



EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL INDOOR SPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT June 2026

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd (KKP) was appointed to produce a Sport and Recreation Strategy for East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC). This work will form part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan to support the development of indoor and outdoor leisure facilities in East Hertfordshire. The Outdoor Sport and Playing Pitch Strategy was published in 2025 and this document focuses on Indoor Sport built facilities.

The Indoor Sport Needs Assessment and Strategy has the following objectives:

- ◀ Undertake a local authority wide assessment of indoor sport and recreation facilities, building upon existing information, to establish the quantity and quality of existing provision and any additional provision required to meet future needs to 2043.
- ◀ Develop a strategy and realistic action plans for indoor sports provision. The action plan will need to be prioritised and realistic in recognition of diminishing public resources and limited budgets.
- ◀ Follow best practice advice including Sport England's: "Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance" and "Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance".
- ◀ Provide a robust evidence base to ensure the timely and sound preparation of the new Local Plan and aid the implementation of policies and provision of sports facilities.
- ◀ Provide a clear direction on where future investment from the Council or external sources should go in the East Hertfordshire area.
- ◀ Provide clear and justified conclusions.
- ◀ Provide advice and guidance on how to maintain an up-to-date record of existing provision in terms of condition, demand, aspirations of clubs etc.

The assessment includes all sports halls larger than three badminton courts in scale, swimming pools, health and fitness suites plus other specialist provision (squash, indoor bowls, indoor tennis, gymnastics and trampolining and combat sports).

Evidence about provision and overall need provides:

- ◀ A clear picture of the quantity, quality, accessibility and availability of facilities serving the area within the EHDC area and adjacent authorities.
- ◀ A clear understanding of existing and future demand for facilities considering local population data, local and national participation rates, unmet, latent, dispersed and future demand, local activity priorities and sports specific priorities.
- ◀ Detail about the required level of provision in quantity, quality, accessibility and availability terms accompanied by the development of key findings and facility implications that could be used by the Authority with reference to a Toolkit for provision.

The needs assessment encompasses:

- ◀ A documented assessment of current use and future need for sports/amenity facilities within the District; focusing on the quantity and quality issues in relation to supply and demand until 2043.
- ◀ Identification of all sites to ensure that, as appropriate, they can be protected and improved for the long-term benefit of sport.
- ◀ Identification of education facilities which could be utilised to address identified deficits in provision.
- ◀ Detail which informs the development and implementation of planning policy.
- ◀ Detail which will inform the assessment of planning applications – linked to a toolkit via which contributions can be best directed to enhance existing provision.

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Development priorities include:

- ◀ A priority list of realistic and deliverable projects which will help to meet any current deficiencies, provide for future demands and feed into wider infrastructure planning work.
- ◀ Proposed potential changes to provision supply due to capital programmes e.g., for education sites.

Financial budgeting includes:

- ◀ Advice in respect of achieving the most efficient management and maintenance of sports facility provision.
- ◀ Prioritisation of internal capital and revenue investment.
- ◀ Evidence to help secure internal and external funding including S.106 / CIL funding linking to potential developments coming forward.

The facilities audit

This was conducted between August-November 2024. Where access was not available KKP carried out non-technical quality assessments via desk research. Where possible the quality of this was supplemented utilising virtual 'walk arounds' of, for example, health and fitness suites or videos and photos present on operators' websites or during discussion with operators.

1.2: Scope of the project

This report thus provides detail as to what exists in East Hertfordshire, its condition, location, availability and overall quality. It considers demand for facilities based on population distribution, planned growth, and takes into consideration health and economic deprivation. The facilities/sports covered include sports halls (and associated indoor sports), swimming pools, health and fitness, dance/aerobic studios, squash, indoor tennis, indoor bowls, gymnastics and trampolining and combat sports. In delivering this report KKP has:

- ◀ Individually audited identified sports halls (conventional i.e., 3+ court halls) swimming pools (minimum size 160m²), health and fitness facilities (including, within reason, dance studios), squash courts, indoor bowls facilities, indoor tennis courts, gymnastics facilities and combat sports facilities.
- ◀ Analysed supply and demand to identify gaps and opportunities to improve provision.
- ◀ Sought to identify the extent to which delivery of leisure facilities is undertaken with full reference to the corporate strategies of the Council and other relevant strategic influences.
- ◀ Identified areas of good practice and opportunities for improved service - in order to drive up participation levels.

This evidence-based report thus provides a quantitative and qualitative audit-based assessment of the facilities identified above. It is a robust, up-to-date assessment of need and identifies opportunities for new, enhanced, and rationalised provision. Specific deficiencies and surpluses are identified to inform the provision required. Specific report objectives are to:

- ◀ Review relevant Council strategies, plans, reports, corporate objectives.
- ◀ Review the local, regional, and national strategic context.
- ◀ Provide demographic analysis of the local population at present and in the future (to 2043).
- ◀ Audit indoor facilities provided by public, private, voluntary and education sectors.
- ◀ Consider potential participation rates and model likely demand.
- ◀ Analyse the balance between supply of, and demand for, sports facilities alongside identification of potential under and over-provision – now and in the future.
- ◀ Identify key issues to address in the future provision of indoor sports facilities.

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This process follows the Assessment Needs and Opportunities Guidance (ANOG) methodology for assessing indoor sports need, developed by Sport England. It also accords with relevant paragraphs of the most up-to-date version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

1.3: Background

East Hertfordshire covers an area of 477 square kilometres and is predominantly rural in nature. It has a dispersed settlement pattern, including five market towns (Bishops Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware), all of which provide services to the surrounding areas. It also contains a significant number of villages and hamlets, which vary in size.

As outlined in Figure 1.1, East Hertfordshire borders seven other local authorities: Stevenage, North Hertfordshire, Uttlesford, Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne, Harlow and Epping Forest.

The district contains many special landscape, natural and built heritage features, including international, national and local nature conservation designations. It is home to several chalk streams which support wildlife habitats and has over 3,000 listed buildings.

Figure 1.1: East Hertfordshire with main roads and neighbouring authorities



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The main settlement areas in East Hertfordshire are well connected. The A10 runs north to south through the District, passing through Buntingford, Ware and Hertford. Bishops Stortford can also be accessed from the A10 via the A120. The development of other main road and rail networks have historically bypassed the District. The M11 can be accessed to the east of East Hertfordshire and the A1(M) to the west. The M25 can be accessed to the south.

Rail connectivity within the district is limited. The West Anglia Main Line connects Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford to London, Stansted Airport and Cambridge, with the Hertford East branch line connecting Hertford, Ware and St Margarets to Broxbourne and London. The East Coast Mainline can be accessed via the Hertford Loop, which connects Hertford, Watton-at-Stone and Bayford to London and Stevenage (where wider destinations such as Gatwick Airport and Edinburgh can be reached).

1.4: Report structure

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in a report entitled '[Strategic Planning: Effective Co-operation for Planning Across Boundaries \(2015\)](#)' puts the case for strategic planning based on six general principles:

- ◀ Have focus.
- ◀ Be genuinely strategic.
- ◀ Be spatial.
- ◀ Be collaborative.
- ◀ Have strong leadership and
- ◀ Be accountable to local electorates.

KKP has paid due regard to these strategic principles and this needs assessment report is, thus, structured as follows:

- ◀ Section 2 - review of background policy documentation (national/regional/local) and a profile of the population and socio-demographic characteristics of the District.
- ◀ Section 3 - description of methodology employed to assess provision.
- ◀ Section 4 - assessment of sport halls provision.
- ◀ Section 5 - assessment of swimming pool provision.
- ◀ Section 6 - assessment of health and fitness provision.
- ◀ Section 7 - assessment of squash.
- ◀ Section 8 - assessment of indoor bowls.
- ◀ Section 9 – assessment of indoor tennis.
- ◀ Section 10 – assessment of gymnastics and trampolining.
- ◀ Section 11 – assessment of combat sports.
- ◀ Section 12 – strategic recommendations.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

2.1: National context

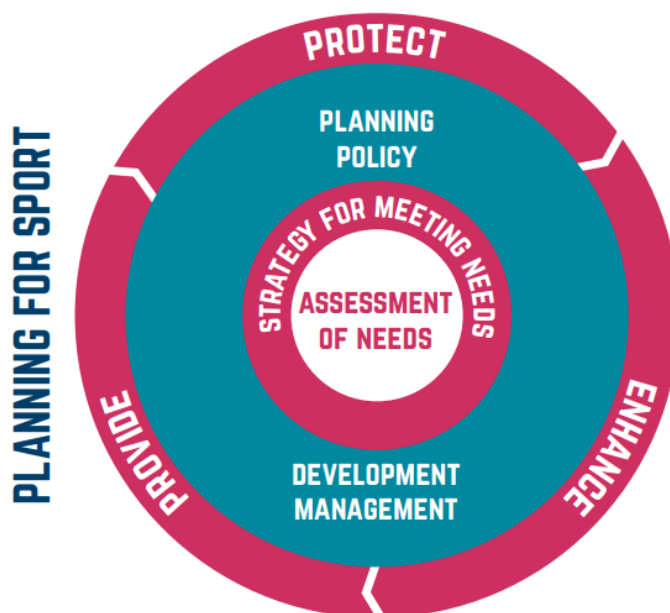
The Government [Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity](#) has the focus on increasing physical activity, making sport more welcoming and inclusive, and ensuring the long-term financial and environmental sustainability of the sector. In addition, the recently launched cross-departmental National Physical Activity Taskforce has a focus on environmental sustainability in the sector, clear targets for increasing physical activity rates and a new vision for leisure facilities in 2023.

Get Active sets out how the government will work with the sector to achieve these aims by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to get active. Central to this is a focus on ensuring that children establish a lifetime of engagement with sport and physical activity. This is accompanied by the introduction of national targets for participation to help hold Government and the sector to account for delivering the change that is needed.

Sport England

Sport England aims to ensure positive planning for sport, enabling the right facilities to be provided in the right places, based on up-to-date assessment of needs for all levels of sport and all sectors of the community. This assessment report has been produced for EHC applying the principles and tools identified in Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide.

Figure 2.1: The Sport England Planning for Sport Model



Assessment of need is core to planning for sporting provision. It is underpinned by 12 planning-for-sport principles which help the planning system to contribute to sustainable development by fulfilling the key role of the National Planning Policy Framework in creating strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

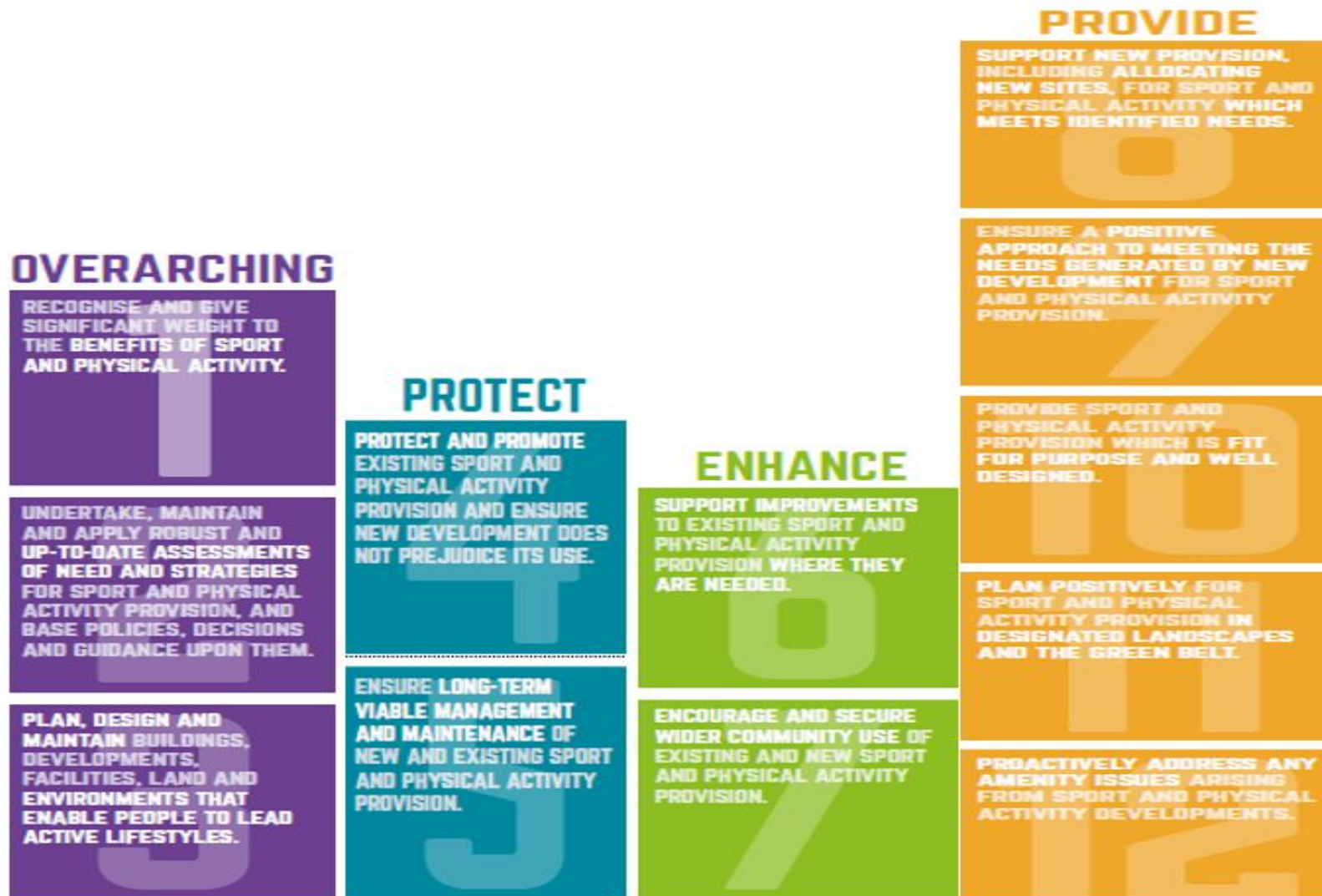
Applying them ensures that the planning system plans positively to enable and support healthy lifestyles, delivers community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs, and provides opportunity for all to experience the benefits that taking part in sport and physical activity brings. They apply to all areas of the planning system and to planning at local authority

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and neighbourhood levels. As such they are of relevance to all involved in, or looking to engage with, the planning system.

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Figure 2.2: Sport England's 12 planning principles



Sport England: Uniting the Movement 2021

Sport and physical activity have a major role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities, and rebuilding a stronger society for all following the global pandemic. Reflecting this, The Uniting the Movement strategy sets out its 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.

It seeks to tackle the inequalities that it states are long seen in sport and physical activity noting that 'providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity, has never been more important'. The three key Strategy objectives are:

1. Advocating for movement, sport and physical activity.
2. Joining forces on five big issues.
3. Creating the catalysts for change.

As well as being an advocate for sport and physical activity, through the building of evidence and partnership development, the Strategy identifies five big issues that communities and people need to address by working together. They are described as the major challenges to England being an active nation over the next decade as well as being the main opportunities to make a lasting difference. They are designated as a building-blocks that individually would make a difference but tackled collectively could change things profoundly.

The issues are:

- ◀ Recover and reinvent: Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant, and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.
- ◀ Connecting communities: Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.
- ◀ Positive experiences for children/young people: Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.
- ◀ Connecting with health and wellbeing: Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health, and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.
- ◀ Active environments: Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

To address these five big issues, the right conditions for change need to be created: across people, organisations, and partnerships to help convert plans and ideas. This will include a range of actions, including development of effective investment models and applying innovation and digital technology to ensure sport and physical activity are more accessible.

The specific impact of the Strategy will be captured via funded programmes, interventions made, and partnerships forged. For each specific area of action, key performance indicators will be developed to help evidence the overall progress being made by all those involved in supporting sport and physical activity.

Sport England: Understanding the impact of Covid-19 January 2021¹

Activity levels for adults had been increasing until coronavirus restrictions were introduced in March 2020. This led to unprecedented drops in activity during the first few weeks of full

¹ Link to Sport England - Understanding the impact of Covid-19 January 2021

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lockdown between mid-March and mid-May 2020. The proportion of the population classed as active dropped by 7.1% (meaning that there were just over 3 million fewer active adults).

Some audiences found it harder to be active before Covid-19 and are finding it hard now. Inequalities between different groups have persisted since lockdown restrictions began in March. Those who have found it hardest to stay active include:

- ◀ People with long-term health conditions/disabilities.
- ◀ People from lower socio-economic groups.
- ◀ Women aged 16–34-year-olds and 55 years and above.
- ◀ Black adults, Asian adults, and adults from other minority ethnic groups

The proportion of children and young people reportedly active mid-May to late July 2021 fell by 2.3%, with just over 100,000 fewer meeting the recommended level of activity compared to the same period 12 months earlier. The impact was greater for some groups than others. Whilst all were impacted in terms of activity levels, girls fared better than boys, whilst those from black and mixed backgrounds saw more pronounced drops in activity levels.

Sporting activity decreased; over one million fewer children and young people (16.3%) reporting having taken part in swimming and team sports in the last week* compared to the same period 12 months earlier. Walking, cycling and fitness all saw substantial increases in numbers reporting having taken part in the last week compared to the same period 12 months earlier. 1.6 million more children and young people went for a walk (22.0%) or did fitness activities (22.1%), whilst 1.4 million more cycled for fun or fitness (+18.4%).

In addition, lack of disposable income may lead to a reduction in sports sector spend and can have an impact upon the take-up of activities which cater for children and young people as well as adults. Uncertain employment and financial circumstances mean that greater numbers of people will be looking for affordable and flexible opportunities to stay active. Fewer people will be in a position to make an ongoing financial commitment to participate.

Total annual social value of sport and physical activity in England 2024²

Sport and physical activity are widely recognised for making people happier and healthier, and for fostering stronger communities. That's why creating more opportunities for those who need them most is central to Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy.

The Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England 2020³ created an evidence base to better understand the value of taking part in sport and physical activity. Sport England, in partnership with social value experts State of Life, sports economists from the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University, and the Institute of Sport at Manchester Metropolitan University, developed an updated national model to quantify the social value of community sport and physical activity.

The October 2024 report breaks down the social and economic impact of community sport and physical activity into two parts. Part one focuses on the primary benefits, such as physical and mental health improvements, while part two explores the broader value to society.

Community sport and physical activity contributed £107.2 billion annually to the UK in 2023/2024, through both social and economic benefits. Of this, £96.7 billion is attributed to primary value, with individual wellbeing improvements driven by adult volunteering, youth participation, and adult participation. This underscores the profound impact of sport and physical

² [Link to Sport and physical activity generates over £100 billion in social value | Sport England](#)

³ [Link to Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England 2020](#)

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activity on quality of life, as improved health and wellbeing positively influence relationships, social connections, and productivity.

It also generated £10.5bn in secondary value; of which £9.3bn is associated with the 'active population' and £1.2bn of the 'fairly active' population through reduced GP visits and mental health service usage. Over three million cases of non-communicable diseases or chronic health conditions were prevented, including depression (1.3 million cases), back pain (0.9 million) and type 2 diabetes (0.6 million). A total of £130 million spent treating injuries related to sport and physical activity participation.

There would be an estimated £15.6 billion more annual social value created by sport and physical activity if the wider adult population, including those with 1 or 2+ characteristics of inequality, were active at the same levels as those with zero characteristics of inequality. This would equate to over four million more 'active' adults in England.

Sport England: The Future of Public Sector Leisure

Engagement by Sport England with the public leisure sector has highlighted that the pandemic has accelerated the appetite for local authorities to look at leisure services and re-examine the purpose of their provision, delivery against local community outcomes and consider their alignment with broader strategic outcomes, particularly health.

Key insight from the report ([Sport England: The Future of Public Sector Leisure](#)) includes:

- ◀ 68% of sports halls and swimming pools were built 20+ years ago. Although more than £150m was invested in the opening of new public leisure and swimming facilities in 2018/19⁴, with another £200m worth of assets in construction or planning there remains significant levels of ageing public leisure stock.
- ◀ 72% of all school swimming lessons take place in a public leisure facility, which included both the statutory learn to swim programme and the water safety curriculum across primary schools. Swimming club usage is also predominantly based at public leisure facilities.

The leisure sector emerged from the pandemic in a fragile state. Emergency funding⁵ helped to avert financial catastrophe and enabled the additional costs of maintaining public assets and reopening services to be met. This funding is, however, finite and is largely exhausted. At best, financial pressures risk limiting the ability of stakeholders to deliver against their commitments; at worst they may result in the permanent closure of some services or facilities.

In respect of the recovery of the sector to pre-Pandemic participation levels, data generated via the [Moving Communities](#) platform suggests that in October 2021, throughput levels (13.2 million) were still lower than the monthly average in 2019 (17.8 million). Participation recovery has been imbalanced and has leaned towards those activities which deliver a faster return to pre-pandemic revenue levels.

Sites refurbished in the last 10 years are seeing a throughput recovery of 68% compared with a recovery of 62% for those last refurbished 20+ years ago, suggesting that investment in newer facilities creates spaces that have greater appeal, increase user confidence levels and provide a more relevant offer to meet current customer demands.

⁴ 2 Mintel Report on Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools (September 2019)

⁵ Local authorities invested £160 million The National Leisure Recovery Fund £100m, Leisure operators drew on £171 million of reserves alongside further relief measures such as the Government's furlough scheme

To address these significant challenges, a repositioning of the traditional offer of public leisure into one akin to an **active wellbeing service** is advocated focusing on added value and supporting delivery of key local priorities, alongside wider government policy around Levelling Up, net zero and health inequalities.

Chief Medical Officer Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

This updated the 2011 physical activity guidelines issued by the four chief medical officers (CMOs) of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They drew upon global evidence to present guidelines for different age groups, covering the volume, duration, frequency and type of physical activity required across the life course to achieve health benefits.

Since 2011, evidence of the health benefits of regular physical activity for all groups has become more compelling. In children and young people, regular physical activity is associated with improved learning and attainment, better mental health and cardiovascular fitness, also contributing to healthy weight status. In adults, there is strong evidence to demonstrate the protective effect on physical activity on a range of many chronic conditions including coronary heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes, mental health problems and social isolation.

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Regular physical activity can deliver cost savings for the health and care system and has wider social benefits for individuals and communities. Key factors for each age group are as follows:

- ◀ Under-5s (infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers): should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of different exercises, whereas infants should be physically active several times every day in a variety of ways, including interactive floor-based activities.
- ◀ Children and young people (5-18 years): should engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week.
- ◀ Adults (19-64 years): for good physical and mental health, adults should aim to be physically active every day. This could be 150 minutes of moderate exercise, 75 minutes of vigorous exercise or even shorter durations of very vigorous intensity activity, or a combination of moderate, vigorous and very vigorous intensity activity.
- ◀ Older adults (65+): should participate in daily physical activity to gain health benefits, including maintenance of good physical and mental health, wellbeing, and social functioning. Each week older adults should aim to accumulate 150 minutes (two and a half hours) of moderate intensity aerobic activity.

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Figure 2.3: Physical activity guidelines



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The report also recognises an emerging evidence base for the health benefits of performing very vigorous intensity activity performed in short bouts interspersed with periods of rest or recovery (high intensity interval exercise, HIIT). Available evidence demonstrates that high intensity interval exercise has clinically meaningful effects on fitness, body weight and insulin resistance. This option has therefore been incorporated into the recommendation for adults.

It, thus, emphasises the importance of regular activity for people of all ages. It presents additional guidance on being active during pregnancy, after giving birth, and for disabled adults. The new guidelines are consistent with previous ones, introducing some new elements and allowing flexibility in achieving recommended physical activity levels for each age group.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty 2025 report

This report notes that poverty in the UK has now increased to close to pre-pandemic levels. The cost of accessing sport and physical activity can be a significant barrier. Available data provides evidence that more than one in five people now live in poverty (including 4.3 million children. Of these, 40% are described as being in 'deep poverty', with an income considerably below the standard poverty line. Certain groups of people face particularly high levels of poverty. They include (figures relate to 2021/22 unless otherwise stated):

- ◀ Larger families – where 45% of children in families with 3 or more children were in poverty.
- ◀ Families whose childcare responsibilities limit their ability to work – 44% of children in lone-parent families were in poverty.
- ◀ Many minority ethnic groups – many households have higher rates of child, very deep and persistent poverty.
- ◀ 30% of disabled people are in poverty. This rate is higher (at 38%) for people with a long-term, limiting mental health condition.
- ◀ 28% of informal carers (those with caring responsibilities). They have limited ability to work and unpaid social-care givers experience an average pay penalty of nearly £5,000/annum.
- ◀ Families not in work – more than half of working-age adults (56%) in workless households are in poverty - compared with 15% in working households. Around two-thirds of working-age adults in poverty actually live in a household where someone is in work.
- ◀ Part-time workers and the self-employed - the poverty rate for part-time workers was nearly triple that of full-time workers (22% compared with 8%).
- ◀ 43% of people living in rented accommodation and 35% of private renters are in poverty after housing costs.
- ◀ Poverty rates of people claiming different income-related benefits are much higher than the national average poverty rate.

Environmental sustainability

The UK Government net zero strategy 'Build Back Greener' was published in October 2021. This sets out how it intends the UK to meet its target for decarbonisation by 2050. It focuses on interventions such as:

- ◀ A fully decarbonised power system by 2035 with all electricity coming from 'low carbon sources'.
- ◀ Improved efficiency of heating for homes and buildings, aiming for all new heating appliances to be based on low carbon technologies, such as electric heat pumps or hydrogen boilers.
- ◀ Low carbon fuel supply – by scaling up the production of low carbon alternatives including hydrogen and biofuels.

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[Sport England](#) reports that ⁶climate change and the increased occurrence of extreme weather that it brings are already affecting sports facilities, meaning that the sector needs to build greater resilience to counter this very real threat. It proposes that a wide range of issues should be considered when approaching project development to, and the resultant environmental impact of, say, new swimming pool development.

This applies to determining whether to refurbish an existing building with its carbon already embedded or to build anew⁷. In establishing a sustainability strategy early on Sport England suggests some key principles as part of a 'pathway to sustainability' and net zero carbon in respect of building design and operation. These include:

- ◀ Reduce energy consumption as a first measure to reduce carbon emissions/energy costs.
- ◀ Change behaviour, eliminate energy waste and operate energy control systems more effectively at no extra cost.
- ◀ Passive design - Building orientation and placement on site is critical to achieving net zero targets Harness a site's natural resources to benefit cross ventilation, natural lighting, solar gain, shelter or shading.
- ◀ Fabric efficiency Maximise the building fabric and glazing performance.
- ◀ Minimise initial energy demand to reduce demand on plant and technologies incorporated.
- ◀ Efficient systems Invest in appropriate energy-efficient products including heating, ventilation, fittings, controls, sensors, heat pumps and recovery systems.
- ◀ On-site renewables Incorporate low and zero carbon (LZC) technologies - to produce energy on site.
- ◀ Off-site renewables - only use energy providers who use renewable energy.

Investment in school sport

The School Sport and Activity Action Plan (July 2019) sets out the Government's commitment to ensuring that children and young people have access to at least 60 minutes of sport and physical activity per day, with a recommendation of 30 minutes of this delivered during the school day (in line with the CMO guidelines which recommend an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week). The action plan has three overarching ambitions - that:

- ◀ All children/young people take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- ◀ Children/young people have the opportunity to realise developmental, character-building experiences through sport, competition and active pursuits.
- ◀ All sport and physical activity provision for children/young people is designed around the principles of physical literacy, focuses on fun and enjoyment and aims to reach the least active.

The PE and sport premium is intended to help primary schools to achieve this aim, providing them with £320m of government funding to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE, physical activity and sport offered via core budgets. It is allocated directly to schools which have the flexibility to use it in the way that they consider works best for their pupils.

In 2021 the Department for Education announced a £10.1 million funding package to help more schools open their facilities to the public once the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is over. The funding, which will be administered by Sport England and distributed via the Active Partnership Network will help schools deliver extra-curricular activities and open their facilities outside of the school day during evenings, weekends and school holidays.

The Physical Literacy Consensus Statement for England – Sport England (2023)

⁶[Sport England Environmental Sustainability policy](#)

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This has been developed to facilitate a shared understanding of physical literacy for those working in the sport, education, physical activity, recreation, play, health and youth sectors. It offers a broad overview of physical literacy, why it matters and how it can be developed and supported.

Developing a consensus on the term physical literacy has been a priority, as understanding what impacts people's relationship with movement and physical activity throughout life will enable those working in the sector to ensure their offer is as appealing as possible.

In essence, physical literacy represents the extent to which individuals have a positive relationship with movement and physical activity. The Youth Sport Trust has published findings evidencing that a total of 4,000 hours of physical education (PE) have been lost from the curriculum of state-funded secondary schools. PE hours have fallen victim to more time spent online, poor school attendance and declining health and wellbeing levels in young people. Since 2012, the amount of PE in England has fallen by more than 12%.

Evidence also shows that children with high levels of physical literacy are twice as likely to engage in sport and physical activity. In later life, adults who feel they have the opportunity, ability and enjoy being physically active are more likely to be so. To increase physical activity in both children and adults, it is important to consider the cultural and environmental factors which affect physical activity levels alongside the influence of previous experiences.

Ensuring good quality and regular PE in schools is considered to be essential to improving the mental and physical wellbeing of young people and will enable young people to develop new skills, achieve greater academic success and live longer, happier, healthier lives.

Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund

In 2023, a funding pot of £63 million was announced to ease the pressure on leisure centres which are managing the cost of operating, maintaining and heating swimming pools. This is being managed by Sport England and is available to all pools run by councils and charities and all those run on behalf of councils. No facilities in East Hertfordshire were awarded funding via the Swimming Pool Support Fund.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) (2024) and Draft National Planning Policy Framework (2025) set out planning policies for England. It details how these are expected to be applied to the planning system and provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, identifying the need to focus on three themes of economic, social, environmentally sustainable development.

A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making, the NPPF states that local plans should meet objectively assessed needs. It is clear about sport's role delivering sustainable communities through promoting health and well-being. Sport England, working within the provisions of the NPPF, wishes to see local planning policy protect, enhance and provide for sports facilities based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need, as well as helping to realise the wider benefits that participation in sport can bring.

The promoting healthy communities theme in the NPPF identifies that planning policies should be based on robust, up-to-date assessment of need for open space, sports and recreation

facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs, quantitative/qualitative deficiencies and surpluses should be identified and used to inform provision requirements in an area.

[Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\): Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space](#)

The PPG provides further guidance on how to meet the requirements in the NPPF. It signposts Sport England guidance on how local authorities and developers should assess a range of indoor and outdoor sports facilities .

Summary of national context

In the context both of emergence from the global pandemic and the highly challenging economic environment, there is a need to reconnect communities, reduce inequality and create stronger societies. The aim is to create a catalyst for change, with sport and physical activity a key driver and people in all age groups either getting or remaining active. Ensuring an adequate supply of suitable facilities to support this aim is a key requirement of the planning system in line with national policy recommendations.

2.2: Local context

East Herts District Plan 2011-2033

The East Hertfordshire District Plan was adopted in 2018 and outlines the plan for housing, jobs, community facilities and infrastructure to 2033. The plan seeks to provide a minimum of 18,458 new homes up to 2033, alongside new jobs, community facilities and infrastructure. The Plan sets out the importance of implementing this growth sustainably, to protect the natural and historical environment and the quality of life of people who live, work and visit the district.

The District Plan directs development across the district including urban extensions to the main towns and strategic development to the east of Stevenage, east of Welwyn Garden City and in the Gilston area. Developments are at various stages of implementation, with a number of the larger sites coming forward in phases. The Council's latest Annual Monitoring Report (2024-25) outlines that 10,229 dwellings have been completed in the plan period to date.

The Gilston Area is a key component of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT), a large-scale development initiative designated as a Garden Town. Located north of Harlow and across the River Stort in East Hertfordshire, the Gilston area of the Garden Town will feature 10,000 homes and associated infrastructure for seven new villages. Gilston will also be connected to Harlow town centre by a new public travel route known as a Sustainable Transport Corridor, prioritising walking, cycling and high-quality public transport routes.

The District Plan has outlined the following objectives for the Authority to achieve:

- ◀ Reduce carbon dioxide emissions and promote greener energy options.
- ◀ Support mixed communities which provide the needs for old, young and vulnerable people.
- ◀ Provide a balanced housing market.
- ◀ Protect the district's landscape from inappropriate developments.
- ◀ Encourage entrepreneurialism and maximise existing employment opportunities.
- ◀ Improve the travel network to ease road congestion and reduce carbon footprint.
- ◀ Provide good quality facilities for arts, culture, community, leisure, entertainment, recreation, faith and health.

- ◀ Reduce health inequalities and improve the health and well-being of all residents.

To support the improvement of the health and well-being of the whole community, District Plan policies require the provision of open space, sport and recreation and new community facilities in conjunction with new development. Policy CFLR1- Open Space, Sport and Recreation expects provision on-site, or if appropriate, financial contributions towards new or enhanced off-site provision. Facilities should be provided in accordance with the Council's latest evidence and in consultation with Sport England and the Council's Leisure and Environment team. Policy CFLR7- Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation requires that provision of adequate and appropriately located community facilities will be sought in conjunction with new development.

New Local Plan

In October 2023 East Herts Council agreed to update the adopted District Plan (2018). Now the Government has published the Local Planning Regulations (2026), the Council will commence formal work on the New Local Plan later this year.

Currently, the Council is updating the evidence base and undertaking other preparatory work needed to support the New Local Plan . The Indoor Sports Needs Assessment and Strategy is a key part of this evidence base

to help understand if existing facilities are the most appropriate in terms of quantity, quality and location and to inform policy decisions about how best to meet the additional needs generated by the planned housing and economic growth.

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document

The Council adopted an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2020, following the publication of an open space and sports assessment in 2017. The SPD supplements policies in the District Plan, providing guidance on the type and scale of open space, sport and recreation required in, and funded by, new development.

UK Innovation Corridor

The councils of Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford form the LSCC Core Area which lies at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor. This has, over the past decade or more, been the engine of UK growth with its world class industries and businesses.

The Corridor's economy has grown at a rate almost double of that of the UK average, leading to higher population growth. Transport connections are strong, with motorways and rail stations providing connectivity between towns and cities.

With a significant number of jobs in knowledge-based industries, the Corridor is a leading knowledge economy and a showcase for tech industries and firms. There is a high rate of innovation. It accounts for 24,700 jobs in the life sciences sector contributing 11% of all national employment.

EHDC is working with its partner authorities in the Core Area to deliver the following strategic vision - up to 2050 – which is to:

- ◀ Complement and support the economic performance of the Corridor whilst maintaining and enhancing the special character of the area.

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- ◀ Deliver housing, supported by good access to social, leisure, community, health facilities, education and jobs, that meets the needs of local people.
- ◀ Capitalise on existing economic sectors and promote the growth of expanding industries.
- ◀ Work with partners to protect and enhance the high-quality environment, its unique landscapes and places of special wildlife value.
- ◀ Work with partners to secure investment in major infrastructure including increasing rail capacity on the West Anglia Mainline and maximising the opportunities that improved transport infrastructure can deliver.

Vision and Corporate Priorities

On 28th February 2024, the Council approved its “LEAF” corporate priorities. These set out the strategic priorities of the Council and are grouped under the following four headings: -

- Listening, Open and Transparent
- Environmentally Focused
- Acting with the Community
- Fair and Inclusive

Under each heading are a series of sub-objectives and actions which officers are tasked with delivering. These LEAF priorities are kept under review, and in July 2025, the Council approved some updates to priorities.

Housing Strategy 2022-2027

The East Herts Housing Strategy for 2022-2027 addresses key housing challenges within the district, including homelessness, housing conditions, and the need for more affordable homes. It focuses on four main priorities: increasing the supply of affordable housing, providing diverse housing options and support for vulnerable groups, improving housing quality for older residents, and enhancing sustainability and energy efficiency in homes. The strategy is informed by evidence and consultations with local stakeholders, aiming to meet the housing needs of the district while aligning with broader community and economic goals.

To achieve these priorities, the strategy emphasises collaboration with various partners and the strategic use of available resources. While East Herts Council does not directly own or manage housing stock, it plays a key role in facilitating new housing development and improvements through partnerships. The strategy also outlines the council's commitment to meeting housing obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and ensuring that housing efforts align with wider corporate objectives, including sustainability and economic development.

East Herts Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2028

The plan promotes an integrated approach to tackling health and wellbeing, working alongside national and regional health agencies, the Herts and Essex Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), the Integrated Care System (ICS) and the Integrated care Board (ICB), as well as Hertfordshire County Council and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Public Health has a key role to play in supporting good health and wellbeing and is tasked with the overall responsibility for achieving this across Hertfordshire.

The main priorities are to:

- ◀ Ensure that every child has the best start to life.
- ◀ Support communities to be healthy and sustainable.

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- ◀ Support residents to maintain healthy lifestyles.
- ◀ Support people living with dementia.
- ◀ Improve support for people living with life-long conditions, long term health conditions, physical disabilities and their families.
- ◀ Improve residents' mental health.

An action plan has been developed to address these aims, with a range of actions including supporting and engaging with the voluntary sector and tackling inactivity and improving physical wellbeing by supporting residents to access sport, leisure and recreation opportunities.

East Herts Cultural Strategy 2021-2025

The East Herts Cultural Strategy 2021-2025 outlines how strategic partners can contribute to highlighting the great physical and human assets of the District. The vision is that: "East Herts will lead the way in demonstrating that when residents, community organisations and the creative industries come together extraordinary, surprising and delightful things can happen that enrich and enhance everyone's health, wellbeing and sense of inclusion".

For the purposes of this Strategy, which places inclusion at its heart, arts and culture is considered to include the performing and visual arts, festivals, tourism and leisure, heritage and historical buildings, sports and physical activity, parks and open spaces, children's play and common interest voluntary groups. The Strategy recognises that culture can be a key drive for prosperity in East Herts.

Population projections estimate that the number of people in all age groups are growing in the District. Housing developments in new neighbourhoods and garden villages will bring new cultural opportunities to East Herts through unlocking developer contributions. Ensuring that all residents have access to activities is a challenge, particularly those living in more deprived areas. Providing cultural activities is also seen to tackle wider societal issues such as crime and loneliness and improve educational attainment in young people. Residents need to be able to access these events in sustainable ways.

Site Masterplans

District Plan Policy DES1: Masterplanning requires all 'significant' development proposals to prepare a Masterplan to ensure sites are planned and delivered comprehensively. The masterplan should set out the quantum and distribution of land uses; access; sustainable high quality design and layout principles; necessary infrastructure; the relationship between the site and other adjacent and nearby land uses; landscape and heritage assets and other relevant matters. The process is based upon a collaborative approach to identifying and resolving issues, creating a vision for what the site aspires to achieve, testing design options and consulting upon preferred solutions.

Council endorsed masterplans can be viewed on the website ([Masterplans | East Herts District Council](#)).

Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership

This is the active partnership that covers the District. It is one of 43 active partnerships across England and is funded by Sport England to locally deliver the Uniting the Movement Strategy. Its vision is to 'strategically and collaboratively to improve the lives of the people of Hertfordshire, by using the power of sport and physical activity to tackle inequality and disadvantage'. Key insights which have informed its Strategic Plan 2022-2027 summary are:

- ◀ The need for a joined-up approach between schools and community sport.
- ◀ The Covid-19 Pandemic affecting the most disadvantaged communities.
- ◀ Taking opportunities to use SPA to tackle the number of long-term health conditions and wider societal issues.
- ◀ Addressing widening inequality gaps.
- ◀ The need for well-designed spaces to increase physical activity levels and improve mental health.

Leisure operator

Everyone Active manages two public leisure centres in East Hertfordshire: Grange Paddocks LC and Hartham LC. It previously operated Leventhorpe Pool and Gym and Fanshawe Pool and Gym until their closure in December 2024, both of which are owned by the respective schools at which they are situated. It also operated Ward Freman Pool (owned by Hertfordshire County Council) in Buntingford until its closure in December 2023. Everyone Active's contract, which commenced on 1 January 2020, covers a 15-year period.

EA offers free annual membership for anyone diagnosed with Parkinson's, plus an additional membership for a family member or carer at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre.

Summary of local policy

The Council has identified several initiatives to create a district which is an attractive place to live, work and visit. The current District Plan features a series of strategic objectives to achieve this, including creating suitable housing, good public transport, protecting the environment and reducing health inequalities. These objectives are likely to remain a key priority in the new Local Plan.

The importance of protecting the existing landscape and heritage is recognised in several Council policies. New housing developments will need to suit the needs of all residents in East Herts and be in keeping with the District's image. Given the risk posed by climate change in East Herts, significant focus will be placed on ensuring that new and existing buildings are as energy efficient as possible. Given the significant car ownership and trips made per resident alternative travel solutions will be provided to lower the district's carbon footprint.

The importance of accessing cultural activities is recognised by EHDC, and it is acknowledged that this needs to be done in an affordable and sustainable manner. The Council will continue to work with Everyone Active and the Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership to ensure that even the most disadvantaged members of society have the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity to tackle health and other societal issues.

2.3: Demographic profile

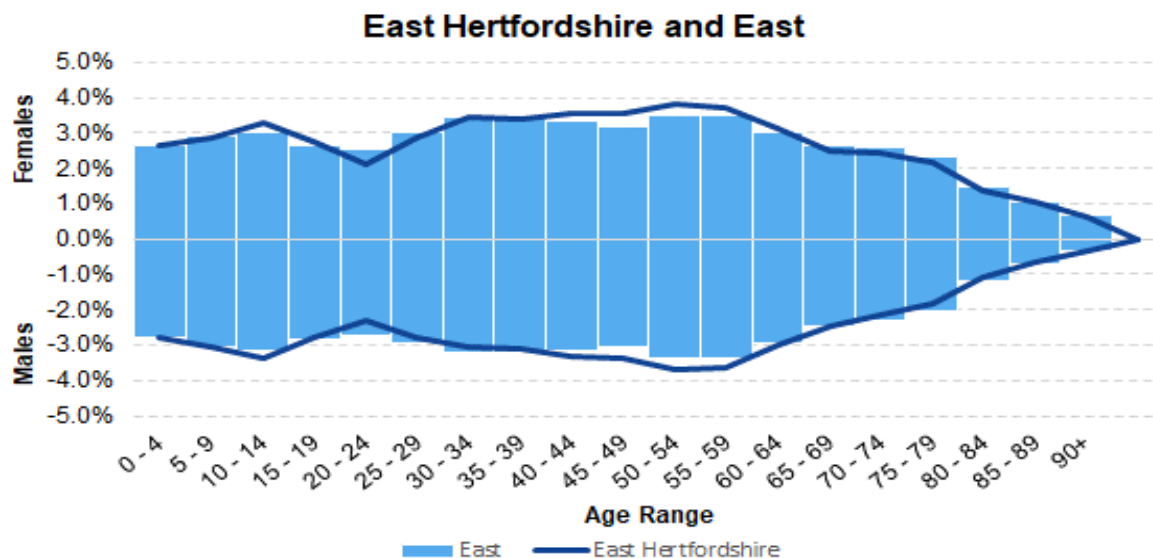
Population (Data source: 2022 Mid-Year Estimate (MYE), ONS)

The total population of East Hertfordshire is 151,635, comprising of 74,063 males and 77,572 females. The following chart illustrates the population's age and gender composition. By,

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

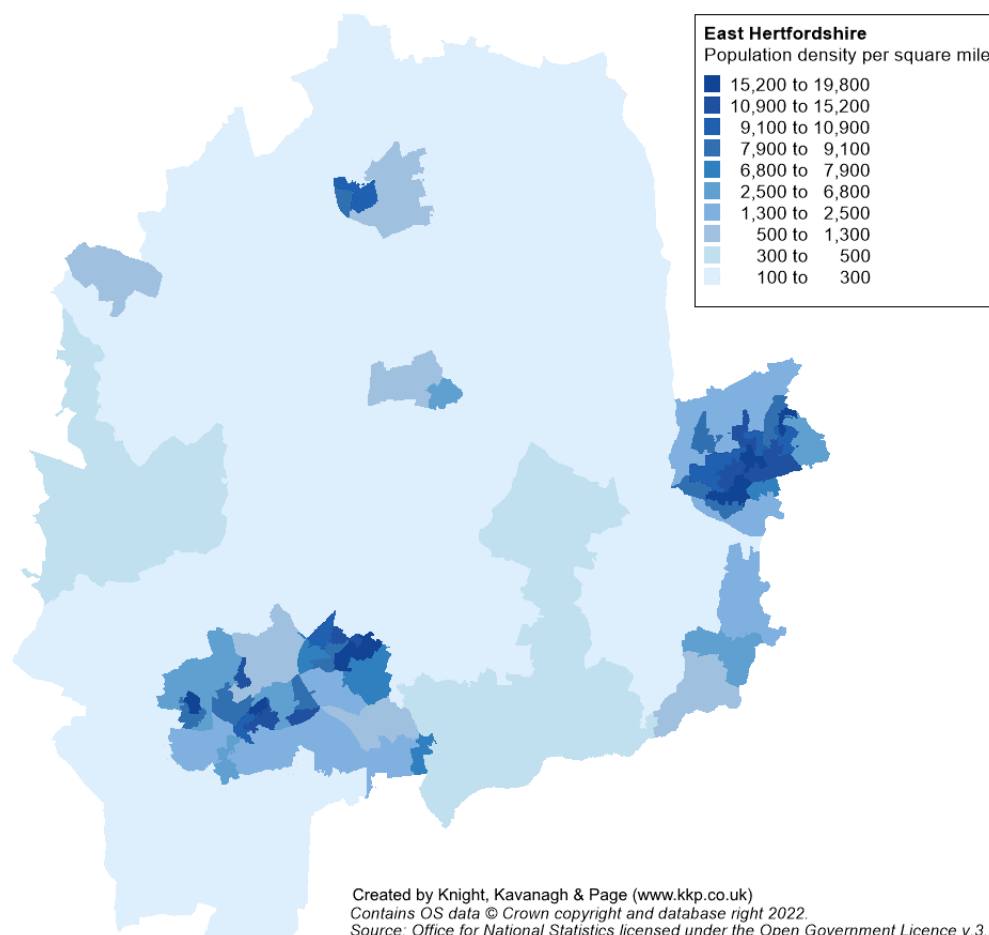
overlaying the dark blue line for East Hertfordshire on top of the blue bars for the region it is easy to see where one dataset is higher or lower than the other.

Figure 2.4: Comparative age/sex pyramid for East Hertfordshire and East.



