

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

OPEN SPACES AND SPORTS FACILITIES ASSESSMENT
TECHNICAL STUDY (SEPTEMBER 2017)

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report summarises the findings of the Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment Technical Study (September 2017) and seeks agreement to use the Assessment to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and to inform Development Management decisions.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL:</u> That Council, via the Executive, be advised that:	
(A)	Parts 1 to 3 of the Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment Technical Study (September 2017), be approved as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan;
(B)	Parts 1 to 3 of the Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment Technical Study (September 2017), be approved to inform Development Management decisions;
(C)	the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to agree Part 4 of the Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment Technical Study (September 2017), as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and
(D)	the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to agree Part 4 of the Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment Technical Study (September 2017), to inform Development Management decisions.

1.0 Background

1.1 Open space, sports, play and recreation facilities are important in enhancing people's quality of life. They also perform wider health and wellbeing functions, helping to build inclusive communities, and promoting healthy lifestyles. As such, it is important that new developments make provision for new facilities for recreation and physical activity, and where possible, existing facilities are improved and enhanced.

1.2 In order to understand the potential implications of the growth associated with the proposed District Plan on demands for such facilities, the Council commissioned this assessment. The Open Spaces and Sports Facilities Assessment (August 2017) comprises four separate reports plus appendices:

- Part 1 – Background and Context
- Part 2 – Built Facilities Strategy
- Part 2 – Appendices
- Part 3 – Playing Pitch Strategy
- Part 3 – Appendices
- Part 4 – Open Spaces Audit and Assessment
- Part 4 – Appendices

1.3 Part 4 of the Assessment; the Open Spaces Audit and Assessment is yet to be complete. This report therefore contains only the recommended standards arising from the assessment which have been agreed with officers. The final Assessment report will therefore be agreed in consultation with the Head of Planning and the Leader of the Council.

2.0 Report

2.1 Sport England was engaged in the initial brief preparation and has been involved throughout the project as a member of the Steering Group. As such, the Study comprises a very comprehensive assessment of existing facilities, playing pitches and open spaces, and is in full conformity with the guidance set out by Sport England.

2.2 Officers of the Leisure and Environment teams were also engaged throughout the project, ensuring that the Study will provide a useful evidence base for a number of Council roles and projects. The consultants engaged on the Leisure Strategy work,

Max Associates, were also consulted throughout the project, with some of the Leisure evidence on patronage and quality of built facilities informing this Study.

- 2.3 Part 1 of the Study comprises five sections, detailing the purpose of the Study, the policy framework behind the project, a precis of the character of the district, an update on the evidence available and strategies of neighbouring authorities and a summary.
- 2.4 Part 2 of the Study comprises the Built Facility Strategy. Made up of 13 sections it details the assessment process and methodology, discusses the existing leisure network, and provides detailed assessments for the following facilities:
- Sports Halls
 - Swimming Pools
 - Health and Fitness
 - Athletics
 - Indoor and Outdoor Bowls
 - Tennis
 - Squash
 - Gymnastics
 - Village and Community Halls
 - Other sport and recreation activities
- 2.5 Section 13 focuses on delivering the strategy. This section discusses ways of maximising health and wellbeing outcomes, maximising cost-effectiveness and working across authority boundaries. The section also discusses different ways of securing sport provision through development, such as Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 Agreements. The Strategy makes recommendations on different scenarios and approaches regarding phasing of development and timing of provision. Figure 48 sets out the standards for built facilities that should be applied when calculating contributions arising from new housing developments, replicated below. The table also indicates that for the four largest proposed developments there is a specific need for multi-purpose community halls:

