

# BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APRIL 2024

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP) was commissioned to develop a Built Facilities Strategy (BFS) and to update its existing Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for Blaby District Council (BDC).

Both studies are for the period 2024 – 2041 in line with the Blaby District Local Plan and have been produced in accordance with Sport England (SE) guidance and are SE approved.

Each study provides BDC with a comprehensive assessment of the current level of facilities available and future supply and demand needs for built facilities, playing pitches and outdoor sport provision for over the next 15 years. It delivers a clear evidence base and recommendations to inform future development and/or consolidation of facilities, partnership development opportunities and funding applications.

### How the studies will be used

Both studies provide the Council with an evidence base to support clubs to develop. They will do this by enabling Council offers to appropriately comment on planning applications, to secure developer contributions, secure external funding opportunities and ensure meeting future demand is considered by working to deliver the action plans.

These documents are also required for the authority to gain access to the Sport England facility and playing pitch calculators which are used when calculating developer contributions.

### Strategic input and scope of work

#### PPS

The PPS has been updated by KKP with strategic support provided by the following:

- ◀ Active Together (Active Partnership)
- ◀ Bowls England
- ◀ England & Wales Cricket Board
- ◀ England Golf
- ◀ England Hockey
- ◀ England Netball
- ◀ Football Foundation
- ◀ Lawn Tennis Association
- ◀ Leicestershire Bowls Association
- ◀ Leicestershire County FA
- ◀ Leicestershire Cricket
- ◀ Rugby Football Union

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The PPS includes the following sports/facility types:

- ◀ Bowling greens
- ◀ Cricket pitches
- ◀ Football pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Golf facilities
- ◀ Hockey pitches (sand/water based AGPs)
- ◀ Rugby union pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Tennis and netball courts

## Built Facilities

The BFS was created with strategic support provided by the following:

- ◀ Sport England
- ◀ Active Together (Active Partnership)
- ◀ British Gymnastics
- ◀ Swim England
- ◀ Badminton England
- ◀ English Indoor Bowling Association
- ◀ Basketball England

The BFS includes the following sports/facility types:

- ◀ Archery
- ◀ Athletics
- ◀ Gymnastics facilities
- ◀ Health and fitness (gyms) and studios
- ◀ Indoor bowls
- ◀ Indoor tennis
- ◀ Sports halls
- ◀ Squash courts
- ◀ Swimming pools

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## **BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY - GENERAL FINDINGS**

Blaby District Council recognises the importance of its leisure facility stock to physical activity, health and wellbeing, and is committed to its retention via the presumption (in planning policy) against any net loss of active sport and leisure facilities. There is also recognition that the Council must operate within a climate of financial constraints (increasingly so following the Pandemic, and the on-going cost of living increases).

Sustaining and improving the general health of the local population will become increasingly relevant. It will be important to ensure that the proportion of the population which is currently active remains so and that more of those who are currently inactive become active. Indoor and built facilities, and programmes of activity therein, need to be capable of adapting to changing demand and need associated with demographic change.

The principal opportunity/challenge for BDC is to ensure that its stock of facilities continues to be accessible, fit for the future and viable. As noted in the needs assessment, there will be a continuous rise in the number/proportion of persons aged 65+ and a rise in the number of 35-44 year-olds over the strategy period. There is a need to balance catering for existing need while ensuring that the growth of new activities reflects the preferences of a more diverse population. One example being how an increasingly ageing population may choose to use its leisure time and the impact on demand for different activities that this may engender.

Apart from this, in general, existing stock (and provision in neighbouring areas) is meeting current resident demand. There is a need to maintain/improve quality and ensure that facilities remain community accessible, good quality and attractive. There is also a specific need to plan for the long-term replacement of Enderby Leisure Centre.

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## BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY VISION AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Blaby District's vision for sport and leisure provision in the area for the period 2023 - 2041 reflects the clear requirement to ensure that facilities are fit for purpose (e.g., modern, welcoming, clean, attractive, flexible, enable a wide programme, ability to offer a good quality learn to swim programme and cost-effective to operate). The proposed vision is:

*“To create and maintain high quality, sustainable leisure/sports facilities which meet community need, increase participation, help tackle health and age-related issues and provide accessible, inclusive activities for Blaby District residents as part of an active lifestyle”.*

### BFS General strategic objectives

#### Short term (1-2 years)

- ◀ Develop a system to, as early as possible, identify and tackle investment, maintenance, and refurbishment requirements to protect and improve the district's existing sports facilities.
- ◀ Reduce sports facility energy consumption and meet carbon reduction targets - in line with BDC commitments. Existing facilities should be adapted to ensure that they are as energy efficient as possible and any new developments should, as a priority consider where and how to enable reductions in energy use/costs and carbon emissions.
- ◀ Work with schools to maintain and where necessary improve the quality of their sports hall facilities.
- ◀ Ensure that Blaby District residents, especially communities which face specific barriers to participation (e.g., people living in rural areas and those with specific health needs) can access sport and physical activity provision.
- ◀ Ensure that affordable pay and play/casual participation opportunity is available and accessible in the Authority.
- ◀ Explore options to increase facility capacity at Huncote Leisure Centre, in particular during the daytime. This may incorporate re-purposing the four traditional squash courts, but England Squash should be consulted prior to making any such decision.
- ◀ Support gymnastics club growth to reduce latent demand.