There is a marginally higher proportion of 40–59-year-olds in East Hertfordshire (28.6%,) than in the East region as a whole: (26.5%) but slightly fewer in the age groups from 20-39 (East Hertfordshire: 23.1%, East: 24.6%). As a combination of factors, This suggests that careful consideration should be given to the pitching of sports and physical activity within the area – Sport England’s segmentation model is interpreted in relation to this age structure (see later).

Figure 2.5: Population density 2021 Census: East Hertfordshire (LSOAs).



The population density map is based on lower super output areas (LSOAs) from the most recent ONS Census. It covers all parts of the country irrespective of whether the SOA is in an area of high-density housing and flats or it covers farms and rural villages. Map shading, however, allows concentrations of population to be easily identified, for example, major urban areas such as flats, terraced houses and estates tend to be illustrated via the darkest shading while rural areas, housing adjoining parks and other non-residential land uses tend to be the lightest shades.

Ethnicity (Data source: 2021 Census, ONS)

East Hertfordshire's ethnic composition is less diverse than that of England as a whole. The largest proportion (92.3%) of the local population classifies its ethnicity as White; this is higher than the comparative England rate of 81.0%. The next largest population group (by self-classification) is Mixed, at 2.8% - this is lower than the national equivalent (3.0%).

Table 2.1: Ethnicity in Ethnic composition – East Hertfordshire and England.

Ethnicity	East Hertfordshire #	East Hertfordshire %	England #	England %
White	138,587	92.3%	45,783,401	81.0%
Mixed	4,245	2.8%	1,669,378	3.0%
Asian	4,019	2.7%	5,426,392	9.6%
Black	1,951	1.3%	2,381,724	4.2%
Other	1,357	0.9%	1,229,153	2.2%

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TOTAL	150,159	100.0%	56,490,048	100.0%
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Crime (Data source: Crime in England and Wales year ending June 2023, ONS)

Crime data is only available for police force areas. East Hertfordshire is in the Hertfordshire Police Force Area, which comprises ten local authorities (Broxbourne, Dacorum, East Hertfordshire, Hertsmere, North Hertfordshire, St. Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Watford, and Welwyn Hatfield). The population of EHDC accounts for 12.6% of the Police Force Area.

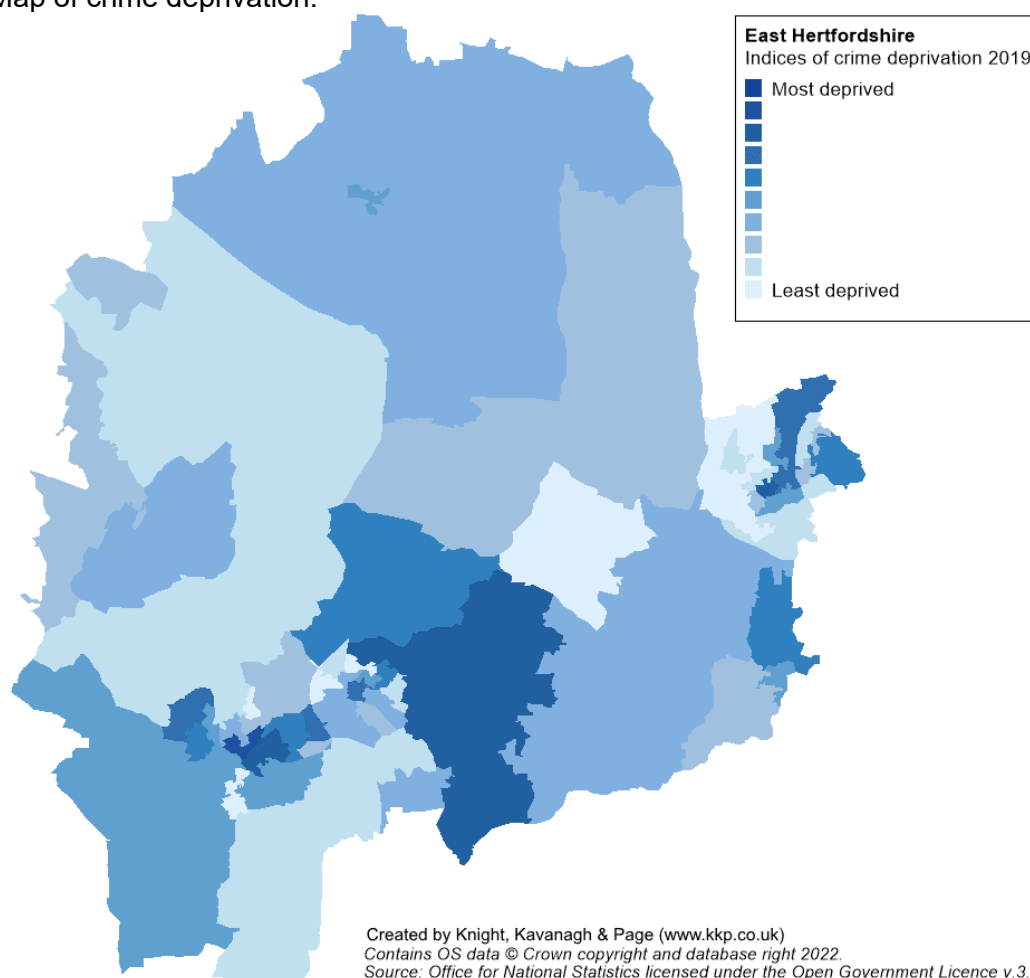
During the 12 months to June 2023 the number of recorded crimes per '000 persons in the Hertfordshire area was 63.7. (2022 MYE) This is considerably lower than the equivalent rate for England and Wales - which was 92.5. The number of recorded crimes in the Hertfordshire area has risen (by 1.4%) since June 2022 (2021 Census). The number for England and Wales has risen by 1.1% over the same period.

Table 2.2: Comparative crime rates: Hertfordshire and England & Wales.

Authority/area	Recorded crime (Jul '22 – Jun '23)	Population 2022 MYE	Recorded crime per 1,000 population
Hertfordshire	76,684	1,204,588	63.7
England & Wales	5,572,143	60,238,038	92.5

As an alternative to the crime figures for police force areas the Index of Deprivation measures the risk of personal and material crime at a more local level. In East Hertfordshire, 7.1% of the population are in the top three cohorts most at risk compared to 30.0% nationally.

Figure 2.6: Map of crime deprivation.



Income and benefits dependency (Data source: Nomis 2023)

The median figure for full-time earnings (2023) in East Hertfordshire is £45,038; the comparative rate for East is £36,697 (-18.6%) and for Great Britain it is £ 35,496 (-21.2%). 1,805 people in East Hertfordshire claimed out of work benefits⁸ in May 2024. This is an increase of 10.4% compared to March 2020 (1,635).

Deprivation (Data source: 2019 indices of deprivation, MHCLG)

Relative to other parts of the country East Hertfordshire experiences low levels of deprivation; less than 1 in 100 of the district's population (0.9%) falls within areas covered by the country's three most deprived cohorts compared to a national average of c.30%. Conversely, 77.1% live in the three least deprived groupings in the country, this compares to a 'norm' of c.30%. The pattern is broadly replicated for health but not to the same extent.

None of East Hertfordshire's population falls within the areas covered by the three most deprived cohorts, and only 1 in 42 (2.4%) fall within the areas covered by the five most deprived cohorts, this compares to a national average of c.48.8%. Conversely, 91.6% live in the three least deprived groupings compared to a 'norm' of c.31.3%.

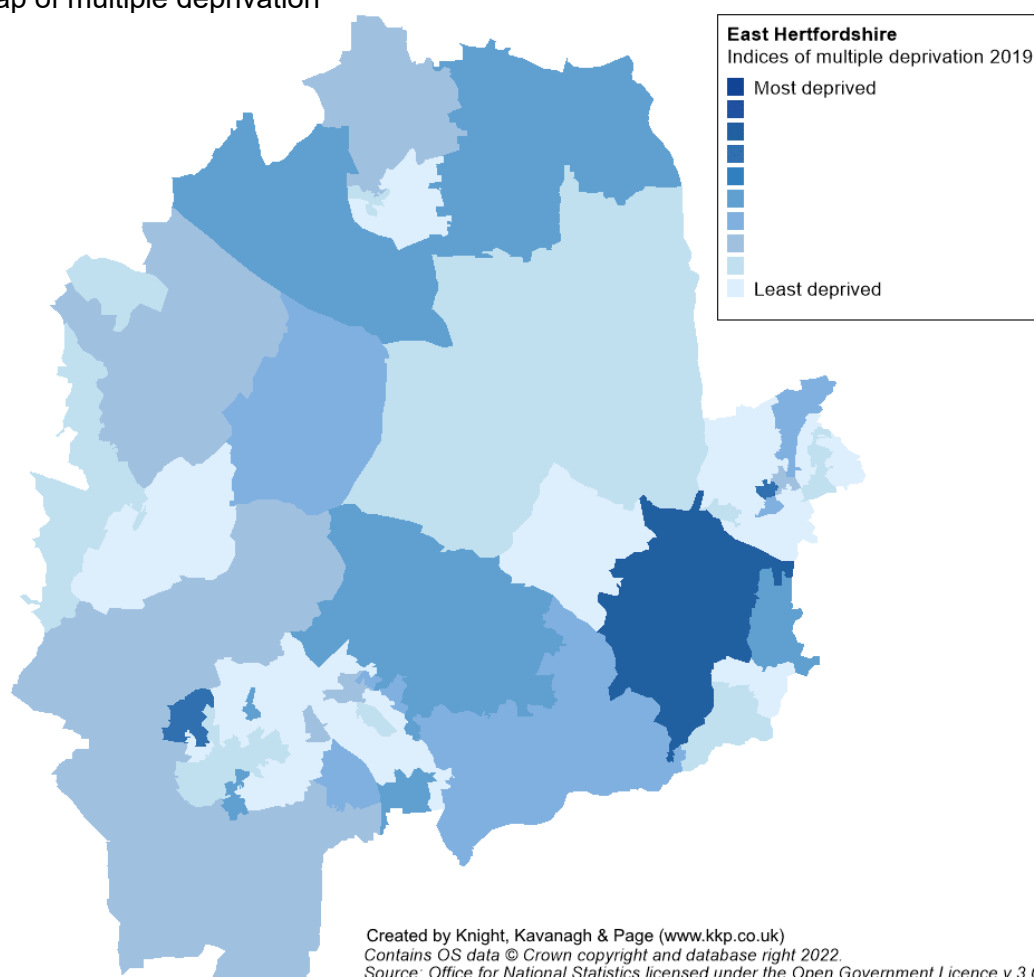
⁸ This includes both Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Universal Credit. Universal credit also includes other benefits including employment and support allowance (ESA) and child tax credits.

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Table 2.3: IMD cohorts – multiple deprivation in East Hertfordshire.

10% bands	Population in band	%	Cumulative %
Most deprived 0-10	0	0.0%	0.0%
10.1-20	0	0.0%	0.0%
20.1-30	1,323	0.9%	0.9%
30.1-40	4,332	3.0%	3.9%
40.1-50	0	0.0%	3.9%
50.1-60	14,154	9.8%	13.7%
60.1-70	13,234	9.2%	22.9%
70.1-80	17,097	11.8%	34.7%
80.1-90	33,411	23.1%	57.8%
Least deprived 90.1-100	60,937	42.2%	100.0%

Figure 2.7: Map of multiple deprivation

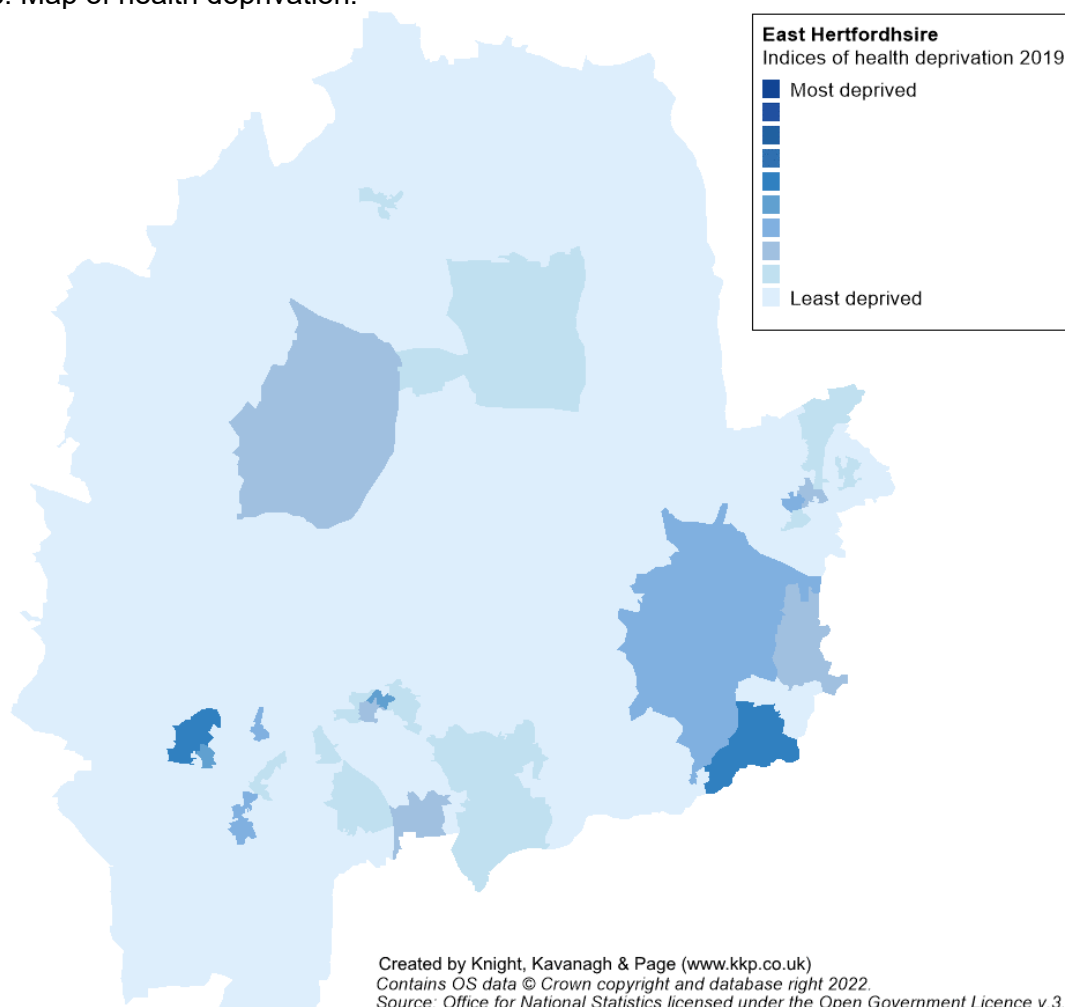


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Table 2.4: IMD cohorts – health deprivation in East Hertfordshire.

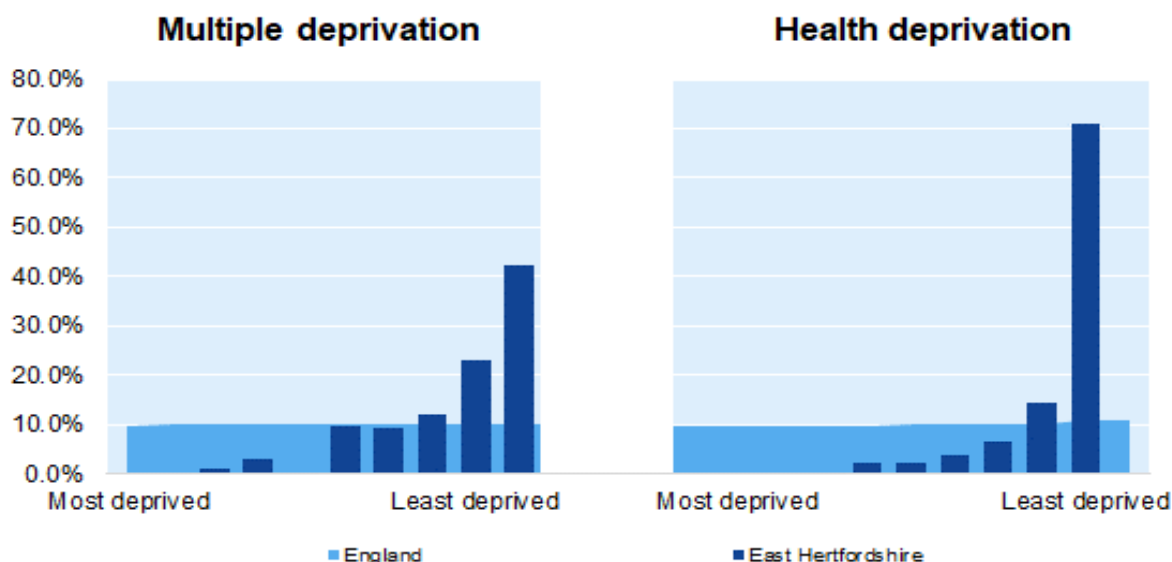
10% bands	Population in band	%	Cumulative %
Most deprived 0-10	0	0.0%	0.0%
10.1-20	0	0.0%	0.0%
20.1-30	0	0.0%	0.0%
30.1-40	0	0.0%	0.0%
40.1-50	3,425	2.4%	2.4%
50.1-60	3,188	2.2%	4.6%
60.1-70	5,557	3.8%	8.4%
70.1-80	9,173	6.3%	14.8%
80.1-90	20,692	14.3%	29.1%
Least deprived 90.1-100	102,453	70.9%	100.0%

Figure 2.8: Map of health deprivation.



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Figure 2.9: Index of multiple and health deprivation.



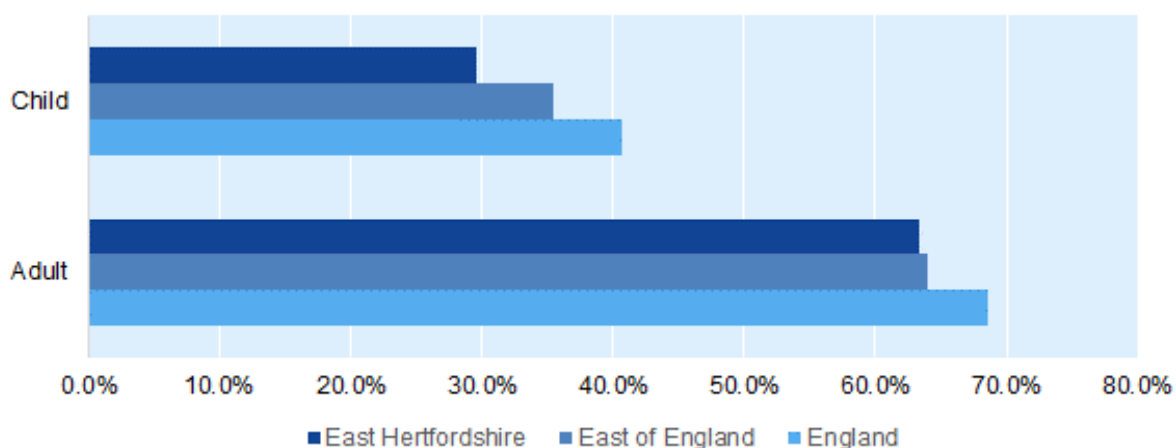
Health data (Data source: ONS)

In keeping with patterns seen alongside lower levels of health deprivation, life expectancy in East Hertfordshire is higher than the national figure; the male rate is currently 81.6 compared to 79.4 for England, and the female equivalent is 85.0 compared to 83.1 nationally⁹.

Weight and obesity (Data Sources: NCMP¹⁰ and NOO¹¹)

Obesity is widely recognised to be associated with health problems such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. At a national level, the resulting NHS costs attributable to overweight and obesity are projected to reach £9.7 billion by 2050, with wider costs to society estimated to reach £49.9 billion per year. These factors combine to make the prevention of obesity a major public health challenge. Adult and child rates of obesity or overweight in East Hertfordshire are below both national and regional rates.

Figure 2.10 – Adult and child obesity rates (2021)



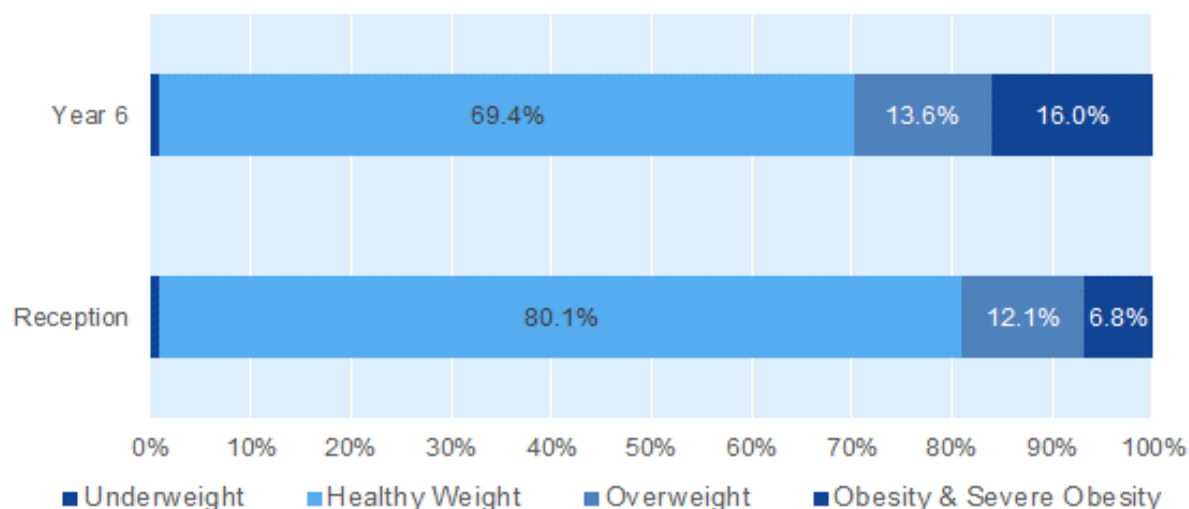
⁹ Office of National Statistics: Life Expectancy at Birth by local areas in the United Kingdom, 2020.

¹⁰ National Child Measurement Program

¹¹ National Obesity Observatory

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Figure 2.11 – Child weight – reception and year 6 (2021/22)



As with many other areas, obesity rates increase significantly between the ages of 4-11. One in 15 children (6.8%) in East Hertfordshire is obese in reception year at school and 12.1% are overweight. By Year 6 this rises to more than one in six (16.0%) obese and 13.6% overweight. In total, by Year 6 approaching three tenths (29.6%) are either overweight or obese.

Active Lives Survey (Data Source: Sport England November 2021/22)

This is based on 16+ year olds taking part in walking, cycling, fitness, dance and other sporting activity. A lower percentage of the EHDC population is inactive compared to England and East and a higher percentage is active. The definitions specified by Sport England as follows:

- ◀ Inactive - <30 minutes per week.
- ◀ Fairly Active – 30-149 minutes per week.
- ◀ Active – 150+ minutes per week.

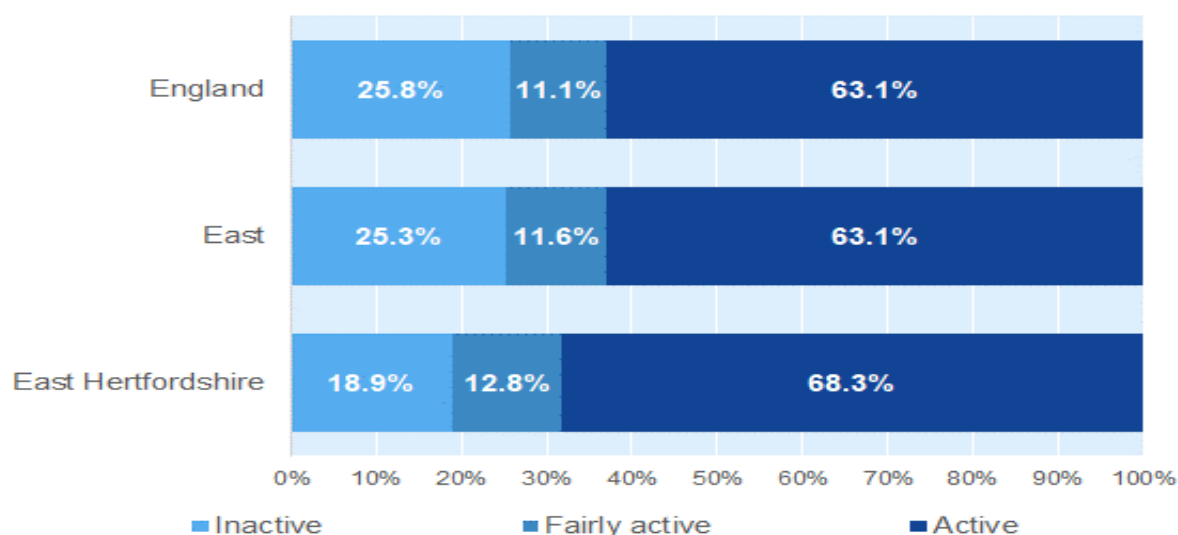
Table 2.5: Active Lives Survey results: November 2021/22.

	Inactive #	Inactive %	Fairly active #	Fairly active %	Active #	Active %
England	11,874,800	25.8%	5,131,700	11.1%	29,062,000	63.1%
East	1,305,500	25.3%	599,400	11.6%	3,257,000	63.1%
East Hertfordshire	23,000	18.9%	15,600	12.8%	83,200	68.3%

Rate/population totals for sport and physical activity levels (excluding gardening) of adults (16+) in English local authority areas.

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Figure 2.12: Levels of activity (Active Lives 2020-2021)



Popular sports (Data Source: Sport England Active Lives Survey November 2020/21)

This enables identification of the top five sports/activities within East Hertfordshire. In common with many other areas, fitness and cycling are among the most popular (and are known to cut across age groups and gender). In East Hertfordshire just over one third (36.6%) of adults take part in fitness activities, on average, at least twice a month. The next most popular activity is cycling in which 24.6% of adults participate in on a relatively regular basis.

Table 2.6: Most popular sports in East Hertfordshire.

Sport	East Hertfordshire #.	East Hertfordshire %	East #	East %	England #	England %
Fitness	44,600	36.6%	1,264,600	25.0%	11,374,600	24.9%
Cycling	29,900	24.6%	916,500	18.1%	7,472,900	16.4%
Athletics	28,800	23.6%	694,100	13.7%	6,252,000	13.7%
Swimming	11,800	9.7%	231,200	4.6%	2,001,600	4.4%
Football	4,000	3.3%	135,700	2.7%	1,451,700	3.2%

Sporting segmentation (Data source: Sport England Sports Market Segmentation web tool)

Sport England classifies the adult population via a series of 19 market segments which provide insight into the sporting behaviours of individuals throughout the country. The profiles cover a wide range of characteristics, from gender and age to the sports that people take part in, other interests, the newspapers that they read etc.

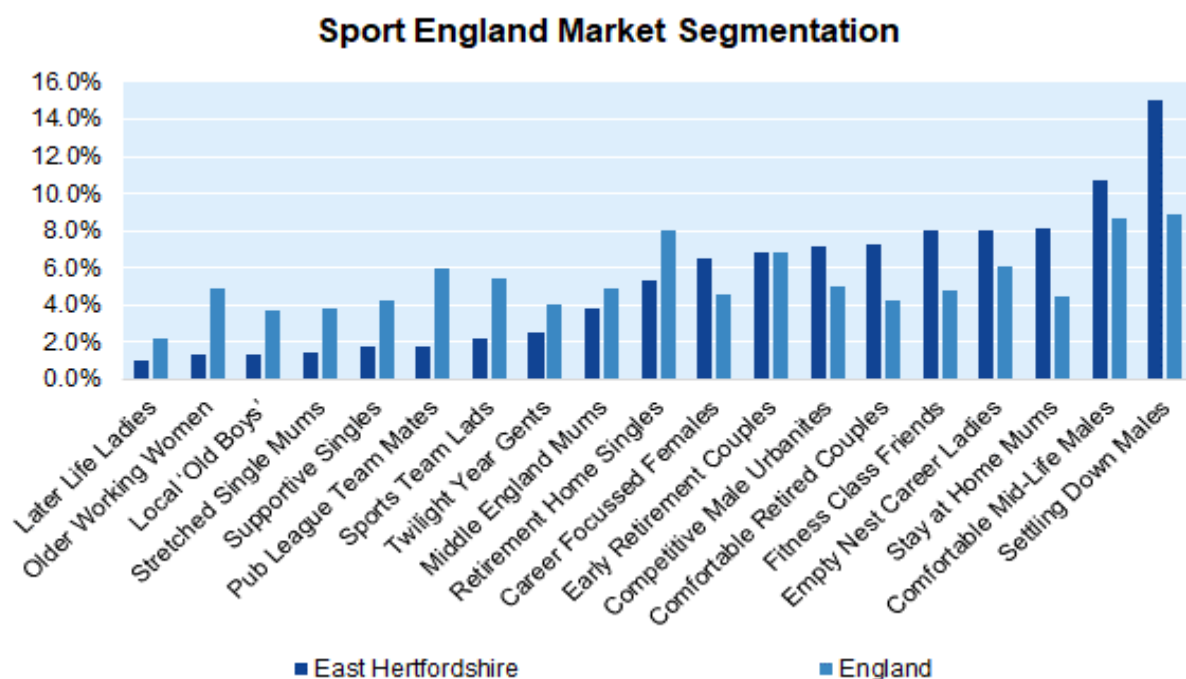
Knowing which segments are most dominant in the local population is important as it can help direct provision and programming. Segmentation also enables partners to make tailored interventions, communicate effectively with target market(s) and better understand participation in the context of life stage and lifecycles.

The segmentation profile for East Hertfordshire indicates 'Settling Down Males' to be the largest of the adult population at 15.1% (15,613) compared to a national average of 8.8%. This is followed by 'Comfortable Mid-Life Males' (10.7%) and 'Stay at Home Mums' (8.1%).

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At the other end of the spectrum, there are fewest 'Later Life Ladies' with only 0.9%, 'Older Working Women' (1.3%) and 'Local 'Old Boys'' (1.4%).

Figure 2.13: Sport England Market Segmentation – East Hertfordshire compared to England.



Mosaic (Data source: 2022 Mosaic analysis, Experian)

Mosaic 2023 is a similar consumer segmentation product. It classifies all 28.6 million households into 15 groups, 66 household types and 238 segments. This data is then used to paint a picture of UK consumers in terms of their social-demographics, lifestyles, culture and behaviour and tends to be used to draw out population characteristics for the backdrop to library usage and other non-sporting activities.

The following table shows the top five Mosaic classifications in East Hertfordshire compared to the country as a whole. The dominance of these five can be seen inasmuch as they represent almost three quarters (73.8%) of the EHDC population compared to a national equivalent rate of just over four in 10 (42.0%).

Table 2.7: Mosaic – main population segments in East Hertfordshire.

Mosaic group description	East Hertfordshire #	East Hertfordshire %	National %
1 - Domestic Success	33,062	21.8%	9.1%
2 - Prestige Positions	29,678	19.5%	7.2%
3 - Country Living	17,977	11.8%	6.6%
4 - Aspiring Homemakers	16,113	10.6%	11.0%
5 - Rental Hubs	15,277	10.1%	8.1%

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The largest segment profiled for East Hertfordshire is the Domestic Success group. It accounts for 21.8% of the adult population in the area, more than double the England rate (9.1%). This group is defined as high-earning families who live affluent lifestyles in upmarket homes situated in sought after residential neighbourhoods. Their busy lives revolve around their children and successful careers in higher managerial and professional roles.

Table 2.8: Dominant Mosaic profiles in East Hertfordshire

Mosaic group description	East Hertfordshire #	East Hertfordshire %	National %
1 - Domestic Success	33,062	21.8%	9.1%
2 - Prestige Positions	29,678	19.5%	7.2%
3 - Country Living	17,977	11.8%	6.6%
4 - Aspiring Homemakers	16,113	10.6%	11.0%
5 - Rental Hubs	15,277	10.1%	8.1%

Figure 2.15: Distribution of Mosaic segments in East Hertfordshire

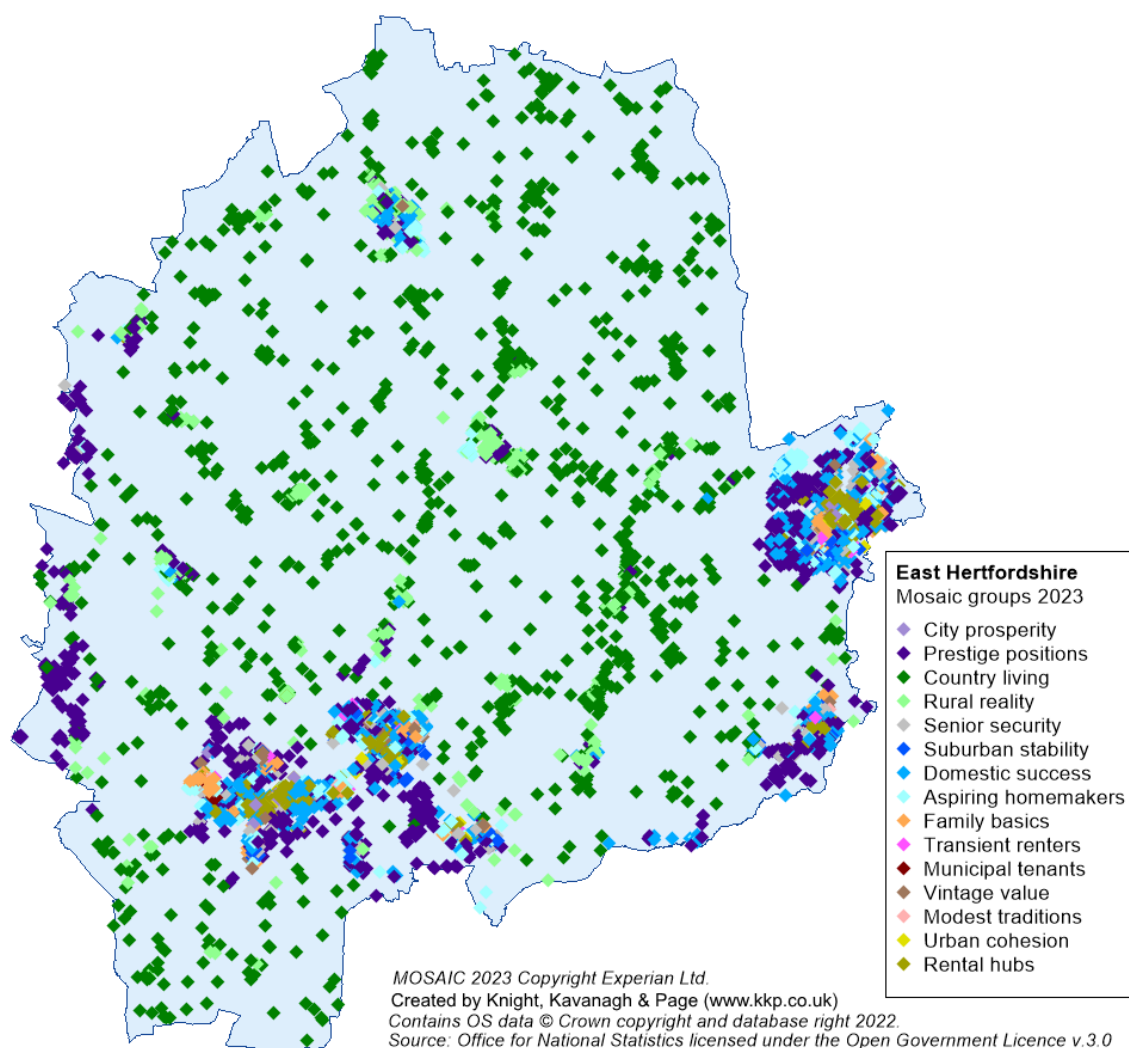
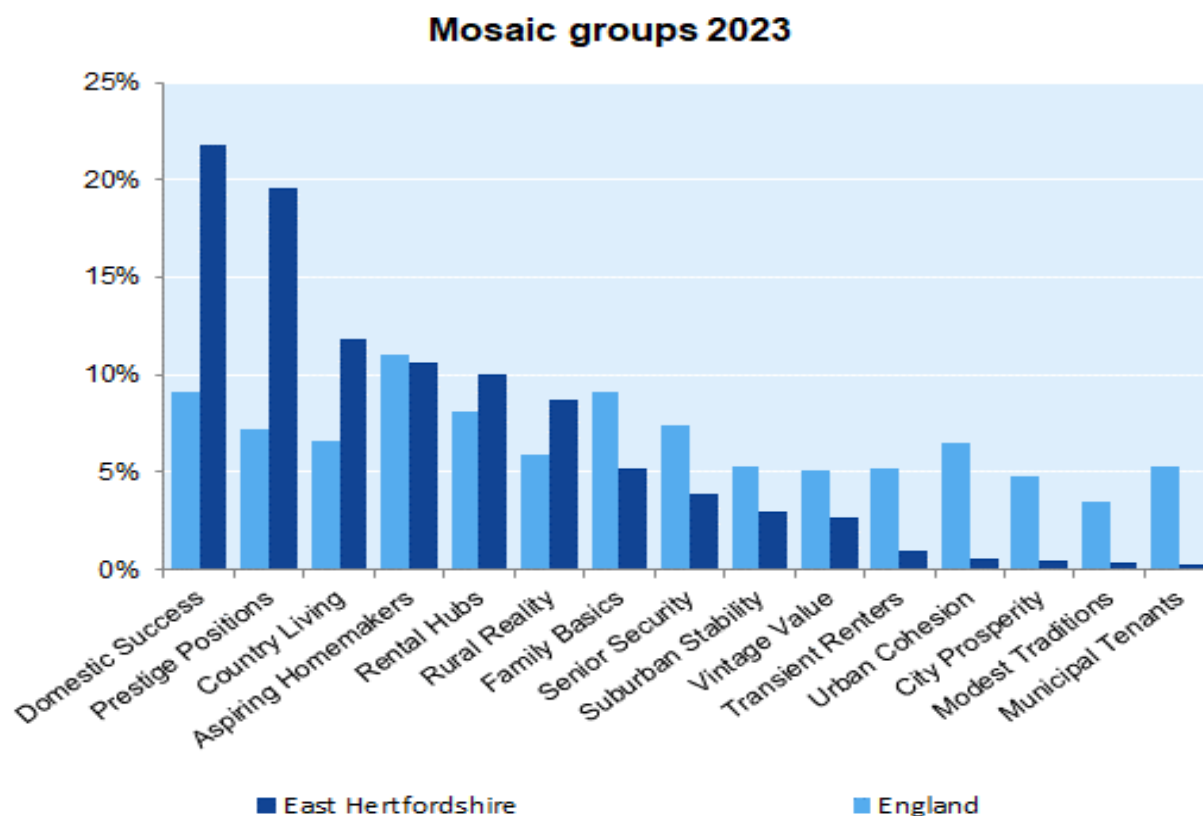


Figure 2.14: Mosaic segmentation – East Hertfordshire compared to nationally.



Population projections (Data Source: 2018-based population projections, ONS)

Strategic planning: Change over 25 years (2018 to 2043)

The most recent ONS projections indicate a rise of 10.0% in East Hertfordshire’s population (+14,766) over the 25 years from 2018 to 2043. Over this extended timeframe there are fluctuations at different points across the majority of age groups. Several key points for East Hertfordshire are outlined below:

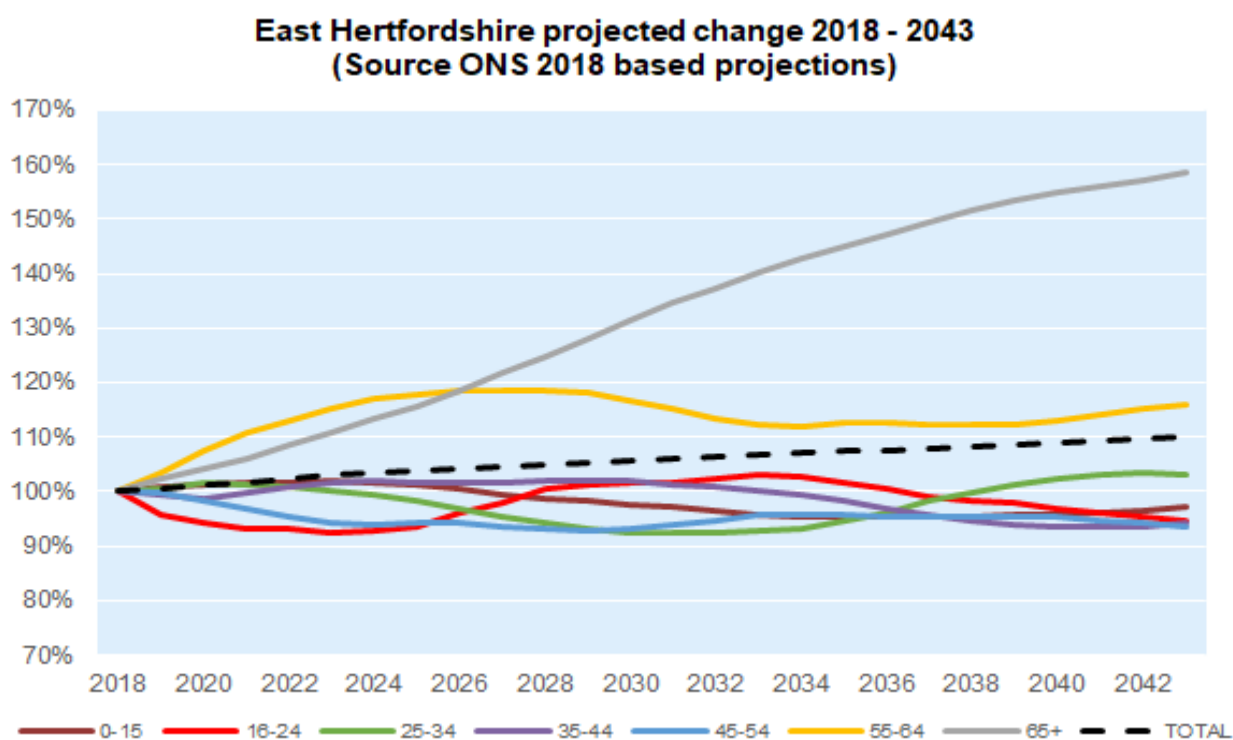
- ◆ The number of 0-15 year olds, falls by 670 (-2.3%) over the first half of the projection (to 2030).
- ◆ There is a predicted increase in the number of 16-24 year olds, +1.6% in the first period (+206) followed by a decline of -6.8% (-902) in the second period. (This may make achieving Sport England’s target to ‘increase the number of 14-25 year olds playing sport once a week’ difficult.
- ◆ There is a continuous increase in the numbers of persons aged 65+ and a need to consider varying sports offers for this age group. There is an increase of +31.4% (+8,331) in the first period continuing to rise to +58.5% (+15,529) between 2018 and 2043. While the age group represented 17.9% of East Hertfordshire’s population in 2018 it is projected to be 25.8% of the total by 2043 - over one quarter of the population.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Table 2.9: East Hertfordshire – ONS projected population (2018 to 2043)

Age (years)	2018 #	2030 #	2043 #	2018 %	2030 %	2043 %	2030 Change	2043 Change
0-15	29,244	28,574	28,392	19.7%	18.2%	17.4%	97.7%	97.1%
16-24	13,103	13,309	12,407	8.8%	8.5%	7.6%	101.6%	94.7%
25-34	16,586	15,342	17,128	11.2%	9.8%	10.5%	92.5%	103.3%
35-44	20,392	20,804	19,186	13.8%	13.3%	11.8%	102.0%	94.1%
45-54	23,632	21,978	22,087	16.0%	14.0%	13.6%	93.0%	93.5%
55-64	18,620	21,736	21,613	12.6%	13.9%	13.3%	116.7%	116.1%
65+	26,528	34,859	42,057	17.9%	22.3%	25.8%	131.4%	158.5%
Total	148,105	156,602	162,871	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	105.7%	110.0%

Figure 2.16: Projected population change (2018 – 2043).

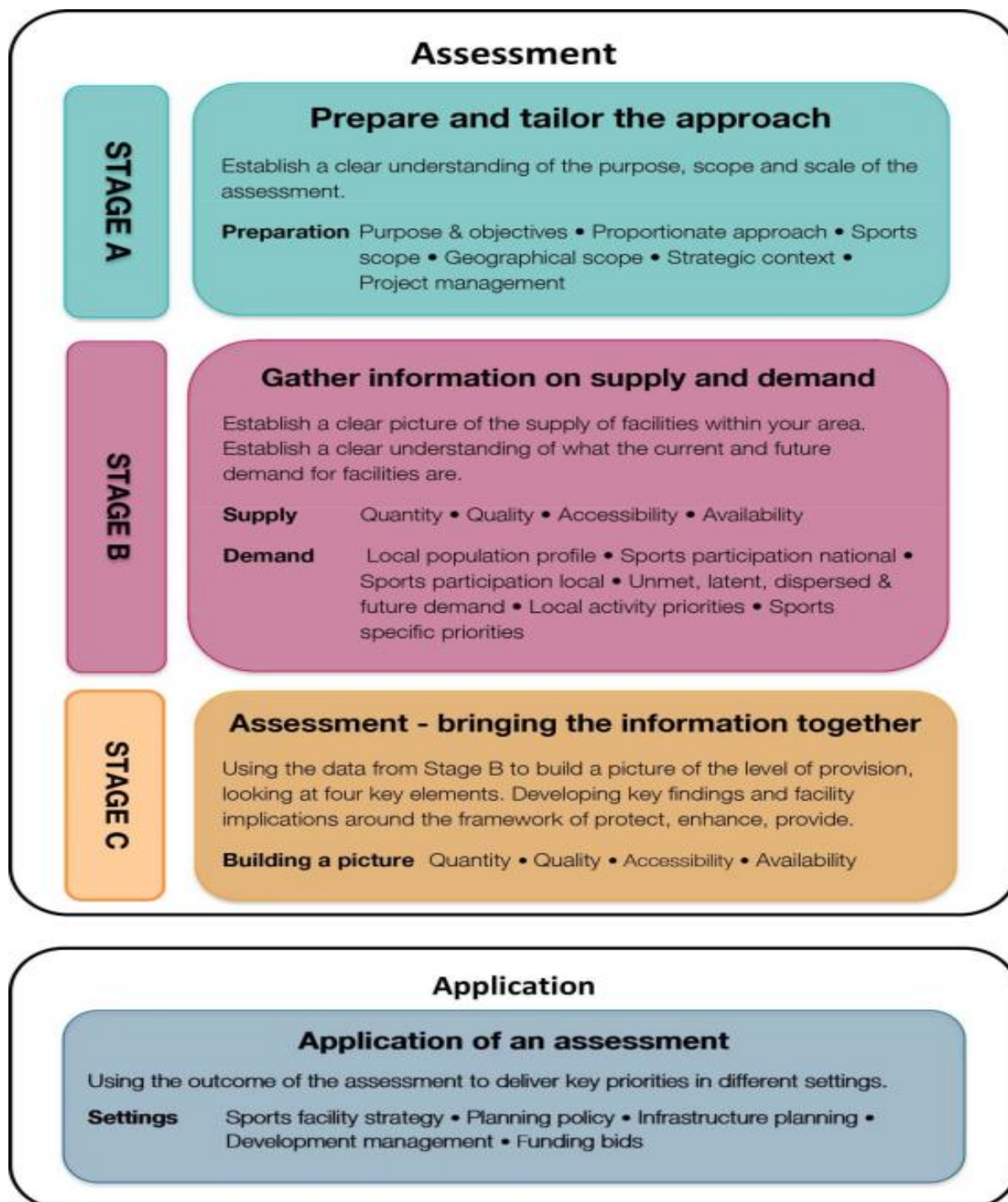


SECTION 3: SPORTS FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

3.1: Methodology

As noted above, the assessment of provision is based on the Sport England Sport England Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) for indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

Figure 3.1: Recommended approach



This is the recommended approach to undertaking a robust assessment of need for indoor and outdoor sports facilities (It excludes playing pitch provision which has been assessed separately within the Playing Pitch Strategy and uses Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance).

