

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Assessment of East Herts Sports Facilities - Proposed Recommendations/ Aspirations

SUMMARY AND CONTEXT

This Assessment shows that East Herts is well served by a range of high quality, indoor and outdoor sports facilities. In general, residents are currently satisfied with the sports and active recreation facilities on offer.

East Herts Council recognises the physical, mental and social benefits of sport and physical recreation and aims to encourage and enable "sport for all" through stimulation of interest, creating awareness and facilitating access to an active, healthy lifestyle through the provision of sports facilities. The Council will work in partnership with schools, local sports facilities providers and the voluntary sports club network to provide and improve opportunities for everyone to participate in the sport and active recreation of their choice and attain their desired level of performance.

The following recommendations and long term aspirations take into account the following factors:

- The population in East Herts is predicted to increase from 128,919 to 145,000 (by 2016) or 153,000 by 2021 (an increase of 11% and 15% respectively). The "active" population is expected to increase by 6% by 2021.
- It is anticipated that there will be a 24% rise in people over 65 years old by 2021 and expectations are changing: significantly people increasingly want to have more control over their own lives and how their needs are met. Older people are getting "younger" physically and mentally and therefore they will still be active, possibly more active than younger people as they have more time and disposable income to spend on leisure and sport.
- Residents of East Herts are generally affluent with a good level of health and quality of life though there are pockets of deprivation.
- There are 5 main towns and a large dispersed rural area and differential accessibility to facilities.
- Access to school sports facilities by the community is limited.
- Access to sports facilities in neighbouring local authority areas is good; and there is some import and export of demand across boundaries to each others' sports facilities.
- Many of these factors combine to demonstrate that activity levels in sport in the district are higher than the national average. However, there is still less than

25% of the local population undertaking 30 minutes of exercise, three times a week, so participation could be improved – as per the new East Herts Public Health Action Plan.

- In terms of East Herts residents participation in sport, the condition of individual sports facilities has a higher than average impact on whether they are encouraged to take part. For those active in sport, improving performance is an important motivating factor.

ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS/ASPIRATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL SPORTS FACILITY TYPES

The recommendations identified in the next pages could be delivered by sports providers in the commercial, voluntary and/or public sector and are not the sole responsibility of any one sector or agency. The medium/long term recommendations are aspirations for the future and would be pursued only if external funding opportunities become available or if the Council's financial situation changes.

SPORTS HALLS (Chapter 5):

Key Issues from the Assessment - There are 11 main sports halls with 3+ courts, and a number of smaller halls, although some are on school and education sites and may not offer full community access at all times. According to Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator, anticipated demand from within the district is for about nine 4-court halls.

The level of satisfied demand for sports halls in East Herts is high, but there is a small amount of unmet demand in the Hertford area, which might justify one additional hall, though this would be likely to drag demand in from outside the district. In addition, four of the existing main sports halls are operating at capacity, and additional space could therefore be considered, either on these sites by increasing capacity, or refurbishment, or by improving community access to other halls on nearby school sites.

Current provision of sports halls relies on all existing halls being available in some degree to community use. Better use of school halls is required to maintain this level of provision at present, and avoid existing halls being overused. It is estimated that there is unmet demand for the provision of one additional 4-court hall in Hertford.

Future provision - on the basis of the desirable level of current provision, it is estimated that up to 2.5 additional halls would be needed in the period up to 2021.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. In the short term, there is demand for the development of a 4-court sports hall to meet the needs of Hertford, possibly on the basis of dual use with schools.
2. Retain and maintain the quality of the existing 'public' sports halls at Wodson Park Sports Centre in Ware, including ongoing maintenance and improvement to ensure continued community use and long term sustainability.
3. Maintain and improve community access to school sports halls throughout the district, using models of good practice for community use agreements.

4. Coordinated management and promotion of all halls throughout the district, possibly by the CSN, to ensure optimum availability for all different users, and support the appointment/identification of an organiser.
5. Establish a framework for the usage of all sports halls to ensure community use by the wider community, sports clubs, and other users, including defining particular halls for specialist use by clubs in a particular activity.
6. Ensure that all sports halls meet the needs of the widest range of users, including young people, women and the disabled by improved management and publicity.
7. Ensure that all sports halls are maintained and fit for purpose over the whole term of the strategy to 2021.
8. Work in partnership with Local Education Authority and local schools to ensure that any new sports hall – provided as part of a future schools investment programme – are planned and designed to meet community as well as school needs.
9. Plan for the specialist needs of individual sports when designing new or refurbished sports halls in consultation with sports national governing bodies in order to meet any sport specific or competition needs that are currently not being met.
10. Adopt Sport England design and technical guidance advice for quality standards for new sports halls.
11. In the medium/longer term, it is estimated that one additional larger (6 to 8 court) sports hall with full community access may be needed in the Bishops Stortford or a 4-court hall in the Buntingford area, depending on housing growth. This aspiration is dependent on external funding becoming available or a change in the Council's financial situation.

