ Pay and play usage is unknown but the golf club in Stevenage provides green fee rates and pay and play is available at the site's driving rate

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PART 12: Other sports

11.1: Rugby league

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is the governing body for rugby league in England. It administers the England national rugby league team, the Challenge Cup, Super League and the championships which form the professional and semi-professional structure of the game in the UK. The RFL also administers the amateur and junior game across the country in association with the British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA).

Most community club rugby league is now played throughout the summer season (from February to October). However, rugby league is considered as a winter season sport within schools, colleges and universities and therefore pitch provision for matches and training is required throughout the winter months.

Supply

There are no rugby league pitches provided within the Borough.

Demand

No demand has been identified for community rugby league in Stevenage, with the nearest known demand for rugby league taking place at North Herts Crusaders RLFC (North Hertfordshire). Any residual demand for the sport is unlikely to be sufficient for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of North Herts Crusaders RLFC.

Supply and demand analysis

As no formal demand is identified within Stevenage it can be determined that any new demand is signposted to North Herts Crusaders RLFC.

11.2: Climbing

This section focuses on facilities which provide opportunities for climbing.

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) is the national representative body that champions the interests of climbers, hill walkers, mountaineers and ski mountaineers in England and Wales. It is recognised by Sport England as the NGB for competition climbing. BMC's latest Strategic Plan (2020-2024) outlines the vision of 'to create a better future for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers'. It sets out five key strategic themes:

- ◀ Access, conservation & environmental sustainability.
- ◀ Membership engagement, services & support.
- ◀ Education, inspiration & skills.
- ◀ Organisational development & sector leadership.
- ◀ GB Climbing - competitions, talented athletes & the GB Teams.

Sport climbing (speed, bouldering and lead) officially debuted at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. All three disciplines can be hosted at indoor venues and are popular formats of climbing. Bouldering is identified as a high growth area, especially for children entering the sport.

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Supply

In Stevenage, Fairlands Valley Park features a six-metre vertical climbing wall with four routes. Helmets and harnesses are included at the site for hire upon arrival. Ware (East Hertfordshire) also provides an outdoor climbing centre at Edge Outdoor Activities Limited. The site is located 9.3 miles from Fairlands Valley Park, meaning it is a good accessible site for people within Stevenage wanting to engage in outdoor climbing.

Demand

There are no known climbing clubs located within Stevenage. As such it can be determined that any interest in climbing is being catered for by residents exporting demand outside of the Borough. The nearest BMC affiliated club is Harpenden Exhibition Club, based in Harpenden (St Albans City and District) which delivers outdoor activities such as mountaineering and rock climbing. The Club does not access any provision within Stevenage, and instead does excursions across the UK.

Conclusion

The audit identified the Fairlands Valley Park site which offers a six-metre vertical climbing wall with four routes alongside all necessary for residents of Stevenage to access.

11.3: Water sports

The outdoor environment of Stevenage as a landlocked authority provides somewhat limited spaces for outdoor water based activities.

Water sports in England are governed by various bodies, including:

- ◀ British Canoe Union
- ◀ British Kite Surfing Association
- ◀ British Rowing
- ◀ British Sub-Aqua Club
- ◀ British Swimming
- ◀ British Water Ski
- ◀ Royal Yachting Association
- ◀ Surfing Great Britain

Supply

Fairlands Valley Park provides a large reservoir that as of April 2023 is managed by Stevenage Borough Council. The site provides a reservoir which can cater for several outdoor water sports, as well as a splash park play area that is opened from May until the end of summer.

The main reservoir hosts an Aqua Parcs obstacle course which gives users a fun outdoor play area with slides and obstacles to manoeuvre. The lake is also utilised for a variety of activities such as fishing, sailing, wind surfing and kayaking. The site has space for residents to store kayaks and boats of various scales.

The site is serviced an outdoor activity centre which provides a café, toilets and a studio space suitable for meetings a Cycle Hub and Model Boat Club.

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Demand

Fairlands Valley Park resembles the provision for outdoor water sports. Despite the site providing space for a variety of water sports, it does not have any partner clubs other than the Sea Scouts based at the site and instead provides the equipment and space for individuals to use the reservoir for water sports.

Neighbouring Authority North Hertfordshire is home to Baldock and District Canoe Club which accesses North Herts Leisure Centre for indoor pool sessions, as well as going on monthly trips across the UK in locations such as Dartmoor, Yorkshire, Wales and Scotland. St Albans Canoe Club (Hertsmere) delivers canoe polo sessions at Furzfield Centre and slalom sessions in Harefield. Both clubs should be considered by any residents within Stevenage looking to join an outdoor water sports club, alongside Fairland Valley Park due to having capacity to accommodate further demand or partner clubs.