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ANOG was produced to help (local authorities) meet the requirements of the Government's NPPF, which states that: 'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. 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. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.' (NPPF, Paragraph 103).

Provision assessment involves analysis of quality, quantity, accessibility and availability for the identified facility types (e.g., sports halls and swimming pools). Each venue is considered on a 'like for like' basis within its own facility type, to enable it to be assessed for adequacy.

Demand background, data and consultation is variable, depending upon levels of consultation garnered. In some instances, national data is available whilst in others, it is possible to drill down and obtain very detailed local information. This is evident within the demand section.

The report considers the distribution of and interrelationship between facility types in the Authority and provides a clear indication of areas of high demand. It identifies where there is potential to provide improved and/or additional facilities to meet this demand and, where appropriate, to protect or rationalise the current stock.

3.2: Site visits

Active Places Power (APP) is used to provide baseline data to identify facilities in the study area. Where possible, assessments are undertaken in the presence of facility staff. This tends to add value as it enables access to be gained to more areas within venues and more detailed in-situ discussion of issues such as customer perspectives, quality, maintenance etc. Where possible it adds value to the audit (which is a 'snapshot' visit) enhancing the accuracy of insight gathered about the general user experience.

Site visits to key indoor facilities, those operated by other partners and the voluntary sector were undertaken between August and October 2024. Where a physical visit was not possible a telephone consultation with the facility/ site manager was delivered. Via the audit and via informal interviews with facility managers this report identifies 'relevance' and 'condition' and describes (e.g.):

- ◀ Facility and scale.
- ◀ Usage/local market.
- ◀ Ownership, management and access arrangements (plus, where available, facility owner aspirations).
- ◀ Management, programming, catchments, user groups, gaps.
- ◀ Location (urban/rural), access and accessibility.
- ◀ Condition, maintenance, existing improvement plans, facility 'investment status' (lifespan in the short, medium and long term).
- ◀ Existing/ planned adjacent facilities.

The assessment forms utilised capture quantity and quality data on a site-by-site basis and feeds directly into the main database allowing information to be stored and analysed. Quality assessments undertaken are rated in the categories set out in Table 3.1 overleaf. These ratings are applied throughout the report, regardless of facility type.

Ratings are based on non-technical visual assessments. These consider facility age and condition. Surfaces, tiles and walls, line markings and safety equipment are considered and

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problem areas such as mould, damage, leaks etc. are noted. The condition of fixtures, fittings and equipment is recorded.

Maintenance and facility 'wear and tear' is considered as is compliant with the Equality Act, although this is not studied in detail for the purposes of this report. When all data is collated, key facility elements receive an overall quality rating.

Table 3.1: Quality ratings of indoor sports facilities using ANOG

Quality rating	Description
Good	Facility is new (less than 10 years old) or recently invested in, up to date, clean, well maintained and presented. Fixtures, fittings, equipment and sports surfaces are new or relatively new with little if any wear and tear. They are well-lit with a modern feel. Ancillary facilities are new or well maintained, fit for purpose, modern and attractive.
Above average	Facility is in reasonable condition and is well maintained and presented. May be older but it is fit for purpose and safe. Fixtures, fittings, equipment and sports surfaces are in an acceptable condition but may show some signs of wear and tear. Ancillary facilities are good quality, but potentially showing signs of age and some wear and tear.
Below average	Facility is older and showing signs of age/poor quality. Fixtures, fittings, equipment and sports surfaces show signs of wear and tear. It is usable, but quality could be improved. The facility is not as attractive to customers and does not meet current expectations. Ancillary facilities are deteriorating, reasonable quality, but usable.
Poor	The facility is old and outdated. Fixtures, fittings, equipment and sports surfaces are aged, worn and/or damaged. The facility is barely usable and at times may have to be taken out of commission. The facility is unattractive to customers and does not meet basic expectations. Ancillary facilities are low quality and unattractive to use.

In addition to site visits, club and NGB consultation took place throughout the audit process. Club lists were built via desk research and NGB club finder utilisation, which were checked and challenged by the relevant NGB. Clubs were contacted on several occasions, and in some instances, promoted by the NGB representative to encourage a response.

3.3: Catchment areas

Applying catchments areas for facility types listed in sections 3-12 enables identification of areas currently not served. These vary from person to person, day to day, hour to hour. This problem is overcome by accepting the concept of 'effective catchment'; the distance travelled by around 75-80% of users (used in the Sport England Facilities Planning Model - FPM). Sport England data indicates that most people will travel up to 20 minutes to access sports facilities. This, coupled with KKP's experience of working in/with leisure facilities and use of local data enables identification of catchment areas for sports facilities as follows.

Table 3.2: Facility catchment areas

Facility type	Identified catchment area
Sport halls, health and fitness, swimming pools, squash courts.	20-minutes' walk/ 20 minutes' drive
Indoor bowls, tennis centre, gymnastics, combat sports.	30-minutes' drive
Village/community halls	800m radial catchment

SECTION 4: SPORTS HALLS

Indoor multi-purpose sports halls are prime venues for community sport catering for a range of sport and recreational activity. The standard methodology for measuring sports halls is based on the number of badminton courts contained within the floor area. They are of greatest value if of at least 3+ badminton courts in size with sufficient height to allow games such as badminton to be played. However, 4+ court sports halls provide greater flexibility and can accommodate major indoor team sports such as netball and basketball. They tend to have sufficient length to accommodate indoor cricket nets and indoor athletics and, thus, offer more flexibility than their 3-court counterpart. There is variance in the dimensions of 4-court halls; but only those which meet current Sport England Design Guidance of 34.5m x 20m can accommodate the full range of indoor sports, especially league/competition activity – at the right quality level.

Larger (e.g., 6-8+ court halls) can accommodate higher level training/competition and meet day-to-day need. Some accommodate more than one pitch/court increasing flexibility for training, competition and central venue leagues for sports such as netball.

In 2025 the Council commissioned Sport England to produce a Facilities Planning Model (FPM) analysis to better understand the future demand for sports hall provision based on changes to facilities and population growth. Where relevant, data from the FPM has been included in this section.

The FPM analysis provides a theoretical approach to supply and demand levels based on locality to provision and the quality of provision (based on the age/recent refurbishment of the facility). This is used to support KKP findings, which produces findings based on site assessment, consultation with providers/operators and clubs.

4.1: Supply

Quantity

There are 45 sports halls of all sizes accommodating 107 badminton courts in East Herts. Some venues have more than one activity/sports hall on site.

Table 4.1: All sports / activity halls in East Herts

Ref	Site	Courts
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	3
2	Amwell View School	1
2	Amwell View School	1
5	Aston Playing Field	1
7	Avanti Grange High School	4
8	Birchwood High School	4
8	Birchwood High School	1
10	Bishop's Stortford College	4
14	Braughing Playing Fields	0
20	Edwinstree C of E Middle School	1
22	Freman College	2
22	Freman College	1
22	Freman College	4
23	Gilston and Eastwick Village Hall	0
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	8
28	Heath Mount School	4
32	The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	4

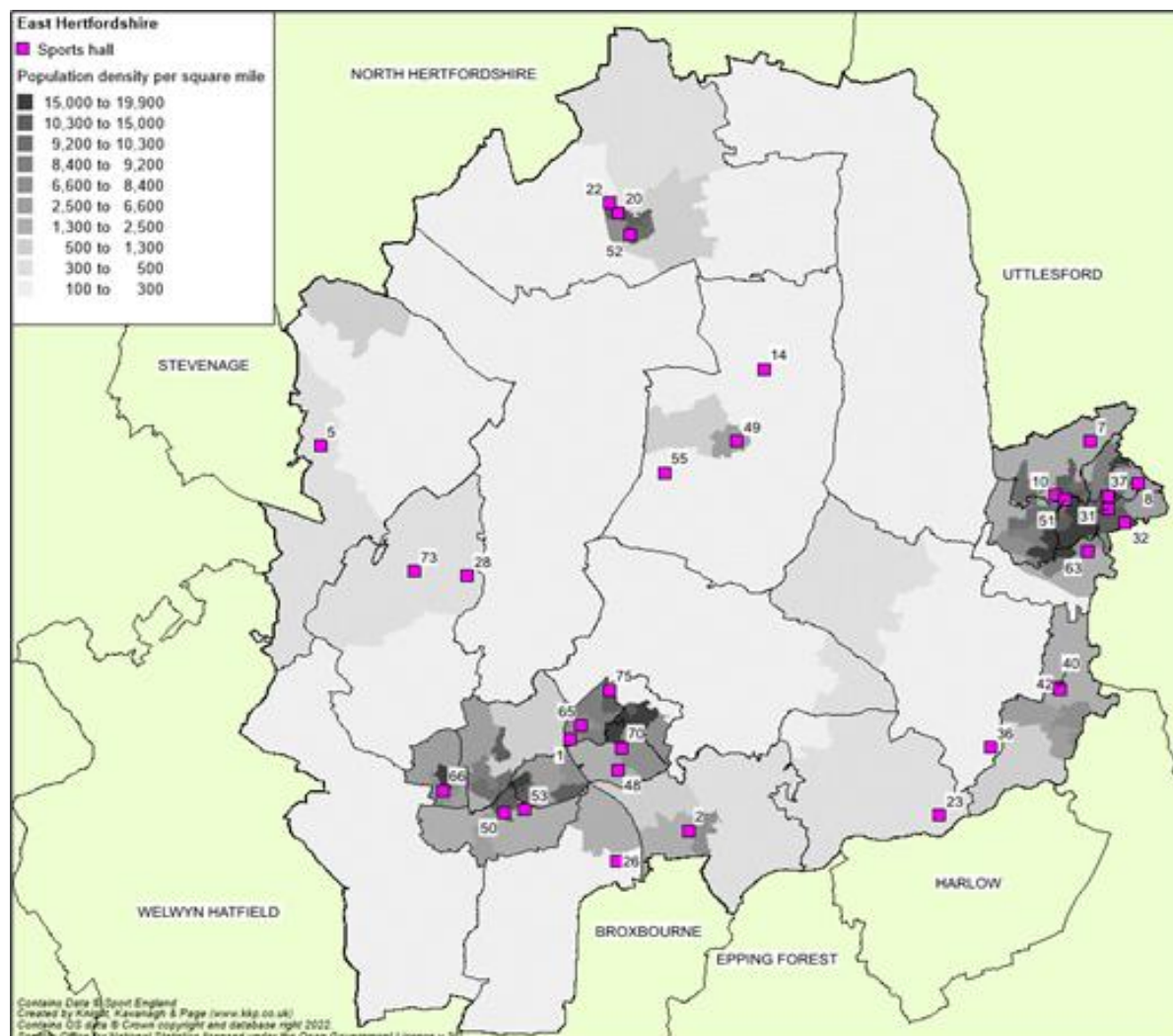
EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Ref	Site	Courts
36	High Wych CE Primary School	0
37	Hockerill Anglo-European College	1
37	Hockerill Anglo-European College	4
40	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	4
42	Leventhorpe School	1
42	Leventhorpe School	1
48	Presdales School	1
48	Presdales School	0
48	Presdales School	4
49	Ralph Sadleir School	1
50	Richard Hale School	1
50	Richard Hale School	4
51	Saint Mary's Catholic School	4
52	Seth Ward Community Centre	1
53	Simon Balle School	1
55	St Edmunds College/Prep School	3
63	Bishop's Stortford High School	6
63	Bishop's Stortford High School	0
63	Bishop's Stortford High School	2
65	The Chauncy School	1
65	The Chauncy School	4
66	The Sele School	2
66	The Sele School	1
70	Ware Drill Hall	4
73	Watton at Stone Community Hall and Recreation Ground	1
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	0

(0 court halls identified in Active Places but not large enough to accommodate 1 badminton court)

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Figure 4.1: All sports / activity halls in East Herts – regardless of size



This needs assessment considers all 3+ court facilities in East Herts. Smaller halls and those which function as specialist sports venues (e.g., dance studios) are excluded.

There are 26 sports/activity halls in East Herts with two or fewer badminton courts marked out. While often appropriate for mat sports, exercise to music and similar provision, the size of these smaller halls limits the range and scale of recreational/sporting activity that can be accommodated.

Several sites have more than one activity/sports hall. One example is Wodson Park Sports centre, which has three. As per the note above, only sites with sports halls containing three or more marked badminton courts were subject to assessment for the purpose of the needs assessment as they can accommodate a range of sports and be potentially used by the community depending on the access policy.

Nineteen sports halls in East Herts have 3+ marked badminton courts (totalling 84 badminton courts). Figure 4.2 shows the location of all 3+ court sports halls and Table 4.2 details these locations.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Figure 4.2: Sports halls with 3+ courts on population density

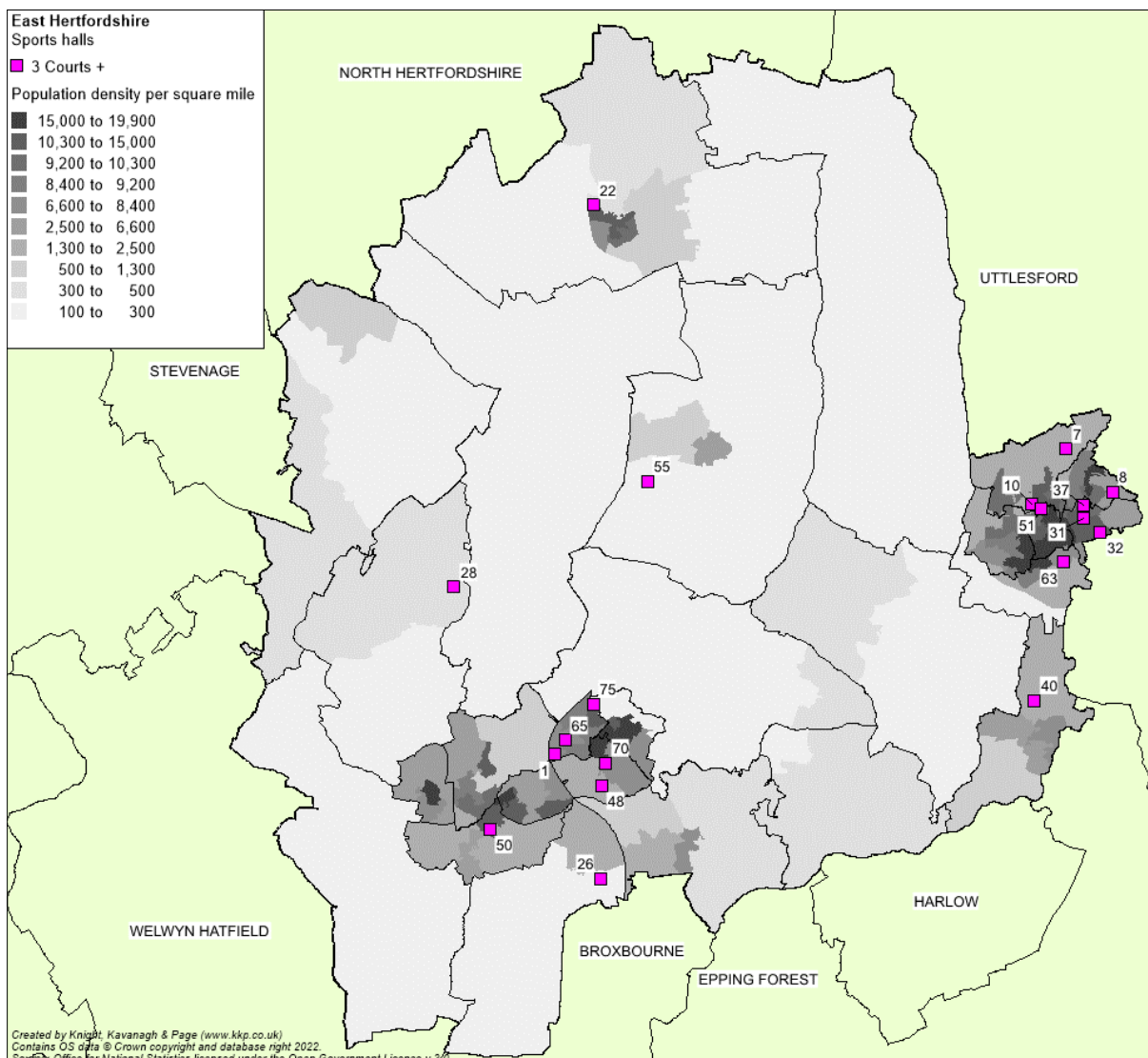


Table 4.2: Sports halls with 3+ badminton courts

Ref	Site	Courts
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	3
7	Avanti Grange High School	4
8	Birchwood High School	4
10	Bishop's Stortford College	4
22	Freman College	4
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	8
28	Heath Mount School	4
31	The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	4
37	Hockerill Anglo-European College	4
40	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	4
48	Presdales School	4
50	Richard Hale School	4
51	Saint Mary's Catholic School	4

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Ref	Site	Courts
55	St Edmunds College & Prep School	3
63	Bishop's Stortford High School	6
65	The Chauncy School	4
70	Ware Drill Hall	4
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6

In line with most other local authorities, 4-court sports halls are the most common size hall. As noted, larger (4+ court) halls can cater for sports that require more floor space such as futsal and handball or offer multiple courts for events and competitions. The largest sports hall in East Herts is located at Haileybury Sports Complex; this has eight marked badminton courts.

Sports halls with 3+ courts are generally well distributed across the main population areas of Ware, Hertford and Bishop's Stortford. The rest of the District is largely rural, hence the limited supply in the District's north and central areas.

Facility quality

All 3+ court sports halls were subject to non-technical quality assessments. Assessments took place between August and October 2024. Any investment made after this date is not accounted for. Known or planned investment is mentioned in the site notes. Two sites were not assessed, these are St Edmunds College and Prep School and the Bishops Stortford High School.

The Bishops Stortford High School was under construction at the time of audit. The sports hall structure is complete and Junckers flooring has been laid; however, the lines have not been marked and general decor remained incomplete. As a result, it could not be assessed, but it has since opened and is assumed to be good quality. The School reported having issues with the contractors who were commissioned to carry out the work and could not confirm when it is expected to open for school and public use. It is likely to be a good quality facility when fully completed given its design and layout.

A site visit to St Edmunds College and Prep School was arranged, however, the visit could not be accommodated on the day by the school. It was contacted several times following the failed visit to try to assess facility quality and community use, however, no response was received.

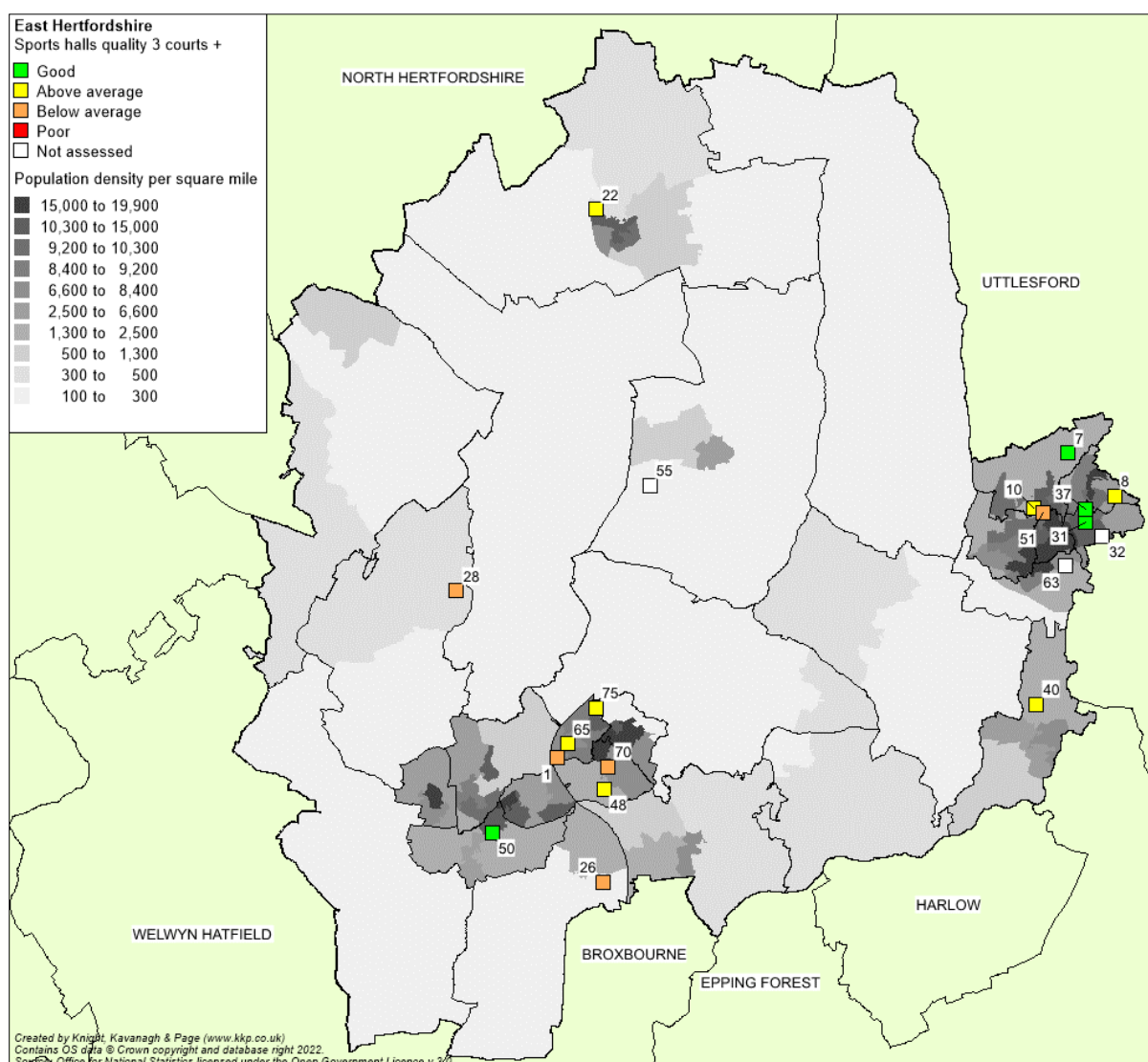
Table 4.3: Quality of 3+ sports halls

KKP ref	Site	Courts	Court condition
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	3	Below average
7	Avanti Grange High School	4	Good
8	Birchwood High School	4	Above average
10	Bishop's Stortford College	4	Above average
22	Freman College	4	Above average
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	8	Below average
28	Heath Mount School	4	Below average
31	The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	4	Good
37	Hockerill Anglo-European College	4	Good
40	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	4	Above average
48	Presdales School	4	Above average

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

KKP ref	Site	Courts	Court condition
50	Richard Hale School	4	Good
51	Saint Mary's Catholic School	4	Below average
55	St Edmunds College & Prep School	3	Not assessed
63	The Bishop's Stortford High School	6	Not assessed
65	The Chauncy School	4	Above average
70	Ware Drill Hall	4	Below average
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6	Below average
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6	Above average

Figure 4.3: Quality of 3+ sports halls on population density



There are four good quality sports halls (16 courts), seven are above average (30 courts) and six are below average (29 courts). As noted above, two sports halls (total; 9 courts) were not assessed. In terms of geography, residents in Bishop's Stortford have access to a better supply of good quality sports halls than those in Ware and Hertford. Changing room provision for sports halls at education sites was largely unassessed due to pupil use at the time of the site visit. In general, changing room quality is deemed to be commensurate with sports hall quality and they tend to be less modern than changing facilities at public leisure sites.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Four sports halls in East Herts are good quality as a result of recent construction. The 4-court hall at Avanti Grange High School opened in 2023. It has significant court runoffs, attractive blue décor and good quality lighting. It features a community entrance which allows easy access outside of school hours. Indoor cricket nets are scheduled for installation in November 2024. The 4-court sports hall at Richard Hale School features green walls which meet Badminton England's guidelines, a good quality sprung wooden floor and clear line markings, plus LED lighting.

The Herts and Essex Sports Centre was built in 2019. The wooden flooring is good quality and has clear line markings for traditional sports hall sports including handball and volleyball. The décor is attractive, with modern blue walls and good LED lighting. Hockerill Anglo-European College was also built in 2019 and meets Sport England's guideline for a 4-court sports hall. It features large run off space with a good quality flooring and line markings.

The 4-court sport hall at Freman College is of above average quality. It is 10-years old has relatively modern décor and a new vinyl floor (installed in 2022). User groups report that this provides insufficient grip underfoot in comparison to the old surface and, as a result, usage has decreased. The hall is in a frame and fabric structure building, so maintaining sufficient temperatures is challenging. LED lighting was installed in 2023.

Birchwood High School has an above quality 4-court sports halls which has recently been refurbished. LED lights have been installed, dividing nets replaced and adjustable basketball hoops fitted. Roof and heating system work was carried out in 2023. The School reports that prior to the improvements, the user experience was encouraging clubs to use other local facilities.

Leventhorpe Leisure Centre features an attractive 4-court sports hall with a sprung wooden floor and good line markings. The floor has had water damage due to a frequent roof leak. A temporary fix 'patch repair' cost the School £12,000 but a new roof will be required to correct the issue permanently. The hall has significant courtside run off space and a very high ceiling. This means changing the lightbulbs is time consuming and expensive.

A regular maintenance programme is in place at Presdales School. The floor is sanded and re-sealed every 24-months, at which time walls are washed and repainted if required. The wall décor is suitable for traditional indoor sports such as badminton. Work has also been undertaken to fix a leak in the roof. The Chauncy School features a blue vinyl floor and modern décor. Neither school has installed sports hall LED lighting and both would like to - to help save energy.

The above average hall at Wodson Park Sports Centre is 25 years old, however the original green rubber flooring is still in reasonable condition. The lighting is good and the general décor is acceptable. The run-off space around the courts is sufficient and bleacher seating is available.

Table 4.4: Reported quality issues at below average and poor-quality sports halls

Site name	Rating	Audit findings
Allenburys Sports and Social Club	Below average	An old-style sports hall with dated décor and hard wooden flooring. The floor was replaced six years ago but is subject to significant wear and tear from GSK employees.
Heath Mount School	Below average	A tired sports hall with worn wooden flooring. The décor is old fashioned and lines need to be remarked.
Haileybury Sports Complex	Below average	The largest sports hall in East Herts. Its two 4-court halls are separated by removable barriers enabling it to accommodate indoor hockey. The floor is worn and it has a low ceiling relative to other 4-court sports halls. LED lighting is good and general décor reasonable. It will need modernisation (to the walls and floor) within the next five years.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Site name	Rating	Audit findings
Saint Mary's Catholic School	Below average	A large sports hall with sufficient court runoff space. Lighting was upgraded to LED in 2022. It is of below average in quality due to the old wooden floor which needs refurbishment/line marking.
Ware Drill Hall	Below average	This sports hall has an old wooden floor with a concrete base. It was refinished and relined in 2023. The timber wall cladding is prone to damage by ball sports. Court runoffs are narrow and the pitched ceiling is low where it meets the walls, making it less suitable for competitive badminton.
Wodson Park Sports Centre	Below average	This 6-court sports halls is 37 years old. The floor has been refurbished within the last 10-years but, the general décor and the inefficiency of the heating system means the facility is of below average quality.

Table 4.5: Date of opening and refurbishment of sports halls

Site	Year built / opened	Last refurbished	Time since opened/refurbished
Allenburys Sports and Social Club	1998	-	26
Avanti Grange High School	2023	-	1
Birchwood High School	2007	2023	1
Bishop's Stortford College	1980	-	44
Freman College	2013	2022	2
Haileybury Sports Complex	1997	2010	14
Heath Mount School	2000	-	24
The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	2019	-	5
Hockerill Anglo-European College	2019	-	5
Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	2011	2014	10
Presdales School	2009	2022	2
Richard Hale School	2021	-	3
Saint Mary's Catholic School	2006	-	18
St Edmunds College & Prep School	1986	1996	28
The Bishop's Stortford High School	2024	-	0
The Chauncy School	2017	-	7
Ware Drill Hall	1899	2023	1
Wodson Park Sports Centre	1989	2012	12
Wodson Park Sports Centre	1997	-	27

Most sports halls are either relatively modern or have benefitted from some form of refurbishment in the last 20 years. At sites where access was not gained, refurbishment may have taken place more recently than suggested, for example, at St Edmunds College and Prep School. The sports hall at Bishops Stortford College is likely to have received investment since 1980 given its quality (above average). However, detail with regard to this was not provided during the site visit.

Accessibility

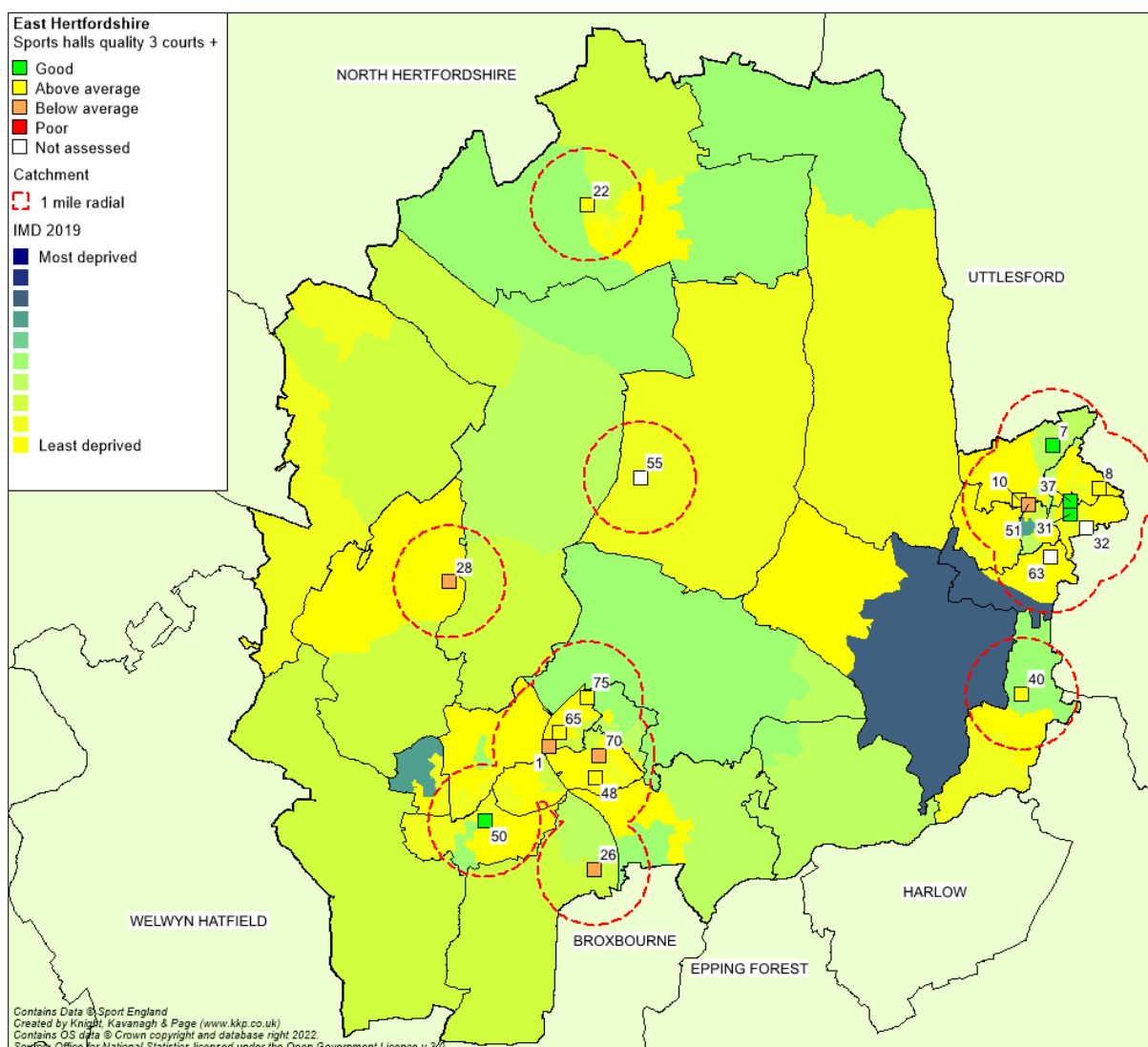
Sports hall accessibility is influenced by how far people are willing and able to travel to and from them. Walk and drive-time catchments are applied to determine facility accessibility to different communities. The normal (industry) standard is a 20-minute walk time (one-mile radial catchment) for urban areas and a 20-minute drive time for rural areas.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Table 4.6: Accessibility to sports halls with 3+ courts

IMD 10% bands	Persons	Population %	Persons inside catchment	Population inside (%)	Persons outside catchment	Population outside (%)
0 - 10	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10.1 - 20	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
20.1 - 30	1,323	0.9%	126	0.1%	1,197	0.8%
30.1 - 40	4,332	3.0%	1,309	0.9%	3,023	2.1%
40.1 - 50	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
50.1 - 60	14,154	9.8%	6,975	4.8%	7,179	5.0%
60.1 - 70	13,234	9.2%	8,979	6.2%	4,255	2.9%
70.1 - 80	17,097	11.8%	8,200	5.7%	8,897	6.2%
80.1 - 90	33,411	23.1%	18,571	12.9%	14,840	10.3%
90.1 - 100	60,937	42.2%	47,933	33.2%	13,004	9.0%
Total	144,488	100.0%	92,093	63.7%	52,395	36.3%

Figure 4.4: All sports halls with 3+ courts on IMD with one-mile radial catchments



In East Herts, 63.7% of residents live within a one mile walk of a sports hall. This reduces to 58.9% of residents (85,044) when applying the same calculation to sports halls with community

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access. Of the 1,323 residents living in areas of higher deprivation in East Herts, 126 live within 1-mile of a community accessible sports hall.

12.4% of the population in East Herts do not have access to a car (2021 Census). This means that given the rural nature of the District, these residents are reliant on public transport or walking/cycling to get to a sports hall. This can add to the cost of participation.

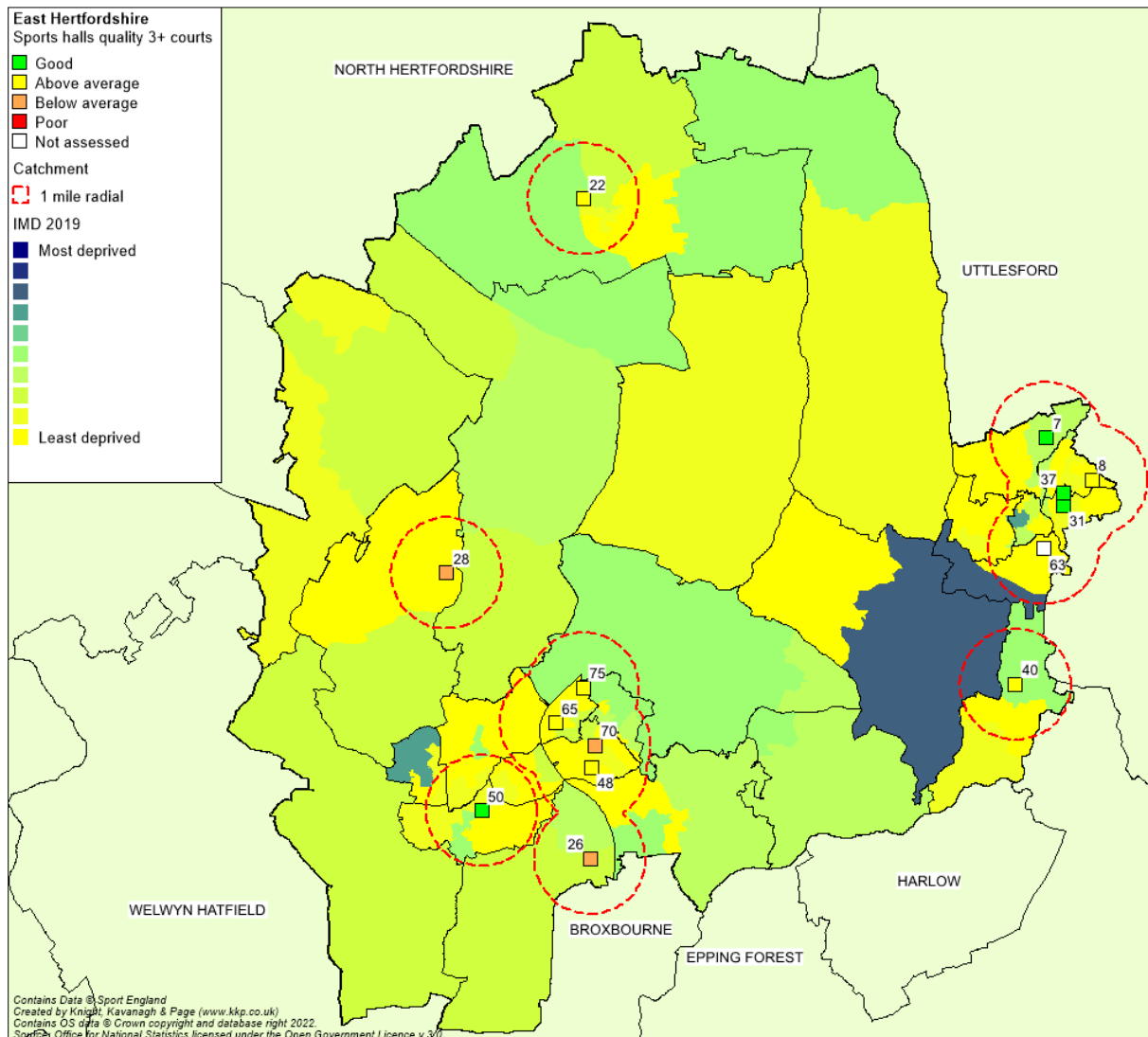
The whole East Herts' population lives within a 20-minute drive of a publicly accessible sports hall with 3+ badminton courts, or a sports hall of equivalent dimensions.

Table 4.7: Accessibility to community use sports halls with 3+ courts

IMD 10% bands	Persons	Population %	Persons inside catchment	Population inside (%)	Persons outside catchment	Population outside (%)
0 - 10	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10.1 - 20	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
20.1 - 30	1,323	0.9%	126	0.1%	1,197	0.8%
30.1 - 40	4,332	3.0%	1,309	0.9%	3,023	2.1%
40.1 - 50	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
50.1 - 60	14,154	9.8%	6,975	4.8%	7,179	5.0%
60.1 - 70	13,234	9.2%	8,883	6.1%	4,351	3.0%
70.1 - 80	17,097	11.8%	8,190	5.7%	8,907	6.2%
80.1 - 90	33,411	23.1%	16,838	11.7%	16,573	11.5%
90.1 - 100	60,937	42.2%	42,723	29.6%	18,214	12.6%
Total	144,488	100.0%	85,044	58.9%	59,444	41.1%

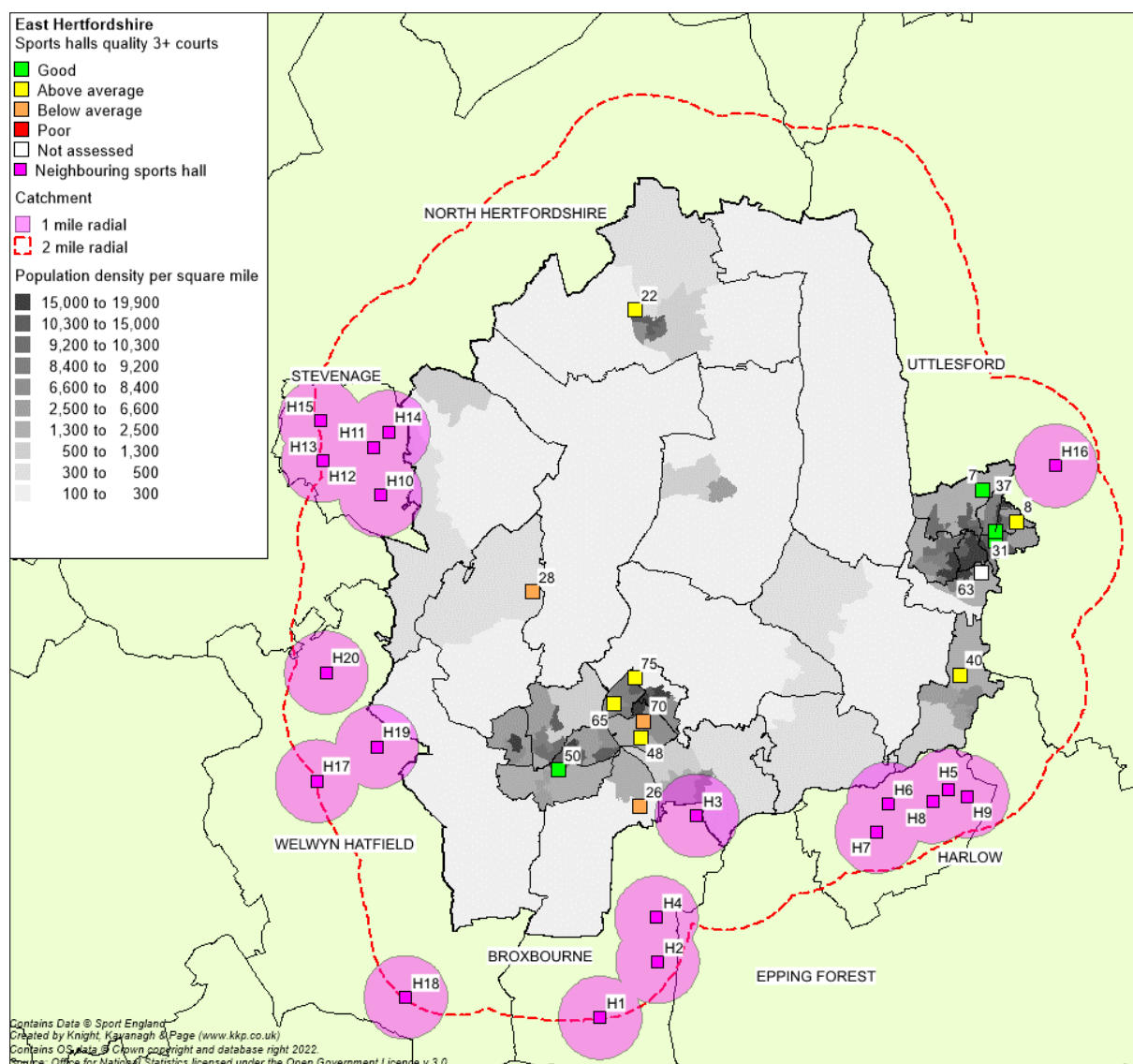
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Figure 4.5: Community use sports halls with 3+ courts on IMD with one-mile radial catchments



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Figure 4.6: Sports halls on IMD background based on 1 and 2-mile radial catchment.



Facilities in neighbouring authorities

Accessibility is influenced by facilities located outside the authority. There are 20 sports halls with 3+ courts located within two miles (indicative of how far people may travel) of the East Herts boundary. They offer 94 courts, 16 of which are in Broxbourne, 25 in Harlow, 31 in Stevenage, 18 in Welwyn Hatfield and four in Uttlesford.

Table 4.8: Neighbouring sports halls with 3+ courts

Map ID	Site	Courts	Access	District
H1	Goffs Academy	4	Sports club / CA	Broxbourne
H2	Hertford Regional College	4	Sports club / CA	Broxbourne
H3	John Warner Sports Centre	4	Pay and play	Broxbourne
H4	The Broxbourne School	4	Sports club / CA	Broxbourne
H5	Batts Table Tennis Club	3	Sports club / CA	Harlow
H6	Burnt Mill Academy	4	Sports club / CA	Harlow
H7	Harlow Leisurezone	8	Pay and play	Harlow
H8	Mark Hall Sports Centre	6	Sports club / CA	Harlow

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Map ID	Site	Courts	Access	District
H9	St Nicholas School	4	Sports club / CA	Harlow
H10	Barnwell School (Upper)	4	Sports club / CA	Stevenage
H11	Marriotts Sports Centre	4	Pay and play	Stevenage
H12	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre	8	Pay and play	Stevenage
H13	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre	8	Pay and play	Stevenage
H14	The Nobel School	4	Sports club / CA	Stevenage
H15	The Thomas Alleyne Academy	3	Sports club / CA	Stevenage
H16	Mountfitchet Romeera Leisure Centre	4	Sports club / CA	Uttlesford
H17	Gosling Sports Park	5	Pay and play	Welwyn Hatfield
H18	Queenswood School	6	Sports club / CA	Welwyn Hatfield
H19	Ridgeway Academy	4	Pay and play	Welwyn Hatfield
H20	Sherrardswood School	3	Sports club / CA	Welwyn Hatfield

(NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club / community association use)

Availability and facility management

Management and ownership vary. Twelve of the fourteen 3+ court halls are managed by the education sector, whilst EHDC does not own any such venues. Consultation with Everyone Active identified that commercial considerations have been a driving factor in the removal of sports hall spaces within public leisure sites due to limited identified demand.

