



EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL INDOOR SPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY

STRATEGY

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the East Herts District Council (EHDC) Indoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan focussing on built sports facility provision. It builds upon the conclusions identified in the indoor sport needs assessment report, which was originally produced in 2024, with later amends due to the production of an FPM, finalised in 2026. A summary of needs assessment report findings can be seen in section 1.3.

EHDC's District Plan commits it to ensuring that infrastructure and services are delivered to meet the needs of its growing population. The East Herts Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2028 recognises the need to support residents to get the best start to life, maintaining healthy lifestyles and improving mental health. It also focuses on providing targeted support for people living with dementia, long-term health conditions, and physical disabilities, while also supporting their families. By 2043, over a quarter of East Herts' residents will be over the age of 65 (ONS).

Sport and physical activity play a crucial role in achieving the council's goals. However, to be effective, it requires modern facilities and inclusive programmes which encourage and support physical activity for all residents. Based on the needs assessment, EHDC is in a position to make informed decisions to ensure that facilities are located in the right places to enable the maximum number of local people to take part in regular, meaningful sport and physical activity. The strategy provides EHDC with a comprehensive assessment of the current level of facilities available and future supply and demand needs for facility provision over the next 17 years. Built on a clear evidence base it incorporates recommendations to inform their future development and/or consolidation, partnership development opportunity and funding applications.

The commission of a Sport England Facilities Planning Model (FPM) assessment to add an extra layer of analysis of need in respect of swimming pools and sports halls meant that the time period between the production of the needs assessment and this strategy is longer than usual. During this time, changes to the original provision levels evaluated have occurred. Where these are known, they have been described out in section 1.4 of this report.

The FPM provides a structured, data-driven framework that evaluates how well existing and future facilities can support organisational demand, enabling more accurate, transparent, and strategic decisions about space, capacity, and investment. It has been used in conjunction with the KKP audit to understand how the current facility stock needs to grow to accommodate future population growth.

1.1 Local policy

East Herts District Plan

Adopted in 2018, this sets out how the district will grow and develop to 2033. Its vision is that "East Herts will be a high-quality environment with a good supply of jobs and housing to meet all needs." In relation to leisure, it emphasises the ambition to maintain and improve existing facilities and deliver new provision to support arts, culture, community activity, leisure, entertainment, recreation, faith and health. These aims sit alongside wider objectives to protect the district's natural and historic environment and ensure that growth is supported by appropriate infrastructure.

New Local Plan

EHDC has decided to update its District Plan, to create a new planning framework, reflecting increased housing requirements and updated national policy. Now the Government has published the Local Planning Regulations (2026), the Council will commence formal work on the New Local Plan in late 2026. The emerging plan is being shaped around six themes: People, Place, Economy, Environment, Infrastructure and Movement, with a strong focus on sustainable growth, climate responsibility and protecting the distinctive character of East Herts.

1.2 Housing and population growth

Work on the new Local Plan is now starting and whilst the location for growth has not yet been determined, the Council can use the Government's standard method for calculating housing growth to provide an indicative estimate. The latest standard method figure for East Herts is 1,223 dwellings per year. On the basis of an average of 2.36 people per dwelling¹, it is estimated, by 2043, that East Herts' population will grow to 207,761 from 155,808 in 2025, an increase of 51,953.

The Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) is a modelling tool designed to assist local planning authorities to quantify how much additional demand is generated by increasing populations and new housing areas. It has no spatial qualities or dimensions and is only used to estimate facility needs for whole-area populations.

It draws upon information that Sport England has gathered on facility users and applies this to the population profile of the local area. This ensures that calculations take account of the area's demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender). The SFC then converts this estimated demand (visits per week) into the equivalent quantity of facilities needed to accommodate this. For swimming pools, the units of provision are 25-metre lane equivalents, and for sports halls, the measure is the number of badminton courts.

In the case of East Herts, Table 1.1 calculates the level of new provision required for sports included in the SFC based on the population growth scenario of 51,953 residents which would mean that, by 2043, the district will have an overall population of 207,761 people.

NB, when arriving at investment decisions, the SFC should not be used to determine the need for sports facilities solely from the perspective of single or stand-alone developments. Calculations should be considered in tandem with overarching strategy recommendations and combined with application of the Planning Gain Contributions Toolkit (see Appendix 2) when arriving at investment decisions. (Indicative costs are based on Q3 2025 build costs).

Table 1.1: SFC calculations based on housing growth scenarios in East Herts

Facility type	Total SFC requirement	Cost
Sports halls	12.68 courts (3.17 4-court halls)	£10,476,569
Swimming pools	10.78 lanes (2.69 4-lane 20m pools)	£13,603,587

The above recommendations are based on the theoretical model and should, therefore, be considered alongside KKP recommendations. For example, running the SFC for indoor bowls provision based on housing growth in East Herts would evidence a need for more indoor bowls provision. Given current membership and usage levels at existing sites, it is

¹ ONS household rate for East Hertfordshire in 2025 from the 2018-based projections

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likely that existing sites will accommodate any growth in demand brought on by the growing East Herts population. It is therefore recommended that existing sites are supported as opposed to developing new provision. Despite housing growth, there is no need to consider developing new indoor bowls provision.

This calculation has been completed for the whole of East Hertfordshire; and can be updated as required to reflect changes in housing requirements/ growth, as set out in the emerging Local Plan. It can also be undertaken at a more local level, for example, for the Gilston development, and should be carried out for any additional planned developments which the Council is yet to identify.

1.3: Needs Assessment summary

Sports halls

The audit identified 45 sports halls containing 107 badminton courts in East Herts. 19 sites have 3+ court halls (84 courts). In quality terms, four 3+ court sports halls are rated good quality, seven are above average, six are below average. Two could not be assessed.

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.

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. 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. Daytime availability of sports hall space is limited. Only two sites offer this. No public leisure sites feature a sports hall.

Overall, 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 the district, however Freman College (in the north) and Heath Mount School (in the west) are well placed to serve the more rural neighbourhoods.

Five new community accessible sports halls are to be developed as part of developments in Gilston, north and east Ware and Birchall Garden Suburb. This will help significantly to accommodate demand from planned housing growth.

East Herts commissioned a Facilities Planning Model (FPM) in 2025 to assess how planned housing growth will affect sports hall capacity, using a 2025 baseline and a 2043 forecast that includes five new halls committed in the District Plan. The modelling is based on Government Standard Method housing figures, with additional growth locations to be identified through the new Local Plan. Overall, East Herts has a strong, modern supply of sports halls that meets 97% of demand in both 2025 and 2043, supported heavily by the education sector, which provides around three-quarters of all capacity.

New facilities help offset a 34% population increase and a 29% rise in demand, keeping unmet demand very low and improving retention of visits within the district. However, several sites already operate at or near full capacity, and by 2043 more schools and Wodson Park are projected to be fully utilised, highlighting the need to protect and expand community access, modernise ageing facilities, and increase peak-time availability where

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possible. Key priorities include securing Community Use Agreements, addressing gaps in Hertford, planning for pressures at Birchall Garden Suburb and Gilston, and considering refurbishment or replacement of older public facilities such as Ware Drill Hall to maintain a resilient and accessible network through to 2043.

Swimming pools

Assessment findings show that East Herts has 27 pools across 21 sites, although five are currently closed. Only 11 pools are large enough to meet community needs, and the two public leisure centres now operate with very limited spare capacity following multiple pool closures since December 2023. Public swim hours at Hartham Leisure Centre have already been reduced to accommodate rising club and learn-to-swim demand.

Pool quality is generally good, with the strongest provision in the east of the district. However, several pools in the Hertford and Ware area require improvement, and the roof at Hartham Leisure Centre needs replacing in the short to medium term to avoid further disruption. Accessibility is uneven: while almost all residents live within a 20-minute drive of a pool, only 40.8% live within one mile of a community-use pool, with accessibility lower in the north and west of the district. Just 24.4% live within a one-mile walk of a pay-and-play facility – with poor access to pay and play provision across the district with exception to Bishop’s Stortford and Hertford. The closure of two school pools has further reduced access, placing pressure on the remaining school sites to stay open.

Availability is constrained, with only two sites offering pay-and-play swimming. As noted above, one of these is already reducing public hours. Strategically, existing facilities should be protected, and new provision is required to offset recent losses, support clubs, and improve access for residents—particularly in the north of the district. Reopening Ward Freman Pool would significantly improve access in the north. In the longer term, the planned Gilston Leisure Centre will help meet additional demand generated by housing growth.