#### Medium term (3-5 years)

- ◀ Look to increase the volume of health and fitness provision within the authority, particularly in areas of new housing development. As a key component of this invest in expanding and/or improving fitness and studio provision available at Enderby Leisure Centre - to enable it to continue to compete commercially.
- ◀ Given the increases in the number of people aged 35-44 and over 65, consider options to support providers to increase the volume of activity and participation opportunity for people in these age groups.
- ◀ Improve the quality of the air hall at Leicester Forest East Tennis Club. Given its age, a replacement may be required.
- ◀ Invest in and install appropriate energy-efficient products including heating, ventilation, fittings, controls, sensors, heat pumps and recovery systems.

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## Longer term (5-10 years)

- ◀ Ensure that a plan is in place to for the long-term future of Enderby Leisure Centre.
- ◀ Take opportunities to support other developments (via planning, developer contributions and officer expertise) geared to improving sport and physical provision and activity in the wider community.
- ◀ Work with local sports clubs to ensure that facilities and workforce development programmes meet the needs of all clubs and residents.
- ◀ Drive increases in participation (challenging themselves to innovate) via delivery of high quality, varied activity programmes.

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## BUILT FACILITY STRATEGY FINDINGS BY FACILITY TYPE

The key findings from the Needs assessment report of Built Sports Facilities Strategy across Blaby District are summarised below on a facility type basis:

### Sports halls supply and demand summary

- There are 15 sports halls at 12 sites (a total of 31 badminton courts) in Blaby District. Six have 3+ court halls (22 courts). In quality terms, three are rated above average quality (Brockington College, Enderby Leisure Centre and Huncote Leisure Centre), two (Countesthorpe Community College and The Winstanley School) are below average and one (Leicestershire Constabulary Police HQ) was unassessed because it is not available to the community. Most sports halls have benefitted from some form of investment/refurbishment during the last 20 years.
- In the BDC area, 44,438 residents (46.2% of the total population) live within one mile of a sports hall. There are no people living in areas of higher deprivation. The whole Blaby District's population lives within 20 minutes' drive time of a sports hall.
- 11.4% of the population do not have access to a car. This means that 4,867 people in Blaby District's population are reliant on public transport or walking to get to a sports hall. This can (and often does) add to the cost of participation.
- There are 26 sports halls located within two miles of the Authority boundary. Three of these are of significant size (8-courts) and four are 6-courts in size. All are considered likely to be attracting residents from the north and west of the District. For some residents their closest facility may be located in a neighbouring authority.
- There is some capacity at existing facilities (within the Authority) to accommodate an increase in population and strategic housing. All (apart from the venue at the Leicestershire Constabulary Police HQ) offer good levels of community availability.
- Most sports halls in the Authority are owned and managed in house by the respective education institution. BDC's influence on overall sports hall programming, pricing and management is limited by the fact that it only owns Huncote and Enderby leisure centres.
- Daytime availability is limited due to the constraints on education sites. Enderby Leisure Centre is the only sports hall publicly available during the day. Huncote Leisure Centre could be available however, it is reported that, at present, it is not currently viable. Consultation with operator, Everyone Active suggests that that it has aspirations to increase the extent to which it is able to cater for daytime demand. This will, however, necessitate changes to its current facility mix.
- There is capacity at existing facilities to accommodate additional demand generated via increased participation and/or a population increase. Investment is, thus, required to improve the quality and capacity of existing stock prior to considering development of a new sports hall.
- Overall, while the Authority has sufficient sports hall courts available and accessible to meet current demand, there is a need to maintain the quality of its above-average sites and invest in the below average sports halls to ensure that they meet modern user expectations.

