



HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

DRAFT ASSESSMENT REPORT NOVEMBER 2020

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
CFA	County Football Association
DALP	Delivery and Allocations Local Plan
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HBC	Halton Borough Council
HC	Hockey Club
IOG	Institute of Groundmanship
JFC	Junior Football Club
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facilities Plan
NFFS	National Football Facilities Strategy
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PIP	Pitch Improvement Programme
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
RDO	Rugby Development Officer
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
U	Under

Sport	Club consultation	Site assessments	Affiliation data
Football	January/February 2020	January/February 2020	2019/20
Cricket	September/ October 2020	August 2020	2019
Rugby union	January/February 2020	January/February 2020	2019/20
Rugby league	September/ October 2020	August 2020	2019
Hockey	January/February 2020	January/February 2020	2019/20

It was agreed with the NGBs for Cricket and Rugby league that 2019 Affiliation data was used due to on COVID-19 Pandemic. For more in depth details regarding club consultation please see the relevant sporting sections.

Population Data: ONS (2018 based) Sub-national Population Projections.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been commissioned by Halton Borough Council (HBC) to undertake a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). This report presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch facilities within the Borough in accordance with Sport England's PPS Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a PPS. The guidance details a stepped approach to developing a PPS, with these steps separated into five distinct sections:

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

Stages A to C are covered in this report, with stage D covered in the proceeding Strategy document. The guidance has been followed to develop a clear picture of the balance between the local supply of and demand for playing pitches.

Covid-19

Since the production of the winter sports elements of this Assessment Report (covering football, hockey and rugby union) there has been global pandemic from the spreading of Covid-19 (Coronavirus).

This led England to enter an unprecedented state of Lockdown from the 23rd March 2020. Lockdown requires the general public to remain at home and only leave their households for food, health reasons or work (only if work cannot be carried out at home). In addition, if people are to go outside, they are to remain two metres apart. This understandably led to all sporting activities including all those covered in the Playing Pitch Strategy documents to cease until further notice.

Lockdown restrictions began to ease in July/August 2020 which led to a return to play for summer sports such as cricket and rugby league but with truncated seasons and new social distance regulations. These are explained in greater detail in the relevant sports sections below.

It should be noted that due to a further increase in Covid-19 cases, England re-entered a state of Lockdown on November 5th 2020 till at least December 5th 2020. This saw the reintroduction of the above mentioned rules and as such grassroots sports ceased again, impacting on the new winter sports season.

It should be noted that any changes to the approach used to analyse supply and demand data for summer sports is detailed in the relevant sections (Part 4: Cricket and Part 7: Rugby League) and have been agreed with the appropriate NGB.

It is currently unknown what the future impact of Covid-19 and the Lockdown will have on participation and the quality of provision for each sport referenced in the documents. Therefore, it is acknowledged that as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy Stage E process, the review of the documents should ensure that any recommendations made are still accurate based on future levels of supply and demand.

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As part of Stage E, the PPS should be reviewed on an annual basis from the date it is formally signed off by the Steering Group. A review will help to maintain the momentum and commitment built up during its development. Given current circumstances an annual meeting, which could coincide with the annual NGB affiliation process, would be beneficial to understand what impact, Covid-19 and the Lockdowns have had within Halton.

For more information regarding the Stage E process please see Part 8: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date or see <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport>

1.1: Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach

Why the strategy is being developed

Concern at national government level over the loss of playing fields prompted the development of localised playing pitch assessments and strategies which identify current and future requirements for playing fields. Developing a strategic approach to the analysis of playing pitch supply and demand is necessary to:

- ◀ Protect playing pitches against development pressures in, and around, urban areas.
- ◀ Identify pitch (natural grass and artificial) supply and demand issues in relation to predicated population changes.
- ◀ Address 'demand' pressures created as a result of specific sports development pressures e.g. growth of mini soccer and wider use of artificial grass pitches.
- ◀ Address budget pressures and public-sector cuts.

The Halton PPS will provide an evidence base for planning decisions and funding bids and will ensure that this evidence is sound, robust and capable of being scrutinised through the Local Plan examination whilst meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Section 8 of the NPPF deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities; Paragraph 96 discusses the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

Paragraph 97 discusses assessments and the protection of "existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields". As such, the Halton PPS will provide the evidence required to help protect playing fields to ensure sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future pitch requirements.

Paragraph 99 and 100 also promote the identification of important green spaces by local communities and the protection of these facilities. Such spaces may include playing fields.

In addition, the PPS will support the delivery of outcomes in Halton's emerging Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP), 2014-2037. This was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination in March 2020. The DALP sets out how the Borough has developed over time and introduces the Borough's characteristics, including the issues and challenges that it now faces and those likely to have an impact and drive further change during the period to 2037 and beyond. Key challenges that the plan is seeking to address are to:

- ◀ Respond to the changing population structure including the Borough's ageing population
- ◀ Tackle issues of deprivation and health for the Borough's residents.

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- ◀ Deliver and secure a balanced housing offer which is appropriate to local markets and ultimately supports the Borough's economic growth.
- ◀ Continue to create an environment where employers want to invest and create jobs.
- ◀ Attract skilled workers into the Borough and increase the proportion of Halton's working age population with appropriate qualifications.
- ◀ Support the Borough's economic growth sectors including science and technology, and logistics and distribution.
- ◀ Ensure all development is of a high quality of design and that areas of contaminated land are successfully remediated.
- ◀ Maintain and enhance Halton's natural and heritage assets including its sites of local, national, and international importance, waterside environments and distinctive character
- ◀ Protect, enhance and, where appropriate, expand the Borough's green infrastructure network.
- ◀ Put in place mitigation and adaptation measures to deal with the threat of climate change.
- ◀ Utilise resources sustainably.
- ◀ Reduce congestion and support travel by sustainable modes.
- ◀ Maintain and enhance the retail and leisure offer of Widnes Town Centre, Shopping City and Runcorn Old Town.
- ◀ Minimise and respond to the potential risk of major accidents, flooding, contamination and pollution.

The DALP also sets out a vision, stating that "Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills, enjoy a good quality life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and within safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods."

A series of 13 strategic objectives are identified to help deliver the vision. These are:

- ◀ SO1 - Create and support attractive, accessible and adaptable residential neighbourhoods where people want to live.
- ◀ SO2 - Provide good quality, affordable accommodation and a wide mix of housing types to create balanced communities.
- ◀ SO3 - Create and sustain a competitive and diverse business environment offering a variety of quality sites and premises, with an emphasis on the revitalisation of existing vacant and underused employment areas.
- ◀ SO4 - Further develop Halton's economy around the logistics and distribution sector, and expand the science, creative and knowledge-based business clusters.
- ◀ SO5 - Maintain and enhance Halton's town, district, and local centres to create high quality retail and leisure areas that meet the needs of the local community, and positively contribute to the image of the Borough.
- ◀ SO6 - Ensure all development is supported by the timely provision of adequate infrastructure, with sufficient capacity to accommodate additional future growth.
- ◀ SO7 - Provide accessible travel options for people and freight, ensuring a better connected, less congested and more sustainable Halton.
- ◀ SO8 Ensure that all development achieves high standards of design and sustainability and provides a positive contribution to its locality.
- ◀ SO9 - Minimise Halton's contribution to climate change through reducing carbon emissions and ensure the Borough is resilient to the adverse effects of climate change
- ◀ SO10 Support the conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environment including designated sites and species and the Borough's green infrastructure in order to maximise social, economic and environmental benefits.
- ◀ SO11 - Improve the health and well-being of Halton's residents throughout each of their life stages, through supporting the achievement of healthy lifestyles and healthy environments for all.

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- ◀ SO12 - Prevent harm and nuisance to people and biodiversity from potential sources of pollution and foreseeable risks.
- ◀ SO13 - Support sustainable and effective waste and minerals management, reducing the waste generated and contributing to the maintenance of appropriate mineral reserves.

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.

In addition to the project team, a strong and effective steering group has and will continue to lead and drive this PPS forward during its development and also to ensure the delivery of its recommendations and actions. The membership of the group is balanced and representative of the different parties and key drivers behind the work and the providers and users of playing pitches in the study area. It is made up of representatives from the Council, Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs).

The steering group is and has been responsible for the direction of the PPS from a strategic perspective and for supporting and checking and challenging the work of the project team. It will be important for the steering group to continue once the PPS has been finalised for several reasons, including a continuing responsibility to:

- ◀ Be a champion for playing pitch provision in the area and promote the value and importance of the PPS.
- ◀ Support implementation of the PPS's recommendations and action plan.
- ◀ Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the PPS.
- ◀ Ensure that the PPS is kept up to date and refreshed.

Agreed scope

The scope of the PPS focuses geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Provision included within the project is as follows:

- ◀ Football pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Cricket pitches
- ◀ Rugby union pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Rugby league pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Hockey pitches (artificial grass pitches (AGPs))
- ◀ American football pitches
- ◀ Baseball pitches

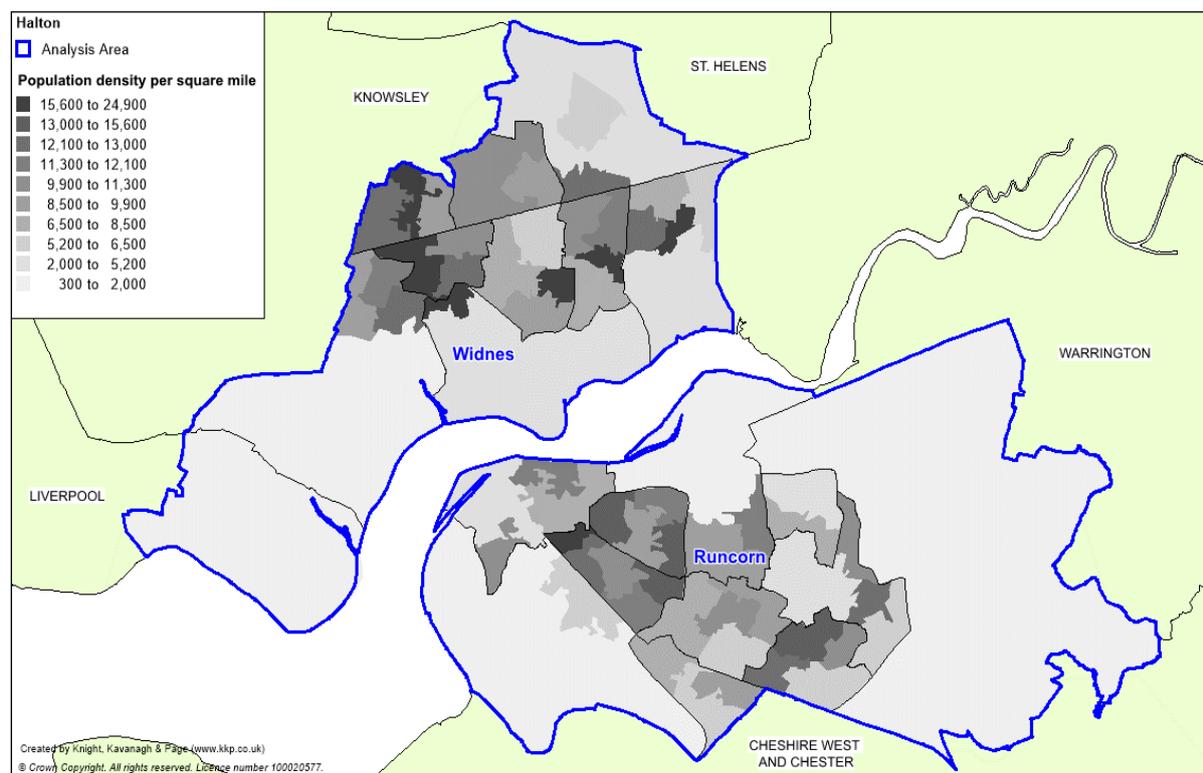
Study area

The study area is the whole of Halton Borough Council's administrative area. In addition, cross-boundary issues are also explored to determine the level of imported and exported demand from neighbouring authorities.

In addition, analysis areas (or sub areas) are used to allow for a more localised analysis in addition to the analysis for Halton as a whole. As the Borough comprises of two distinct localities, these will be used for the purpose of creating the analysis areas – Runcorn and Widnes.

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Figure 1.1: Analysis areas



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

A clear picture of supply and demand for playing pitches in Halton needs to be provided to enable 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 playing pitches.

Gather supply information and views – an audit of playing pitches

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 of 0.2ha or more which 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 playing field sets out a minimum size, this PPS takes into account smaller sized pitches that contribute to the supply side; for example, a site containing a mini 5v5 football pitch. This PPS counts individual grass pitches (as a delineated area) as the basic unit of supply. The definition of a playing pitch also includes AGPs.

As far as possible the assessment report aims to capture all of the playing pitches within Halton. However, there may be instances, for example, on school sites, where access was not possible and has led to omissions within the report (although facilities at sites not accessed are still included within the PPS where provision is known to exist from other data sources). Where pitches have not been recorded within the report they remain as pitches and for

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

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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 playing pitches are included within the PPS, 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 as well as supplying their own. This was also verified against club information supplied by local leagues.

For each site, the following details are recorded in the project database:

- ◀ 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 playing pitches 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** - pitches 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** - pitches 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.
- ◀ **No community use** - pitches 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** – sites that are not being used at all by any users and are not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years they will then be categorised as 'lapsed sites'.
- ◀ **Lapsed** - last known use was as a playing field more than five years ago. These fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Sport England would nonetheless challenge a proposed loss of playing pitches/playing field which fails to meet such criteria. It should be emphasised that the lawful planning use of a lapsed site is still that of a playing field.

In addition, there should be a good degree of certainty that the pitch will be available to the community for at least the following three years. A judgement is made based on the information gathered and a record of secured or unsecured community use put against each site.

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 playing pitches and the 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 playing pitches 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 have also been 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 playing pitches (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 playing pitches 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 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.

In comparison latent demand is defined as the number of additional teams that could be fielded if access to a sufficient number of outdoor sports facilities (and ancillary provision) was available, whereas exported and imported demand refers to those that are playing outside of their local authority area of choice.

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.

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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 have been followed up by telephone or face-to-face interviews.

As key providers and users of playing pitches, 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, special schools and independent schools.

Future demand

Alongside current demand, it is important for a PPS to assess whether the future demand for playing pitches can be met. Using Office of National Statistics (ONS) population projections and proposed housing growth, 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). This ratio is then applied to population growth to help estimate the change in demand for pitch sports that may arise in the future.

Other information sources that were used to help identify future demand include:

- ◀ Recent trends in the participation.
- ◀ The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate including the use of Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator.
- ◀ 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).

For the base year population ONS 2018 Mid-Year Population Estimates for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) by single year of age and sex have been used. This was used to calculate the current population for each age group for each sport, for example, in Halton there were 21,198 Men aged 18-45 in 2018 (football).

To get the percentage change ONS 2016-based Subnational Population Projections (SNPP) for Local Authorities by single year of age and sex was used. Then the number of people in each sport age group for both 2018 and 2037 was calculated, and then worked out the percentage change between the two years, this percentage was then applied to the ONS mid-year population estimates, for example, for Men aged 18-45 (football) the percentage change is -2.5%.

Table 1.1: Future population calculations

Local Authority	2018 (ONS MYE) Men aged 18-45	2018 (SNPP) Men aged 18-45	2037 (SNPP) Men aged 18-45	% Change 2018 to 2037 (SNNPP)	% Change applied to ONS 2018 MYE
Halton	21,198	21,113	20,595	-2.5%	20,677

The final figure (20,677) is then used in the team generation rate calculations.

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1.3: 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 Halton and to identify key issues, challenges and aspirations.

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 1.2: Capacity of playing pitches

Sport	Pitch type	No. of match equivalent sessions		
		Good	Standard	Poor
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union*	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
	One synthetic wicket	60 per season	60 per season	60 per season

For other grass pitch sports included (i.e. rugby league, American football and baseball), no guidelines are set by the NGBs although it can be assumed that similar principles should be followed. This, however, does not apply to hockey as there is no limit to how often an AGP can be used, with capacity instead limited by availability and current usage levels. A pitch without floodlighting or capacity restrictions can generally be accessed for four matches on one day.

Develop the current picture of provision

Once capacity is determined on a site-by-site basis, actual spare capacity is calculated on a Borough wide and an area-by-area basis via further interrogation of temporal demand. This then identifies whether there is overall spare capacity on pitches or whether there is a shortfall. Although spare capacity may be 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 in a 'strategic reserve' to enable pitch rotation to reduce wear and tear.

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 playing pitch provision in Halton. This report seeks to identify

and present the key findings and issues prior to development of the Strategy and Action Plan for the Borough.

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.

Most of the scenario testing generally occurs in the strategy reports that proceed this document and therefore does not form part of the Assessment Report.

PART 2: FOOTBALL

2.1: Introduction

The organisations primarily responsible for the development of football in Halton are Cheshire FA and Liverpool FA. They are 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. All clubs in the area affiliate to one of the two County Football Associations (CFA).

This section of the report focuses on the supply and demand for grass football pitches. Part 3 captures supply and demand for third generation pitches (3G pitches) which are the preferred AGP (artificial grass pitch) surface type for football. There is 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 Games Strategy (NGS), the FA has commissioned a nationwide consultancy project which is now nearing completion. A Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) has been or will be 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 delivered through the Football Foundation to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP builds upon PPS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game and includes strategic priorities for investment across small-sided football (including recreational and indoor activity). 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, disability football and futsal.

The LFFP is a 'live' document that can be updated following the completion of a PPS, if required. An up-to-date supply and demand assessment may present findings and recommendations that need to be incorporated into the LFFP for investment purposes. LFFPs 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.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to recognise that the 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 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 and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The LFFP for Halton was produced in 2019 and identifies eight priority projects for investment. These are discussed in greater detail in the Part 2: Football (pitch Quality) and Part 3: Third Generation Turf (3G) Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) (Future Provision).

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Consultation

In addition to face-to-face consultation with key football clubs, an electronic survey was sent to all clubs playing within Halton. Contact details were provided by both Liverpool FA and Cheshire FA and the invitation to complete the survey was distributed via email. Assistance with circulating the survey and increasing the response rate was also provided by the Widnes Football Forum.

Through both face-to-face meetings and survey responses, 21 of 36 clubs playing in Halton responded, equating to a 75% team response rate (173 out of 232). It should be noted that the majority of clubs which did not respond to consultation only have a solitary team. As a result, with most larger clubs responding to consultation, in addition to information provided by the Widnes Football Forum, Football Foundation, Cheshire FA and Liverpool FA it is accepted that this is representative of football in Halton.

Face-to-face consultation was carried out with the following five clubs:

- ◀ Beechwood JFC
- ◀ Halton Borough Wolves FC
- ◀ Pex Hill FC
- ◀ Runcorn Linnets FC
- ◀ Widnes FC

2.2: Supply

The audit identifies a total of 111 grass football pitches within Halton across 40 sites. Of these, 97 pitches are available, at some level, for community use across 26 sites. All 14 unavailable pitches are located at school sites.

As can be seen in the table below, community available pitches in the Borough are split fairly evenly across the two analysis areas. Widnes accommodates 52 community available pitches (54%), whereas Runcorn accommodates 45 community available pitches (46%).

Table 2.1: Summary of grass football pitches available to the community

Football						
Analysis area	No. of pitches available for community use					
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Runcorn	12	9	5	9	10	45
Widnes	19	12	5	7	9	52
Halton	31	21	10	16	19	97

Most available pitches across Halton (31 pitches) are adult size, despite youth 11v11 football being the most common format of play. This leads to many youth 11v11 teams playing on adult pitches, which, whilst sometimes preferable for clubs, is not ideal for players at U13-U16 level and is not in line with the FA Youth Review.

In accordance with the FA Youth Review, U17 and U18 teams can play on adult pitches. The FA's recommended pitch size for adult football is 100x64 metres, whilst it is 91x55 metres for U15 and U16 teams and 82x50 metres for U13 and U14 teams.

Please refer to the table overleaf for more detail relating to pitch sizes for each format of play.