East Herts’ 2025 Facilities Planning Model (FPM) assessed the impact of recent public pool closures and forecast future swimming pool demand to 2043, modelling a 2025 baseline and a 2043 scenario that includes the new Gilston Leisure Centre. The findings show that 97% of demand is met in both years, with most residents’ needs accommodated within the district despite some unmet demand in areas such as Buntingford and around a quarter of satisfied demand being exported to neighbouring authorities. Public leisure centres provide the majority of capacity, and total water space increases as Gilston comes online, enabling the district to absorb a 34% population rise and a 31% increase in demand. No pool reaches full utilisation, though several sites operate above comfortable levels, and only educational sites offer scope to increase availability.

By 2043, ageing facilities will require modernisation or replacement to remain attractive, and East Herts’ role as a net importer of demand highlights the need for continued cross-boundary planning. Key priorities include maintaining investment in modernisation, increasing peak-time access at busy educational sites, addressing pressures at Grange Paddocks and Bishop’s Stortford College, planning for future upgrades at Hartham, ensuring Gilston’s pool is sized to meet long-term growth, and recognising the positive impact of the Ward Freman Pool reopening in improving access in the north of the district.

As set out in section 1.4 below, since the audit and FPM work, the Chauncy School has reopened the swimming provision at Fanshawe Pool and Gym in 2026, which is now back

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accommodating Ware Swimming Club for club use and swimming lessons. It can be assumed that this will help meet localised demand in the Ware area.

Health & fitness

Assessment findings indicate that East Herts has a strong supply of health and fitness provision, with 32 suites containing 1,719 stations, of which 19 sites (1,434 stations) are accessible to the community. Demand is high, but current supply meets need. However, continued growth in participation may necessitate development of additional provision. Grange Paddocks and Hartham Leisure Centre have absorbed users from recently closed sites, and usage levels at both should be monitored.

Quality across the district is mixed. While most 20+ station gyms are rated good or above average, a significant number are below average or poor. Maintaining and improving quality will be important to ensure the network remains fit for purpose. Accessibility is generally strong, with 66% of residents living within a mile of a facility and full coverage within a 20-minute drive. Access is particularly good in Hertford, Ware, Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth, although rural areas rely more heavily on car travel.

Availability varies by operator. Six large facilities offer pay-and-play access, while most others require membership. Commercial gyms provide budget options but rarely offer concessionary rates or targeted programmes for residents facing barriers to participation. Take-up of exercise/health referral schemes is low, and there is limited provision tailored to older or disadvantaged residents.

Strategically, despite recent leisure centre closures, current and future demand is well served by existing provision. The council and Everyone Active should review programme alignment with health and inclusion priorities, particularly around discounted access and health referral pathways. EHDC should work with public health partners to strengthen referral routes and support the delivery of health and fitness provision within the planned Gilston leisure facility to support future population growth.

Squash

East Herts has 14 squash courts, including eight glass-backed courts, with a further 22 courts accessible within a 20-minute drive. Although the district falls slightly below England Squash's benchmark of one court per 10,000 residents, all clubs report some spare capacity, and no unmet demand was identified. Court quality is acceptable across the board, with all facilities rated above average.

Accessibility is high, with more than 97% of residents living within a 20-minute drive of a squash facility. Pay-and-play access is available at Haileybury Sports Complex, although daytime access is restricted due to school use. Additional pay-and-play courts are available in neighbouring authorities, helping to supplement local provision.

Availability is limited during weekday afternoons and weekends, when pay-and-play options are reduced. Encouraging clubs to offer casual access during off-peak periods would help address this gap, particularly when Haileybury's courts are unavailable.

Strategically, squash provision in East Herts is sufficient despite being marginally below national benchmarks. The council should work with clubs and England Squash to expand

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levels of pay-and-play opportunity, especially during weekday daytime hours, to maximise community access and support participation.

Indoor bowls

There is no indoor bowls facility within East Hertfordshire. Despite this, accessibility is relatively good, as almost all residents live within a 30-minute drive of an indoor bowls venue located in neighbouring authorities. Consultation with the English Indoor Bowling Association indicates that existing provision outside the district is sufficient to meet current levels of demand from East Herts residents.

Availability is therefore dependent on facilities beyond the district boundary and participation is vulnerable to any future closures or capacity issues at these neighbouring sites. At present, no unmet demand is identified, and there is no requirement for new indoor bowls provision within East Herts.

Indoor tennis

Legends Tennis Centre is the only indoor tennis facility in East Herts, providing four acrylic courts that are well used and operating with limited spare capacity at peak times. Despite a busy coaching programme, the centre continues to make courts available for pay-and-play use. The site is rated above average in quality, with appropriate ancillary provision, and funding is already in place to replace the playing surface when required.

Accessibility is strong; 99% of residents live within 30-minutes' drive of an indoor tennis facility, either within East Herts or in neighbouring authorities. Pay-and-play access at Legends Tennis Centre is available during evenings and weekends, though daytime access is limited due to programming demands.

National and local demand for padel is rising rapidly, and the Playing Pitch Strategy identifies a need for 12 outdoor courts to meet this growth—highlighting that padel should be a key consideration when assessing future development proposals. 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.

There are currently seven indoor/covered padel courts in East Herts, located in Bishop's Stortford and near Puckeridge. The two indoor padel courts at Country Padel Co, located in the centre of the district south of Puckeridge, 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 also three covered padel courts located at Bishop's Stortford Padel Club, which require club membership in order to book.

Pickleball provision is more established, with a mix of indoor courts across several school and leisure sites and active club use at Wodson Park, Avanti Grange, Legends Tennis Centre, The Bishop's Stortford High School, Leventhorpe School, and outdoor courts at Hoddesdon and Sawbridgeworth tennis clubs. Outside of organised club activity, most pickleball participation at schools is informal. Together, these patterns show strong and growing demand for emerging racket sports—particularly padel—which should be factored into planning decisions and applications for new or enhanced provision.

Gymnastics and trampolining

East Herts has five dedicated gymnastics facilities and three non-dedicated sites. Two major clubs report waiting lists and a need for larger venues, indicating that current capacity is insufficient to meet demand. Hertford Gymnastics Academy also faces quality issues, with its dedicated facility becoming unusable during hot weather and its heating system in need of replacement.

Accessibility is strong, with all residents living within a 30-minute drive of a gymnastics venue. However, availability is constrained: two clubs report capacity issues linked to limited facility size and staffing, which restricts participation growth and contributes to waiting lists.

Strategically, the council should work with British Gymnastics to help clubs secure access to larger, fit-for-purpose facilities and support necessary upgrades at Hertford Gymnastics Academy. As housing growth continues, including at Gilston, the feasibility of providing new dedicated gymnastics provision should be explored to meet future demand and reduce pressure on existing clubs.

Combat sports

There are 21 combat sport facilities in East Herts including six dedicated venues. No clubs reported issues with facility size, and no quality concerns were identified. Accessibility is high, with all residents living within a 30-minute drive of either a dedicated or non-dedicated combat sports facility.

Availability is generally good, with most clubs operating on a pay-and-play basis and offering memberships for regular participants. There is a need to support clubs to expand provision where possible to meet growing demand and ensure long-term sustainability.

Strategically, combat sport facilities are well distributed, providing good access for all main population areas. Although many clubs operate commercially, they play an important role in offering alternative routes into sport and physical activity. The council should, thus, support providers where feasible, ensuring that they have security of tenure, access to fit-for-purpose facilities and capacity to meet the needs of the local population.

Community and village halls

Assessment findings show that East Herts has 57 village and community halls, well distributed across the district and serving smaller population areas. All sites report some spare capacity, with good levels of daytime availability — an important asset given the limited public leisure sports hall space. Around 41.2% of residents live within 800 metres of a smaller hall, indicating strong local accessibility.

Quality information is limited, as no formal ratings have been produced, though several halls have recently benefited from Biffa Award-funded refurbishments. A logical next step is to identify which halls require improvement to better support physical activity and community use.

Availability is generally positive, and halls have the potential to play a greater role in meeting local sport and physical activity needs. Supporting hall managers to optimise usage, tailor programmes to local demand, and explore opportunities such as hosting health-referral activity would help maximise their contribution.

Strategically, village and community halls are an important part of East Herts' facility network. Ensuring that they continue to serve local communities, and that physical activity remains part of their offer, will be essential. The council should explore opportunities to expand use of existing halls and ensure planning policies are in place to deliver new provision where needed to meet current and future population demand.