### Swimming pools supply and demand summary

- There are 12 swimming pools at eight sites of varying size – they include five main/general pools, five learner/teaching pools and two lidos.
- The five main pools are located in the more densely populated areas in the centre and north of the authority with no pool in the largely rural, south. The largest venue is Enderby Leisure Centre which has a 6-lane 25m pool and a learner/teaching pool.
- The average age of swimming pools in the authority is 37 years. They are, as a result, generally outdated, tend not to meet modern user expectations and not very energy efficient. Everyone Active is working with the Council to pursue options to decarbonise Enderby Leisure Centre to make it as energy efficient as possible.
- The oldest pool is at the Enderby Leisure & Golf Centre. This opened in 1970. The challenge for the Council is that although this venue has been refurbished, it is operating way beyond its

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anticipated life expectancy (critical life point is 38 years). It is important that BDC has a long-term future plan to replace it.

- ◀ There is a need to replace the plant room at The Winstanley School. Consultation identified that it was condemned c. 15 years ago but has not, as yet, been replaced.
- ◀ Analysis confirms that 32,450 (33.8%) of the population lives within one mile of a swimming pool that is 20m in length or larger. Given the rural nature of the authority, this is not unusual. When considering drive times, effectively the whole Blaby District's population (99.47%) lives within 20 minutes of a swimming pool.
- ◀ Only the pool at Enderby Leisure & Golf Centre is available to the public on a pay and play basis, most others are commercial venues which require a membership. The Winstanley School pool is available via a sports club/community association.
- ◀ There is a need to maintain current provision and plan for the long-term future of Enderby Leisure Centre - to ensure that the District has adequate water supply for public swimming, clubs, learn to swim etc. beyond the next 10 years. Failure to replace it is likely to create a water deficit when considering the commercially focused make-up of stock in the District.
- ◀ There are 15 swimming pools within two miles of the BDC boundary. Nine of these are available on a pay and play basis, four require a membership to access and two are available via a sports club/community association. Leicester Leys Leisure Centre is a leisure pool with flumes and splash facilities. It is a destination leisure swim facility and as such is likely to be attracting Blaby District's residents for casual swimming.

## Health & fitness gyms supply and demand summary

- ◀ The nine health and fitness gyms in Blaby District offer 582 stations and 13 studios. One has fewer than 20 stations. They are, primarily, located in main settlement areas and on the main arterial routes. There are no known new health and fitness facilities planned for the area. Of the eight health and fitness sites, seven are rated above average and one (Leicestershire Constabulary Police HQ) was not assessed.
- ◀ There are 34 qualifying sites i.e. venues with 20+ stations (totalling 2,624 stations) located within two miles of the Blaby District boundary. Seven offers pay and play access. 12 sites are of significant size (with 100+ stations) and five are national chains. All are considered likely to attract/cater for some BDC residents.
- ◀ Almost half (48%) of Blaby District's population lives within 20 minutes' walk of a health and fitness facility with 20+ stations and which offers community access. Consequently, 52% of the population is likely to need to use a car or public transport to access facilities. The whole (100%) of the population lives within 20 minutes' drive of a health and fitness facility.
- ◀ The two public leisure centre facilities offer pay and play access. Leicestershire Constabulary Police HQ is private use only and the remaining six (two hotels and four commercial fitness gyms) require a membership to access.
- ◀ Based upon UK penetration rates there is a current need for 703 stations in Blaby District. This will grow to 810 by 2029 and to 948 by 2041 taking account of a comfort factor (particularly at peak times). When comparing the number of currently community available stations (564) and accounting for the comfort factor, there is a current under supply of 139. This shortfall rises to 246 stations by 2029 and to 684 by 2041. It is, however, recognised that the significant supply of 2,624 stations within two miles of the local authority boundary to a degree counterbalances this shortfall.
- ◀ Everyone Active's desire to expand fitness provision at Enderby Leisure Centre will enable more Blaby District resident demand to be accommodated within the Authority without the need to export demand for neighbouring authorities to cater for.
- ◀ It will also mean that the scale of Enderby Leisure Centre's provision matches the size and scale of some of the commercial gyms.
- ◀ One key issue is that budget operator provision is not necessarily available to people who face barriers to participation and groups/people from areas of (relative) disadvantage (as cost is only one factor which hinders usage). This applies particularly to people who need to pay for transport to access such facilities and where pay and play is not available.
- ◀ As noted, health and fitness facilities are an important facet of leisure provision. Income derived can offset the cost/underpin the viability of other aspects of provision, especially swimming and targeted physical activity programmes such as exercise on referral. The

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challenge is to continue to provide overall opportunity while ensuring that people with specific health needs or people in rural locations can access health and fitness facilities.