Figure 48: Provision Guide for New Housing Developments

<i>Facility type</i>	<i>Quantity per 1,000 population</i>	<i>Accessibility</i>	<i>Quality</i>
<i>Sports Halls</i>	0.29 badminton courts fully available at peak time	20 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body guidance
<i>Swimming Pools</i>	11.31 sq m water space fully available at peak time	20 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body guidance
<i>Fitness Facilities (Stations)</i>	7.17 stations fully available at peak time	15 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England guidance
<i>Fitness Facilities (Studios)</i>	0.13 studios fully available at peak time	15 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England guidance
<i>Outdoor Bowls</i>	0.59 rinks per 1,000 provided as 6-rink green	15 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body guidance
<i>Outdoor Tennis Courts</i>	0.32 courts per 1,000 available at all times	10 minutes by car	Design and quality to meet Sport England or the relevant national governing body guidance
<i>Multi-Purpose Community Halls</i>			
Gilston Area:	A facility with a minimum internal area of 780 sq m	800 m walk	Design to be agreed with the Council
Bishop's Stortford South, North and East of Ware and East of Welwyn Garden City:	A facility with a minimum internal area of 530 sq m.	800 m walk	Design to be agreed with the Council

** Fully available at peak time means open to community use in the evenings and weekends*

2.6 Section 13 also contains recommended priorities for action, with a project list derived from the needs evidence and discussion with stakeholders. These projects could be delivered through development or through the combination of other programmes and strategies, including cross-boundary planning. The ongoing assessment of the deliverability of these projects should form part of a rolling programme, with alternatives identified if necessary. The next stage of the strategy work will be the testing of these projects through feasibility assessments, working with delivery partners and detailed costing and business planning. Figure 49 of the Strategy sets the recommended priorities for the short term (see page 203 of the Strategy). Figure 50 places some indicative costs against the recommended projects identified in Figure 49 (see page 2013 of the Strategy). Figure 51 provides an overview of all the key facilities in the district which brings together the recommendations of the Strategy using a rating system of Protect, Enhance or Provide.

2.7 The appendices for the Built Facility Strategy comprise:

- Appendix 1: the Facility Capacity Assessment Methodology arranged by facility type; and an explanation of 'peak periods' for participation and use of facilities.
- Appendix 2: comprises a copy of the Community Scrutiny Committee report on the Leisure Task and Finish Group, which outlines the issues, options and risks for joint use and sites wholly owned by the Council.
- Appendix 3: an extract of Sport England's Sports Halls Design Guidance
- Appendix 4: an Assessment of Community and Ancillary Halls in East Herts
- Appendix 5: a summary of sports development ambitions for England Netball
- Appendix 6: an audit of netball club facilities
- Appendix 7: a worked example of the East Herts Contributions Assessment Calculator which references the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator

2.8 Part 3 of the Assessment is the Playing Pitch Strategy. This part comprises the assessment of outdoor pitches, some of which are strategic in nature:

- Adult grass football pitches
- Youth grass 11v11 football pitches
- Youth grass 9v9 football pitches
- Mini-soccer grass 7v7 football pitches
- Mini-soccer grass 5v5 football pitches
- '3G' football turf pitches
- Grass and artificial turf cricket pitches
- Grass rugby pitches
- Artificial Grass Pitches for hockey

2.9 The Strategy looks at the current use and capacity of pitches and considers the impacts of additional demands arising from new population participation to determine the need for new pitches. To identify localised issues, a sub-area analysis based on Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs) clustered around the main towns and service centres in the district is used (see Figure 1 of the Playing Pitch Strategy).

2.10 In addition to taking into account population growth, the Strategy also considers the priorities and programmes of key stakeholders including the Council's Leisure Services department, governing bodies of pitch sports, Hertfordshire Sports Partnership, local sports clubs and pitch providers, local schools, league secretaries, neighbouring authorities and Sport England.

2.11 Section 2 considers the football pitches needs in the district. Participation in football is extremely high in East Herts, particularly in Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Ware. As such, many pitches are over-played or have limited capacity to absorb additional demands. The demands of larger clubs can displace smaller clubs from their local pitch, having a negative impact on rural participation. Lack of available pitches is considered to be the greatest barrier preventing increased participation. The national and local drive to increase youth and female participation in football is often hampered by a lack of suitable changing facilities. Another key barrier to participation is the lack of community access to many school pitches, which could make a significant contribution towards meeting the demands of youth and mini-soccer. Similarly, continued use of school pitches is not a guarantee, therefore an alternative form of supply also needs to be considered. Existing unmet and latent demand results in a deficit of 11.83ha of grass pitches and 9.52 '3G' pitches. With additional population growth, the demand for new grass pitches rises to 41.96 ha, while the additional demand for 3.07 new '3G' pitches brings the total demand to 12.59 '3G' pitches (11.64 ha).