1.4: Key challenges

Key challenges, with updates about the facilities since the production of the needs assessment, where necessary, are as follows:

Loss of key facilities and insufficient capacity in the remaining leisure estate

The closure of Leventhorpe Pool and Gym, Fanshawe Pool and Gym and Ward Freman Pool in recent years has re-shaped the stock of Everyone Active managed swimming provision, from five to two. This has caused demand issues whilst alternative provision or timetabling can be sourced. For example, learn to swim participants which used the three former sites have had to be accommodated at existing provision, such as Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, whilst Ware Swimming Club has had to find alternative pool provision outside of the district.

This places greater emphasis on ensuring that remaining leisure centre provision stays open. For example, the roof structure at Hartham Leisure Centre requires maintenance. If this issue was to force the pool to close, only Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre of the public leisure stock would be left available.

Since the production of the needs assessment, it has come to light that two previously owned council pools may re-open in 2026. The Chauncy School has re-opened the swimming provision at Fanshawe Pool and Gym in 2026, which is now back accommodating Ware Swimming Club for club use and swimming lessons. Ward Freman Pool could also potentially re-open in 2026. The Ward Freman Community Pool Group has successfully crowdfunded, in addition to receiving grants from EHDC, to carry out the required work and bring the venue back into use. It can be assumed that these pools re-opening will help meet localised demand in the Ware and Buntingford areas.

Heath Mount School has plans to extend its current 20m lido to 25m, with a covered structure implemented and ancillary provision developed. It has applied for planning permission to complete this. The development of a covered pool at this site would lead to increased access for community groups in the east of the district.

Heavy reliance on school-based facilities and limited pay and play opportunities

Needs assessment and FPM findings confirm that a high percentage of sports hall provision in East Herts is located on education sites. While this provides essential capacity, it also creates vulnerability. Several clubs report losing access to school facilities for up to 12 weeks per year, severely disrupting league fixtures and training schedules. This issue is compounded by the fact that the two public leisure centres do not contain sports halls, leaving the district wholly dependent on school and community-managed venues. Quality varies across sites, and EHDC must work with schools and Active Herts to ensure standards are maintained and community access is protected.

Since the production of the needs assessment, Simon Balle School has opened its new 4-court sports hall for community use. It is reportedly well used, with limited spare capacity.

Reportedly, the School does not have a community use agreement in place, which should be implemented to secure access for local clubs and groups.

Growing population pressures, especially from major housing developments

As noted above, ONS projections indicate a significant rise in the number of residents aged 65+ by 2043. This is likely to increase demand for age-friendly programming and accessible facilities. At the same time, major housing growth, particularly at Gilston, will place additional pressure on existing leisure infrastructure.

Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) findings indicate that the impact of estimated population growth will be felt in terms of making existing swimming pools and sports halls much busier. In addition, it estimates that the four new school sports halls planned as part of site allocations in the adopted District Plan (two at Gilston, one at Birchall Garden Suburb and one North of Ware) and the new leisure centre in Gilston, will be critical to meeting additional future demand. To meet future housing needs the new Local Plan will need to allocate additional sites. At this stage, the strategy and location of additional housing growth in the new Local Plan have not been determined. However, EHDC must ensure that further new development delivers the right type and scale of provision to meet future need.

Rising demand from clubs requiring increased access to provision

Several sports report difficulty accessing suitable, affordable space. Gymnastics demand is particularly acute, with around 750 young people on waiting lists across multiple clubs, all of which are exploring alternative provision. Badminton England has also identified a shortfall in appropriate quality badminton provision across Hertfordshire. Without intervention, these sports will continue to face growth constraints, limiting participation opportunity for children, young people and adults.

The new, potentially 6-court hall, which will be developed as part of Gilston Leisure Centre, provides an opportunity to ease demand levels on these two sports to provide regular gymnastics and badminton opportunities for local people.

Access issues and affordability barriers for residents

Access to pay-and-play sport and leisure opportunities is limited across sports halls, swimming pools, health/fitness suites and squash courts. This issue is particularly prevalent in the north of East Herts, where a lack of provision is amplified by the rural nature of the authority. Village and community halls are well placed to tackle this issue, providing pay and play options for exercise classes, combat sport activities, dance groups and other group activities.

Several clubs also report difficulty accessing facilities due to availability or cost. This affects sports including badminton, netball, volleyball and gymnastics. Membership and casual activity prices at public leisure centres are relatively high, reflecting the district's overall affluence, but this creates barriers for older residents, rural communities, people living in poverty and facing other forms of financial disadvantage. There is a clear need to ensure that pricing, discount schemes and membership pathways are accessible and inclusive.

PART 2: VISION AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

Building on its commitment to place physical activity, health and environmental sustainability at the centre of community wellbeing, EHDC has a clear opportunity to plan for the long-term future of its sport and leisure provision. As it prepares the new Local Plan and responds to significant housing growth, the council can ensure that high-quality, modern and sustainable facilities remain central to improving health outcomes, tackling inequalities and supporting active, connected communities.

This strategy is based on the need to address the recent loss of public swimming provision, invest in the quality and resilience of existing facilities, and secure meaningful contributions from new development—particularly in major growth areas such as Gilston. It also recognises the importance of maximising community access to non-council facilities, including school sites, village halls and commercial operators, to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population while supporting families, clubs and existing users.

Current provision is unevenly distributed, with strong access in the main towns but gaps in the north and rural areas. As housing growth comes forward, the strategy must ensure that spaces for sport, physical activity and community wellbeing—whether council-owned or delivered through partners—are attractive, accessible, sustainable and capable of accommodating future demand.

EHDC's partnership with Everyone Active, alongside its work with the Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, provides a strong platform for aligning facility programming with wider health and inclusion priorities. The current planning framework- national policy, adopted District Plan and the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document all reinforce the need for coordinated planning to secure high-quality leisure infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.

Looking ahead, the council has an opportunity to reshape the stock of sport and leisure provision through targeted investments and contributions linked to major developments. This should include a strong core offer of swimming, health and fitness, flexible community spaces and facilities that support health referral, active ageing and inclusive participation. Ensuring that all facilities contribute to the council's carbon-neutral ambitions will be important. It is essential that the strategy and policies in the emerging new Local Plan provide a continued framework to protect, provide and enhance sport facilities.

Together, these actions will enable East Herts to deliver a resilient, future-proofed leisure network that supports healthier lifestyles, strengthens communities and enhances the district as a great place to live, work and be active.

The vision for sport and leisure provision in the area reflects a clear ambition to ensure that facilities are attractive, accessible and fit for purpose with a wide range of programming to meet the needs of all residents. It is:

To support and sustain sport and leisure facilities that meet the needs of all East Herts residents, aiming to increase participation, support healthier and more active lives, address health and age-related inequalities, and ensure that everyone can access opportunities to be active within their community, now and as the district grows."

2.1: Overarching strategic recommendations

Invest in both new and existing leisure facilities to ensure they meet the needs of the growing population, while also ensuring that all facilities operate in a sustainable and responsible way.

The reduction in the number of public leisure facilities has left EHDC with a more manageable estate to maintain but has also increased pressure on the centres that remain. Essential maintenance, such as the roof replacement at Hartham Leisure Centre, should be prioritised to prevent further closures and to ensure that facilities remain attractive, fit for purpose, and accessible to the local community.

Use the planning process to ensure new development supports the provision and enhancement of indoor sport facilities. The composition and proposed programmes at new leisure developments, including the proposed Gilston Leisure Centre, should be guided by needs assessment and FPM findings to determine the appropriate scale of provision required to meet demand for sports hall space, swimming, and health and fitness facilities. Based on current projections, an (at least) 6-court sports hall and a 6-lane swimming pool would accommodate the growing demand by 2043. Smaller provision, such as a 4-court hall or 4-lane pool would already be uncomfortably busy by 2043.

Once the scale and location of growth is confirmed in the emerging Local Plan, officers should use this assessment and strategy, alongside the toolkit in appendix 2, to reassess demand associated with housing growth.

The reopening of Fanshawe Pool and potential reopening of Ward Freman Pool will also have a positive impact on accessibility for the current and future population.

In line with the District plan's carbon-reduction commitments, the council should prioritise improving energy efficiency at all existing leisure centres, where possible, while ensuring that any new development meets high environmental standards. This includes upgrading building fabric, heating systems and plant, and embedding sustainability principles into all future capital projects from the outset.

Strengthen partnerships with schools and community groups to secure long-term, high-quality community access.

Given that virtually all sports hall capacity sits on educational sites, EHDC should work closely with schools and Active Herts to maintain and improve facility quality and ensure consistent, all year round, community access. This should include formalised agreements to minimise disruption caused by school closures (which can currently last up to 12 weeks), protect evening and weekend access, and ensure that new school sports halls, such as at Simon Balle School and those planned through the Local Plan, are designed with community use in mind.