## Squash supply and demand summary

- ◀ Based upon the current population; 100,421 and the fact that there are 10 courts in the Authority, Blaby District has sufficient courts to meet local community need. Virtually the whole (99%) Blaby District's population lives within 20 minutes' drive of a facility with squash courts.
- ◀ When taking future population growth (to 2041) into account there is a need for two additional courts (a total of 12). Twelve courts are located within 2 miles of the Authority boundary.
- ◀ Courts are located at Huncote Leisure Centre (5 courts), David Lloyd; Narborough (3 courts) and Stoney Stanton War Memorial Playing Fields (2 courts). The courts at Huncote Leisure Centre are available on a pay and play basis, the remainder require a membership for access.
- ◀ They are generally rated above average quality with just the two at Stoney Stanton War Memorial Playing Fields rated below average. There is a need to improve the quality of the Stoney Stanton courts.
- ◀ Stoney Stanton uses a keyholder access arrangement whereby once members have signed up, they are given a key to access courts at a time of their choice. Consultation identified that there is no need to book a court due to the low number of members.
- ◀ Demand for seven of the 10 courts in the Authority is reported to be limited as is the court usage. Everyone Active wishes to consider making alternative use of four courts at Huncote Leisure Centre. This would leave just one court at the venue in future.

## Gymnastics supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is no dedicated gymnastics facility in Blaby District, although gymnastics is accommodated in the sports halls of Huncote Leisure Centre and Enderby Leisure Centre.
- ◀ The whole district population lives within a 30-minute drive of a gymnastics club. Of the area's two affiliated gymnastics clubs, one operates out of a dedicated gymnastics venue, and one runs at a non-dedicated site.
- ◀ Consultation identified high demand in the locality, particularly in the pre-school age group. Overall, there is a need for more high-quality gymnastics provision.
- ◀ Adams Gymnastics Club operates satellite clubs across Leicestershire. It is very keen to expand its pre-school offer at Huncote Leisure Centre having identified good potential given its location and proximity to primary schools and family housing. It reports experiencing substantial demand for 1:1 sessions and for small groups with special educational needs.
- ◀ British Gymnastics has indicated that Adams Gymnastics Club would be considered a priority both to secure long-term tenure at its existing site and to develop further should it desire to.

## Indoor bowls supply and demand summary

- ◀ The one dedicated indoor bowls facility in Blaby District is at Enderby Leisure Centre (Carlton IBC). It has six rinks and is of above average quality. The maintenance plan is to flip the carpet in 2024 looking (pending wear and tear in the interim) to replace it in 2029.
- ◀ The whole district population lives within 30 minutes' drive of the facilities at Enderby Leisure & Golf Centre.
- ◀ While the increasing number/proportion of older people in the Authority makes it likely that demand will increase but not to the extent that new provision is required. There is, thus, no requirement for additional purpose-built indoor bowls facilities now or in the near future.
- ◀ Additional energy saving measures could be implemented via installation of a suspended ceiling in the main bowls hall.

## Indoor tennis supply and demand summary

- ◀ The two indoor tennis facilities in the Authority are David Lloyd; Narborough (which has six indoor courts in a frame and fabric type facility) all rated above average quality and Leicester Forest East Tennis Club has an air hall with two acrylic courts which is rated below average

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quality. The Tennis Club rating is primarily due to the age of the air hall which was reported to have last been refurbished in 2013. It is considered likely that the air hall will need to be replaced in the near future.

- ◀ The whole Blaby District population lives within a 30-minute drive of an indoor tennis facility. There is no pay and play based indoor tennis option in Blaby District. David Lloyd (Narborough) requires a (high cost) membership to access the facilities and Leicester Forest East Tennis Club requires access via sports club membership. In the wider area, Loughborough University indoor tennis facilities are available on a pay and play basis, but the remainder require membership or must be accessed via a sports club/association.
- ◀ Blaby District is not a priority area for LTA indoor provision and there is no need to for additional indoor tennis provision in the locality.

## Archery supply and demand summary

- ◀ There are three locations at which archery is played in Blaby District. The Leicester Ancient Order of Foresters has exclusive all year-round access to the outdoor venue at Meadows Sports Ground where there are permanently sited targets and an outdoor shooting range. In the winter months, it uses the sports hall at Brockington College.
- ◀ Thurlaston Airgun & Archery Centre is a commercial shooting range site. It has container-based provision and has open fronted shooting, a café and shop. It has an archery field-based range. Its on-site offer also includes an airsoft range and two air rifle ranges.
- ◀ Thurlaston Airgun and Archery Centre is a pay and play commercial centre, it offers no memberships.
- ◀ Leicester Ancient Order of Foresters requires a membership to access. It runs taster sessions once a month on a pay and play basis and beginners courses. It also offers guest shooting to members of Archery GB. Its membership options include concession and student rates.
- ◀ There is no identified need to develop additional archery provision in the area.

