Appendix A

Sport & Physical Activity Development
Action Plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Area</th>
<th>Description of work to be undertaken</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| New Facility provision   | Providing entirely new pitches and outdoor sports facilities may be the only means of securing additional provision in the right location. Items to be considered and actioned as appropriate include:  
  - Identifying needs and understanding demand through appropriate consultation and review, supported by recognised methodology.  
  - Identifying new sites for provision in appropriate locations.  
  - Extending existing provision where feasible.  
  - Disposing of existing facilities to re-invest the capital receipt in new provision of at equivalent quality, quantity and accessibility.  
  - Incorporating open space and new facilities into new community provision and housing developments.  
  - Exploring external investment opportunities.  
  - Taking into consideration the strategic priorities identified within the Central Bedfordshire playing Pitch Strategy | Central Bedfordshire Council  
Leighton-Linslade Town Council  
Relevant National Governing Bodies for Sport.  
County Sport Partnership.  
Developers |          |
| Upgrading and Refurbishing Facility provision | Upgrading and refurbishing existing pitches and outdoor sports facilities would help to meet some of the qualitative deficiencies identified and help retain participation rates. Consideration should be given to the following areas of investment:

- Provision of floodlighting where possible for some pitches and outdoor sports facilities would extend the period in which they could be used.
- Drainage and improvements to grass pitches enable them to accommodate more play, with fewer postponed facilities. This eases pressure on existing sites and allows for participation retention and growth.
- Changing facilities are considered poor or absent (not accessed) at some pitch sites in the parish borough and improvements would significantly enhance the experience of users.
- Exploring external investment opportunities.
- Taking into consideration the strategic priorities identified within the Central Bedfordshire playing Pitch Strategy | Central Bedfordshire Council  
Leighton-Linslade Town Council  
Local Sports Clubs.  
National Governing bodies of Sport  
County Sports Partnership. |
| Enhanced facility access | Developing new access to pitches and outdoor sports facilities on education sites and securing community use at sites where access is only informal at present would significantly improve the availability of provision.  
Securing improved access through the development of formal agreements serves to safeguard community use of school pitches and outdoor sports facilities.  
Consideration should be given to the strategic priorities identified within the Central Bedfordshire playing Pitch Strategy  
Primary school access for grass pitch facilities (mini football?) | County Sports Partnership to help build awareness of support and guidance available through Sport England ‘Use our School’ tool.  
County Sports Partnership to explore consultation already undertaken in this area with the schools in Leighton-Linslade. |
|---|---|---|
| Re-Instatement of former facilities | Consideration should be given to re-instatement of pitches and outdoor sports facilities where usage has, for a variety of reasons, been discontinued in recent times. This should only be considered where it can clearly be demonstrated that there are sustainable levels of local demand.  
The opportunity to secure external investment to fund/part fund such projects should be robustly pursued.  
Consideration should be given to the strategic priorities identified within the Central Bedfordshire playing Pitch Strategy | Central Bedfordshire Council  
Leighton-Linslade Town Council  
National Governing Bodies of Sport.  
The County sports Partnership. |
| Community Asset Transfer                                                                 | Consideration should be given to the transfer of assets from public sector bodies to sports clubs or community groups offering a number of opportunities to widen access to pitches and outdoor sports facilities and in some cases to access funding for improvements that would not be available to local authority facility owners.

There are examples of these situations available in other local authority areas within Bedfordshire. | Central Bedfordshire Council
Leighton-Linslade Town Council
Local Sports Clubs.
National Governing Bodies of Sport.
The County Sports Partnership. Consideration should be given to raising awareness of this opportunity and the support kit/tools available. |

| Cycle Parish                                                                                   | Leighton-Linslade is designated as a ‘Cycle Parish’. There has been little or no promotion of this since staffing changes and although the network exists it is not well known or used to the extend originally planned.

Re-instatement of promotion of the network should be considered together with inclusion within any new housing and industrial development areas. | Central Bedfordshire Council
Leighton-Linslade Town Council
British Cycling. |
The town council should be encouraged to work with British Cycling and the County Sports Partnership to identify and implement new programmes that encourage cycling amongst the local population.

| Strategic and Delivery Partnerships | There are a number of strategic and delivery based national organisations with a local presence. Understanding their role in the sporting landscape and the resources, help, advice and guidance available through these organisation is essential in ensuring that the development and investment opportunities, both capital and revenue based, are maximised for Leighton-Linslade.

This is best achieved through building strong local relationships with key people. This will also provide more extensive opportunities for the town council to feed back in on consultation processes.

These relationships will also be key to understanding the new strategies for sport being consulted on by national government and also Sport England. The outcomes will be significant for the future development of sport and physical activity in Leighton-Linslade. | Central Bedfordshire Council
Leighton-Linslade Town Council
National Governing Bodies of Sport.
The County Sports Partnership. |

| Promoting Local programmes | There is a wide range of programmes available for participants of all ages and abilities to access. Consideration should be given to raising awareness of the opportunities | Central Bedfordshire Council |
available across the Parish through the Town Council’s website and social media channel’s.

| Understanding demand from neighbouring areas | National Governing Bodies of sport are reporting increased instances of sports club travelling out of their own area to access good quality sports facilities. A better understanding of these issues and how they may directly affect demand for facilities in Leighton-Linslade would help inform decision making, particularly given the demographic make up of large nearby towns. | Leighton-Linslade Town Council
The County Sports Partnership. |
Appendix B
Central Bedfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy
Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire Council’s ‘Leisure Strategy’ (2013) considers the need for leisure facilities in the area to 2031. It includes a playing pitch strategy which applies the new Sport England assessment methodology and concludes the following.