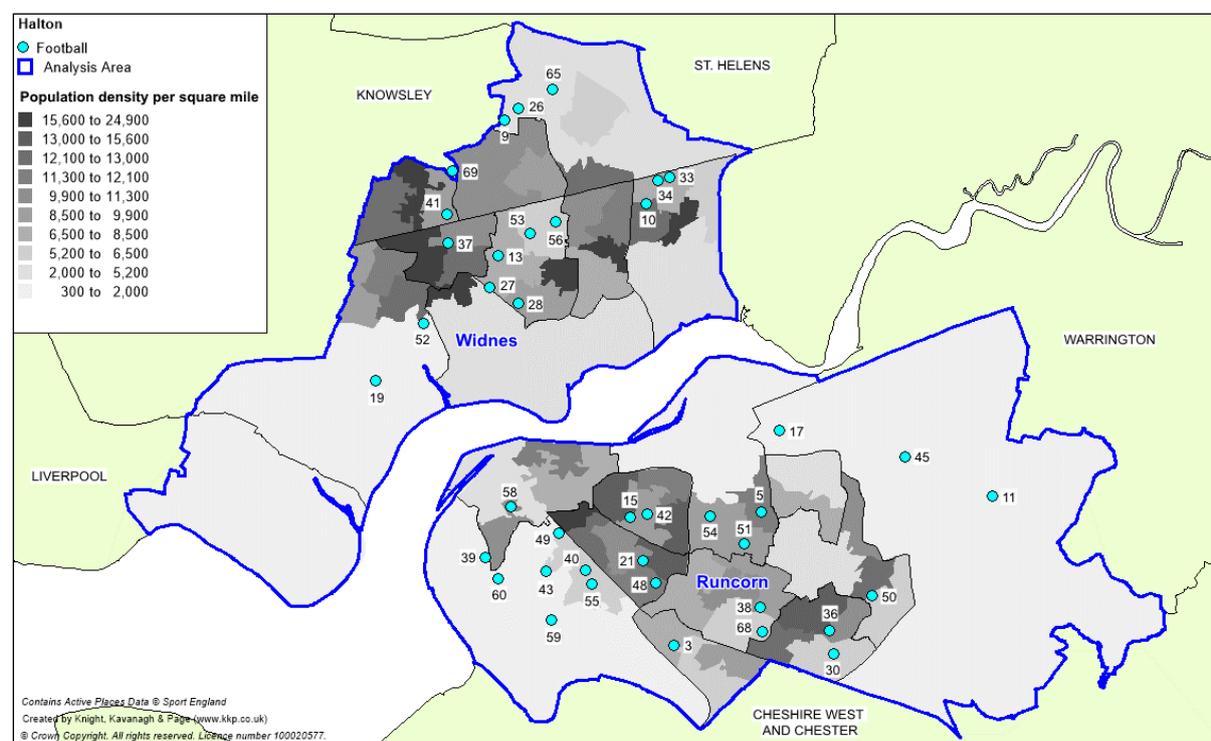
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Table 2.2: Recommended football pitch sizes

Football		
Format	Age group	Recommended pitch size (metres)
Adult	U17s+	100 x 64
Youth 11v11	U15s-U16s	91 x 55
	U13s-U14s	82 x 50
Youth 9v9	U11s-U12s	73 x 46
Mini 7v7	U9s-U10s	55 x 37
Mini 5v5	U7s-U8s	37 x 27

Figure 2.1 below identifies the location of all football pitches in Halton, regardless of community use. For a key to the map, please see Table 2.13.

Figure 2.1: Location of all football pitches in Halton



Unused provision

The Council reports that it has two sites which it has retained and can be reinstated if the relevant demand arises; Arley Drive Playing Fields and Hale Park.

Arley Drive Playing Fields was previously configured with one mini 5v5, one mini 7v7 and one youth 9v9 pitch, going back to 2018. Alternatively, the Council reports that the site has the capacity to accommodate two youth 11v11 pitches. In addition, it is accompanied by changing rooms; however, these are no longer available to community users due to vandalism issues.

The last known layout at Hale Park was one adult and one youth 11v11 pitch. Furthermore, the site is also accompanied by changing rooms, although the water system has been drained due to infrequent use.

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Lapsed/disused provision

Playing fields which have previously accommodated formal pitch provision are categorised as being either disused or lapsed. A disused site is a playing field which is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years, they will then be categorised as lapsed sites.

As mentioned, a lapsed site was as a playing field more than five years ago. These fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 97 of the NPPF and Sport England would nonetheless challenge a proposed loss of playing pitches/playing field which fails to meet such criteria.

Disused provision

There is an undetermined planning application (17/00468/FUL) to build houses on disused playing fields at Sandy Lane, which previously accommodated both football and rugby league pitches as well as clubhouse provision. If the site was lost, it would be subject to appropriate mitigation to address the loss in line with the NPPF Paragraph 97 and Sport England's Playing Field Policy. As such, the Council reports that it is in dialogue with the Sport England regarding the site and is awaiting the completion of the 2020 PPS to assist.

Lapsed provision

Prescot Road Playing Field currently is separated into three parcels of land which are under three separate tenures: the Council, Widnes RUFC and private ownership. The parcel of land which is owned by the Council, currently accommodates four mini pitches that are used by Pex Hill FC.

The Club reports that it previously had access to an additional three youth 11v11 pitches at the site, before these were sold in 2013 from a private ownership to another to private owner. They have not been used since and are now considered to be lapsed. As a result, the Club now uses alternative sites for its youth 11v11 teams; it indicates that it would want to reinstate the provision in order to accommodate all of its teams at one location.

Future provision

Runcorn Linnets FC has received a grant from the Football Foundation, in March 2020, to replace its stadia grass pitch with a hybrid pitch. This project forms part of Sport England's hybrid pitch pilot scheme (see below). The Club is one of only two sites in the North West of England to receive a grant, although it should be noted that a schedule of works is yet to be agreed in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The concept of a hybrid pitch is to create additional capacity whilst ensuring it is accessible in various conditions. Current grass pitches are designed for one to three matches per week based on quality, and at times become unusable such as throughout the winter or during periods of wet weather. Comparatively, a hybrid pitch should be able to support approximately 20 hours of usage whilst maintaining reasonable quality in various playing conditions.

Security of tenure

Tenure of sites in Halton is generally secure i.e. through a long-term lease or a guarantee that pitches will continue to be provided over the next three years. This relates to most pitches operated by the Council, with such provision protected as part of an ongoing commitment to providing a leisure offering.

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A common exception to providing security of tenure is found at schools and academies each have their own lettings policies which are more likely to restrict levels of community use. In total, 12 educational providers in Halton do not allow community use of some or all of their pitches. The reasons for not allowing community use varies; the most common example is that the schools want to protect pitches for curricular and extra-curricular purposes due to existing quality issues. Other reasons include staffing issues, health and safety issues and a perceived lack of profitability.

Moreover, some schools that do provide community access do so without providing security of tenure, meaning they can stop the external use at any point devoid of any warning. An example of this is found at Sandymoor School, which is heavily used by Sandymoor FC. The Club only rents the use of the pitches on site and reports that restrictive opening times for community access is causing a major issue. To prevent such issues, it is recommended that club users enter community use agreements with the schools that they access, where possible.

Similarly, St Michael's DH FC reports that it struggles to gain funding due to only renting pitches at St Michaels Catholic Primary School. It aspires to have long-term tenure on the site (or an alternative site) so that it can apply for funding to help the growth of the Club. Generally, funding bodies will require clubs to have long-term security of tenure (often in the form of a lease arrangement with at least 25 years remaining) before awarding grants.

The only known secured usage at an education site in Halton is at St Peter & St Paul Catholic College, which is accessed by Widnes FC. The Club reports through consultation that it has long term tenure on the site.

Aside from schools, Brookvale United FC reports that it has requested a lease for Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields from the Council; however, it states that it has not had a response as of yet. If it obtains a long-term agreement, it reports that it would explore potential funding options to improve pitch quality.

Similarly, Beechwood JFC has aspirations for a long-term arrangement at Haddocks Wood Playing Fields. The Club indicates that if it could obtain an agreement, it would apply for potential grant funding to improve pitch quality and make improvements to ancillary provision.

Pitch quality

The quality of football pitches across Halton have been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA²) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

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 are able to 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.

² See Appendix 3 for the non-technical assessment for football pitches

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The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (50-80%), Poor (<50%). The final quality ratings assigned to the sites also take into account the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

The table below summarises the quality of pitches that are available for community use in Halton. In total, only two pitches are assessed as good quality (both located at Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club), 54 as standard quality and 41 as poor quality.

Table 2.3: Football pitch quality assessments (community use pitches)

Football									
Analysis area	Adult pitches			Youth pitches			Mini pitches		
	Good	Standard	Poor	Good	Standard	Poor	Good	Standard	Poor
Runcorn	-	3	9	-	5	9	-	10	9
Widnes	1	12	6	-	15	2	1	9	6
Halton	1	15	15	-	20	11	1	19	15

Most of the poor quality pitches are either located at educational or local authority sites. Such provision often receives limited amounts of dedicated maintenance due to budgetary restraints and are heavily used for community, curricular and extracurricular activities meaning they have less time to remediate. For example, the Council is limited to only grass cutting on its sites and cannot carry out in depth maintenance such as aeration, weed killing or fertilising.

The following sites accommodate at least one poor quality pitch:

- ◀ Beechwood County Primary School
- ◀ Crow Wood Park
- ◀ Daresbury County Primary School
- ◀ Grange Academy
- ◀ Haddocks Wood Playing Fields
- ◀ King George V Playing Fields
- ◀ Moorfield Sports and Social Club
- ◀ Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy
- ◀ Prescot Road Playing Fields
- ◀ Runcorn Heath Playing Fields
- ◀ Sandymoor School
- ◀ St Michaels Catholic Primary School
- ◀ Westfield Primary School
- ◀ Weston County Primary School

When broken down further, 40% of pitch provision in the Runcorn Analysis Area is standard quality with the remaining 60% poor quality. Comparatively, 69% of the pitches in the Widnes Analysis Area are standard quality with the remaining provision either poor (30%) or good quality (1%). For a full breakdown of quality ratings at each site, see Table 2.13.

It should also be noted that almost all the pitches rated as standard quality are all within 10% of being categorised as poor quality through non-technical assessments, this includes taking into consideration each sites maintenance regime, which is mostly limited. Similar to the poor quality pitches these sites have some issues with insufficient drainage, unauthorised access and dog fouling/littering.

Specific comments relating to the pitch conditions at individual sites can be seen in the table below. These are either taken from club consultation or from site assessments.

Table 2.4: Summary of football pitch quality comments

Football			
Site ID	Site name	Stakeholder/s	Comments
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Ditton Athletic FC	Pitches suffer from dog fouling.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Football			
Site ID	Site name	Stakeholder/s	Comments
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Beechwood JFC BPR Leiria JFC Sandymoor FC	Pitches suffer from water logging, dog fouling, unauthorised access and poor drainage.
26	Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club	Avon Villa FC	Pitches require drainage improvements.
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Halton Borough FC	Pitches suffer from poor drainage and dog fouling.
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn Linnets FC	Pitches are well maintained however suffer from drainage issues and waterlogging.
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Pex Hill FC	Pitches suffer from poor drainage, waterlogging and dog fouling.
52	St Michaels Catholic Primary School	St Michaels DH FC	Pitches have slightly improved in quality due to verti draining however bad weather is affecting pitch quality.
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes FC	Pitches have improved in quality due to investment from the School, however, there are issues with unauthorised access.
56	Wade Deacon High School	Wade Deacon High School	Issues with unauthorised access.
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Brookvale United FC	Pitches suffer from waterlogging and drain poorly

In conjunction with the aforementioned hybrid pitch grant, Runcorn Linnets FC also reports having recently been awarded (April 2020) pitch improvement grant in order to improve the quality of drainage on its remaining onsite grass pitches.

As also mentioned previously, St Michaels DH FC reports that it has plans to improve pitch quality at St Michaels Catholic Primary School. The Club wants to carry out in depth maintenance, such as verti-draining. It has recently had the FA identify a Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) for the site.

Local Football Facility Plan

The LFFP for Halton identifies key sites considered a priority to improve, with these selected based on the rationale of identifying sites that are the poorest in quality and that are the best utilised, or that have the greatest potential for increased utilisation following quality enhancements. Emphasis is on sites with three or more pitches, although scope exists for the inclusion of smaller sites if they are deemed to be strategically important. The following sites were identified:

- ◆ Frank Myler Pavilion
- ◆ Haddock Woods Playing Fields
- ◆ King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)
- ◆ Leigh Recreation Playing Fields
- ◆ Wilmere Lane Playing Fields
- ◆ Runcorn Heath Playing Fields

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP)

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 the quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the PIP. As part of this, grass pitches identified as having quality issues undergo a pitch inspection from a member of the Ground Management Association (formally known as the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG)).

Following a PIP report, clubs can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified in order to improve the quality of their pitches. Clubs can also utilise the report as an evidence base to acquire potential funding streams to obtain the relevant maintenance equipment.

In addition to the above, the Football Foundation and the FA have recently developed a new pitch maintenance grant fund that allows clubs and sports organisations to apply for 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. This fund was available until the end of March 2020, however, due to ongoing circumstances surrounding Covid-19 it has been extended indefinitely.

Funding is awarded over a ten-year period for up to 66% of the total cost required to bring the pitches up to an appropriate standard, following a site assessment. The level of funding decreases year on year, with the expectation that the Club is then able to take on the works independently.

Ancillary facilities

The quality of ancillary facilities across Halton has been assessed via a combination of site visits and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type and quality of amenities which are available on a site, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, showering provision, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities and boundary fencing. The table below identifies the findings for sites that are actively utilised for football across Halton.

Table 2.5: Summary of community available ancillary facility quality at active football sites

Football			
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Ancillary facility quality
3	Beechwood County Primary School	Runcorn	N/A
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	Widnes	Good
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Good
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	Standard
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	Standard
19	Halebank Recreation Ground	Widnes	Standard
26	Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Good
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Good
28	Leigh Recreation Playing Fields	Widnes	Standard

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Football			
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Ancillary facility quality
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	Good
34	Moorfield Sports & Social Club	Widnes	Standard
36	Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy	Runcorn	Standard
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	Good
39	Pavilions Club	Runcorn	Standard
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Standard
42	Runcorn Boys Club	Runcorn	Standard
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Standard
45	Sandymoor School	Runcorn	Standard
46	DCBL Stadium Halton	Widnes	Good
52	St Michaels Catholic Primary School	Widnes	N/A
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Standard
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	Standard
58	Westfield Primary School	Runcorn	N/A
60	Weston Point Community Primary School	Runcorn	N/A
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Good
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	Standard
69	Parklands Sports Club	Widnes	Standard

Across the Borough, most ancillary facilities accompanying grass football pitches is standard or good quality; however, this does not mean there are not any ancillary facility issues within Halton. For example, it should be stated that even though there are changing rooms at Beechwood County Primary School, St Michaels Catholic Primary School, Westfield Primary School and Weston Point Community Primary School, these are not often accessible for teams using the sites. As such, quality could not be obtained through consultation.

Changing rooms at Haddocks Wood Playing Fields are open on a Saturday due to high levels of demand at this time period. In comparison the facilities are not available on a Sunday due to lower levels of demand. The Council indicates when clubs hire the facilities on a Sunday there are aware there will be no provision available.

There is clubhouse provision at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields; however, AFC Cronton reports this is not readily available unless the long-term tenants at the site (Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC) are utilising the facilities at the same time.

Runcorn Linnets FC reports that the main clubhouse which services its senior teams at Millbank Linnets Stadium to be good quality, although the youth and mini teams do not have access to this provision. These teams utilise poor quality changing rooms in a different, unattached building. The Club therefore has aspiration to improve the quality of this building to better accommodate its junior teams.

Although provision at Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, Runcorn Heath Playing Fields and Leigh Recreation Playing Fields is rated as standard quality, the clubs using the provision (Brookvale Utd, Halfway Rangers FC and West Bank FC) report that there is a need to modernise the building as it is particularly dated and showing signs of wear and tear.

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Local Football Facility Plan

As with grass pitch improvements, the LFFP for Halton identifies sites considered as priority sites for changing facility improvements. It identifies Haddocks Wood Playing Fields and Leigh Recreation Playing Fields.

2.3: Demand

Through the audit and assessment, 232 teams from within 36 clubs are identified as playing within Halton. This consists of 36 adult men's, five adult women's, 89 youth boys', eight youth girls' and 94 mini teams. Youth 11v11 football is the most prominent format of play, whilst youth 9v9 football is the least common.

Table 2.6: Summary of competitive Football teams currently playing in Halton

Football						
Analysis area	No. of teams					
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Runcorn	15	31	19	25	30	120
Widnes	26	29	18	17	22	112
Total	41	60	37	42	52	232

There is marginally more football being played in Runcorn (52%) when compared to Widnes (48%). As mentioned earlier, Widnes accommodates 54% of the provision in Halton.

Football pyramid demand

The National League System is a series of interconnected leagues for adult men's football clubs in England. It begins below the football league (the National League) and comprises of seven steps, with various leagues at each level and more leagues lower down the pyramid than at the top. The system has a 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.

Clubs within the step system must adhere to ground requirements set out by the FA. The higher the level of football being played the higher the requirements. Clubs cannot progress into the league above if the ground requirements do not meet the correct specifications. Ground grading assesses grounds from A to H, with 'A' being the requirements for Step 1 clubs.

There are no professional clubs that plays above the football pyramid with Halton; however, there are a total of three clubs which play within the football pyramid, as seen in following table.

Table 2.7: Summary of teams playing within the football pyramid structure

Football		
Team	League	Level
Runcorn Linnets FC	Northern Premier League – North West Division	Step 4
Widnes FC	Northern Premier League – North West Division	Step 4
Runcorn Town FC	North West Counties League – Premier Division	Step 5

A common issue for clubs entering the pyramid is changing facilities. For Step 7 football (ground grading H), changing rooms must be a minimum size of 18 square metres, exclusive of shower and toilet areas.

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The general principle for clubs in the football pyramid is that they must achieve the appropriate grade by March 31st of their first season after promotion, which therefore allows a short grace period for facilities to be brought up to standard. This, however, does not apply to clubs being promoted to Step 7 (as they must meet requirements immediately).

Widnes FC currently rents the DCBL Stadium Halton, at a perceived substantial cost, to play its home fixtures, as this is the only site in its locality which meets the requirements for the level of football it plays (Step 4). As such, the Club has plans to obtain a long-term lease/freehold at King George V Playing Fields (Widnes) in order to create its own home ground. It indicates this venture would be funded through private investment and sponsorship revenue.

Neither Runcorn Town FC nor Runcorn Linnets FC report any issues with ground grading.

Women's National League System

There is also a Women's National League System similar to the adult men's football pyramid, providing structure to the women's game. As seen in the table overleaf, this ranges from Step 1 to Step 6 with each step requiring differing ground grading requirements. The system is also hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels.

Table 2.8: Summary of ground grading for women's football

Football		
Level	League	Grading category
Step 3 and 4	Women's Super League 1	Grade A
Step 3 and 4	Women's Super League 2	Grade B
Step 5	Northern and Southern Women's Premier League	Grade A
Step 6	Women's Combination Leagues	Grade B
Step 7	Women's Regional Leagues – Premier Divisions	Grade C

Brookvale United, Pex Hill, Widnes Dragons, Weston Point Juniors and Runcorn Linnets football clubs all field teams within Halton which play in the Women's National League System. This is a substantial number when compared to other local authorities of a similar size, nationally.

Although women's clubs are still required 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. Steps 1 and 2 in the Women's National League System is akin to steps 3 and 4 of the men's National League System, although not exactly the same.

Imported demand

Imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities within the Halton study area due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based. There is no identified imported demand into Halton.

Exported demand

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of Halton, despite being registered to the Borough. Beechwood, Brookvale United, Avon Villa, Widnes and Weston Point football clubs all have youth teams that export into hub sites within Liverpool (Heron Eccles), although they are not specifically quantified. As these teams use central venues, none of the clubs report aspirations to return demand back into Halton.

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Latent demand

Latent demand refers to potential demand; individuals who would like to participate within the sport but do not do so. This can be for a variety of reasons including a lack pitches or appropriate facilities. Clubs that report latent demand and the reasons provided for this latent demand can be seen in the table below.

Table 2.9: Football clubs that report latent demand and the reasons provided

Football			
Club	Need for more match pitches	Need for more/better training facilities	Need for better/more appropriate changing provision
AFC Cronton	-	Yes	-
Avon Villa FC	-	Yes	-
Beechwood JFC	Yes	Yes	Yes
BPR Leiria JFC	-	Yes	Yes
Brookvale Utd	-	Yes	Yes
Ditton Athletic	-	Yes	-
Ford Motors FC	-	-	-
Halton Borough FC	-	Yes	Yes
Halton Borough Wolves JFC	Yes	Yes	-
Halton Sports FC	-	Yes	Yes
Pexhill FC	Yes	Yes	-
Sandymoor FC	-	Yes	Yes
St Michaels DH FC	-	Yes	Yes
West Bank FC	-	Yes	Yes
Widnes FC	-	Yes	Yes
West Point JFC	-	Yes	-

Most clubs which express latent demand indicate they would be able to increase the number of teams if they have access to more or better training provision including the use of floodlit 3G pitches. This is followed by a perceived need for more or better quality changing provision, which can be a particular issue for clubs looking to field women's and girls' teams.

Only three clubs across the Borough report that they would be able to increase playing numbers through increasing the number of available pitches.

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 has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league. No unmet demand is expressed by responsive clubs in Halton.

Future demand

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

The Strategy & Action Plan will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for football arising from housing development within Halton.

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Participation increases

Ten clubs' report aspirations to increase the number of teams they provide. Through the clubs that quantified *potential* increase, there is a predicted growth of 25 teams, as seen below.

Table 2.10: Potential team increases identified by football clubs

Football				
Club	Analysis area	Future demand (teams)	Pitch size	Match equivalent sessions ³
Avon Villa FC	Widnes	1 x women's	Adult	0.5
		2 x youth boys'	Youth 11v11	1
		1 x mini	Mini 5v5	0.5
Beechwood JFC	Runcorn	2 x mini	Mini 5v5	1
		1 x men's	Adult	0.5
BPR Leiria JFC	Runcorn	1 x youth girls'	Youth 9v9	0.5
Brookvale United FC	Runcorn	2 x mini	Mini 5v5	1
Halton Borough FC	Widnes	1 x men's	Adult	0.5
		1 x youth boys'	Youth 11v11	0.5
Halton Borough Wolves FC	Widnes	2 x mini	Mini 5v5	1
Pex Hill FC	Widnes	2 x mini	Mini 5v5	1
		1 x youth boys'	Youth 9v9	0.5
Runcorn Linnets FC	Runcorn	2 x mini	Mini 5v5	1
St Michaels DH FC	Widnes	1 x mini	Mini 5v5	0.5
Widnes FC	Widnes	1 x men's	Adult	0.5
		1 x women's	Adult	0.5
		3 x mini	Mini 5v5	1.5
Total				12.5

The total future demand expressed by clubs amounts to 12.5 match equivalent sessions (as two teams equates to one match equivalent sessions to account for matches being played on a home and away basis). The majority of this is identified in Widnes, equating to 8.5 match equivalent sessions. Four match equivalent sessions are identified in Runcorn.