11.4: Cycling

Introduction

British Cycling is the NGB for all forms of cycling. It oversees six sporting disciplines, with each having a dedicated facility type:

- ◀ Track cycling – velodromes.
- ◀ Road cycling – closed road circuits.
- ◀ Mountain biking – trails.
- ◀ BMX racing – race/pump tracks.
- ◀ Cycle speedway – cycle speedway tracks.
- ◀ Cyclocross – non-dedicated, non-permanent venues.

British Cycling aids in the development of all six formats, helping to safeguard those that wish to participate in a competitive and compelling environment. The popularity of cycling has increased since recent, elite sporting success in the Olympics and Paralympics as well as in other major championships.

Broad cycling specific aims of the project the project included:

- ◀ Making cycling inviting and attractive to everyone.
- ◀ Making cycling safe and secure.
- ◀ Making cycling easy and intuitive.
- ◀ Normalising cycling to reduce inequalities.

It should be noted a direct comparison cannot be made for cycling to the previous study as cycling was not included in the overall supply and demand analysis in 2015.

Supply

Considering the six disciplines of cycling presented above, Stevenage has a limited supply of dedicated cycling provision. Stevenage does not provide a velodrome, cycle speedway or cyclo-cross facilities. St Nicholas Park provides a bike pump track that is openly accessible to the general public. The space is fairly small and offers good beginners experience to BMX pump tracks.

Stevenage Cycling Hub is a cycling community hub building located within Fairlands Valley Park. The site opens every Saturday and is available for bike hire, learning to ride a bike and acts as a workshop for repairs.

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The National Cycle Network Route 12 stretches from Enfield Lock in North London to Spalding. The route passes through Stevenage through the Old Town before continuing North to Letchworth.

Demand

Stevenage Cycling Club is a social cycling club that does weekend training rides every Saturday and Sunday throughout the year. The Club meets outside HSBC Bank in Stevenage ahead of its road biking meets.

HSBC UK Go-Ride

HSBC UK Go-Ride is a British Cycling's development programme for young people. It offers a fun and safe way to introduce young people to the sport and provides a platform to improve cycling skills. People can get involved through holiday coaching programmes or through their local accredited club which allows them to sample the various disciplines of the sport. Progression is obtainable with Go-Ride Racing, offering competition for riders to transition from school or club coaching to inter club and open regional competitions.

Go-Ride is in place at Icknield Road Club (Central Bedfordshire) which is based in Ampthill and delivers Go-Ride cycling following the British Cycling plan.

HSBC UK Breeze

HSBC UK Breeze is a British Cycling's development programme for women. It offers three categories easy going, steady and challenging to allow women of all abilities to get involved. The programme offers exercise whilst also creating a comfortable environment to meet new people. In Stevenage, the easy ABC Ride delivered in November begins at Stevenage Cycling Hub within Fairlands Valley Park.

Future/latent demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables an analysis of the percentage of adults that would like to participate in cycling but that 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 3,480 people within Stevenage, which represents approximately 3.88% of the Boroughs population compared to a national average of 3.4%. This therefore suggests that unmet demand is marginally higher than what would otherwise be expected.

Notwithstanding the above, it must be noted that future and latent demand does not account for societal factors or changes in the way people may wish to participate in sport and cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools. For example, there is a focus by British Cycling to develop youth participation through the HSBC UK Go-Ride or HSBC UK Breeze schemes, which may lead to further increases in demand.

Supply and demand analysis

Stevenage has a limited offering of cycling provision, with St Nicholas Park resembling the only dedicated cycling provision. However, it's important to note the excellent network of dedicated cycle routes for leisure cyclists across Stevenage. The Stevenage Cycling Hub and 2018 Stevenage Cycle Strategy does, however, exemplify the Council's commitment to supporting cycling and ensuring it is something its residents can enjoy.

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Rugby league – supply and demand summary

- ◀ No demand has been identified for rugby league in Stevenage.
- ◀ Neighbouring authority North Hertfordshire hosts North Herts Crusaders RLFC.
- ◀ Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs outside of the Borough.

Climbing – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Fairlands Valley Park provides an outdoor climbing centre for residents to access. As such it should be determined the Authority is well catered for with outdoor climbing facilities.