## Athletics supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is no permanent outdoor athletics track in Blaby District. Synthetic tracks are located in neighbouring authorities within the England Athletics recommended 20-minute drivetime catchment. There is an indoor athletics facility within 40-minutes' drivetime of the centre of Blaby.
- ◀ Consultation with England Athletics reveals that, nationally, no new standard 400-metre athletics tracks are planned for construction. The focus is on retention of existing 400-metre facilities and the development of new, innovative, entry level facilities such as mini tracks and endurance loops, particularly if they can be provided as part of floodlit, multi-sport developments.
- ◀ The one running club in the area is Huncote Harriers Athletics Club.
- ◀ Blaby District residents are within England Athletics defined drive time catchments for both indoor and outdoor facilities.
- ◀ No facility needs are identified.

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## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - GENERAL FINDINGS

The existing position for playing pitches & outdoor sports is mixed in relation to there being a sufficient supply, or not. This is broadly a similar position to what was taken during the development of the PPS in 2020.

The one notable difference between the PPS in 2020 and 2024 is the growth in affiliated football. There has been an increase of 85 teams. Naturally, this has increased the pressure on the existing facility stock of grass football pitches and associated need for 3G pitches to accommodate for midweek training activity.

It is expected that over the Local Plan period all sports will grow in participation and put increased pressure on the existing supply of provision. This growth needs to be monitored (through regular update to the PPS) due to the current supply of provision being at capacity or showing shortfalls for particular sports.

Whilst it is not directly the Council's responsibility to provide pitches and infrastructure for outdoor sports, it should use its position as the local planning authority to create new sports facilities (where development is of the scale to warrant it) and to secure developer contributions to increase the capacity of the existing pitch stock and improve the infrastructure of existing facilities to enable them to withstand higher amounts of use. A number of suitable sites which would benefit from targeted investment are available to find in the PPS Strategy & Action Plan.

The PPS Strategy & Action Plan also sets out a range of sport specific recommendations which will enable developer contributions to be used in the correct way to increase capacity and reach maximum sporting benefit.

Moving forward it is important that Council officers sustain the relationships which have been formed with Sport England and the national governing bodies of sport over the development of this study. These partners and their expertise will be beneficial in supporting the Council to make informed decisions around future development, securing external funding and maximising both sporting and social value across Blaby District.

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## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY SPORT SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations set out below are not only the responsibility of BDC to deliver. All relevant stakeholders including those included during the development of the study should have a vested interest in working collaboratively to deliver what is set out below.

### Grass football pitch recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of pitches until all demand is being met (unless replacement provision meets Sport England requirements and is agreed upon and provided).
- ◀ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- ◀ Support clubs and eligible organisations to access funding to improve quality of grass pitches, including through the FF Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund.
- ◀ Work to accommodate future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity or at sites not currently available for community use that could be moving forward.
- ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where this is a clear need to do so (as set out within the action plan in this report).
- ◀ Work to secure tenure for clubs which have a reliance on accessing provision at education sites.
- ◀ Ensure clubs playing within, or with aspirations to play within, the National League System can progress.
- ◀ Explore pitch reconfiguration where possible in order to alleviate pitch shortfalls.
- ◀ Update the Local Football Facilities Plan for Blaby District in due course with findings from the PPS.
- ◀ Monitor future growth in football demand over the lifespan of this document as it is expected to be significant (66 teams).
- ◀ Explore opportunities for club-led management and maintenance models at sites where appropriate.
- ◀ Focus on the development of good quality pavilion provision at key strategic multi-pitch sites and those with a focus on growth of women and girls' participation.

### 3G pitch recommendations

- ◀ Look to increase the supply of 3G pitches throughout the District. The Blaby East Analysis Area has the highest identified need.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place.
- ◀ Ensure all current and future providers have in place a sinking fund to ensure long term sustainability.
- ◀ Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet quality performance standards and are on the FA 3G Pitch Register to enable their use for competitive match play.
- ◀ Encourage more match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches and ensure that pitches remain suitable to accommodate such demand through appropriate certification when it is required.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches are priced competitively against the cost of hiring a grass pitches and are aimed at local grassroots clubs.
- ◀ Consult with the RFU if any new 11v11 pitches are provided to determine potential need from local rugby union clubs.
- ◀ Update the Local Football Facilities Plan for Blaby District in due course with findings from the PPS.