SWIMMING POOLS (Chapter 5)

Key Issues from the Assessment - There are 17 pools available in some measure to the wider community in East Herts, though only nine with four lanes or more. Of these, there are six main pay and play pools with 1750m² of water in the main pool, and a further three on school sites and mainly available for clubs and bookings with 750m² of water. If an allowance is made for pools not in secured community use, there is the equivalent of 2125m² or about 10 4-lane pools available for use in the district. Anticipated demand from within the district from Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator is for about six 4-lane pools.

The level of satisfied demand for swimming in East Herts is very high, and additional pools are not required for this reason. There is spare capacity overall and at all individual pools. No additional pools are required at the present time.

Future provision - on the basis of current provision and spare capacity at existing pools, it is unlikely that additional water space is required to meet increased population growth, even taking into account increased participation rates. However, there will be issues of quality and possibly accessibility by then, and some consideration will need to be given to these in the future.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Retain and maintain the availability and quality of the main 'public' pools at Hartham, Grange Paddocks, and joint provision pools - Fanshawe, Ward Freman and Leventhorpe.

2. Seek to secure appropriate community usage of schools and other pools in the district.
3. Ensure that all different demands for swimming – casual, teaching, training, life saving, competition are catered for throughout the district in a coordinated manner and establish a hierarchy of pools to deliver this.
4. Endeavour to coordinate the management and promotion of all pools throughout the district to ensure optimum availability for all different users. Taking measures to spread the peak demand for swimming so that existing supply can ‘fit’ the variety of different demands on time.
5. Endeavour to ensure that all swimming pools meet the needs of the widest range of users, including young people, women and the disabled by improved management and publicity.
6. Further investigate/consult on whether there is a need for a district Aquatics Strategy and organiser to promote the maximum and profitable usage of all pool space.
7. Work in partnership with the owners of the joint provision pools to maintain and, where appropriate, further develop the joint use pools at Fanshawe, Ward Freman and Leventhorpe, in the face of the continuing and possibly increasing demand for water space arising from development initiatives and population increases.

HEALTH AND FITNESS CENTRES (Chapter 5)

Key Issues from the Assessment - There are 895 health and fitness stations throughout East Herts, of which about 800 are available to the wider community either through Pay-as-You-Play access, sports club use or by registered membership.

In accordance with the guidelines of the Fitness Industry Association, an estimated demand from the current population of the district would require about 670 stations in the district. Despite the calculations above, demand and supply are therefore considered to be in broad balance, and additional centres are not considered necessary at the present time.

Future provision - on the basis of the desirable level of current provision, up to 130 additional stations might be required for community usage up to 2021.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Maintain the current level and mix of facilities in the district.
2. Maintain and improve where necessary the quality of facilities in the district.
3. Seek to ensure that all health and fitness centres meet the needs of the widest range of users, including young people, women and the disabled by improved management and publicity.
4. In the longer term, it is estimated that there may be a demand for two to three 50-station centres, in accessible locations throughout the district, preferably in conjunction with other sports and community facilities including sports halls (especially on schools sites), pools, artificial grass pitches and village/community halls, to ensure that all facilities are sustainable in financial terms. This aspiration is dependent on external funding becoming available or a change in the Council’s financial situation.

INDOOR BOWLS (Chapter 5)

Key Issues from the Assessment - There is no indoor bowls provision in East Herts. Despite the relatively good accessibility to facilities in neighbouring local authority areas, it would be appropriate to plan for the provision of new indoor bowls facilities in the district to bring local provision up to the county or national average, or in accordance with Sports England's Sports Facilities Calculator (based on the average participation rate at a national level.) It is not feasible, unless a local demand can be identified, to improve to the regional average which is very high. On this basis, the local population could justify 5 to 8 rinks, and this could be in two locations in the east and south of the district. Bowls is an activity especially popular in the 50 plus population.