- **Football** - The key findings are as follows:
  - Football participation is very high in Central Bedfordshire, and in contrast to national trends, participation continues to grow.
  - The majority of pitches are provided at single or double pitch sites and the quality varies.
  - There is overall spare capacity of adult pitches, but a shortfall of youth and mini-soccer pitches. The shortfalls are most severe in the northern part of the district that adjoins Bedford borough.
  - More Third Generation (‘3G’) pitches are needed to meet unmet demand for training facilities.
  - 40 schools allow the use of their pitches by the community, but much of this use is unsecured.
  - Asset transfers of council-owned pitches should be considered where this will result in positive club/football development outcomes.

- **Cricket** - The key findings are as follows:
  - Participation is increasing and most clubs have aspirations to grow further.
  - Most community play takes place at public facilities. Most school facilities are poor quality artificial pitches.
  - The quality of first team pitches is generally high, but many public facilities are of lower quality.
  - There are sufficient facilities to meet current demand, but some wickets are used to beyond optimum levels (five times per season).
  - There are capacity issues in Biggleswade, Blunham, Ampthill and Flitwick that might impact on the adjoining parts of Bedford borough.

- **Rugby** - The key findings are as follows:
  - Participation is relatively strong, with four main clubs.
  - Most clubs own their own facilities and all are approaching capacity. Training facilities are particularly poor.

- **Hockey** - The key findings are as follows:
- There are two clubs, both of whom have recently expanded.
- There is sufficient access to sand-based synthetic turf pitches at present.

**Bowls** - The key findings are as follows:
- All clubs have spare capacity to accommodate additional members.
- The quality of greens is generally good.

**Tennis** - The key findings are as follows:
- The stock of courts is well spread across the district, with levels of provision particularly good in the northern part that adjoins Central Bedfordshire.
- All clubs have spare capacity to accommodate additional members.
- The quality of courts is generally good, although there are some site-specific quality issues.
**WIDER STRATEGIC INFLUENCES**

*Introduction*

This section examines the influence of national strategic policies and priorities on playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities provision in Central Bedfordshire.

*Central Government*

In March 2012, the Government published the *'National Planning Policy Framework' (2012)*, setting out its economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government’s vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally to meet local aspirations. The policies of greatest relevance to pitch provision and retention are as follows:

- **Sustainable development** - ‘The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

- **Health and well-being** - ‘Local planning authorities should work with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population, including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being’.
• **Open space, sports and recreational facilities** - ‘Access to good quality opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. The planning system has a role in helping to create an environment where activities are made easier and public health can be improved. Planning policies should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of sports and recreational facilities in the local area. The information gained from this assessment of needs and opportunities should be used to set locally derived standards for the provision of sports and recreational facilities’.

‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or The need for and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss’.

**Sport England**

**Overall policy**


• **Overall aims** - In 2017, five years after the Olympic Games, sport in England will be transformed, so that sport becomes a habit for life for more people and a regular choice for the majority. The strategy will:

  - See more people taking on and keeping a sporting habit for life.
  - Create more opportunities for young people.
  - Nurture and develop talent.
  - Provide the right facilities in the right places.
  - Support local authorities and unlock local funding.
  - Ensure real opportunities for communities.
Sport England is seeking a year-on-year increase in the proportion of people who play sport once a week for at least 30 minutes. In particular it hopes to raise the percentage of 14-25 year olds playing sport once a week and reduce the proportion dropping out of sport.

- **Anticipated outcomes** - The outcomes with the greatest potential impact on playing pitch use and provision will be as follows:

  - Every one of the 4,000 secondary schools in England, will be offered a community sport club on its site with a direct link to one or more governing body of sport, depending on the local clubs in its area.
  - County sports partnerships will be given new resources to create effective links locally between schools and sport in the community.
  - All secondary schools who wish to do so will be supported to open up, or keep open, their sports facilities for local community use and at least a third of these will receive additional funding to make this happen.
  - Building on the early success of Places People Play, a further £100m will be invested in facilities for the most popular sports.

**Playing pitch policy**

Sport England’s national policies in relation to playing pitches are contained in ‘A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England’ (2002). It contains a policy of resisting the loss of pitches unless one or more of the following five conditions are met:

- A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of facility provision in the catchment and that the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

- The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or outdoor sports facility and does not affect the quantity or quality of facilities or adversely affect their use.

- The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming a playing pitch or outdoor sports facility and does not result in:

- The loss, or loss of use of, any facility (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins).
- A reduction in the size of the playing area of any facility.
- The loss of any other sports/ancillary facilities on site.

The playing field or outdoor sports facility which would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by facilities of an equivalent or better quality, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of the development.

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of playing field or current outdoor facility.

*The Football Association*

National Game Strategy

The Football Association’s ‘National Game Strategy 2011-2015’ (2011) sets out the priorities for the development of football over the period.