The five new sports halls due to be delivered by 2043 should all be supported by robust community use agreements (CUAs) that guarantee a minimum of 50 weeks of weekday evening community access per year. These agreements should set clear expectations around programming, pricing, safeguarding, and operational responsibilities to ensure that local residents benefit fully from the increased provision and that facilities remain accessible, reliable, and well-managed.

The council should also support the reintroduction of key community facilities, including Fanshawe Pool (through The Chauncy School) and Ward Freman Pool (through the Ward

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Freman Community Pool Group). This support may include providing guidance on governance models, assistance with funding pathways and collaboration to ensure that any reinstated facilities meet modern standards for safety, accessibility, and sustainability.

Similarly, the council should monitor the situation at the currently closed Leventhorpe pool, and support any attempts to bring it back into use from local schools or community groups with suitable plans in place to support the work required and running costs of opening the pool.

Reopening these sites would help address local gaps in provision and strengthen the overall leisure network across East Herts.

Improve affordability, pay-and-play opportunities and dedicated spaces across all facility types.

The fact that there are only two publicly operated leisure facilities in East Herts places greater emphasis on them being affordable and accessible to the broadest cohort of residents. (For example, fewer than one quarter of residents live within one mile of a public swimming pool). EHDC should work with Everyone Active, Public Health, Active Herts and other partners to expand low-cost and flexible access options, particularly for older adults, rural residents and those on low incomes or disability benefits. This should include reviewing concession schemes, leisure card discounts, and pricing structures, and exploring targeted offers for carers and other key community roles.

Providing access to sports hall space during the day is a particular challenge. With a growing population of residents aged over 65, demand for daytime physical activity is increasing, yet provision is limited. These facilities also play an important role in providing opportunities for shift workers, the unemployed or the growing number of people working flexibly.

The absence of a sports hall at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre places additional pressure on community venues, leaving Ware Drill Hall and Wodson Park Sports Centre as the only facilities offering daytime access. As neither site is under council control, EHDC is exposed to risks around pricing, programming and potential changes to opening hours. The council should, thus, explore options to secure more reliable daytime access through strengthened agreements with existing providers and via future projects that could help address this gap directly, such as the development of Gilston Leisure Centre.

EHDC should also work proactively with national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) to ensure that dedicated space is available to support club development and reduce waiting lists. The council should, in particular, work closely with Badminton England (which has expressed direct interest in establishing dedicated provision within Hertfordshire) and with British Gymnastics to identify opportunities to reduce the combined gymnastics waiting list, which currently exceeds 750 young people. Strengthening provision for these high-demand activities will help broaden participation, support talent pathways and improve the overall resilience of the local club network.

There is a need to ensure that demand for emerging sports can be met throughout the Local Plan period. For example, padel and pickleball have grown significantly in popularity in recent years, highlighting the need to continually monitor participation and demand levels for these and other emerging sports to ensure that the facility stock meets the needs of East Herts' residents.

Pickleball also provides an opportunity to adapt existing sports hall provision at relatively low cost to accommodate older or less mobile users, through the installation of either temporary or permanent court markings within facilities.

Where dedicated provision cannot be developed, ensuring that clubs with high demand levels have appropriate access to new provision developed over the plan period is essential.

Support programming and facility development that reflects the needs of an ageing population.

ONS projections show a significant increase in residents aged 65+ by 2043. EHDC should ensure that programming at public leisure sites supports active ageing, in line with the East Herts Community Health and Wellbeing Plan. This includes offering more daytime sessions, low-impact activities, accessible pricing options, and targeted health-referral pathways. New facilities should be designed with accessibility, social spaces and health-and-wellbeing functions built in.

EHDC should help its residents to make greater use of the district's community halls, which are well distributed across urban and rural areas, to extend access to physical activity opportunities for residents who live beyond typical travel distances of the main leisure centres. These halls offer a valuable platform for delivering programmes in rural areas such as GP referral and other health-based activities, helping reach communities that are otherwise underserved. Despite limited transport links in more remote parts of the district, these venues remain highly accessible locally, actually/potentially providing an effective and sustainable way to broaden participation and improve health outcomes.

Consider forming a cross-border strategy implementation group with North Herts District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Broxbourne Borough Council.

Needs assessment findings highlighted a high level of cross-border reliance in respect of East Hertfordshire residents accessing sports facilities in North Herts and Stevenage and vice versa. Given the presence of the same leisure operator in each of the three authorities, a working group comprising representatives from each district and Everyone Active could be created to consider cross-border issues in relation to the implementation of each authority's indoor facility strategy. This could examine issues such as respective programming and discretionary pricing arrangements across facility stock, and the comparative findings of the FPM analyses conducted for each area. Broxbourne Borough Council could also be included, given the cross-boundary relationship.

2.2 Action plans

EHDC should support the following strategic recommendations. Please note, responsibility for actions set out in the plan are not solely the council's responsibility and are assigned to a number of agencies including the Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership, schools, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and sports clubs. This reflects the fact that, while the strategy was commissioned by EHDC, it requires a partnership approach to deliver its recommendations.

The following action plan contains two sections:

- ◀ Overarching recommendations.
- ◀ Built sports facilities action plan.

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In respect of timescales, short term refers to 1-2 years; medium is 3-5 years and long-term equates to 5-10 years. Action plan priorities are categorised either as protect, enhance or provide in line with Sport England objectives. The Sport England definitions for these 'headings' are as follows:

- ◀ **Protect** - to protect the right opportunities in the right places.
- ◀ **Enhance** - to enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision.
- ◀ **Provide** - to provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations.
- ◀ **Overarching** - roughly works across all three of the above

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2.2.1: Overarching recommendations

Strategic objective	Action	Timescale	Responsibility
<p>Invest in both new and existing leisure facilities to ensure they meet the needs of East Herts' growing population, while also ensuring that all facilities operate in a sustainable and responsible way.</p> <p>Enhance / provide.</p>	<p>Prioritise essential maintenance across the remaining leisure estate to prevent further closures and maintain facility quality. Prioritise replacement of the roof at Hartham Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Ensure new developments are guided by this assessment and strategy to address demand by delivering new and/or enhanced provision. Utilise the toolkit provided in appendix one to understand contribution requirements for future housing growth linked provision which falls outside of the current District Plan.</p> <p>Work with developers to ensure delivery of Gilston Leisure Centre. Based on current population growth calculations, this should involve the development of an (at least) 6-court sports hall and a 6-lane swimming pool at Gilston.</p> <p>Improve the energy efficiency of all existing leisure centres in line with District Plan carbon-reduction commitments.</p>	Long	EHDC, Everyone Active, Gilston Area Developers.
<p>Strengthen partnerships with schools and community groups to secure long-term, high-quality community access.</p> <p>Protect.</p>	<p>Work with schools and Active Herts to improve facility quality and secure consistent community access to sports halls. This should include the introduction of CUAs for school sports halls, guaranteeing at least 50 weeks of community access per year, including new halls built by 2043. Support the reinstatement of Fanshawe Pool and Ward Freman Pool via collaboration with their respective school and community groups.</p>	Short	EHDC, Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, schools.

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Strategic objective	Action	Timescale	Responsibility
<p>Improve affordability, pay and play opportunities and dedicated spaces across all facility types.</p> <p>Enhance / provide</p>	<p>Expand low-cost and flexible pay-and-play options by reviewing concessions, pricing structures and targeted discounts with key partners.</p> <p>Secure more reliable daytime access to sports halls through strengthened agreements with existing providers and future projects such as Gilston Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Work with Badminton England and British Gymnastics to increase dedicated space and reduce waiting lists for high-demand club activity. These are priority sports with scope to broaden participation, support talent pathways and improve accessibility for the local club network.</p>	Medium	EHDC, Everyone Active, NGBs, Developers.
<p>Support programming and facility development that reflects the needs of an ageing population.</p> <p>Enhance / provide.</p>	<p>Expand active-ageing programmes by increasing daytime sessions, low-impact activities, accessible pricing and targeted health-referral pathways.</p> <p>Ensure all new facilities are designed with strong accessibility, social spaces and health-and-wellbeing functions built in.</p> <p>Use the district's community halls to deliver physical activity and GP-referral programmes in rural communities which have poorer access to public leisure provision.</p>	Long	EHDC, Parish/town councils, Everyone Active.