All school halls are owned and managed in house. This helps to keep the cost of hiring the facilities lower but can limit usage unless dedicated roles are created to organise/drive facility bookings. There are no third-party lettings companies currently operating in relation to school sites in East Herts. The audit found the sports halls at the following sites to be unavailable for community use:

- ✦ Allenburys Sports and Social Club.
- ✦ Bishop's Stortford College.
- ✦ Saint Mary's Catholic School.
- ✦ St Edmunds College & Prep School.

Allenburys Sports and Social Club is a private members club on a long-term lease with Glaxosmithkline (GSK). It is accessible to employees of GSK, with a limit on the number friend/family memberships. It does not currently offer community use to ensure that GSK employees can access the facility for casual use or internal competitions, which are busy during weekday evenings. It stated that it could potentially offer daytime community use to the general public in the future if this was commercially viable.

Bishops Stortford College is a boarding school and often utilises its sports hall during evenings and weekends for pupils staying on site. It has an agreement with the Marylebone Cricket Club for use of its indoor cricket nets during the winter, however, no other community use takes place. Consultation with the School suggests that this is unlikely to change.

St Mary's Catholic School is not currently available to the community due to staffing issues, however, Stortford Archery Club has an agreement to use the sports hall on Saturdays. It has a dedicated keyholder who is responsible for opening and closing the site meaning a school staff member is not required. The School and Club have a long-standing relationship.

Desk research suggests that St Edmunds College and Prep School does not offer community use and its sports hall is retained for school use only. It did not respond to consultation requests and its disposition and future aspirations re community use are, thus, unknown.

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Once privately used (community unavailable) sports halls are removed from the analysis, there are 15 sports halls in East Herts with 3+ courts. This equates to 70 available courts.

Table 4.8: Ownership and management of 3+ court sports hall facilities with community access

Site name	Ownership	Management
Avanti Grange High School	Academy	In house
Birchwood High School	Academy	In house
Freman College	Further education	In house
Haileybury Sports Complex	Independent school	In house
Heath Mount School	Independent school	In house
The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	Secondary school	In house
Hockerill Anglo-European College	Academy	In house
Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	Academy	In house
Presdales School	Secondary school	In house
Richard Hale School	Secondary school	In house
The Bishop's Stortford High School	Secondary school	In house
The Chauncy School	Secondary school	In house
Ware Drill Hall	Ware Drill Hall Association	In house
Wodson Park Sports Centre	Wodson Park Sports and Recreation Association	In house

Only two sites, Ware Drill Hall (1 hall) and Wodson Park Sports Centre (2 halls), offer daytime availability. This can be important (and attractive) for older people and shift workers. Given that the number of older people in the District is increasing, providing adequate daytime available sports hall space is essential. Both these venues are located in the south of East Herts, meaning that the more heavily populated area of Bishop's Stortford has poor access to a sports hall available for community use during weekday daytimes.

Sixteen courts are available during the daytime in East Herts, none owned or operated by the Council. The lack of sports hall space within public leisure centres puts the Council at risk of facilities closing or changing hours beyond their control, which will impact the daytime activity levels of local people.

Given the nature of school sites, their availability is limited to evenings and weekends. This significantly lowers the number of hours in which they can offer community use. Other factors such as staffing, community use agreements (CUAs) and the loss of access during exam periods and for other school events/activities often also impact this.

Table 4.9 details the total community use hours available for each sports hall. Figures are calculated using intelligence gathered via the audit and desk research. Table 4.10 details the used capacity at each site. These percentages have been determined based on booking information provided and by site information gained through consultation. It is not possible to exactly gauge used capacity due to the changing nature of bookings on a week-by-week basis, the seasonality of sports and the abovementioned variations in the accessibility of sports halls caused by school exams and other events.

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Table 4.9: Opening hours and activities in sports halls 3+ courts in East Herts

Community use hours	Hours*	ID	Site	Total courts	Main sports played
0	0	1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	3	-
0	0	10	Bishop's Stortford College	4	-
0	0	51	Saint Mary's Catholic School	4	-
0	0	55	St Edmunds College & Prep School	3	-
2	2	28	Heath Mount School	4	Junior rugby, indoor cricket
8	8	37	Hockerill Anglo-European College	4	Indoor cricket, indoor football
11	10	26	Haileybury Sports Complex	8	Badminton, table tennis, hockey, indoor cricket
12	12	50	Richard Hale School	4	Netball
17.5	15.5	65	The Chauncy School	4	Futsal, netball, basketball, indoor cricket
28	28	8	Birchwood High School	4	Futsal, basketball, badminton
34	36	7	Avanti Grange High School	4	Badminton, pickleball
39.5	38.5	40	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	4	Badminton, karate, indoor cricket, pickleball
41	32	48	Presdales School	4	Football, basketball, badminton
43	40	31	The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	4	Handball, badminton, basketball, volleyball
46.5	38.5	22	Freman College	4	Basketball, badminton, futsal
49	41	63	The Bishop's Stortford High School	6	Netball, netball, badminton
85	40	75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6	Badminton, pickleball, short mat bowls, netball, gymnastics, table tennis
85	40	75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	6	Badminton, pickleball, short mat bowls, netball, gymnastics, table tennis
98	46	70	Ware Drill Hall	4	Badminton, karate

(* peak period)

Heath Mount School provides two hours community use per week on Saturday mornings. This is to ensure that priority is given to those staying on site throughout term time. Other school facilities (the artificial grass pitch and swimming pool) are available for greater community use.

Hockerill Anglo-European College and Haileybury Sports Complex limit the community use hours they offer due to restrictions related to the hours during which only their boarders can access facilities. Haileybury Sports Complex is only available between 19:00 and 20:00 during the week but does provide a further five hours of community use on Sunday mornings.

The Richard Hale School would like to increase the number of hours for which it offers its sports hall to the public as there is significant demand which cannot be accommodated. When developed two years ago, the construction costs of building in a conservation area meant the School could not afford the additional VAT costs associated with building a facility available for community hire.

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It is therefore limited to a total of 12 hours per week for a period of 10 years (eight remaining). Staffing issues mean that The Chauncy School cannot currently accommodate bookings on Wednesday or Friday evenings or on Sundays.

Wodson Park Sports Centre has significantly reduced its operating hours, including reducing the peak time hours available to the community. It is open between 07:00 and 22:00 Monday to Thursday, 07:00-20:00 on Fridays, 08:00-16:00 on Saturdays and 09:00-14:00 on Sundays. Prior to the adjustment to its opening hours, it was open until 20.00 at weekends. A lack of adequate staffing and limited demand to use facilities during weekday late afternoons was behind the decision to reduce opening hours.

Used capacity

Non-technical site audits identify the used capacity of each sports hall. Used capacity is the percentage of available community use hours used. Sport England identifies 80% as a 'comfortably full' benchmark so, for example, the 12 hours available at Richard Hale School are used for 100% of the time whereas the Ware Drill Hall is available for 46 peak hours and is operating at 70% used capacity.

Table 4.10: Used capacity of sports halls

Used capacity	Peak CU hours	Site
0%	0	Allenburys Sports and Social Club
0%	0	Bishop's Stortford College
0%	0	Saint Mary's Catholic School
0%	0	St Edmunds College & Prep School
40%	38.5	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre
50%	31	Avanti Grange High School
60%	15.5	The Chauncy School
65%	40	Wodson Park Sports Centre (Below average)
70%	38.5	Freman College
70%	32	Presdales School
70%	46	Ware Drill Hall
75%	28	Birchwood High School
85%	40	Wodson Park Sports Centre (Above average)
90%	10	Haileybury Sports Complex
90%	40	The Herts and Essex Sports Centre
100%	2	Heath Mount School
100%	8	Hockerill Anglo-European College
100%	12	Richard Hale School
N/A	0	The Bishop's Stortford High School

(80% -Sport England's guidance threshold which is considered to be a "comfortably full" sports hall)

School sites offering limited community use hours report having little to no spare capacity during peak hours. Richard Hale School, Hockerill Anglo-European College, Haileybury Sports Complex and Heath Mount School all report being above Sport England's threshold of 'comfortably full' but community use hours are limited at these sites. Heath Mount is reportedly at capacity based on its two hours of community use per week. These are good examples of where community use could be increased were additional community use hours to be identified during peak time.

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The Richard Hale School reports turning down several bookings per week as it cannot accommodate more than 12 hours of community use per week. Badminton and basketball clubs are keen to use the facility given its quality, however, this cannot be accommodated due to planning limitations. This provides a slight contrast to the FPM findings, which suggest that the School does not currently provide community use.

The Herts and Essex Sports Centre is reportedly the only facility to offer significant community use hours (40 peak time hours) and to operate above Sports England's threshold of 'comfortably full'. The building was developed in 2019 and was part funded by Bishop's Stortford Judo and Bishop's Stortford Hockey. The School has implemented a system to enable block booking and pay and play access. Pay and play at educational sites is uncommon as it requires dedicated staffing as opposed to a site team opening and closing facilities as part of their daily duties. Whilst more expensive, it encourages more local people to use the facility. Pay and play badminton is reportedly popular. It also offers pay and play basketball sessions at weekends for young people.

Ware Drill Hall is operating at c.70% used capacity. The facility is not a dedicated sports facility, and as a result, the hall is often utilised for non-sport and leisure activities such as quiz nights, children's parties and performing arts events. The most popular sport at Ware Drill Hall is badminton. This takes place on Monday (Saracens Badminton Club & Hertford Badminton Club) and Wednesday (All Saints Junior Badminton) evenings. The United Karate Association uses the facility on Mondays and Fridays. It is also used for group exercise on Tuesday evenings.

The operator confirmed that despite being open during weekday mornings and afternoons, usage is generally low. The hall serves as a community centre given its location in the centre of Ware. Parking is limited during the day however this is eased during the evening when street parking in close proximity to the Hall becomes quieter after the high street shops close.

The better quality 6-court hall at Wodson Park Sports Centre is busier than the below average hall. The site reported a used capacity of 74.89% for the busier (above average) hall, and just under 55% for the quieter hall. When taking into consideration peak time usage only, these figures rise to 85% and 65% respectively.

Wodson Park confirmed it currently hosts 103 different sports clubs and groups across the two halls. Badminton was the most popular peak time activity. Approximately 35% of hall bookings after 6pm are badminton related. Pickleball is the most popular daytime activity, accounting for approximately 25% of daytime bookings.

Wodson Park Sports and Recreation Association is keen to ensure that users can access the facility on a traditional pay and play basis. Clubs and groups are currently allowed to use cash to pay for the facilities, and the site has no intentions of operating on a cashless basis as this does not align with its vision of creating accessible sport and leisure opportunities.

Both halls are well used during daytimes with several schools using the facilities during PE sessions. The Centre delivers sessions to encourage local people to use the facilities on a pay and play basis, particularly on weekdays. Activities such as short mat bowls and parent and toddler classes give the Centre a strong community feel. Wodson Park Sports Centre operates on a not-for-profit basis and prides itself on its ability to target those with less disposable income to access sport and leisure provision.

Presdales School, Freman College and Birchwood High School are all operating just below Sport England's threshold of comfortably full. Predales School is a key site for the Hertfordshire Badminton Association as it uses the facility every Sunday. Birchwood High School provides an opportunity to increase community use hours given the popularity of the site. It is currently only available on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Leventhorpe Leisure Centre is actively trying to improve the number of bookings it has. It is expecting to be busier over winter months as the hall is popular with indoor cricket, particularly with Sawbridgeworth CC's junior teams. Avanti Grange High School has only recently opened to community use, and as such, is still in the process of building its client base.

Future developments

Three sites were identified during the audit where provision could increase in the future. At the time of the audit, a new sports hall was being developed at the Simon Balle School. Consultation indicated that a new 4-court sports hall will open in Spring 2025. It will feature one netball court, two indoor cricket nets, a 5-a-side football court and one basketball court. It is costing in excess of £4 million and will have a full programme of community use during evenings and weekends. The School confirmed that it is already receiving enquiries from clubs looking to hire the venue.

The Bishops Stortford College has identified a plot of land in which it could potentially use to create a community hub for sport and leisure. The land is currently used for grassroots community football, however the pitch quality is poor in comparison to other pitches located at the School. It is considering the development of a new sports hall, swimming pool or artificial pitch with a clubhouse building. The School would be keen for the new facility to offer community use and is exploring external funding opportunities to make this feasible.

As part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development, 10,000 new homes will be developed at Gilston. Section 106 funding will be utilised to implement new sports and leisure provision to accommodate the housing growth, and a 4-court / 6-court sports hall will be developed as part of a new leisure centre, alongside new sports halls in the two new secondary schools. Likewise, a further two 4-court halls will be developed over the local plan period as part of new schools at the Birchall Garden Suburb and North and east of Ware development allocations.

4.2: FPM

An FPM report was commissioned by the Council in 2025 to better understand the impact of the planned housing growth in East Herts on sports hall capacity. To do this, two scenarios or 'runs' were carried out:

- ◀ Run 1 – A baseline assessment of provision in 2025.
- ◀ Run 2 – Forward assessment of demand for sports halls and its distribution, based on the projected changes in population between 2025 and 2043, and the likely implications that the addition of the following new sports halls (committed in the East Herts District Plan) have in meeting the projected demand in 2043:
 - Six-court hall at Gilston Leisure Centre to open in 2039.
 - Four-court hall at Gilston Secondary School 1 to open in 2037.
 - Four-court hall at Gilston Secondary School 2 to open in 2043.
 - Four-court hall at Birchall Garden Secondary School to open in 2043.
 - Four-court hall at North and east of Ware Secondary School to open in 2043.

This projection is based on annual housing requirement figure set out in Government Standard Method figure. This will partly be met by existing commitments set out in the adopted District Plan, however, there will also be additional sites needed to meet the required growth. These locations for growth are not known yet and will be determined as part of the new Local Plan.

Headline Strategic overview

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

East Hertfordshire benefits from a strong and modern supply of sports halls, and this places the district in a favourable position when compared with regional and national averages. The current network of well-located facilities is capable of meeting most of the area's demand in both 2025 and 2043, reflecting the effectiveness of recent investment and the overall quality of provision.

The addition of five new sports halls, combined with the generally modern nature of the existing stock, plays a significant role in offsetting the substantial projected increase in demand. As a result, unmet demand remains low in 2043, demonstrating that the district's supply is resilient even as population growth and participation levels rise.

However, the increase in demand and the way it is distributed across the district means that more sites are expected to operate at or near full capacity during peak times by 2043. While overall supply remains sufficient, this pattern highlights opportunities to increase availability and capacity, whether through extended hours, improved community access, or targeted enhancements at the busiest locations.

Provision in East Herts is almost entirely dependent on the education sector, which supplies the vast majority of sports hall sites. There is currently strong commitment to community use across these facilities, and maintaining this access is essential. Any reduction in availability from the education sector would have a significant impact on the district's ability to continue meeting demand effectively.

Key findings

The supply of sports hall space in East Hertfordshire is strong, with 51.9 badminton court equivalents available for community use during the weekly peak period in 2025, increasing substantially to 72.1 courts by 2043. A significant proportion of total hall space is unavailable for community use—34% in 2025 and 28% in 2043—which reflects the scale of educational provision and the varying levels of access across sites. Wodson Park Sports Centre represents the single largest contributor to capacity, accounting for 18% of all available visits in 2025 and 13% in 2043, making it a key strategic asset within the district's network.

Provision in East Hertfordshire is dominated by the education sector, which provides 74% of all available capacity in 2025 and 73% in 2043. Public sector provision is limited, accounting for only 8% of capacity by 2043. This reliance on educational sites underscores the importance of maintaining strong community access arrangements. Population growth is projected to be substantial, with a 34% increase between 2025 and 2043, leading to a 29% rise in demand for sports halls. Despite this, demand remains comfortably within the district's available supply, equating to 59% of capacity in 2025 and falling slightly to 55% in 2043 as new facilities come online.

The district performs strongly in meeting demand, with 97% of all visits satisfied in both 2025 and 2043. The number of visits met during the weekly peak period rises from 10,993 in 2025 to 14,235 in 2043, reflecting both increased demand and increased capacity. Retention levels also improve, with 78% of satisfied demand met within the district in 2025, rising to 80% in 2043. This equates to an increase in retained visits from 8,523 to 11,432 across the period. Unmet demand remains very low, at the equivalent of 1.2 courts in 2025 and 1.5 courts in 2043—just 3% of total demand in both years—indicating that spatial gaps near Birchall Garden Secondary School rather than capacity constraints are the primary cause.

Utilisation patterns show that several sites are already operating at or near capacity. Wodson Park Sports Centre is estimated to be fully utilised during the weekly peak period in 2025, while three educational sites are uncomfortably busy at over 80% utilisation. By 2043, three educational sites are projected to be operating at 100% capacity, and Wodson Park becomes

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

uncomfortably busy. East Hertfordshire is also a net importer of demand, bringing in 748 more visits than it exports in 2025, rising to 2,525 in 2043. This reflects the district's strong supply and its role in supporting neighbouring areas.

Intervention and next steps

The strategic focus for East Hertfordshire should be on maintaining a consistent programme of modernisation and new provision to ensure that sports halls remain attractive and capable of meeting the significant increase in demand expected by 2043. The district already benefits from high levels of community access at educational sites, with four existing schools offering between 38.5 and 41 hours of peak-time availability, and the four new educational halls planned to offer 41 hours. Given the dominance of the education sector in the supply network, it is essential that this access is protected. Community Use Agreements (CUAs) provide the mechanism to secure this, and where they are not already in place, they should be negotiated and formalised. Sport England will advise on requirements during the planning process for any new or replacement facilities, and once CUAs are established, the Council must ensure they are actively monitored.

Future modernisation of the educational estate may be necessary to sustain long-term community access, and the Council may wish to consider investment in return for guaranteed availability. Increasing peak-time availability would help relieve pressure at heavily used sites. In 2025, Haileybury Sports Complex and Hockerill Anglo-European College are both highly utilised but offer limited peak-time hours, suggesting scope for increased availability. The Bishop's Stortford High School, however, is already open for the full 41 hours and therefore has no capacity to expand.

Looking ahead to 2043, Birchall Garden Secondary School is projected to be fully utilised. Its proximity to Welwyn Hatfield means that any future increase in capacity in the neighbouring district could help reduce pressure on this site. Sport England's Use Our School resource provides further guidance to support schools in opening their facilities to the community.

Wodson Park Sports Centre remains a critical component of the district's supply and is the only site fully utilised in 2025. Increasing its peak-time availability from 40 to 46 hours per week would help reduce pressure and support its role as a major provider. There is no scope to increase availability at the public leisure centres, and Ware Drill Hall—despite offering the full 46 hours—has very low utilisation due to its age and lack of refurbishment. Consideration should therefore be given to its modernisation or replacement, particularly as it is the only public hall with extensive off-peak availability.

Gilston Leisure Centre is well positioned to meet demand arising from significant housing growth in the area by 2043. The six-court hall, alongside two new secondary school facilities, will provide substantial capacity. However, one of the new school halls may be under-utilised, and the Council may need to consider whether both should be fully available for community use. The Gilston facilities may also play a role in supporting unmet demand from Harlow, where sports halls are heavily used. If Gilston Leisure Centre were a four-court hall rather than a six-court hall, it would become uncomfortably busy at peak times. Further planned housing growth (as part of the 10,000 dwellings with outline planning permission) beyond 2043—around 1,300 additional dwellings—was not modelled but would likely increase pressure on the six-court hall, potentially leading to full utilisation or displacement of demand to school sites or neighbouring districts. It should be noted that the model does not account for housing development in Harlow, which is likely to increase demand on the new Leisure Centre.

4.3: Demand

NGB and club consultation

National governing bodies of sport (NGBs) and active clubs were consulted to ascertain current use, participation trends and the needs/challenges facing sports halls in the area.

Badminton

Badminton England (BE) is the national governing body of sport (NGB) for badminton. Its latest strategy, Discover Badminton 2017-2025 presents a vision for the sport to become one of the nation's most popular and to consistently win medals at world, Olympic and Paralympic levels. To achieve this, it has identified three key objectives:

- ◀ Grow grassroots participation.
- ◀ Create a system that identifies and develops player potential to deliver consistent world class performers.
- ◀ Build financial resilience to become a well governed organisation and demonstrate compliance with the UK governance code.

The Badminton Facilities Strategy Model 2020-2030 – East Hertfordshire overview

Badminton participation statistics

- ◀ 1.80% of adults (62.10%; male and 37.90%; female) have played badminton at least twice in the last 28 days¹². This equates to 2,100 regular adult players.
- ◀ 6.00%¹³ of juniors¹² have played badminton at least twice in the last 28 days. This equates to 534 regular junior players.
- ◀ It is estimated that 6.30% of adults have played badminton at least once in the last 12 months. This equates to 5,400 occasional adult players¹⁴ (4.59% latent demand).

Demand

- ◀ The presumption is that regular adult players play once per week for one hour and that their average need is for 3 adults per court. This equates to a weekly requirement for 700 court hours (current demand).
- ◀ The presumption is that regular junior players play once per week for 45 minutes and that their average need is for 4 players per court. This equates to a weekly requirement for 101 court hours (current demand).
- ◀ The presumption is that occasional adult players play four times per annum for one hour and that their average need is for 3 adults per court. This requires 139 court hours (latent demand).
- ◀ To service all badminton demand there is a need for 940 court hours per week.
- ◀ Projected increase in regular demand in 2030 is 110 court hours.

Supply

- ◀ There are 18 (3+court) sports halls containing 79 courts in East Hertfordshire.
- ◀ Five hall(s) are for private use only; thus 61 courts are available for badminton.

¹² ALS states that people that have participated at least twice in the last 28 days. For modelling purposes, it is assumed that they participate every week

¹³ ALS states that 6.0% of juniors nationally (14-15 year olds) have played at least twice in the last 28 days. For modelling purposes this has been extended to include 11-13 year olds.

¹⁴ Occasional players equates to all players minus regular players

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- ◀ The total number of court hours per week (3+ court sports halls) available in East Hertfordshire during stated peak time is 2,105¹⁵
- ◀ 62.30%¹⁶ of badminton courts in East Hertfordshire meet the Badminton England quality threshold (above average/good) which equates to 1,267 court hours¹⁷.
- ◀ There is a need for 74.19% of the 1,267 good quality peak time court hours, available each week, to service current and latent badminton demand.
- ◀ Additional court hours required per week in 2030 are 110.

Strategic overview

Consultation with BE outlined a strong demand for badminton in East Herts, however, BE expressed concern about the supply of suitable facilities for clubs and the county to access. It stated that several schools are unable to offer community use in sports halls/activity halls when examinations take place. This can take as many as 12 weeks per year out of the equation in some circumstances. It is actively trying to set up more badminton activity in East Herts, but accessing good quality facilities on a regular basis is hindering its ability to do this. It is investigating opportunities to asset own in East Herts to improve badminton provision.

The audit identified six badminton clubs in East Herts and two regional associations responsible for development of badminton in the County. All clubs were invited to be part of the audit consultation process. The following is a summary of the findings:

Ware Badminton Club has c.45 members and reports having a steady membership base over recent years, which is considered to be encouraging given that other clubs in the area have reportedly struggled. It operates out of Wodson Park Sports Centre on Wednesday evenings and every other Sunday afternoon. It has enquired about booking additional court time on Monday evenings but has been told that this cannot currently be accommodated. It is happy with the playing conditions at Wodson Park but reported that the flooring can sometimes lack grip when not sufficiently cleaned.

Wodson Park Sports Centre has reduced its opening hours. This has affected when the Club is able to hire the facility. Previously, club nights were held on Sunday evenings at 18:00, however the Club was informed that it would have to move to 15:00 ahead of the Centre closing at 17:00. Further amendments have since been made to opening hours at Wodson Park, resulting in the site closing at 14:00. The Club reports that members do not wish to play that early and as such has been forced to look for alternative provision.

It has, however, as yet been unable to identify a suitable facility for weekend hire in East Herts. It has considered moving club nights to Monday evenings, but sports hall availability is poor on that evening. It is starting to look further afield, such as The John Warner School in Hoddesdon.

Much Hadham Junior Badminton Club also struggles to find suitable provision. It has 26 members, all between the ages of 7-18. It delivers one session per week at Much Hadham Village Hall, where there is only one court. It is heavily reliant on volunteers, whose time is limited. The Club does not have ambitions to deliver more sessions but would like to access a facility with more court space on a regular basis.

The cost of accessing alternative provision is limiting, as is the availability of school facilities. Approximately four times per year it hires a larger facility (previously Wodson Park Sports centre and Leventhorpe School) to run sessions at a larger venue. It cannot afford to do this on a regular basis without passing the cost onto participants, which it is reluctant to do.

¹⁵ Peak time hours are defined as; Monday – Friday 17:00-22:00, Saturday 09:30-17:00, Sunday 09:00-14:30 & 17:00-19:30

¹⁶ National figure: 75.0%

¹⁷ Assumes that all courts of all standards available during all peak hours.

All Saints Badminton Club is based at Ware Drill Hall, which it has hired for over 20 years. It is a junior club with 36 members, of which approximately 50% are female. It is content with the facilities and times of current sessions at Ware Drill Hall. The Club acknowledges that the hall has limited run-off space and that the lighting is not of the highest quality compared to other venues. However, it meets the Club's needs. The facility is hired for two hours on Wednesday evenings, with additional times occasionally utilised in the past to meet increased demand.

It has also used Wodson Park Sports Centre for group coaching sessions. It would like to access this facility on a more regular basis, however acquiring a suitable time slot is difficult. Once members pass the age of 18, they are encouraged to transition into Saracens Badminton Club, which is also based at Ware Drill Hall.

Saracens Badminton Club and Hunsdon Badminton Club did not respond to consultation request. Desk research suggests that Hunsdon Badminton Club is an informal/social club is not involved in inter-club competitive badminton. It runs at Hunsdon Village Hall on Tuesday evenings between September and May.

The Hertfordshire Badminton Association is frustrated by the lack of sports halls located at public leisure sites in East Hertfordshire as this is having a negative impact on its and clubs' ability to find suitable provision. High level badminton is being most affected by this. It believes that given the popularity of badminton in the wider Hertfordshire area, East Herts would be suitably placed for a premier standard badminton hall.

It is keen to access Simon Balle School when the sports hall becomes available to the public for regional competitions. It is also frustrated by the lack of community use available at Richard Hale School. Finally, it would like to see Wodson Park Sports Centre refurbished to make it a regional badminton centre given the high level of badminton participation at the facility. One of the issues is that court layout is poor as they do not run parallel. This makes it, in its present configuration, unsuitable for high level badminton.

Netball

In November 2021, England Netball (EN) launched a ten-year 'Adventure Strategy' for the game along with a new organization brand identity. Its new strategy shares a purpose-led ambition for the game, to build on the momentum the sport has seen in recent years and to take it to new heights for the decade ahead.

The strategy outlines its intention to:

- ◀ Accelerate development and growth of the game at every level, from grassroots to elite;
- ◀ Elevate the visibility of the sport, and;
- ◀ Lead a movement to impact lives on and beyond the court.

At the heart of its purpose, EN commits to remaining dedicated to increasing opportunities for women and girls to play the game as a priority and to work to address the gender participation gap in the sport which has widened since the Pandemic. Underpinned by years of engaging with and delivering netball for female communities, EN pledges to understand, support and nurture women and girls more deeply at every life stage, at every age.

It is committed to opening the sport to new audiences in every community, so netball better represents the diversity of England, and continues to evolve, adapt and thrive in the future, helping to create a truly inclusive sport for all where everyone can belong and flourish. A recent partnership announcement with England Men's and Mixed Netball Association

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(EMMNA) to help develop and grow male participation in the game, supports this commitment as EN pledges to promote difference and make the sport available to all.

Transforming netball for children and young people is a strategic priority to help protect the future of the sport. EN is working with schools and policy makers to extend physical literacy within, and after the school day with a focus on netball specific provision. It is committed to accelerating the expansion of its Bee Netball programme for young children, whilst supporting teens and young women to stay in the game.

The elite game is also a focus. EN's ambition is that the Vitality Roses will be the best female sports team in the world. It thus has to support the national team to win consistently on the world stage and to have an outstanding talent pathway in place to fuel sustainable successes on court and set new standards. Professionalisation of the game over the next decade is a priority – with a specific focus on growing world-leading international and domestic competitions and events and creating more careers in the sport.

The Adventure Strategy was developed on the back of feedback from the Netball Family, with over 3,000 members and stakeholders consulted as part of the strategic process to understand what they wanted netball to 'look like' in 2031, the plan is aspirational and ambitious, and sees EN pledge to continue as a trailblazer for women's sport.

Facility development

Facility development aspirations stated within EN's Strategy are to:

- ◀ Take a fresh look at the spaces required to support the sport, creating accessible places in every community to allow netball to be incorporated into how and where women and girls live their lives.
- ◀ Protect, enhance, and extend the network of homes that house the sport at a local and regional level.
- ◀ Develop an elite domestic professional competition that supports full-time athletes underpinned by a world-class infrastructure and environments.

For EN to achieve its ambitions to make the game accessible to wider audiences and in every community, it encourages local authorities to adopt policies within outdoor and indoor sports facilities strategies that:

- ◀ Facilitate informal netball activity within neighbourhood multi-use games areas. neighbourhood equipped areas for play (NEAPs).
- ◀ Incorporates the cultural and health needs of women and girls within any designs for improved or new facilities.
- ◀ Protects and enhances netball facilities within all primary and secondary school environments so they offer a positive first experience of the sport for students and the wider community during out-of-school hours.
- ◀ Supports the installation of floodlights on outdoor courts to increase all-year-round use.
- ◀ Facilitates the development of netball growth programmes, club training and competition within public leisure centres.
- ◀ Where appropriate, supports development of netball homes and performance environments to enable local women and girls to pursue a career in netball as an elite athlete, official, coach or administrator.

EN reports that the sport is growing fast nationally. Its YouGov¹⁸ report indicated that the 2019 World Cup inspired 160,000 adult women to take up the sport. In addition, at the time when

¹⁸ <https://www.uksport.gov.uk/news/2019/10/02/netball-world-cup>

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the report research was undertaken, 71% of clubs reported that more people had shown an interest in playing netball than before the tournament started.

Netball is played both indoors and outdoors in East Herts. For outdoor provision please refer to the 2024 East Herts PPS. Current indoor provision in East Herts is as follows:

- ◀ Back 2 Netball sessions (run by coaches) are designed to re-introduce players to the sport. They are currently being held at Wodson Park Sports Centre. England Netball report the sessions to be popular but not close to capacity.
- ◀ Walking Netball (netball played at a walking pace) is designed so that anyone can play it regardless of age or fitness level. EN confirmed that currently, no sessions take place in East Herts but two take place on a weekly basis in the neighbouring authority of North Herts. Sufficient demand has not been identified to justify running a session in East Herts.

EN confirmed that the facilities at Wodson Park are sufficient, however the court is slightly smaller than standard and run off space around the court is limited. This is due to the layout of the line markings. It confirmed that indoor netball is sparse in East Herts due to the lack of availability of suitable indoor facilities and the cost associated with hiring facilities.

The audit identified eight clubs within East Herts, four of which are affiliated to EN. Clubs in East Herts compete in the Bishops Stortford Netball League or Hertford & District Netball League.

Table 4.11: Netball clubs in East Herts

Club name	Affiliated	Club response
Ware Social Netball	Yes	No
Wodson Park Netball Club	Yes	Yes
Hertford Hornets Junior Netball Club	Yes	No
Hornets Netball	No	No
Hertford Panthers	Yes	No
Hertford Heath Rangers Netball Club	No	No
Bishop's Stortford Netball Club	No	No
Swan Netball Club	No	No

EN confirmed that no commercial netball leagues are present in East Herts. This is due to its strong league system in the wider area and a lack of available facilities.

Club consultation

Each club was contacted on several occasions by both KKP and also by England Netball. A response was received from Wodson Park Netball Club. The following summary is, thus, based upon club consultation, desk research and information provided by England Netball:

Ware Social Netball predominantly utilises outdoor court space at Wodson Park Sports Centre. It is an informal netball group which operates on a pay and play basis. It utilises a social media page to arrange sessions, which are held on Thursday evenings at 20.00. It is estimated that c.20 members attend each week.

Wodson Park Netball Club has eight senior teams, two of which compete in the Hertfordshire County Netball League. Home matches are played at Wodson Park Sports centre on the outdoor courts. It has a further six senior women's and 15 junior teams competing in the local Hertford & District Netball League. It accesses multiple sites including Wodson Park Sports Centre, Presdales School, the Richard Hale School and several facilities outside of the District

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including Broxbourne School and Stanborough School. It reports struggling to access adequate facilities in East Herts and would ideally like to access The Richard Hale School more frequently but reports that community use hours are limited at this venue.

Hertford Hornets Junior Netball Club creates significant demand for netball participation in the District. It has ten junior teams and a development squad with participants ranging from 9-18. It reports having a good level of access to facilities in the District and it predominantly uses the sports hall at Presdales School on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. It also uses Richard Hale School twice per week. This combination appears to be sufficient to meet its needs. All sessions take place on indoor courts with the exception of its U17s, who compete in the Hertford & District netball League on Wednesday evenings at Presdales School.

Those looking to progress into senior netball participation represent Hertford Hornets in one of its eight senior teams. These offer three main playing pathways: performance, development and social. Five teams compete in the Hertfordshire County Netball league and two compete in the East Regional League, which is a high standard and requires players to attend three training sessions per week. Outdoor matches are played at Haileybury Sports Centre on Sunday mornings and indoor sessions are hosted at Wodson Park Sports Centre.

Hertford Panthers has one team which competes in the Hertford & District Netball League on Wednesday nights at Presdales School. Hertford Heath Rangers Netball Club uses Presdales School for indoor training on Tuesday evenings but matches take place on outdoor courts.

The Herts and Essex Sports Centre is a key strategic site for netball in the Bishop's Stortford area. It is used by The Bishops Stortford & District Netball League, taking place on the outdoor courts, on Sunday mornings. Bishop's Stortford Netball Club utilise the indoor courts during the winter months on Thursday evenings, before moving to the outdoor courts during the summer.

Basketball (BBE)

BBE is the NGB for the sport in England. Its latest strategy, Transforming Basketball in Britain Together (2016 - 2028) aims to improve basketball from grassroots to GB teams, by adopting a whole sport approach and working closely with the basketball community. To achieve this, a series of key objectives have been identified:

- ◀ Develop successful GB teams.
- ◀ Build high-quality men's and women's leagues and teams.
- ◀ Support talented players, officials and coaches and coach development pathways.
- ◀ Drive increased awareness and profile of the sport.
- ◀ Increase opportunities to play the game at every level.
- ◀ Transform the leadership and culture of the sport.

To help increase the number of opportunities to play the game at every level, BBE has produced a facilities strategy which aims to create community hubs including, where appropriate, arenas that sit at the heart of communities and are homes for the leading British Basketball League (BBL), Women's British Basketball League (WBBL) and community clubs. The stated intent is that as part of its facilities strategy implementation, BBE will regularly monitor provision in schools, colleges, universities, clubs and at local authority sites and identify any gaps, looking to improve connections between these organisations to increase the availability and affordability of facilities of the right quality.

BBE does not have any affiliated clubs in East Herts. Three were identified via the audit and approached for consultation; the one response came from Stortford Strollers Basketball Club.

Table 4.12: Basketball club responses

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Club name	Club response
Stortford Strollers Basketball Club	Yes
Ware Rebels Basketball Club	No
Stortford Vikings Basketball Club	No

Club consultation

The summary of basketball clubs in East Herts is provided based on information provided by Basketball England, club consultation and desk research carried out for the audit.

Stortford Strollers Basketball Club is a social basketball club for over 50's catering for both males and females who wish to play a low impact version of the sport. It has been providing walking basketball sessions on Sunday mornings at Birchwood High School since 2016. It reports having a steady participant base which is slowly growing through word of mouth and has no requirements for additional facilities now or in the near future.

Ware Rebels Basketball Club and Stortford Vikings Basketball Club did not respond to consultation requests. Ware Rebels hires three facilities for training purposes: Haileybury Sports Complex, Wodson Park Sports Centre and a 1-court gymnasium facility at Simon Balle School. Matches take place at Wodson Park. Stortford Vikings is actively recruiting younger participants to its sessions which take place at Birchwood High School on Thursday evenings.

Indoor cricket

The Hertfordshire Cricket Board is the overarching NGB for cricket in East Herts. Working closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), it is responsible for the management and development of every form of recreational cricket for men, women and children in the County. The Hertfordshire Cricket Board was approached for consultation; however, no response was received. Indoor cricket is most often played between two teams of six or eight players. It can take place in any suitably sized multi-purpose sports hall, offering amateur and professional cricketers an option to play the game during winter months.

There is one dedicated indoor cricket facility in East Herts, called the Hertfordshire and Essex Indoor Cricket Centre. It hosts the Hertfordshire Indoor Cricket League in which 27 clubs from across Hertfordshire compete, including several from East Hertfordshire. It runs under 13s, under 15s and senior competitions. The audit did not identify any women's or girls or disability indoor cricket leagues. The Hertfordshire League did previously have a veteran's competition, however this ended due to reportedly limited demand. It is keen to restart this should demand increase.

The Hertfordshire and Essex Indoor Cricket Centre is also available for indoor cricket net hire. It consists of a 5-lane dedicated facility with the option to use a bowling machine. It is popular with local clubs which use it for indoor training during the winter months. It provides a high-class training environment which is reportedly superior to using non-dedicated indoor cricket facilities, such as those found at educational sites. Where clubs use 4-court sized sports halls for winter training, there is insufficient space for pace bowlers to complete a full length run up. In addition, the quality of floor surfaces at education sites is often problematic. As such, many clubs travel further afield to access good quality facilities. Indoor cricket was found to take place at the following education sites:

- ◀ The Chauncy School (No recent club usage).
- ◀ Bishop's Stortford College (Used by the Marylebone Cricket Club).
- ◀ Freman College (Used by Buntingford CC).
- ◀ Leventhorpe School (used by Sawbridgeworth CC).

- ◀ Heath Mount School (No recent club usage).

Indoor cricket nets are due to be installed at Avanti Grange High School, however this is delayed due to an issue with the contractors being unable to complete the work and two lanes are due to be installed at Simon Balle School. A further four indoor cricket lanes are going to be available at Bishop's Stortford High School.

Further information regarding East Herts' cricket clubs winter net usage is included in the Outdoor Sport and Playing Pitch Strategy (2025).

Volleyball

Stortford Stags was the only volleyball club identified during the audit. England Volleyball was contacted with regard to this assessment but did not respond. Consultation with Stortford Stags identified that facilities in East Herts are unable to cater for the level of play at which it currently competes.

It competes in the men's and mixed divisions of the Herts Volleyball Association. Home matches are played at Birchwood High School for two hours on Tuesday evenings from September through to May. This venue is reportedly sufficient for high level volleyball; however, the lack of sprung floor increases the likelihood of player injury. The quality of equipment is also problematic e.g., the posts and the lack of padding. Historically, the Club reports difficulty accessing facilities in East Herts due to a number of sports halls being technically unable to cater for volleyball clubs.

It has identified The Herts and Essex Sports Centre as a good facility for volleyball, however, the lack of spare capacity at the venue makes it difficult to book regular sessions. Avanti Grange Secondary School can accommodate volleyball, however, the equipment purchased is not of an appropriate standard for club use. Leventhorpe School has floor sockets for volleyball posts, but these have been incorrectly positioned forcing users to put weights down to keep them in place. This is unsafe and is the reason that the Club does not use the facility. The same issue was identified at Hockerill Anglo-European College. Overall, the Club expressed concerns that the facility needs of volleyball are not being sufficiently considered when sports hall developments are planned.

Notwithstanding the above, the Club reports a steady growth in membership year on year. It currently has c.22 members, with each session close to capacity. It would like to offer additional sessions but cannot find a suitable venue.

Futsal

Futsal is administered by the Football Association. Its strategy "Fast Forward with Futsal" is The FA's Futsal Strategy 2018 – 2024. The FA vision to Make Futsal the FA's - and the nation's indoor game of choice for young players with an accompanying mission to ensure that every young player experiences Futsal as part of his/her development. Targets set by the FA to achieve by 2024 are:

- ◀ Participation: 150,000 Futsal players participating regularly across genders & of all ages.
- ◀ Workforce: 15,000 FA qualified Futsal coaches at FA Level 2 and UEFA 'B' (currently 900).
- ◀ Facilities: A defined network of Futsal facilities, covering every County FA
- ◀ International: An England men's Futsal team in the top 20 of the FIFA world rankings (currently 54th) and an England women's Futsal team.

Three indoor facilities currently host futsal activity. Fustal Club UK Bishop's Stortford is based at Birchwood High School. It uses both the sports hall and the 3G pitch on Saturdays for

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matches. It is actively recruiting younger members to grow the age groups between under 11s and under 13s. It has teams ranging from under 9s to under 18s. Teams compete in the Essex Futsal League

Wodson Park Sports Centre and The Chauncy School both confirm that futsal activity takes place in their sports halls. Bows Soccer Academy previously utilised the sports hall at The Chauncy School, however the School was unable to confirm whether it is the current user. Desk research suggests sessions currently take place on Tuesday evenings. It has previously delivered sessions in the sports hall at Wodson Park Sports Centre. No evidence suggests that this is still ongoing and it does utilise space on the 3G pitch.

4.4: Future demand and the Sport England Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC)

The SFC helps quantify additional demand for community sports facilities generated by new growth populations, development and regeneration areas. It is used to estimate facility needs for whole area populations but should not be applied for strategic gap analysis as it has no spatial dimension and does not take account of:

- ◀ Facility location compared to demand.
- ◀ Capacity and availability of facilities – opening hours.
- ◀ Cross boundary movement of demand.
- ◀ Travel networks and topography.
- ◀ Attractiveness of facilities.

At the Council's request, 2022 ONS data has been used to inform SFC calculations as this is the dataset used to inform the production of the FPM. In addition, to quantify known housing growth between the period of the new local plan dates, the annual Standard Method figure (currently 1,223 per annum) is applied to this period to quantify the level of population increase in this period. Applying the Standard Method figure of 1,223 dwellings per annum to 2043 creates a population increase of 51,953 based on an average of 2.36 people per household.

Table 4.13: Sport England: Sports Facilities Calculator

	Population 2022: (ONS)	Population estimate: 2043
ONS population projections	155,808	207,761
Population increase	-	51,953
Facilities to meet additional demand	-	12.68 courts (3.17 4-court halls)
Estimated cost*	-	£10,476.569

(Build costs as of July 2024)

This is likely to be negated by the increased sports hall provision at the Simon Balle School, Gilston Leisure Centre and new schools developed as part of the Gilston, Birchall and Ware developments. Over this period, investment should also be directed at improving the quality of existing sports hall provision to encourage clubs and groups to utilise sports halls with spare capacity. The SFC does not take account of daytime (off peak) sports hall availability, which is generally poor in East Herts given the lack of sports halls located at public leisure sites.

To ensure that future provision levels remain aligned with the scale of planned growth, the SFC should be applied as new housing sites are allocated through the emerging Local Plan. While the current growth figures reflect only the commitments within the adopted District Plan, the forthcoming Local Plan will identify additional housing sites to meet the full standard method requirement.

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4.5: Summary of key facts and issues

Facility type	Sports halls	-
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
Quantity	East Herts has 45 sports halls containing 107 badminton courts. 19 sports halls have 3+ courts (84 badminton courts).	Sports halls are generally well located in line with the areas of higher population density. Bishop's Stortford has a good supply. Residents in the west of Ware and Hertford have poorer access. Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth are both served by one sports hall of 3-courts or larger, both of which have community use and spare capacity. Simon Balle School is developing a new 4-court sports hall which is due to provide community use in late 2025. Five new community accessible sports halls are to be developed as part of developments at Gilston, north and east of Ware and Birchall Garden Suburb. This will accommodate demand from planned housing growth.
Quality	Four 3+ court sports halls are rated good quality, seven are above average, six are below average. Two could not be assessed.	Generally, sports hall quality is satisfactory. Investment is needed in the below average quality sports halls such as Leventhorpe Leisure Centre to increase demand. All main population areas are served by at least one good quality sports hall.
Accessibility	58.9% of the East Herts population lives within 1 mile of a community accessible sports hall. All residents live within a 20-minute drive of a sports hall with community use.	The size and rural nature of East Herts lowers the number of residents living within 1-mile of a community use 3+ court sports hall. Section 12 details how the use of smaller halls and community centres help to address this.
Availability (Management and usage)	Fifteen 3+ court halls provide some form of community availability. Six are currently operating at the Sport England threshold of 'comfortably full'. Eight are operating below 70% used capacity and could accommodate increased demand. Daytime availability of sports hall space is limited. Only two sites offer this. No public leisure sites feature a sports hall.	Several schools offer only very limited community use hours and are at capacity. The Council should work with schools looking to increase community hours, particularly where such venues are of high quality and are in high demand – such as The Richard Hale School. Access to facilities at public schools (e.g., Haileybury Sports Complex, Bishops Stortford College and Heath Mount School) is often limited by their need to be made available in the evenings and at weekends for pupils living on site. This increases pressure on other school sites to accommodate peak time demand. Fee paying schools should be encouraged to assess current programming to determine whether it is possible to generate any additional community use hours. The absence of Council-owned sports hall facilities leaves East Herts residents susceptible to programming variations, closures or changes to community use policy at school sites. Several clubs report not having access to school facilities during exam periods. The Council and partners should seek ways to encourage schools to ensure that facilities open all year round where possible.

Strategic summary

- ◀ Technically, East Herts has a good supply of good and above average quality sports halls, particularly in the Bishop's Stortford area. They are generally located in more densely populated parts of East Herts, however Freman College (in the north) and Heath Mount School (in the west) are well placed to serve less densely populated areas.
- ◀ Levels of car ownership levels are high and all residents live within a 20-minute drive of a publicly accessible sports hall.
- ◀ School sports halls accommodate a significant proportion of peak time demand; however, community use hours could be extended, particularly at public school sites.
- ◀ The Council should actively consider whether Everyone Active's commercially driven decision to remove sports hall provision from public leisure sites aligns with the Council's overall vision for physical activity and health and wellbeing. In addition to the pressure on peak time use, only two offer daytime sports hall availability - both of which are located in the south of the Authority. Bishop Stortford residents have poor access to sports halls available during weekday daytimes. Sites offering daytime availability should be protected to ensure that daytime accessibility does not worsen.
- ◀ Everyone Active's actions are affecting traditional sports hall sports such as badminton and netball and the situation has been made worse by the decision to reduce the number of weekend opening hours at Wodson Park. Residents (and the Council) are now also heavily reliant upon school sites accommodating weekend demand. It should be borne in mind that, in addition to delimiting weekday evening access for a substantial number of peak demand weeks every year, the use of sports hall space for examinations also often adversely affects weekend access over the same periods. The needs of netball and badminton should be prioritised if/when new provision becomes available.
- ◀ The audit identified a lack of facilities with the capacity and specification to accommodate high level badminton. BE expressed a specific interest in developing dedicated badminton provision in the area given the high levels of demand. The Council should work with and support BE with this. This could potentially tie in with the development of increased sports hall provision as part of the development of the Gilston area.
- ◀ The same issues applies to volleyball, albeit that the volume of overall demand for this sport is lower.