Broken down by pitch type, 2.5 match equivalent sessions are identified on adult pitches, 1.5 match equivalent sessions on youth 11v11 pitches, one match equivalent session on youth 9v9 pitches and 7.5 match equivalent sessions on mini 5v5 pitches. No future demand is identified for mini 7v7 pitches, although such provision is likely to be required as future mini 5v5 teams progress.

Further to the above, SSE Wildcats centres work with County FA qualified coaches to deliver local weekly sessions, providing opportunities for girls aged five to 11 to develop fundamental skills and experience football in a safe and fun environment.

All organisations delivering Wildcats centres receive a £900 start-up grant and 30 branded footballs in their first year of running the programme to help develop and increase girl's participation.

In light of both FA aspirations to double female participation in football through its Game Changer strategy and the establishment and foreseen future effect of the SSE Wildcats programme, it is likely that the growth in affiliated women's and girl teams may exceed that

³ 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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shown through team generation rates. To what extent is not currently quantifiable, however, this increase in female demand is likely to be captured within the club aspirational future demand figures expressed in Table 2.10.

Population increases

Team generation rates are used to calculate the number of teams likely to be generated in the future (2037) based on population growth. Using this, it is predicted that there will be a possible increase of three youth 11v11 boys' teams across Halton as a whole. This equates to an increase of 1.5 match equivalent sessions.

Table 2.11: Borough wide football team generation rates

Football						
Age group	Current population within age group ⁴ (2018)	Current no. of teams ⁵	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group (2037)	Predicted future number of teams (2037)	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Men (18-45)	21,198	36	1:589	20,677	35.1	0
Senior Women (18-45)	22,257	5	1:4,451	21,204	4.8	0
Youth Boys (12-17)	4,584	56	1:82	4,849	59.2	3
Youth Girls (12-17)	4,489	4	1:1,122	4,474	4.0	0
Youth Boys (10-11)	1,733	33	1:53	1,576	30.0	0
Youth Girls (10-11)	1,647	4	1:412	1,439	3.5	0
Mini-Soccer Mixed (8-9)	3,453	42	1:82	2,985	36.3	0
Mini-Soccer Mixed (6-7)	3,332	52	1:64	2,873	44.8	0

When broken down by analysis area, population growth equates to an increase of two teams in Runcorn (one match equivalent session) and one team in Widnes (0.5 match equivalent sessions).

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to note that team generation rates are based on population figures and cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools.

In total in the Runcorn Analysis Area future demand from participation increases and population increases equate to one adult team (0.5 match equivalent sessions), four youth 11v11 teams (two match equivalent session), one youth 9v9 team (0.5 match equivalent sessions) and six mini 5v5 teams (three match equivalent sessions).

Comparatively in the Widnes Analysis Area future demand from participation increases and population increases equate to four adult teams (two match equivalent sessions), four youth 11v11 teams (two match equivalent session), one youth 9v9 team (0.5 match equivalent sessions) and nine mini 5v5 teams (4.5 match equivalent sessions). This demand will be factored in later in the section for the overall supply and demand analysis for each pitch type.

2.4: Capacity analysis

⁴ Current population information is based upon Mid 2018 ONS data.

⁵ Age group team numbers differ from Table 2.6 as forecasts are based on age rather than playing format. U17 and U18 teams affiliate to their respective County FA as juniors, however, are generally considered to play on and require adult pitches and are considered by age boundaries to be in the adult age group

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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. Taking into consideration the guidelines on capacity, the following ratings were used in the Halton:

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

Table 2.13 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play recorded 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

Match equivalent sessions

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

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 at all 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. As such, where not overplayed as a result of community use, school sites are considered to have no spare capacity to accommodate further usage based on assumed curricular and extracurricular activity.

For school sites which are available for community use but that currently do not have any external hirers, current play has been enlarged on a site-by-site basis following consultation with the providers. Generally, usage is increased by one match equivalent session per pitch; however, in some cases, further use is added when it is known that a particular provider uses a particular pitch heavily.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Informal use

A number of football pitches in the area are on 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. It must be noted, however, that informal use of these sites is not recorded and it is therefore difficult to quantify on a site-by-site basis. Instead, it is recommended that open access sites be protected through an improved maintenance regime.

Peak time

Spare capacity can only be considered as actual spare capacity if pitches are available at peak time. In Halton, peak time is Saturday AM for all youth and mini pitches, whereas its Saturday PM for adult pitches.

In Table 2.13, please note that, on occasion, 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. This is because most of the use on those particular pitches occurs outside of the peak period. The identified spare capacity at peak time should not be utilised over and above overall capacity unless quality improvements are made that increases overall capacity.

Actual spare capacity

To determine 'actual spare capacity', each site with 'potential capacity' 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.

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 way this will be represented in the Table 2.13 is as follows:

Table 2.12: Spare capacity examples

Spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of spare capacity
1	If the cell is highlighted in green with a number, it means that the pitch/es has actual spare capacity at peak time.
-	If the cell has a dash in it, it means the pitch is played to capacity during the peak period.
1	If the cell has a number in it but is not highlighted, it means the pitch has spare capacity at peak period; however, this is discounted. This could be due to unsecure tenure, poor pitch quality, the pitch not being available for community use, or the pitch already being played to capacity or being overplayed (outside of peak time).

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Table 2.13: Football pitch capacity analysis

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use availability	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	Agreed quality rating	No. of pitches	Current play ⁶	Site capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
3	Beechwood County Primary School	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1.5	2	0.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
5	Bridgewater Park Primary School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	No community use
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	Widnes	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult		Standard	2	0.5	4	3.5	2	Spare capacity of 2 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
10	Crow Wood Park	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	1	0	1	1	1	Spare capacity of 1 match equivalent session is discounted due to poor quality
11	Daresbury County Primary School	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Spare capacity of 1 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult		Standard	3	1.5	6	4.5	2.5	Actual spare capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	3	1.5	12	10.5	1.5	Actual spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	2	1	8	7	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 match equivalent sessions
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	2	1.5	4	2.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	1	3	4	1	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	1.5	4	2.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	2	1	1	-	Pitch is overplayed by 1 match equivalent session.
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult		Poor	2	1.5	2	0.5	2	Spare capacity of 2 match equivalent session is discounted due to poor quality
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	2	4	4		-	Pitches are played to capacity at peak period
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	3	3.5	6	2.5	-	Pitches are played to capacity at peak period
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	2	4	2	3	-	Pitches are overplayed by three match equivalent sessions
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	3	1	2	-	Pitch overplayed by 2 match equivalent sessions
19	Halebank Recreation Ground	Widnes	Yes	Sports club	Secure	Adult		Standard	1	1	2	1	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
21	Halton Lodge School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	1	2	1	1	No community use
26	Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Yes	Commercial	Secure	Adult		Good	1	1	3	2	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
26	Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Yes	Commercial	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Good	1	0.5	6	5.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity at peak period
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult		Poor	3	2	3	1	2	Spare capacity of 2 match equivalent session is discounted due to poor quality
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	1	2	1	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1.5	2	0.5	0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions is discounted due to poor quality
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	1.5	1	0.5	0.5	Pitches are overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions

⁶ Match equivalent sessions

⁷ Match equivalent sessions; 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.

⁸ Red indicates overplay, green indicates potential spare capacity and amber indicates at capacity.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use availability	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	Agreed quality rating	No. of pitches	Current play ⁶	Site capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
28	Leigh Recreation Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult		Standard	4	3.5	8	4.5	2	Actual spare capacity at peak period
28	Leigh Recreation Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	2	3.5	4	0.5	-	Pitches are played to capacity at peak period
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Adult		Standard	2	1	4	3	1.5	Actual spare discounted due to ongoing pitch developments
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	3	4	12	8	0.5	Actual spare capacity at peak period
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	2	3.5	8	4.5	-	Pitches played to capacity at peak period
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	2	5.5	4	1.5	-	Pitches overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	3	2	1	-	Pitch overplayed by one match equivalent session
33	Moorfield Primary School	Widnes	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Not available for community use
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Adult		Poor	2	3	2	1	1	Pitches overplayed by 1 match equivalent session
36	Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy	Runcorn	Yes	Academy (in house)	Unsecure	Adult		Poor	3	1.5	3	1.5	3	Spare capacity of 3 match equivalent sessions discounted due to unsecure tenure
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	No	Academy (in house)	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	1	1		1	Not available for community use
38	Palace Fields Primary Academy	Runcorn	No	Academy (in house)	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Spare capacity of 1 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
39	Pavilions Club	Runcorn	Yes	Commercial	Unsecure	Adult		Poor	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent session discounted due to poor quality
40	Pewithall Primary School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Not available for community use
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	2	4	4		-	Pitches played to capacity
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	2	3	4	1	-	Pitches are played to capacity at peak period
42	Runcorn Boys Club	Runcorn	Yes	Sport club	Secure	Adult		Standard	1	2	2		0.5	Pitch played to capacity
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult		Poor	3	4	3	1	0.5	Pitches overplayed by one match equivalent session
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	2	1	2	1	2	Spare capacity of 2 match equivalent session discounted due to poor quality
45	Sandy Moor School	Runcorn	Yes	Academy (in house)	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	1	1	1		1	Pitch is played to capacity.
48	St Chad's Catholic and Church Of England High School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	2	2	2		2	Not available for community use
49	St Clement's Catholic Primary School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	1	1		1	Not available for community use
50	St Martin's Catholic Primary School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	1	1		1	Not available for community use
51	St Mary's Church Of England Primary School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Not available for community use
52	St Michaels Catholic Primary School	Widnes	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult		Poor	1	1	1		-	Pitch is played to capacity
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Yes	Education	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	2	2	8	6	-	Pitches are played to capacity at peak period
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Yes	Education	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	2	2	8	6	-	Pitches are played to capacity at peak period
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Yes	Education	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	2	1.5	4	2.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity at peak period
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Yes	Education	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	4	2	2	-	Pitch is overplayed by two match equivalent sessions
54	The Brow Community Primary School	Runcorn	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Spare capacity of 1 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use availability	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	Agreed quality rating	No. of pitches	Current play ⁶	Site capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
55	The Heath School	Runcorn	No	Academy (in house)	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	2	2	2		2	Pitches are played to capacity
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	2	2	4	2	2	Spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions discounted due to unsecure tenure
58	Westfield Primary School	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	1	2	1	1	Spare capacity of 1 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
58	Westfield Primary School	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
59	Weston County Primary School	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	1.5	2	0.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
60	Weston Point Community Primary School	Runcorn	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	2.5	4	1.5	1	Spare capacity of 1 match equivalent session discounted due to unsecure tenure
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Sports club	Secure	Adult		Standard	1	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity at peak period
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Sports club	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	4	2.5	8	5.5	2.5	Actual spare capacity at peak period
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	Sports club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	1.5	2	0.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	1	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity at peak period
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	1	1.5	4	2.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	1.5	2	0.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak period
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	0.5	2	1.5	1	Actual spare capacity at peak period
69	Parklands Sports Club	Widnes	Yes	Sports club	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	1	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity at peak period
69	Parklands Sports Club	Widnes	Yes	Sports club	Secure	Adult		Standard	1	0	1	1	1	Actual spare capacity at peak period

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

2.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify current demand (i.e. spare capacity taking away overplay and any exported demand) in each of the analysis areas for each pitch type, based on match equivalent sessions. Future demand is based on team generation rates, which are driven by population increases, in addition, to club aspirational future growth plans.

Adult pitch analysis

Table 2.14: Supply and demand balance of adult pitches

Football					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ⁹	Demand (match equivalent sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Runcorn	-	1	1	0.5	1.5
Widnes	6	1	5	2	3
Total	6	2	4	2.5	1.5

There is currently an adequate supply of adult pitches to meet demand, with four match equivalent sessions of spare capacity when looking at the position Borough wide; however, overplay is identified in Runcorn amounting to one match equivalent session.

When considering future demand, the shortfall increases in Runcorn, with spare capacity in Widnes reducing. This leads to overall spare capacity amounting to 1.5 match equivalent sessions.

Youth 11v11 pitch analysis

Table 2.15: Supply and demand balance of youth 11v11 pitches

Football					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ¹⁰	Demand (match equivalent sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Runcorn	-	4.5	4.5	1	5.5
Widnes	4	-	4	2	2
Total	4	4.5	0.5	3	3.5

There is currently a marginal shortfall across the Borough on youth 11v11 pitches totalling 0.5 match equivalent session per week, with shortfalls evident in Runcorn. When accounting for future demand, the shortfalls increase to 3.5 match equivalent sessions per week, although some minimal spare capacity remains in Widnes.

It must also be noted that several youth 11v11 teams are playing on adult pitches, meaning shortfalls would greatly increase should these sides transfer to the correct pitch type.

⁹ In match equivalent sessions

¹⁰ In match equivalent sessions

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Youth 9v9 pitch analysis

Table 2.16: Supply and demand balance of youth 9v9 pitches

Football					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ¹¹	Demand (match equivalent sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Runcorn	-	4	4	0.5	4.5
Widnes	0.5	2.5	2	0.5	2.5
Total	0.5	6.5	6	1	7

Overall, there is current shortfall on youth 9v9 pitches totalling 6 match equivalent sessions across the Borough, equating to a shortfall of 4 match equivalent sessions in Runcorn and 2 match equivalent sessions in Widnes.

When taking into consideration future demand, there is an overall shortfall of 7 match equivalent sessions arises. This accounts for a shortfall of 4.5 match equivalent sessions in Runcorn and 2.5 match equivalent sessions in Widnes.

Mini 7v7 pitch analysis

Table 2.17: Supply and demand balance of mini 7v7 pitches

Football					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ¹²	Demand (match equivalent sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Runcorn	1	-	1	-	1
Widnes	1	-	1	-	1
Total	2	-	2	-	2

Across Halton there is currently minimal spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions on mini 7v7 pitches, with 1 match equivalent session of spare capacity existing in both analysis areas.

As there is no identified future demand from clubs for mini 7v7 pitches, the level of spare capacity is projected to remain at two match equivalents session per week.

Mini 5v5 pitch analysis

Table 2.18: Supply and demand balance of mini 5v5 pitches

Football					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ¹³	Demand (match equivalent sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Runcorn	1	-	1	3	2
Widnes	2	-	2	4.5	2.5
Total	3	-	3	7.5	4.5

¹¹ In match equivalent sessions

¹² In match equivalent sessions

¹³ In match equivalent sessions

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Currently, mini 5v5 pitches have minimal spare capacity of 3 match equivalent sessions, which broken down equates to 1 match equivalent session in Runcorn and 2 match equivalent sessions in Widnes.

When accounting for future demand, there is a predicted overall shortfall of 4.5 match equivalent sessions and a shortfall in both analysis areas.

Overall pitch supply and demand capacity

Using the supply and demand analysis tables above, it is determined that there is current spare capacity across adult, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 and a shortfall of youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches in Halton. After factoring in future demand, a shortfall also becomes evident for mini 5v5 pitches whilst it worsens for youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches.

Table 2.19: Summary of supply and demand

Football					
Pitch type	Demand (match equivalent sessions per week)				
	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	6	2	4	2.5	1.5
Youth 11v11	4	4.5	0.5	3	3.5
Youth 9v9	0.5	6.5	6	1	7
Mini 7v7	2	-	2	-	2
Mini 5v5	3	-	3	7.5	4.5

Most current overplay across the various pitch types is generated from high levels of demand accessing poor quality pitches. This is worsened when accounting for future demand.

Spare capacity

The table below identifies actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across Halton. It should be noted that a total of 8 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity has been discounted due to poor pitch quality, whereas, 13 match equivalent sessions has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.

Table 2.20: Summary of actual spare capacity

Football					
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (match sessions)
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Adult	3	2.5
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	(5v5)	3	1.5
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	(7v7)	2	1
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	(9v9)	2	0.5
26	Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club	Widnes	(5v5)	1	0.5
28	Leigh Recreation Playing Fields	Widnes	Adult	4	2
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	(5v5)	3	0.5
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	(11v11)	2	0.5
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Adult	1	0.5
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	(11v11)	4	2.5
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	(5v5)	1	0.5

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Football					
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (match sessions)
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	Runcorn	(7v7)	1	1
69	Parklands Sports Club	Widnes	(11v11)	1	1
69	Parklands Sports Club	Widnes	Adult	1	1
Total					15.5

Actual spare capacity totals 15.5 match equivalent sessions per week on 29 pitches across 8 sites. This has been aggregated up by area and by pitch type below.

Table 2.21: Summary of actual spare capacity by Analysis Area

Football						
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions per week)					Total
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	
Runcorn	-	-	-	1	1	2
Widnes	6	4	0.5	1	2	13.5
Total	6	4	0.5	2	3	15.5

Most actual spare capacity is identified on adult pitches, although some is identified on each pitch type. Most of the spare capacity is in Widnes, with 13.5 match equivalent sessions, whereas Runcorn contributes only two match equivalent sessions.

Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it is able to sustain, which can often be due to the low carrying capacity of pitches. In Halton, 14 pitches across 7 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 13 match equivalent sessions per week.

As can be seen overleaf, when broken down, 9.5 match equivalent sessions of overplay takes place in Runcorn and 3.5 match equivalent sessions takes place in Widnes.

Table 2.22: Summary of overplay

Football					
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (match sessions)
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	(9v9)	1	1
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	(11v11)	2	3
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	Runcorn	(9v9)	1	2
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	(9v9)	1	0.5
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	(11v11)	2	1.5
30	Millbank Linnets Stadium	Runcorn	(9v9)	1	1
34	Moorfield Sports & Social Club	Widnes	Adult	2	1
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Adult	3	1
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	(9v9)	1	2

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Football					
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (match sessions)
Total					13

Most overplay is generated from demand accessing poor quality pitches. In total 8.5 match equivalent sessions of overplay is on poor quality pitches.

In total, there are 2 match equivalent sessions of overplay on adult pitches, 4.5 match equivalent sessions on youth 11v11 pitches and 6.5 match equivalent sessions on youth 9v9 pitches. No overplay is identified on the mini pitches.

In addition to overplayed pitches, it should be noted that there are seven community available pitches across 5 sites that are played to capacity. These are Haddocks Wood Playing Fields (two mini 5v5 pitches), Prescott Road Playing Fields (two poor quality mini 5v5 pitches), Runcorn Boys Club (one standard quality adult pitch), Sandymoor School (one poor quality youth 11v11 pitch) and St Michaels Catholic Primary School (one poor quality adult pitch). Any additional play on these pitches would result in overplay.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Football – grass pitch supply and demand summary

- ◀ It is determined that there is current minimal spare capacity on adult, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches; however, there is a shortfall of youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches.
- ◀ After factoring in future demand, shortfalls become evident on mini 5v5 pitches and worsen on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches.
- ◀ Actual spare capacity totals 15.5 match equivalent sessions per week across 29 pitches and 8 sites.
- ◀ A total of 14 pitches across 7 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 13 match equivalent sessions per week.

Football – supply summary

- ◀ The audit identifies a total of 111 grass football pitches within Halton across 40 sites, with 97 pitches available for community use across 26 sites.
- ◀ The Council reports it has two sites which it is currently not marking out for football but that it will reinstate if the relevant demand arises (Arley Drive Playing Fields and Hale Park).
- ◀ Runcorn Linnets FC has received a grant from the Football Foundation to replace its stadia grass pitch and replace it with a hybrid pitch.
- ◀ Tenure of sites in Halton is generally secure i.e. through a long-term lease or a guarantee that pitches will continue to be provided over the next three years; however, Brookvale United FC and Beechwood JFC report issues.
- ◀ Widnes FC reports plans to develop a new ground with accompanying facilities, suitable for the football pyramid.
- ◀ In total, two community available pitches are assessed as good quality, 54 as standard quality and 41 as poor quality.
- ◀ Most ancillary facilities accompanying grass football pitches across the Borough is standard or good quality.
- ◀ Although ancillary facilities servicing Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, Runcorn Heath Playing Fields and Leigh Recreation Playing Fields are rated as standard quality, the clubs using the facilities report there is a general need for modernisation.

Football – demand summary

- ◀ Through the audit and assessment, 232 teams from within 36 clubs are identified as playing within Halton, consisting of 36 adult men's, five adult women's, 89 youth boys', eight youth girls' and 94 mini teams.
- ◀ Most clubs which express latent demand indicate they would be able to increase the number of teams if they have access to more or better training provision including the use of floodlit 3G pitches.
- ◀ Through the clubs that quantified potential future demand, there is a predicted growth of 25 teams, whilst team generation rates predict a growth of three youth 11v11 teams.

PART 3: THIRD GENERATION TURF (3G) ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (AGPS)

3.1: Introduction

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard (IMS) tested and approved by the FA for inclusion on the FA pitch register. As such, a growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play, providing that the performance standard meets FIFA quality (previously FIFA One Star), as well as for training purposes.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that 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 standard, meaning full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts, can take place.