**Football development objectives** - These are as follows:

- **Challenges**: The strategy identifies the following:
- Halting the decline in adult male 11-a-side football.
- Providing local and flexible formats of football to suit changing consumer lifestyles.
- Addressing the drop off at ages 14-19.
- Supporting the transition from mini-soccer to youth and youth to adult.
- Widening affiliation and integrating teams from diverse communities.
- Affiliating and developing football in the commercial small-sided sector.
- Working effectively with changing school sport.

- Priorities - The priorities for 2015 are as follows:
  - Focus resources on retaining and developing the existing affiliated teams.
  - Halt the decline in adult male 11-a-side and retain female 11-a-side teams by improving the access and quality of pitches, providing a referee for every game, supporting volunteers, using technology and increasing participation through FA ‘Just Play’ Centres and the ‘Get into Football’ programmes.
  - Develop the FA’s children and young people offer to sustain participation and address drop-out at key phases mini-soccer to youth, 14-16 and 16-19.
  - Continue to support existing and diverse communities to participate in affiliated football.
  - Develop different affiliation and benefits packages for groups not traditionally affiliated.
  - Embed flexible formats of football such as 60 minute matches, shorter competition programmes and turn-up-and-play and develop playing opportunities to meet changing player lifestyles.

National Facilities Strategy

The FA National Facilities Strategy 2013 - 2015 - The National facilities Strategy sets out the FA’s long-term vision for facilities to support the development of the ‘National Game’ (all non-professional football). The priorities for 2013 to 2015 are as follows:

- Natural grass pitch improvements and maintenance - Grants will be made to support the development of new and improved natural grass pitches. There are an estimated 33,500 such pitches in England which carry the vast majority of grassroots football. Additional support will
be made available to clubs wishing to develop their own skills in the future maintenance of natural grass, through relevant training and advice.

- **Development of new Artificial Grass Pitches** - There are currently 491 full-size Artificial Grass Pitches in England. The latest Artificial Grass Pitches are capable of delivering a high quality football experience and in addition are capable of carrying much greater activity than natural grass. An increasing number of leagues are allowing games to be played on these surfaces and many grassroots clubs compete to access them for training purposes. The FA estimates that a typical full-sized floodlit AGP can accommodate the training needs of up to 60 teams in any given week let alone wider use for matches and informal participation. Recent consultation with clubs and leagues has further reinforced to the FA that investment in these facilities is a priority. AGPs are also the preferred facility type for grassroots pan-disability football. The FA will continue to work with Leagues and Competitions to encourage appropriate use of AGPs.

- **Refurbishment of old Artificial Grass Pitches** - There are over 1,500 existing sand-based or water-based artificial pitches in England some of which are at the end of their useful lives. The FA will work closely with other relevant National Governing Bodies and map out priority sites where existing old-style pitches might be replaced to reflect local need / demand. This will offer a value for money approach to sustaining and growing participation and at the same time create a financially sustainable network of AGP sites in England.

- **Provision of suitable changing accommodation and toilet facilities** - The FA will seek to ensure that suitable proposals for improvements to changing rooms and associated facilities are properly assessed against need and value for money and that standards are put in place that are consistent with the needs of clubs at all levels. New construction methods will be assessed and implemented where these meet with local needs and are cost effective.

- **Small Grants Programme for modest facility improvements** - Since the opening of the Football Foundation’s ‘Build the Game’ programme, The FA has recognised the popularity of this programme with a steady increase in volume of applications. This programme will continue and will aim to address the often very basic facility requirements of clubs. The FA and Football Foundation will set down some broad guidelines for access to this funding although the intention will be to minimise red-tape and keep access as open as possible.
New/replacement goalposts - In support of the implementation of 9v9 football and other flexible formats of the game, a dedicated fund for new/replacement goalposts will be established through the Football Foundation. The FA will also ensure that awareness regarding goalpost safety is refreshed and publicised. Funding to replace unsafe goalposts will continue.

The England and Wales Cricket Board

National Facilities Strategy

The ECB’s ‘National Club Strategy’ (2012) sets out the priorities for developing cricket at club level over the next few years.

- **Current issues** - These have been identified as follows:
  - Many clubs are unable to make long-term plans for a sustainable future.
  - It is difficult to recruit and retain adult players, members and volunteers.
  - Growth is compromised by poor access, to and the quality of, club facilities.
  - Many clubs have poor security of tenure.
  - Club income streams are typically static or falling.
  - Volunteer’s time is used ineffectively due to excessive bureaucracy.
  - The time and cost of travelling to and from fixtures is increasing.
  - The effects of climate change have impacted on pitch maintenance.

- **Strategic priorities** - The key priority is to create sustainable clubs by encouraging clubs to create a culture that embraces change, advocates best practice and understands that people are the most important asset of a cricket club. To support this, the ECB will:
  - Support, develop and reward the skills required to grow and sustain participation. Provide easy access to high-quality training and support. Ensure that people are at the heart of maintaining the spirit of cricket and providing a fun, open, fair and accessible game.
  - Develop accessible, high quality and innovative facilities, which inspire the nation to choose cricket. Create a culture of sustainable development that will leave a legacy for generations to come.
  - Develop appropriate, innovative competitions. Improve the experience for existing players in order to help recruit new and lapsed players, as well as to help retain players between the critical ages of 16 - 22 and 25 - 35 years of age.
**Bedfordshire Cricket’s Delivery Action Plan**

Bedfordshire Cricket’s ‘Delivery Action Plan’ (2014) contains the following facilities actions:

- Have in place an effective, efficient and economic Grounds Association.
- Identify and develop new grounds across Bedfordshire.
- Ensure that clubs have the information, advice and support to improve and develop grounds and facilities.
- Ensure that clubs understand what is available and how to access funding for facilities and ground improvements.
- Ensure that a well-maintained grounds trailer and hire process is available to all clubs through the Grounds Association. Support and assist clubs in securing external funding to improve and enhance facilities and grounds.