Cycling – supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is a limited supply of dedicated cycling facilities within Stevenage.
- ◀ Stevenage Cycling Hub is a community hub building which provides residents a space to hire bikes and undertake bike repairs.
- ◀ Protecting and sustaining the building should be supported to ensure the Authority continues to have a cycling facility.
- ◀ A continuation of initiatives promoted by British Cycling, such as Go-Ride and Breeze should also be encouraged in order to continue growing the sport of cycling.

Water sports – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Stevenage is well catered for with outdoor water sports provision due to its effective use of Fairlands Valley Park. The site provides Aqua Parcs obstacle courses, as well as offering space for sailing, canoeing and a café.

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APPENDIX 1: SPORTING CONTEXT

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

National context

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

Department of Culture, Media and Sport Get Active: A Strategy for the Future of Sport and Physical Activity (2023)

The previous Government published its new strategy for sport in August 2023. The 2015 government sport strategy, Sporting Future: A New Strategy for a More Active Nation, was a fundamental re-framing of sport and physical activity in the UK. It set out five outcomes delivered by sport and physical activity:

- ◀ Physical wellbeing
- ◀ Mental wellbeing
- ◀ Individual development
- ◀ Social and community development
- ◀ Sustainable economic development

This new strategy builds on the foundations of Sporting Future and retains these five outcomes at its core. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of three core priorities, with seven indicators to achieve these priorities as follows:

Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active

- ◀ Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030
- ◀ Focusing on evidence, data and metrics
- ◀ Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active

Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport

- ◀ Helping the sector to be welcoming to all
- ◀ Improving how issues and concerns are dealt within the sector

Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust

- ◀ Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment
- ◀ Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector

Delivering against these priorities will help create a more active nation and a more sustainable sport sector. These aims are complementary; greater participation, stronger governance and confidence in the sector will help to drive investment, which in turn helps to attract new audiences. The vision is to make sport and physical activity accessible, resilient, fun and fair, for now and the years to come – for the benefit of individuals and the country.

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Sport England Uniting the Movement: Our 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport (2021-2031)

Sport and physical activity makes people happier and healthier, and movement is the lens through which we can make that happen. It does the same thing for our communities, with life-changing, sustainable benefits that have huge economic and social value. That's why Sport England wants sport and physical activity to be recognised as essential to help overcome these national challenges.

The Strategy recognises the need to invest in sport and physical activity through NGBs, other sports bodies and local sports clubs, organisations and community groups to increase engagement for different groups as part of our core purpose. It states that there is now a need to go further in promoting movement in general as the means to unlock sport and activity for some people.

Tackling inequalities

There are deep-rooted inequalities in sport and physical activity, which means that there are people who feel excluded from being active because the right options and opportunities aren't there. These inequalities are at the very core of the Uniting the Movement.

Sport England plans on having a laser focus on tackling inequalities in all that it does, because providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity is vitally important.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

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

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

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

Paragraph 104 sets three criterion that ensures existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

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

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

The FA National Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)

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

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

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

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

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

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

- ◀ **Improve 20,000 Natural Turf pitches**, with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents'** (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses**, linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;
Support access to flexible indoor spaces, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;
- ◀ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision**, recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;
- ◀ **Support testing of technology and innovation**, building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

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Local Football Facility Plans

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Game Strategy (NGS), the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project. A Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) has now been produced for every local authority across England. Each plan is unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (The FA, Premier League, DCMS, Football Foundation) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP will build upon PPS/PPOSS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game, to also include strategic priorities for investment across small sided football (recreational and informal including indoors). The LFFP will also incorporate consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as underrepresented communities. This could include those which may be key partners with regards to football for behavioural change and groups which may be key drivers of FA NGS priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

LFFPs will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all national football investment through the funding partners will be identified via LFFPs.

It is important to recognise that a LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS/PPOSS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. A LFFP will, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS/PPOSS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The FA: Inspiring Positive Change Through Football (2024-28)³²

The FA launched its new Strategy which aims to 'take English football forward, with clear focus on the biggest opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed'.

To achieve this, eight key strategic priorities are identified which include four 'Game Changer' objectives and four 'Drivers' objectives as detailed below. The strategy also outlines how The FA's plans to achieve these objectives.