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Strategic objective	Action	Timescale	Responsibility
<p>Consider forming a cross-border strategy implementation group with NHDC, Stevenage BC and Broxbourne BC.</p> <p>Provide.</p>	<p>Establish a joint working group with neighbouring Hertfordshire local authorities focused on cross border issues in relation to the implementation of respective facility strategies.</p> <p>This should consider issues such as programming and pricing arrangements and combining forces to commission new and/or assessing comparative findings of existing FPM analysis. This is particularly prevalent with Stevenage BC, which is in the process of building a new leisure centre featuring a 10-lane pool, health and fitness gym and 6-court sports hall.</p> <p>The presence of the same leisure operator across North Herts, East Herts and Stevenage is an opportunity to jointly implement a consistent 'cross-boundary' leisure card-based process, a wider exercise referral programme and to collaborate with NGBs seeking to invest in the Hertfordshire area such as England Badminton.</p>	Long	EHDC, NHDC, SBC, BBC, Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership
<p>Planning</p> <p>Overarching</p>	<p>Endorse this strategy as an evidence-based document supporting the Local Plan and development management decisions.</p> <p>Use the recommendations in this Strategy to protect existing facilities which meet community needs and inform the need for proposals for new/enhanced provision. The use of the Sports Facility Calculator is advocated for calculating demand and contributions towards indoor sports facilities.</p>	Medium	EHDC, developers.
<p>Monitor and review</p> <p>Overarching</p>	<p>Complete a light touch annual strategy review and deliver a complete review within 5 years of adoption.</p> <p>Keep this strategy relevant and up to date.</p>	Medium	EHDC

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2.2.2: Site specific recommendations

Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency(s)	Timescale
Allenburys Sports and Social Club	Glaxosmithkline (GSK)	A 3-court sports which is rated below average. Use of the facility is currently limited to GSK employees.	Work with the club to consider options for community use during typically quieter periods, such as weekday daytimes – to increase the number of facilities available during these time periods	GSK/ EHDC	Short/medium
Avanti Grange High School	Avanti Schools Trust	A recently opened 4-court sports hall. It has significant court runoffs, attractive blue décor and good quality lighting.	Maintain hall quality and encourage the school to ensure that it remains available for 50+ weeks of the year.	Avanti Schools Trust	Long
Birchwood High School	Birchwood High School Academy Trust	The school recently refurbished its 4- court sports hall, which is rated above average quality. It accommodates futsal, basketball, badminton and operates close to capacity.	Maintain the facility at its current standard to ensure that it continues to cater for the sporting needs of authority residents.	Birchwood High School academy Trust	Long
Bishop 's Stortford Squash Club	Bishop Stortford Squash Club	Registered members club with six above average quality squash courts. It does not offer pay and play access.	Work with the club to scope whether it can offer pay and play access. This would provide a pay and play squash venue in Bishop Stortford.	Bishop Stortford Squash Club	Short/medium
Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford Educational Trust	Private boarding school which has a 4-court above average quality sports hall. Site does not offer community access apart from Marylebone Cricket Club, which uses the sports hall cricket nets.	Explore options to permit additional community use in the sports hall.	College/EHDC	Long
The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford High School Academy Trust	A 6-court hall that was being built at the time of site assessment and has since opened.	Ensure that the hall is available for up to 50+ weeks of the year.	The Academy Trust/EHDC	Short/medium
East Herts Gymnastics Club	East Herts Gymnastics Club	Dedicated gymnastics facility located to the north of Hertford.	Support the club, where possible, with any facility requirements.	East Herts Gymnastics Club	Long
Freman College	The Freman College (Academy Trust)	4-court (above average quality), 2-court and 1-court sports halls, all available for community use. The floor was recently upgraded to a vinyl surface. It accommodates Horizon Gymnastics in one of the smaller halls.	Maintain quality of site and keep programme of use under review to maximise usage and relevance to local residents.	The Freman College (Academy Trust)	Long

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency(s)	Timescale
Grange Paddocks LC	Everyone Active	A key strategic sport/leisure site in Bishop's Stortford which opened in 2021. It has an 8-lane 25m pool; rated good quality, a 130-station fitness facility; rated good quality and three studios: all rated good quality This site has taken on much of the displaced demand on its learn to swim programme caused by other pool closures. It is operating close to capacity.	Maintain venue quality and keep programme of use under review to maximise usage and relevance to local residents. Work with Everyone Active and other partners to increase numbers on the health referral programme and allocate provision accordingly.	Everyone Active/ EHDC	Long
Haileybury Sports Complex	Haileybury School	Below average quality 8-court sports hall. The worn flooring requires modernisation. Community use is restricted as the school prioritises boarders. It is available on a block booking basis. It has four above average quality squash courts, which are available on a pay and play basis.	Upgrade hall to a modern sprung floor surface. Work with the school to increase its sports hall community hours of use. Ensure that squash courts remain pay and play accessible as this is currently the sole pay and play squash venue in the district.	Haileybury Sports Complex/EHDC	Short Medium/long Short
Hartham Leisure Centre	Everyone Active	33m indoor pool (plus two learner pools), 120-station fitness facility, group studio, Pilates reformer studio and soft play. Pool and fitness facilities are above average quality. Pay and play access is available. Investment in the pool in 2023 included a boom to create a 25 m pool, with diving blocks. However, the roof over the pool needs to be replaced.	Allocate funding to replace the pool hall roof to ensure the pool remains open. Due to the currently low take-up levels for the health referral programme, work with Everyone Active and other partners to increase numbers and allocate provision in the centre accordingly.	EHDC/Everyone Active	Short
Heath Mount School	Heath Mount School Trust Limited	A below average quality 4-court sports hall, which is 'tired' with a worn wooden floor. Décor is old fashioned and lines need to be remarked. The School has plans to cover the current lido, extend it to a 25m pool and create ancillary provision to house community groups and clubs. It has applied for planning permission to complete this.	Invest in upgrading the sports hall, to include a modern sprung surface and new court lines. Support the School to develop pool provision which could benefit the wider community, particularly in the east of the district.	Heath Mount School Trust Limited	Short/medium

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency(s)	Timescale
Hertford Gymnastics Academy	Hertford Gymnastics Academy	A dedicated gymnastics facility. The club is keen to install a good quality air handling unit, as the site does gets warm in the summer months. A new roof would also be required as part of the upgrade.	Work with British Gymnastics (BG) and the club to identify funding options to upgrade the roof and heating system. This could potentially come from BG's Club Capital Programme.	Hertford Gymnastics Academy	Long
The Herts and Essex Sports Centre	Herts & Essex Multi-Academy Trust	Popular 4-court sports hall rated good quality. Site operates at 90% capacity, and supports handball, badminton, basketball and volleyball.	Maintain facility quality and consider options for extending community use hours.	Herts & Essex Multi-Academy Trust	Medium/long
Hertfordshire Gymnastics Club	Hertfordshire Gymnastics Club	A dedicated gymnastics facility at Rye House Stadium in Hoddesdon.	Support the club, where possible, with any facility requirements.	Hertfordshire Gymnastics Club	Long
Hockerill Anglo-European College	Hockerill Anglo-European College Ltd	A good quality 4-court sports hall, opened 2019, which is supplemented by a 1-court hall. Neither is available for community use as they are used during evenings and weekends by boarders.	Consider options for some community use when less access is required by the school, such as during the summer months.	Hockerill Anglo-European College Ltd	Short/medium
Legends Tennis Centre	Legends Tennis Centre	Four above average quality acrylic surface tennis courts. It is the only indoor tennis facility in East Herts and as such is a key strategic site. It provides pay and play use on evenings and weekends.	Ensure that court quality remains good enough to attract usage. The sinking fund in place, should be used to do this when necessary.	LTC	Long
Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	Rivers Multi Academy Trust	An above average quality 4-court sports hall with spare capacity to host additional bookings and a 40-station health and fitness gym now managed by Vision Fitness, which provides community use.	Support school attempts to market the facility and build connections with clubs in the local community.	Leventhorpe Leisure Centre	Short
Presdales School	Presdales School Academy Trust	4-court sports hall is rated above average quality. The site operates at 70% capacity catering for football, basketball and badminton. Work to repair a leak in the sports hall roof is underway.	Ensure the sports hall stays at its present above average quality standard.	Presdales School Academy Trust	Short
Richard Hale School	Richard Hale School Academy Trust	Good quality rated sport hall which opened in 2021. Site operates at capacity and is heavily used by Hertford & District Netball League. It can only offer 12 hours of community use per week due to planning restrictions.	Collaborate with the school and EHDC's planning colleagues to explore options for extending community use hours.	Richard Hale School Academy Trust	Short