**The Rugby Football Union**

National Facilities Strategy


- **Current issues** - A clubs survey - identified a number of areas of required facility development. These include:
  - Over half of the clubs responding considered that their training facilities are not fit for purpose. Floodlighting was highlighted as a particular issue. Two-thirds of clubs stated that it is either ‘very important’ or ‘important’ for them to upgrade their floodlighting over the next four years.
  - 68% of respondents stated that they considered their playing pitches to be fit for purpose. However, over 57 per cent of respondent clubs stated that additional or improved grass pitches are either very important or important for them to develop over the next four years.
  - Almost a third of respondent clubs considered that their changing facilities are not fit for purpose. New or improved changing facilities were stated to be the highest priority for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of clubs (50% of respondents), while 61% stated that it is either very important or important for them to address the state of their changing facilities over the next four years.
Facility priorities - These are as follows:
- Increase the provision of integrated changing facilities that are child friendly and can sustain concurrent male and female activity at the club.
- Improve the quality and quantity of natural turf pitches.
- Increase the number of Artificial Turf Pitches.
- Improve social, community and catering facilities, which can support diversification and the generation of additional revenues.
- Invest in facility upgrades which result in an increase in energy-efficiency, in order to reduce the running costs of clubs.

Local facilities priorities
In addition to the national facilities strategy, the RFU has assessed the facilities needs of all local clubs, which identified the following:

- Leighton Buzzard RFC

*England Hockey*


- Participation targets - England Hockey wishes to attract and retain more people into the sport, in particular by retaining club members, and increasing new membership by 10,000 adults and 32,500 children.

- Facility provision - There are approximately 1,000 sand-filled or dressed and 50 water based pitches in England. Most have been installed in the past 10-15 years. Many of the sand-filled or sand-dressed pitches involve provision in partnership with schools or local authorities. A considerable number of these pitches are used for multi-sport activity and in most cases hockey is not the dominant user.
As of 2011 affiliated hockey clubs are utilising around two thirds of the sand and water artificial turf pitches in England. The clubs are collectively using around 7,000 hours between September and April and reduced hours during the summer months. Outside of this club use, sits the Single System of coaching and development which uses 2,000 hours annually. 32% of pitches are over 10 yrs old, 12% 15 yrs old and 4% over 20 years old.

England Hockey will be looking into pitch resurfacing cycles, to identify age of pitches and to guide facility providers as to when they need to start to think about replacing their surface. 400 sand filled pitches are over 15 years old and alongside developing new facilities, it will be a priority to ensure that existing facilities receive appropriate maintenance.

Bowls Development Alliance

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) receives funding from Sport England to promote bowls via a package of initiatives delivered by the network of affiliated clubs. To support this, the Bedfordshire Bowls Association has the following local priorities for the development of the game:

- To support affiliated clubs in maintaining their present facilities. Many of our clubs have very small membership numbers and are reliant on the resources provided by the local authority. This is particularly true within the urban area of Bedford.
- To support affiliated clubs by providing them with loans in order that they are able to maintain and renew the vital equipment needed to maintain machinery necessary for providing a good bowling green.
- To support affiliated Clubs in their quest to encourage new members from juniors to advanced age. Over 55’s are currently being targeted to take up the sport at present.
- Through the ‘Play Bowls’ initiative, to encourage clubs to use the development packages and funding provided by the BDA to enhance their playing memberships.
- Through the Coaching initiatives provided by the BDA to encourage Club level coaching.
Lawn Tennis Association

Participation Strategy
The LTA’s strategy is called ‘British Tennis Participation Strategy 2013 -2017’ (2013) and has a mission to get more people playing more tennis. Specific targets by 2017 are to get 500,000 adults playing at least weekly and one million adult playing at least monthly, along with one million more school children introduced to tennis. The key drivers are:

- Attractive and inviting parks tennis courts.
- Viable tennis clubs.
- Children must have the opportunity to experience tennis.
- A higher proportion of women and girls playing tennis.
- More teenagers staying with tennis.
- Tennis is an accessible sport for all.
- Broadening the base.
- At least 60,000 young people competing annually.
- Tennis is a year round sport for more people.
Facilities Strategy
The LTA’s facilities strategy is called ‘Places to Play’ (2010) and covers the period 2011 to 2015. The strategy aims to provide high quality facilities for everyone at a convenient location, by increasing opportunities for people to play tennis on a regular basis at tennis clubs close to their home on safe and well maintained tennis courts.

- **Development objectives** - The key strategic objectives as follows:
  - Access for everyone to well-maintained high quality tennis facilities which are either free or ‘pay-as-you-play’.
  - A Clubmark accredited place to play within a 10 minute drive of the whole population. Indoor tennis courts within a 20 minute drive time of the whole population.
  - A mini tennis (10 and under) performance programme within a 20 minute drive of the whole population. (Performance Centres).
  - A performance programme for 11 - 15 year olds within a 45 minute drive time of the whole population (High Performance Centre).