Game Changers:

- ◀ Win tournaments
 - ◀ Develop pathways
 - ◀ Support elite players
 - ◀ Enhance environments
 - ◀ Collaborate and influence
- ◀ A game free from discrimination
 - ◀ Boost representation
 - ◀ Drive more inclusion
 - ◀ Tackle discrimination
- ◀ Equal opportunities for women & girls
 - ◀ Increase school participation
 - ◀ Increase club participation

³² [FA Strategy 2024-2028: The Football Association](#)

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- ◀ Enhance women's competitions
- ◀ Support female coaches and referees
- ◀ Transform the pitch landscape
 - ◀ Sustain and grow high-quality grass pitches
 - ◀ Deliver new 3G pitches
 - ◀ Support inclusivity accessibility and environmental sustainability of facilities

Drivers:

- ◀ Thriving community clubs
 - ◀ Develop club opportunities
 - ◀ Support the current and future generation of club leaders
 - ◀ Equip clubs to add long-term value to local communities
- ◀ World-class FA cups
 - ◀ Broaden commercial appeal
 - ◀ Evolve the Adobe Women's FA Cup format
- ◀ Participant led
 - ◀ Place participants at the centre of decision making
 - ◀ Create flexible models to meet participants needs
 - ◀ Provide digital tools to improve experiences
- ◀ Progressive governance
 - ◀ Support integration of women's and girls' football
 - ◀ Support governance of the NLS
 - ◀ Support our County Football Associations (CFAs)

The FA: Reaching Higher (2024-28)³³

The FA's 2020-2024 strategy, 'Inspiring Positive Change', coincided with record growth across the sport, with more women and girls playing, coaching, officiating and supporting the flourishing professional game than ever before.

This strategy aims to build on the success achieved to date and strives to continue working to unlock the full potential of the women's and girls' game. The strategy outlines four strategic priorities as seen below.

1. **Build and Protect the Uniqueness of the Women's Game:** Continue to honour the history of women's football and recognise those who have contributed towards making it so unique, whilst ensuring the distinct qualities and unique culture of the women's game are valued and protected.
2. **Win a Major Tournament:** Continue to be world-leaders both on and off the pitch, developing players and building an inclusive talent pathway system to make football more equal and accessible at every level of the game, ensuring the England pathway and teams represent society.
3. **Build Robust, High-Quality Competition:** Create compelling competition structures and support clubs to develop to the appropriate level within the game, while enabling people to grow and develop within The FA's competition structures.
4. **Deliver Equal Opportunities for Women and Girls to Play:** Sustain growth in schools whilst tackling inequalities. Continue to grow the number of female teams and deliver vibrant league offers whilst extending and enhancing the sessional football offer. The ambition is for 90% of schools to deliver equal access for girls to play football in key stages two and three.

³³ [The FA Womens & Girls Football Strategy 2024-28](#)

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There are five golden threads which weave through each of the four strategic priorities and across all levels of the women's and girls' game, which will be instrumental for delivering the next phase of growth by 2028:

1. **Female Health and Wellbeing:** Develop the game to support women and girls with their health and wellbeing needs, providing them with environments in which they can thrive.
2. **Safeguarding:** Support the evolution of an ever-safer culture across the women's and girls' game.
3. **Refereeing:** Grow and nurture a new generation of referees who are representative of our society.
4. **Coaching:** Support and develop brilliant coaches capable of unleashing every player's potential in a safe and inclusive game.
5. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure the game is more reflective of our society.

Inspiring Generations – Cricket's Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28)^[1]

In October 2024 the ECB released its updated strategy Inspiring Generations – Cricket's Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28). Cricket in England and Wales has seen transformative growth since the publication of its previous strategy Inspiring Generation (2020-24). Its new strategy represents an evolution of its plans, however, many of its previous themes are still relevant. Its main purpose is to say 'Cricket is a game for me' through its vision:

- ◀ To become the most inclusive team sport
- ◀ To grow and unite the game
- ◀ Lead the game through global transformation

It aims to obtain this vision through six key objectives

- ◀ Make cricket diverse, inclusive and accessible
- ◀ Transform Women's and Girl's cricket
- ◀ Connect communities through play
- ◀ Inspire through winning England teams
- ◀ Support a thriving and sustainable men's and women's professional game
- ◀ Win the battle for attention

Underpinning these six ambitions are a series of enablers that cut-across multiple areas of the game, alongside Cricket's Core Values.

The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan 2021 onwards

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

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

^[1]<https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2024/10/22/19a925d7-3c92-4a36-8e7b-f49cb470377f/ECB-Inspiring-Generations-2025-2028.pdf>

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England Hockey Strategy (2023 – 2028)

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found [here](#).