### Cricket recommendations

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- ◀ Existing quantity of cricket squares to be protected or be fully mitigated to meet National Planning Policy.
- ◀ Work with clubs and grounds staff to review quality issues on squares to ensure appropriate quality is achieved at sites assessed as standard and sustained at sites assessed as good.
- ◀ Consider long term future of the Sharnford Cricket Club site which has been out of use since 2017. Evidence suggests it may play a role as a strategic reserve for the sport in the future.
- ◀ Ensure security of tenure for all clubs with lease arrangements in place by ensuring agreements have over 25 years remaining.
- ◀ Support pavilion developments where it is required.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to provide Countesthorpe CC with a secondary square within a suitable locality to accommodate its exported demand.
- ◀ Explore options to provide clubs capacity for future demand including square quality improvements, creation of NTPs, securing tenure and secondary sites or creating new provision if required.
- ◀ Where sites are overplayed consider the opportunity to provide hybrid wickets to enable higher durability of the cricket square.
- ◀ Any new cricket provision created should have a ball strike assessment carried out as a matter of due course. Where new housing or building developments are under consideration within proximity to existing facilities a ball strike risk assessment should be undertaken. In addition, any clubs which could be potentially affected by this issue should be signposted to the ECB.
- ◀ Deliver the All Stars Cricket, Dynamos and women & girls programmes and seek to increase junior and female participation as a result.
- ◀ Work to increase women and girls' participation in line with the emerging Inspiring Generations ECB Strategy and protect existing provision so that women and girls have a suitable place to practise and play.

## Grass rugby union recommendations

- ◀ Existing quantity of rugby union pitches to be protected or be fully mitigated to meet National Planning Policy.
- ◀ Improve pitch quality, where possible, at secure sites to alleviate overplay and create actual spare capacity, this is particularly important at Vipers RFC and Leicester Lions RFC.
- ◀ Continue to develop strong relationships between rugby clubs and schools through curricular and extracurricular programmes to increase levels of mixed age grade and junior participation.
- ◀ Work to provide additional sports lighting at Vipers RFC and Leicester Lions RFC.
- ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where this is a clear need to do so.
- ◀ Maximise the use of the WR compliant 3G pitch at Leicester Forest RFC for rugby union participation.

## Bowling green recommendations

- ◀ Retain existing quantity of greens.
- ◀ Existing quantity of bowling greens to be protected or be fully mitigated to meet National Planning Policy.
- ◀ Improve standard quality greens to good through enhanced maintenance regimes.
- ◀ Assist clubs, where possible, with any future ancillary provision improvements.
- ◀ Work to support clubs to be financially sustainable.
- ◀ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.

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## Tennis recommendations

- ◀ Retain and sustain quality of club courts for competitive play through implementation of appropriate maintenance regimes.
- ◀ Support clubs which aspire for courts and ancillary facility improvements such as Enderby TC (KGV Playing Field).
- ◀ Improve quality of non-club courts and accompanying ancillary provision, first and foremost focusing on sites that best accommodate informal play.
- ◀ Explore implementation of ClubSpark, Rally and Gate Access schemes at appropriate sites to enhance available provision for informal tennis.
- ◀ Consider the feasibility of operating LTA programmes to attract new players to the sport.
- ◀ Work to strengthen the links between schools and tennis clubs. This will encourage children to play, strengthen the membership of clubs and increase their financial viability and also make better use of school tennis courts where they exist.

## Netball recommendations

- ◀ Protect quantity of courts.
- ◀ Improve the quality of courts at Brockington College as a priority.
- ◀ Seek to improve the quantity of courts in the District. The current supply is low and limits opportunities for participation.
- ◀ Aim to secure long term community access for courts which are used for recreational activity.
- ◀ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and walking netball.
- ◀ Facilitate improved engagement between England Netball and schools.

## Golf recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing golf provision unless appropriate mitigation is secured in line with planning policy, or an independent needs assessment identifies a course as being surplus to requirements.
- ◀ Sustain course and ancillary facility quality and seek improvements where necessary.
- ◀ Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth and encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for players.

## Hockey recommendations

- ◀ Refurbish the existing small sided pitches in the District to provide a multi-sport offer for recreational and informal purposes where there is a need to do so.
- ◀ Promote opportunities for residents to engage in formal hockey programmes at clubs which lie on the periphery of the District in Leicester.

## American football recommendations

- ◀ Ensure that Leicester Falcons can continue to operate within the District by accessing sufficient pitch space.

# BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

## PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY FINDINGS BY SPORT

The key findings from the updated PPS are summarised below on a sport-by-sport basis:

### Football – supply and demand summary

- There are current shortfalls on adult and youth 11v11 format football pitches. All remaining pitch formats have sufficient capacity.
- The pitch quality position has improved since the 2020 PPS and therefore shortfalls have reduced, and additional capacity has been created.
- Future demand (expressed through ONS population forecasts to 2041) exacerbates existing shortfalls on adult and youth 11v11 pitches and creates small shortfalls on all remaining pitch types.

### Football – supply summary

- The 2020 PPS identified a total of 116 pitches across 43 sites of which 107 were available for community use across 43 sites. Using updated pitch information provided by Leicestershire & Rutland County FA there has been an identified increase of 13 pitches across the District. This equates to a total of 129 pitches of which 120 are available for community use.
- Ancillary provision is generally considered to be okay through the District. Football partners are currently progressing four separate projects which will see provision improved at key community football sites.

