

Recreation Strategy: Executive Summary

This study provides a baseline of the number of playing pitches at open space sites within the District of North Norfolk as part of the comprehensive audit. The findings of the site assessments were verified with results drawn from a Pitch Sports Club Survey and Schools Survey to ensure that the assessment of pitch capacity within the District was as accurate as possible.

North Norfolk compares well when compared to the equivalent national figures for pitch provision per adult population with pitches distributed widely across the District amongst its villages and towns. The distribution and area of pitches per ward is uneven, with an overall area of 1.6ha per 1,000 population. This figure is exceeded in a number of wards including Priory, Glaven Valley, North Walsham West, Holt and Lancaster North.

Playing pitch quality assessment showed that all pitches in secure community use reached an overall quality standard of “good”.

To provide an in depth assessment of local playing pitch needs, an assessment following the Sport England Playing Pitch Model was undertaken. As a benchmark, the demand for pitch sports was assessed by applying National Participation Rates to the North Norfolk population. All sports showed a lower participation rate than national levels with reduced participation for future years to 2016.

The demand assessments for each for the pitch sports identified football as the most popular of the sports played in North Norfolk, with 54 senior teams playing home games within the District. This demand was translated into a number of home games per week for each of the sports and an assessment of temporal demand provided.

This assessment identified that capacity exists for additional adult football and rugby matches per week on full sized pitches even when peak demand and utilisation for mini football is considered. There is a relatively low level of pitch availability for cricket pitches which is further reduced when considering latent and potential demand. Whilst overall capacity exists on competitive hockey pitches (artificial turf pitches), on peak days there is no additional capacity.

The demographic profile of the District, socio-economic structure, gender differences, working hours are all likely to influence participation in sports in North Norfolk. A residents' survey undertaken as part of this study indicated that a lack of interest and health reasons were the strongest reasons for suppressing demand and participation. Calculated team generation rates also demonstrate that the highest latent demand is for hockey, especially senior hockey and high levels of latent demand exist for all women's sports.

Additional pitch requirements for cricket, hockey and mini football have been identified from this assessment, which includes the need for a strategic reserve. A standard of 1.90 ha per 1,000 population has been calculated taking into account existing provision, accessibility and future requirements.

Demand, supply and future provision of other sports (indoor and outdoor) has also been assessed. Using the Sports Facility Calculator to calculate needs for swimming pools, sports halls and indoor bowls, it has been assessed that existing provision meets the needs of the population of North Norfolk now and in the future to 2016 taking into account projected demographic change. The provision of the swimming

pools and sports halls in the District is however limited somewhat by the fact that many such facilities are dual-use, being available to the community only outside school hours, and does not consider their age and condition. Previous condition surveys undertaken by the Council demonstrated that investment was necessary to ensure these facilities remained available for public use in a satisfactory standard. 16% of residents indicated that a better range and improvements to existing facilities would encourage use of indoor leisure facilities.

Access to such facilities is also a significant issue in North Norfolk given its rural and dispersed nature. Improvements to access to sports hall and swimming pool provision were identified in a number of areas, which should be given priority for future investment.

Other important sports improvements identified as being necessary in the future were the need for a further all weather training pitch within the District (Fakenham being the preferred location expressed by hockey clubs).

Tennis, archery and outdoor bowls are anticipated to grow in numbers over the future years. Perhaps as important in the District is the maintenance and improvement of the quality of beaches, countryside and bridleways within the District which provide opportunities for a wide range of informal and organised sports including horse riding.

In order to enhance the assessment undertaken within the scope of this study, opportunities for further work have been identified, including: future regular club surveys to monitor pitch use; development and application of appropriate standards within the Local Development Framework; and the adoption of revised supplementary planning documents to provide more detailed guidance on developer contributions relating to indoor and outdoor sports.