SECTION 5: SWIMMING POOLS

A swimming pool is defined as an “enclosed area of water, specifically maintained for all forms of water-based sport and recreation”. It includes indoor and outdoor pools, freeform leisure pools and specific diving tanks used for general swimming, teaching, training and diving. Many small pools are used solely for recreational swimming and will not necessarily need to strictly follow the NGB recommendations. It is, however, generally recommended that standard dimensions are used to allow appropriate levels of competition and training and to help meet safety standards. Relatively few pools need to be designed to full competition standards or include spectator facilities.

Training for competition, low-level synchronised swimming, and water polo can all take place in a 25m pool. With modest spectator seating, pools can also accommodate competitive events in these activities. Diving from boards, advanced synchronised swimming and more advanced sub-aqua training require deeper water. These can all be accommodated in one pool tank, which ideally should be in addition to the main pool.

The NGB responsible for administering diving, swimming, synchronised swimming and water polo in England is Swim England.

Swim England’s report ‘A Decade of Decline: The Future of Swimming Pools in England’ provides a national analysis of the current swimming pool stock across England. It notes that the average age of a pool built from 1960 onwards is 43 years. On this basis it suggests that many of these pools are now coming to the end of their lifespan.

Many pool operators were placed in a serious financial situation during the pandemic, when many local authorities provided emergency financial support through direct grants, deferred payments or loans to subsidise pool operators who had suffered loss of income due to pool closures.

UK Government’s £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund also provided assistance to enable pools to re-open once restrictions had been lifted. Despite this, Swim England reports that 206 pools (including 68 public pools) closed, either permanently or temporarily over the period of the Pandemic.

In preparing for the future, Swim England recommend that local authorities conduct analysis of their pool stock to understand if they have the right pools in the right places to meet the needs of the local community. In the light of leisure facilities accounting for over 40% cent of some councils’ direct carbon emissions it advocates capital investment into renewal of pool stock in order to support efforts to reach net zero targets, alongside combating the predicted overall future deficit of water space nationally.

In 2025 the Council commissioned Sport England to produce an FPM analysis to better understand the future demand for swimming pool provision based on changes to facilities and population growth. Where relevant, data from the FPM has been included in this section.

The FPM analysis provides a theoretical approach to supply and demand levels based on locality to provision and the quality of provision (based on the age/recent refurbishment of the facility). This is used to support KKP findings, which produces findings based on site assessment, consultation with providers/operators and clubs.

5.1: Supply

This assessment is mostly concerned with larger pools available for community use (no restrictions to accessing the pool as a result of membership criteria). As such, those less than

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160m² (e.g., 20m x 4 lanes) water space and/or located at private member clubs are deemed to offer limited value in relation to community use and delivery of outcomes related to health and deprivation. It is recognised that smaller pools can accommodate learning/ teaching sessions, but they are, for modelling/needs assessment purposes, deemed unable to offer a full swim programme and, thus, eliminated from the supply evaluation, when considering accessibility and availability later in this section.

Quantity

The audit identifies 27 swimming pools at 21 sites. This includes all pools irrespective of size and access. Overall supply, therefore, comprises five learner/teaching pools, eight lidos, and 14 main pools. Learner/teaching pools assist with programming (and income generation) at the public leisure centre sites in particular.

Swimming facilities are well located and distributed across East Herts. The largest settlements such as Hertford and Bishop's Stortford are all served by a mix of public leisure centre, commercially operated and school pools. The closure of Ward Freman Pool and Fanshawe Pool and Gym left no pool provision in Buntingford or Ware. The closure of Leventhorpe Pool and Gym means there is no public leisure swimming in Sawbridgeworth.

Table 5.1: All swimming pools in East Herts

ID	Site name	Facility type	Lanes/length	Area (m ²)
2	Amwell View School	Learner/teaching/training	0 / 10	50
10	Bishop's Stortford College	Main/general	6 / 25	350
10	Bishop's Stortford College	Learner/teaching/training	0 / 14	98
21	Fanshawe Pool & Gym*	Main/general	4 / 25	250
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Main/general	8 / 25	500
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Learner/teaching/training	0 / 20	160
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	Main/general	6 / 25	325
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	Main/general	6 / 25	325
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	Learner/teaching/training	0 / 12	72
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	Learner/teaching/training	0 / 13	104
28	Heath Mount School	Lido	0 / 20	140
31	The Herts and Essex Sports Centre *	Main/general	4 / 25	200
41	Leventhorpe Pool & Gym*	Main/general	5 / 25	250
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	Main/general	2 / 20	200
44	Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	Main/general	1 / 17	136
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	Main/general	2 / 20	160
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	Main/general	2 / 20	160
48	Presdales School*	Lido	0 / 22	176
53	Simon Balle School	Main/general	4 / 25	200
55	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Main/general	3 / 20	200
56	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Lido	4 / 17	102
57	St Joseph's in The Park	Lido	0 / 15	113
59	St Marys Junior School	Lido	0 / 14	105
61	Tewin Cowper Primary School	Lido	0 / 14	98
69	Ward Freman Pool*	Main/general	5 / 25	250
72	Ware Priory Lido	Lido	2 / 30	300
72	Ware Priory Lido	Lido	0 / 10	50

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Two public leisure pools (Leventhorpe Pool and Gym and Fanshawe Pool and Gym) closed in December 2024. The operation of both was being supported by funding from the Department of Education as they were previously accessed and part funded by Leventhorpe School and The Chauncy School respectively.

The Council was informed the funding was not available from and both schools have insufficient financial capacity to continue to meet the running costs of keeping the pools open. The Council is unable to cover the funding gap caused by the withdrawal of external funding. Consultation with the Council and Everyone Active suggests that both pools were operating at close to a break-even basis prior to the withdrawal of DofE funding.

Both will necessitate significant investment to keep them available to the public. Everyone Active indicated that this could cost as much as £250,000 at Leventhorpe Pool and £150,000 at Fanshawe to make the necessary improvements to the pool area and plant room¹⁹.

At the time of the audit the five pools discussed above were excluded from further analysis due to the insufficient information available about possible reopening dates.

Lidos, including those larger than 160m², have been omitted from this analysis since the audit identified them as seasonal facilities. While they provide valuable opportunities for both casual and club swimming during the summer months, their limited operational period restricts access to just three or four months each year.

Once facilities already closed, those which are due to close, lidos and pools smaller than 160m² have been removed from the analysis, ten swimming pools located across nine sites remain.

The closure of Fanshawe, Ward Freman and Leventhorpe Pools for public leisure swimming sites leaves only Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre and Hartham Leisure Centre providing a public leisure offer. Both serve the larger population areas of Bishop's Stortford, Ware, Sawbridgeworth and Hertford.

The largest of the two is Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, situated in Bishop's Stortford to the east of the District. It is located in close proximity to Uttlesford District and is likely to be attracting use from residents of the neighbouring authority. It is a key strategic site, with a learner/teaching pool and an 8-lane 25m main/general pool. It provides a total supply of water amounting to 660m². Hartham Leisure Centre has three pools, totalling 504m².

Fanshawe Pool and Gym previously provided 55 hours of community use per week, which included public swim sessions, swimming lessons and club swimming. Leventhorpe Pool and Gym provided 37 hours per week with a similar programme of use, however, no swimming clubs utilise its pool. Both pools are only available for one hour during weekday daytimes due to school usage.

Quality

Of the ten pools included in the assessment, three are good quality, four are above average, two are below average and one could not be assessed due to a lack of response to visit/consultation request. KKP's non-technical visual assessments also encompass review of changing provision as this also plays a significant role in influencing and attracting users. In general, changing facilities are of similar standard to pool quality.

¹⁹ In March 2026 Fanshawe Pool (Chauncy School Pool) reopened for use by Ware Swim Club, please the Indoor Sport Strategy Report for more detail.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Settlements in the east of the District such as Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth have access to good swimming pool facilities. Of the five pools in the Ware and Hertford region of East Herts, three are above average quality and two are below average.

Good quality swimming facilities are located to the east of the District in the Bishop's Stortford area. Residents to the rural north of East Herts, such as those living in the Buntingford area, have further to travel to access public swimming pool provision. Residents in this area would have accessed Ward Freman Pool prior to its closure. Quality assessments are set out below. Figure 5.2: Swimming pools larger than 20m+ in length with quality ratings.

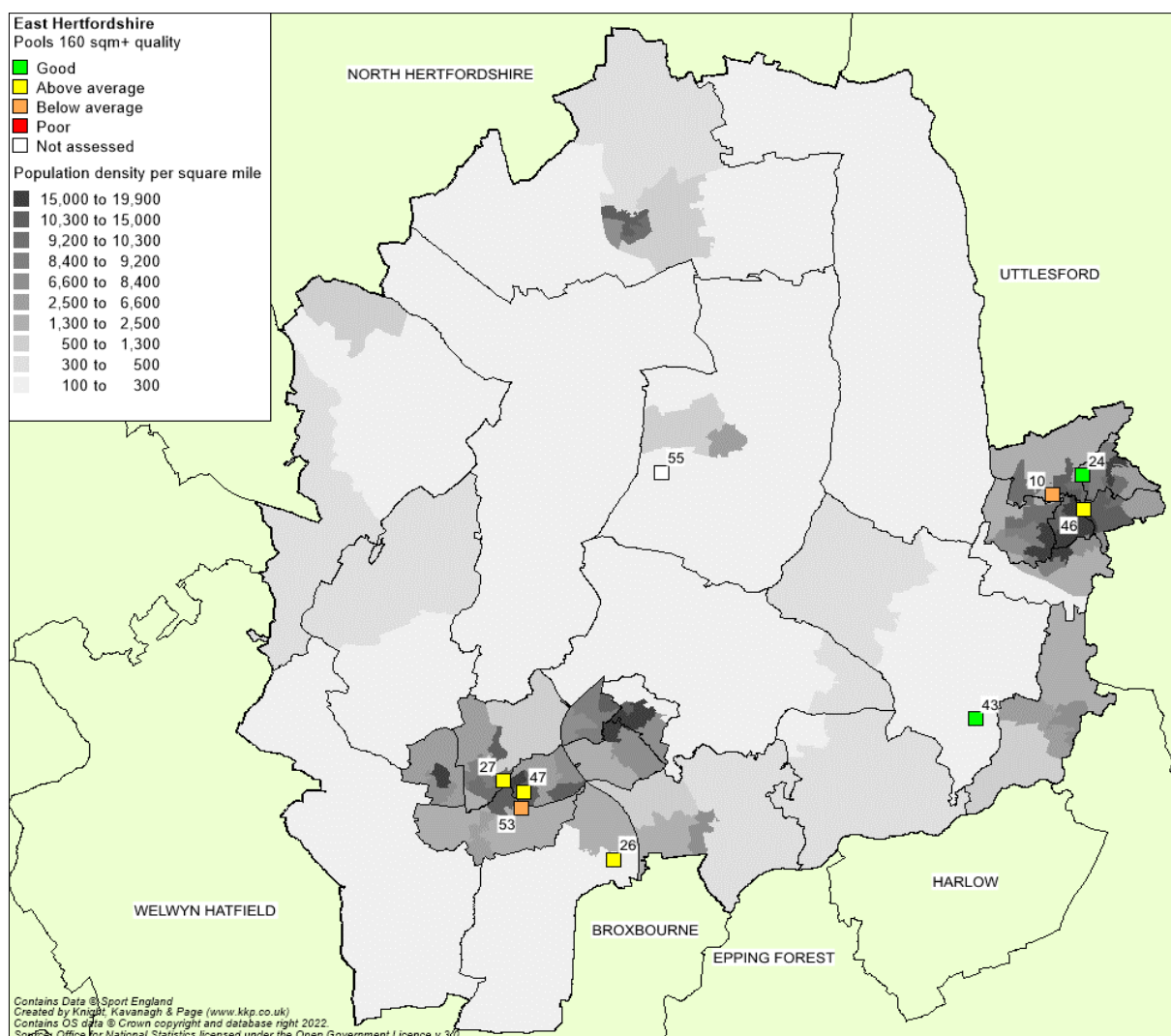


Table 5.2: Quality of 160m²+ swimming pools in East Herts

ID	Site name	Facility type	Lanes/length	Pool condition	Changing condition
10	Bishop's Stortford College	Main/general	6 / 25	Below average	Above average
24	Grange Paddocks LC	Main/general	8 / 25	Good	Good
24	Grange Paddocks LC	Learner/teaching	0 / 20	Good	Good
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	Learner/teaching/training	6 / 25	Above average	Above average
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	Main/general	6 / 25	Above average	Above average
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	Main/general	2 / 20	Good	Good

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ID	Site name	Facility type	Lanes/length	Pool condition	Changing condition
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	Main/general	2 / 20	Above average	Above average
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	Main/general	2 / 20	Above average	Above average
53	Simon Balle School	Main/general	4 / 25	Below average	Below average
55	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Main/general	3 / 20	Not assessed	Not assessed

Overall, the current supply of swimming pools in East Herts is well maintained and receives regular refurbishment. The good quality pools are located at a mix of commercially operated facilities and public leisure centres. Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre is the newest providing a good quality swimming offer. It opened in 2021 and features a competition pool with timing equipment and a moveable floor. It is well lit with film fitted over the windows to reduce glare. Under water cameras are in place to support lifeguards. Both pools have pool hoists.

The above average pool at Hartham Leisure Centre (Hertford) was refurbished in 2023, when its pool linings were upgraded. It was previously a 33-metre lido over which a roof was installed in the 1990s. A bridge has also been installed to create a 25m pool and an additional teaching area which is primarily used during learn to swim sessions. Diving blocks were purchased (in partnership with Hertford Swimming Club) so the facility is capable of hosting galas. LED lights and new pool covers were installed in 2021.

Only minor work has been carried out to the plant room and the venue is inefficient when compared to modern leisure centre buildings, with gas boilers in use for both the main and learner pools. A separate gas boiler is used to heat the changing rooms in which new lockers were installed in 2021. Teaching pool depth (because it was part of the main pool prior to the boom being fitted) limits the number of younger swimmers that can be accommodated on the learn-to-swim programme. EA plans to install a platform in this pool to reduce the depth and enable it to accommodate more younger swimmers.

The facility was previously a lido before a roof was installed in the 1990's. The roof only has approximately four years left on its life expectancy, which will need replacing to ensure the pool remains fit for purpose.

Haileybury Sports Complex (at Haileybury College) opened in 1997. It is still an attractive pool due to the refurbishment carried out to upgrade pool tiles, its hoist and pool cover. Changing facilities are of a similar standard due to regular refurbishment and routine maintenance. Both Nuffield Health sites are also of above average quality.

The 6-lane pool at Bishop's Stortford College opened in 2002 and was refurbished in 2023. This involved the School investing £250,000 in upgrading the poolside tiles, pumps and its filtration system, as well as installing a new pool cover and replacing the boiler. However, poolside décor remains dated. An additional £60,000 was spent on improving the changing facilities, which are now of above average quality.

The two oldest pools in the District are both at school sites (Simon Balle School and St Edmund College and Prep School). Both have been refurbished. The pool at Simon Balle School is located in an ageing part of the School. It did not report any current issues with its plant room. The boiler was repaired and several pumps replaced in 2024. The facility and décor are generally dated and in need of modernisation.

Table 5.3: Age of swimming pools (20m+) and refurbishment dates (where applicable)

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Site name	Year built/ opened	Year last refurbished	Age (years) since built/refurbished
Bishop's Stortford College	2002	-	22
Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	2021	-	3
Haileybury Sports Complex	1997	2010	14
Hartham Leisure Centre	1990	2022	2
Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	2003	-	21
Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	1991	2004	20
Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	2001	2007	17
Nuffield Health (Hertford)	2003	2012	12
Simon Balle School	1955	2018	6
St Edmunds College & Prep School	1901	2000	24

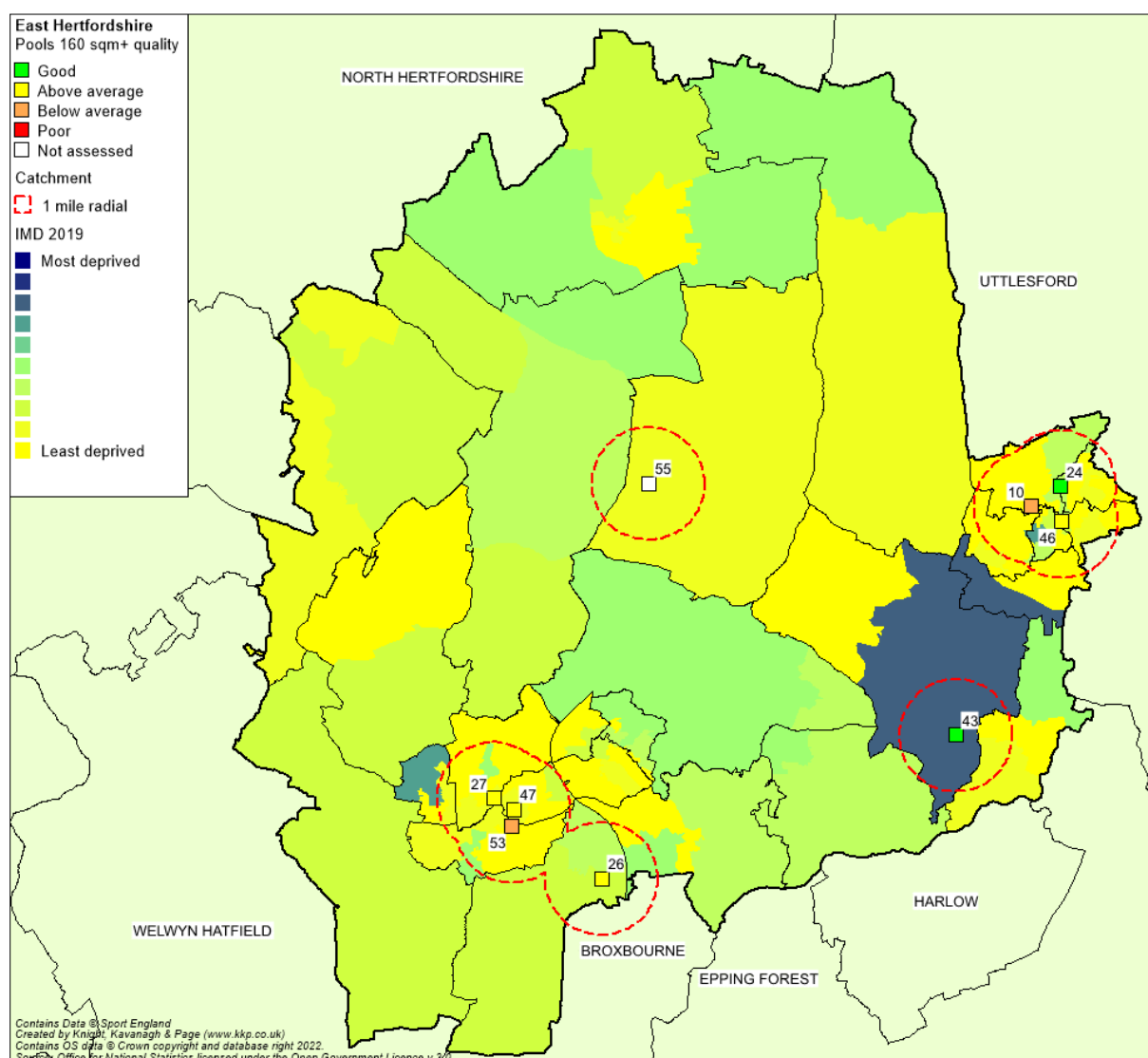
Accessibility

Swimming pool accessibility is influenced by physical traits such as the built environment. Walk and drive-time catchments are applied to determine accessibility. The normal acceptable standard is 20-minutes' walk time (1-mile radial catchment) for an urban area and a 20-minutes' drive time for a rural area. This enables analysis of the adequacy of coverage and helps identify areas currently not serviced by existing provision. Figure 5.3 below and Table 5.4 overleaf illustrate the walk-time based accessibility of all swimming pools in East Herts.

40.8% of the population lives within one mile of a swimming pool (160m² or larger) that offers some level of community use. When considering fully 'pay and play' accessible pools, this falls to 24.4%. Of the 1,232 people living in areas of higher deprivation in East Herts (i.e., the 30% most deprived areas nationally), 346 live within one mile of a swimming pool. Nearly all (98.7%) of the population lives within a 20-minute drive of a swimming pool larger than 160m².

Figure 5.3: Accessibility of swimming pools in East Herts

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT



The percentage of East Herts residents living within 1-mile of a swimming pool is relatively low. The rural nature of the District and the closure of three public leisure pools since December 2023 are significant factors contributing to this figure. Following the closure of Ward Freman Pool in the north of the East Herts, residents in the Buntingford, Puckeridge and Standon area have limited access to pool provision.

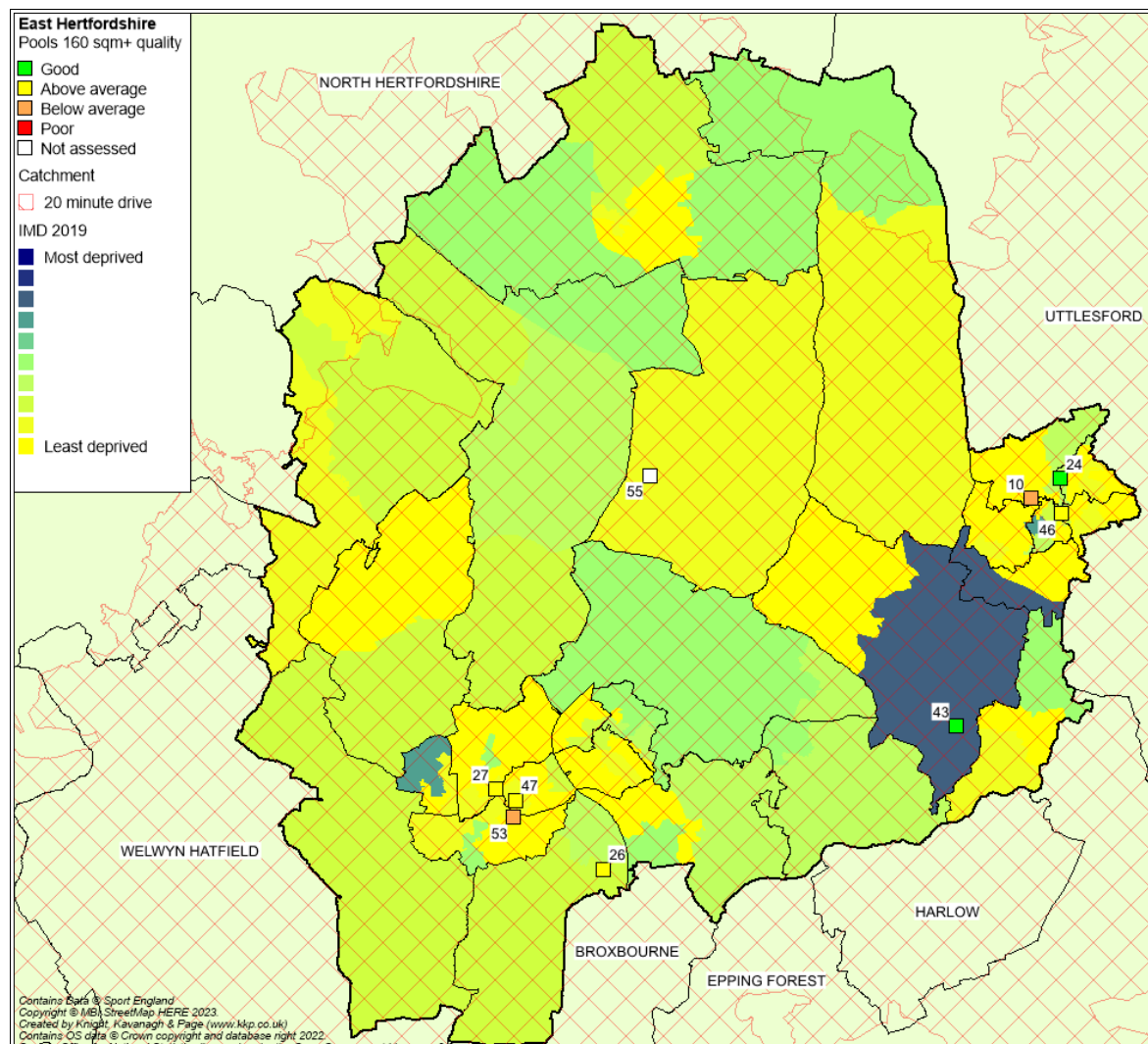
Table 5.4: Accessibility of swimming pools in East Herts

IMD 10% bands	Persons	Population %	Persons inside catchment	Population inside (%)	Persons outside catchment	Population outside (%)
0 - 10	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10.1 - 20	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
20.1 - 30	1,323	0.9%	346	0.2%	977	0.7%
30.1 - 40	4,332	3.0%	1,693	1.2%	2,639	1.8%
40.1 - 50	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
50.1 - 60	14,154	9.8%	3,006	2.1%	11,148	7.7%
60.1 - 70	13,234	9.2%	4,895	3.4%	8,339	5.8%
70.1 - 80	17,097	11.8%	4,038	2.8%	13,059	9.0%
80.1 - 90	33,411	23.1%	15,365	10.6%	18,046	12.5%

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

90.1 - 100	60,937	42.2%	29,571	20.5%	31,366	21.7%
Total	144,488	100.0%	58,914	40.8%	85,574	59.2%

Figure 5.4: Swimming pools within 20 minutes' drive time



Availability of swimming pools

Swimming pool availability differs dependent upon ownership and/or management. All facilities audited offer some form of public access. The access policy for each site is detailed below.

Table 5.4: Access policy of swimming pools

Site name	Access policy
Bishop's Stortford College	Sports club / CA
Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Pay and play
Haileybury Sports Complex	Sports club / CA
Hartham Leisure Centre	Pay and play
Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	Registered membership
Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	Registered membership
Nuffield Health (Hertford)	Registered membership

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Site name	Access policy
Simon Balle School	Sports club / CA
St Edmunds College & Prep School	Sports club / CA

(NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club / community association use)

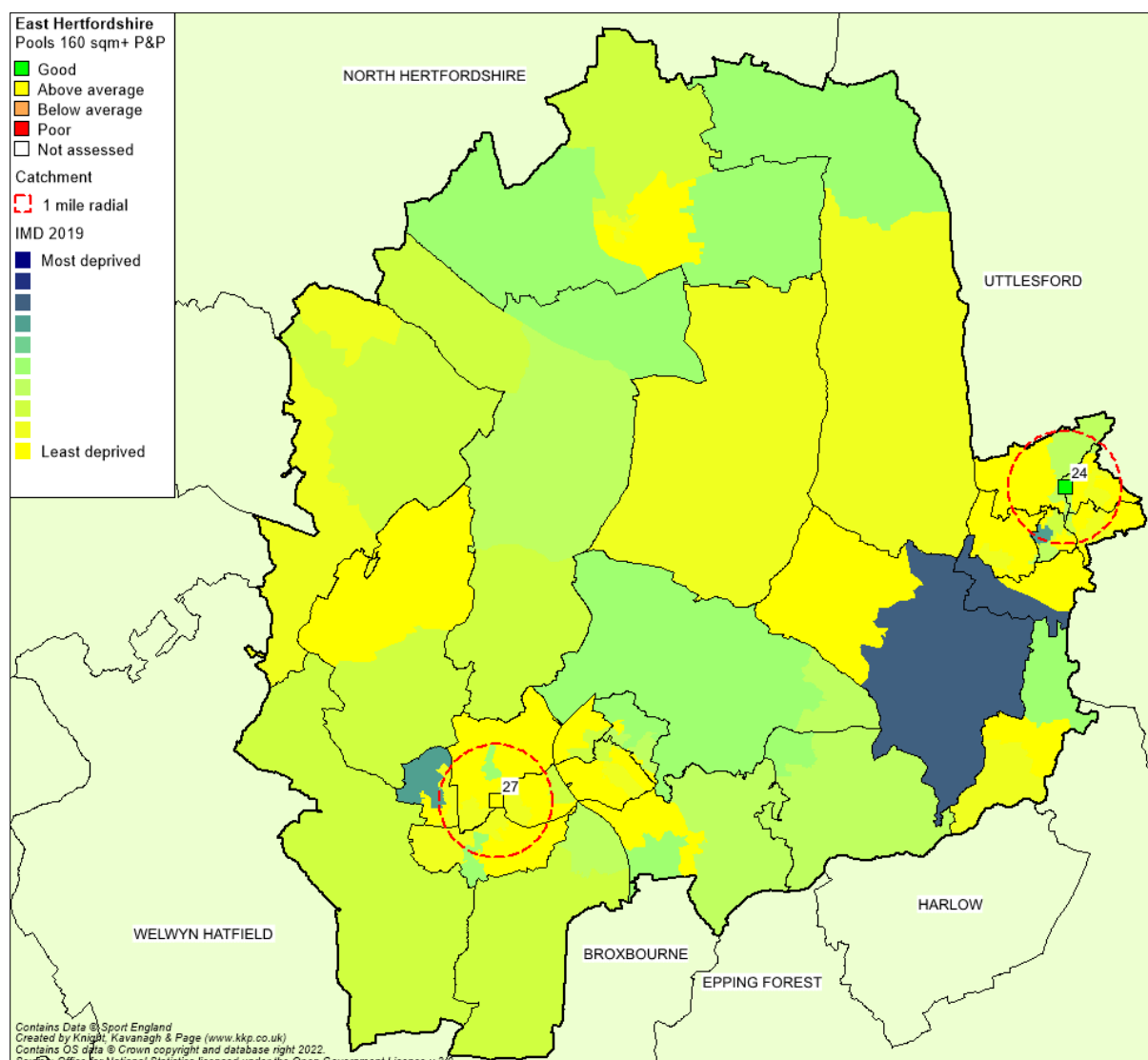
Two pools can be accessed on a pay and play basis, both are public leisure centres operated by Everyone Active. These also have membership options which are more cost-effective (for regular users) than the pay and play offer. Commercial health and fitness operators which provide pools offer access via registered membership only. This is the case for four pools in East Hertfordshire, the two Nuffield Health facilities and two hotels.

While acknowledging that commercially managed facilities can cater for specific market segments, they are not always available to all sections of the community and may not necessarily be affordable to all households. The four schools-based pools offer community use in the form of swim schools or swimming club use but do not offer individual pay and play access.

Table 5.5: Accessibility of pay and play pools in East Hertfordshire

IMD 10% bands	Persons	Population %	Persons inside catchment	Population inside (%)	Persons outside catchment	Population outside (%)
0 - 10	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10.1 - 20	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
20.1 - 30	1,323	0.9%	0	0.0%	1,323	0.9%
30.1 - 40	4,332	3.0%	1,309	0.9%	3,023	2.1%
40.1 - 50	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
50.1 - 60	14,154	9.8%	1,889	1.3%	12,265	8.5%
60.1 - 70	13,234	9.2%	1,616	1.1%	11,618	8.0%
70.1 - 80	17,097	11.8%	2,470	1.7%	14,627	10.1%
80.1 - 90	33,411	23.1%	11,994	8.3%	21,417	14.8%
90.1 - 100	60,937	42.2%	16,007	11.1%	44,930	31.1%
Total	144,488	100.0%	35,285	24.4%	109,203	75.6%

Figure 5.5: Pay and play pools quality on IMD 1-mile catchment



Facilities in neighbouring authorities

Accessibility is influenced by facilities located outside an authority. Eight pools (160m²+) across seven sites are located within two miles of the East Hertfordshire boundary.

Table 5.6: Neighbouring community available pools within 2-mile radial of East Hertfordshire

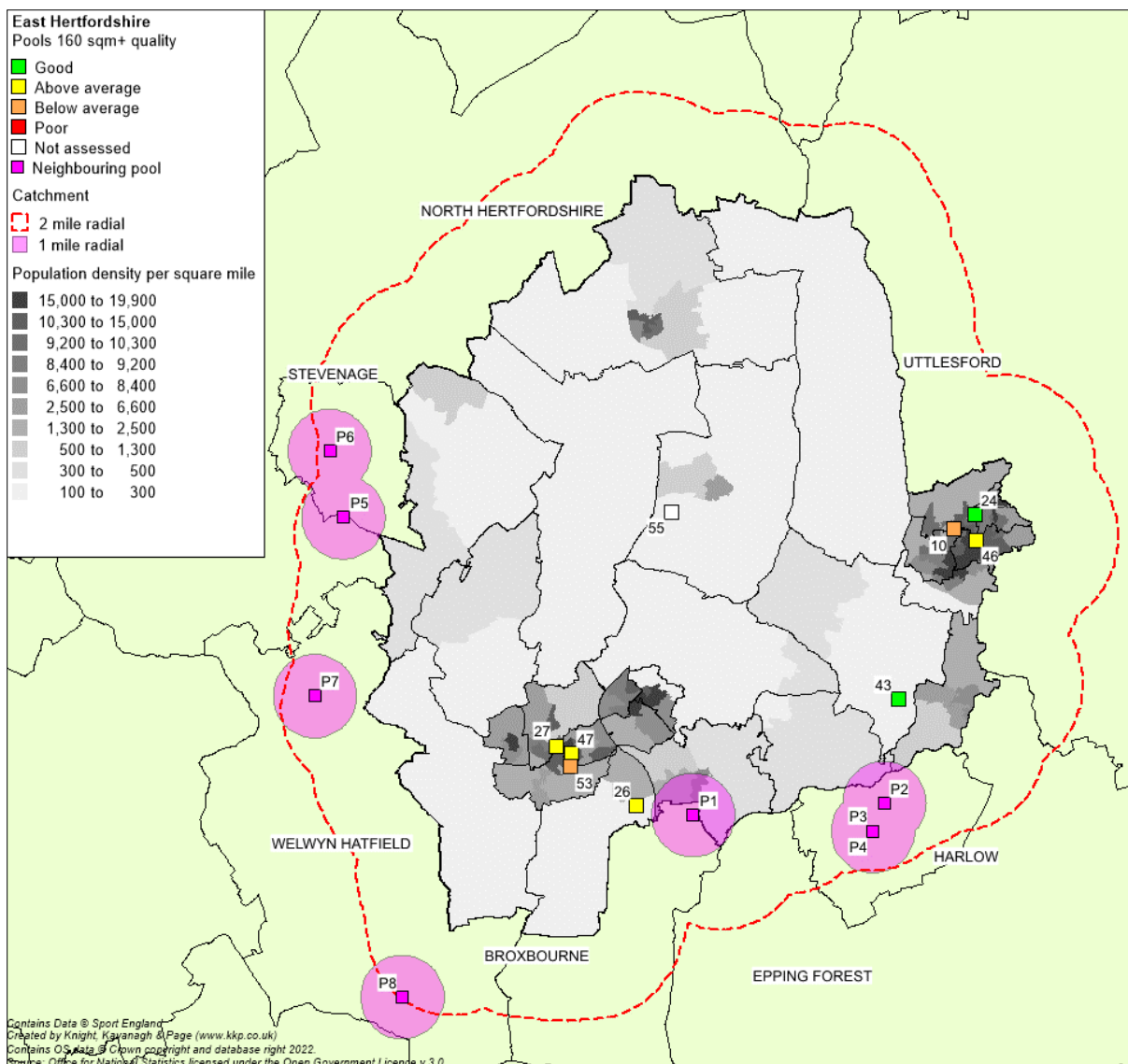
ID	Site	Type	Area m ²	Access	District
P1	John Warner Sports Centre	Main/general	325	Pay and play	Broxbourne
P2	Burnt Mill Academy	Main/general	162	Sports club / CA	Harlow
P3	Harlow Leisure Zone	Learner/teaching	160	Pay and play	Harlow
P4	Harlow Leisure Zone	Main/general	400	Pay and play	Harlow
P5	Odyssey Health Club (Knebworth)	Main/general	300	Reg. membership	North Herts
P6	Stevenage Swimming Centre	Main/general	396	Pay and play	Stevenage
P7	Monks Walk School	Main/general	160	Sports club / CA	W-Hatfield
P8	Queenswood School	Main/general	225	Sports club / CA	W- Hatfield

(NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club / community association use).

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Four of these sites offer pay and play access, one requires registered membership and three can be accessed via sports club or community association.

Figure 5.6: Swimming pools located within 2 miles of East Hertfordshire boundary



Source: Active Places Power 23/10/2024

Future enhancements / new developments

As part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development, 10,000 new homes will be developed in the southeast of the district at Gilston, adjacent to the border with Harlow. Section 106 funding will be utilised to implement new sports and leisure provision to cater for the growth in demand created by this housing growth. It is understood that a 25m four or six lane swimming pool will be built as part of this development at Gilston Leisure Centre to meet the needs of the increased population in this area.

Heath Mount School is considering plans to install a structure over the existing lido, extending the pool to 25m in length and developing modern ancillary provision. There are plans for the facility to accommodate community use once this work has been completed. The date of this is currently unknown.

Additionally, new leisure provision is being developed in neighbouring authorities within drivetime accessibility for East Herts residents. Stevenage Brough Council is redeveloping its public leisure provision, building a new 25m 10-lane pool. North Herts Council is also developing new provision at its Royston Leisure Centre site by creating additional learn to swim space with a new learner pool. Also, the replacement pool on the Burnt Mill Academy in Harlow will offer a new pool in close proximity to the Sawbridgeworth area. The quality and offer at these sites will like attract East Herts residents, particularly in the east and north of the district

5.2: FPM

An FPM report was commissioned by the Council in 2025 to better understand the impacts of the three public leisure pool closures and to assess future demand and level of provision to 2043. To do this, two scenarios or 'runs' were carried out, neither of which included the pools which are currently closed:

- ◀ Baseline assessment of provision in 2025.
- ◀ Forward assessment of demand for swimming pools, based on the projected changes in population between 2025 and 2043 and the likely implications that the addition of Gilston Leisure Centre has in meeting this projected demand.

Headline overview

Nearly all current and future demand for swimming pools in East Hertfordshire can be met by the available supply in both 2025 and 2043. This remains the case despite a substantial projected increase in population and demand over the period. Most demand is met within the district in both years – despite some unmet demand in parts of the district such as Buntingford, with up to a quarter of residents' demand is satisfied at facilities outside East Hertfordshire.

Public leisure centres provide the majority of swimming pool capacity and meet the most visits across the district. The addition of Gilston Leisure Centre enables East Hertfordshire to accommodate the significant increase in demand generated by planned housing growth in this part of the district by 2043.

No swimming pool site is estimated to be fully utilised during the weekly peak period, although several operate above their comfortable capacity threshold in both years. The only scope to increase availability and capacity lies at educational sites, some of which already operate above comfortable levels.

By 2043, the ageing facility stock will be considerably less attractive unless modernisation or replacement is undertaken. More than one-third of used capacity at East Hertfordshire's pools comes from outside the District, highlighting the importance of continued collaboration with neighbouring authorities to support effective strategic planning.

Key findings

Supply

Public leisure centres provide the majority of swimming provision in both years, supplying 52% of available capacity in 2025 and 61% in 2043. Total water space increases from 2,854 sqm in 2025 to 3,237 sqm in 2043, with available peak-time water space rising from 2,215 sqm to 2,598 sqm. All unavailable capacity is located at educational sites.

Facility availability

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

There is no scope to increase peak-time availability at the two currently open or one future leisure centre pool as all operate at maximum hours. Several educational sites operate above comfortable capacity in both years, and these are the only locations where additional availability could be created.

Population

East Hertfordshire's population is projected to increase by 34% between 2025 and 2043. This results in a 31% rise in demand for swimming pools.

Met and unmet demand

In both 2025 and 2043, 97% of demand is met. The number of visits met in the weekly peak period increases from 10,130 in 2025 to 13,239 in 2043 due to increased demand and capacity. The proportion of satisfied demand met within the District is 78% in 2025 and 75% in 2043. Unmet demand is very low, equating to 48 sqm of water in 2025 and 67 sqm in 2043, with most unmet demand arising from residents living too far from a facility.

Used capacity

Overall used capacity is 68% in both 2025 and 2043. Gilston Leisure Centre absorbs a significant share of the increased demand in 2043. East Hertfordshire is a net importer of demand, with 35–39% of used capacity coming from outside the District.

Interventions and next steps

The priority is to maintain East Hertfordshire's strong record of modernisation and replacement to ensure facilities remain attractive and competitive. Increasing peak-time availability at key educational sites will help relieve pressure on those operating above comfortable capacity.

There is no scope to increase availability at the public leisure centres, which already operate at maximum hours. Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre becomes uncomfortably busy by 2043, and modernisation and extended opening hours at Bishop's Stortford College would help redistribute demand.

Hartham Leisure Centre becomes less attractive by 2043 as the model no longer takes into account its 2022 refurbishment. A major refurbishment or replacement should therefore be considered, particularly if nearby facilities modernise or expand.

Gilston Leisure Centre is well located and the modelled six-lane pool comfortably meets demand from planned housing growth. A four-lane option would still satisfy demand, however, it would operate at a capacity deemed uncomfortably busy by the model. The further planned housing growth in Gilston beyond 2043 (around 1,300 of the total 10,000 dwellings with outline planning permission) was not modelled but will likely increase the used capacity of the six-lane pool above 70% used capacity. A four-lane pool would be fully utilised and unable to meet all of this additional demand.

The reopening of Ward Freman Pool in 2026 will increase capacity and improve access in the north of the district, helping meet the small amount of unmet demand projected for 2043.

5.3: Demand

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Swim England was invited to consultation to inform the audit; however, no response was received. Consultation with the three swimming clubs based in East Hertfordshire was carried out to better understand demand.

Club consultation

Bishop's Stortford Swimming Club is based at Bishop's Stortford College and has a strong relationship with the School. It prefers to use education sites as a home base as opposed to public leisure centres as it can access peak times and can deliver its own learn to swim programmes. It has approximately 720 members, with c.153 participating on a competitive basis. Its learn to swim programme is strong, with about 400 young people attending lessons on a weekly basis.

The Club is content with the quality of the current facility and the times in which it can access it. It did express concern about the overall volume of pool space in the District, and the impact that this has on young people getting into competitive swimming. It identified a lack of competency in younger swimmers in the post-Covid era as a result of a lack of opportunities to swim from an early age.

Hertford Swimming Club is predominantly based at Hartham Leisure Centre (Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays) but also hires additional pool space within and outside the District. It currently uses Haileybury Sports Complex (Mondays, Wednesdays and Sundays), Simon Balle School (Tuesdays), Albany Leisure Centre in Enfield and Luton Sports Village (to access a 50m pool). It would like to access more pool space at Haileybury Sports Complex; however, this is not cost effective, and the Club is trying to avoid passing on the rising cost of facility hire to its members. Generally, it is happy with the amount of pool space it currently occupies but is concerned about the wider impact of local pool closures on swimming participation rates in East Hertfordshire.

The timetabling of public leisure sites causes frustration for Hertford Swimming Club. It recognises the need to offer public swim sessions, however, it notes that these are often poorly attended and take place at times when club demand is high. It experiences a similar issue when organising sessions for master's swimming and water polo training. The depth of the pool at Hartham LC and other public leisure pools is also problematic for Hertford Swimming Club's water polo section.

Ware Swimming Club has been significantly impacted by the closure of Fanshawe Pool. It previously accessed the full pool for 15 hours per week split across five days and did not use any other pools as this was (at the time) sufficient to cater for its membership. It was also given to understand that should its membership grow, additional hours could be accommodated by EA. It had invested £8,500 in new starting blocks for the facility. The Club will benefit from the reopening of this pool, should it occur.

It currently has c.170 members, the majority of which are in younger age. Several of its coaches also teach on the EA swimming lesson programme. This has enhanced the progression for participants looking to progress into club swimming from EA lessons. The Club also actively recruits from local schools and through word of mouth.

It has, thus far, identified five hours per week at an alternative facility, however more time is needed to maintain membership at current levels. It estimates that if a level of pool space to comparable to that which it previously had access to at Fanshawe, cannot be identified, membership could reduce by approximately 40% due to increased travel times and its talented swimmers moving to other local clubs to guarantee water time. The five hours already sourced are already causing logistical issues in respect of getting the its workforce to each session.

It had access to a 5-lane pool at Fanshawe, however, the most likely school pool options in the district to access alternative provision, only have four. This has an impact on the number of participants able to attend each session. The Club is part of a wider community group interested in reopening the pool. It has contacted The Chauncy School and the Council to better understand the costs associated with running and managing the facility.

Swimming lessons

Children's swimming lessons are delivered at both public leisure sites in East Hertfordshire. Current lesson volumes are as follows:

- ◀ Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre – c.2,500.
- ◀ Hartham Leisure Centre – 1,500.

Fanshawe and Leventhorpe Pools previously accommodated EA learn-to-swim programmes, with approximately 900 young people attending across both sites on a weekly basis. EA planned for those attending lessons at Fanshawe to move to Hartham Leisure Centre, while Leventhorpe swimmers transitioned to Grange Paddocks, as this made geographical sense.

Consultation with EA indicates that, while this approach was feasible, it will result in a reduced number of young people participating in learn-to-swim programmes. This was underscored by data following the closure of Ward Freman in December 2023. EA reported a significant drop in participation among swimming lesson attendees capable of completing 25 metres as many opted to discontinue lessons rather than transfer to alternative sites, largely due to the challenges associated with increased travel times and rush-hour traffic.

To accommodate those transferring to new sites, additional programming amendments have been made at Hartham Leisure Centre. This has led to EA reducing the number of public swimming hours available. Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre can support additional learn-to-swim members adapting existing pool usage without reducing club use or general swim times. EA reports that its swimming lesson programme is now close to capacity given the loss of pool space.