Competitive rugby league play and contact practice is permitted to take place on 3G pitches which are deemed by the RFL to meet its Performance Standard for Synthetic Turf Pitches. Pitches fall under two categories; community club pitches which require retesting every two years and elite stadia pitches which require an annual retest. Much of the criteria within the RFL performance standard test also forms part of the World Rugby test, consequently World Rugby certified 3G pitches are considered by the RFL to be able to meet rugby league requirements and are deemed suitable for rugby league use subject to passing an additional exclusive RFL performance standard test.

England Hockey's (EH) Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy (June 2016) 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	Sport	Comments
Rubber crumb	Rugby	Long pile surface (60mm) that is compliant to World Rugby regulation 22 and/or RFL Community Standard
Rubber crumb	Football	Performance standard to meet FIFA Quality after FIFA or IMS testing with the preferred surface medium pile (55-60mm)
Rubber crumb	Hockey	Short pile surface (40mm) for lower level hockey only

Many test contractors are able to 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.

3.2: Current provision

A full size 3G pitch is considered by the FA to measure at least 100 x 64 metres (106 x 64 metres including run offs); however, for the purposes of this report, all pitches measuring over 94 x 55 metres (exclusive of run offs) are considered to be full size due to the amount of demand they can accommodate. Nationally, many 3G pitches are slightly undersized due to being converted from sand-based provision (dimensions for hockey are smaller than for football).

There are four full size 3G pitches in Halton that fully comply with the above specification. Three of these are in Widnes, with the remaining pitch located in Runcorn.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Table 3.2: Full size 3G pitches in Halton

3G / AGP						
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Floodlit?	Size ¹⁴	Certification
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	Yes	Yes	100 x 62	-
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	Yes	Yes	108 x 64	FIFA
46	DCBL Stadium Halton	Widnes	Yes	Yes	103 x 70	FIFA / World Rugby / RFL Stadium Standard
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	Yes	Yes	106 x 70	-

The pitch located at the DCBL Stadium Halton considered to be available for community use, however outside of the usage from professional rugby league club Widnes Vikings RLFC.

All remaining full size 3G pitches in Halton are available for community use.

In addition to the full size pitches, there is one smaller sized floodlit 3G pitch at Sandymoor School. The pitch is measures 88x56 metres.

Table 3.3: Additional supply of 3G pitches

3G / AGP						
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Community use?	Floodlit?	Size (metres)
45	Sandymoor School	Runcorn	1	No	Yes	85 x 55

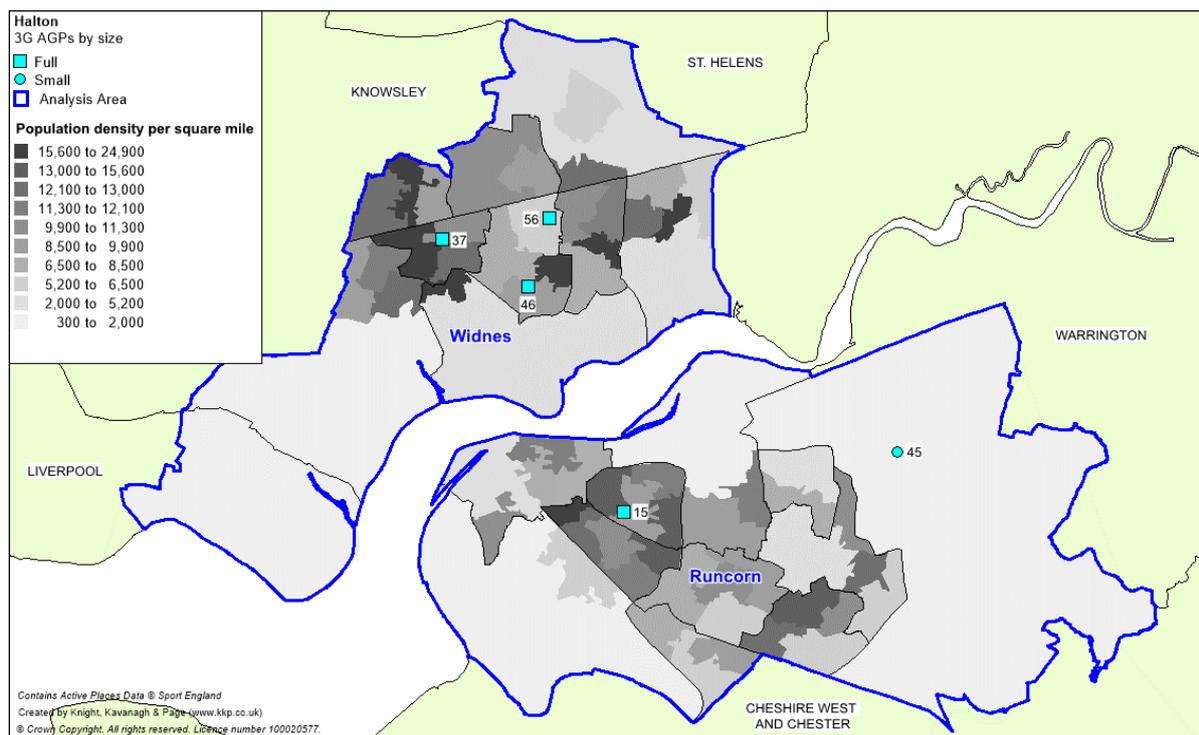
The pitch at Sandymoor School is owned by Sandymoor Parish Council which reports awaiting a shared use agreement with the School which will run the provision on a day to day basis including the hiring of the pitch. The completion of this agreement has been delayed due to issues surrounding Covid-19.

As the pitch is FA approved, if accessibility issues can be resolved, it can be used to accommodate youth and mini matches up to and including U14 level (the FA's recommended size of a youth pitch is 82 x 50 metres for u14s and u13s). However, more commonly, smaller sized 3G pitches are used to accommodate training demand, commercial football leagues and social/recreational play.

Figure 3.1 overleaf identifies the location of all 3G pitches in Halton, regardless of size.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Figure 3.1: Location of 3G AGPs in Halton



Future provision

The LFFP for Halton proposes two priority projects for the creation of two full size 3G pitches: one at Frank Myler Pavilion and one within the general Runcorn area. Recent dialogue between England Hockey, the Council and Football Foundation suggests there is potential to convert the poor quality hockey suitable AGP at Brookvale Recreation Centre to a 3G surface in order to accommodate the shortfall in the Runcorn Analysis Area, however, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the timeframe for a decision regarding this is currently unknown.

Conversion to 3G surfaces

Since the introduction of 3G pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way to replace a worn sand or water based carpet and generate increased revenue from hiring out a 3G pitch to football and rugby clubs and commercial football providers. This has often come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams consequently displaced from their preferred local authority.

Due to its potential to impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand based AGPs are retained for the playing development of hockey. To that end, a change of surface may require planning permission and the applicants will need to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Advice from Sport England and EH should also be sought prior to any planning application being submitted.

It should also be noted that, if the surface type is changed, it could require the existing floodlighting to be changed and in some instances noise attenuation measures may need to be put in place. Conversion to a 3G surface will likely require a size increase; along with floodlighting improvements, the addition of a shock pad, fencing and noise attenuation.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

A 3G surface is limited in the range of sport that can be played or taught on it. Providers proposing a conversion should take advice from the appropriate sports' governing bodies or refer to Sport England guidance and in particular 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface': <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/outdoor-surfaces>

FA 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: <http://3g.thefa.me.uk/>.

Pitches undergo testing to become a FIFA Quality pitch (previously FIFA One Star) or a FIFA Quality Pro pitch (previously FIFA Two Star), with pitches commonly constructed, installed and tested in situ to achieve either accreditation. This comes after FIFA announced changes to 3G performance in October 2015 following consultation with member associations and licenced laboratories.

The changes are part of FIFA's continued ambition to drive up performance standard in the industry and the implications are that all 3G pitches built through the FA framework will be constructed to meet the new criteria.

The changes from FIFA One Star to FIFA Quality will have minimal impact on the current hours of use guidelines, which suggests that One Star pitches place more emphasis on the product's ability to sustain acceptable performance and can typically be used for 60-85 hours per week with a lifespan of 20,000 cycles. In contrast, pitches built to FIFA Quality Pro performance standards are unlikely to provide the hours of use that some FIFA Two Star products have guaranteed in the past (previously 30-40 hours per week with a lifespan of 5,000 cycles). Typically, a FIFA Quality Pro pitch will be able to accommodate only 20-30 hours per week with appropriate maintenance due to strict performance measurements.

In Halton, none of the full size 3G pitches are FA certified, however, the pitches at the DCBL Stadium Halton and Ormiston Chadwick Academy are both FIFA certified. Although there are no full size pitches which are FA certified the small size pitch at Sandymoor School is on the FA register.

RFL Compliant pitches¹⁵

The RFL in 2018 amended its rules to allow the use of 3G pitches in all of its competitions providing a pitch holds a Fields Test Certificate showing it fully complies with the relevant field test requirements of the RFL Performance and Construction Standards for Pitches. These can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.4: RFL 3G pitch certification

Level of competition		Category of field certification
Club Tiers One and Two (Super League and Championship)		Stadium
Club Tiers Three and Four (Community and training)	New provision	Community
	Existing provision	Community or World Rugby Turf Performance Specification

¹⁵ https://secure.rugby-league.com/ign_docs/RFLPerformanceStandardforsyntheticurf pitches2018.pdf

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

The 3G pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton has a RFL Stadium certification as Widnes Vikings RFLC previously played at the Championship Tier, however, the Club has recently been relegated meaning the club is now semi-professional.

World Rugby compliant pitches

To enable 3G pitches to host competitive rugby union matches, World Rugby 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.

In Halton, the 3G pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton is also World Rugby compliant, with retesting required in October 2020.

Management

All community available full size 3G pitches in Halton are managed internally at education sites. This in turn affect each pitches availability, which is outlined below.

Availability

As seen in the table below, each community available pitch is considered widely accessible between 17:30 to 21:00 during weekdays; however, the pitches at Grange Academy and Wade Deacon High School are not available at the weekend. This is due to issues with staffing and costing as both schools let their facilities in house.

It should be noted that a community use agreement was established at Wade Deacon High School on the construction of the 3G pitch in 2013 which allows the pitch to be used both midweek and in the evening by the community. The pitch not being available at the weekend is in breach of this agreement.

Table 3.5: Summary of 3G pitch availability

3G			
Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Availability
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	The pitch is available from 17:30- 21:00 Monday to Friday. Not available at the weekend.
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	The pitch is available from 17:00-21:30 Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 16:00 Saturday and Sunday.
46	DCBL Stadium Halton	Widnes	The pitch is available from 09:00-22:00 Monday to Friday and 10:00 to 16:30 Saturday and Sunday.
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	The pitch is available from 17:30- 21:00 Monday to Friday. Not available at the weekend.

As mentioned previously, the full size pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton is considered unavailable for community use.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Quality

It is considered that the carpet of an AGP 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 sinking funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, ongoing repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

In Halton, the full size 3G pitches at Ormiston Chadwick Academy and DCBL Stadium Halton are currently considered to be good quality, with no issues identified following user consultation. In contrast, the pitches at Grange Academy and Wade Deacon High School are both standard quality, with some signs of wear and tear being apparent.

Table 3.6: Age and quality of full size 3G pitches

3G				
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Year installed/resurfaced	Quality
15	Grange Academy	Runcorn	2013	Standard
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	2017	Good
46	DCBL Stadium Halton	Widnes	2019	Good
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	2013	Standard

The smaller size pitch at Sandymoor School is considered to be good quality having been installed in 2019.

Ancillary facilities

The ancillary facilities at Sandymoor School, Grange Academy and Wade Deacon High School are considered to be relatively dated and tired with both sites accommodating community, curricular and extracurricular demand. In contrast, good quality changing facilities are available at Ormiston Chadwick and DCBL Stadium Halton with no issues highlighted through consultation.

3.3: Demand

The majority of 3G provision currently servicing Halton is reported as operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months. However, usage is somewhat impacted upon by a lack of availability during weekends and because two of the pitches are not approved for competitive football or rugby matches.

Current demand

Football

There is some usage of the 3G pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy and DCBL Stadium Halton by teams to play matches, with potential demand perceived to be much higher if availability was better. Nationally, many 3G pitches are used to accommodate matches, particularly for youth and mini football, and there is an increasing number being used to host central venue matches. This is the case in Liverpool and Cheshire West and Chester (Northwich), with numerous Halton teams exporting demand to access such provision.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

For training, accessing affordable floodlit facilities is a key issue for most clubs in the Borough, particularly those with a large number of youth and mini teams. Sand based AGPs that are heavily used for training also accommodate hockey demand and operate commercial small sided football leagues which limits availability. In addition, some teams export demand to neighbouring authorities to access full size 3G pitch provision, detailed later in this section.

In total, 21 football clubs that responded to consultation requests state a demand for additional training facilities, with all of them specifically identifying a need for increased access to 3G pitches.

Other sports

The pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton is the home venue for Widnes Vikings RLFC and Halton Spartans AFC (American football), which fields all its competitive and training demand onsite. There is no known rugby union usage of 3G pitches in Halton, with no clubs reporting a demand to access such provision.

Key trends and changes in demand for pitches

Football

Demand from football for 3G pitches has increased in recent years due to demand from clubs for training but also due to a growing acceptance by local leagues of use for competitive matches, where play on 3G pitches is now included within the FA Standard Code of Rules. This considered, the general condition of local authority pitches and increasingly limited budget for regular and adequate maintenance may lead more teams to consider AGPs as a possible alternative should it be financially viable.

A number of leagues around the country now use 3G pitches as central venues where all play takes place. Mini soccer leagues especially are increasingly adopting this approach either for whole seasons or a number of months throughout the winter because they can continually offer a high quality playing experience, in many cases beyond that of grass pitches which are generally of comparatively poorer quality. It also allows leagues to continue to run throughout the winter, largely unaffected by poor weather which has disrupted the football season over recent years, causing it to run into summer and clash more often with summer sports. The above trend is likely to increase in the future and more mini soccer, flexi and vets' leagues could be played exclusively on 3G pitches.

Rugby union

Given the inclement weather often experienced throughout the winter months of the rugby union season, more clubs are becoming increasingly receptive towards training on artificial pitches. Clubs traditionally train on match pitches where floodlights are in place or one pitch designated for all training in particular, unless there is a separate floodlight grass training area. It often results in deterioration in pitch quality coupled with decreasing maintenance budgets.

The recent RFU strategy on investment in 3G pitches both at club and community based sites is indicative of the growing acceptance of 3G pitches amongst clubs nationally. 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, with ad hoc use of 3G pitches for fixtures in the case of unsuitable pitches due to waterlogging or frost.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Rugby league

Since rugby league switched from the winter to summer season in March 2012, the majority of teams have moved towards playing in summer. The improved weather and longer daylight hours throughout the summer mean that clubs tend to train on grass pitches or areas in order to reduce additional costs of hiring facilities because they require less access to floodlighting. This often leads to overuse of match pitches by clubs which consistently train on them, especially those which have several teams and train twice a week.

Nationally, excluding professional demand from Widnes Vikings RLFC, the use of 3G pitches for rugby league typically extends to pre-season or early season training when weather is often still poor and floodlights are required. It is likely that demand for 3G pitches for training will increase in future but that teams will continue to prefer grass training provision during most months of the season when weather is forgiving.

Rugby league is still played throughout the winter in schools, colleges and universities where 3G pitches are used often for both training and matches, where certified.

3.4: Supply and demand analysis

FA training scenario

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

The FA's long-term ambition is to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once per week on floodlit 3G surface, together with priority access for every Charter Standard Community Club through a partnership agreement. The FA standard is calculated by using the latest Sport England research "AGPs State of the Nation March 2012" assuming that 51% of AGP usage is by sports clubs when factoring in the number of training slots available per pitch at peak times. It is estimated that one full size AGP can service 38 teams.

Using the above methodology, the table below considers the number of full size 3G pitches required if every team was to remain training within the analysis area in which they play. The 3G requirement is rounded to the nearest whole number. However, it must be noted that the model assumes that all pitches are fully available for club use at peak time when in practice a number of pitches operate commercial small sided leagues which can reduce availability. It also projects all football teams as training on full size 3G pitches when in practice a proportion of football training demand should be retained on sand based AGPs in order to sustain the financial and commercial sustainability of these pitches.

Table 3.7: Current demand for 3G pitches in Halton for affiliated football team training (38 teams per pitch)

3G				
Analysis area	Current number of teams	3G requirement¹⁶	Current number of 3G pitches	Current shortfall
Runcorn	120	3.15 - 3	1	2
Widnes	112	2.94 - 3	3	-

¹⁶ Rounded to the nearest whole number

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

As seen in the table above, using the FA Training Scenario there is a theoretical current need for two additional full size 3G pitches to accommodate training demand in the Runcorn Analysis Area.

When factoring in future demand, the theoretical need for additional pitches remains unaltered, although the increase may result in the need for additional smaller sized provision to cater for the excess demand.

Table 3.8: Future demand for 3G pitches in Halton for affiliated football team training (38 teams per pitch)

3G				
Analysis area	Future number of teams	3G requirement¹⁷	Current number of 3G pitches	Current shortfall
Runcorn	130	3.42 – 3	1	2
Widnes	130	3.42 – 3	3	-

It should be noted that the above need for 3G provision in Halton is calculated on the theoretical FA Training Scenario. In actuality, dialogue with the Council, football clubs, County Football Associations and Football Foundation report a clear need to create additional full size 3G provision within the Widnes Analysis Area. This is based on the level of teams operating in the Analysis Area and the anticipated future growth from key clubs.

3.5: Conclusion

For football, there is an insufficient supply of full size 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future training demand based on the FA training model. As such, it is determined that an increase in provision is required. The proceeding Strategy and Action Plan will provide an indication of where new AGPs should be located in order to best address current unmet and future demand.

In addition, increasing access to the existing supply should be sought, especially during weekends to enable more match play to transfer from grass pitches. Only one of the existing pitches is readily available on Saturdays and Sundays.

Given that the 3G pitch at the Halton Stadium is not fully available for community use, it is likely that there is some demand from community rugby league clubs to access provision for contact elements of training, if not for match play. However, a more in depth analysis for rugby league demand can be seen later in the report in Part 7: Rugby League.

For rugby union, there is no apparent demand for access to a World Rugby compliant pitch.

¹⁷ Rounded to the nearest whole number

3G summary – supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is an insufficient supply of full size 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand for football in Halton in both the Runcorn and Widnes areas.
- ◀ There is limited apparent demand for access to a World Rugby or RFL compliant pitches for rugby union or rugby league.

3G summary – supply summary

- ◀ There are four full size 3G pitches in Halton: three in Widnes and one in Runcorn.
- ◀ In addition, there is one smaller sized floodlit 3G pitch at Sandymoor School (measuring 88x56 metres).
- ◀ Despite being available to the community, the pitches at Grange Academy, Wade Deacon High School and Sandymoor School are unavailable at weekends.
- ◀ All community available full size 3G pitches in Halton are managed internally at education sties.
- ◀ The majority of 3G provision currently servicing Halton is reported as operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months.

3G summary – quality summary

- ◀ Two of the full size 3G pitches are good quality (DCBS Stadium Halton and Ormiston Chadwick Academy), with the remaining two pitches rated as standard quality.
- ◀ The full size 3G pitches at DCBL Stadium Halton and Ormiston Chadwick Academy are both FIFA certified.
- ◀ The pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton is World Rugby compliant

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

PART 4: CRICKET

4.1: Introduction

Cheshire Cricket serves as the main governing and representative body for cricket across Halton as both of the clubs in the Authority (Runcorn CC and Widnes CC) affiliate to them. Its aim is to promote the game at all levels through partnerships with professional and recreational cricketing clubs, and other appropriate agencies.

For reference Lancashire Cricket Foundation has historically provided support for Birchfield Park CC (now exported out of Halton) and Moorfield CC (now folded), however, this was until the county of Lancashire restructured approximately 10 years ago.

The ECB's refreshed strategy called 'Inspiring Generations' was announced in January 2019 and is further detailed within Appendix One: Sporting Context.

It should be noted that due to the Covid-19 Pandemic the decision has been made to utilise 2019 demand data to inform this section of the report in order to give an accurate representation for the analysis of the sport across Halton. The Pandemic and subsequent lockdown/social distancing measures meant that the cricket season in 2020 was truncated with a reduced numbers of matches taking place. In addition, ECB initiative Dynamos did not take place whereas All Stars did, however, at reduce capacity level due to Covid imposed restrictions. Where identified through consultation, 2020 information will be referenced as relevant and for comparison purposes.

Consultation

There are two cricket clubs playing in Halton; Widnes CC and Runcorn CC. Both responded to an online survey, resulting in an 100% response rate.

4.2: Supply

There are two grass wicket squares in Halton located across two sites: Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club. Each lies within its respective analysis area, with the former hosting 13 wickets and the latter hosting 15.

Table 4.1: Summary of grass wicket squares

Cricket	
Analysis area	No. of grass squares
Widnes	1
Runcorn	1
Total	2

Lapsed/disused provision

Playing fields which have previously accommodated formal pitch provision are categorised as either disused or lapsed. A disused site is a playing field which is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years they will then be categorised as 'lapsed sites'.

As mentioned, a lapsed site was as a playing field more than five years ago. These fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Sport England would nonetheless challenge a proposed loss of playing pitches/playing field which fails to meet such criteria.