### Football – demand summary

- 332 community football teams are situated in the District and need access to 3G pitches for midweek training and recreational opportunities. This is an increase from 247 in the 2020 PPS.
- Future demand (ONS forecasts) to 2041 anticipates the potential growth of 66 teams.

### 3G – supply and demand summary

- There is an insufficient supply of 3G pitches in the District to accommodate both current and future demand for football trained, based on the FA training model.
- For rugby union, the 3G pitch servicing Leicester Forest RFC is sufficient for its and the wider region's needs.

### 3G – supply summary

- There are three 11v11 size 3G pitches in the District all of which offer community use.
- There are also seven small sided 3G pitches which also offer community use.
- An 11v11 size 3G project is progressing at Countesthorpe Community College which will reduce identified shortfalls.
- All 11v11 and two small sided pitches are FA registered and are accredited for match play purposes.
- Most 3G provision is good or standard quality. There is one poor quality small sided pitch located at Blaby & Whetstone Youth Club.

### 3G – demand summary

- The 3G pitches currently servicing the District are reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months.
- 332 community football teams are situated in the District and need access to 3G pitches for midweek training and recreational opportunities.
- Future demand (ONS forecasts) to 2041 anticipates the potential growth of 66 teams and 1.5 full size pitches.

# BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

## **Cricket – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ There is currently a sufficient supply of cricket provision in the District.
- ◀ Future demand (as well as the consideration of exported demand) creates a shortfall of cricket for Saturday peak time access (typically for senior men).

## **Cricket - supply summary**

- ◀ There are 17 natural turf wickets in the District across 16 sites.
- ◀ There is one disused cricket site at Sharnfold Cricket Club following the Club folding in 2017.
- ◀ There are eight non-turf-wickets accompanying as many sites.
- ◀ Of the 17 natural turf squares, seven are good quality, eight are standard quality and two are poor quality.
- ◀ Poor quality ancillary provision is located at four club sites. These are Meadow Sports Ground, Warwick Road Recreation Ground, Winston Avenue Sports Ground and Braunstone Lane.

## **Cricket - demand summary**

- ◀ As of the 2023 season there are 16 clubs identified as competing in the District which cumulatively consist of 58 teams.
- ◀ Countesthorpe CC export demand for two senior men's teams outside of the District to accommodate match play.
- ◀ Future demand (ONS forecasts to 2041) identifies potential growth equating to seven men's teams and five junior boys' team.
- ◀ Leicestershire Cricket is working to increase opportunities for recreational and formal cricket for women and girls in Blaby District which may lead to increased demand over and above what is identified through population forecasts.

## **Rugby union – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ There is currently an insufficient level of rugby union provision in the District.
- ◀ A district wide shortfall of six match equivalent sessions is apparent. This is broadly due to overplay at both Vipers and Leicester Lions rugby union clubs.
- ◀ Future demand of 4.5 MES exacerbates existing shortfalls.

## **Rugby union - supply summary**

- ◀ There are 13 grass senior rugby union pitches from six sites pitches identified across the District.
- ◀ Of the 13 pitches, 11 are standard quality and two are poor quality.
- ◀ Ancillary provision at Old Newtonians RFC is poor quality, the quality of provision at the remaining three community clubs is a mixture of standard and good quality.
- ◀ Vipers RFC has the highest shortfall on grass pitches of all clubs in Blaby.
- ◀ Leicester Forest RFC has a WR compliant 3G pitch which typically used to capacity each week.

## **Rugby union - demand summary**

- ◀ There is a total of four community rugby union clubs in the District. This is a reduction of one since the 2020 PPS. Crosby RFC has since folded because of participation issues.
- ◀ There are 56 registered teams competing in rugby union, an increase of 7 since the 2020 PPS.
- ◀ The Women's Rugby World Cup (2025) is expected to be a catalyst for increased participation for women's and girls' rugby union.
- ◀ Future demand (defined via 2018 ONS projections) forecasts the growth of 13 potential teams by 2041.

# BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

## **Bowls – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ There is a sufficient supply of bowling greens to accommodate current and future demand in the Blaby District.
- ◀ The focus for bowls in the District should be focused around enabling participation on a club specific basis and supporting programmes such as Bowls Bash

### **◀ Bowls – supply summary**

- ◀ There are seven bowling greens in the District, located across seven sites, all of which, are available for community use.
- ◀ Three greens are good quality and four are standard quality. There is no poor quality bowling green provision in Blaby District.
- ◀ Green quality at Countesthorpe BC and Shakespear Park BC are now both standard (a downgrade from their respective previous good quality scores in 2020).
- ◀ There are no disused bowling greens in the District.
- ◀ Since the 2020 PPS, a new clubhouse has been provided at Shakespear Park which is good quality and serves a multi-sport offer with football and tennis.