The audit did not identify any free swimming for over fifties at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre or Hartham Leisure Centre. Discounted swimming sessions for over fifties take place at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre on Monday mornings between 09:00 and 10:00, and Tuesday mornings at Hartham Leisure Centre between 09:30 and 10:30. The cost to attend each session is £2.85.

5.4: Sport England's Facilities Calculator (SFC)

As noted earlier, this assists local planning authorities to quantify additional demand for community sports facilities generated by new growth populations, development and regeneration areas. It can be used to estimate facility needs for whole area populations but should not be applied for strategic gap analysis as it has no spatial dimension as it does not take account of:

- ◀ Facility location compared to demand.
- ◀ Capacity and availability of facilities – opening hours.
- ◀ Cross boundary movement of demand.
- ◀ Travel networks and topography.
- ◀ Attractiveness of facilities.

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Table 5.8: Sports facilities calculator

Factor	Population 2022: (ONS)	Population estimate: 2043 (ONS)
ONS population projections	155,808	207,761
Population increase	-	51.953
Facilities to meet change in demand	-	10.78 lanes / 2.69 pools
Estimated Cost	-	£13,603,587

(Build costs as of Q3 2024)

Calculations assume that the current swimming pool stock remains available for community use and the quality remains the same. The projected increase in population will lead to an increase in demand for swimming space of 10.78 lanes (equivalent to 2.69 4-lane pools). The development of a 6-lane pool as part of Gilston Leisure Centre will offset much of the new demand brought on by new housing sites throughout the local plan. This, in addition with supporting the re-opening of currently closed sites (such as Ward Freman Pool and Fanshawe Pool and Gym) and the transition of Heath Mount School's lido into a covered 25m pool will ensure suitable access to pool provision for East Herts residents to 2043.

In the shorter term, programming at all key public leisure sites should be investigated to ensure that the most popular activities are available at peak times. This should include opportunities for recreational (and pay and play) swimming, learn to swim programmes and club use.

To ensure that future provision levels remain aligned with the scale of planned growth, the SFC should be applied as new housing sites are allocated through the emerging Local Plan. While the current growth figures reflect only the commitments within the adopted District Plan, the forthcoming Local Plan will identify additional housing sites to meet the full standard method requirement.

5.5: Summary of key facts and issues

East Hertfordshire is in the following position with regards to its swimming pool provision:

Facility type	Swimming pools	
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
Quantity	There are 27 pools across 21 sites of which five are closed. 11 pools larger than 160m ² are open, one of which is a lido.	The two public pool venues have limited spare capacity due to recent pool closures - since December 2023. Public swimming time at Hartham Leisure Centre has been reduced to accommodate additional club and learn to swim demand. FPM findings suggest that nearly all current and future demand for swimming pools in East Hertfordshire can be met by the available supply in both 2025 and 2043.
Quality	Three pools are good quality, four are above average, two are below average and one was unassessed.	More good quality swimming pools are located in the east of the District. Improvements should be considered at the five pools located in the Hertford and Ware region, with exception to Hartham Leisure Centre which is above average in quality.
Accessibility	40.8% of residents live within one mile of a community use pool. (99%	Two school pools have closed. It is important that the two remaining school

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Facility type	Swimming pools	
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
	live within 20-minute drive-time). The re-opening of currently closed pools (such as Ward Freman Pool) will improve accessibility for residents in the north of East Herts. Pay and play access is available within a 1-mile walk for one quarter (24.4%) of East Herts' residents.	pools receive the required investment to remain open/accessible to clubs. Ware Swimming Club is at risk unless additional pool space can be found, or currently closed pools reopen.
Availability (Management and usage)	Two sites (five pools) offer pay and play use. A further three are accessed via registered membership. School pools only cater for clubs and commercial learn to swim schools.	Only two sites provide a pay and play option, one of which has reduced its public swim hours to accommodate additional learn to swim users.

Strategic summary

- ◀ Swimming pool quality in East Herts is generally good. Better quality provision is located in the east of the district with exception to Hartham Leisure Centre. Residents in the north have poor access to pool provision.
- ◀ Existing facilities should be protected in accordance with Para 104 of the NPPF.
- ◀ The roof at Hartham Leisure Centre needs to be replaced. Funding should be allocated in the short/medium term to do this. Any risk of further pool closure should be mitigated given the current lack of spare capacity in the district.
- ◀ Providing an adequate number of pool hours for Ware Swimming Club should be prioritised. It is at risk because of insufficient pool time following closure of Fanshawe Pool.
- ◀ The closure of three public leisure centre swimming facilities since December 2023 has placed high demand on the two public leisure sites. Learn to swim lesson used capacity is high.
- ◀ New provision is required to counterbalance the loss of three public pools, ease pressure on learn-to-swim programmes, improve access for public swim users and cater for clubs. As per the FPM findings, support the community group seeking funds to re-open Ward Freman Pool to improve swimming accessibility for those in the north of East Herts such as Buntingford residents.
- ◀ Community groups are attempting to raise funds to re-open two of the three closed pools, although the actual cost of this work is unknown. EHC should support these groups to assess the likely cost and, as feasible/appropriate, with their efforts to re-open local pools.
- ◀ The development of Gilston leisure Centre will accommodate additional swimming demand generated by housing growth in the district.

SECTION 6: HEALTH AND FITNESS SUITES

According to the most recent ALS data²⁰, around 11.4 million adults regularly engage in some form of fitness type activity (i.e., using gym equipment, a weights session, fitness class, or interval session). The popularity of fitness activities is reflective of their taking place across wide range of facilities including larger gyms (run on behalf of the local authority by companies and/or Trusts, managed in-house or private sector operators), and also other smaller activity spaces such as village and community halls.

Fitness studios also vary in their size and function, from relatively large rooms within leisure centres often containing a sprung floor, to smaller spaces (often within community and village halls) which may serve as dedicated spinning (indoor cycling) studios or to hold virtual fitness classes. Studio based timetabled classes such as Pilates, yoga, dance, step, boxercise and Zumba usually generate a significant amount of activity within publicly operated provision and comprise a core benefit of a health and fitness membership.

In terms of trends in the market, prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the UK health and fitness industry was enjoying a strong period of growth. It had more gyms, more members and a greater market value than ever before. The State of the Fitness Industry Report UK for 2022 found that membership levels dropped by around 5% since 2019 as a result of the Pandemic and numbers of facilities had also reduced. This correlates with ALS data which measured regular pre-Pandemic activity levels at around 14 million. Pure Gym and GLL remain the UK's leading operators (by number of gyms and members).

Health and fitness facilities are a core element within the transitioning of public leisure facilities towards delivering on wider health improvement outcomes. A leisure operator's role in providing for people with long term health conditions, including via exercise referral is critical. Fitness studios may 'double up' as spaces where NHS services such as physiotherapy, health screening, and weight management can take place alongside gentle exercise classes.

Larger health and fitness gyms containing a mix of flexible spaces (such as cardio, free weights and boxing equipment, (80 stations +²¹) remain central to the financial viability of public sector leisure centres. When combined with multiple studio facilities offering a good mix (and sufficient number) of classes, these usually offer the most profitable spaces within a typical leisure centre.

The past decade or so has also seen a growth in the prevalence of operators offering 'functional fitness' type equipment and activities. This form of fitness is a type of strength training that readies your body for daily activities and includes lifting, loading, pushing, pulling, squatting and hauling. This is manifested both in terms of small private facilities, and the incorporation of functional fitness spaces within publicly operated health and fitness facilities.

6.1: Supply

Quantity

The 35 health and fitness gyms in East Herts contain a total of 1,761 stations and are generally, located in the local authority's more densely populated areas, such as Ware, Hertford and Bishop's Stortford. The north and west of the district are largely rural, which explains the more limited of provision in these areas.

²⁰ [Active Lives adult survey Nov 20-21 report](#)

²¹ A health and fitness 'station' is defined as a piece of static fitness equipment – KKP normally audits facilities of 20 stations or more.

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Figure 6.1: All health and fitness gyms on population density

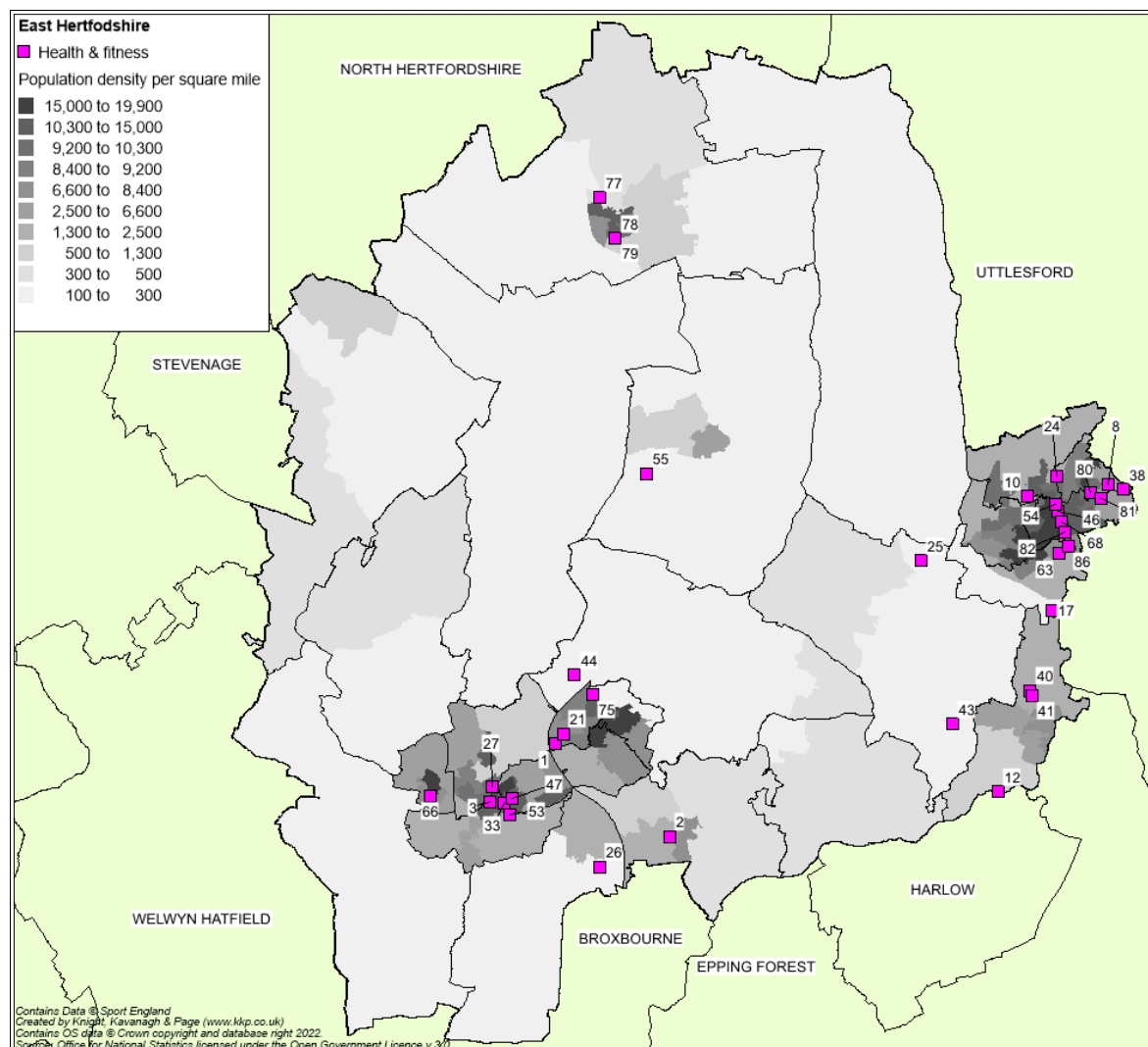


Table 6.1: All health and fitness gyms in East Herts

ID	Site name	Stations
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	10
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	35
2	Amwell View School	5
3	Anytime Fitness (Hertford)	200
10	Bishop's Stortford College	20
12	Body Active Gym	100
17	Challenge Active	106
21	Fanshawe Pool & Gym*	40
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	130
25	Great Hadham Country Club	36
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	30
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	120
33	Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue	5
38	Koru Gym	30
40	Vision Fitness (Leventhorpe)	40
41	Leventhorpe Pool & Gym*	17

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ID	Site name	Stations
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	76
44	Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	31
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	120
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	75
53	Simon Balle School	24
54	Snap Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	200
55	St Edmunds College & Prep School	9
63	The Bishop's Stortford High School	30
66	The Sele School	20
68	Vision Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	40
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	45
77	Buntingford Gym	25
78	Bar and Belles	20
79	The Body Shop	40
80	AbFab Gym	20
8	Birchwood School	20
81	Prime Performance	15
82	Apex Strength and Wellness	12
86	Cre8 Gym	15
-	Total	1,761

*Facility is currently closed.

Fanshawe Pool and Gym and Leventhorpe Pool and Gym closed in 2024. Both are deemed to be too small to generate sufficient membership income to remain operational. According to Everyone Active, Fanshawe had approximately 800 health and fitness members who have now been offered a 15-month contract at the same price to use Hartham Leisure Centre.

Leventhorpe (a smaller operation) has provided its members with a comparable offer to encourage transfer to Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre. Both, alongside venues with fewer than 20 stations have been discounted in respect of the further provision analysis below. This leaves 26 facilities with 20+ stations.

Table 6.2: Health and fitness suite (20+ stations)

ID	Site name	Stations
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	35
3	Anytime Fitness (Hertford)	200
10	Bishop's Stortford College	20
12	Body Active Gym	100
17	Challenge Active	106
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	130
25	Great Hadham Country Club	36
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	30
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	120
38	Koru Gym	30
40	Vision Fitness (Leventhorpe)	40
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	76
44	Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	31
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	120
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	75
53	Simon Balle School	24

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ID	Site name	Stations
54	Snap Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	200
63	The Bishop's Stortford High School	30
66	The Sele School	20
68	Vision Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	40
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	45
77	Buntingford Gym	25
78	Bar and Belles	20
79	The Body Shop	40
80	AbFab Gym	20
8	Birchwood School	20
-	Total	1,633

Seven gyms are of significant size (with 100+ stations), the largest of which are Anytime Fitness (Hertford) and Snap Fitness (Bishop's Stortford) which both have 200 stations. There is a considerable good quality local competition provision from a number of national chain providers.

Quality

All 20+ station health and fitness sites received a non-technical quality assessment. Three are rated good quality, ten above average, nine below average and two are poor. Two sites were unassessed.

Figure 6.2: Health and fitness gym quality (20+ stations)

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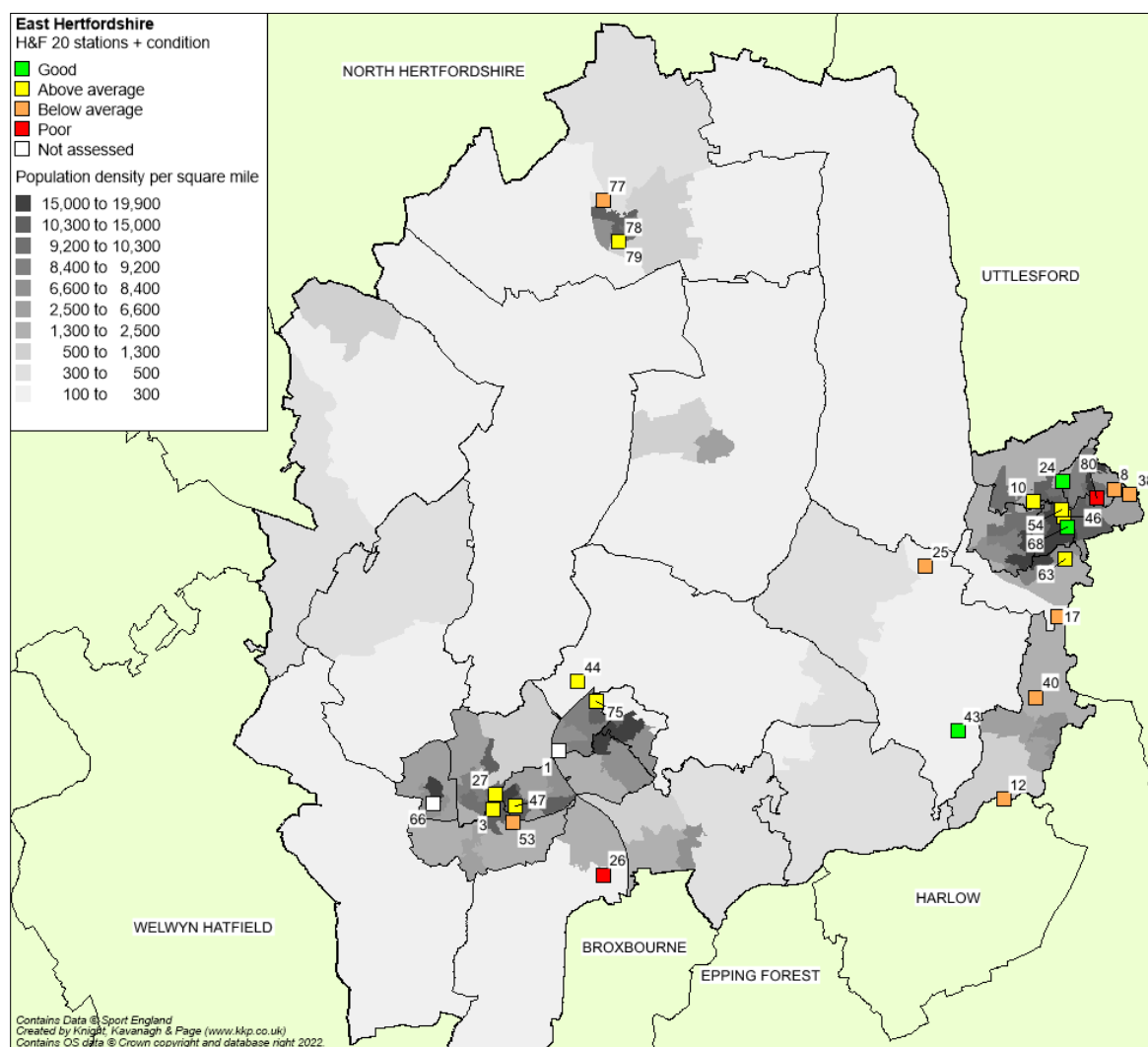


Table 6.3: Health & fitness suites with 20+ stations by condition

ID	Site name	Stations	Quality
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	35	Not assessed
3	Anytime Fitness (Hertford)	200	Above average
10	Bishop's Stortford College	20	Above average
12	Body Active Gym	100	Below average
17	Challenge Active	106	Below average
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	130	Good
25	Great Hadham Country Club	36	Below average
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	30	Poor
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	120	Above average
38	Koru Gym	30	Below average
40	Vision Fitness (Leventhorpe)	40	Below average
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	76	Good
44	Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	31	Above average
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	120	Above average
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	75	Above average
53	Simon Balle School	24	Below average
54	Snap Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	200	Above average
63	The Bishop's Stortford High School	30	Above average

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ID	Site name	Stations	Quality
66	The Sele School	20	Not assessed
68	Vision Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	40	Good
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	45	Above average
77	Buntingford Gym	25	Below average
78	Bar and Belles	20	Below average
79	The Body Shop	40	Above average
80	AbFab Gym	20	Poor
8	Birchwood School	20	Below average

Grange Paddocks provides a good quality health and fitness offer, reflective of its relatively recent construction. It has modern décor, LED lighting throughout and a spacious layout. The building is of a high standard and has generated significant public interest and use.

Hartham Leisure Centre is the only other public leisure site with a health and fitness facility with 20+ stations. In 2023, its fitness offer was expanded significantly (from 75 to 120 stations) as part of a £9 million investment which also included energy saving measures such as the installation of solar panels on the roof and an air source heat pump to reduce the sites reliance on gas. A soft play centre was also developed as part of the renovation. On the back of this the facility has had issues with persistent roof leaks. The wet changing facilities were refurbished in May 2024, when a changing village was installed.

The fitness facility at Wodson Park Sports Centre is of above average quality with a spacious layout and good quality equipment. Leventhorpe Leisure Centre (at Leventhorpe School) is of below average in quality. Machines are located in close proximity to each other, and the facility is in need of modernisation.

Generally, the facilities managed by commercial operators are of above average or good quality. Examples include the two Nuffield Health sites and Vision Fitness (Bishop's Stortford).

Accessibility

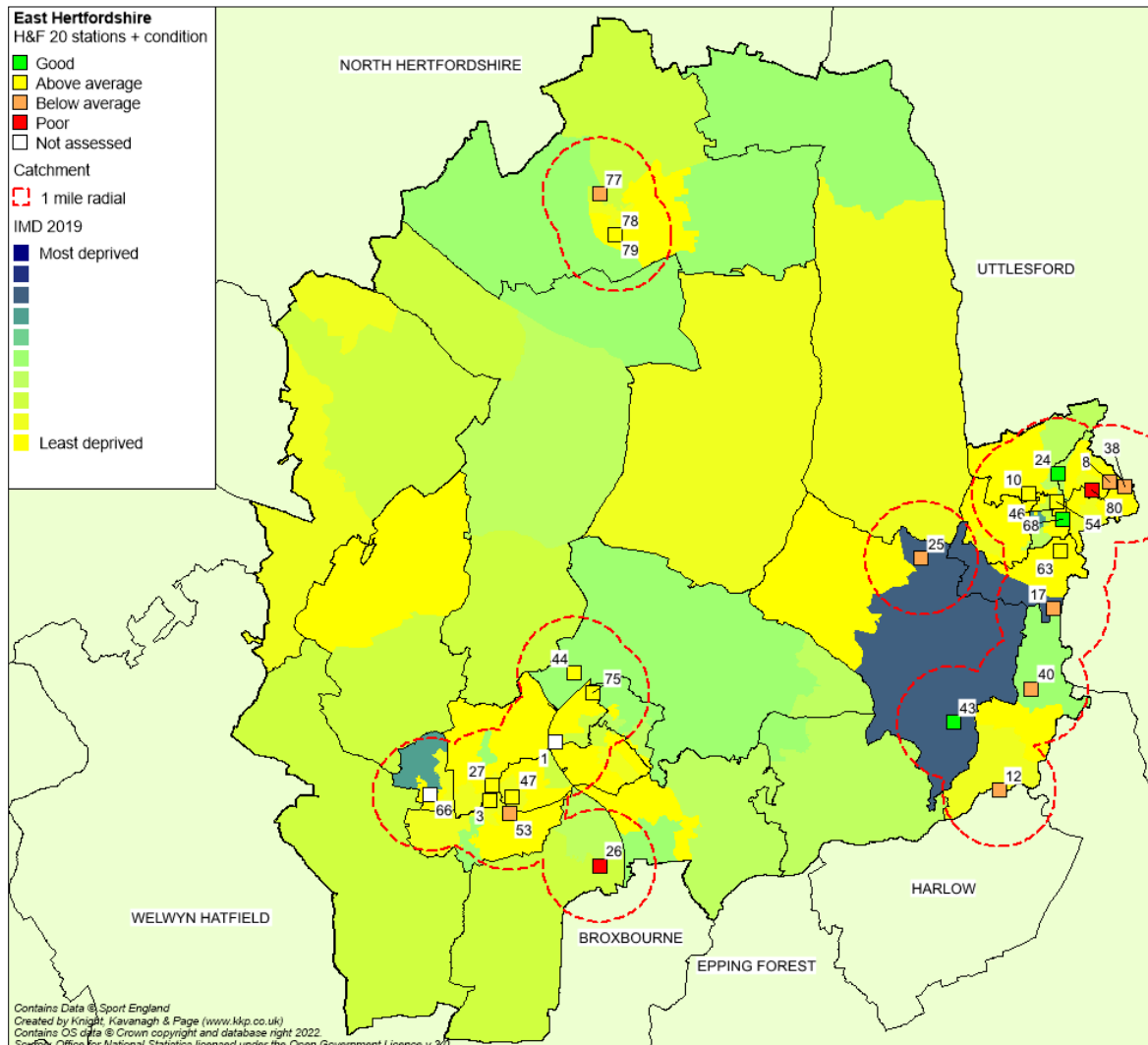
The Sport England classification of access type defines registered membership use facilities as being publicly available. For health and fitness suites, this generally means payment of a monthly membership fee which can vary considerably. Private operators have no contractual obligation to, for example, offer exercise referral nor do they necessarily actively target people/communities who face barriers to participation. It is also acknowledged that some memberships are dear while others are cheaper than those offered by public sector venues. There is little doubt that the various private operators can take pressure off the more available public facilities.

Appropriate walk and drive-time accessibility standards are applied to health and fitness suites to determine provision deficiencies or surpluses. The normal acceptable standard for an urban area is a 20-minutes' walk time and 20-minute drive time for a rural area.

Over 66% of East Herts' population lives within 20 minutes' walk of a health and fitness facility with 20+ stations and community access. All residents in East Herts live within a 20-minute drive of a community accessible facility with 20+ stations. 72% of people living in areas of higher deprivation live within one mile walk of a health and fitness gym in East Herts.

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Figure 6.3: Health and fitness gyms 20+ stations+ with 1-mile radial catchment

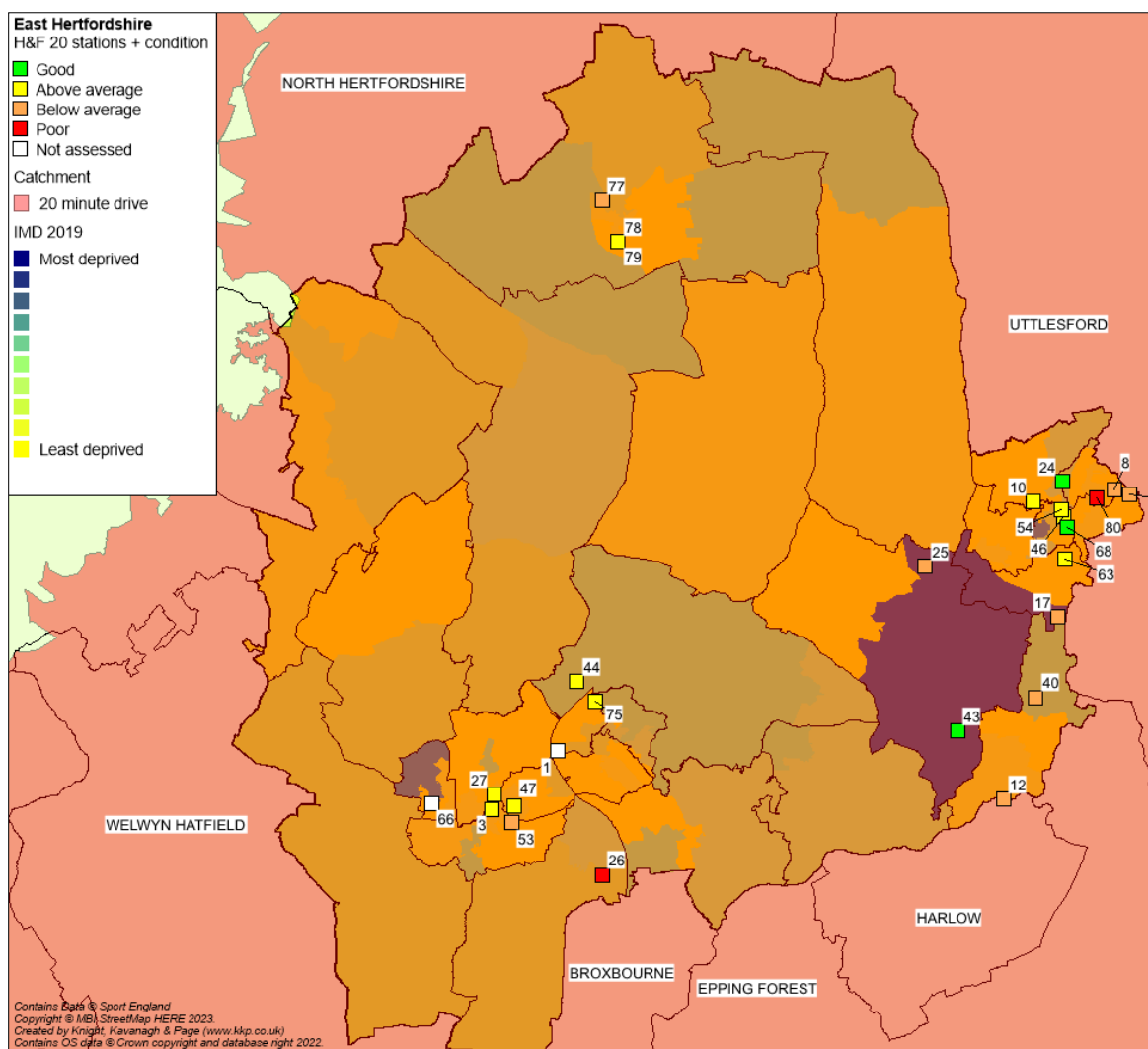


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Table 6.4: Health and fitness 20+ stations with 1-mile radial catchment

IMD 10% bands	Persons	Population %	Persons inside catchment	Population inside (%)	Persons outside catchment	Population outside (%)
0 - 10	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10.1 - 20	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
20.1 - 30	1,323	0.9%	767	0.5%	556	0.4%
30.1 - 40	4,332	3.0%	4,203	2.9%	129	0.1%
40.1 - 50	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
50.1 - 60	14,154	9.8%	8,177	5.7%	5,977	4.1%
60.1 - 70	13,234	9.2%	6,797	4.7%	6,437	4.5%
70.1 - 80	17,097	11.8%	8,247	5.7%	8,850	6.1%
80.1 - 90	33,411	23.1%	18,897	13.1%	14,514	10.0%
90.1 - 100	60,937	42.2%	48,838	33.8%	12,099	8.4%
Total	144,488	100.0%	95,926	66.4%	48,562	33.6%

Figure 6.4: Health and fitness gyms 20+ stations+ with 20-minute drivetime



Neighbouring facilities

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Health and fitness facility users do not just use venues in their own authority. As a consequence, those within two miles of the border are considered. There are 21 health and fitness venues within two miles of the East Herts border. Six offer pay and play access whilst the remainder all require some form of membership. Seven are in Harlow, five in Stevenage, four in Barking, three in Welwyn Hatfield, one in Uttlesford and one in North Hertfordshire.

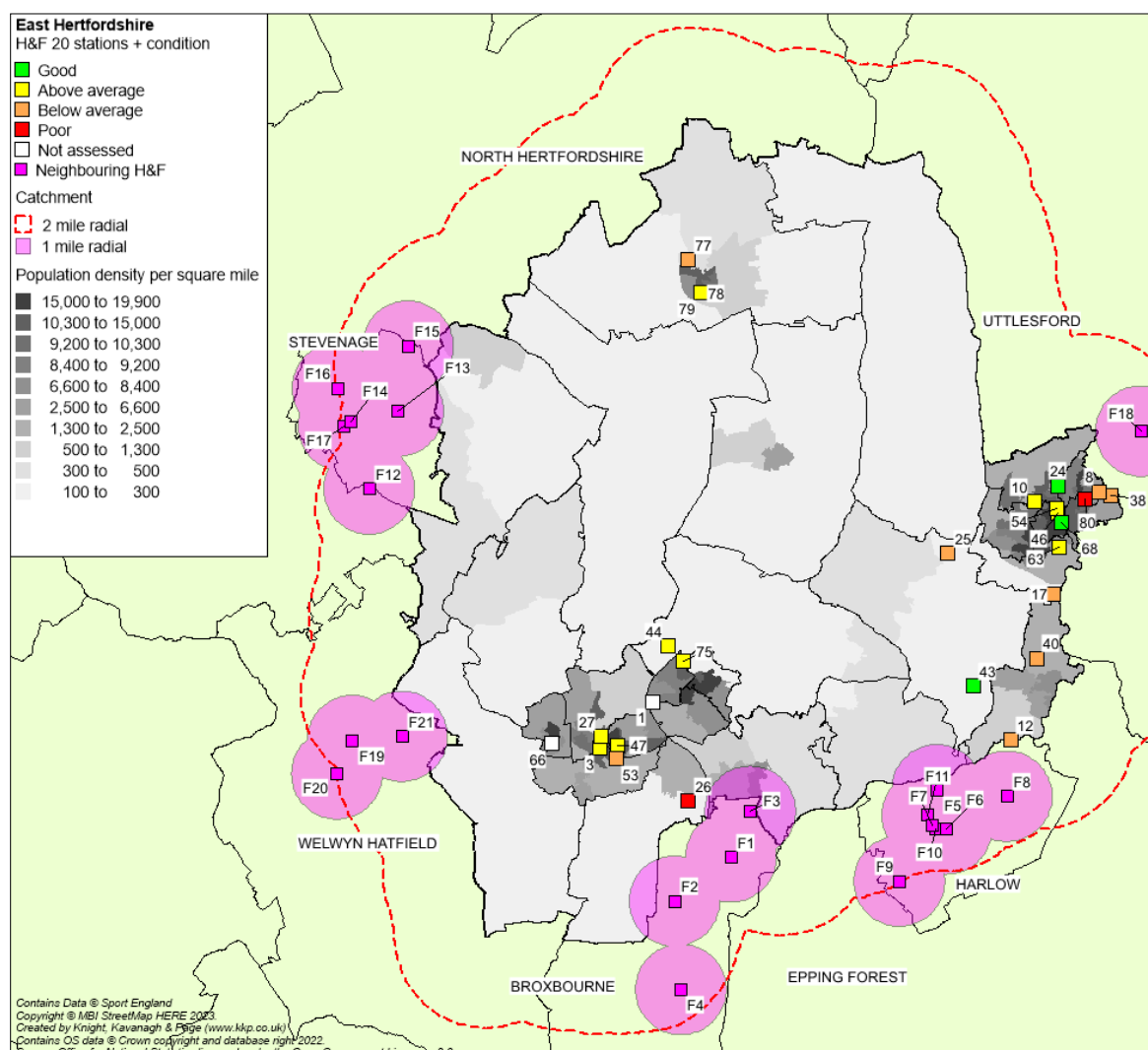
Table 6.5: Community available health and fitness (20+ stations) within 2 miles of East Herts

ID	Site	Stations	Access	District
F1	Energie Fitness (Hoddesdon)	80	Registered membership	Broxbourne
F10	Puregym (Harlow)	220	Pay and play	Harlow
F11	Ripped Gym (Harlow)	200	Pay and play	Harlow
F12	Odyssey Health Club (Knebworth)	100	Registered membership	North Herts
F13	Marriotts Sports Centre	30	Pay and play	Stevenage
F14	Puregym (Stevenage)	220	Registered membership	Stevenage
F15	Renegade Fitness Academy	40	Registered membership	Stevenage
F16	Rise Gym (Stevenage)	90	Registered membership	Stevenage
F17	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre	125	Registered membership	Stevenage
F18	Mountfitchet Romeera LC	37	Sports club / CA	Uttlesford
F19	Anytime Fitness (Welwyn Garden City)	35	Registered membership	W-Hatfield
F2	Hertfordshire Golf & Country Club	50	Registered membership	Broxbourne
F20	Gosling Sports Park	100	Pay and play	W-Hatfield
F21	Ridgeway Academy	21	Pay and play	W-Hatfield
F3	John Warner Sports Centre	114	Pay and play	Broxbourne
F4	Puregym (Cheshunt Brookfield Shopping Park)	220	Registered membership	Broxbourne
F5	Anytime Fitness (Harlow)	100	Registered membership	Harlow
F6	Harlow Leisurezone	150	Registered membership	Harlow
F7	JD Gyms (Harlow)	250	Registered membership	Harlow
F8	Mark Hall Sports Centre	28	Registered membership	Harlow
F9	Paringdon Sports Club	30	Registered membership	Harlow

Source: Active Places Power 28/10/24. (NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club / community association use)

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Figure 6.5: Health and fitness suites in neighbouring authorities within 2-miles of East Herts



Availability and programming

Sport England’s classification of access type defines registered membership use facilities as publicly available. However, the cost of monthly membership fees can vary considerably. It is acknowledged that those which may be considered expensive offer access to different market segments and can ease pressure on facilities which offer cheaper membership options.

Of the 26 health and fitness suites with 20+ stations, six offer some element of pay and play, either via the pre-purchase of a one-day pass or payment on arrival. All five gyms offering pay and play also offer a monthly membership scheme which may work out as a more cost-effective option based on regular usage. 14 gyms in East Herts only offer access via registered membership. Six health and fitness suites with 20+ stations offer no community use, predominantly those based at educational sites.

Table 6.6: access policy of fitness gyms (20+ stations)

ID	Site	Stations	Access
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	35	Private use
3	Anytime Fitness (Hertford)	200	Registered membership

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ID	Site	Stations	Access
10	Bishop's Stortford College	20	Private use
12	Body Active Gym	100	Pay and play
17	Challenge Active	106	Pay and play
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	130	Pay and play
25	Great Hadham Country Club	36	Registered membership
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	30	Private use
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	120	Pay and play
38	Koru Gym	30	Pay and play
40	Vision Fitness (Leventhorpe)	40	Registered membership
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel & Health Club	76	Registered membership
44	Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	31	Registered membership
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	120	Registered membership
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	75	Registered membership
53	Simon Balle School	24	Private use
54	Snap Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	200	Registered membership
63	The Bishop's Stortford High School	30	Private use
66	The Sele School	20	Private use
68	Vision Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	40	Registered membership
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	45	Registered membership
77	Buntingford Gym	25	Registered membership
78	Bar and Belles	20	Registered membership
79	The Body Shop	40	Pay and play
80	AbFab Gym	20	Registered membership
8	Birchwood School	20	Registered membership

Leventhorpe Leisure Centre previously worked on the basis of an arrangement with a personal trainer who hired the facility seven days a week to deliver classes exclusively for individuals enrolled in a monthly membership scheme. This hirer was unable to deliver this on the basis of a sustainable business model, leaving the facility unused. Following this, the School decided not to open the facility for individual use because of the required staffing and resources. It is open to adopting a similar agreement with a qualified individual or organisation to manage the facility and provide structured programs under a defined arrangement.

All other education sites cite staffing as a primary reason for not catering for community use in their fitness suites. In total, 19 health and fitness suites contain more than 20 stations and offer some form of community use. This equates to 1,434 stations.

Table 6.7: Pricing structure of health and fitness suites with community use and 20+ stations

Site name	Pay & play	Annual	12-month DD	Notes
Anytime Fitness (Hertford)	-	£450	£41.95	24/7 use.
Body Active Gym	£10	£425	£39.99	Concessionary rates students/seniors
Challenge Active	£8.95	-	£24.95	-
Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	£9.75	£499.99	£49.99	Includes private GP access, guest passes, PT session.

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Site name	Pay & play	Annual	12-month DD	Notes
				Cheaper memberships also available without benefits.
Great Hadham Country Club	-	£420	£35	-
Hartham Leisure Centre	£9.75	£499.99	£49.99	Includes private GP access, guest passes, PT sessions. Cheaper memberships also available without benefits.
Koru Gym	£10	-	£42.5	-
Manor of Groves Hotel/Health Club	-	£715	£65	-
Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	-	-	£50	-
Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	-	-	£59	Off peak membership: £50 p/m.
Nuffield Health (Hertford)	-	-	£84	Off peak membership: £71 p/m.
Snap Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	-	-	£39.95	-
Vision Fitness (Bishop's Stortford)	-	-	£35	-
Wodson Park Sports Centre	-	-	£45	-
Buntingford Gym	-	-	£40	24/7 use.
Bar and Belles	-	-	-	Pricing structure not available online.
The Body Shop	£7.95	-	£35	Off peak membership available for £20 per month.
AbFab Gym	-	-	£74	Unlimited class use
Birchwood School	-	-	£16	Monthly rolling contract

*Pricing as advertised in September 2024

As shown, the cost of accessing health and fitness facilities varies considerably. The four sites managed by EA offer the most comprehensive membership; this includes gym, swim and class use and several other benefits depending on membership type. Prices also vary based on age. EA sites also technically offer pay and play use; however this requires online registration, and places can only be guaranteed when booked through the website. The cost to book a single adult pay and play gym session is £9.75.

The two public leisure sites closed since December 2023 did offer lower pricing for both pay-and-play and registered memberships compared to the remaining two venues. While EA has committed to honouring the existing membership prices for transferring members at the remaining sites on the basis of an initial offer of 15 months membership for the price of 12, uptake on this offer has been relatively low. Additionally, the closure of these sites significantly impacts individuals who previously accessed pool facilities on a pay-and-play basis, as they now face increased travel times and higher costs.

EA currently operates an exercise referral scheme in partnership with We Are Undefeatable. It comprises a 12-week programme designed to help individuals self-manage long-term health conditions such as asthma, arthritis, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. GP referral is currently taking place at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre and Hartham Leisure Centre. As of May 2026, 60 referrals were made in quarter one of 2016, up by 12 on the previous quarter.

Challenge Active provides the cheapest pay and play option in East Herts at £8.95 per session. At the opposite end of the scale, Body Active and Koru Gym are the most expensive

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at £10 per session. It is recognised that well run health and fitness facilities with studios can offset the costs and enhance the financial viability of other venue elements such as swimming pools and in many instances are used to cross subsidise such facilities.

Future developments

No known new health and fitness facilities are planned for the area.

6.2: Demand

EA reports demand for health and fitness membership at the two remaining public leisure to be high. The calculation of number of members per station is based upon its membership data and the number of current stations at each site. Typically, a health and fitness suite with 100 stations will have a sales target of 3,500 members (35 members per station).

As of August 2024, Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre had approximately 4,800 members and 130 stations (just under 37 members per station). This is likely to have increased given the number of members who will utilise the site following closure of Leventhorpe Pool and Gym. Hartham Leisure Centre has 5,215 members and 120 members (43 members per station). This is also likely to increase as it takes on members from Fanshawe Pool and Gym. EA expects to lose a number of 'sleeper' (i.e., inactive) memberships during the period of closure of the two sites, so not all the 1,043 members previously accessing Fanshawe (710 members) and Leventhorpe (323 members) will join/use the remaining fitness venues.

Health and fitness via exercising in a gym or class environment is a highly popular form of exercise, appealing to men and women across a range of age groups. To identify the adequacy of provision a demand calculation based upon the assumption that 'UK penetration rates' will increase slightly in the future is applied. Population increases are also factored in to enable a calculation of whether current supply will meet future demand. ONS data has been used as this allows the audit to identify demand levels from the adult population (16+).

Table 6.8: UK penetration rates; health/fitness in East Herts (ONS Data)

	Current (2018)	Future (2043)
Adult population (16+ years)	118,861	134,478
UK penetration rate	16.0%	17.0%
Number of potential members	19,018	22,861
Number of visits per week (1.75/member)	33,281	40,007
% of visits in peak time	65	65
No. of visits in peak time (equated to no. of stations required i.e., no. of visits/39 weeks*65%)	555	667
Number of stations (with comfort factor applied)	832	1,000

Model applies 1.75 visits/week by members and 65% usage for 39 weeks of the year. (Figures rounded up/down)

Based upon UK penetration rates there is current need for 832 stations in East Herts. This will grow to 1,000 by 2043, taking account of a comfort factor (particularly at peak times). When comparing the current number of community available stations (1,319) and accounting for the comfort factor, there is currently a positive supply balance of c.487 stations. This will reduce to c.319 by 2043 based on population growth and increasing penetration rates, not considering any new provision developed in this period.

This indicates that there is capacity within existing health and fitness provision to accommodate future demand from projected population growth. To counter this, the KKP audit

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has identified high participation rates across the District and it is presumed that there will be some import and export of demand whereby residents in East Herts will access facilities in neighbouring local authorities and vice versa, especially in relation to larger sites.

It is not uncommon for the private sector to identify niche markets and fill them with stations which make the market appear congested. The key issue is that while some of these may be budget operators this does not necessarily make them available to people/communities who face barriers to participation and people from areas of (relative) disadvantage (as cost is only one factor which may hinder usage). It could be argued that this applies particularly to those who require transport to access such facilities.

Leisure centres in the district use a cashless system. The price point and the requirement to register, book and pay online in order to access 'pay and play' sport and leisure provision means that the option could be restrictive. It is important that people are able to access provision without barriers. Whilst centres are generally well used, there is a need to create opportunity for those that are considered to be digitally excluded.

6.3: Dance studios

Dance studios are an important element of the wider health, fitness and conditioning market. They vary in size, shape, quality of environment, access to sprung wooden floors and quality of ancillary facilities. There has been an increase in the number of people accessing fitness classes as identified in increased UK penetration rates. Activity types offered also vary from low impact classes such as Pilates and yoga to dance, step, boxercise and Zumba. It is worth noting that dance classes/clubs are key users of studio spaces throughout the country. Of the 24 studios in East Herts (across 18 sites) 22 were subject to a non-technical assessment.