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There has previously been a grass square with six wickets maintained at Birchfield Sports and Social Club; however, this was not provided by the owners of the site for the 2020 season. Birchfield Park CC formerly utilised the facility but has since relocated to play friendly fixtures at Northern Cricket Club in the authority of Sefton.

Similarly, until 2016, there was a grass square with six wickets at Moorfield Sports & Social Club. This was the home venue for Moorfield CC before the club folded in the same year. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is an aspiration for this piece of playing field land to be sold for housing, however, to date (December 2020), no official planning application has been submitted.

ECB Ball Strike

Where there is either new cricket provision being put in place, or more commonly where there is a development which may prejudice the use of an existing cricket facility, there is a requirement for a full ball strike risk assessment to be undertaken and appropriate mitigation put in place as part of the development. As such, the ECB recommends that the clubs and organisations seek to have a ball strike risk assessment undertaken; further information can be provided by the ECB.

Non-turf pitches (NTPs)

The ECB highlights that NTPs which follow its TS6 guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play and are considered able to take 60 matches per season, although this may include training sessions via the use of mobile nets.

In Halton, there is just one NTP accompanying a grass wicket square. This is at Widnes Cricket Club. In addition, there is one standalone NTP located at Cronton Sixth Form College albeit this is poor quality and considered disused by the College.

Table 4.2: Summary of cricket pitches

Cricket						
Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of squares	No. of wickets	
					grass	non-turf
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	Yes	1	13	-
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	Yes	1	15	1

Security of tenure

Both clubs have secure tenure with Widnes CC having a freehold at Widnes Cricket Club and Runcorn CC having recently obtained a new long-term lease (30 years) at Runcorn Sports Club.

Pitch quality

As part of the PPS guidance, there are three levels to assessing the quality of cricket pitches: good, standard and poor. Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous.

The non-technical assessment of grass wicket squares in Halton found both squares to be good quality, with no significant issues identified.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Table 4.3: Quality ratings for grass wicket squares (site by site)

Cricket				
Site ID	Site	Analysis area	No. of squares	Square quality
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	1	Good
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	1	Good

Widnes CC reports that its square has improved in quality over the previous three seasons due to a new groundsman creating better wickets. In comparison, Runcorn CC reports that its square is good quality despite there being an issue with a steep incline.

To obtain a full technical assessment of wicket and pitches, the ECB recommends a Performance Quality Standard (PQS) assessment. The PQS looks at a cricket square to ascertain whether the pitch meets the Performance Quality Standards, which are benchmarked by the Institute of Groundsman.

Table 4.4: Performance Quality Standard ratings

Cricket	
Quality rating	Details
Premier (High)	Where the surface is intended for Premier League play, with those within the top quartile capable of holding minor county and 1st class one day matches. May include some of the better schools and university pitches
Club (Standard)	A Club pitch suitable for league, school and junior cricket
Basic	An acceptable level suitable for recreational cricket and where the surface is designed and maintained within tight financial limitations such as local authorities
Unsuitable	This is where the surface is deemed unfit or unsafe for play

Clubs can contact the ECB to arrange for a pitch advisor to complete three different reports (comprehensive/mini/verbal) that vary in cost. A fully comprehensive report includes soil testing and guidance on machinery and corrective procedures, a mini report includes guidance on machinery and corrective procedures and a verbal report is a spoken version of a mini report.

Ancillary facilities

The audit of ancillary facilities determines that both sites currently accessed for affiliated cricket in Halton are accompanied by good quality changing rooms.

Table 4.5: Changing room quality

Cricket				
Site ID	Site	Analysis area	No. of squares	Changing room quality
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	1	Good
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	1	Good

Widnes CC reports no particular issues regarding the quality of its clubhouse, although it indicates that during the Covid-19 Lockdown imposed across the Country in 2020, its facilities have experienced some minimal vandalism.

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It should be noted that Runcorn CC indicates a desire to replace/reconfigure its changing room space to become more accommodating to its growing women and girls participation.

Training facilities

Access to cricket nets is important, particularly for pre-season/winter training. Both sites used by affiliated cricket clubs in Halton are serviced by fixed bay practice nets, these being Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club. Despite this, both clubs indicate a need for additional training facilities, with Widnes CC suggesting that its grass netting area would benefit from some fencing and new grass practice nets. The Club also reports that its practice facilities are utilised, on occasion, by Birchfield Park CC (please see the exported demand section).

Runcorn CC reports a need for a NTP to accompany its grass square in addition to a mobile netting cage. The Club also reports that it has to travel outside of Halton to access suitable indoor provision to use throughout the winter. It ideally would prefer for this to remain onsite or at a minimum within the Borough.

4.3: Demand

There are two cricket clubs playing in Halton: Runcorn CC and Widnes CC. In 2019, each club fielded three senior men's teams and six junior boys' teams generating a combined total of 18 teams. As referenced above, these are the figures which will be considered for the supply and demand analysis below as these teams played a full compliment of league, cup and friendly fixtures.

By means of comparison, during the truncated 2020 season, both clubs fielded the same number of teams. However, Runcorn CC had a reduction of two junior boys' teams that was offset by the development of one junior girls' team and one senior women's team.

Table 4.6: Summary of teams

Cricket					
Club name	Analysis area	No. of competitive teams			
		Senior men's	Senior women's	Junior boys'	Junior girls'
2019					
Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	3	-	6	-
Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	3	-	6	-
Total		6	-	12	-
2020					
Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	3	1	4	1
Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	3	-	6	-
Total		6	1	10	1

Exported demand

Displaced or exported demand refers to Halton based teams that are currently accessing facilities outside of the local authority for their home fixtures, normally because their pitch requirements cannot be met. This is usually because of a lack of access to squares, in some cases quality issues, or stipulated league requirements for access to a certain standard of provision.

As previously mentioned, Birchfield Park CC previously accessed a square at Birchfield Sports & Social Club; however, for the past couple of seasons this has not been maintained by the

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Social Club, leading to the Club relocating to Northern Cricket Club in Sefton. That being said, the Club still utilises practice facilities within Halton at Widnes Cricket Club.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Widnes CC is keen to explore a merger with Birchfield CC, or at a minimum a player share, although this has stalled recently due to the ongoing Pandemic.

Imported demand

Imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities within Halton due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based. There is no known imported demand into the Borough.

Future demand

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

In addition, the ECB has recently announced new five-year media rights deals, from 2020-2024. The new deals include a continuation of the ECB relationship with Sky Sports, now extending beyond broadcasting as a genuine partnership to secure significant investment and commitment to increase participation and drive engagement. Together, significant investment in participation and increased free to air media coverage could see future demand increase to levels in excess of those anticipated through the PPS and the impact should therefore be reviewed over coming years. This being said, it is unknown if the Covid-19 pandemic will affect this.

Participation increases

Widnes CC reports aspirations to increase its levels of participation by one senior men's team and two junior teams. In comparison, Runcorn CC reports aspirations for one additional senior men's and one additional senior women's team.

Population forecasts

Team generation rates are used overleaf as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future (2037) based on population growth. Both 2019 and 2020 demand data are analysed.

Table 4.7: Boroughwide Team generation rates

Cricket						
Age group	Current population within age group (2018)	Current no. of teams	Team Generation Rate¹⁸	Future population within age group (2037)	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
2019						
Senior Men's (18-55)	30,042	6	1:5,007	28,674	5.7	0
Senior Women's (18-55)	31,404	0	0	29,793	0	0
Junior Boys (7-18)	9,655	12	1:805	9,534	11.8	0
Junior Girls (7-18)	9,402	0	0	8,775	0	0

¹⁸ Please note TGR figures are rounded to the lowest whole number.

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2020						
Senior Men's (18-55)	30,042	6	1:5,007	28,674	5.7	0
Senior Women's (18-55)	31,404	1	1:31,404	29,793	0.9	0
Junior Boys (7-18)	9,655	10	1:966	9,534	9.9	0
Junior Girls (7-18)	9,402	1	1:9,402	8,775	0.9	0

Using both sets of demand data there is no anticipated team increases from population growth across Halton.

Although no women and girls' teams are predicted to be created via population growth alone, consultation with the ECB suggests that further development of female cricket in the Borough is likely as it is currently a national priority to increase women and girls participation.

Widnes CC indicates a desire to run a junior girl's section and is open to the possibility of a joint venture with Runcorn CC until demand is of a sufficient levels to operate teams within each respective club.

It is important to acknowledge that whilst application of team generation rates project team growth as a factor of population and existing teams, there are plans and strategies to increase the number of teams at some formats beyond what current trends suggest.

All Stars Cricket

In partnership with the ECB and Chance to Shine cricket clubs in Halton can register to become an ECB All Stars Cricket Centre. Once registered, a club can deliver the programme which aims to 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
- ◀ 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

Both clubs operated All Stars programmes in 2019 and anticipate re-establishing them in the 2021 season. It should be noted that Runcorn CC did in fact run a successful All Stars initiative in 2020 although with reduce levels of participation due to capacity limits imposed through Covid regulations.

Dynamos cricket

A key development area for the ECB in delivering on the outcomes of 'Inspiring Generations' will be the Dynamos Cricket programme for 8-11 year olds which originally aimed to launch in 2020. It plans on building on the significant growth of the All Stars Cricket programme for 5-8 year olds established in 2017 and will develop the pathway to retain juniors progressing from All Stars Cricket into Dynamos Cricket.

Where All Stars Cricket seeks to engage children in cricket activity and learning the skills, Dynamos Cricket seeks to engage children in learning how to play, introducing a modified soft ball format as competitive progression with a view to eventual transition through to hardball cricket. The programme will be strongly linked to The Hundred, a new short format competition which also aimed to launch in 2020 (pre-Covid).

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Dynamos cricket activity will generally take place midweek to coincide with junior training sessions. Similarly, to All Stars, both clubs are anticipated to run it in 2021.

Softball cricket

Softball cricket is an ECB initiative aimed at women and girls to increase participation in cricket as a sport. The aim of softball cricket sections is enjoyment and participation, without pads, a hardball, a heavy bat and limited rules. Sessions are played on the outfield and follow a festival format with each session running for a maximum of two and half hours, shorter than traditional formats.

In Halton, Runcorn CC has recently developed women's and girls' teams in the 2020 season with anecdotal evidence suggesting that it will continue to develop this demand in 2021. Cheshire Cricket may encourage Widnes CC to partner with Runcorn CC to increase women's and girls' participation across Halton if the Club cannot commit to supplying its own demand.

It should be noted that All Stars, Dynamos and Softball cricket generally takes place on the cricket outfields rather than the actual squares. Although this does not impact the carrying capacity of the square it does influence the accessibility of the squares as whilst the outfield is in use the main square cannot be used to accommodate fixtures. Therefore, this may limit the potential spare capacity whilst these activities are taking place, generally on midweek evenings or Sunday mornings.

Future demand summary

Using the above information, in cohesion with the supply and demand analysis below, the following teams will be brought forward as future demand.

- ◀ Widnes Analysis Area – One senior men's, one senior women's and two junior teams (one boys and one girls)
- ◀ Runcorn Analysis Area - One senior men's, one senior women's and one junior girls team

This is a mixture between club aspirational demand and the anticipated demand growth in women's and girls' cricket through ECB initiatives.

Please note the future demand of one senior women's team in the Runcorn Analysis Area has not been included as the clubs has seen this growth between the 2019 and 2020 season.

The potential impact on current and future demand due to Covid-19 will be run in greater detail, as a scenario, in the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan.

Peak time demand

An analysis of match play identifies peak time demand for cricket in Halton as Saturday PM for senior men's, Sunday PM for senior women and Midweek for junior teams.

For junior cricket, peak time demand varies between Sundays and midweek, with clubs generally arranging the fixtures to best suit their needs. As a result, squares have greater capacity to carry junior demand as play can be spread across numerous days (providing the squares are not overplayed).

4.4: 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 pitch per day at weekends or

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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 presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive matches per season per square.

For good quality squares, capacity is considered to be five matches per wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not safe for play.

The number of matches played by each team has been derived from consultation with the clubs. Where consultation was not possible, the assumption has been made that all senior teams play between ten 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

Please note that non-turf wickets have been discounted from the table overleaf. No non-turf wicket squares are recorded as accommodating more than 60 matches per season; therefore, all non-turf wickets 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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Table 4.8: Capacity of cricket squares (2019 demand)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Com use?	Security of tenure	No. of squares	Pitch quality	No. of grass wickets	Capacity (sessions per season)	Actual play (sessions per season)	Capacity rating (sessions per season)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Saturday PM)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Sunday PM)	Potential spare capacity for junior cricket?
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	Yes	Secure	1	Good	13	65	49	16	No	Yes	Yes
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	Yes	Secure	1	Good	15	75	47	28	No	Yes	Yes

It should be noted that even if 2020 demand data were to be used, on the basis that all teams played a full competitive season, there would be little change to the above table. In fact, the only difference would be that the current capacity rating at Runcorn Sports Club would reduce from 16 match equivalent sessions per season to eight match equivalent sessions per season.

Spare capacity is shown in the Capacity ratings (sessions per season) column as this is overall spare capacity on the square across the entire season. This, however, does not mean there is spare capacity at certain peak times. For example, there is no spare capacity at Saturday PM although there is spare capacity at Sunday PM. This is explained in greater detail below.

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4.5: Supply and demand analysis

Consideration must be given to the extent to which provision can accommodate current and future demand. As discussed above, the current overview of cricket across Halton includes the following future demand:

- ◀ Widnes Analysis Area – One senior men’s, one senior women’s and two junior teams (one boys and one girls)
- ◀ Runcorn Analysis Area - One senior men’s and one junior girls team

This is a mixture between club aspirational demand and the anticipated demand growth in women’s and girls’ cricket through ECB initiatives.

It should be noted that future demand of teams will affect the following peak times capacity; senior men’s (Saturday PM) senior women’s (Sunday PM) and junior (Midweek) as this is generally when these team would play.

Match equivalent sessions for future demand are based on the estimated average number of matches played per season by the respective team type (14 matches for senior men’s, eight matches for senior women’s matches and four matches for junior girls).

Senior cricket capacity balance (Saturday PM)

The below looks at actual spare capacity during the peak period (Saturday PM) for senior cricket against overplay.

Table 4.9: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares for senior cricket

Cricket					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match sessions per season)	Demand (match sessions per season)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Runcorn	-	-		14	14
Widnes	-	-		14	14
Total	-	-		28	28

Analysis suggests that senior peak time (Saturday PM) cricket is currently operating at capacity across the Borough. As such, any future growth in senior men’s cricket, teams would either need to play in a Sunday or midweek league. Alternatively, any future demand on a Saturday PM would need to access an alternative suitable venue.

With the only cricket squares in Halton currently played to capacity on a Saturday, this means that any future growth at peak time would require the creation or reinstatement of provision, or demand would have to export.

It should be noted that if any future senior men’s teams are established, playing either on a Sunday PM or Midweek, this would reduce potential spare capacity for women’s or junior future demand.

Senior cricket capacity balance (Sunday PM)

The table below looks at actual spare capacity on Sunday PM for cricket against overplay and identified future demand. For this, as actual spare capacity exists, please note that it is converted from the number of squares to match equivalent sessions. This is calculated by

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using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (eight) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (one team per 0.5 squares that are available). The entirety of spare capacity available at each site is not used as this number of matches may not be able to be accommodated at peak time (the maximum amount of spare capacity that can be accommodated on one square at peak time is 16 match equivalent sessions per season).

Table 4.10: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares for Sunday PM

Cricket					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match sessions per season)	Demand (match sessions per season)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Runcorn	8	-	8	8	
Widnes	8	-	8	8	
Total	16	-	16	16	

With each square already used by one team on a Sunday, there is capacity to accommodate one additional team each. Therefore, the potential future demand of one women's team within each Analysis Area could be accommodated; however, this would mean each square would then be played to capacity.

Junior cricket capacity balance

The table below looks at actual spare capacity during the peak period (midweek) for junior cricket. For this, actual spare capacity equates to the total spare capacity at each available site or, if it is lower, 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 playing home and away) multiplied by four (the average number of matches a junior team plays). This is because additional demand at peak time is not limited to one day.

Table 4.11: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares for junior cricket

Cricket					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match sessions per season)	Demand (match sessions per season)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Runcorn	-	-		4	4
Widnes	-	-		8	8
Total	-	-		12	12

Each club operates six junior teams' midweek which means there is no actual spare capacity to accommodate any further demand at peak time, in addition to any anticipated All Star and Dynamos cricket demand. Therefore, similar to Saturday peak time demand, analysis suggests that junior peak time cricket is currently operating at capacity across the Borough.

It should be noted that additional capacity could be created with the installation or greater utilisation of an NTP. Alternatively, some junior demand could relocate to Saturday or Sunday mornings. Scenarios on potential options to accommodate future demand will be explored in detail in the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan.

Cricket –supply and demand summary

- ◀ Using 2019 demand data, cricket in Halton is currently played to capacity for Saturday PM and midweek cricket. In comparison there is spare capacity to accommodate one additional team on each square on Sunday PM.
- ◀ Therefore, future demand can not currently be accommodated on a Saturday PM or midweek. This being said summer junior (softball) fixtures can be played on the outfield so there could be capacity midweek to accommodate U9s games simultaneously.

Cricket – supply summary

- ◀ There are two active grass wicket squares in Halton located across two sites: Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club.
- ◀ There have been previous grass squares maintained at Birchfield Sports and Social Club and Moorfields Sports and Social Club. Both are now disused.
- ◀ In Halton, there is just one NTP that accompanies the grass wicket square at Widnes Cricket Club (Good quality), in addition to one standalone NTP located at Cronton Sixth Form College (Poor quality).
- ◀ Both clubs have secure tenure with Widnes CC having a freehold at Widnes Cricket Club and Runcorn CC having recently obtained a new long term lease (30 years) at Runcorn Sports Club.
- ◀ The non-technical assessment of grass wicket squares in Halton found both squares to be good quality.
- ◀ The audit of ancillary facilities determines that both sites currently accessed for affiliated cricket in Halton are accompanied by good quality changing rooms.
- ◀ Both sites used by affiliated cricket clubs in Halton are serviced by fixed bay practice nets, these being Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club. Despite this each club indicates a need for additional training facilities.

Cricket– demand summary

- ◀ There are two cricket clubs playing in Halton: Runcorn CC and Widnes CC. In 2019 each club fielded three senior men's teams and six junior boys' teams generating a total of 18 teams.
- ◀ In comparison, during the truncated 2020 season, both clubs fielded the same number of teams, however, Runcorn CC had a reduction of two junior boys' teams but developed one junior girls' team and one senior women's team.
- ◀ Widnes CC reports aspirations to increase its levels of participation by one senior men's team and two junior teams. In comparison Runcorn CC reports aspirations for one senior mens and one senior women's team

PART 5: RUGBY UNION

5.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is split into six areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions. A Rugby Development Officer (RDO) and a team of community rugby coaches deliver core programmes in schools and clubs within the Halton area.

Its variety of programmes, which include 15 aside, 10 aside, 7 aside, Tag and the O2 Touch programme, all aim to increase and retain participation within the game. In order to sustain and increase participation, facilities need to be appropriate, affordable and accessible.

Consultation

There are three clubs currently playing within Halton: Birchfield RUFC, Moore RUFC and Widnes RUFC. All three clubs were met with face-to-face, resulting in a 100% response rate.

5.2: Supply

Within Halton there are seven rugby union pitches across four sites. All of the pitches are of senior size (as opposed to junior or mini) and all are available for community use.

Of the seven pitches, five are located in Widnes, with only the two pitches (at Moore RUFC) located in Runcorn.

The audit only identifies dedicated, line marked pitches. However, it is common for junior and mini matches to be played on senior pitches via the use of cones and this is the case across Halton. For rugby union pitch dimension sizes please see the table below.

Table 5.1: Pitch dimensions

Rugby union		
Age	Pitch type	Maximum pitch dimensions (metres) ¹⁹
U7	Mini	20 x 12
U8	Mini	45 x 22
U9	Mini	60 x 30
U10	Mini	60 x 35
U11	Mini	60 x 43
U12	Mini	60 x 43
U13	Junior	90 x 60 (60 x 43 for girls)
U14 +	Senior	100 x 70 ²⁰

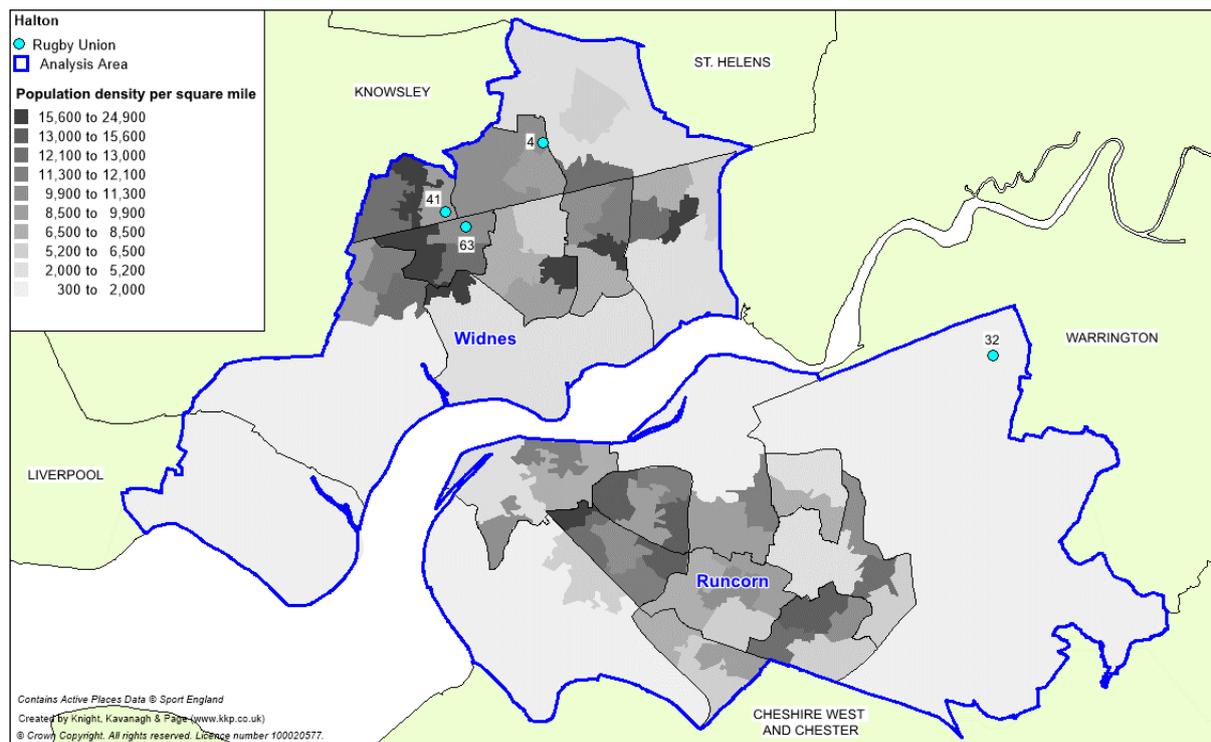
Figure 5.1 identifies the location of the rugby union pitches. For a key to the map, see Table 5.5.