- **Facilities objectives** - The facilities objectives as follows:
  - **Improving facilities at high quality places to play** - Enhancing facility provision at performance venues and Clubmark accredited places to play.
  - **Tennis in community settings** - Beacon sites - supporting LA’s to bring back into use existing community tennis facilities and working with them to develop affordable quality tennis programmes.
  - **Sustainability** - Advising places to play to ring fence funding to ensure existing facilities can be upgraded or replaced when they get to the end of their life.
Summary of wider strategic influences

Central Government planning policy is supportive of undertaking local assessments of need and the protection of playing fields and outdoor sports facilities, which provides helpful context for local planning policies in Central Bedfordshire.

Sport England’s target to increase participation rates year-on-year will drive up demand for pitches and outdoor sports facilities if it is achieved. The emphasis on developing and funding school-community club links will increase the scope for improving the dual use of education pitches and facilities.

All the governing bodies of sport have similar facilities objectives, to improve the quality of pitches/facilities and changing provision and many are introducing new, more accessible formats of their sports some of which, such as ‘Last Man Stands’ in cricket, have additional and specific pitch requirements.

The LTA has identified 30 Priority Areas nationally and Leighton Buzzard is not one of the highest priority ‘Tier One’ targets. This means that the LTA will not target resources to increase participation in the game in the Parish.
Appendix C

Sport & Physical Activity Development Plan 2014

Strategic Priorities
Strategic Priorities - Football

The assessment of pitches for football indicates that the key issues to address for football across local area follows;

- Football participation is very high across Central Bedfordshire and in particular Leighton Buzzard and surrounds in contrast to national trends, participation continues to grow.

- The majority of the existing pitch stock is formed from single/double pitch sites (the Central Bedfordshire average is 2 pitches) Pages and Astral Parks are larger multi-pitch sites with a mix of sizes and competition formats. The quality of pitches is varying and key issues arising include drainage, changing and evenness of pitches

- Club satisfaction is generally low and the majority of clubs attribute their dissatisfaction to the amount of pitches provided and there are also concerns about facilities and quality of pitches.

- While overall there are enough adult pitches, surpluses in this type of pitch are offset by shortfalls of junior and mini pitches. There are particularly capacity issues and unmet demand in some settlements, while in others; the amount of pitches is more than sufficient to accommodate demand. A lot of the high demand is associated with the large clubs. The recent FA Youth Review, requiring 9 v 9 pitches as well as facilities of other sizes will further impact upon the demand for facilities

- Increasing number of schools allows use of their facilities by the local community – these play an essential role in ensuring that all clubs are able to play. Cedars in particular has opened its doors to community use of its grass as well as 3G pitches.

- Increases in the population will have major implications on the demand for pitches and the adequacy of the pitch stock and will generate further shortfalls in some areas. Growth of the Parish to the East with the expected population increases will only add pressure to this.

- 43% of clubs indicate that they struggle to access training facilities and a shortage of AGP’s was highlighted as a key barrier to club development. Based upon the exiting high participation levels, modelling reveals demand for several additional facilities

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area/site specific implications are set out in Table 3.1
Table 3.1 Football – Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</td>
<td>Protect all current playing fields to ensure the longevity of the pitch stock. This should include former playing pitches, unless they are located in an area identified as having sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the short term, review the designation of pitches to address deficiencies in junior football and to accommodate the recent FA Review of Youth Football. Ensure that as far as possible, all teams are playing on pitches of the correct size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase the amount of pitches available and support clubs to find home venues to ensure that they are not dispersed across multiple sites. This is likely to include;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Securing of formal agreements for the use of school sites – ideally sites offering multiple pitches should be prioritised and consideration should be given to the provision of accessible changing/toilets for community teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Re-instating former playing pitches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o New pitches (promote the creation of new multi pitch sites to support large clubs). This will free up other sites for the use of smaller clubs and single teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o The creation of new pitches linked with new developments, to offset the impact of the increase in population on the demand for playing pitch provision. There are particular pressures in areas of growth and new facilities will be required where there is evidence of need. Improvements to the quality of existing facilities should be required where there is already sufficient provision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ensure pitch quality meets requirements** | Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of the appropriate specification by focusing on the improvement of both pitch quality and ancillary facilities. Qualitative improvements should be prioritised over quantity where there are already enough facilities.

The following standards should be considered:

Investment to address basic quality issues at key sites to ensure NGB specifications and standards are met;

- the provision of changing accommodation at all sites where adult football is played and a minimum of toilet provision at junior and mini football sites
- supporting clubs in the creation of facilities of higher specification where these are required for clubs progression in Leighton Buzzard |

| **Support Club Development** | Maintain the existing football forums to establish clear routes of communication with pitch users and providers ensuring that all decision are taken with a full understanding of needs and aspiration.

- Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place including evaluation of success of football forum
- Support the principles of asset transfer where this will result in positive club and football development outcomes |
Strategic Priorities – Cricket

The assessment of cricket provision across Leighton Buzzard and surrounds indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

• Participation is increasing and almost all clubs have aspirations to grow further

• Most community play takes place at public facilities. Facilities at school sites are largely artificial and in general are poor quality and insufficient for community use.