## **Bowls – demand summary**

- ◀ Leicestershire Bowls state that on average, most club memberships are consistent with what they were in 2020. The one exception to this is at Narborough & District BC which has seen a reduction of 25% due to internal disputes between members.
- ◀ All clubs have sufficient capacity to accommodate growth in the sport.

## **Tennis – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ There is a sufficient capacity at community tennis club in the District to accommodate current demand.
- ◀ For non-club activity, there is a sufficient supply of courts. However, quality is a concern at several sites and there would be benefit to greater alignment to LTA offers such as LTA Play.
- ◀ There are no Padel tennis courts in Blaby.

### **Tennis – supply summary**

- ◀ There are 39 courts across 12 sites in the District all of which offer a level of community use.
- ◀ There are no padel courts in the District.
- ◀ Ancillary provision servicing Enderby TC is dated but function and provision at Blaby Victoria TC is poor and would benefit from refurbishment/replacement. Provision at remaining club sites is good quality.
- ◀ Since the 2020 PPS, quality has improved at Shakespeare Park with both courts being resurfaced.

### **Tennis – demand summary**

- ◀ There are five community tennis clubs in the District. Each has sufficient capacity to accommodate existing levels of demand.
- ◀ Latent demand (Sport England segmentation data) suggests there is a high number of people (1,799) in Blaby District which would like to participate in Tennis but are not currently doing so.
- ◀ National trends for tennis indicate an increase in the demand for the sport which may translate to need for formal club and recreational/informal tennis offers.

# BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

## **Netball – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ In summary, there is enough netball provision in the District to meet current and future demand therefore a priority should be placed on retaining the supply of courts and improving quality when possible.

## **Netball - supply summary**

- ◀ In total, there are eight outdoor netball courts located across three unique sites in the District. All courts are located at education sites.
- ◀ Most of the courts in the District (five) have a macadam surface, three, have an AstroTurf surface.
- ◀ All five macadam courts are poor quality, whilst the AstroTurf court at Countesthorpe Community College is also of poor quality. The two courts at Winstanley Community College are of good quality.

## **Netball - demand summary**

- ◀ There are no netball clubs based in the District, with all demand from Blaby Netball Club exported outside of the Authority.
- ◀ The local league structure for competitive netball operates on a central venue basis outside of the District. Consequently, it is not expected that there will be a significant rise in demand for outdoor netball courts, other than for recreational formats.

## **Golf – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ There are five golf courses in the District spread across five sites. Three courses offer 18 hole courses and two offer nine hole courses.
- ◀ There are no footgolf opportunities identified in the District.
- ◀ It is considered that the current supply of facilities in the District can meet current and future demand for traditional golf, with emphasis placed on ensuring sites are able to retain current members and users as well as assisting them in capitalising on any untapped demand and future demand.

## **Golf - supply summary**

- ◀ Application of a 20 minute drive time catchment to all existing golf courses in the District shows 11 potential facilities which are likely to be accessible for the Districts residents.
- ◀ Quality is considered to be good at all courses in the District.

## **Golf - demand summary**

- ◀ The 2022 national average for golf club membership in England was 407 members per Club. Of the three affiliated golf clubs in Blaby District (Cosby, Kirby Muxloe & Whetstone golf clubs), average membership is currently 568 members per club, placing Blaby 40% above the national average. Average membership for the clubs has increased from 473 members per club in 2015, with Kirby Muxloe Golf Clubs membership increasing by 26% since 2015.

# BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGY & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

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## **Hockey – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ There are no full size hockey suitable pitches in the District. There are however five small sided pitches provided across four sites.
- ◀ There is no demand from hockey originating in Blaby District.

## **Hockey - supply summary**

- ◀ There are five small sided pitches in the District. The quality at three of the five sites is poor quality. The two pitches situated at Ellis Park are standard quality.

## **Hockey- demand summary**

- ◀ There is no formal demand for hockey identified in the District. Any demand originating from Blaby District residents will be expressed in neighbouring authorities.

## **American Football – supply and demand summary**

- ◀ Demand for American football is well accommodated for in Blaby District on existing rugby union provision. There are no dedicated pitches for American football, however, this is not uncommon nationally.

## **American Football - supply summary**

- ◀ There is no dedicated American football provision.
- ◀ Demand for the sport is expressed on a 3G pitch at Leicester Forest RFC.

## **American Football - demand summary**

- ◀ Leicester Falcons is the Club situated in Blaby. It has one team which usually plays on Sundays.