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

²⁰ Minimum dimensions of 94 x 68 metres are accepted.

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Figure 5.1: Location of rugby union pitches within Halton



Lapsed/disused pitches

No rugby union pitches are identified as lapsed or disused in Halton.

Security of tenure

Birchfield RUFC rents the pitch at Birchfield Sports and Social Club on an annual basis although the site has recently been purchased by new owners. The Club does not know what the new owners have planned for the site. As such, the existing agreement is determined to be unsecure.

Both Moore and Widnes rugby clubs own their respective home venues. The former has a freehold at Moore RUFC, whereas the latter owns both Widnes RUFC and a parcel of land which contains two pitches at Prescott Road Playing Fields. The remaining area of land at Prescott Road Playing Fields is split between private ownership and owned by the local authority.

Pitch quality

The assessment of 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 in the tables overleaf.

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Table 5.2: Definition of maintenance categories

Rugby union	
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 5.3: Definition of drainage categories

Rugby union	
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 5.4: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

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

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.

Of the community available pitches in Halton, four are assessed as standard quality and three as poor quality. No pitches are assessed as good quality.

The single pitch at Birchfield Sports and Social Club is assessed as poor quality. It is maintained to a basic level, with cutting and line marking undertaken by Birchfield RUFC. The Club reports that the pitch drains adequately, despite no system being in place.

The pitches at Widnes RUFC are verti-drained, fertilised and reseeded four times per season and chain harrowed in the off-season, in addition to regular grass cutting and line marking. The first team pitch on site naturally drains well whilst the second pitch has pipe drainage installed on account of it being newly established. That being said, a nearby housing development has disrupted the system, causing significant waterlogging issues.

In contrast, the pitches on Prescott Road Playing Fields are only maintained to a basic level by Widnes RUFC as it can not fully access the site with its maintenance equipment. Both suffer from poor drainage and have no system in place.

The pitches at Moore RUFC are maintained to a relatively high level by the Club. The first team pitch on site has pipe drainage installed whilst the second team pitch drains adequately without a system. Both are assessed as standard quality.

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Table 5.5: Site quality ratings

Rugby union								
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Number of pitches	Pitch type	Floodlit?	Non-technical assessment score	Quality rating
4	Birchfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	No	M0/D1	Poor
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D2	Standard
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M0/D0	Poor
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	No	M0/D0	Poor
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D2	Standard
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard

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Ancillary facilities

The quality of ancillary facilities at Widnes RUFC is good although the car park is reported to be in need of resurfacing. Similarly, Moore RUFC indicates that ancillary facilities are of good quality at its site although the Club states that its clubhouse needs expanding in order to accommodate planned establishment of mini, junior and female sections. The Club also hopes to improve the showers and the boiler.

Ancillary facilities at Birchfield Sports and Social Club are deemed to be of adequate quality with no specific issues highlighted through consultation. Birchfield RUFC states anecdotally the new owners are looking to provide a new block of changing rooms on site but have seen no evidence regarding this at the time of writing.

Additionally, Widnes RUFC hire Council owned facilities at Prescott Road Playing Fields on Sunday mornings to accommodate its junior demand.

5.3: Demand

Competitive play

There are three community rugby union clubs based in Halton, providing a total of 15 teams. Broken down, this equates to six senior men's, one senior women's, five junior boys and three mini teams. The largest club in the Borough is Widnes RUFC which fields 11 teams (73% of the Borough's demand), whereas Birchfield and Moore rugby clubs currently only field senior teams.

Table 5.6: Summary of club demand

Rugby union				
Club	Analysis area	No. of rugby union teams		
		Senior (19+)	Junior (13-18)	Mini (6-12)
Birchfield RUFC	Widnes	1	-	-
Moore RUFC	Runcorn	3	-	-
Widnes RUFC	Widnes	3	5	3
Total		7	5	3

It should be noted that one of the senior teams at Moore RUFC is a women's team which trains and plays in friendly fixtures. As it trains on a regular basis it has been included in the above mentioned demand.

The team started to play competitive fixtures partially through the 2019/20 season with it aspiring to make it a dedicated competitive team for the 2020/21 season.

Training

Throughout the Country, many rugby teams train at their 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 floodlighting.

In Halton, Birchfield RUFC utilises a small floodlit training area on site, separate to its match pitch, which accommodates all of the Club's training demand. Widnes RUFC also reports that it has a floodlit training area on site, although its new pitch is also utilised for 1 training session per week.

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Moore RUFC trains across both of its match pitches. This equates to 3.5 match equivalent sessions a week.

Use of artificial pitches

The alternative to training on grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches. World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. A World Rugby compliant pitch also enables the transfer of match demand from grass pitches onto 3G pitches, which alleviates overplay of grass pitches and as a result protects quality.

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, with ad hoc use of 3G pitches for fixtures in the case of unsuitable pitches due to waterlogging or frost. Further detail on use of 3G pitches can be found in Part 3 of this report.

Exported demand

Displaced or exported demand refers to Halton based teams that are currently accessing pitches outside of the local authority for their home fixtures, normally because their 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 is no known exported demand outside of the Borough.

Imported demand

Imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities within the Halton study area due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based. There is no known imported demand into the Borough.

Future demand

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

The proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for rugby union arising from housing developments within Halton.

Population increases

Team generation rates are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based on population growth (2037).

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Table 5.7: Team generation rates (2037)

Rugby union						
Age group	Current population within age group (2018)	Current no. of teams	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group (2037)	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Mens (19-45)	20,427	6	1:3,405	19,879	5.8	0
Senior Womens (19-45)	21,555	1	1:21,555	20,462	0.9	0
Junior Boys (13-18)	4,458	5	1:892	4,854	5.4	0
Junior Girls (13-18)	4,366	0	0	4,487	0.0	0
Mini Mixed (7-12)	10,233	3	1:3,411	2,271	0.7	0

As seen in the table above, no additional rugby union teams are expected to be generated in Halton through population growth alone. However, both Widnes RUFC and Moore RUFC report aspirations to increase their team numbers.

Participation increases

Widnes RUFC indicates an aspiration to add another mini team for the 2020/21 season. This will be fielded at U7 age level.

As mentioned previously, Moore RUFC plans on fielding a senior women's team from next season. The Club also aspires to add mini and junior teams although it did not specify potential team numbers. It reports that clubhouse enhancements are required to satisfy its growth plans.

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 considered to be Saturday PM as all senior men's teams play at this time. Peak time for mini and junior rugby is Sunday AM.

5.4: 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.
- ◀ All competitive play is on senior sized pitches (except for where mini pitches are provided).
- ◀ From U13 upwards, teams play 15 v 15 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.

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- ◀ 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 5.8: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

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

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.

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Table 5.9: Capacity table for rugby pitches in Halton

Rugby union													
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Number of pitches	Pitch type	Quality rating	Floodlit?	Non-tech score	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Training equivalent sessions (per week)	Pitch Capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Comments
4	Birchfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Poor	No	M0 / D1	0.5		1.5	1	One poor quality mini pitch which is utilised for match play by Birchfield RUFC.
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	Yes	1	Senior	Standard	Yes	M1 / D1	0.5	2	2	0.5	One standard quality senior pitch which is overplayed due to training demand from Moore RUFC.
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	Yes	1	Senior	Standard	No	M1 / D2	0.5	1.5	2.5	0.5	One standard quality senior pitch which has minimal spare capacity through match play and residual training demand.
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Poor	Yes	M0 / D0	0.5	-	0.5		Two poor quality senior pitches that are used on an ad-hoc basis by Widnes RUFC.
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Poor	No	M0 / D0	0.5	-	0.5		
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Standard	No	M1 / D1	1.5	-	2	0.5	One standard quality senior pitch that is has minimal spare capacity through match play by Widnes RUFC.
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	Yes	1	Senior	Standard	Yes	M1 / D2	2.25	1	1.5 ²¹	1.75	One standard quality senior pitch that is overplayed due to match play and training demand from Widnes RUFC.

²¹ Even though the pitch is rated as M1/D2 which has a capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions, its capacity has been altered due to aforementioned drainage issues to M1/D0 which has a capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

5.4: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the table below identifies the overall spare capacity in each of the analysis areas for rugby union pitches based on match equivalent sessions per week. Future demand is based on both team generation rates, which are driven by population increases, as well as reported club development plans.

Table 5.10: Summary of supply and demand balance on rugby union pitches

Rugby union					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ²²	Demand (match equivalent sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand ²³	Future total
Runcorn	-	0.5	0.5	1	1.5
Widnes	-	1.75	1.75	0.25	2
Total	-	2.25	2.25	1.25	3.5

Overall, there is a current minimal shortfall of 2.25 match equivalent sessions per week on senior rugby union pitches to meet current demand across Halton. This is further exacerbated when considering future demand, resulting in a future shortfall of 3.5 match equivalent sessions. Current and future shortfalls are evident in both Runcorn and Widnes.

Spare capacity

There may 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 regularly 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.

Furthermore, any pitches that are used to capacity at peak time, that are poor quality or that provide unsecure tenure 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 senior play.

Table 5.11: Summary of actual spare capacity

Rugby union						
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Number of pitches	Potential capacity	Actual spare capacity	Comments
4	Birchfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	1	1	-	Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure.
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	1	0.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity discounted as it will make the pitch played to capacity.

²² In match equivalent sessions per week

²³ Anticipated future junior demand is represented as 0.5 MES on a senior pitch whereas anticipated mini future demand is represented as 0.25 MES on a senior pitch.

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Rugby union						
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Number of pitches	Potential capacity	Actual spare capacity	Comments
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	1	0.5	-	Pitch is played to capacity at peak time.

There are three sites which display potential spare capacity to accommodate additional play in Halton totalling two match equivalent sessions; however, there is no actual spare capacity.

For mini and junior rugby, the programming of matches can be unclear with regards to ascertaining spare capacity, especially at peak time as it varies from week to week. Junior rugby sections tend to play regular matches as part of a league format, whereas, minis play organised friendly fixtures. Clubs organise a number of their mini age groups to play those from another club at once either at home or away. Teams will generally hold training sessions instead on the weeks that mini / junior sections do not have a fixture event arranged. This means that mini/junior sections require use of all home pitches for two or three mornings a month but may play an away fixture one week meaning none of the pitches are used that particular morning.

Overplay

There are two pitches across two sites in Halton which are overplayed by a total of 2.25 match equivalent sessions per week. One pitch at Moore RUFC is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions, whilst a pitch at Widnes RUFC is overplayed by 1.75 match equivalent sessions.

Table 5.12: Summary of supply and demand balance on senior rugby union pitches

Rugby union					
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	Number of pitches	Overplay (match equivalent sessions per week)
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	Senior	1	0.5
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	Senior	1	1.75
Total				2	2.25

Both overplayed pitches are used to accommodate training demand as well as match play demand.

Rugby union – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Overall, there is a current shortfall of 2.25 match equivalent sessions per week on senior rugby union pitches to meet current demand.
- ◀ When considering future demand, there is shortfall of 3.5 match equivalent sessions.
- ◀ There are 3 sites which display potential spare capacity to accommodate additional play; however, in practice no pitches have actual spare capacity.
- ◀ There are 2 pitches across 2 sites in Halton which are overplayed by a total of 2.25 match equivalent sessions per week. One pitch at Moore RUFC is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions, whilst a pitch at Widnes RUFC is overplayed by 1.75 match equivalent sessions.

Rugby union – supply summary

- ◀ Within Halton there are 7 rugby union pitches across 4 sites, all of which are senior size and available for community use.
- ◀ Moore and Widnes rugby clubs own their respective home venues whilst Widnes RUFC also has a freehold of pitches at Prescot Road Playing Fields.
- ◀ Birchfield RUFC is considered to have unsecure tenure at Birchfield Sports and Social Club as it only has an annual rental agreement in place; the site is recently under new ownership.
- ◀ Of the community available pitches in Halton, 4 are assessed as standard quality and 3 as poor quality; no pitches are assessed as good quality.
- ◀ Moore and Widnes rugby clubs are serviced by good quality ancillary provision although Widnes RUFC indicates that the car park is in need of resurfacing, whilst Moore RUFC reports that it requires expanded facilities to accommodate planned mini, junior and women's growth.
- ◀ Ancillary facilities servicing Birchfield RUFC are deemed to be of adequate quality.

Rugby union – demand summary

- ◀ There are three community rugby union clubs based in Halton, providing a total of 15 teams.
- ◀ All three clubs are serviced by some form of floodlit provision, whether that be a match pitch or dedicated training area, to accommodate training demand.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

PART 6: HOCKEY

6.1: 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 third generation turf pitches (3G), 40mm pitches may be suitable at introductory level, such as school curriculum low level hockey. EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as shown below.

Table 6.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey

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 EH competitions for clubs and schools (excluding domestic national league)
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	Desirable
England Hockey Category 4	All 3G surfaces	Essential None	Desirable Lower level hockey (Introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

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In addition to the above pitch types England Hockey reports it is currently trialling a different multi sport surface in order to better accommodate lower levels of hockey demand and other sports such as netball and tennis. The surface type known as Gen 2²⁴ is a versatile surface that will ensure 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 utilised provision to full potential.

For senior teams, a full sized 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 & three metres at the ends. England Hockey 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 that the pitch has floodlighting. Training is generally midweek and requires access to a pitch and floodlights.

Consultation

There is a single hockey club identified as playing with Halton; Runcorn HC. The Club was consulted with during a face-to-face meeting, resulting in a 100% response rate.

6.2: Supply

The audit identifies two hockey suitable AGPs in Halton. Both are full size, floodlit, available for community use and located in Runcorn.

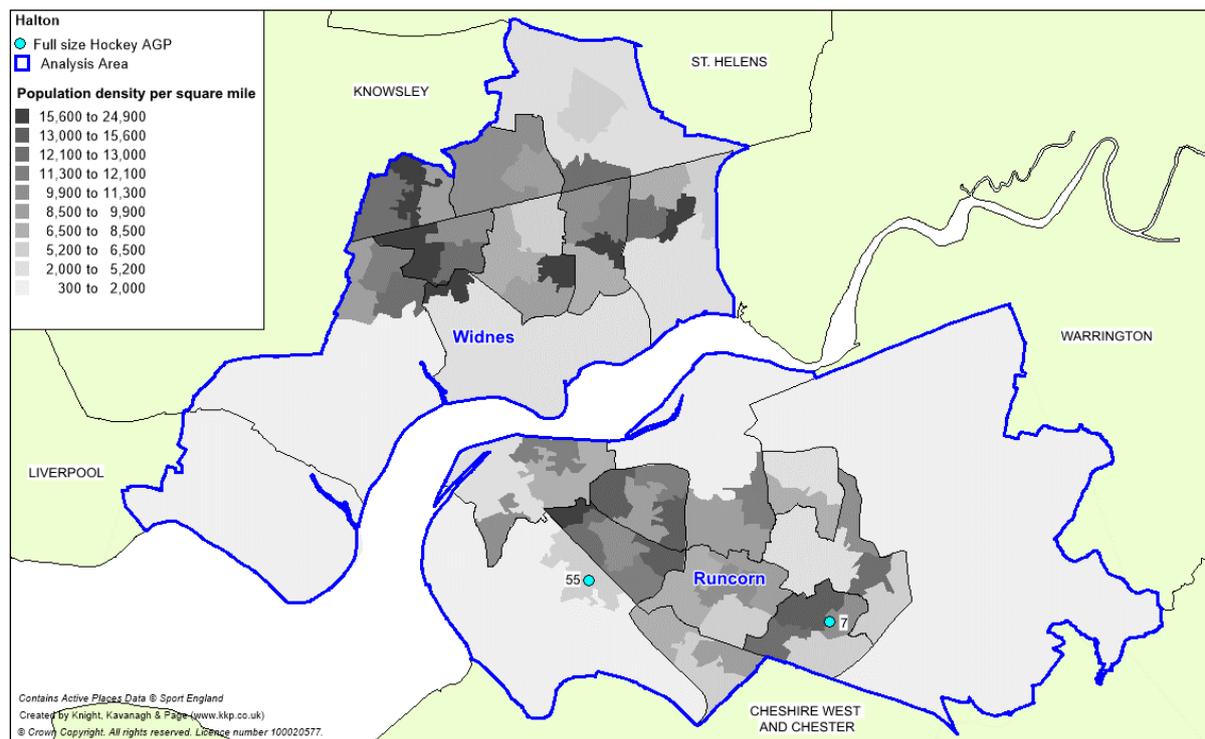
Table 6.2: Full size hockey suitable pitches in Halton

Hockey					
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Floodlit?	Size (metres)
7	Brookvale Recreation Centre	Runcorn	Yes	Yes	100x60
55	The Heath School	Runcorn	Yes	Yes	100x60

²⁴ <http://www.englishhockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=2596§ionTitle=Gen+2+Playing+Surface>

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Figure 6.1: Location of full size hockey suitable AGPs in Halton



Future developments

Recent dialogue between the Council, England Hockey and Football Foundation suggests there is potential to convert the hockey suitable AGP at Brookvale Recreation Centre to a 3G surface in order to accommodate the shortfall in the Runcorn Analysis Area, however, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the timeframe for a decision regarding this is currently unknown.

Conversion to 3G surfaces

Since the introduction of 3G pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way to replace a worn sand or water based carpet and generate increased revenue from hiring out a 3G pitch to football and rugby clubs and commercial football providers. This has often come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams consequently displaced from their preferred local authority.

Due to its potential to impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand based AGPs are retained for the playing development of hockey. To that end, a change of surface may require planning permission and the applicants will need to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Advice from Sport England and EH should also be sought prior to any planning application being submitted.

It should also be noted that, if the surface type is changed, it could require the existing floodlighting to be changed and in some instances noise attenuation measures may need to be put in place. Conversion to a 3G surface will likely require a size increase; along with floodlighting improvements, the addition of a shock pad, fencing and noise attenuation.

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A 3G surface is limited in the range of sport that can be played or taught on it. Providers proposing a conversion should take advice from the appropriate sports' governing bodies and refer to Sport England guidance, in particular 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface': <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/outdoor-surfaces>

Management and security of tenure

The AGP located at Brookvale Recreation Centre is managed by the Council, whilst the pitch at the Heath School is managed internally by the School which is in turn sub contracted to School Lettings Solutions (SLS).

Runcorn HC currently rents the pitch at the Heath School on an annual basis. As there is no long-term agreement in place for the Club's usage, tenure on site is considered to be unsecure.

The pitch at Brookvale Recreation Centre is currently unused for hockey.

Availability

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

At the Heath School, the AGP is reserved for curricular use from 09:00-17:00 Monday to Friday, before opening to the community from 17:00 to 21:00. At weekends the pitch is available to the community from 08:00–21:30. Therefore, the pitch is available for the full 34 hours per week of peak period.

The AGP at Brookvale Recreation Centre is reserved for private use from 09:00–16:00 before opening to the community from 16:00–21:30. At weekends, the pitch is available to the community from 08:00-20:00. As such, it is also available for the full 34 hours per week.

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an AGP usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, together with maintenance levels, that most commonly affects quality. An issue for hockey nationally is that many providers did not financially plan to replace the carpet when first installed.

Both full size hockey suitable pitches in Halton are considered to be poor quality in addition to being over their recommended lifespan. The pitch at The Heath School was built in 2005 and has not been resurfaced since its construction, although it has been deep cleaned in January 2019. Similarly, the AGP at Brookvale Recreation Centre is poor quality having not been resurfaced since construction in 2003 and following heavy usage from the community.

Ancillary provision

Runcorn HC reports that it is able to access external changing facilities at the Heath School which are of good quality. In addition, the Club utilises a clubhouse at Runcorn Sports Club as its home base. It utilises this for post-match refreshments.

Changing facilities are also available at Brookvale Recreation Centre, with no issues raised through consultation albeit they are not currently used by hockey clubs.