Aiming to make hockey more noticeable, relevant, and accessible to all, England Hockey have launched their new strategy 'Creating a Future for Our Game Together' on 3rd October. The new strategy is a continued effort to re-engage with the current hockey community and to reach out to potential newcomers to introduce them to hockey.

Underpinning the strategy and of importance to the hockey community are four values, "collaborate inclusively, care for people and places, play with spirit win with grace and resilient in everything we do".

The strategy is the culmination of two years consultation with various stakeholders across the sport and larger sporting sector. Hockey will be guided by five key objectives over the next five years.

1. **Lead Positive Change:** to create and champion positive change within the community by broadening and widening the engagement of the sport and making it more ethnically and culturally diverse.
2. **Meaningful Growth:** to make sure that our sport thrives and grows into the future, we want to nurture a love of hockey within a more diverse group of young players and communities to reflect society.
3. **Drive Visible Impact:** to produce and release high-quality, engaging content that shares the love of the game, captures the passion, builds a deep connection and amplifies the voices of the hockey community with new and existing participants.
4. **Responsible Leadership:** to provide forward thinking, compassionate and inclusive leadership. Leadership that fosters trust within physically and psychologically safe environments and which puts players, the community and sustainability at heart of every decision.
5. **Inspirational International Success:** inspirational club and national teams delivering podium success in Europe and on the world stage, underpinned by a thriving talent system and domestic game.

The strategy aligns with Sport England's 'Uniting the movement' strategy and UK Sport's 'Powering Success, Inspiring Impact' strategic plan.

England Netball

In November 2021 England Netball launched a 10-year 'Adventure Strategy' for the game with a new brand identity for the organisation.

England Netball's 'Adventure Strategy' shares a purpose-led ambition for the game, to build on the momentum the sport has seen in recent years and take it to new heights for the decade ahead.

The 'Adventure Strategy' outlines the intention to:-

- ◀ accelerate the development and growth of the game at every level, from grassroots to the elite,
- ◀ elevate the visibility of the sport, and
- ◀ lead a movement to impact lives on and beyond the court.

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At the heart of its purpose, England Netball, with its proud and unique female foundations, will remain dedicated to increasing opportunities for women and girls to play the game as a priority, working tirelessly to address the gender participation gap in sport that has widened since the global pandemic.

Underpinned by years of engaging with and delivering netball for female communities, the organisation pledges to understand, support and nurture women and girls more deeply at every life stage, at every age.

The organisation is also committed to opening the sport to new audiences in every community, so netball better represents the rich diversity of the country it proudly represents, and ensures the sport continues to evolve and adapt to thrive in the future, helping to create a truly inclusive sport for all where everyone can belong, flourish and soar. A recent partnership announcement with England Men's and Mixed Netball Association (EMMNA) to help develop and grow male participation in the game, supports this commitment as England Netball pledges to promote difference and embrace the opportunity to make the sport a possibility within everyone's reach.

Transforming netball for children and young people is a strategic priority to protect the future of the sport. Working with schools and policy makers to extend physical literacy within, and after the school day with a focus on netball specific provision will pave the way for greater community participation. The organisation will accelerate the expansion of its Bee Netball programme for young children, whilst supporting teens and young women to stay in the game to keep them physically active and in the game for life.

Facility Development

The facility development aspirations stated within the Strategy are to:-

- ◀ Take a fresh look at the spaces required to support the sport, creating accessible places in every community to allow netball to be incorporated into how and where women and girls live their lives;
- ◀ Protect, enhance, and extend the network of homes that house the sport at a local and regional level;
- ◀ Develop an elite domestic professional competition that supports full time athletes underpinned by a world class infrastructure and environments.
- ◀ For England Netball to achieve its ambitions to make the game accessible to wider audiences and in every community, it encourages Local Authorities to adopt policies within Playing Pitch Strategies and Built Facilities Strategies that:-
- ◀ Facilitates informal netball activity within neighbourhood multi use games areas for example by installing combined outdoor basketball and netball goals and art courts in Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- ◀ Incorporates the cultural and health needs of women and girls within any designs for improved or new facilities.
- ◀ Protects and enhances netball facilities within all Primary and Secondary School environments so they offer a positive first experience of the sport for students and the wider community during out of school hours.
- ◀ Supports the installation of floodlights on outdoor courts to increase all year-round use.
- ◀ Facilitates the development of netball growth programmes, club training and competition within public leisure centres.
- ◀ Where appropriate, supports the development of netball homes and performance environments that enable local women and girls to pursue a career in netball as an elite athlete, official, coach or administrator.