- 2.12 Demand for '3G' football turf pitches outstrip supply. '3G' pitches have the ability to accommodate a greater number of matches compared to traditional grass pitches and can be accommodated on far smaller sites. However, they are more expensive as a facility and often require security features and floodlighting, which are often constraints within rural areas or near to residential properties.
- 2.13 The Strategy sets out a series of recommendations for securing additional accessible and secured pitch capacity using the 'Protect', 'Enhance' and 'Provide' approach. The key recommendations are to safeguard existing provision, secure community access to school pitches, increase capacity on existing pitches through ancillary facilities or pitch enhancements (including the conversion of adult to youth/mini-soccer pitches), using developer contributions to enhance or provide new facilities, to invest in the creation of strategic hub sites including '3G' and grass pitches, and invest in the creation of new '3G' opportunities through developments. These recommendations are then illustrated in proposed Action Plans arranged by sub-area (see page 84 and Figures 123 to 128).
- 2.14 Section 3 considers the cricket pitch needs in the district. The Strategy found that all cricket clubs and teams are currently able to accommodate their needs using facilities in the district, with some imported demand, with Knebworth Park Cricket Club playing some 'home' fixtures at Aston cricket Ground. However, all clubs identified that lack of pitches are an impediment to growth resulting in unmet and latent demand. Coupled with the demands arising from new development across the district, there will be a need for an additional 7.25 pitches. As with football, the Strategy sets out a series of 'Protect', 'Enhance' and 'Provide' recommendations, a list of key strategic actions and site-specific actions (see page 125 and Figures 177 to 182).
- 2.15 Section 4 of the Strategy considers the rugby pitch needs in East Herts. A lack of training pitches and changing facilities are cited as issues by clubs, which are preventing a growth in participation. Unmet and latent demand in addition to population growth will result in a need for 10.75 additional adult pitches. When added to the current identified deficit of 6.25 match equivalents, there is a need for an additional 14.25 rugby pitches. The Strategy sets out a series of 'Protect', 'Enhance' and 'Provide' recommendations

along with an action plan for each club and for each strategic development site (see page 153 and Figure 208).

- 2.16 Section 5 considers Hockey pitch needs in the district. There are two hockey clubs in East Herts, though Harlow Hockey Club plays some of its games at Leventhorpe Academy in Sawbridgeworth. The clubs have cited that a lack of pitches is preventing an increase in participation. Lack of secure tenure is also a risk as all the hockey pitches are on school sites. Due to the lack of '3G' pitches in the district, several football clubs share the same pitches, preventing the full capacity of sites suitable for hockey being used for hockey. Expressed, unmet and latent demand in addition to residential growth will result in a need for 2.88 pitches. When adding the existing deficit, this rises to 3.04 pitches; two within the Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth sub area and one for the sub-area for Hertford, Ware and the rest of the district. The Strategy sets out a series of 'Protect', 'Enhance' and 'Provide' recommendations along with an action plan for each club and for each strategic development site (see page 179 and Figure 232).
- 2.17 Section 6 of the Strategy focuses on delivering the strategy. Various mechanisms for securing funding and delivery are discussed, including the need to consider cross-boundary contributions where there is an inter-relationship between imported and exported demand for particular sports. One example of this is where Harlow Hockey Club uses pitches in Sawbridgeworth, which could be met through a new facility provided through the Gilston Area development. This section also discusses the need to monitor the strategy regularly and makes suggestions as to some of the ways by which the delivery of the strategy could be taken forward. Options suggested include securing new or enhanced provision through development, through enabling (financially supporting) or facilitating projects managed by other delivery partners such as schools, sporting organisations and sport governing bodies for example. Furthermore, the Strategy recommends that the Council, in consultation with stakeholders should prepare a short-term action plan identifying priorities and actions for year one of the strategy delivery. This may need to be supported by further project-specific feasibility assessments.
- 2.18 The Playing Pitch Strategy includes one appendix; a worked example of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator supported by an explanation. This is useful for applicants and officers in calculating demand from developments and indicative costs.