Table 6.9: Table of studios in East Herts

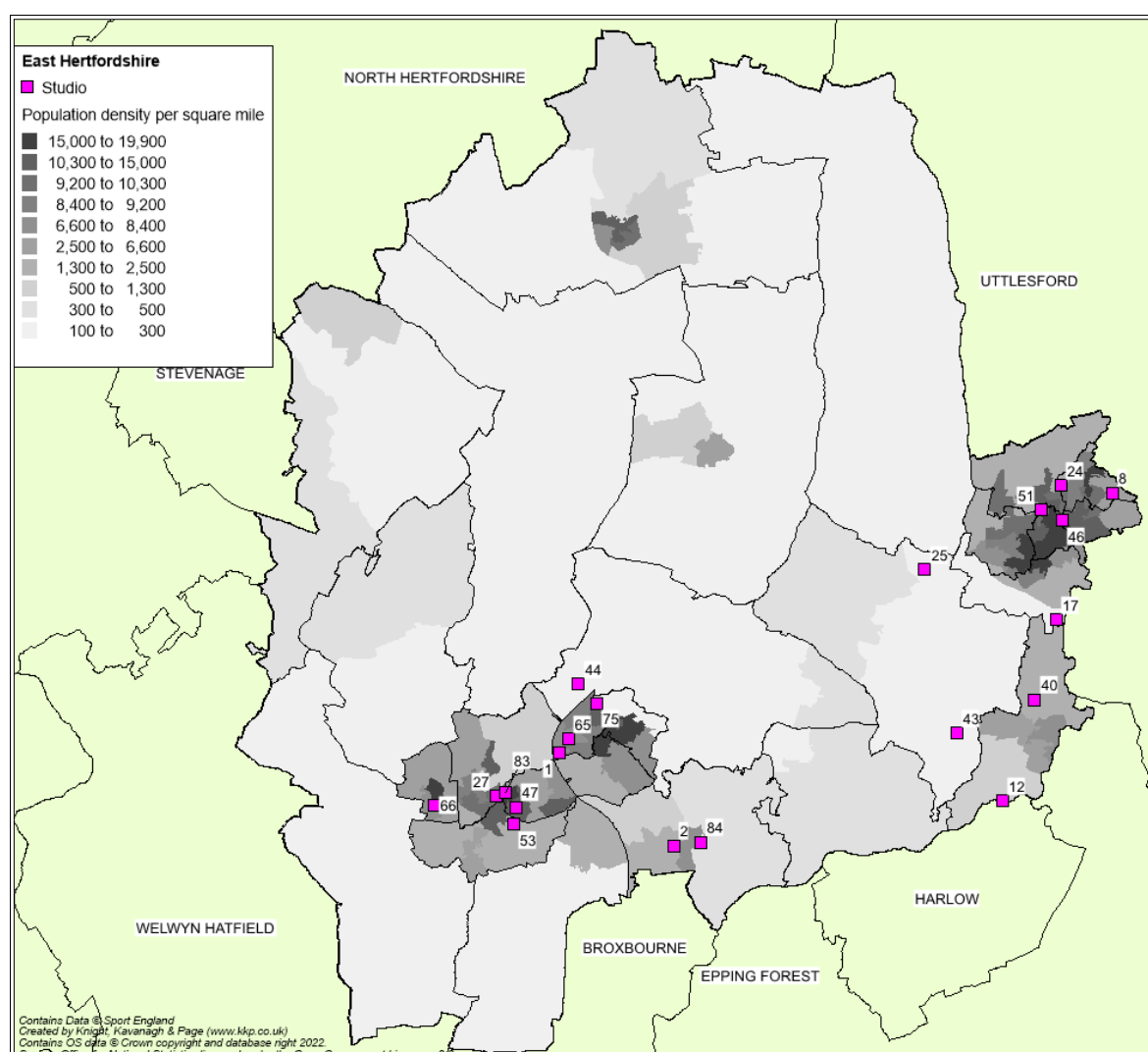
ID	Site	Type	Access	Condition
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	Fitness	Registered membership	Below average
2	Amwell View School	Fitness	Sports club/CA	Not assessed
8	Birchwood High School	Fitness	Sports club/CA	Above average
12	Body Active Gym	Fitness	Pay and play	Below average
17	Challenge Active	Fitness	Pay and play	Below average
17	Challenge Active	Fitness	Pay and play	Below average
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Fitness	Pay and play	Good
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Fitness	Pay and play	Good
24	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Fitness	Pay and play	Good
25	Great Hadham Country Club	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average
27	Hartham Leisure Centre	Fitness	Pay and play	Above average
40	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	Fitness	Sports club/CA	Above average
43	Manor Of Groves Hotel/Health Club	Fitness	Pay and play	Good
44	Marriott Leisure & Country Club (Hanbury Manor)	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average
46	Nuffield Health (Bishop's Stortford)	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average
47	Nuffield Health (Hertford)	Fitness	Registered membership	Above average

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ID	Site	Type	Access	Condition
51	Saint Mary's Catholic School	Fitness	Sports club/CA	Below average
53	Simon Balle School	Fitness	Sports club/CA	Below average
65	The Chauncy School	Fitness	Pay and play	Above average
66	The Sele School	Fitness	Private use	Not assessed
75	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Fitness	Pay and play	Above average
83	Core control Pilates	Fitness	Pay and play	Above average
84	Sculpt Studios	Fitness	Pay and play	Above average

(NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club / community association use)

Figure 6.6: Studios in East Herts



In terms of access policy, ten studios can be accessed on a pay and play basis. A further eight can be accessed via a registered membership, and five via a sports club/community association. One studio, located at The Sele School, is private use only and not available to the community.

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6.4: Summary of key facts and issues

Facility type	Health & fitness	-
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
Quantity	<p>35 H&F suites contain 1,761 stations. 26 of these have 20+ stations (1,633 in total). 19 sites (1,434 stations) are available to the community.</p> <p>There are 24 studios, 23 offer some form of community access.</p> <p>There is a current positive supply facility demand balance in the area.</p> <p>The audit identified high local demand and participation rates.</p>	<p>There is currently sufficient supply but should the upward trend continue, there may be a need to increase provision volume the area.</p> <p>Grange Paddocks LC and Hartham LC have had to accommodate demand from two closing leisure sites. This should be monitored.</p>
Quality	<p>The majority, (12 of 21) 20+ station health and fitness suites are of good or above average quality. Nine are below average and two are poor. Two could not be assessed.</p>	<p>There is a need to provide high quality provision and maintain quality across the stock.</p>
Accessibility	<p>66% of East Herts residents live within a mile of a health and fitness suite. This increases to 100% for people living within a 20-minute drive of an accessible facility. This generally consists of people living in the areas of Ware, Hertford, Bishops Stortford and Sawbridgeworth, where supply is good.</p> <p>72% of people in areas of high deprivation live within one mile of a venue.</p> <p>There are 21 gyms in neighbouring authorities - within 2 miles of the East Herts boundary. These also serve East Herts residents.</p>	<p>The rural nature of East Herts means those living within a one-mile radius of a H&F facility is relatively low, however, car ownership levels are high and drivetime accessibility is good. There is also a strong supply of community and village halls offering similar activity types, as seen in section 12.</p>
Availability (Management and usage)	<p>There are Six publicly accessible pay and play health and fitness facilities with 20+ stations in East Herts. A further 14 can be accessed via registered membership.</p>	<p>Commercial gyms provide some budget membership options but typically do not offer concessionary rates or programmes enabling people facing participation barriers to engage.</p> <p>Take up of health referral is low.</p> <p>There is limited (no) provision to ensure that ageing/disadvantaged people have access to low-cost fitness related activity.</p>

Strategic summary

- ◀ Despite two public leisure centre facilities closing, current and future demand is well catered for given the quantity and quality of existing provision in the District.
- ◀ Grange Paddocks and Hartham Leisure Centre are popular facilities. They have also taken on users from Fanshawe and Leventhorpe Pool and Gym. Demand should be monitored at these sites to ensure they are not oversubscribed.
- ◀ The Council and EA should consider whether current programmes align with EHC stated priorities. Public leisure sites currently provide few options for the disadvantaged and ageing population to take part in discounted cost sport and physical activity, and there is limited take up of EA's health referral offer.

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- ◀ EHDC should investigate, with partners in public health and Active Herts, how the health referral pathway in the district can be improved.

SECTION 7: SQUASH

Squash is now on a new strategic path, implementing a rebrand and undergoing a major restructure. England Squash (ES) has achieved core strategic goals agreed with Sport England and is committed to supporting the traditional infrastructure of county associations, clubs, coaches and officials to grow the game via key programmes (e.g., Squash101) and campaigns (e.g., Squash Girls Can) but will be apportioning resources in a significantly different manner.

Table 7.1: England Squash strategic aims:

Element	Aim
Governance	Adhere to the highest standards of organisational governance.
Membership	Provide a membership model that caters to and provides benefits for anyone interested in playing and coaching squash irrespective of their ability.
Programmes	Enabling and supporting partners to be at the forefront of adult and player recruitment and retention.
Talent & high performance	Provide a support and development programme that identifies, develops and delivers world leading individuals and teams.
Commercial	Create a diversified and effective revenue model that minimises risk and reduces dependency on funding.

Squash In a Changing World (2021-2025) outlines the vision, principles and strategic pillars for ES. Its vision for the future of squash in England is a thriving, diverse and growing community. Its Purpose is to serve as custodians of the game's past, its present and its future. It is to serve as a catalyst for positive change across the sporting community at home and abroad. The 2021-2025 strategy sets six key objectives:

- ◀ Drive increased participation in the game, with a radical advance in equality, diversity and inclusion.
- ◀ Inspire and train a community of world class coaches, referees and volunteers at every level, who drive participation and increase engagement in the game.
- ◀ Sustain world-leading talent pathways and programmes for high performing players who achieve success on the global stage and inspire others to realise their potential.
- ◀ Empower creativity and innovation in the game and in ES's culture, using ideas and technology to support the squash community and to engage with new audiences.
- ◀ Spearhead new and creative ways to enhance the visibility and appeal of squash at local, national and international levels, including the pursuit of Olympic inclusion.
- ◀ Provide leadership for the game nationally and internationally, including addressing the Climate and Ecological Crisis.

ES has set a benchmark of one court per 10,000 people in each local authority in order for squash to thrive. It estimates that there is currently one court per 12,617 people in England. This reflects the significant number of court closures and/or non-replacements when new facilities are developed to replace older venues - seen over the past two decades.

East Herts' current population is 148,105 (ONS 2018) and it has 14 courts. Applying the ES model would suggest that there is demand for one additional court to meet local community needs. When taking future population growth (to 2043) into account there will be demand for 17 courts.

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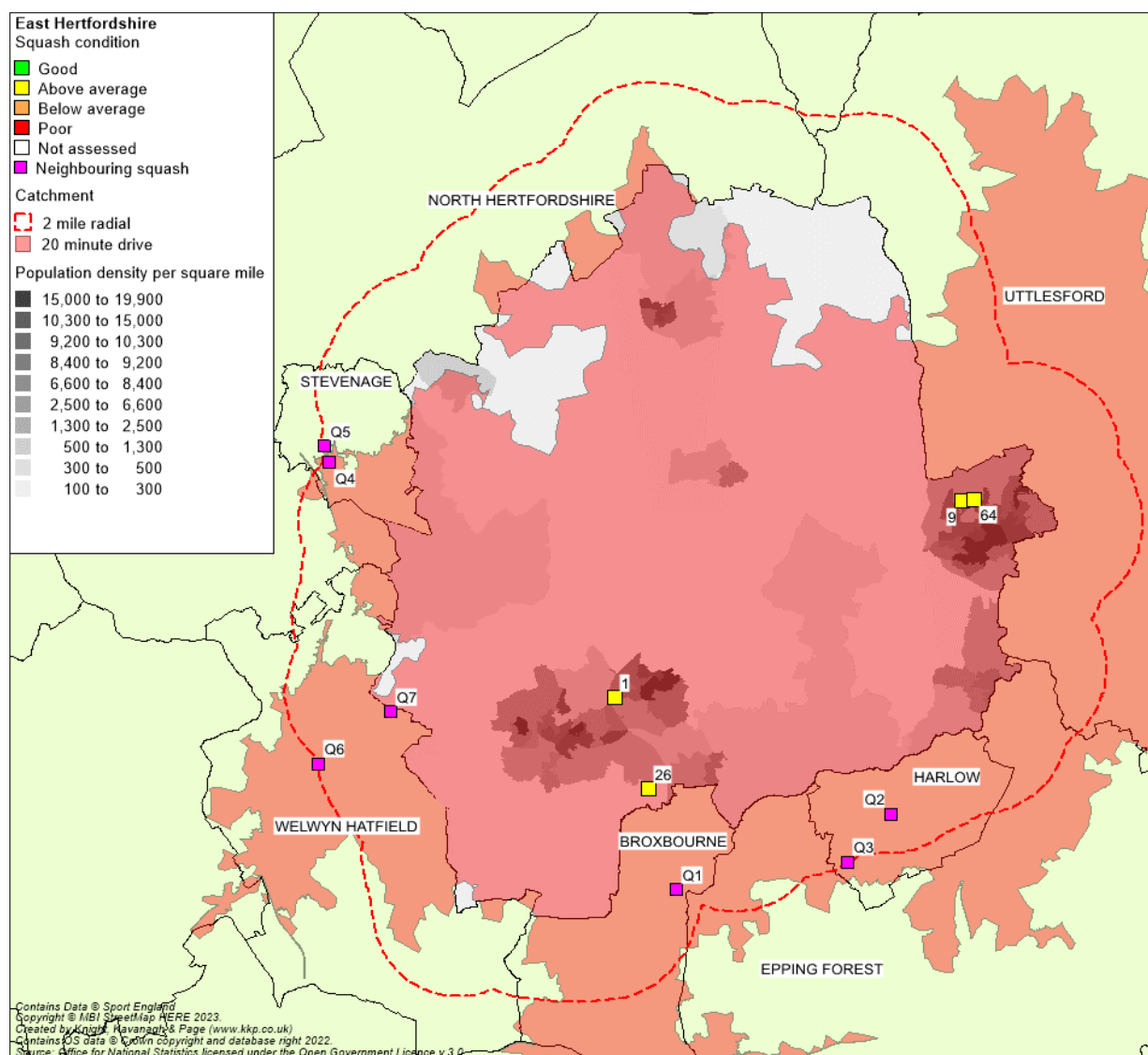
7.1 Supply

There are 14 squash courts in East Herts across four sites. Two sites are located in close proximity to Ware, and two are in Bishop's Stortford.

Table 7.2: Squash courts in East Herts

ID	Site name	Courts	Type	Condition
1	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	2	Normal	Above average
9	Bishop Stortford Squash Club	4	Glass-backed	Above average
9	Bishop Stortford Squash Club	2	Normal	Above average
26	Haileybury Sports Complex	4	Glass-backed	Above average
64	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	2	Normal	Above average

Figure 7.1: Location of squash courts in East Herts with 20-minute drive time



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Table 7.3: Squash courts in neighbouring authorities within 20 minutes' drive time of East Herts

ID	Site name	Courts	Court type	Authority
Q1	Broxbourne Sports Club	4	Sports club / CA	Broxbourne
Q1	Broxbourne Sports Club	1	Sports club / CA	Broxbourne
Q2	Harlow Leisurezone	3	Registered membership use	Harlow
Q2	Harlow Leisurezone	1	Registered membership use	Harlow
Q3	Paringdon Sports Club	1	Registered membership use	Harlow
Q4	Glaxo Smithkline	2	Private use	Stevenage
Q5	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre	3	Pay and play	Stevenage
Q6	Gosling Sports Park	5	Pay and play	W-Hatfield
Q7	Panshanger Golf Complex	1	Pay and play	W-Hatfield
Q7	Panshanger Golf Complex	1	Pay and play	W-Hatfield

Source: Active Places Power 28/10/2024. (NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club/community association use)

Quality

All 14 courts located in East Herts are of above average quality. The courts at Allenburys Sports and Social Club were refurbished in 2022. This included sanding and resealing of the floors and installation of LED lights.

Bishop Stortford Squash Club undertakes routine maintenance on all its courts on an annual basis. This includes repainting walls and replastering if necessary. All lighting throughout the building was upgraded to LED in 2020. Its court one has a viewing balcony, which is often used for club events. It has a 50-year lease on the current facility. Minor repairs to the structure of the building are now required, predominantly to the roof due to the fact that some leaks have started to form above some playing surfaces. The Club has previously tapped into external funding opportunities to fund the installation of solar panels on the roof.

Haileybury Sports Complex has four above average quality squash courts. Its operator confirmed that regular maintenance is carried out to the flooring and walls. It has benefitted from an investment package of £30,000 which was used to re-paint and re-line the walls, revarnish the flooring and re-hand the glass doors.

Two above average quality squash courts are located at The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust. These are reportedly well maintained and feature a viewing balcony.

Accessibility and availability

Approximately 97.7% of East Herts' population lives within a 20-minute drive of a squash facility. In addition, 22 courts at seven sites are located within a 20-minute drive time catchment of the District.

The four courts at Allenburys Sports and Social Club can only be accessed by employees of GlaxoSmithKline with a club membership. Consultation with the Club did not indicate any intention to open these facilities up to the wider public in the near future.

The eight courts at Bishops Stortford Squash Club and The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust can be accessed via a registered membership with Bishops Stortford Squash Club and Chantry Squash Club respectively. This ensures that provision can be prioritised for club members and club nights, alongside competitive league matches. Both clubs operate on an annual membership and court fee basis.

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The only courts available on a pay and play basis in East Herts are located at Haileybury Sports Complex, however, they are only available during evenings and at weekends. Weekday daytimes and weekend afternoons are retained for pupil use.

Haileybury Squash Club uses the School facilities for home matches and training nights, and as such can access courts at a discounted rate. Cost of hire for non-members is £8.45. The courts are frequently block booked by Haileybury Squash Club for club nights and matches, so pay and play time is limited, however the operator ensures that some pay and play options are available every evening. A further ten squash courts can be accessed on a pay and play basis in neighbouring authorities.

Future developments / changes to provision

No changes to squash provision were identified as part of the audit. All facilities confirmed they had no plans to increase or decrease the amount of squash provision on site.

7.2: Demand

England Squash was invited to take part in consultation with regard to squash provision in East Herts. Despite multiple attempts to contact, no response was received.

Facility consultation

Allenburys Sports and Social Club reports a reasonably high usage rate for its squash courts. Limited slots are available during weekday evenings, with the busiest time between 18:00 and 21:00.

Similar usage patterns were reported at Haileybury Sports Complex. Limited weekday evening slots are available, with the exception of Friday night which is generally quieter. The majority of bookings are attributed to Haileybury Squash Club. Saturday and Sunday are busy; however, weekend mornings can be quiet.

Club consultation

Three clubs were identified as part of the audit. Two responded to consultation request, one did not.

Haileybury Squash Club reports having a good working relationship with the School. It is able to access the facilities from 18:00 to 21:45 on weekdays, and between 10:30 and midday and 16:30 and 18:00 at weekends. It has c.100 members, a number which has increased steadily over the last five years. Annual membership is £60, which allows members to benefit from a reduced booking fee when booking courts.

Overall, the Club is content with the condition of the courts. It has contributed to the upkeep of the facilities and operates on a non-profit basis to keep costs down for members. It is concerned about its absence of tenure on the current facilities which means that the School could decide not to offer community use at the site.

The Bishops Stortford Squash Club experiences high demand on weekday evenings between 16:00-20:00. Known for its excellent facilities, the club attracts members both locally and from surrounding areas. It has been recognised twice with the prestigious "Club of the Year" award from England Squash. Currently, it has approximately 250 members but it has capacity for up to 350 and is actively seeking to expand. In particular, it is aiming to increase the number of women players, who currently make up about 50 of its members.

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7.3: Summary of key facts and issues

Facility type	Squash	-
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
Quantity	There are 14 squash courts in East Herts, eight glass-backed. A further 22 courts can be accessed within a 20-minute drivetime.	Whilst, based on the ES benchmark, East Herts has an under supply of one squash court, which increases to three courts by 2043.
Quality	All 14 courts are above average in quality.	Continue to undertake regular refurbishment of all courts.
Accessibility	Over 97% of East Herts' population lives within a 20-minute drive of a squash facility.	-
Availability (Management and usage)	Haileybury Sports Complex provides a pay and play option for East Herts residents; however, its courts are not available during the day. A further ten pay and play access courts are located within a 20-minute drive in neighbouring authorities.	Encourage clubs, where possible, to provide a pay and play option during off-peak times. This would coincide with the pay and play courts at Haileybury Sports Complex being unavailable due to school use.

Strategic summary

- ◀ Squash provision in East Herts is sufficient despite being slightly below England Squash's recommendations of one court per 10,000 people. The audit did not identify demand for additional provision.
- ◀ Pay and play options are limited during weekday afternoons and weekends. The Council should work with clubs and England Squash to identify additional pay and play opportunities at existing club sites, particularly during weekday daytimes.

SECTION 8: INDOOR BOWLS

The five forms of bowls that are played indoors (flat/level green, crown green, long mat, short mat and carpet mat) each require a different venue and each format of the game has a different technical specification for their indoor facility.

Indoor flat/level green bowls is played on a purpose-built indoor green which complies with the laws of the sport of bowls. The NGB is the English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA). It requires a standard bowling green; a flat area 31-40 metres long divided into playing areas called rinks. The number of these varies, depending on the width of the green.

Crown green bowls requires a standard crown green, artificial grass (carpeted) area of approximately 38m square which is crowned i.e. higher in the centre than round the perimeter. Indoor crown greens are relatively rare – substantially less common than those provided for flat green bowls. The NGB is the British Crown Green Bowling Association (BCGBA).

Carpet bowls is played on a rectangular carpet (45 x 6 feet) that is rolled out. It can be accommodated in any indoor space large enough to accommodate the mats which come in different lengths. It tends to be played at a recreational level. The NGB is the English Carpet Bowls Association (ECBA).

Short mat bowls is typically played in sports halls, parish council rooms, outdoor bowls club pavilions and on indoor flat green bowls club greens. The NGB is the English Short Mat Bowling Association (SMBA). Long mat bowls is played on a rolled carpet typically laid on a sports hall floor. There are no ditches in this game. It is typically found in areas of low flat-green supply and/or where crown green bowls is played outdoors. There is no NGB for this version of the game.

An indoor bowling centre typically comprises a single flat green with a number of rinks and ancillary accommodation such as changing rooms, lounge/bar, viewing area, kitchen, office/meeting rooms and stores plus designated car parking. Ancillary accommodation scale varies according to the number of rinks available. A successful indoor bowls centre requires a combination of the right location, design, and financial and general management. Sport England²² guidelines on catchment for indoor bowls centres are set out to be interpreted in the light of local circumstances:

- ◀ Assume the majority of users live locally and not travel more than 30 minutes.
- ◀ Assume that 90% of users will travel by car, with the remainder by foot.
- ◀ As a guide, calculate demand on the basis of one rink per 14,000-17,000 total population.
- ◀ The number of rinks required can be related to the estimated number of members, assume 80-100 members per rink.

EIBA stated priorities are:

- ◀ Recruitment of participants.
- ◀ Retention of participants.
- ◀ Clubs are recommended to:
 - ◀ Develop and implement a robust sports development plan
 - ◀ Actively review the Sport England 'Buddle' website.
 - ◀ Actively promote the club in the local community amongst those who are able bodied and disabled. Wheelchair users and visually impaired people are particularly keen on the sport of bowls.
- ◀ Retention and improvement of facilities.
- ◀ New indoor facilities in areas of low-supply and high-demand.

²² Sport England Design Guidance Note Indoor Bowls 2005

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EIBA Outline Plan 2022-2025

The EIBA plan is focused on: recruit and retain 45+ and recruit and retain 70+. Both markets require growth. The idea is that people aged 45+ need new versions/formats of the game to play and the 70+ will wish to continue with current formats. Its focus areas are:

- ◀ Getting core bowlers back playing following COVID lockdowns.
- ◀ 45-59 year old participants.
- ◀ Volunteers.
- ◀ Health and Wellbeing.
- ◀ Inclusivity – women, ethnic communities.
- ◀ Facilities: build, improve, retain.
- ◀ Youth and the family.
- ◀ Disability.
- ◀ Competitions.
- ◀ Internationals.
- ◀ Promotion.
- ◀ Commercial partnerships.

The “Recruit and Retain Strategy” is to concentrate on encouraging and supporting clubs to increase participation and improve the experience of all participants. Its objectives include:

- ◀ Growing participation across the adult population in local communities. Targeted work to increase female participation.
- ◀ Growing participation in the 12-18 age range as part of the EIBA Development Pathway.
- ◀ The provision of an excellent sporting experience for new and existing participants.
- ◀ A growth in Indoor Bowls participation by people who have disabilities.

Running alongside this is the Sport England funded development work provided jointly by the Indoor NGB (EIBA); Outdoor NGB (Bowls England) and the “Bowls Development Alliance” (BDA). Each NGB has two directors on the Board of BDA.

The Sport England funding for the 2022-2025 period, focuses on the delivery of:

- ◀ **Club hubs:** ensure that all clubs remain sustainably positioned at the heart of the communities, and there are good pathways to increase membership.
- ◀ **Communities:** develop healthy bowling communities, with good quality competitions, options to increase coaches and volunteers and healthy relationships between clubs.
- ◀ **Health and wellbeing:** support clubs promote health and wellbeing of members with a range of programmes and activities.
- ◀ **Inclusion:** ensure clubs are as inclusive as possible, promoting the sport to all including females and people from diverse communities.

Alongside these core objectives the BDA works with key partners on:

- ◀ **Safeguarding:** ensuring the sport is safe for everyone to play by working across all five National Governing Bodies (NGBs) [BE, EIBA, British Crown Green BA, English Short Mat BA and English Bowling Federation] to have policies and processes in place. Training is also available to support the network of Club Safeguarding Officers.
- ◀ **Disability:** the BDA works in partnership with Disability Bowls England, Activity Alliance, BE and the EIBA to ensure everyone regardless of disability can access the sport of bowls.
- ◀ **Women Can:** the BDA are driving a campaign alongside BE and the EIBA to encourage more women to play bowls, coach bowls and volunteer in bowls.
- ◀ **Equality & Diversity:** the BDA, BE and the EIBA are all striving to ensure the sport of bowls is as diverse as it can be.

8.1: Supply

Quantity and quality

There is no indoor bowling facility in East Hertfordshire. Two facilities located in neighbouring authorities can be accessed within a 30-minute drive.

Figure 8.1: Indoor bowls facilities in neighbouring authorities

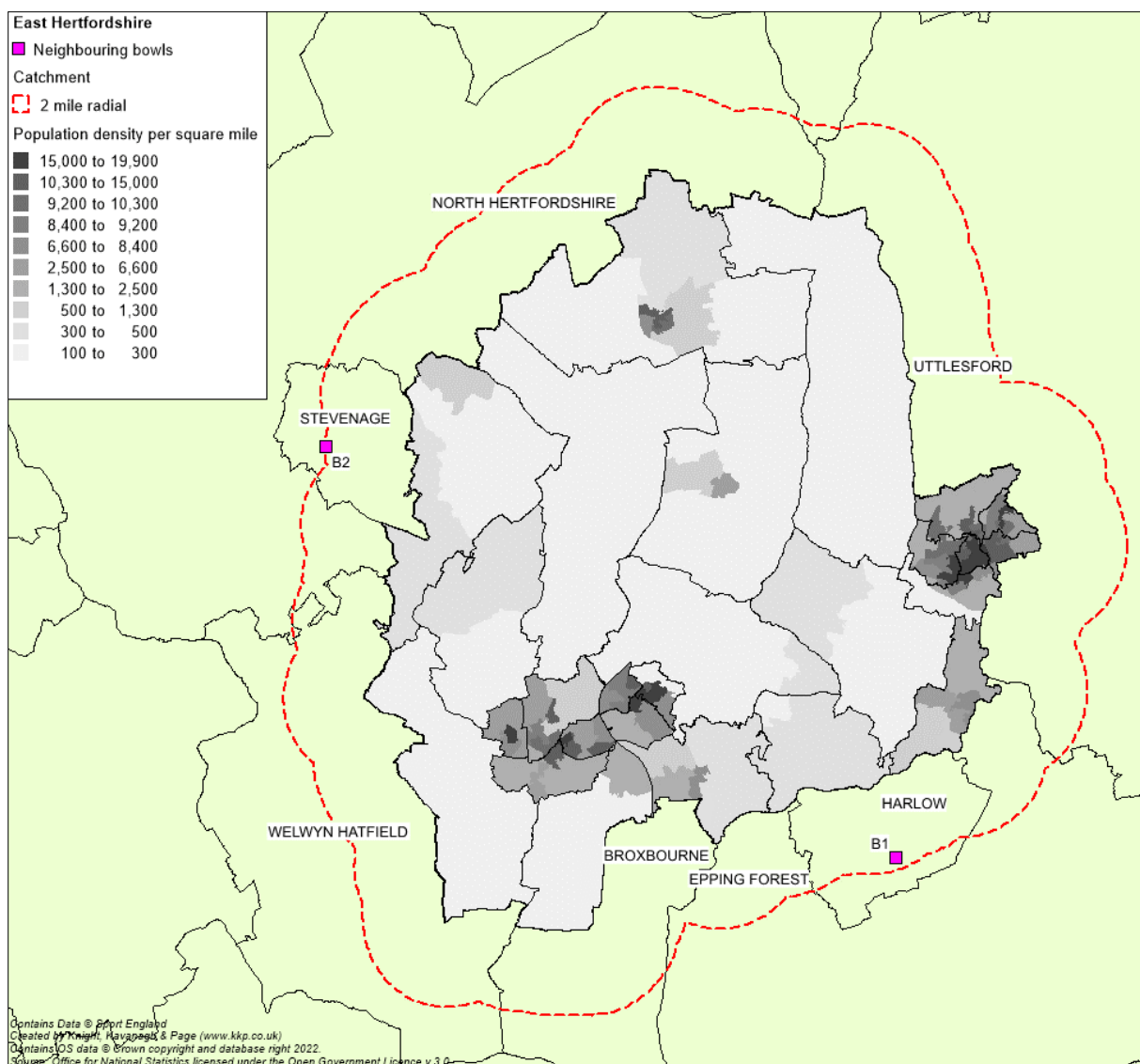


Table 8.1: Indoor bowls facilities in neighbouring authorities

ID	Site	Rinks	Access	District
B1	Tye Green Indoor Bowls Club Ltd	9	Sports club / CA	Harlow
B2	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre	6	Pay and play	Stevenage

(NB: Sports club/CA= Sports club / community association use)

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Accessibility

Drive time catchment modelling suggests that 98.2% of the East Herts population lives within a 30-minute drive of an indoor bowls facility within the District.

Availability

Two facilities in neighbouring authorities are within a 30-minute drive of the District boundary. Tye Green Indoor Bowls Club Ltd can be accessed through membership with Tye Green Indoor Bowls Club, and Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre can be accessed on a pay and play basis.

It should be noted that there are also several other indoor bowls facilities which fall slightly outside the 30-minute drivetime catchment in Cheshunt, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield.

8.2: Demand

Consultation with EIBA suggests that East Hertfordshire is not currently a priority area for the development of indoor bowls provision due to the accessibility of indoor provision located in neighbouring authorities. It does recognise East Herts as an area in which clubs in neighbouring authorities can help to grow the game. Unaffiliated short mat bowls activity is taking place at Wodson Park Sports Centre, which can be accessed on a roll up pay and play basis.

Short mat bowls activity was also identified at eight village and community halls. These sessions generally take place in the daytimes and provide a physical and social opportunity for residents to take part in indoor bowls activity. Venues which currently offer short mat bowls are:

- ◀ Cotted Village Hall.
- ◀ Bramfield Village Hall.
- ◀ Antsey Village Hall.
- ◀ Benington Village Hall.
- ◀ Datchworth Village Hall.
- ◀ Hunsdon Village Hall.
- ◀ Little Hadham Village Hall.
- ◀ Stapleford Abbots Village Hall.

8.3: Summary of key facts and issues

Facility type	Indoor bowls	
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
Quantity	There are no indoor facilities located in East Hertfordshire.	-
Quality	-	-
Accessibility	Nearly all East Herts' residents live within a 30-minute drive of an indoor bowls facility.	
Availability (Management and usage)	Consultation with EIBA suggests there is currently sufficient demand to cater for East Hertfordshire residents in neighbouring authorities within a 30-minute drivetime.	Continue to monitor demand for indoor bowls participation. Should demand be identified, support outdoor bowls clubs aspiring to implement indoor provision.

Strategic summary

There is no current requirement for indoor bowls provision in East Hertfordshire. This should be monitored to ensure that any clubs considering development of indoor provision can be supported if future demand is identified. It should be noted there is a reliance on facilities in

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

neighbouring authorities, which means that residents' participation at these facilities might be at risk in the event of closures.

SECTION 9: INDOOR TENNIS

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the NGB for all tennis provision within the UK. It administers the sport at national and regional level. One of its key objectives is to get more people playing tennis more often. To achieve this, through its most recent Investment Framework (Vision 2019 – 2023), prioritises will be given to the following sites:

- ◀ New and existing indoor tennis centres
- ◀ Park tennis
- ◀ Tennis clubs
- ◀ Schools and other educational establishments

This will be supported through the following key funding objectives:

- ◀ Funding through interest free loans.
- ◀ Investing in venues that have a proven record of increasing participation.
- ◀ Investing where there is thorough community engagement.
- ◀ Support venues that encourage participation growth.
- ◀ Target investment that is demand led.
- ◀ Invest in venues that are financially sustainable.
- ◀ Support venues that have successfully sourced partnership funding.

Central to any investment will be the provision of a sustainable business case.

This section considers indoor tennis facilities provision in East Herts. It uses two terms to describe indoor building types:

Traditional - A permanent structure made of traditional materials using traditional construction techniques. This commonly takes the form of steel or timber portal frame spanning the full length of the court (including run backs) clad in a material to suit local conditions e.g. metal cladding, brickwork or timber boarding.

Non-traditional - A permanent or non-permanent structure made of non-traditional materials using non-traditional construction techniques. Three types of structure fall into this category:

- ◀ Air supported structures (air halls).
- ◀ Framed fabric structures.
- ◀ Tensile structures.

9.1: Supply

Indoor tennis is based on specialist facilities which appeal beyond local authority boundaries. This report considers provision within with a 30-minutes' drive time catchment. There is one indoor tennis facility in East Herts, Legends Tennis Centre - it has four courts.

Quality

The four acrylic courts at Legends Tennis Centre are of above average quality. All are marked for doubles and covered by an air hall. They were installed in 2008 but receive regular maintenance as a result of high usage. There is wear and tear to the flooring and nets, however grip underfoot is still good.

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Figure 9.1 Indoor tennis facilities in East Hertfordshire and within 30 minutes' drive time

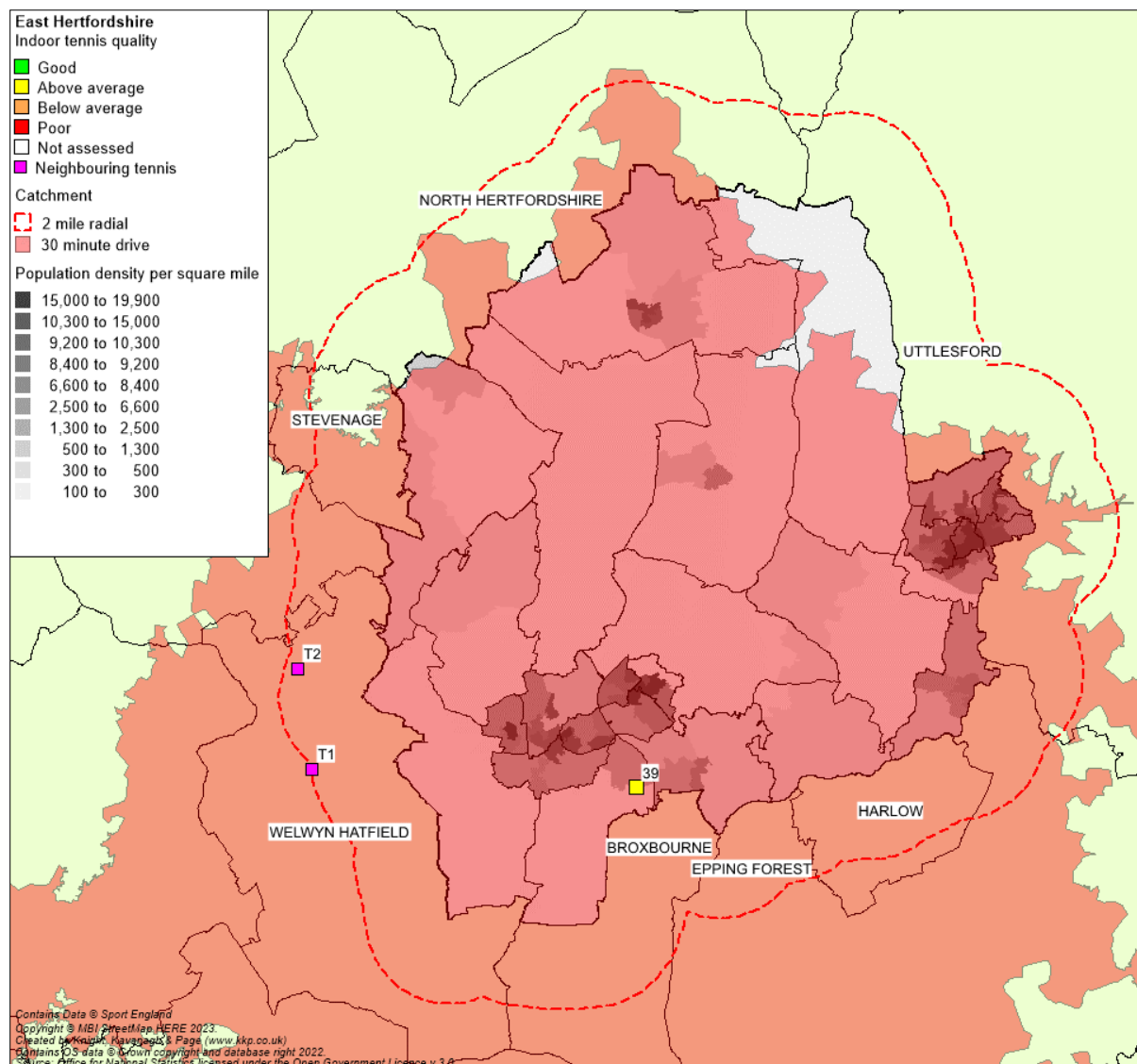


Table 9.1: Indoor tennis sites in East Hertfordshire

ID	Site name	Courts	Access type	Condition
39	Legends Tennis Centre	4	Pay and play	Above average

A further four courts, at two different sites in Welwyn and Hatfield (Gosling Sports Park and Welwyn Tennis Club) are located outside the District within a 30-minute drive.

Table 9.2: Indoor tennis provision in neighbouring authorities

ID	Site name	Courts	Access type	Authority
T1	Gosling Sports Park	1002925	Pay and play	Framed fabric
T1	Gosling Sports Park	1002925	Pay and play	Traditional
T1	Gosling Sports Park	1002925	Pay and play	Airhall
T2	Welwyn Tennis Club	1011240	Registered membership	Airhall (seasonal)

Accessibility and availability

Drive time catchment modelling confirms that 99% of East Hert's population lives within a 30-minute drive of an indoor tennis facility.

Legends Tennis Centre can be accessed on a pay and play basis, however regular users will benefit from cheaper court rates by signing up to a monthly membership. This also includes free access to club nights and one-to-one coaching. A monthly membership is available from £30.50.

9.2: Demand

The LTA has recently restructured its strategic approach to target key national focus areas, ultimately to grow participation. Future investment in facilities will be based on detailed analysis of potential demand throughout the UK. It has identified 96 priority target areas for development of new indoor courts in the UK of which East Hertfordshire is not one.

Legends Tennis Centre is well used during evenings and weekends. It reports limited spare capacity between the hours of 16:00-21:00 Monday to Thursday. Fridays and weekend afternoons are generally quieter. The site has a full programme of junior and senior coaching; however, two courts are available for pay and play users at various times each evening.

The facility is located within the grounds of Haileybury School, and therefore is only available from 16:00 on weekdays. East Herts residents looking to access an indoor tennis facility during weekday afternoons must travel to neighbouring authorities. There is a need to monitor demand for indoor tennis courts at outdoor court venues. This will be captured within the District Playing Pitch Strategy 2024.

Bishop's Stortford Lawn Tennis Club has three outdoor courts which are temporarily covered by a bubble during the winter months. This allows these courts to receive more usage during poorer weather. It reports that demand to access these courts is higher throughout winter than uncovered courts.

9.3: Padel

Padel is reportedly one of the fastest growing sports in Great Britain. Significant investment has been made in the sport since the LTA became the NGB in 2019. It is played on an enclosed court that is one third the size of a tennis court, in a doubles format - by groups of mixed ages and abilities. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although serves are under-arm and walls are part of the game - the ball being allowed to bounce off them.

The LTA recently launched an updated LTA Padel Strategy to outline its plans for 2024 – 2029. ([LTA Padel Strategy](#)). The vision and mission align to the tennis strategy and the focus is on growing the infrastructure, increasing and diversifying the coaching workforce and building on the performance pathway as well as increasing visibility and driving participation.

There are currently over one thousand courts in GB of which 60% are indoor (March 2025). A recent LTA survey reported the following:

- ◀ An estimated 145,000 people have played padel in British venues in the past year with around half this number playing regularly/monthly.
- ◀ At present, most players are adults; juniors account for less than one in ten of the total.
- ◀ Most venues reported strong growth, with high interest in taster sessions, and players enjoying the fun/sociability offered by the sport.
- ◀ Currently demand is outstripping supply, with many venues keen to add courts, or cover existing facilities, though costs, and the complexity of local planning rules, can be prohibitive.

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In terms of future supply, a variety of environments can be considered. Padel courts are often situated next to or managed by those running existing tennis facilities (tennis clubs, parks, indoor tennis centres). In addition, padel court development at leisure centre sites, golf clubs and rugby/football sites can be beneficial as provision can be tied into other sports facilities and profit from an already established operating model.

The LTA is not encouraging clubs or local authorities to convert existing tennis courts to padel courts, unless it can be shown that they have the capacity to support this. This is to ensure that the provision of traditional courts is not adversely affected.

Padel court supply and demand

To assist local authorities to strategically plan for padel provision across the authority, the LTA has estimated the number of courts that can, in its view, be sustained – based on population density and padel demand. Figures provided form a start point for conversation and strategic planning. The suggested number is neither a target nor a cap it is simply an indication that the LTA has confidence that there is sufficient demand for the number of courts identified. In areas where the sport is more established there is likely to be higher demand.

The current LTA estimate of the number of courts for which there is demand in East Herts is 12. There are currently two indoor padel courts at Country Padel Co, located in the centre of the district south of Puckeridge. These courts can be booked on a pay and play basis and no membership is required. There are also two covered courts at Bishop's Stortford Lawn Tennis Club, which can also be booked on a pay and play basis and three covered padel courts located at Bishop's Stortford Padel Club which require club membership in order to book.

9.4: Pickleball

Indoor pickleball takes place at Wodson Park Sports Centre (2 marked courts), Avanti Grange High School (1 marked court), Legends Tennis Centre (2 marked courts), The Bishop's Stortford High School (1 marked court) and Leventhorpe School (1 marked court).

Braughing and District Pickleball Club utilises both indoor and outdoor pickleball provision. Outdoor sessions take place at Hoddesdon Tennis Club on Saturday mornings. Indoor sessions are held at Wodson Park Sports Centre on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. Sunday morning sessions are also held at The Bishops Stortford High School.

Sawbridgeworth Pickleball Club does not currently access any indoor facilities for club nights or matches. It uses the outdoor courts located at Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club.

Consultation with school sites confirmed that with the exception of the two sites used by Braughing and District Pickleball Club, pickleball participation is generally informal between groups of friends.

9.5: Summary of key facts and issues

Facility type	Indoor tennis	
Elements	Assessment findings	Specific facility needs
Quantity	Legends Tennis Centre is the sole facility for indoor tennis in East Herts, with four acrylic courts.	Legends Tennis Centre is well used and reports having limited spare capacity during peak times. Courts are kept available for pay and play despite a busy coaching schedule.

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Quality	The site is rated as above average quality with suitable ancillary provision. Funds are in place to replace the playing surface when needed to retain its quality.	Maintain court and changing room quality and replace playing surface when required.
Accessibility	99% of residents live within a 30 minutes' drive time of an indoor tennis facility.	-
Availability (Management & usage)	Legends Tennis Centre offers pay and play access; however, this is limited to evening and weekends.	Ensure that Legends Tennis Centre's programming continues to ensure adequate access to pay and play courts.

Strategic summary

No further indoor tennis provision is currently required. Continue to monitor demand at Legends Tennis Centre and local outdoor tennis clubs to identify future demand for additional indoor tennis facilities, including potential outdoor court conversions.

Since the audit was carried out, demand for padel provision has grown considerably. The LTA is keen to support applications to support the growth of padel, so the Council should work with clubs and commercial operators to develop suitable levels of padel provision.

SECTION 10: GYMNASTICS AND TRAMPOLINING

In 2023 British Gymnastics released its new strategy – Leap Without Limits: A New Vision for a New Era. The strategy is developed as a shared vision for gymnastics across all four home nations.

To help achieve the vision It focuses on five ‘leaps’:

- ◀ **The Why Leap** - Nurturing and celebrating the positive impact of gymnastics on individuals, communities and wider society.
- ◀ **The Empowerment Leap** – Supporting everyone involved in gymnastics to play their part in making a positive difference.
- ◀ **The Experience Leap** – Making positive experiences and memories central to everything we do, at every stage, in every role.
- ◀ **The Creative Leap** – Encouraging and welcoming new ideas to support meaningful change.
- ◀ **The Together Leap** – Uniting the community, existing and new partners to maximise impact, learning and growth.

To bring the vision to life, British Gymnastics are working on the following actions:

- ◀ **Membership** – Develop a new more relevant membership offer that provides value for all its members, and an improved membership system.
- ◀ **Education** - Implement a reformed and reimagined approach to supporting the learning and development of the gymnastics workforce, ensuring it feels valued and supported by British Gymnastics and the clubs and delivery environments you operate within.
- ◀ **Community** – Celebrate and recognise the contribution and stories of those in the gymnastics community on British Gymnastics channels and more widely, including further developing the British Gymnastics Awards as an annual platform for this.
- ◀ **Reform** - Deliver all of the 40 actions British Gymnastics has committed to in Reform '25 over the next two years to create safe, positive and fair experiences for all in gymnastics, including a major Safe Sport campaign.
- ◀ **Events** - Work with its Technical Committees to agree a clearly defined and sustainable long-term national event programme for each discipline and develop new competitions and events at a recreational level.
- ◀ **Disability** - Work to build international support for our ambition for gymnastics to become a Paralympic sport, with the aim of agreeing a plan and pathway for this to become a reality.

The new strategy outlines six key impacts:

- ◀ More people enjoying the sport and its benefits, across all abilities, ages, and backgrounds, and as a gymnast, coach, club owner, official or fan.
- ◀ Everyone is safe, supported and is able and confident to speak up, whatever their role or involvement in gymnastics.
- ◀ More inspirational moments that are seen, shared and enjoyed by more people.
- ◀ The NGB membership experience is a positive one, which meets your needs, is easy from start to finish. and being a member of British Gymnastics is something that provides you with both pride and value.
- ◀ Members/participants feel connected to British Gymnastics and trust it to be positive custodians of this incredible sport.
- ◀ A united sport, where everyone is working together to ensure that collectively we deliver an uplifting gymnastics experience for all.

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10.1: Supply

The audit identified seven gymnastics clubs in East Herts, five of which operate out of dedicated gymnastics sites.