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Tennis in Britain - LTA Strategy

The LTA's vision for 2019 – 2023, Tennis Opened Up includes seven strategies relating to three objectives which are built around its mission 'to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable'.

Objectives

- ◀ Increase the number of fans on our database from [623,602] to [1,000,000] by 2023.
- ◀ More people playing more often;
 - Increase the number of adults playing tennis each year from [7.7% (4,018,600)] of the population to [8.5% (4,420,460)], and the frequency of adults playing tennis twice a month 2.5% 1,311,800 to 1.9% 1,500,000 by 2023.
 - The number of children playing tennis once a week from 550,000 to 700,000 (7.9% to 10% of the population) by 2023.
- ◀ Enable 5 new players to break into the top 100 by 2023 and inspire the tennis audience.

Strategies

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

British Crown Green Bowling Association

Please note there is no current facility guidance provided by British Crown Green Bowling Association responsible for crown green bowls in England.

<https://www.bcgba.org.uk/>

Bowls England: Fit for the Future (2021-2026)

Bowls England's Strategy; 'Fit For The Future' frames an exciting course for the sport. The five-year plan has been designed with the ultimate goal of getting more people playing & enjoying bowls. It sets out its vision for the sport, how it plans to achieve its objectives and what success looks like in 2026. The priorities that will get it to the target of 1 million bowls experiences per year by 2026 are:

- ◀ Building the brand of bowls by increasing focus on international & top domestic bowls, and utilizing opportunities such as Birmingham 2022 to achieve larger media coverage;
- ◀ Ensuring the sport is truly accessible to all by offering different formats of the game which suit all time constraints, as well as driving more people to clubs in new ways;
- ◀ Creating positive playing experiences for everyone who steps on the green, both for casual and competitive players, as well as growing our events calendar and introducing a Performance Pathway

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- ◀ Putting volunteers first, as the lifeblood of our sport, by increasing our support for clubs in order to empower them to thrive;
- ◀ Leading the sport with purpose by developing our Governance structures, diversifying our revenue streams, and work collaboratively with all the sport's key stakeholders.

England athletics strategy plan 2021 – 2032: Athletics and runners at the heart – creating opportunities, enhancing experiences and powering potential.

This strategy ensures a robust and clearly defined future direction for the sport which places athletics and runners at the heart of everything we will do over the 12 year period to 2032.

England Athletics overarching purpose and visions are:

Purpose: 'To inspire more athletics and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport.'

Vision: 'For athletics to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish.'

At the heart of this plan, and the focal point for everything England Athletics do, are the people and communities involved in athletics across the following five areas:

- ◀ Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities
- ◀ Competition
- ◀ Coaches and officials
- ◀ Participation: young people and running
- ◀ Talented athletes

Each has its own unique challenges and opportunities, yet also the opportunity to positively influence the success and growth of the other areas.

There are four key supporting activities that will be essential in enabling us to deliver the strategic priorities and ultimately achieve goals:

- ◀ Provide strong **leadership** that builds trust and respect by creating an open and positive culture.
- ◀ Embrace technology and reduce our environmental impact by putting **digital first** and encouraging innovation and creativity.
- ◀ Ensure greater **engagement** through sharing of high-quality insight, information and content.
- ◀ Develop **commercial minds** to maximise funding opportunities and diversify income.

England Golf Course Planner – Strategic Direction (2021-2025)

England Golf has always had a mission to lead, support, inspire and deliver for its community of golfers, golf clubs and counties. To help enable this, its Course Planner forms the core of its strategy, with 18 guiding principles established that are designed to best position growth in the game:

- ◀ Strengthen governance in all aspects of the sport
- ◀ Deliver safeguarding throughout the golfing community
- ◀ Utilise data and technology to enhance decision making
- ◀ Drive equality and equity in everything it does
- ◀ Support golf clubs with member recruitment and retention
- ◀ Connect and engage with all golfers
- ◀ Inspire and educate golf's network of volunteers

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- ◀ Increase golf's influence
- ◀ Advocate and inform on all elements of sustainability
- ◀ Drive diversity at all levels of golf
- ◀ Create more opportunities for junior and young adults
- ◀ Promote the health and wellbeing of golf
- ◀ Inspire more women and girls to play golf
- ◀ Develop greater access for disabled people
- ◀ Enthuse all golfers through relatable role models
- ◀ Communicate a positive perception change for golf
- ◀ Deliver an excellent talent development pathway
- ◀ Host best-in-class competitions for all golfers

<https://www.englandgolf.org/englandgolfstrategy/>