• The quality of first team cricket facilities is high and the condition of the outfield and issues with drainage are perhaps the main concerns and several clubs also raise concerns with the quality of their pavilion. There are much lower levels of satisfaction with the overall stock of facilities however, with 50% of clubs suggesting that facilities inhibit club development and 40% of clubs suggesting that they are not happy with the stock of facilities. The quality of pitches for 3rd and 4th teams, as well as access to sufficient pitches, are the main reasons attributed to this.

• Although there are enough pitches overall to meet current peak time demand, this disguises site specific pressures and almost all club bases are at capacity on both Saturday and Sunday afternoon. Most clubs with capacity are not located in close proximity to those clubs requiring additional pitches. Added to this, several clubs are using wickets above optimum levels (5 times per season) and for many, there are no artificial wickets or training nets, meaning that practice must take place upon grass square or off site.

• Population growth will generate increasing demand and unmet demand may rise substantially

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area/site specific implications are set out in Table 3.2
### Table 3.2 Cricket – Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand| Reflecting the pressures on existing club bases across all Central Bedfordshire, protect all existing cricket grounds through the inclusion of appropriate planning policy.  
  - Appropriate planning policy to be incorporated into emerging development strategy and other relevant documents. |

Ensure the amount of cricket facilities available does not impact on the opportunities to grow participation in the sport. Many clubs are at or nearing capacity and there is a need to provide access to additional appropriate facilities. This should be sought by:

- the ongoing development of relationships between larger and smaller clubs. This has already proved successful in Central Bedfordshire, with many larger clubs using facilities owned/controlled by smaller clubs;

- the provision of a new satellite ground for clubs at capacity where this represents a sustainable option for growth. This may be either through a new provision or the re-instatement of sites that have formerly been used for cricket;

- the development of school club links and the establishment of a relationship between schools and cricket clubs. Facilities at school sites can then be used by the cricket club as the club expands. Note improvements to the quality of facilities are likely to also be required if this is be successful; and

- ensuring the impact of the increasing population is taken into account when identifying facility requirements – there are particular pressures in areas of growth and new facilities will be required where there is evidence of
| **Ensure pitch quality meets requirements** | To ensure that pitches can accommodate the level of play that they are required to currently, as well as to support cricket clubs in the development of training nets to enhance club sustainability and improve overall performance as well as to remove pressure on grass wickets. This may include;  
| | o an indoor cricket venue  
<p>| | o the provision of outdoor cricket nets at larger clubs that do not currently have access to such facilities |
| <strong>Support Club Development</strong> | Support long term sustainability of clubs by promoting succession planning, for example in groundsman ship. Providers and clubs should be supported in gaining key skills. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initiatives to be developed to achieve these objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support initiatives to increase cricket participation including the introduction of new forms of the game, which may require the provision of flexible spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Priorities – Rugby

The assessment of rugby provision across Leighton Buzzard and surrounds indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

- Participation in rugby is relatively strong across Central Bedfordshire and there are four clubs, all of which offer full transition between midi, junior and senior rugby, offering clear player pathways Leighton Buzzard RUFC included.

- The majority of pitches in Central Bedfordshire are at school sites and there is limited if any use of these by the clubs currently. Club sites are important for the growth and development of rugby clubs and all clubs are approaching capacity. Training facilities are poor. Added to this, there are some quality issues that need to be addressed.

- Population growth is likely to generate an increase in participation and some clubs have aspirations to increase their membership, in all likelihood generating further pressures on the existing facility stock. Pitch capacity at club bases will become particularly strained by 2022 if club development aspirations are realised. In this instance, access to school pitches and/or the creation of new pitches at club bases or as a satellite pitch may become increasingly important. The identified East of Leighton Buzzard Urban extension will have implication for the Rugby Club given its location.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area/site specific implications are set out in Table 3.3

### Table 3.3 Rugby – Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</td>
<td>Monitor club growth over strategy period. Additional facilities will be required for clubs if participation increases significantly over and above levels that are generated by growth in population. Notably, the impact of training on pitches is significant and this could be addressed through the provision of a 3G training pitch which would reduce the impact of use on grass pitches. Any new provision should be in conjunction with existing or new clubs rather than provided ad hoc on new sites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ensure pitch quality meets requirements** | To ensure that pitches can accommodate the level of play that they are required to currently, as well as to meet the needs of additional teams in future years, maintain and improve the quality of existing facilities by;  
  - addressing maintenance issues identified through RFU ground surveys;  
  - improving and expanding social facilities and pavilions  
  - the provision of training floodlights – these should be located to enable rotation and use of different parts of the pitches to ensure that additional wear and tear is dispersed  
  Leighton Buzzard RUFC – require additional training floodlights.  
  Quality improvements should be prioritised over additional capacity in the short term |
| --- | --- |
|  | o Amount of pitches currently sufficient.  
  o Population growth an increase in participation may generate requirement for new pitch longer term.  
  To be delivered either through;  
  - New pitch at club base or satellite facility  
  - Conversion of grass pitch to AGP to increase capacity  
  - Use of school facility by club (may require qualitative improvements)  
  Cedars Upper School  
  Vandyke School |
|  | Monitor demand for rugby league provision over the strategy period  
  - Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Club Development</th>
<th>Support aspirations to increase participation in rugby and manage the impact of these aspirations on facility development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support initiatives to increase rugby participation including the introduction of new forms of the game, which may require the provision of flexible spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Priorities – Hockey

The assessment of hockey across Leighton Buzzard and surrounds indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

- There is one hockey club in Leighton and surrounds, Leighton Buzzard HC. Analysis of participation trends demonstrate evidence of significant recent expansion. Despite this, the current and potential playing profile of the area is relatively limited, with hockey likely to attract less than 1% of local and wider circle residents, even when taking into account latent demand.