- 2.19 Part 4 of the Assessment is the Open Spaces Audit and Assessment. This comprises an assessment of all the open spaces across the District that are not a formal playing pitch or built facility. The assessment therefore looks at the following types of spaces:
- Amenity Green Space
 - Parks and Gardens
 - Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space
 - Allotments
 - Cemeteries and Churchyards
 - Children and Young People
- 2.20 In total, 430 different sites were assessed. Each space is assessed against qualitative factors and given an overall score. As such, it is easy to see where minor improvements could be made which would raise the overall performance of a space, for example, the installation of signs and noticeboards can make a space more welcoming at relatively little cost. Each typology is also assessed against the current (2007 Local Plan) quantity and accessibility standards, grouped by settlement type and open space type.
- 2.21 The Assessment uses benchmark authorities and the Fields in Trust standards as a way of comparing quantity and accessibility standards in order to derive the standards recommended for East Herts. It is important to note that many spaces have overlapping functions which are not necessarily bound to one standard. Where possible, each function has been assessed and calculated separately. However, in acknowledgement of this multi-functionality, the standards for Amenity Green Space and Parks and Gardens are now combined into a single standard. The standards for Children's Play now reflects the Fields in Trust standard which differentiates between local areas for play and equipped areas for play. Table 1 overleaf shows the proposed standards for open spaces across the district.
- 2.22 The appendices for Part 4 comprise a series of large spreadsheets which contain all the site visit appraisals and their scores. A series of maps are also available.

Table 1: Proposed Open Space Standards

Open Space Typology	Existing Standards		Proposed standards		Number of sites assessed	Justification
	Quantity	Accessibility	Quantity	Accessibility		
Amenity Green Space	0.55ha	400m	1.4ha	480m	141	<p>The Fields in Trust (FiT) quantity standards for Parks and Gardens and Amenity Green Space have been combined, as there are many similarities between both typologies and a Park and Garden can also be considered as an Amenity Green Space.</p> <p>In addition, local residents are likely to favour the sites closest to them site irrespective of its classification.</p> <p>As there are only a small number of Parks and Gardens within the district, the existing quantity standard was only satisfied in a small number of the settlements.</p> <p>The accessibility for Amenity Green Spaces and Parks and Gardens have been updated based on the FiT standards.</p>
Parks and Gardens	0.53ha	800m		710m	8	
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	7.76ha	800m	3.4ha (for new development)	720m	75	<p>3.4ha is the current provision of Natural and Semi Natural Green Space (per 1000 people) within urban areas. As new development will be focused within these areas the updated standard will allow the current rate of provision to be maintained.</p> <p>The accessibility standard has been adjusted to match the Fields in Trust recommended standard.</p>
Allotments	0.21ha	4000m	0.21ha	1000m	47	<p>The existing accessibility standard of 4000m provided a near complete coverage of 'accessible' sites for the whole district. For the</p>

						<p>majority of rural settlements with an allotment, a 1000m accessibility will cover the entire area. As allotments are more important for residents within an urban area, the proposed 1000m accessibility will highlight any localised gaps in accessibility.</p> <p>The on site assessment highlighted some spare capacity in the majority of allotments, including those within urban areas. Therefore, it can be assumed that the current supply of allotments is well matched to existing demand. As new development should provide additional allotment space, combined with the spare capacity of existing sites the quantity standard of 0.21 ha per 1000 has been carried forward from the previous strategy.</p>
Children's Play	0.2ha	800m	<p>0.25ha (0.01 ha for a LAP 0.04ha for a LEAP 0.1ha for a NEAP)</p>	<p>LAPs – 100m LEAPs – 400m NEAPs – 1000m</p>	<p>104 Children's Play 48 Teenage Provision</p>	<p>The quantity and quality standards for Children's Play have been updated to reflect the Fields in Trust recommended standards.</p>
Cemeteries and Churchyards	No standard	No standard	No standard	No standard	7	
Total sites					430	

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

The Assessment and appendices are available to view on the Council's website: www.eastherts.gov.uk/evidencebase

- Part 1 – Background and Context
- Part 2 – Built Facilities Strategy
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