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency(s)	Timescale
Saint Mary's Catholic School	St Mary's Catholic High School Academy Trust	A below average 4-court sports hall in need of investment in the floor. It is only available for hire on Saturday mornings and is used by Stortford Archery Club which has a keyholder agreement.	Consider options for keyholder arrangements with other local clubs to accommodate more community use. Income generated from this should be invested in sports hall floor upgrade.	Saint Mary's Catholic School	Medium
St Edmunds College & Prep School	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Private day and boarding school which has a 3-court sports hall, which is unavailable for community use.	Explore options to implement a CUA with the school.	St Edmunds College & Prep School/EHDC	Short
Simon Balle School	The Laurel Education Trust	Site with a 4-lane x 25m swimming pool, a 1-court sports hall, a 4-court sports hall, and a studio. All are community available. The 4-court sports hall has recently opened as a new facility as part of Elm Sports Centre. The swimming pool is rated below average; surrounds are in need of modernisation; however, its plant equipment was upgraded in 2024. The pool is available on the basis of block bookings.	Invest in the swimming pool surrounds, including new tiles and tank upgrade. Ensure a CUA is in place to secure access to the hall for local clubs and groups.	The Laurel Education Trust/EHDC	Medium/long
Stortford Gymnastics Club	Stortford Gymnastics Club	Dedicated gymnastics facility which reports a waiting list of 500. It is currently seeking a larger premises to address the waiting list.	Work with the club to identify a larger premises to accommodate its large waiting list.	Stortford Gymnastics Club/BG/EHDC	Short/medium
The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Registered members club with two above average squash courts. It also supports a number of outdoor sports, including cricket.	Explore the option for the site to offer pay and play access to its squash courts.	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Short/medium
The Chauncy School	School Hire	A 4-court above average quality sports hall, which operates at 60% and supports futsal, netball, basketball, indoor cricket. There is also a swimming pool (5 lanes x 20m), previously known as Fanshawe Pool, which was closed in 2024 reportedly due to the loss of Government funding and operational costs. The school has re-opened the swimming pool in 2026 for school and club use – a move supported by Ware Swimming Club.	Work with the school and Swim England to develop a sustainable business model to ensure the pool remains open. Swim England can provide business support. Explore opportunities to open the pool up for further community use (such as pay and play).	The Chauncy School/ Swim England / Ware Swimming Club	Short

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency(s)	Timescale
Valdez Gymnastics Club	Valdez Gymnastics Club	Dedicated gymnastics facility in Bishop's Stortford.	Support the club, where possible, with any facility requirements.	Valdez Gymnastics Club	Long
Ward Freman Pool	Ward Freman Community Pool Group	A 250m ² pool (5 lanes, 25m in length) with plans to re-opened following closure in 2024. Ward Freman Community Pool Group, who now have ownership and management of the pool, have raised funds to carry out the work required to bring the pool back into use. The pool is expected to open in 2026 and have both club and general public access.	Collaborate with Swim England, who can provide business support, to ensure that the pool provides as much community accessibility as possible (including pay and play opportunities) whilst meeting the needs of club and learn to swim groups.	Ward Freman Community Pool Group / Swim England	Short
Ware Drill Hall	Ware Drill Hall Association	The below average 4-court sports hall has an old wooden floor with a concrete base. It was refinished and relined in 2023. It operates at 70% capacity and is predominantly used for badminton and karate. It is one of two venues with sports hall space to provide daytime access.	Invest in upgrading the sports hall floor with modern surface, making it more attractive for more users.	Ware Drill Hall Association	Short/medium
Wodson Park Sports Centre	Wodson Park Trust	Trust managed sports centre which has two 6-court sports halls. One is above average and the other is below average in quality. It is one of two venues with sports hall space to provide daytime access. It has a 45-station health and fitness suite, which is above average in quality, accessible via registered membership.	Invest in upgrading the below average quality sports hall by improving the décor and installing a new heating system.	Wodson Park Trust	Short/medium
Commercial fitness gyms	Commercial / various	The district's commercially operated health and fitness facilities contribute to the diverse offer of facilities available.	Monitor use/gauge the extent to which they complement other activity in EHDC.	Commercial operators	On-going
Community and village halls	Various	There are 57 community facilities in the district which support a variety of activities.	Ensure that smaller halls located in more rural areas can provide suitable activities and create opportunities for GP referral outreach. Ensure new development supports the provision and enhancement of community halls, as appropriate.	Community centre management/EHDC	On-going

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency(s)	Timescale
Gilston Leisure Centre	Places for Leisure	Development of a new public Leisure Centre as part of the Gilston development. (GA1)	Work with the provider and Gilston Area developers to design and deliver the new Leisure Centre.	Places for Leisure Developers EHDC	Short/ medium
New school sports halls	Schools	Four new 4-court sports halls, with community use, at new schools on strategic site allocations: North and east of Ware (WARE2), Birchall Suburb (WGC1) and Gilston (GA1)		Developers Schools NGBs	Short/medium

PART 3: MONITORING AND REVIEW

This strategy identifies and recommends the investment and actions required to deliver and maintain a high-quality built facilities infrastructure for EHDC for the period up until 2043.

It is important that it is (and is treated as) a live document and is used in a practical manner to prioritise investment, develop key work programmes and partnerships, guide planning gain investment and ensure that built sports facilities are a vital component contributing to the quality of life of East Herts residents.

Strategy production is just the start of the process and there is a requirement for all partners to engage in ongoing dialogue and review to ensure that a considered perspective and approach is maintained throughout the strategy period.

It will be important for EHDC and its partners to develop the 3–5-year action plan based around the strategy and for this to be annually monitored and reviewed. This should not only evaluate progress made against the action plan but should identify actual/potential changes in supply and demand in the authority. This is on the basis that the strategy is as much about how facilities are used as it is about ensuring that local infrastructure is of a good quality.

The annual review process should include:

- ◀ A review of progress in respect of implementation of action plan recommendations; taking account of any changes required to the priority of each action (e.g. the priority of some may increase/reduce following implementation of others).
- ◀ Lessons learnt throughout the period.
- ◀ New facilities coming on stream (or being made newly available to the community) which need to be taken into account.
- ◀ Any specific changes in the use of key district sites (e.g., sport specific specialisms of sites, changes in availability, etc.).
- ◀ Any specific changes in demand at/for particular facilities and/or clubs in the area (e.g., reduction or increase in club numbers, new housing growth).
- ◀ New formats of traditional sports that may need to be considered.
- ◀ Any other new or emerging issues and opportunities.

The outcome of the 3–5-year review will be to develop a new annual and medium-term action plan for indoor and built sports facilities across the authority.

APPENDIX 1: PLANNING GAIN CONTRIBUTION TOOLKIT

Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to ensure that planning gain contribution sought from an individual development is based on a tailored approach, using the robust evidence bases provided as part of the East Herts Needs Assessment report and Strategy and Action Plan. This will help to clearly justify the needs arising from the development and how they are to be met.

It provides a step-by-step guide which should be used by those stakeholders which are directly involved in negotiating developer contributions either local authority case officers or housing developers/planning consultants acting on their behalf.

The following processes should be followed in order to inform the potential additional demand that a new housing development generates. This sets out the process for leisure facilities.

There is also a checklist summary for the process which should be completed as evidence of working through each step. In terms of social sustainability, a series of questions to explore are provided with possible options to consider.

For all developments (regardless of size) developer contributions should be sought towards social, sport and open space facilities. Where a development may be considered too small to provide a contribution, consideration should be given to where a number of small developments may have a cumulative impact on the community infrastructure and refer to local planning policy.

In instances where a development may fall within two or more local authorities it is recommended that the demand from the more urban area or locally reflective area are applied in calculating the requirements. This is in order to reflect the on the ground use of provision in the context of its setting. If provision is to be provided on the outskirts of an urban settlement and therefore is to act as an extension of that settlement, it is justifiable to utilise the demand/standards most appropriate.

The suite of evidence documents which should be used to assess demand includes:

- ◀ East Herts – Sports Strategy Needs Assessment Report
- ◀ East Herts – Sports Strategy Report

Process

Step 1	Determine the key indoor sports facility requirement resulting from the development	Navigation
	<p>The key tools to assess this are provided within Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator which is accessed via the Active Places Power website.</p> <p>https://www.activeplacespower.com/</p> <p>This will enable you to determine the demand for sports halls, swimming pools and indoor bowls facilities that the new population from a development generates.</p>	<p>Access to the calculator is restricted and requires a username and password to be set up.</p>

The East Herts strategy provides an estimate of future demand for key indoor sports facilities based on population forecasts as a result of key housing growth areas. This key

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demand is translated into units of badminton courts, swimming pool lanes and indoor bowls rinks.