- The hockey club are dissatisfied with the current levels of provision in Central Bedfordshire generally. There are concerns about both access to changing and social facilities, not having a dedicated on site clubhouse, as well as issues with access to facilities for training and matches. Continued challenges of competing demands with football.

- Analysis of use of the facilities at a peak time confirms that there are enough pitches overall to accommodate demand within Club, however, this is skewed by the presence of the pitch at Dunstable Leisure Centre, which is not currently used at all for hockey although it has a sand based surface. It is not located appropriately to function as an overspill facility for LBHC or the other club in Central Bedfordshire (Sandy). While overall there are sufficient pitches, both clubs are at/nearing capacity at their club bases, meaning that access to overspill facilities is essential if levels of activity are to be maintained.

- While population growth alone will have limited impact, schemes designed to increase participation in hockey may generate demand for further facilities in the longer term. These include Back to Hockey and Rush Hockey, both of which are currently being trialled at Flitwick Leisure Centre.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area/site specific implications are set out in Table 3.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</strong></td>
<td>To support hockey development, ensure that the surfaces currently used for hockey are retained as sand based pitches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vandyke School should remain sand based surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor club activity and support the provision of additional sand based facilities (linked with the clubs) if significant participation increases occur and/or if issues are identified with pitches used outside of Central Bedfordshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o New provision likely to be required within reasonable distance of club base to support existing club structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure priority access for hockey clubs at sand based facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vandyke School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that the impact of housing growth is taken into account and that contributions towards hockey are required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o The hockey club will both be impacted upon by population growth and will serve residents across Central Bedfordshire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ensure pitch quality meets requirements** | Support aspirations for the provision of onsite club houses and changing accommodation to facilitate club development. Here may be opportunities to share this with other sports as part of the process of securing formal use of school sites to address quantitative deficiencies  

Pavilion/clubhouse at Vandyke School |
|---|---|
| **Support Club Development** | Support the introduction of new forms of hockey through the provision of appropriate facilities for the new form of the game  
  o Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary |
| **Maintain the quality of existing sand based AGPs, ensuring that facilities are refurbished every 10 years.** | Vandyke School |
Strategic Priorities – Bowls

The assessment of bowls across Leighton Buzzard and surrounds indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

- Analysis of the capacity of existing bowling greens suggests that clubs are able to accommodate additional members, and there is scope to accommodate more teams on most greens. Adding to this, there is no evidence of growth in bowls with clubs indicating that participation is static despite efforts to attract new players.

- Almost all clubs are satisfied with the quality of existing greens and this was also reinforced through site visits, which reveal that facilities are well maintained and all greens are in good condition. Just three clubs identify site specific issues requiring improvement and only two clubs are not happy with the overall stock of facilities (attributing this to the number of greens of the right quality).

- The average membership age of bowls clubs across Central Bedfordshire is 69, representing a rate of 2.3% of residents over the age of 60. In contrast to pitch sports, the ageing population may see bowls become more popular in future years. This growth alone could generate additional 435 bowls players, meaning that clubs would have on average 92 members and supply would be much more closely matched with demand. Sport England Active people surveys, however, suggest that current demand is higher and also highlight potential to increase participation, potentially up to 4%. If these targets were to be achieved, added to the anticipated impact of participation increases, the current stock of bowling greens would become insufficient.

- The changing population profile and the propensity of the older age groups to play bowls mean that there is a significant opportunity to promote the sport. While overall provision is currently sufficient, regardless of current capacity, it should be noted that residents expect these facilities to be local to their home (on average, 55% of members are within 1 mile of their club) and many residents are outside of this distance to a current facility.

The key strategic priorities and area specific implications for bowls are set out in Table 3.5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</strong></td>
<td>Protect all current bowling greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New bowling greens are not required to meet current (or future) demand unless expressed demand is identified in an area further than 1 mile from an existing bowling green. New provision should be demand rather than supply led and facilities should only be developed where demand has already been identified. Instead, improvements to existing bowling greens should be prioritised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o New participants and residents of new development should be channelled towards existing bowling clubs until it becomes clear that an existing facility is over capacity and/or there is significant expressed demand for a new facility in an area currently outside of the catchment of a facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor the impact of attempts to increase participation as well as population growth on club membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure pitch quality meets requirements</strong></td>
<td>Seek to maintain the quality of facilities and where issues are identified, improve the quality and consistency of bowling greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leighton Buzzard Bowls Club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 Bowls – Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements
| **Support Club Development** | Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership. To maximise the sustainability of bowls as a sport, efforts should focus on recruitment of junior players as well as adult and veterans  
  
  o Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary |
Strategic Priorities – Tennis

The assessment of tennis across Leighton Buzzard and surrounds indicates that the key issues to address for tennis are;

• Generally the stock of tennis courts is well spread out across Central Bedfordshire, with more than half of all courts in the major service centres. Most residents in larger settlements have access to at least one tennis court within a five mile radius.