6.3: Demand

As mentioned previously, Runcorn HC is the only identified hockey club in Halton. It fields three senior men's, two senior women's and two junior teams. The senior men's and women's teams play on Saturdays whilst the junior teams play or train on Sundays. Senior training takes place on Tuesday evenings. All activity takes place at the Heath School.

It is reported by the Club that pitch quality at the Heath School is restricting the Club's growth. Ideally, the Club would like to play at Runcorn Sports Club and therefore holds an aspiration for a suitable pitch to be established.

Participation trends

Runcorn HC reports that membership has increased considerably over the last three years at all levels. However, the Club is now concerned that pitch quality is restricting any further growth, as well as reporting that capacity is becoming an issue.

Future demand

Growing participation is a key aim within England Hockey's Strategic Plan and key drivers include working with clubs, universities and schools, working with regional and local leagues, developing opportunities for over 40s and delivering a quality programme of competition. Overall, it has an aim to double participation over the next ten years.

Runcorn HC is in the process of putting together a hockey development plan which entails increasing the Club's membership base although this was not quantified in terms of team numbers.

The proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for hockey arising from housing development in Halton.

Latent demand

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision.

As mentioned previously, Runcorn HC believes that pitch quality at the Heath School is restricting the Club growing any further. However, it has not been turning players away suggesting limited latent demand at this time.

Imported demand

Imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities within Halton due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based.

There is currently occasional use of the pitch at the Heath School from Warrington HC. The Club, which is based in the neighbouring borough of Warrington, normally utilises provision at Priestley College. England Hockey (EH) indicates it can not access this site outside of school term time and therefore has to import partial training and competitive demand into Halton. EH reports it is trying to resolve this issue.

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Exported demand

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing provision for home fixtures outside of Halton, despite being from the Borough. Previously, Runcorn HC has exported demand to Chester due to the quality issues at the Heath School, although this is only occasional.

Hockey Heroes

Hockey Heroes is a six-week hockey programme aimed at beginners (children aged five to eight) that not only focuses on helping children develop some physical hockey skills such as dribbling, passing and goal scoring, but also places as much emphasis on character development including teamwork, communication, perseverance and respect.

There are currently no Hockey Heroes courses operating in or around Halton. This being said Runcorn HC plans to start the initiative in the 2020/21 season.

Back to Hockey

Back to Hockey sessions are fun, social and informal and are aimed at people who either have not played for a number of years or that are looking to play for the first time. They are generally hosted by clubs, with EH providing guidance on how to deliver the programme. Benefits of clubs being involved include:

- ◀ More members
- ◀ More casual players
- ◀ Additional income
- ◀ Extra publicity
- ◀ New volunteers

Runcorn HC operates Back to Hockey sessions at the Heath School on Friday evenings throughout the Summer.

Peak time demand

For matches, all senior hockey activity in Halton takes place on a Saturday, whereas junior activity occurs on a Sunday. For training, peak time is midweek evenings, although preference is generally given for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. As mentioned previously, Runcorn HC currently trains on Tuesday evenings.

6.4: Supply and demand analysis

Match play

The PPS Guidance suggests that a floodlit pitch is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions on a Saturday. With teams playing on a home and away format, this equates to one AGP being able to cater for eight 'home' teams. One team requires 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on its 'home' AGP.

Based on the above information, with Runcorn HC fielding five senior teams at peak time, there is a need for one full size hockey suitable AGP to accommodate current demand. As such, with two pitches currently available, supply is deemed sufficient. However, to ensure this remains the case, quality improvements are urgently needed, particularly in relation to the pitch at the Heath School given current usage levels.

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For junior hockey, the provision of one full size AGP is also considered sufficient to accommodate match play demand. This is because there are fewer junior teams and because there is no conflict with senior demand with matches mostly being played on a Sunday. Furthermore, some of the younger aged participants only require half of a pitch, meaning multiple matches can be played at the same time should demand increase to a point where that becomes necessary.

If quality improvements are not possible in relation to the pitches at Heath School and/or Brookvale Recreation Centre, consideration must go towards the creation of an additional pitch i.e. at Runcorn Sports Club.

Training

Runcorn HC reports no issues with fielding its training demand on the one pitch at the Heath School. As such, current supply is also deemed to be sufficient to meet demand for training, subject to quality improvements taking place.

Hockey – supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is a need for one full size hockey suitable AGP to accommodate current and future demand. This being said this may alter when taking into consideration housing growth scenarios in the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document.
- ◀ In order to adequately meet demand, there is a priority need to improve the poor quality pitch at the Heath School.

Hockey – supply summary

- ◀ There are two full size hockey suitable AGPs in Halton (at the Heath School and Brookvale Recreation Centre), both located in Runcorn.
- ◀ Both hockey suitable pitches are considered to be of poor quality with each pitch over its recommended lifespan (ten years).
- ◀ The pitch at the Heath School is accessed for club hockey (by Runcorn HC), whereas the pitch at Brookvale Recreation Centre is unused for the sport.
- ◀ The AGP located at Brookvale Recreation Centre is managed by the Council, whilst the pitch at the Heath School is managed internally by the School which is in turn sub contracted to School Lettings Solutions (SLS).

Hockey – demand summary

- ◀ Runcorn HC aspires to play at Runcorn Sports Club, where it already accesses clubhouse facilities on site; it believes that pitch quality at the Heath School is restricting the Club growing any further.
- ◀ There is partial imported demand from Warrington HC to the Heath School.
- ◀ The Club fields three senior men's, two senior women's and two junior teams.
- ◀ It states that issues with pitch quality at the Heath School have previously meant that the Club has had to export demand to Chester.
- ◀ Back to Hockey sessions are operated by Runcorn HC at the Heath School throughout the Summer.

PART 7: RUGBY LEAGUE

7.1: Introduction

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.

Senior rugby league is played on a field measuring 100 x 68 metres. The preferred pitch size for u7s, u8s and u9s is 60 x 40 metres, whereas for u10s and u11s it is 80 x 30 metres. U12s and above generally play on senior pitches. Teams from u7s to u11s are known as primary teams, with teams from u12s to u18s known as junior teams.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all rugby league matches and training sessions were cancelled throughout summer 2020. This meant that very few matches were played in relation to the normal summer season, whilst the final fixtures of the North West Counties Men's League and North West Counties Junior League were played in March 2020. As such, similar to approach for cricket, this section of the report utilises 2019 demand data in order to give a more accurate representation for the analysis of rugby league across Halton.

Consultation

There are six community clubs playing in Halton which are:

- ◀ Halton Farnworth ARLFC
- ◀ Halton Simms Cross ARLFC
- ◀ Runcorn ARLFC
- ◀ West Bank Bears ARLFC
- ◀ Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC
- ◀ Widnes St Maries ARLFC

All of these clubs were sent an online survey with all of them responding resulting in a 100% response rate.

In addition, there is one semi-professional club in the Borough, Widnes Vikings ARLFC, which compete in the Betfred Championship. These are not considered to form part of this study due to the level they play at although they are referenced throughout.

7.2: Supply

Nationally, most rugby league pitches are classified as being senior sized, with cones used to mark out pitches for primary and junior teams. However, there may be instances (particularly on school sites and large club sites) where designated junior or primary pitches are provided.

In Halton, the audit identifies a total of 21 grass rugby league pitches (13 senior and eight junior) across nine sites. All but one of these pitches (a senior pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy) are available for community use.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

The large majority of community available provision (95% or 19 pitches) are located in the Widnes Analysis Area. The remaining community pitch is located at Runcorn Heath Playing Field (Runcorn Analysis Area).

Disused/lapsed provision

Playing fields which have previously accommodated formal pitch provision are categorised as being either disused or lapsed. A disused site is a playing field which is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years, they will then be categorised as lapsed sites. Whilst lapsed sites fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit, they are still assessed using the criteria in paragraph 97 of the NPPF and Sport England would still challenge a proposed loss of playing pitches/playing field which fails to meet such criteria.

Whilst there are no disused or lapsed rugby league sites in Halton (as all sites that previously provided rugby league pitches are still in sporting use), there are two that previously hosted provision that no longer do so having been reconfigured to accommodate other sports. This relates to Parklands Sports Club and Leigh Recreation Playing Fields.

Until 2018, Parklands Sports Club accommodated one senior rugby league pitch which was previously the home site for Widnes St Maries ARLFC. The Club reports that it has recently had to relocate to Moorfield Sports and Social Club as the operators at Parklands Sports Club indicated that it would no longer be maintaining rugby league provision on the site. The area of playing field land is now utilised as an adult football pitch.

Leigh Recreation Playing Fields previously accommodated one senior rugby league pitch (*circa 2012*); however, the site is now solely used for football. That being said, there is potential to reinstate the pitch if required based on levels of demand and the reconfiguration of pitch types at other Council sites.

There was also a rugby league pitch located at Widnes RUFC, however, after Widnes St Maries ARLFC relocated to Moorfields Sports and Social Club, the pitch began to be utilised by Widnes RUFC for rugby union.

Ownership/management

Site ownership is varied between clubs renting a site from a wider sports club (or a sports and social club) and clubs which rent or lease pitches from the Council. Tenure of sites in Halton is considered secure if a club has a long-term lease or there is a guarantee that pitches will continue to be provided over the next three years.

Table 7.1: Summary of security of tenure

Rugby league					
Site ID	Site Name	Analysis Area	Club	Tenure	Comments
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Halton Simms Cross ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from Halton Borough Council
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	Unsecure	Rented from Sports and Social Club
			Widnes St Maries ARLFC	Unsecure	Rented from Sports and Social Club
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Runcorn ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from Halton Borough Council

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Rugby league					
Site ID	Site Name	Analysis Area	Club	Tenure	Comments
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC	Secure	Leased from Halton Borough Council
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	West Bank Bears ARLFC	Secure	Leased from Halton Borough Council

Halton Simms Cross ARLFC and Runcorn ARLFC rent provision from the Council and are considered to have unsecure tenure at their existing sites. This is due to the clubs having to hire a pitch on an annual basis with pitch allocations subject to change based on site reconfiguration, site works or changes in management. Therefore, whilst the clubs may always be guaranteed access to a pitch, it may not necessarily be at their current sites of King George V Playing Fields and Runcorn Heath Playing Fields.

As mentioned in Part 2: Football, Widnes FC has plans to obtain a long-term lease/freehold at King George V Playing Fields in order to develop a suitable Step football facility. If this progresses, anecdotal evidence suggests the current rugby league pitch would relocate to either Leigh Recreation Playing Fields or Frank Myler Pavilion. Nevertheless, it should be noted that due to current circumstances (Covid-19 restrictions) this is on hold. Halton Simms Cross ARLFC reports that it would want to remain at King George V Playing Fields moving forward.

Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC and Widnes St Maries ARLFC are also considered to have unsecure tenure as they rent their provision from Moorfield Sports and Social Club. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is an aspiration for this piece of playing field land to be sold for housing, however, to date (December 2020), no official planning application has been submitted.

In comparison, both Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC and West Bank Bears ARLFC are considered to have secure tenure as both clubs have a long-term lease to use Wilmere Lane Playing Fields and Ted Gleave Sports Ground, respectively.

Pitch quality

Non-technical site assessments were carried out for all rugby league pitches in the Borough and assessed as one of three categories, 'good', 'standard' or 'poor'. Carrying capacity of a pitch is dependent upon the quality of a pitch which is outlined below:

Table 7.2: Summary of quality and carrying capacity for rugby league pitches

Rugby league	
Category	Capacity
Good	3 matches per week
Standard	2 matches per week
Poor	1 match per week

The table below summarises pitch quality following the site visits to all pitches (including those not available for community use).

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Table 7.3: Summary of pitch quality

Rugby league					
Site Id	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch size	Number of pitches	Quality
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	Widnes	Senior	1	Standard
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Senior	1	Standard
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Junior	2	Poor
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Senior	2	Poor
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	Senior	1	Poor
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Senior	1	Poor
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Senior	2	Standard
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	Senior	3	Poor
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Senior	1	Standard
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Junior	5	Standard
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	Senior	1	Standard
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	Junior	1	Standard

In Halton, 57% (12) of all pitches are of standard quality with the remaining 43% rated as poor (nine pitches). There are no good quality pitches in the Borough.

West Bank Bears ARLFC signifies that the pitches at Ted Gleave Sports Ground generally get overused through competitive and training demand resulting in them having bare patches and the playing surface becoming damaged. This, in turn, can lead to the pitches becoming hard in periods of hot weather.

Widnes Moorfields Tigers ARLFC reports that the pitches at Moorfield Sports and Social Club are poor quality with particular concern in relation to waterlogging. Additionally, the Club indicates that pitch playing surface can become damaged throughout the winter due to them being used for football.

Comparatively the pitches at Ormiston Chadwick Academy, Runcorn Heath Playing Fields and Wade Deacon High School are all rated as poor quality due to evidence of litter, inadequate lengths of grass and issues with pitches being uneven or having a moderate slope. Additionally, each of these pitches have limited amounts of maintenance carried out, with no in depth works taking place, mainly due to cost implications.

Ancillary facilities

Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC is the only club through consultation that indicates issues with ancillary provision. It reports that the facilities at Moorfields Sports and Social Club are poor quality because of vandalism to the roof and building within the last year.

All remaining ancillary provision accessed by rugby league clubs is either standard or good quality, with no further issues detailed during the assessment or consultation process.

7.3: Demand

Demand for rugby league pitches in Borough tends to fall within the categories of organised competitive play and organised training.

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Competitive play

There is a total of 42 competitive rugby league teams playing in Borough, including the three teams from semi professional club Widnes Vikings ARLFC. There are three one team clubs consisting of Widnes St Maries ARLFC which fields an u14s boys' team and both Runcorn ARLFC and Halton Simms Cross ARLFC which field a senior men's team.

Comparatively, the three remaining clubs each accommodate multiple mini, junior and senior teams with Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC being the largest club in Halton with 18 teams. This is then followed by West Bank Bears ARLFC with nine teams and Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC with eight teams.

Table 7.4: Summary of demand by analysis area

Rugby league				
Analysis area	No. of competitive rugby league teams			Total
	Senior	Junior	Primary	
Runcorn	1	-	-	1
Widnes	7	14	20	41
Total	8	14	20	42

The majority of demand is based in the Widnes Analysis Area where there are 41 teams (98%). This corresponds with the analysis area also accommodating the majority of rugby league provision (95%).

Clubs that responded to consultation were asked whether there had been a change in the number of teams over the previous three years.

In regard to the number of senior teams, West Banks Bears ARLFC and Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC report a growth in the number of teams they field. The latter Club reports it has seen a growth due to its recent merger with Widnes Tigers ARLFC. In comparison Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC reports a decrease in teams at this age group because of declining memberships. All remaining clubs indicate the number of senior teams they accommodate has remained the same.

Only one club, West Bank Bears ARLFC, reports a growth in a number junior teams within the previous three years. All other clubs indicate their number of junior teams have stayed the same within in the same time period.

Finally, Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC and Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC each report an increase in participation at a mini age group with all remaining clubs indicating their participation at this age range has remained the same within the last three years.

The highest increase in teams is seen at primary and senior level, with exactly a third (33%) of clubs reporting an increase over the last three years compared to 17% of clubs reporting an increase in junior teams. No Clubs state that there has been a decrease in primary or junior teams. Trends for participation at senior level indicate demand has remained reasonably static with reported increases somewhat balanced by reported decreases.

Training

Winter rugby league training is accommodated across a combination of AGPs, indoor sports halls and gyms. Little training takes place on competitive pitches in the winter as few clubs have floodlit facilities. However, since the transition to a summer season, clubs tend to train

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on match pitches when extended daylight hours allow, eliminating the need for access to floodlighting. Many clubs attempt to train on grass areas around the perimeter of pitches to reduce impact on surface quality, but in practice a significant proportion of training takes place on the competitive pitches.

The training processes for the clubs in Halton is detailed in Table 7.6 overleaf.

7.5: Summary of training demand

Rugby league				
Club	Site ID	Site name	Training provision	Usage MES²⁵
Halton Farnworth ARLFC	46	DCBL Stadium Halton	3G	Unknown
	65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Grass rugby league	5
Halton Simms Cross ARLFC	27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Grass rugby league	1
Runcorn ARLFC	43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Grass rugby league	0.5
West Bank Bears ARLFC	70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Floodlit grass rugby league	3.25
Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Grass rugby league	2.5
Widnes St Maries ARLFC	34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Grass rugby league	0.5

As seen, all six of the clubs utilise some form of grass pitch provision, which is likely to impact significantly on the carrying capacity of these pitches for matches. This is reflected through consultation with the clubs, with many revealing high demand for additional floodlit grass pitches in order to take usage away from existing pitches that are also needed for matches. A number of clubs report making use of smaller sized AGPs for training outside of the summer months due to a lack of other floodlit grass facilities.

There is a RFL Community Standard 3G pitch in Halton at DCBL Stadium Halton. This is utilised by Halton Farnworth ARLFC in addition to use of a grass pitch. More information regarding 3G provision is detailed in Part 3: Third Generation Turf (3G) Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs).

Widnes Vikings ARLFC

As mentioned, Widnes Vikings ARLFC is a semi professional club operating within Halton. The Club has a tenant's agreement with the Council which covers specific areas of the DCBL Stadium Halton for training and match days for its three teams (1st Men's, Reserves and Academy). Additional details, such as times of use, are subject to change by an operational group. It should be noted that this is a relatively new agreement and reflects the clubs move into the Championship from Superleague

Details surrounding DCBL Stadium Halton and its provision can be found in greater detail in Part 3: Third Generation Turf (3G) Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs).

²⁵ Match equivalent sessions (MES)

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Vikings Sports Foundation

In addition to its competitive demand, Widnes Vikings ARLFC also utilises the 3G pitch at the DCBL Stadium Halton for a number of programmes run through its charity, Vikings Sports Foundation. The Vikings Sports Foundation has been set up as the affiliated charity of Widnes Vikings ARLFC with a goal, alongside key partners from the public, private and third sector, to engage, educate and inspire the local community to bring about positive change and new opportunities for all through rugby league.

The charity offers a number of opportunities to the people from the local community, which includes a monthly Dementia Support event, to represent Widnes Vikings as part of the Learning Disability Rugby League team and delivery of sports sessions to Primary and Secondary School children across the Borough.

There are also a number of educational programmes aimed at helping young people who are out of work and education to regain their confidence, learn valuable skills to use when applying for jobs and become more employable thanks to the Vikings Learning Centre.

More information regarding the Vikings Sports Foundation and multiple community programmes can be found at <https://widnesvikings.co.uk/education/>

Latent demand

Latent demand refers to potential demand; individuals who would like to participate within the sport but do not do so. This can be for a variety of reasons including a lack of pitches or appropriate facilities.

Of the six community clubs within Halton, two (Halton Farnworth ARLFC and West Bank Bear ARLFC) report that they would be able to have more teams if they had access to more pitches. Halton Farnworth ARLFC reports that it would look to start a youth set up if it had access to more provision whereas West Bank Bears ARLFC indicates that it would be able to continue its yearly organic growth in addition to potentially starting a dedicated girls section.

Displaced/exported demand

Displaced or exported demand refers to Halton based teams that are currently accessing pitches outside of the local authority for their home fixtures, normally because their 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 displaced/exported rugby league demand outside of the Borough.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and using population forecasts. Team generation rates are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based on population growth.

Population increases

Team generation rates based on future population to Halton as a whole suggest there is not sufficient enough growth to create any additional demand. This being said, there is some anticipated growth within the Junior Boys (12-18) age group albeit this does not amount to one full team and will likely be amalgamated into current levels of participation across the multiple clubs in the Borough.

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Table 7.6: Team generation rates (Borough wide)

Rugby league						
Age group	Current population within age group (2018)	Current number of teams	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group (2037)	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Men's (19-45)	20,427	8	1:2,553	19,879	7.8	0
Senior Women (19-45)	21,555	0	0	20,462	0.0	0
Junior Boys (12-18)	5,355	12	1:446	5,648	12.7	0
Junior Girls (12-18)	5,191	2	1:2,596	5,216	2.0	0
Primary rugby mixed (7-11)	8,511	20	1:426	7,446	17.5	0

It is important to note that team generation rates are based on population figures and cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives, such as social rugby or coaching within schools, or the forthcoming Rugby League World Cup.

Social Rugby

Consultation with the RFL anticipates a growth in participation through social rugby programmes above those suggested by TGRs. The RFL is expanding formats such as Touch Rugby, Primary Rugby, Tag Rugby, X League and Masters Rugby as a method to increase levels of demand above those associated with affiliated clubs. It anticipates that this demand will assist in the growth of the clubs within Halton however at this stage it is difficult to quantify.

Rugby League World Cup 2021

The Rugby League World Cup is set to take place in 2021 between Saturday 23rd October and Saturday 27th November. This to date (December 2020) has not yet been affected by the Pandemic and will historically have men's, women's and wheelchair tournaments taking place at the same time. In total there will be 61 matches played across venues in Bolton, Coventry, Doncaster, Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Preston, Sheffield, St Helens, Tees Valley, Trafford, Warrington, Wigan & Leigh and York.

Following the World Cup, the RFL plans to identify opportunities for investment and facility development through the Rugby League World Cup 'Inspired by 2021' Legacy Programme. This comprises of three key strands; volunteers, facilities and community engagement and will look to use the tournament as a catalyst to develop the game.

It is currently unknown what impact this will have for participation within Halton; however, it is anticipated that it will only be positive in growing the sport within the Authority.