As the exact number of units are identified from specific housing developments then the Council will need to apply the household occupancy rate to this to determine the total population.

Number of dwellings x household occupancy rate² = associated population

This is the population that is applied within the Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) to determine the additional provision that is required to meet the additional demand.

The SFC is a modelling tool designed to assist local planning authorities to quantify how much additional demand is generated by increasing populations and new housing areas. The model has no spatial qualities or dimension and can only be used to estimate the facility needs for whole area populations. The model makes no reference to:

- ◀ Location of existing facilities compared to demand.
- ◀ Capacity and availability of facilities (i.e. opening hours, how well they are used).
- ◀ Cross boundary movements of demand.
- ◀ Travel networks and topography.
- ◀ The attractiveness of the existing facility network.

The SFC uses information that Sport England has gathered on who uses facilities and applies this to the population profile of the local area. This ensures that the calculations take on board the population profile (e.g. age, gender, etc) of the local area.

The SFC then turns this estimation of demand (visits per week) into the equivalent amount of facility which is needed to meet these visits. For swimming pools, it uses 25m lane equivalents and for sports halls it uses the number of badminton courts.

Registration is required to access Active Places Power (APP) and therefore the SFC. If you are not already registered, you can register for free via the link under the login button on the APP homepage.

Please note the SFC is one tool and should not be used on its own to determine the need for sports facilities from a single development.

Step 2	Determine the other indoor sports and community facilities required as a result of the development	Navigation
	Use the Indoor Built Facilities Strategy to identify level of need that may be generated from new development(s) for indoor sporting provision not included within the SFC. This should also extend to community centre facilities within the area.	Indoor and built facilities strategy

There is no clear calculation of the requirements for other indoor sports provision and community centre facilities (not covered by SFC) as a result of a new housing development. In this instance, the Leisure Facilities Strategy should be used to determine the need for additional facilities within any specific area within the Authority. This should take into account the requirement for other dedicated sports facilities if the Strategy identifies this.

² National occupancy rate of 2.3 persons per household is used

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The Needs Assessment (in specific sections) identifies need for other provision. This results from consultation with specific clubs and organisations, sports facility managers and NGBs. It also takes account of the size, scale, and quality of existing provision. Facilities identified within the Needs Assessment are determined by the scope of the study which the Council commissions.

This will also be informed by how busy existing facilities are. As an example, if an existing leisure centre (adjacent to the new housing development) is fully programmed with high demand for space, it is unrealistic to expect this facility to accommodate the demand generated from the new development. Therefore, additional provision will be required.

Step 3	Demonstrate an understanding of what else the development generates demand for	Navigation
	Consideration also needs to be given to the other infrastructure that will be generated as a result of the development. As an example, this could include primary and secondary schools, health centres, library, etc. The key focus here is to determine where there may be duplication of facilities and where there may be opportunities for shared provision.	Consultation with other council services, partners and developers

In reality, it will take a significantly large development to generate the requirement for a new stand-alone wet and dry leisure centre. Therefore, it is important to identify where other provision may be required as a result of the development in order to determine if this could replace or supplement the need to provide sports facilities or community facilities.

A key example of this is the requirement for primary and secondary school provision as a result of the development. A primary school will require a multi-purpose indoor hall, playground and playing field space to deliver its national curriculum requirements for PE. A secondary school will require at least a three-court sports hall and playing field space in order to deliver its national curriculum requirements for PE. Where possible opportunities to influence the design of secondary school sports hall to 4-court specification should be recommended.

Therefore, further investigation should be undertaken to identify if there is an opportunity to ensure that community use of school sports facilities can be guaranteed, thus minimising potential duplication.

In this instance the 'contribution' associated with the increased demand for sports facilities could be used to enhance the school provision to ensure it was appropriate for community use (e.g., extend fitness facilities, community access arrangements, etc.).

In relation to other service (e.g. library, health centre, etc) there is a need to consider how these could be co-located with alongside sports and community facilities, thus creating a community hub. This is a key driver for sports facilities in attracting users that might not otherwise use these types of facilities.

The financial, social, and sporting benefits which can be achieved through development of strategic sites (also known as hub sites) are significant. Sport England provides further guidance on the development of community sports hubs at:

<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>

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Step 4	Consider if there are existing facilities within close proximity that could be enhanced or extended to accommodate increased demand.	Navigation
	Further investigation is required to determine if there is an existing facility that is close enough to the development site which, if extended /refurbished / remodelled could accommodate the increased demand generated from the new development.	Facility mapping within the indoor and built facilities assessment report

Detailed analysis of facilities within the vicinity of the new development should be undertaken to assess the suitability of these facilities to accommodate the increased demand generated from the development. As an example, the following information should be pulled together in order to determine if this is an appropriate solution to accommodate the increased demand:

- ◀ Is the facility close enough to the development to accommodate the increased demand?
- ◀ The quality of the facility.....does it need investment?
- ◀ Is there capacity to accommodate increased demand.....how well used is the facility?
- ◀ Are there any restrictions in access to the facility?
- ◀ Are there plans in place to maintain or refurbish the facility?
- ◀ What type of activities are accommodated within the facility?
- ◀ Are the current management arrangements appropriate to accommodate changes or increased demand at the facility?
- ◀ Are there opportunities to co-locate other services alongside or within the facility?

In addition to the above, it will also be important to assess the potential impact of the additional demand on clubs and organisations within the vicinity. As an example, some clubs and organisations may already be at capacity; therefore, there may be no capacity to accommodate increased demand within the existing infrastructure.

Step 5	Consider the design principles for new provision	Navigation
	The exact nature and location of provision associated with either onsite or off-site developments should be fully determined in partnership with leisure and community specialists (e.g. NGBs, local authority, advisers, etc.) and community groups themselves.	Sport England design and cost guidance

It is important to ensure that the design of new or extended facilities is in line with the needs of local clubs and organisations as well as relevant design guidance. It will be important that any design reflects best practice design guidance taking into account all the key considerations which will be relevant to each facility. As an example, this will include aspects such as health and safety, safeguarding, storage, sport specific design features, etc.).

Where an extension or refurbishment of an existing facility takes place, it will be important to ensure that the local community is involved in that design. It will also be important to ensure that continuity of provision is also considered as clubs and organisations will need alternative accommodation during the construction period associated with a refurbishment or extension. This is important in ensuring these organisations continue to exist in the longer term.

Development of community hubs is a key focus for many organisations as the benefits derived from facility co-location is often greater than from stand-alone facilities. There is, thus, a need for developers and stakeholders to consider how different facilities may 'fit' together.

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This could, for example, include the following facilities which may be required as part of a development:

- ◀ Indoor and outdoor sports facilities.
- ◀ Primary and secondary schools.
- ◀ Health centres and GP surgeries.
- ◀ Library.
- ◀ Early years provision.
- ◀ Community centre.
- ◀ Children's play areas.
- ◀ Allotments and community growing areas.
- ◀ Local retail centres.

The master plan for new developments need to consider the strategic location of facilities and the clustering and co-location of facilities in order to maximise the benefit for the local community.

There is also a need to ensure that the location of outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities are appropriately located in the context of indoor sports provision (if also being provided onsite) to ensure a cohesive approach to the whole sporting offer.

Step 6	Strategic pooling of financial contributions to deliver new provision	Navigation
	Consideration needs to be given to the multiple developments across the local authority or a combination of local authorities in order to determine if the combined increased demand is sufficient to warrant a contribution to a strategic leisure development.	Wider housing growth strategies.

If the authority considers each housing growth area in isolation, then it is unlikely that there will be sufficient demand generated from a single development to warrant a new stand-alone leisure provision, especially swimming pools.

As such the Council needs to consider how the cluster of housing developments within the local authority boundary, or relevant cross border area should make a contribution to strategic sport and leisure facilities. As discussed previously, this may be to provide new provision or to enhance existing in order that it can accommodate increased demand.

This in turn requires the Council and developer to consider the wider housing growth within the area which may also include that within a neighbouring authority. Where the combined increased demand generates the requirement for a strategic facility this should be pooled via developer contributions to a strategic development. However, it should be noted that the contribution may go towards a facility which is outside of the local authority boundary but reflects how people will live their lives within that specific development.

In order to calculate the contribution from each housing development into a strategic leisure facility fund the Council should use the Sport England Sports Facilities Calculator. Using the population growth and process identified from stage 1 this will provide a basis for negotiation with developers on the contribution from each development.