• Tennis offers a significant opportunity to increase overall participation in sport and physical activity in Central Bedfordshire – the sport has a wider participation base and there are high levels of latent demand

• There are sufficient courts at the two clubs to meet the needs of current membership and only three clubs across Central Bedfordshire are approaching capacity. While club membership does not account for casual play, the current club membership figures suggest that the Active People survey perhaps overestimates demand slightly and provides an indication of the upper echelons of potential demand

• Population growth alone could be accommodated within existing club structures (where there is a capacity for up to 1000 more members) although some clubs are approaching capacity and may require additional courts if growth is focused in their area. Significant participation increases would however require more wholesale increases in provision.

• There are concerns about the quality of courts (particularly at public facilities), but also at several club sites and the overall quality is the most varying of all types of outdoor sport. Several clubs believe that the quality issues at both club and public facilities will inhibit the overall development of tennis in both the short and long term

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area/site specific implications are set out in Table 3.6
Table 3.6 Tennis – Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</strong></td>
<td>Support the provision of new facilities at clubs where specific need can be identified, taking into account the capacity and quality of existing facilities. In the first instance, additional capacity should be created by adding floodlights to courts. Longer term and following population growth, new courts may be required at some clubs. Where there is expressed demand for tennis in areas not currently within a 5 mile catchment, to maximise the use of resources, support additional demand for tennis through a partnership approach with schools where this is possible. Demand for pay and play tennis should be considered in line with the Beacon Tennis Scheme, established by the LTA. Existing tennis courts in large public settlements should also be retained, unless appropriate pay and play opportunities can be organised through club bases or schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure pitch quality meets requirements</strong></td>
<td>Address quality issues identified at club sites prioritising area where club development is limited by quality constraints, specifically;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Floodlighting (linked with increasing capacity above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Covering existing courts (linked with increasing capacity above) or relocation of courts if covering is not possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Surfacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Club Development</strong></td>
<td>Support the development of new forms of tennis in order to increase participation. This might include mini tennis, which provides the use of more flexible spaces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary
Strategic Priorities – Athletics

The assessment identifies the key issues for athletics as;

• There is only one athletics track in Central Bedfordshire at Sandy Sports and Community Centre

• There are four athletics clubs in Central Bedfordshire. While Biggleswade Athletics Club is based at Sandy Sports Centre, the remainder are road running and cross country clubs. **There is no formal athletics facility in Leighton Buzzard**

• Sport England’s Active Places data suggests that the amount of facilities in Central Bedfordshire is poor compared with the average. Supporting this, analysis indicates that with the existence of only one track in the district and despite other tracks nearby, accessibility for local residents is poor. With over a third living outside a 20 minute driving catchment

• Accessibility is skewed to the east, with parts of Central Bedfordshire in the west outside of the catchment to a track. Accessibility is best in Sandy but in general, residents in the north place-making area are closer to athletics facilities than in the south. Poorest accessibility is in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South

• Despite these deficiencies, current activity levels so not provide clear evidence of a requirement for a new athletics facility in Central Bedfordshire (as most activity is in the form of road running)

There is however, clear evidence of demand for a new facility in Leighton Buzzard, an area which has previously had a track and the area of Central Bedfordshire that is least well served for facilities. Leighton Buzzard Athletic Club indicate there is a clear need for facilities in the area and that club development is inhibited without the creation of a track. Recognising that the creation of a track is a longer term project, the club also highlight an immediate priority of the provision of a clubhouse, floodlit outdoor training area and storage facility.

The area specific priorities are set out in Table 3.7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</td>
<td>Support ongoing athletics participation through the protection of only existing athletics track (Sandy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that appropriate changing and meeting facilities are available for road running clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Support sustainable solutions to provide new facilities for athletics in Leighton Buzzard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable athletics facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure pitch quality meets requirements</td>
<td>Ensure that appropriate changing and meeting facilities are available for road running clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre (or alternative venue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Club Development</td>
<td>Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership to maximise the sustainability of the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Strategic Priorities – Netball**

The assessment identifies the key issues for netball as;

- There is a strong network of participation in netball across all of Central Bedfordshire and linked with other local authorities in Bedfordshire. There are several affiliated and accredited clubs in the area offering strong development pathways. National increases in participation in netball are mirrored locally and participation remains strong.

- England Netball indicate that much of the lower levels of participation are focused in the urban areas. However, all areas of Central Bedfordshire are equitably served by local leagues.

- Bedfordshire Netball indicates that the network of facilities is currently adequate for local leagues, although there are some issues with access to appropriate training facilities for clubs. The nature of netball and the leagues that are run mean that competition generally takes place at central venues and some degree of travel is expected. Growth in participation may place further demand upon existing facilities, which are spread across Bedfordshire.

The strategic priorities to address the key issues identified are set out in Table 3.8.

**Table 3.8 Netball – Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Leighton Buzzard and Surrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</td>
<td>Ensure that there are sufficient appropriate venues for club based netball training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o No priorities at current time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitate the requirement for any competitive netball venues longer term in the event of significant participation increases and the creation of new leagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure pitch quality meets requirements</td>
<td>Maintain the quality of the existing facilities and improve the standard of those courts that are not sufficient to sustain appropriate levels of play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Club Development</td>
<td>Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership to maximise the sustainability of the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support initiatives designed to increase player retention and participation</td>
<td>Support initiatives designed to increase player retention and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>