Figure 10.1: Gymnastics provision in East Herts

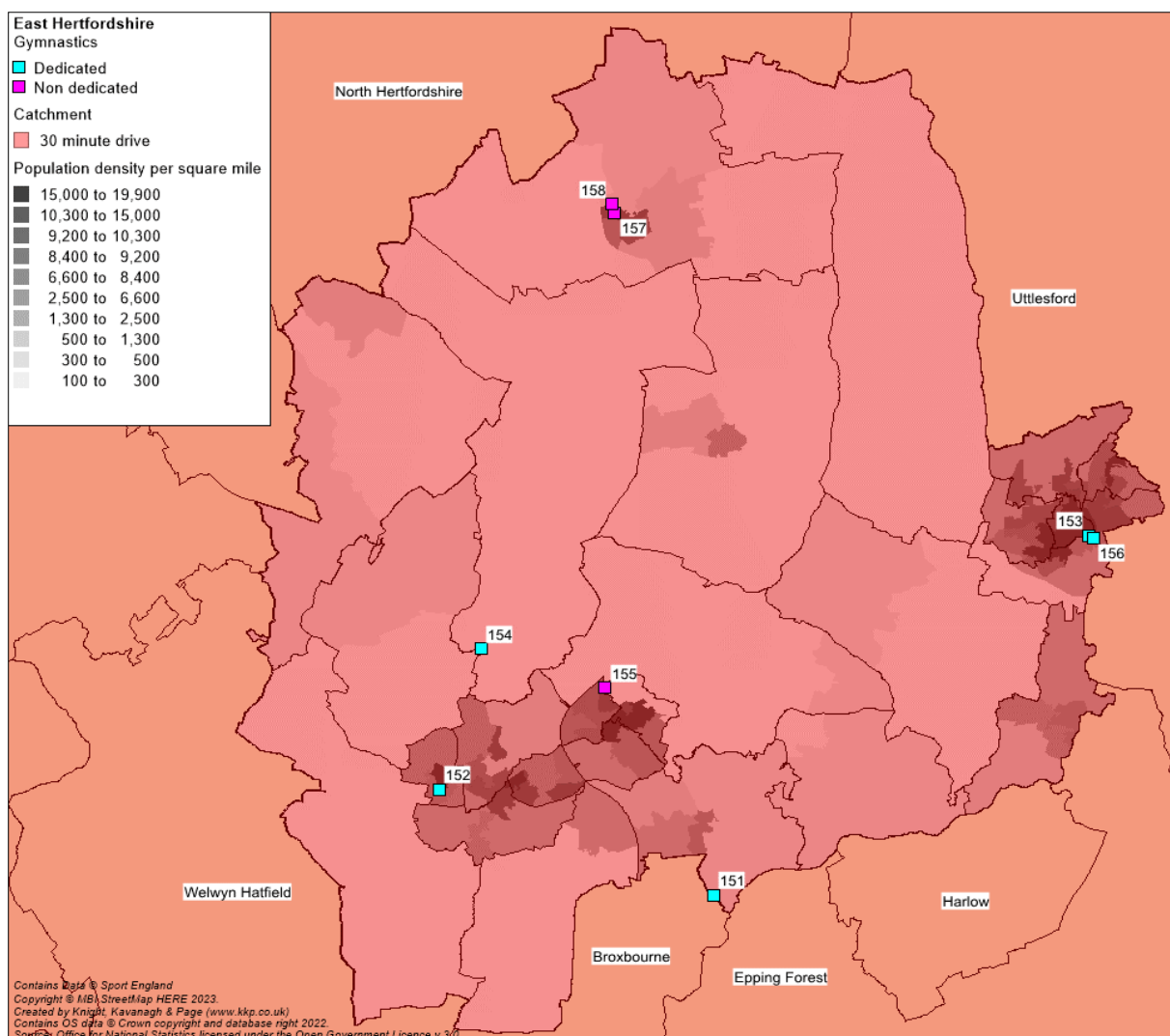


Table 10.1: Gymnastics provision in East Herts

ID	Club	Dedicated	Site name
151	Hertfordshire Gymnastics Club	Yes	
152	East Herts Gymnastics Club	Yes	
153	Stortford Gymnastics Club	Yes	
154	Hertford Gymnastics Academy	Yes	
156	Valdez Gymnastics Club	Yes	
155	Ware Gym Club	No	Wodson Park Sports Centre
157	Rib Valley Gymnastics Club	No	Edwinstree Middle School
158	Horizon Gymnastics	No	Freman College

Accessibility and availability

Gymnastics facilities appeal beyond a local authority boundary. Consequently, this report considers provision within a 30-minutes' drive time catchment to demonstrate accessibility (Sport England suggests that drive time to specialist sports facilities can be modelled at 30 minutes as opposed to the 20 minutes modelled for sports halls and swimming pools). As shown in Figure 10.1 the whole East Herts population lives within 30 minutes of gymnastics facility.

10.2: Demand

British Gymnastics reports that participation in gymnastics is increasing rapidly. It also reports substantial demand and that many clubs have waiting lists - restricting access to gymnastic activity due to lack of time within dedicated and generic facilities. As with most indoor based sports, membership levels were impacted by the Pandemic although British Gymnastics reports that the sport is experiencing a strong recovery with current membership numbers tracking c.5% below 2019 levels.

A key part of the NGB's strategy to increase participation is to support clubs, leisure providers and other partners to move to their own dedicated facilities, offering more time and space for classes. It provides a range of products and programmes and expert assistance to support local delivery; gymnastic activities which are successfully driving membership growth and retention across the country.

British Gymnastics confirmed that safeguarding existing dedicated sites within East Herts was a priority, whilst supporting clubs to increase participation and expand provision. It is aware the clubs in East Herts, as well as nationally, are experiencing issues in recruiting qualified coaches to deliver sessions.

Club consultation

All eight clubs identified in the audit were invited to be part of the consultation, three of which responded.

Hertford Gymnastics Academy is predominantly a recreational gymnastics club; however, some members have recently begun to compete in local competitions. It has c.300 members, a number which has steadily increased since moving to its current dedicated facility in 2021, when it signed a 10-year lease. It has been transformed from an old warehouse into a dedicated gymnastics site with trampolines, mats and vault equipment. It features good quality changing provision, which was refurbished during the period in which the Club could not operate during the Pandemic. Additional members could be accommodated at the facility without the need for additional space, particularly during Saturday morning sessions.

It aspires to undertake additional work at its venue. Padding is required along the back wall, and a heater is situated in the middle of the room which takes up a significant amount of space. It is estimated that approximately £30,000 is needed to deliver insulation work to the roof and install a new heating system. During summer months, the facility can reach inappropriate temperatures due to the fact that the windows do not open. This has previously caused sessions to be cancelled due to safety concerns. It has plans to extend the current track, which is expected to cost £4,000.

It expressed concern about the lack of waste collection from site. This forces staff to take waste home with them. It has contacted EHC with regard to this but at the time of the consultation had received no response.

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Stortford Gymnastics Club has c.1,250 members. It predominantly focuses on recreational gymnastics due to the facility it uses having low ceilings and limited space for older gymnasts. It was able to extend in 2021. This involved removing an unused reception area to create additional floor space. The current flooring was installed in 2021 as part of the extension - it is expected to last approximately 10 years.

As the Club cannot accommodate older gymnasts, it encourages its members to join Valdez Gymnastics Club once they are ready to progress. Despite this, it still has a long waiting list. Each session can only accommodate 25 members due to the space available. The Club has been looking to find a larger facility, as it currently has a waiting list of c.500 young people. No affordable facilities suitable for gymnastics provision have, as yet, been identified.

The current facility is well used by pre-school and school groups during the daytime. Evening sessions are at full capacity each night of the week. It also delivers trampolining sessions at The Herts and Essex Sports Centre one evening per week, where it is able to store trampolines.

Though the Club is thriving in its current facility, the lack of space for additional and older gymnasts is restricting its development. In addition, the rent and rates to use the current facility total £50,000 per year. More money could be invested into equipment and staffing were this to be reduced.

Rib Valley Gymnastics Club operates out of Edwinstree School, and previously held trampolining classes at Freman College. Its trampolining classes had to cease due to a lack of qualified coaches available to deliver sessions. Horizon Gymnastics also started operating out of the same facility. The Club has developed a good relationship with Horizon, and now more talented younger gymnasts transition to Horizon to further their development.

It currently has c.110 members. A lengthy waiting list is also in place, containing c.250 young people. The size of the hall at Edwinstree limits attendance capacity. An additional night would significantly reduce the waiting list, but the Club does not have the staffing to do this. It aims to keep the cost of participation down for its members by removing its uniform policy.

It has considered looking for its own dedicated facility but does not, at present, have the resources in place to make this a reality.

Five clubs did not respond to consultation requests. Consultation with British Gymnastics did not outline any known facility issues. It provided its most recent membership data to help quantify demand:

- ◀ Ware Gymnastics Club – 98 members
- ◀ Horizon Academy of Gymnastics – 62 members
- ◀ Hertfordshire Gymnastics Club – 452 members
- ◀ Valdez Gymnastics Club – Unknown
- ◀ East Herts Gymnastics Club – Unknown

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10.3: Summary of key facts and issues

Elements	Assessment findings	Specific needs
Quantity	There are five dedicated gymnastics facilities and three non-dedicated gymnastics sites in East Herts.	Stortford Gymnastics Club and Rib Valley Gymnastics Club report waiting lists and a need for larger venues. Support should be given to clubs to find larger facilities to reduce waiting lists.
Quality	Hertford Gymnastics Academy's dedicated facility is not fit for purpose during period of hot weather. The heating system is also outdated.	Support Hertford Gymnastics Club to undertake the necessary renovations to its facility.
Accessibility	All East Herts residents reside within a 30-minute drive time of a club/venue within the Authority.	-
Availability (Management & usage)	Two clubs in East Herts report having capacity issues due to the size of the current facility and staffing.	Support clubs to find larger, dedicated facilities to decrease waiting lists and increase participation.

Strategic summary

- ◀ Work with British Gymnastics to help to ensure that clubs can gain access to suitable facilities to accommodate their operation and help reduce waiting lists.
- ◀ Consider supporting the development of new provision linked to housing growth (e.g at Gilston) in the feasibility of considering dedicated indoor gymnastics provision.

SECTION 11: COMBAT SPORTS

This section focuses on the supply and demand position for combat sports in East Herts. Supporting data sets for provision of combat sports clubs and facilities are limited and as such KKP undertook a desk research exercise to identify combat sports activity present at facilities in the District. Below is summary outlining various forms and definitions of each martial arts discipline²³:

Karate

Karate originated in Japan. It emphasises striking techniques, such as punches, kicks, knee strikes, and elbow strikes, as well as open-handed techniques like palm strikes and knife-hand strikes. Karate training also includes blocking, evading, and grappling techniques. It has both physical and mental aspects. It promotes physical fitness, strength, flexibility, and co-ordination, while also focusing on discipline, respect, self-control, and personal development.

It is often practiced as a competitive sport and has been included in the Olympic Games since 2020. Different styles exist including Shotokan, Goju-Ryu, Wado-Ryu, Shito-Ryu, and Kyokushin, each with its own unique techniques, training methods, and philosophies. Karate in England is governed by The English Karate Federation, Karate England, and the Karate Union of Great Britain.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi, also known as Tai Chi Chuan, is an ancient Chinese martial art that combines gentle physical movements, deep breathing, and mental focus. It is practiced for its health benefits, meditation, and self-defence. The philosophy behind Tai Chi is rooted in Taoism, an ancient Chinese philosophy that emphasizes harmony, balance, and the cultivation of internal energy or "qi" (pronounced "chee"). By practicing Tai Chi, individuals learn to redirect and neutralize incoming attacks using circular and yielding movements, rather than relying on brute force.

There are several different styles of Tai Chi, with the most widely practiced ones being the Yang, Chen, Wu, Sun, and Hao styles. Each style has its own distinctive characteristics, forms, and training methods, but they all share the fundamental principles and philosophy of Tai Chi. The recognised governing bodies for Tai Chi in England are The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain and the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts (BCCMA).

Taekwondo

Taekwondo is a Korean martial art which involves a combination of physical training, self-defence techniques, forms or patterns (known as "poomsae" or "hyeong"), sparring, and breaking boards or other materials to demonstrate power and precision. Taekwondo practitioners also focus on discipline, respect, and mental and physical strength. In addition to its martial arts aspects, Taekwondo is also an Olympic sport. It made its debut as a demonstration sport in the 1988 Seoul Olympics and became an official Olympic sport in 2000. Olympic Taekwondo competitions involve sparring matches between two opponents, with points awarded for kicks and punches delivered to specific target areas on the opponent's body.

Taekwondo in England is governed by the English Taekwondo Association, British Taekwondo and GB Taekwondo.

²³ Descriptions were sourced via desktop research utilising world federations websites.

Judo

Judo originates in Japan and is a recognised Olympic Sport. It primarily focuses on throws and grappling techniques to overcome an opponent. The goal is to take down the opponent to the ground and immobilise them with pins or submission holds. Judo practitioners, known as judoka, aim to achieve victory through technique, leverage, and timing rather than relying solely on brute strength.

Training comprises practicing techniques, throws, grappling manoeuvres, and learning to fall safely (known as "ukemi"). It also includes the study of "katas," which are formal exercises that simulate self-defence situations. Judo places great emphasis on discipline, respect, mutual welfare, and personal development. In England, Judo is primarily governed by England Judo, which sits under the umbrella of British Judo.

Ju-Jitsu

Ju-Jitsu is a Japanese martial art and self-defence system that focuses on close combat techniques. Techniques include strikes, kicks, joint locks, throws, sweeps, grappling, and ground fighting. It involves using leverage, timing, and technique to overcome an opponent regardless of their size or strength. Practitioners learn to efficiently utilise joint manipulation, pressure points, and immobilisation techniques to control or incapacitate an adversary.

Modern Jujitsu encompasses a wide range of styles and approaches. Some styles focus more on stand-up techniques, throws, and strikes, while others emphasise ground fighting, submission holds, and grappling manoeuvres. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, a popular variant, is known for its emphasis on ground fighting and submission holds. Ju-Jitsu in England is governed by Great Britian Ju-Jitsu.

Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)

MMA is a full-contact combat sport that allows a wide range of fighting techniques from various martial arts and combat sports disciplines. MMA combines striking techniques (such as punches, kicks, knees, and elbows) with grappling techniques (such as throws, takedowns, joint locks, and submission holds) both standing and on the ground.

In modern MMA competitions, fighters compete inside an octagonal cage or a ring, and they wear gloves specifically designed for striking and grappling. Matches are typically divided into rounds, and fighters aim to win by knockout, submission, or judges' decision based on criteria such as effective striking, grappling, aggression, and control. MMA requires fighters to be well-rounded and proficient in multiple aspects of combat. Many MMA athletes train in various martial arts disciplines, such as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Muay Thai, boxing, wrestling, judo, and others, in order to be prepared for different situations and opponents.

It has gained global popularity primarily through the success of Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). MMA in England is governed by the English Mixed Martial Arts Association (EMMAA).

Krav Maga

This is a self-defence system developed for the Israeli military that focuses on practical, efficient techniques to neutralise threats as quickly as possible. It emphasises instinctive movements, situational awareness, and aggressive counterattacks rather than traditional martial arts forms. Krav Maga originated in the 1930s and 1940s through the work of Imi Lichtenfeld, who later adapted it for the Israel Defense Forces. It has since spread internationally and is widely taught to civilians, law-enforcement personnel, and military units. Techniques include strikes (using fists, elbows, knees, and feet), grappling, defences against common attacks, and responses to

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armed threats. The system draws from boxing, wrestling, judo, and other combat disciplines, but its core principle is real-world effectiveness.

Training typically takes place in a gym or martial arts studio, with practitioners wearing standard workout clothing and protective gear such as gloves, shin guards, and mouthguards. Sessions often involve drills that simulate real-life scenarios, including multiple attackers or surprise assaults. Unlike competitive combat sports, Krav Maga does not have a formal competition structure, as its techniques are designed for self-defence rather than sport. Civilian training in the United Kingdom is overseen by various organisations, with Krav Maga Global (KMG) and the British Krav Maga Association among the most recognised bodies.

Kung Fu

This is a broad term for a wide range of Chinese martial arts that emphasise fluid movement, discipline, and the development of both physical skill and mental focus. Rather than referring to a single style, Kung Fu encompasses hundreds of systems, each with its own techniques, philosophies, and training methods. Its origins trace back thousands of years, with influences from ancient Chinese philosophy, military training, and the practices of Shaolin monks. Over time, Kung Fu has spread globally and is now practised for self-defence, physical fitness, cultural tradition, and performance.

Techniques vary widely depending on the style but commonly include strikes (using fists, palms, elbows, and kicks), intricate footwork, joint locks, throws, and forms known as *taolu*—pre-arranged sequences of movements that develop coordination and technique. Some styles, such as Wing Chun, focus on close-range combat and efficiency, while others, like Shaolin or Wushu, emphasise athleticism, acrobatics, and expressive movement.

Training typically takes place in a martial arts school or studio, with practitioners wearing comfortable training uniforms. Sessions often include conditioning, stance work, partner drills, and the practice of forms. Some schools also incorporate traditional weapons training, such as the staff, sword, or spear. Unlike strictly regulated combat sports, Kung Fu does not have a single unified competitive structure; however, many organisations host forms competitions and controlled sparring events. In the United Kingdom, Kung Fu is taught by a variety of associations, including the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts (BCCMA), which acts as a recognised governing body for many Chinese martial arts styles.

Kickboxing

This is a combat sport that combines elements of boxing with kicking techniques. It involves both punches and kicks, making it a hybrid striking-based martial art. Kickboxing originated in the 1960s in Japan and the United States and has since gained international popularity. Participants use a combination of punches (using fists) and kicks (using legs and feet) to strike their opponents. Techniques employed are derived from various martial arts styles, including karate, boxing, and Taekwondo. The rules and regulations of kickboxing can vary depending on the organisation or governing body overseeing the sport.

Competitive kickboxing matches typically take place in a ring, similar to boxing. Participants wear protective gear, such as gloves, shin guards, and mouthguards. Matches are typically divided into rounds, with fighters aiming to score points by landing strikes on specific target areas of the opponent's body, such as the head, torso, and legs. The sport is governed by Kickboxing England.

Boxing

The NGB for Boxing in England is England Boxing. It governs the sport at national and regional level. There are currently 900+ affiliated boxing clubs containing over 21,000 formal members. EB

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has 11 regional boxing associations, which work with clubs across the full spectrum of development matters. It employs a team of club support officers (one per region), to help assist clubs with the day-to-day facility operation, seeking and securing funding for new projects that range from providing mental health awareness and tackling knife crime to putting on sessions for individuals with disabilities.

The vision of EB's new strategic plan²⁴ (2022-2027) is "inspiring and transforming lives through boxing", to achieve this it has identified four key objectives which are accompanied by specific strategies. The objectives are:

- ◀ A thriving boxing community.
- ◀ An inclusive, diverse and accessible sport.
- ◀ An inspirational and aspirational competition and talent pathway.
- ◀ A respected and valued NGB.

Table 11.1: EB strategies attached to the four key objectives

Objective	Strategies
A thriving boxing community	Strong resilient clubs An enhanced and diverse workforce Engaged, supported and valued volunteers Accessible environments and facilities
An inclusive, diverse and accessible sport	Inclusive boxing opportunities Increased membership and servicing Non-contact/recreational opportunities
An inspirational and aspiration competition and talent pathway	An enhanced competition framework An inclusive and accessible pathway An enhanced and diverse talent workforce
A respected and valued NGB	Governance, leadership and integrity Partnerships and collaboration Insight, research and innovation Driving profile and income

11.1: Supply

KKP's audit identified 21 sites where combat sport activity is taking place, six of which are dedicated. Table 11.2 overleaf outlines activity across the District. Combat sports facilities are not included within Active Places database as a facility type, and thus this report focuses on facilities within East Herts only.

²⁴[Link to England-Boxing-2022-27 Strategy](#)

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Figure 11.1: Combat sports facilities in East Herts with drive time catchment (30-minutes)

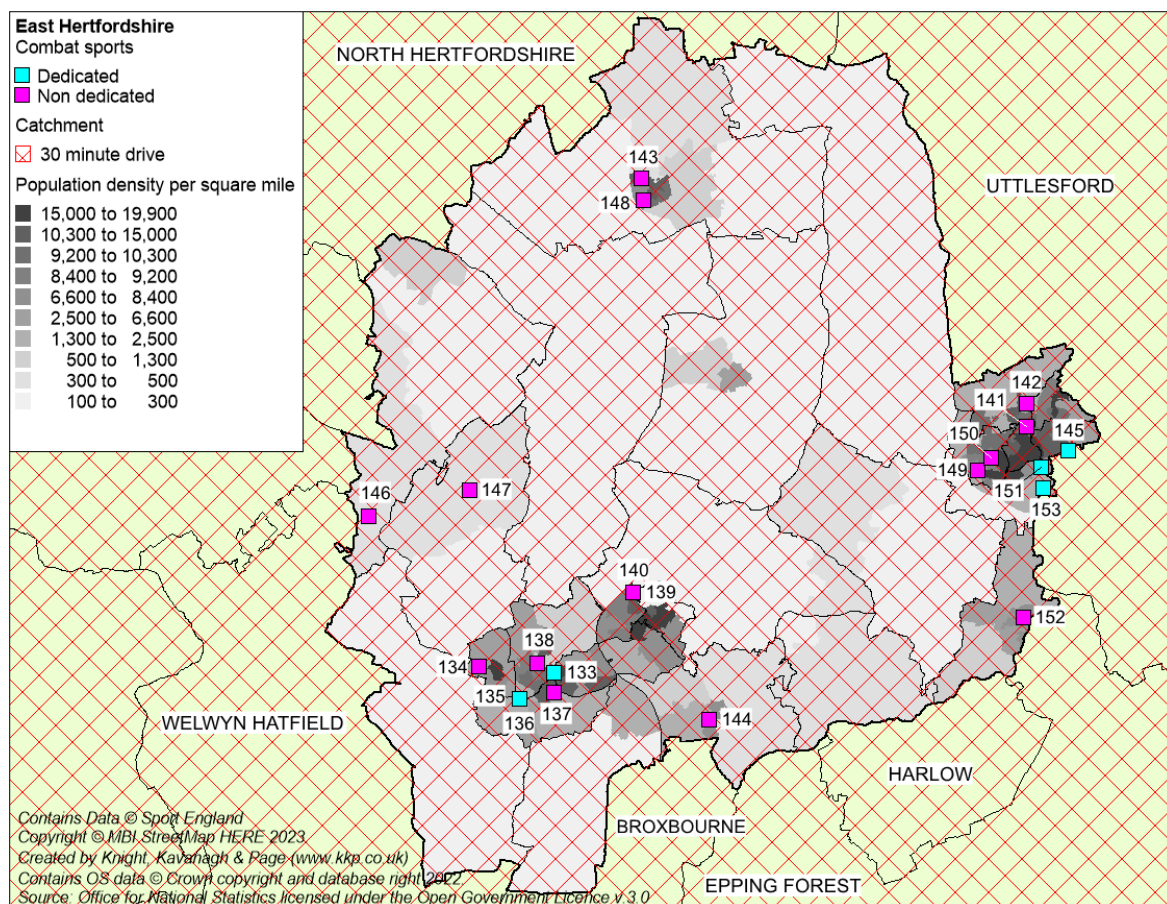


Table 11.2: Dedicated combat sports facilities in East Herts

ID	Name	Dedicated	Site name
133	Krav Maga Elite Hertford	Yes	
145	Bishop's Stortford Judo	Yes	
135	Gracie Barra Hertford	Yes	
136	Hertford Combat Academy	Yes	
134	Freestyle Martial Arts Hertford	No	Sele Farm Community Centre
137	Lee Valley Karate Academy	No	St Johns Hall
138	United Karate Association	No	The Bengeo Club
139	Shen Chi Do Karate	No	Wodson Park Leisure Centre
140	Ware Karate Club	No	Wodson Park Leisure Centre
141	Kids Kung Fu Bishop's Stortford	No	Jackson Square Shopping Centre
142	Hertfordshire Kung Fu Academy	No	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre
143	Buntingford Shotokan Karate	No	Edwinstree Middle School
144	Kokoro Kai jujitsu club	No	Nigel Copping Community Building
146	Datchworth Village Hall	No	Kenyukan Dojo Stevenage
147	Shotokan karate	No	Nigel Poulton Community Hall
148	KSTSK Karate	No	Seth Ward Community Centre
149	Bishops Stortford Kung Fu	No	St Michael's Mead Community Centre

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ID	Name	Dedicated	Site name
150	Shotokan Karate Ryu	No	Thorley Community centre
151	Strongbox Gym	Yes	
152	Pro Karate Academy	No	Bishops Park Community Centre
153	Graft Boxing Gym	Yes	

There is what would appear to be a good supply of combat sports facilities in East Herts, with each of the main residential areas well catered for. There are fewer facilities in the north and west of the District reflecting, to a degree, the fact that they are more sparsely populated.

Bishop's Stortford Judo's dedicated facility was built in 2019 and was part funded by England Judo. Its dojo is located on the first floor of the Herts and Essex Sports Centre and features a purpose-built facility with a 22 x 12-metre mat area, 50mm contest mats and a seated spectator area.

Accessibility and availability

All East Herts residents live within a 30-minute drive of a combat sports facility. All facilities are accessible via pay and play or membership arrangements via the resident club/operator at each venue.

11.2: Demand

Despite several attempts to contact clubs, limited responses were received. Only Grace Barra Hertford and Lee Valley Karate Academy responded.

Lee Valley Karate Academy delivers several sessions every week across Hertfordshire and Essex. The session in East Herts takes place at St Johns Church Hall in Hertford on Thursday evenings from 16:30-19:30. It reports a strong demand for combat sport activity in the area, however, more members could be accommodated at the current facility across all skill levels.

Grace Barra Hertford trains students in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. It has a dedicated combat sports facility on an industrial estate which has been adapted to meet its needs. It offers a full adults and juniors programme and features a full programme of scheduled activities, which includes women only sessions. The Club is actively recruiting both participants and staff as each session has capacity to take on additional members.

Consultation with The Herts and Essex Sports Centre suggests the judo facility at Bishop's Stortford Judo Club is well used seven days per week. It offers introductory membership, a club membership and a squad membership depending on ability levels. Pay and play is also an option for those looking to participate on a more casual basis, however, British Judo Association membership is required.

11.3: Summary of key facts and issues

Elements	Assessment findings	Specific needs
Quantity	There are 21 combat sport facilities in East Herts, six of which are dedicated.	No clubs reported issues with facility size.
Quality	No quality issues were reported.	-
Accessibility	All East Herts residents live within a 30 minutes' drive time of either a dedicated or non-dedicated combat sports facility.	-
Availability (Management & usage)	Clubs/operators generally operate on the basis of pay & play access with memberships available for regular participants.	There is a need to support clubs to expand provision where possible to meet demand.

Strategic summary

- ◀ Combat sport facilities are well spread across the District and all main population areas can access provision. Given that clubs tend to be commercial operations, scope for support is limited however, it should be recognised that combat sports providers offer alternative routes into sports and physical activity and should therefore be supported where possible.
- ◀ There is a need to ensure that, where possible, combat sports clubs have security of tenure, good quality facilities that are fit for purpose and are able to meet the demands of the population.

SECTION 12: COMMUNITY AND VILLAGE HALLS

12.1: Introduction

Community and village halls often fulfil an important role in providing informal physical activity opportunities, often for residents who are unable or lack the confidence/means to access larger more formal leisure facilities. They are usually multi-functional, providing places for meetings, socialising and for sports and recreational clubs and activities. In more isolated areas, a church hall or a sports pavilion can also serve a range of functions depending on its size.

In East Herts, a largely rural district with dispersed communities, local activity spaces such as fitness studios, dance schools and martial arts centres play an especially important role in enabling regular physical activity. Their presence across towns, villages and smaller settlements helps bridge the accessibility gap that can arise when residents live far from major leisure centres. These community-based venues provide flexible, affordable and varied opportunities for people of all ages to participate in sport and exercise, supporting grassroots engagement that might otherwise be limited by travel distance, cost or availability.

12.1: Supply

The audit identified 57 such halls in the Authority. They are well spread, often serving smaller settlement areas which are less densely populated as shown in Figure 12.1. All were subject to physical or virtual assessment and consultation was undertaken to evaluate community use. Where this was not feasible, desk research informed the audit.

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Figure 12.1: Village and community halls in East Herts

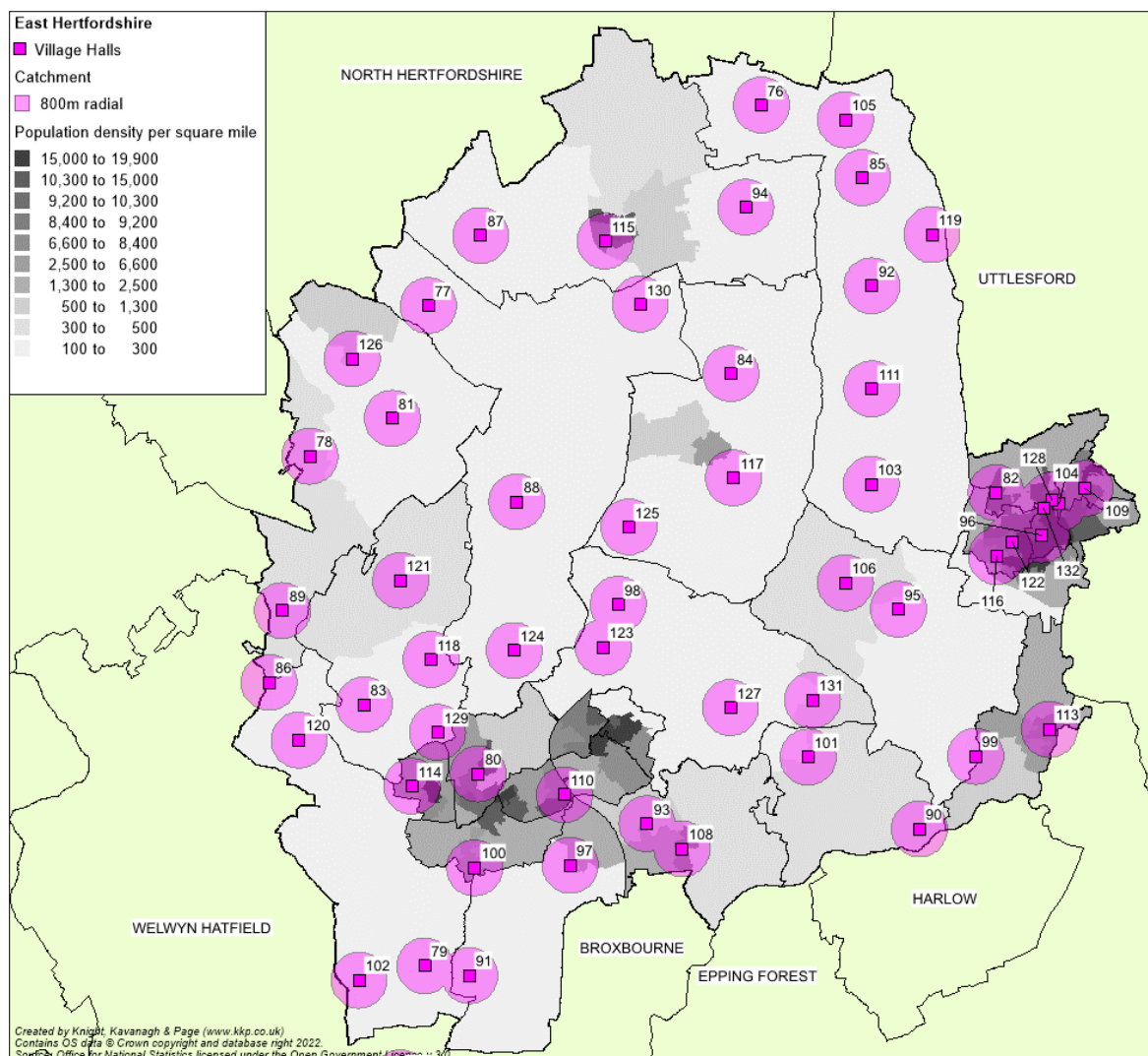


Table 12.1: Smaller halls in East Herts

ID	Name	ID	Name
76	Antsey Village Hall	105	Meesden Village Hall
77	Ardeley Village Hall	106	Much Hadham Village Hall
78	Aston Village Hall	107	Newgate Street Village Hall
79	Bayford Memorial Village Hall	108	Nigel Copping Community Building
80	Bengeo Church Hall	109	Parsonage Lane Community Centre
81	Benington Village Hall	110	Pinehurst Community Centre
82	Bishop's Park Community Centre	111	Saint Mary's Albury
83	Bramfield Village Hall	112	Sandon Village Hall
84	Braughing St Mary's Church - Old Boys School	113	Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall
85	Brent Pelham Village Hall	114	Sele Farm Community Centre
86	Burnham Green Village Hall	115	Seth Ward Community Centre
87	Cottered Village Hall	116	St Michael's Mead Community Centre
88	Dane End Village Hall	117	Standon Village Hall

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ID	Name	ID	Name
89	Datchworth Village Hall	118	Stapleford Abbots Village Hall
90	Eastwick and Gilston Village Hall	119	Stocking Pelham Village Hall
91	Fanshaws Room (Brickendon)	120	Tewin Memorial Hall
92	Furneux Pelham Village Hall	121	The Nigel Poulton Community Hall
93	Great Amwell Parish Hall	122	Thorley Community Centre
94	Great Hormead Village Hall	123	Thundridge Village Hall
95	Green Tye	124	Tonwell Village Hall
96	Havers Community Centre	125	Colliers End Village Hall
97	Hertford Heath Village Hall	126	Walkern Sports and Community Centre
98	High Cross Village Hall	127	Wareside Village Hall
99	High Wych Memorial Hall	128	Water Lane United Reformed Church Hall
100	Hornsmill Community Centre	129	Waterford Village Hall
101	Hunsdon Village Hall	130	Westmill Village Hall
102	Little Berkhamsted Village Hall	131	Widford Village Hall
103	Little Hadham Village Hall	132	Windhill Churches Centre
104	Markwell Studio	133	Barnabus Centre
134	Emmaus Centre		

All 57 sites provide some form of community use. Radial catchment modelling demonstrates the good access to village and community hall provision in East Herts; approximately 41.2% of the population lives within 800 metres (approximately a 10-minute walk) of a village or community hall with community access. These facilities can potentially offer different types of physical activity which are relevant to the local communities which they serve.

Investment in village and community hall stock is generally good. Bramfield Village Hall installed new changing rooms in 2018 at a cost of £29,000. Funding was secured from the Biffa Award, which is used to help build local communities. The development included creating additional storage space for local sports clubs and the adjacent church. Colliers End Village Hall has also received recent investment in a hall renovation project (carried out in 2022). This received a £15,207 of Biffa Award funding. Prior to the renovation it was in poor condition, the roof was prone leaks and it looked dated. New double windows have been installed, new flooring installed in the hall and a modernised kitchen has been fitted.

The Markwell Studio in Bishops Stortford was rebuilt and modernised in 2023 to make it a more attractive option for community use. This included installing a projector to enable it to host functions of up to 60 people. Wareside Village Hall has a sprung dance floor to help it to cater for the dance and performing arts groups which use the facility on a weekly basis.

Some halls, contain line markings for traditional sports hall activities. One example is the Nigel Poulton Community Hall in Watton-at-Stone, which features a badminton court. Line markings in community halls increases the number of activities which can take place.

Availability

A wide range of providers own/operate village/community halls across the faith, charitable and education sectors providing a similarly wide range of physical activity, arts and cultural activity across the district. Patterns of community use vary according to geographic location, local demand and provider agency orientation. Community and village halls are likely to provide community use opportunities during daytimes when key sites such as those located at schools are not available. They also receive substantial weekend use and are often more cost effective than hiring facilities on school sites.

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13.2 Demand

Table 12.2: Village and community hall usage

Site name	Settlement	Activities
Antsey Village Hall	Anstey	Table tennis, carpet bowls and yoga.
Ardeley Village Hall	Ardeley	Unknown.
Aston Village Hall	Aston	Table tennis, badminton.
Bayford Memorial Village Hall	Bayford	Ballroom dancing.
Bengeo Church Hall	Bengeo	Group exercise.
Benington Village Hall	Benington	Chair exercise group, badminton, table tennis, short mat bowls.
Bishop's Park Community Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Baby yoga, group exercise, dance.
Bramfield Village Hall	Bramfield	Group exercise, short mat bowls, book club.
Braughing St Mary's Church - Old Boys School	Braughing	Unknown.
Brent Pelham Village Hall	Brent Pelham	Seasonal fairs.
Burnham Green Village Hall	Welwyn	Youth groups.
Cottered Village Hall	Cottered	Short mat bowls, group exercise, pickleball.
Dane End Village Hall	Dane End	Unknown.
Datchworth Village Hall	Datchworth	Table tennis, group exercise, short mat bowls.
Eastwick and Gilston Village Hall	Harlow	Chair exercise, group exercise.
Fanshaws Room (Brickendon)	Brickendon	Unknown.
Furneux Pelham Village Hall	Furneux Pelham	Group exercise classes
Great Amwell Parish Hall	Great Amwell	Unknown.
Great Hornead Village Hall	Great Hornead	Yoga, Pilates.
Green Tye	Much Hadham	Parent and toddler groups, bellringing.
Havers Community Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Baby ballet, seated cycling, indoor football.
Hertford Heath Village Hall	Hertford Heath	Seasonal fairs, parties.
High Cross Village Hall	High Cross	Group exercise.
High Wych Memorial Hall	High Wych	Table tennis, yoga, Pilates, Scottish dancing, baby ballers.
Hornsmill Community Centre	Hertford	Pilates.
Hunsdon Village Hall	Hunsdon	Group exercise, short mat bowls, badminton.
Little Berkhamsted Village Hall	Little Berkhamsted	Table tennis, yoga.
Little Hadham Village Hall	Little Hadham	Group exercise, chair yoga, short mat bowls.
Markwell Studio	Bishop's Stortford	Pilates, U3A events, group exercise.
Meesden Village Hall	Meesden	Unknown.
Much Hadham Village Hall	Much Hadham	Pilates, ballroom dancing, badminton, ballet.
Newgate Street Village Hall	Newgate Street	Table tennis.
Nigel Copping Community Building	Stanstead Abbots	Combat sports.

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Parsonage Lane Community Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Parent and toddler groups.
Pinehurst Community Centre	Hertford	Dance.
Saint Mary's Albury	Albury	Unknown.
Sandon Village Hall	Sandon	Group exercise, dance.
Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall	Sawbridgeworth	Youth Club activities, group exercise, U3A events.
Sele Farm Community Centre	Hertford	Pilates, combat sports, U3A events.
Seth Ward Community Centre	Buntingford	Line dancing, martial arts, yoga.
St Michael's Mead Community Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Martial arts, yoga, Pilates, music lessons.
Standon Village Hall	Standon	Group exercise, cheerleading.
Stapleford Abbots Village Hall	Stapleford	Short mat bowls, badminton.
Stocking Pelham Village Hall	Stocking Pelham	Unknown.
Tewin Memorial Hall	Tewin	Group exercise, badminton.
The Nigel Poulton Community Hall	Watton-at-Stone	Badminton, martial arts, group exercise, archery.
Thorley Community Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Dance, indoor football, martial arts.
Thundridge Village Hall	Thundridge	Group exercise, art exhibitions.
Tonwell Village Hall	Tonwell	Group exercise, bingo.
Colliers End Village Hall	Colliers End	Unknown.
Walkern Sports and Community Centre	Walkern	Group exercise.
Wareside Village Hall	Wareside	Dance.
Water Lane United Reformed Church Hall	Bishop's Stortford	Unknown.
Waterford Village Hall	Waterford	Group exercise, U3A events.
Westmill Village Hall	Westmill	Group exercise, dance.
Widford Village Hall	Widford	Unknown.
Windhill Churches Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Unknown.

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The Markwell Pavillion is one of the busier facilities in the District. Spare capacity is limited to Tuesday evenings and weekday afternoons as the facility is used by a mixture of sporting and non-sporting activities. The Nigel Poulton Community Hall is used for a range of activities targeting the over 50s community such as table tennis, badminton, yoga and archery.

Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall has two halls available for hire. The larger of the two can accommodate approximately 45 people undertaking group exercise, with the smaller being suitable for approximately 20. The larger hall has limited spare capacity but could generally accommodate an additional booking on Thursday evenings. The smaller hall is less frequently booked.

Little Hadham Village Hall also has two halls on site. It reports having spare capacity in the main hall on weekends, with exception for when hired for private events such as parties as no block bookings take place on Saturdays. In the week it has spare capacity on Monday and Tuesday evening. The smaller hall is infrequently used for sport and leisure activities.

12 sites were identified as offering regular opportunities for sport and/or physical activity but it was not possible to identify which activities or the level of community access currently taking place. Most venues have adopted a modern booking system whereby users can book and pay the facility hire online.

Several small halls sites report having community access but that they are rarely used for sport or physical activity. Examples include Brent Pelham Village Hall and Parsonage Lane Community Centre, which are frequently used for activities such as fairs, parent and toddler groups and other community gatherings.

The audit suggests that demand for smaller halls is strong in East Herts. A range of services and activities take place at these sites, showing their importance to the local community, especially for local people who may not have access to more strategic facilities. All report having some spare capacity to take additional bookings, predominantly during weekday daytimes and at weekends. There is outline planning permission for a new community hall in the neighbourhood centre at Bishop's Stortford South development. Likewise new halls will be provided at developments North and East of Ware, Birchall Garden Suburb and at Gilston.

12.3 Summary of key facts and issues

Elements	Assessment finding	Specific facility needs
Quantity	There are 57 village and community halls in East Herts. They are well spread across the District, generally serving smaller population areas.	Ensure that smaller halls located within community centres continue to serve the local community – and that sport and physical activity is part of the offer made.
Quality	No quality rating has been produced for any site. Several halls have been refurbished having received Biffa Award funding.	A suggested next phase of work is to identify halls requiring improvement in order to facilitate increased opportunity for physical activity.
Accessibility	There is a good level of accessibility; 41.2% of the population lives within 800m of a smaller hall.	Increase accessibility via identifying opportunity to make more use of existing and/or to develop new community provision to serve current and future population-based demand.
Availability (Management and usage)	All sites report some level of spare capacity. Daytime availability is good,	Support the work of hall management to ensure that realistic usage levels are

EAST HERTS INDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Elements	Assessment finding	Specific facility needs
	which is imperative given the lack of public leisure sports hall space.	optimised and that activities at each reflect/support the need of local people. Consider whether health referral activity could take place in village hall settings.

SECTION 13: SUMMARY: STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The strategy which follows will take account of the findings of this needs assessment, the district's demographic make-up and the Council's vision. There is a general requirement to continue to invest in sports facilities in East Herts to ensure that they are fit for purpose for the 21st Century (e.g., welcoming, clean, attractive, flexible spaces, wide programme offer, ability to learn to swim cost-effective to manage and operate etc). This should lead to increased participation and a more active District. Strategy recommendations are likely to be predicated upon some or all of the following:

- ◀ In line with The District Plan's carbon reduction targets, ensure that existing facilities are made as energy efficient as possible, and that new development considers energy efficiency as a high priority.
- ◀ Given that a high percentage of sports hall space is located at educational sites, the Council should collaborate with schools and Active Herts to ensure that sports hall quality remains at/rises to an appropriate standard and that they continue to be made available for community use.
- ◀ Several clubs report losing access to facilities located within educational sites for as many as 12 weeks of the year. This has significant impact on clubs participating in league competitions and is worsened by the absence of public leisure sports hall provision.
- ◀ The two public leisure sites do not contain sports hall provision. Daytime access is provided by community managed facilities, however, this puts the Council at risk of closures/changes of programming and opening times beyond its control, such as at Wodson Park Sports Centre.
- ◀ Five new sports halls are due to be developed over the course of the new local plan period. FPM analysis suggests that new sports hall provision, which includes a new 4 or 6-court hall within Gilston leisure Centre, will provide strong supply levels to the growing population by 2043. The Needs Assessment findings and FPM conclusion support the development of a 6-court hall to accommodate greater demand brought on by housing growth and potentially support sports currently limited in space such as gymnastics.
- ◀ EHDC should consider working in partnership with Badminton England to address the shortfall in high quality badminton provision in the wider Hertfordshire region.
- ◀ There has been significant loss of public swimming pool provision since December 2023. The remaining two public leisure sites have accommodated those on learn-to-swim programmes; however, they are operating close to capacity and public swim time has been reduced. Additional pool space is required to support growing learn-to-swim programmes, competitive club swimming and general public swim sessions.
- ◀ The planned four or six lane pool at Gilston leisure Centre will be well placed to accommodate future demand from new housing provision.
- ◀ The future of Ware Swimming Club should be prioritised when additional pool provision is considered.
- ◀ The Council should prioritise the maintenance work due to be carried out to the roof at Hartham Leisure Centre to avoid further pool closures.
- ◀ ONS figures suggest a significant rise in the number of residents over the age of 65 by 2043. Programming at public leisure sites needs to reflect the need to keep the ageing population in the District active, as outlined in the East Herts Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2028.
- ◀ Access to pay and play sport and leisure provision is generally low - across all facility types. The Council should encourage more sports hall, swimming pool, Health & Fitness and squash operators to provide a pay and play option.
- ◀ Several clubs in different sports in the district report difficulty in gaining access to facilities due to availability or cost. Sports to which this applies include badminton, netball, volleyball and gymnastics.
- ◀ Gymnastics demand is high. Club consultation suggests as many as 750 young people are currently on waiting lists across several clubs, all of which are considering alternative

provision to accommodate demand. There is a need to consider opportunities for further growth of gymnastics in new provision.

- ◀ Ensure that the pricing, level of leisure card based discounting, and means of access to memberships and activities are accessible to older residents, those living in the rural areas of the District and the relatively small number of people living in EHDC who would be classified as being financially disadvantaged (i.e., they receive income support, are on benefits of in receipt of, for example, disability allowance). This might also, pending the disposition of the Council and its stakeholders, extend to including specific arrangements for carers and others performing key, socially essential community roles.
- ◀ This should be considered in the context of the fact that the current cost of activity inclusive memberships (and pay and play access for activities such as swimming or fitness) at the District's public leisure facilities is relatively high. Arguably, this legitimately reflects the overall net spending power of the District's more affluent resident base. The Council should, working closely with Everyone Active, Public Health, Active Herts and other interested parties, evaluate the extent to which low-cost opportunity (and low opportunity cost) options to take up memberships or casually take part in sport and physical activity at the District's facilities can be more proactively encouraged.