[Active Places Power](#)
[Sport England Design and cost guidance](#)

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Checklist summary

Prompt	Evidence	Navigation
Step 1: Determine the indoor sports facility requirement resulting from the development	-	Active Places Power
Step 2: Determine the other indoor sports and community facilities are required as a result of the development	-	Leisure and sport strategies
Step 3: Demonstrate an understanding of what else the development generates demand for	-	Consultation with other council services, partners, and developers)
Step 4: Consider if there are existing facilities within close proximity that could be enhanced or extended to accommodate increased demand.	-	Facility mapping within the sports facilities assessment report
Step 5: Consider the design principles for new provision	-	Consultation Sport England Design and cost guidance
Step 6: Strategic pooling of financial contributions to deliver new provision	-	Active Places Power Sport England Design and cost guidance

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APPENDIX 2: INDICATIVE COSTINGS

Indicative costs

The indicative costs of implementing key elements of the action plan are detailed below. Further details can be found on the Sport England website:

[Sport England facility cost guidance](#)

The costs outlined below are for the development of community sports facilities. These rounded costs are based on schemes most recently funded through the Lottery (and therefore based on economies of scale), updated to reflect current forecast price indices provided by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS), prepared by the Technical Team Lead of Sport England.

Facility capital costs

Facility capital costs are calculated using estimates of what it typically costs to build modern sports facilities, including fees and external work, naturally taking into account varying conditions, inflation and regional adjustments.

Costs are updated regularly in conjunction with information provided by the BCIS (Building Cost Information Service) and other quantity surveyors.

The document is often referred to as the *planning kitbag* costs as the figures are often used by planners and developers when reviewing potential planning contributions to site developments.

Facility type/details	Area (m2)	Capital cost (£)
Affordable sports halls		
1 Court (18m x 10m)	382	905,000
2 Court (18m x 17m)	515	1,030,000
4 Court (34.5m x 20m)	1,532	3,005,000
5 Court (40.6m x 21.35m)	1,722	3,260,000
6 Court (34.5m x 27m)	1,773	3,300,000
8 Court (40m x 34.5m)	2,240	4,125,000
10 Court (40.6m x 42.7m)	2,725	4,960,000
12 Court (60m x 34.5m)	3,064	5,465,000
Affordable community swimming pools		
25m Pool 4 Lane (25m x 8.5m)	1,084	4,685,000
25m Pool 5 Lane (25m x 10.5m)	1,344	5,670,000
25m Pool 6 Lane (25m x 12.5m)	1,543	6,155,000
25m Pool 6 Lane (25m x 12.5) plus secondary pool (13m x 7m)	1,850	7,335,000
25m Pool 8 Lane (25m x 17m)	1,878	7,420,000
25m Pool 8 Lane (25m x 17m) plus secondary pool (17m x 7m)	2,226	8,515,000
Affordable sports centres with community 25m pool		
4 lane pool, 4 court hall, 50 station health/fitness gym plus studio	2,879	10,060,000
6 lane pool, 4 court hall, 100 station health/fitness gym & 2 studios	3,553	11,805,000
6 lane pool plus learner pool, 4 court hall, 100 station health/fitness gym plus 2 studios	3,906	13,000,000

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Facility type/details	Area (m2)	Capital cost (£)
8 lane pool plus learner pool, 5 court hall, 100 station health/fitness gym plus 2 studios	4,509	14,400,000
Indoor bowls centre		
6 Rink (excludes club/function room)	1,914	2,730,000
8 Rink (includes club/function room)	2,500	3,570,000
Indoor tennis centre		
3 court	2,138	3,085,000
Extra Court	-	1,005,000

NB – The costs for:

- ✦ Affordable sports halls.
- ✦ Affordable community swimming pools.
- ✦ Affordable sports centres with community 25m pool options.
- ✦ Affordable sports centres with 50m pool options.
- ✦ Indoor bowls centre
- ✦ Indoor tennis centre
- ✦ Athletics track
- ✦ Multi use games area
- ✦ Tennis courts
- ✦ Natural turf surfaces

Align with the costs included within Sport England publications of the same name updated to 3Q2025. The reader is referred to these documents and their appendices for further information on sizes and general arrangement layouts.

The costs for other facilities include:

- ✦ External works (car parks, roads, paths, services connections etc) are included at an average cost of 12% in addition to the costs of the works.
- ✦ 12 months maintenance/grow in costs for grass pitches.
- ✦ Allowance for fees inclusive of PM, SI, planning, and associated fees.

The costs exclude the following:

- ✦ Project specific details/information, including poor ground conditions, difficult access, long service connections.
- ✦ Natural turf pitches exclude the costs for site remodelling, pump and sump systems and SUDS attenuation.
- ✦ Inflation beyond 3Q2024.
- ✦ VAT.
- ✦ Land acquisition costs.
- ✦ Regional cost variations in materials and labour.

Lifecycle costs

Lifecycle costs are how much it costs to keep a facility open and fit-for-purpose during its lifetime.

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It includes costs for major replacement and planned preventative maintenance (PPM) day-to-day repairs. The costs are expressed as a percentage of the capital cost.

It should not be underestimated the importance of regular maintenance and the expense in maintaining a facility throughout its life.

The table below provides typical annual allowances expressed as a percentage of the overall estimated total project cost per annum based on a 25-year cost model.

Facility type/details	Sinking fund (%)	Maintenance (%)
Multi use sports hall		
Good quality sports hall – irrespective of size	0.7	0.5
Affordable community swimming pools		
Good quality community swimming pool, irrespective of size	0.4	1.1

Sinking fund

Major replacement costs. Typical items for consideration include:

- ◀ Scheduled replacement of major systems and components, i.e. upgrades/replacement of mechanical and electrical equipment (HVAC, tanks, filtration/chlorination/dosing plant, CCTV and the like). Re-configuration of wet areas, replacement of sports flooring, reception refurbishment.
- ◀ Scheduled refurbishment and adaptations, including replacement of sports specific equipment/netting. Re-sealing / re-lining of sports flooring, replacing carpets and signage, replacement of external seating and fittings.
- ◀ Cyclical redecoration.

Maintenance

Day to day repairs and planned preventative maintenance (PPM). PPM includes the costs for servicing and maintaining mechanical and electrical plant and systems in accordance with recommended standards/frequencies and statutory/mandatory inspections (i.e. legionella, lift and boiler insurance inspections etc). Day to day repairs include:

External walls

Repairs to external walls, cladding, glazed screens, external doors and windows. Roofs repairs to roofs, roof lights and the like, together with all associated work such as roof flashings, DPCs, gutters and downpipes.

Other items repairs to ducts, internal doors and frames and the like. Fittings and fixtures repairs to fitted cupboards, seating, notice boards, shelving, worktops and the like. Excludes loose furniture such as chairs, curtains/blinds etc.

Other items

Repairs to ducts, internal doors, and frames and the like.

Fittings and fixtures

Repairs to fitted cupboards, seating, notice boards, shelving, worktops and the like. Excludes loose furniture such as chairs, curtains/blinds etc.

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Internal finishes

Repairs to internal floor, wall and ceiling finishes.

Plumbing and internal drainage

Repairs and PPM to plumbing and internal drainage including work to; rising mains, storage tanks and cisterns; hot and cold-water services; sanitary ware; waste, soil, overflow, and vent pipes; internal manholes, rodding eyes, and access covers.

Heating and ventilation

Repairs and PPM to fuel tanks, boilers, flues, plant, pump, motors, filters, switches, expansion tanks, pipework up to and including calorifiers, radiators, ducts, valves, fans and heating and other HVAC equipment.

Power and lighting

Repairs and PPM to electrical switch gear, fuse boxes, busbars, casings, wiring and conduit to lighting and power supply.

Other M&E services

Repairs and PPM to other M&E services which are part of the building, such as filtration/ chlorination/dosing plant, fire alarm and bell systems, emergency lighting, clock systems, PA systems, firefighting equipment, flood lighting and lighting conductors.

External Works

General Grounds Maintenance, repairs to car parks and external paving.

Exclusions:

Operation, occupancy, end of life costs, fees, and VAT are excluded from the allowances. The definition of these are provided below:

Operation costs: The cost of operating the facility rather than its occupancy excluding maintenance costs. Includes utility costs, administrative costs, overheads, and taxes etc.

Occupancy cost: User support costs relating to the occupation of the facility e.g. security.

End of life: national costs payable and credits accruing after 25 years. Includes disposal inspection and reinstatement to meet potential contractual requirements.