Participation increases

Three clubs intend to increase their number of teams for next season. This is summarised in the table below. However, where clubs do not presently have access to primary pitch provision it is considered that primary teams will play on senior or junior pitches currently accessed and as such will require only half of a senior/junior pitch, equating to 0.25 match equivalent sessions per week.

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Table 7.7: Summary of future demand reported by clubs

Rugby league				
Club	Future demand	Pitch type	Analysis area	Match equivalent sessions per week
Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC	Two primary teams	Senior	Widnes	0.5
Runcorn ARLFC	One senior men's team	Senior	Runcorn	0.5
West Bank Bears ARLFC	One junior boys' team	Senior	Widnes	0.5
	One primary team	Senior	Widnes	0.25
Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	One primary team	Senior	Widnes	0.25

The peak period

In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established. For senior rugby league matches the peak period is considered to be Saturday afternoon as all senior teams play at this time. In comparison peak period for junior and mini rugby league teams is Sunday AM.

School pitches are used regularly to accommodate curricular use and school training sessions and matches. In order to reflect this, an additional one match equivalent session per week of play has been added per pitch at school sites where applicable (shown in bold) in Table 7.10 below.

7.4: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the overall spare capacity in each of the analysis areas for the different pitch types, based on match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 7.8: Supply/demand balance of senior pitches at senior peak time

Rugby league					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Demand (Match Equivalent Sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total demand
Runcorn	-	-		0.5	0.5
Widnes	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
Total	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	1

The table above shows that currently senior rugby league pitches across Halton are marginally overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. However, when accounting for future demand of one senior men's team from Runcorn ARLFC, this shortfall increases to one match equivalent session.

In comparison, the table overleaf examines the supply and demand analysis of junior rugby league pitches within Halton. This includes future demand generated from club aspirations with one junior team represented as 0.5 match equivalent sessions and one mini team as 0.25 match equivalent sessions (on account of them requiring less pitch space).

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Table 7.9: Supply/demand balance of junior pitches at junior peak time

Rugby league					
Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Demand (Match Equivalent Sessions)			
		Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total demand
Runcorn	-	-		-	
Widnes	-	5.25	5.25	1.5 ²⁶	6.75
Total	-	5.25	5.25	1.5	6.75

The current picture for junior pitches across Halton indicates an overall shortfall of 5.25 match equivalent sessions, all generated from the Widnes Analysis Area. When accounting for future demand, the Analysis Area and Borough-wide shortfall increases to 6.75 match equivalent sessions per week.

7.5: 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 affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of the pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

As a guide, The RFL has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its current quality (pitch capacity). Taking into consideration the guidelines on capacity the following was concluded in the Borough:

Rugby league	
Pitch quality	Match equivalent sessions (MES) per week
Good	3
Standard	2
Poor	1

Table 7.10 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play recorded 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

The next step is to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'actual capacity'. There may 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 regularly 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.

For senior and youth teams, the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 match equivalent sessions (MES) per week 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, play

²⁶ This equates to one junior team (0.5 match equivalent sessions) and four mini teams (one match equivalent session).

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per week is set at 0.25 MES per week for each match played across half of one senior/junior pitch, based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis.

Actual spare capacity

To determine 'actual spare capacity', each site with 'potential capacity' 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.

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.

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Table 7.10: Rugby league pitch provision and level of current use within Halton

Rugby league													
Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Security of tenure	Community use	Pitch type	Floodlit	Quality rating	Number of pitches	Current competitive demand (MES per week)	Current training demand (MES per week)	Site capacity (MES per week)	Capacity rating (MES per week)	Comments
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	Widnes	Unsecure	Yes-unused	Senior	No	Standard	1	1	-	2	1	Potential spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
27	King George V Playing Fields	Widnes	Unsecure	Yes	Senior	No	Standard	1	0.5	1	2	0.5	Potential spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Unsecure	Yes	Senior	No	Poor	2	1.5	0.5	2		Pitches are considered played to capacity.
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Unsecure	Yes	Junior	No	Poor	2	3	-	2	1	Pitches are overplayed by one match equivalent session.
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	Unsecure	No	Senior	No	Poor	1	1	-	1		Pitch is not available for community use and considered played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular demand.
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Unsecure	Yes	Senior	No	Poor	1	0.5	0.5	1		Pitch is considered played to capacity through competitive and training demand.
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	Unsecure	Yes	Senior	No	Standard	2	2	-	4	2	Potential spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	Unsecure	Yes	Senior	No	Poor	3	3	-	3		Pitches are considered played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular demand.
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Secure	Yes	Senior	No	Standard	1	1.5	1	2	0.5	Pitch is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions.
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Secure	Yes	Junior	No	Standard	5	8	4	10	2	Pitches are overplayed by two match equivalent sessions.
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	Secure	Yes	Senior	Yes	Standard	1	1	1	2		Pitch is considered played to capacity through competitive and training demand.
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	Secure	Yes	Junior	Yes	Standard	1	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	Pitch is overplayed by 2.25 match equivalent sessions from competitive and training demand.

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Spare capacity

A number of sites are shown to have potential spare capacity, however, across Halton, no rugby league pitches have any actual spare capacity at peak time. This is due to pitches either being played to capacity at peak time or spare capacity being discounted due to unsecure tenure.

Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it is able to sustain, which can often be due to the low carrying capacity of pitches.

In total across Halton only three sites are overplayed. This equates to 5.75 match equivalent sessions all located in the Widnes Analysis Area. This is predominantly a result of training and competitive demand taking place on the pitch.

Table 7.11: Overplay summary

Rugby league				
Site ID	Site name	Analysis Area	Pitch Type	Overplay (match equivalent sessions per week)
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Junior	-1
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Senior	-0.5
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Junior	-2
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	Junior	-2.25
Total				-5.75

Overplay can only be alleviated by improving pitch quality or providing more pitches or areas to be used for training. Potential options on how overplay can be alleviate will be examined in greater detail in the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan.

Rugby league –supply and demand (2019) summary

- ◀ Currently senior rugby league pitches across Halton are marginally overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. However, when accounting for future demand of one senior men's team from Runcorn ARLFC, this shortfall increases to one match equivalent session.
- ◀ The current picture for junior pitches across Halton indicates an overall shortfall of 5.25 match equivalent sessions, all generated from the Widnes Analysis Area. When accounting for future demand, the Analysis Area and Borough-wide shortfall increases to 6.75 match equivalent sessions per week.

Rugby league – supply summary

- ◀ In Halton, the audit identifies a total of 21 grass rugby league pitches (13 senior and eight junior) across nine sites. All but one of these pitches (a senior pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy) are available for community use.
- ◀ There was previous rugby league provision at Parklands Sports Club and Leigh Recreation Playing Fields
- ◀ Site ownership is varied between clubs renting a site from a wider sports club (or a sports and social club) and clubs which rent or lease pitches from the Council.
- ◀ In Halton, 57% (12) of all pitches are of standard quality with the remaining 43% rated as poor (nine pitches). There are no good quality pitches in the Borough.
- ◀ Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC is the only club through consultation that indicates issues with ancillary provision.

Rugby league– demand summary (2019)

- ◀ There is a total of 42 competitive rugby league teams playing in Borough, including the three teams from semi professional club Widnes Vikings ARLFC.
- ◀ Of the six community clubs within Halton, two (Halton Farnworth ARLFC and West Bank Bear ARLFC) report that they would be able to have more teams if they had access to more pitches.
- ◀ Three clubs intend to increase their number of teams for next season.

PART 8: OTHER SPORTS

8.1: American football

The British American Football Association (BAFA) is the National Governing Body for the sport of American football in Great Britain and is responsible for all regulatory, competition, performance and development aspects of the game.

Halton Spartans is the only known club based in Halton. Consultation attempts were made; however, the Club was non-responsive. Therefore, information to inform this study was gathered from online research, where possible.

The Club has one team that currently competes in the BAFA NFL NFC 1 South and plays out of the DCBL Stadium Halton (Widnes). It plays its competitive fixtures on Sundays afternoons and trains on the 3G pitch midweek. For more information regarding the provision at this site please see Part 3: Third Generation Turf (3G) Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs).

With demand for American Football likely to be limited in Halton, it is considered that Halton Spartans can accommodate all demand for the sport across the Authority. This is especially the case given that it accesses 3G provision, meaning capacity issues are less likely.

8.2: Baseball

Baseball Softball UK (BSUK) is the development agency for baseball and softball in the United Kingdom. Since 2000, BSUK has provided services to the sports' governing bodies, the British Baseball Federation (BBF) and British Softball Federation (BSF) with the aim of developing and increasing the levels of participation, skill and achievement in baseball and softball. This occurs at both junior and adult levels, from school and grassroots through to domestic adult clubs up to the Great Britain national teams. A baseball season typically operates between April to September in England.

In November 2019, Halton Baseball Club merged with Trojans Baseball Club, after years of declining membership. Before its merger, Trojans Baseball Club had two teams based within Liverpool although due to Covid-19 it did not host any matches in 2020. For the upcoming 2021 season, in addition to its two teams, it reports plans to host baseball within Halton, under the name of Halton Trojans. This team will be based at John Mills Ballpark, which was used by Halton Baseball Club prior to the merger.

Since the merger, Trojans Baseball Club has taken on the previous lease of the site, which was previously between Halton Baseball Club and the Council although anecdotal evidence suggests that it only has a few years remaining on it. By agreeing to take on the lease, the Club settled all the outstanding costs owed by Halton Baseball Club. Trojans reports that it has plans to extend this lease when needed.

The Club also reports that the current diamond on the site is poor quality having been used sparingly over the previous couple of years. It therefore indicates that it will need to invest in the site to improve its quality and safety before it can be used.

The Club indicates that it expects the site will be used on Sundays by Halton Trojans and has expectations that the site will eventually be used for training and maybe a fourth team as demand increases.

With the above taken into consideration, it is considered that Trojans Baseball Club can accommodate all demand for the sport across the Borough although there maybe some investment required at the site to ensure that quality is suitable.

Other sports –supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is considered to be suitable amounts of provision to meet current and future levels of demand for both American Football and Baseball demand in Halton.
- ◀ This being said there is a need to improve the quality of the Baseball diamond at John Mills Ballpark.

Other sports – supply summary

- ◀ Halton Spartans American Football Club access the 3G pitch at DCBL Stadium to meet its demand requirements. Information regarding this pitch is within Part 3: Third Generation Turf (3G) Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs).
- ◀ Trojans Baseball Club reports that the current diamond at John Mills Ballpark is poor quality having been used sparingly over the previous couple of years. It therefore indicates that it will need to invest in the site to improve its quality and safety before it can be used.

Other sports– demand summary

- ◀ Trojans Baseball Club had two teams based within Liverpool although due to Covid-19 it did not host any matches in 2020. For the upcoming 2021 season, in addition to its two teams, it reports plans to host baseball within Halton, under the name of Halton Trojans. This team will be based at John Mills Ballpark, which was used by Halton Baseball Club prior to the merger.
- ◀ Halton Spartans has one team that currently competes in the BAFA NFL NFC 1 South.

APPENDIX 1: SPORTING CONTEXT

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

National context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

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.

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

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

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

The FA National 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"*

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£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.

Local Football Facility Plans

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

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

It is important to recognise that a 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. Therefore, it cannot be used as a replacement for a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and it will not be accepted as an 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 and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

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The FA: National Game Strategy (2018-2021)

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

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

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

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

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

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Inspiring Generations (2020-2024)

The England and Wales Cricket Board unveiled a new strategic plan in 2019. The strategic plan aims to connect communities and improve lives by inspiring people to discover and share their passion for cricket

The plan sets out six important priorities and activities, these are:

- ◀ ***Grow and nurture the core***
 - ◀ Create an infrastructure investment fund for First Class County Clubs (FCCs)
 - ◀ Introduce a new Community Investment Funding for FCCs and County Cricket Boards (CCBs)
 - ◀ Invest in club facilities
 - ◀ Develop the role of National Counties Cricket
 - ◀ Further invest in County Competitions
- ◀ ***Inspire through elite teams***
 - ◀ Increase investment in the county talent pathway
 - ◀ Incentivise the counties to develop England Players
 - ◀ Drive the performance system through technology and innovation
 - ◀ Create heroes and connect them with a new generation of fans
- ◀ ***Make cricket accessible***
 - ◀ Broaden crickets appeal through the New Competition
 - ◀ Create a new digital community for cricket
 - ◀ Install non-traditional playing facilities in urban areas
 - ◀ Continue to deliver South Asian Action Plans
 - ◀ Launch a new participation product, linked to the New Competition

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- ◀ **Engage children and young people**
 - ◀ Double cricket participation in primary schools
 - ◀ Deliver a compelling and coordinated recreational playing offer from age five upwards
 - ◀ Develop our safeguarding to promote safe spaces for children and young people
- ◀ **Transform women's and girls' cricket**
 - ◀ Grow the base through participation and facilities investment
 - ◀ Launch centres of excellence and a new elite domestic structure
 - ◀ Invest in girls' county age group cricket
 - ◀ Deliver a girls' secondary school programme
- ◀ **Support our communities**
 - ◀ Double the number of volunteers in the game
 - ◀ Create a game-wide approach to Trust and Foundations through the cricket network
 - ◀ Develop a new wave of officials and community coaches
 - ◀ Increase participation in disability cricket

The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

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

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

- ◀ Improve player transition from age grade to adult 15-a-side rugby
- ◀ Expand places to play through Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)
- ◀ Engage new communities in rugby
- ◀ Create a community 7's offering

The Rugby Football League Facility Strategy

The RFL's Facilities Strategy was published in 2011. The following themes have been prioritised:

- ◀ Clean, Dry, Safe & Playable
- ◀ Sustainable clubs
- ◀ Environmental Sustainability
- ◀ Geographical Spread
- ◀ Non-club Facilities

The RFL Facilities Trust website www.rflfacilitiestrust.co.uk provides further information on:

- ◀ The RFL Community Facility Strategy
- ◀ Clean, Dry, Safe and Playable Programme
- ◀ Pitch Size Guidance

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- ◀ The RFL Performance Standard for Artificial Grass Pitches
- ◀ Club guidance on the Annual Preparation and Maintenance of the Rugby League Pitch

Further to the 2011 Strategy detail on the following specific programmes of particular relevance to pitches and facility planning are listed below and can be found via the trust link (see above):

- ◀ The RFL Pitch Improvement Programme 2013 – 2017
- ◀ Clean, Dry and Safe programmes 2013 - 2017

Rugby League World Cup ‘Inspired by 2021’ Legacy Programme

The Rugby League World Cup 2021 will develop a £10 million legacy programme with funds driven into local clubs and community projects. The government investment, delivered by Sport England, is part of RLWC 2021’s ambitious plan to grow the sport and make it more visible, engaging and welcoming to current and potential participants.

The funding will be split into large transformational community projects, such as changing room improvements and new artificial grass pitches with the remaining funding used for smaller scale initiatives such as supplying new kit and equipment to promote club and community development. The investment will focus on the following four key areas:

- ◀ Creating welcoming environments
- ◀ Encouraging participation growth
- ◀ Building community engagement
- ◀ Cultivating further investment

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

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

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

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

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

The core objectives are as follows:

1. Grow our Participation
2. Deliver International Success

3. Increase our Visibility
4. Enhance our Infrastructure
5. For England Hockey to be proud and respected custodians of the sport

Club participation

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

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

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

England Hockey Strategy

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found [here](#).

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

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

The 3 main objectives of the facilities strategy are:

1. PROTECT: To conserve the existing hockey provision

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

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

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

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

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

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APPENDIX 2: NON TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT SHEETS

Grass football pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Football							
Please complete one form per pitch							
Site reference:				Site Name:			
6 figure grid reference				Pitch ID(s):			
Number of football pitches on site:				Pitch size:	(Adult 11v11, Youth 11v11, 9v9, 7v7 Mini, 5v5, 7v7)		
Availability				Are any other pitches marked out over this pitch?	<input type="checkbox"/>		
				<i>If yes, please indicate what pitches are overmarked? (i.e. one youth pitch is overmarked on a adult pitch) in Pitch Issues</i>			
Weather at time of visit & date of visit							
Pitch Issues:							
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)							
Element (Gathered via a non technical site assessment)	Rating					Guidance notes	Comments
Playing surface							
Grass Cover	Good >80%		Adequate 60-80%		Poor <60%		Advice is to walk through the middle of the pitch
Does the pitch meet The FA minimum size?	Yes - as per the FA recommended size		Within FA recommended guidelines		No		See size chart below for recommended dimensions
Slope of pitch (gradient and cross fall)	Flat		Moderate		Severe		
Length of grass	Good		Too long		Too short		Good 30mm-50mm, Too long 51mm plus, Too short 29mm less
Evenness of pitch	Good		Adequate		Poor		
Problem Areas: Evidence of dog fouling/glass/litter/vehicle tracks	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Problem Areas: Evidence of unofficial use/damage to the surface	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Problem Areas: Evidence of poor drainage	No evidence of standing water or poor drainage		Some evidence of poor drainage		Yes, poor drainage		
Maintenance programme (information from maintenance schedule/grounds team/club survey)							Section total
Grass cutting	Yes, as required		Yes, but not frequent enough		No		
Seeded	Yes, as required		Not known		No		
Aerated (per year)	Three or more times		Once/ twice		No		
Sand dressed	Within the last 12 months		Within the last 2 years		No		
Fertilised	Within the last 12 months		Within the last 2 years		No		
Weed killed	Within the last 12 months		Within the last 2 years		No		
							Section total
NB If none of this information is provided you should assume that only the grass is being cut and the rest of the maintenance items should be marked with the lowest score option.							
PITCH SCORE				0.0%	RATING		Poor

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Rugby pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Rugby Union										
Please complete one form per pitch										
Site reference				Site Name						
6 figure grid reference				Pitch ID(s)						
Date of assessment				Pitch size	(Senior, Mini/Midi)					
Number of pitches on site				Are any other pitches marked out over this pitch?						
Availability				<i>If yes, please indicate what pitches are overmarked? (i.e. one mini/ midi pitch is overmarked on a senior pitch) in Pitch Issues</i>						
<small>Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused</small>										
Weather at time of visit										
General comments/observations										
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)										
Qualitative information (gathered on site)	Rating					Guidance notes	Comments			
Grass Coverage	Good		Adequate		Poor		>90% = good. <80% = poor			
Size of pitch	Acceptable (between recommended minimum and maximum sizes)		Flag for further investigation (below recommended minimum size)		Unacceptable (above maximum size)		Maximum size = width 70m, goal line to goal line 100m, in goal area 22m, run offs 5m where practical. Recommended minimum size = width 68m, goal line to goal line 94m, in goal area 6m, run offs 5m where practical.			
Length of grass	Too Long		Good		Too short		Too long = >75mm. Too short = <50mm			
Problem Areas: Evidence of glass/litter/vehicle tracks/dog fouling	None		Yes - some		Yes lots					
GOALPOSTS										
Are goalposts installed?	Yes		No							
Is there any obvious danger on posts?	Yes		No							
Are the posts stable in the ground?	Yes		No							
Is the crossbar fixed securely?	Yes		No							
Is there evidence of rust on the posts?	Yes		No							
ANCILLARY										
Is the pitch floodlit?	Yes		No							
Is there changing accommodation for the pitch?	Yes		No							
Is an appropriate level of car parking available?	Yes		No							
Pitch maintenance (information gathered via club survey/ pitch provider consultation) - refer to the guidance notes below										
Aerated (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Sand dressed (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Fertilised (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Weed killed (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Chain harrowed	every week		fortnightly		monthly		never			
							Pitch Maintenance Score			
Drainage	Natural (inadequate) SCORE D0		Natural (adequate) SCORE D1		Pipe drained SCORE D2		Pipe and slit drained SCORE D3		Unknown SCORE D0	Natural (adequate) = 3 or less training/match cancellations per season Natural (inadequate) = 4 or more training match cancellations per season *Based on a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the previous eight years **Based on a slit drained system at 1m centres completed in the previous five years.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH ASSESSMENT

Artificial grass pitches non-technical assessment (including third generation turf pitches)

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Artificial grass pitches									
Site reference			Site Name						
6 figure grid reference			Pitch ID						
Number of AGPs on site			Pitch size	Full (i.e., 100m x 60m)			Half (i.e., 60m x 40m)		
Availability			Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused						
Type of pitch	Long Pile 3G (65mm with shock pad)		Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)		Short Pile 3G (40mm)				
	Sand Dressed		Sand Filled		Water based				
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Element	Rating						Guidance notes	Site comments	
Age of Surface	less than 2 years		2-5 years		5-10 years		over 10 years		
Evidence of moss/lichen (all surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Loose gravel (macadam surface)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Holes or rips in surface (macadam, art. grass or polymeric surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Grip underfoot	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Line markings - quality	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Problem Areas: Evidence of Glass/ stones/ litter	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of inappropriate use	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of damage to surface	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		If no evidence, assume none.		
Access for disabled players. i.e.: ramps onto courts, width of gates	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Condition of posts/ nets/ goals	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Surrounding fencing	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Adequate safety margins (w here appropriate)	Yes - fully		No- but adequate		No - not adequate				
Is the AGP floodlit?	Yes		No						
Is the AGP left open at all times?	Yes		No						
Are there dug outs?	Yes		No						
Are there youth shelters/spectator seating around AGP?	Yes		No						
Is there changing accommodation for the AGP?	Yes		No						
Maximum score	93	Scoring:	Poor <=50	Standard 51-79	Good 80+	Total Score	0	Potential Rating	Poor