Future provision - on the basis of the desirable level of current provision, up to three additional rinks might be required up to 2021.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. In the short term, in conjunction with the existing outdoor provider and with the national governing body, further research the need for the development of a multi-use 4-to-6 rink facility in the Bishops Stortford area to meet existing demand which is currently met via a facility outside the district.
2. Work with the English Indoor Bowling Association and Bowls Development Alliance (operating in Hertfordshire) to promote the sport throughout the district as an activity which is particularly suitable for older people, given the future demographics of the area, while at the same time encouraging more participation by younger people.
3. In the longer term, it is estimated there will be demand for an additional multi-use 2-to-4 rink facility either in conjunction with the short term provision above or as a separate facility in the Hertford/Ware area, liaising closely with national governing body. This aspiration is dependent on external funding becoming available or a change in the Council's financial situation.

INDOOR TENNIS (Chapter 5)

Key Issues from the Assessment - Indoor tennis provision in East Herts is at about the regional and national average, though below the very high levels in Hertfordshire as a whole. (The county average provision is inflated by very high levels of court provision in Welwyn Hatfield, Hertsmere and St Albans.)

Unless there is any clear local demand for additional indoor tennis, it is unlikely that further provision can be justified at the current time.

Future provision - on the basis of the existing provision, up to one additional court might be required up to 2021, but this would depend on a local case being made.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Additional indoor tennis facilities are unlikely to be required unless there is an identified need for them.
2. Maintain existing facilities over the duration of the strategy to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

COUNTY SPECIALIST FACILITY REQUIREMENTS (Chapter 5)

Key Issues from the Assessment - The Active Hertfordshire Sports Facilities Strategy (2007-2016) highlighted a demand for a number of specialist facilities, which might be provided in East Herts. These include athletics, badminton, cricket, cycling, football, gymnastics, hockey, martial arts, netball, rugby union and volleyball. The information supplied in the county strategy is now several years old, and further consultation with county governing bodies of sport should be undertaken, so that the local implications of sport development plans and facility strategies currently being prepared can be assimilated in this document.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Wodson Park Sports Centre in Ware would be an appropriate venue for development as a centre of strategic sporting excellence due to its existing diverse provision and strong user base, as a venue for the development of any identified specialist facilities and for support facilities associated with these uses.
2. Incorporate specialist facilities for table tennis, badminton, basketball, volleyball or other sports within a hierarchy of sports halls (See Chapter 5) in a coordinated manner, particularly on school sites where management would be facilitated.
3. It is acknowledged that a range of specialist clubs (e.g. Bishops Stortford Judo) could work together to find and develop a suitable training venue.
4. Ensure that national governing bodies of sport be consulted for input on specialist needs when new facility proposals come forward.

VILLAGE HALLS/COMMUNITY CENTRES (Chapter 6)

Key Issues from the Assessment - There are 61 village halls and community centres in the district, which offer the opportunity for sport and recreation outside the main towns and where access to sports facilities is poorer. There is widespread usage for a range of activities and most halls are open in the evening allowing full community access. The majority of halls and community centres are in regular use, although most have some spare capacity.

There is no specific evidence for the total demand for village halls and community centres and further research is required. However, three quarters of halls have identified no demand that cannot be met. Most village halls are considered to be in good or excellent condition. Almost all halls have been improved in recent years and half of all halls plan further refurbishment in the future. Future plans are not, for the most part, intended specifically for sport, but opportunities for sport will benefit from general improvements.

Future provision - if the current standard of provision is projected into the future, there would be a requirement of between four to seven additional halls to meet the needs of the increased population. However, this needs to be related to the actual location of additional housing and its relationship to the current network of halls, and additional research is required to ascertain the appropriate gaps and future locations.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Seek to facilitate the maintenance and refurbishment of existing village and community halls as a suitable base for sports activities in the rural parts of the district through available capital grants.
2. Ensure that any major improvements to village halls in the future accommodate space suitable for indoor sport - as feasible
3. In the longer term, it is anticipated there may be a need for the provision of four to seven additional village halls in locations which best meet the needs of the rural population, and in conjunction with new housing development. This aspiration is dependent on external funding becoming available or a change in the Council's financial situation.

PLAYING PITCHES AND OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS (Chapter 7)

No summary is attached here as this relates to the East Herts Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy which has already been agreed by the Council. The Playing Pitch strategy includes such facilities as outdoor tennis, netball, bowls, multi use games areas (MUGAs) as well as Artificial Grass Pitches and Athletics Tracks and the proposed agreed policies are shown below.

ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (AGPs)

Key Issues from the Assessment - There are eight full-size AGPs (synthetic/artificial all weather pitches) in East Herts, seven in some form of community use, although most of these are on school and education sites and may not offer full community access at all times. Anticipated demand from within the district from the Sports Facilities Calculator is for about four pitches in total.

Additional AGPs in East Herts cannot be justified at present, but some spare capacity would be released by additional pitch construction in neighbouring towns and districts.

Future provision - on the basis of the existing provision, one additional pitch in community use might be required up to 2021.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Maintain and enhance the existing use of AGPs throughout the district to meet the current needs for hockey, football and other activities and ensure the maximum use of school facilities by the wider community.
2. Require that all new pitches are maintained with a sinking fund in place, to ensure that the surface is replaced at least every 10 years, and all pitches remain fit for purpose.
3. Investigate the need for the provision in the longer term of one additional new pitch, built to 3G specification to meet Football Association requirements, in the area of highest housing growth.
4. In the short term, it is estimated that there may be a need for the provision of a facility suitable for the development of small sided football in the short term.
5. Ensure that any new pitch is associated with any necessary changing and clubhouse facilities to facilitate club development.

6. Embrace any new technology which ensures that pitches can be used by a wider range of sports e.g. 4th Generation pitches, when existing pitches reach the end of their life or are considered for refurbishment.

These conclusions are compatible with the results of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy which concluded that “it is not thought that current or future demand for hockey will attribute to the need for more AGP provision in East Herts. Accessibility and management issues at existing sites are more of priority to tackle.”

ATHLETICS TRACKS

Key Issues from the Assessment - There is one athletics track in the district with eight lanes. Athletics provision in the district is better than the average, and most residents of the borough can gain access to a track within a reasonable drive. The track is understood to be in good condition and was recently refurbished. There is little justification in further provision for athletics at present, although as athletics is primarily a club-based sport, any local sports development factors would need to be considered.

Future provision - on the basis of the existing provision, up to 2 additional lanes might be required up to 2026. These levels of additional provision cannot be met alone, but depending on sports development factors, consideration might be given to a smaller training track or J-track in the north of the district, around Buntingford, possibly in conjunction with a developing school site.

Proposed Recommendations/Aspirations

1. Maintain and enhance the existing 8-lane track at Wodson Park Sports Centre in Ware as the centre for athletics in the district.
2. If demand increases in the future, there may be a need for the provision of a smaller training track or J-track in the north of the district as a satellite facility for athletics in the rural area, preferably on a school site.

These conclusions are compatible with the results of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy.

DELIVERY (Chapter 9)

As listed above, the Assessment has identified a range of recommendations/aspirations that would meet anticipated and future demand for sports facilities. Action on these recommendations will depend on the following factors:

- Funding and procurement – the availability of finance from a variety of sources, borrowing, grant aid, partnerships, private sector funding, procurement competitions, joint ventures and other arrangements
- New planning legislation, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- The development of planning policies and inclusion of these in the Core Strategy and ongoing Local Development Framework
- Planning contributions from developers towards essential community infrastructure including sports facilities

The strategy should be guided by a steering group specifically set up for the purpose, and this should base its considerations on the action plan (to be prepared).

REVIEW AND MONITORING (Chapter 10)

The Assessment is relevant in the current situation and represents a snapshot from 2010. It is essential that the document is constantly monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, and a comprehensive review undertaken in 2016.

Appendix 1: List of Attendees at consultation event 27 January 2011

John Hornby, Indoor Bowls
John O'Brien, Hertford Swimming Club
Margaret Carrier, Swim 21 Coordinator
Linda Ashley, Herts Leopards Basketball Club
Tim Saunders, Head of PE, Richard Hale School
Perry Oliver, Bishops Stortford Rugby Club
John O'Callaghan, Active East Herts Community Sports Network
Janet Warrington, Hoddesdon Swimming Club
Andrew Wilesmith, Eastern Region Judokwai
Sarah Jackson, Bishops Stortford Judokwai
Nicole Nunn, Bishops Stortford Judokwai
Debbie Evans, School Sports Development Officer
Jan Wood, School Sports Development Officer
Rhys Loveday, School Sports Development Officer
Will O'Neill, East Herts Council
Roy Warren, Sport England
Michael Presland, Sport England consultant
Jenny Pierce, East Herts Council
Claire Pullen, East Herts Council
Valdis Belinis, East Herts Council

Invitations were sent to members of the East Herts Community Sports Network, village halls and community centres, national governing bodies of sports and the Director of Sport at Amwell View (Special School) and Disability Hertfordshire.