

## Vale of White Horse District Council

### LEISURE FACILITIES ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY

2023 - 2041

Final Draft Version

Produced by:



Produced for:



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## Executive Summary

- EX1 This Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC) Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy (LFAS) updates and supersedes the previous strategy for leisure facilities. It covers the period between 2023 and 2041 in alignment with the likely planning period to be used for the emerging new Local Plan. Given the breadth of sports played in the Vale, as well as the intention of VoWHDC to incorporate as many types of sports and physical activity as possible, the assessment considered; swimming pools, sports halls, activity halls, village halls, community centres, dance / fitness studios, health and fitness suites (gyms), squash courts, gymnastics facilities, archery ranges, tennis courts, netball courts, cycling facilities, athletics facilities, bowls facilities, croquet lawns, water sports facilities, skateparks, multi-use games areas (MUGAs), parkour facilities, climbing walls, horse-riding centres and golf courses.
- EX2 The development of the strategy, which is compliant with Sport England guidance, has been shaped and overseen by a steering group formed of officers from VoWHDC, sports governing bodies (NGBs) and Sport England, and consultation has been undertaken (with clubs and providers / owners of facilities) as part of the process.

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### ***The Vision Statement for Leisure Facilities***

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*“The Vale of White Horse should provide a good supply of well managed and maintained leisure facilities and ancillary facilities, which are fit for purpose, meet identified needs and encourage all residents to take part in sport and physical activity.*

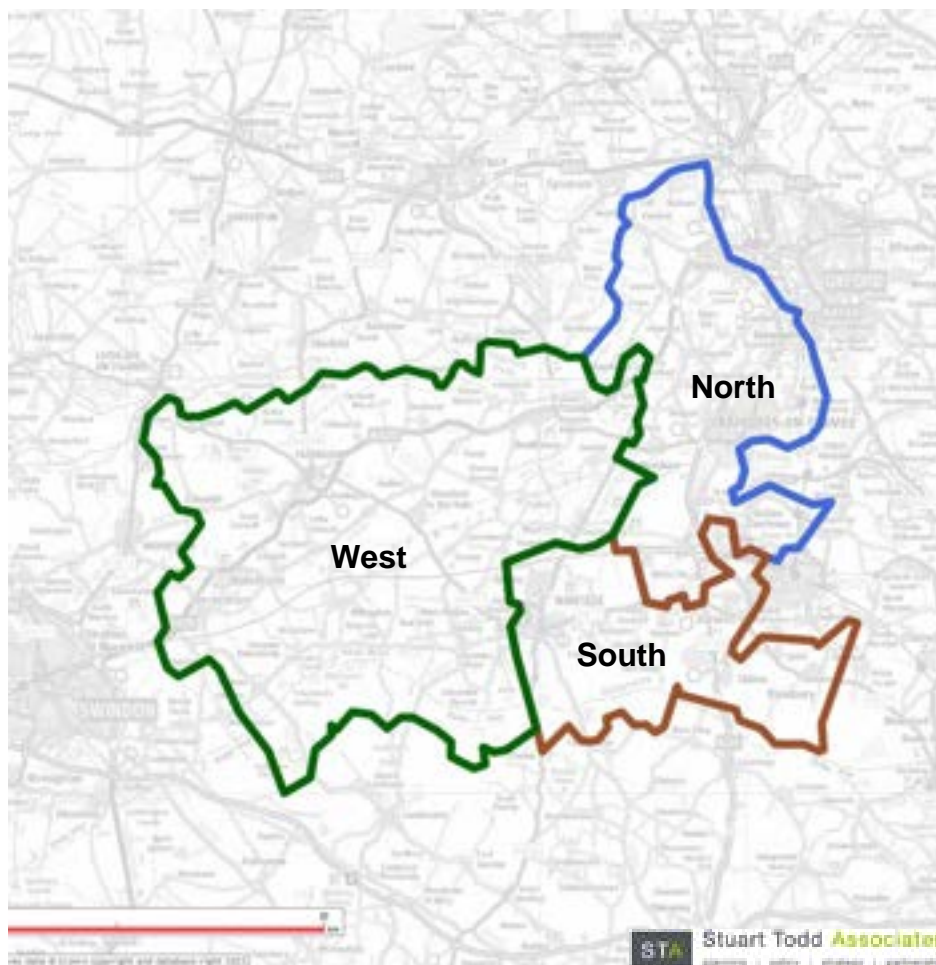
*There will be a positive reaction to the impacts of climate change through leisure provision, seeking to contribute to opportunities for the community to access leisure facilities and ancillary facilities without the need to use unsustainable forms of transport and support access to the facilities through active travel means. The strategy will support the Councils’ vision to become carbon neutral by 2030 and to reduce emissions across the district.”*

- EX3 The LFAS plays a number of important roles in sport, leisure and planning terms, and also has a direct link into the health and wellbeing agenda both in relation to formal club-based sport but also social, casual and informal sport aimed at getting people more active (with positive outcomes for mental as well as physical health). At its basic level, the LFAS provides an audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of leisure facilities, establishes the current levels of demand (and therefore whether facilities are being over or under used) and projects forward demand likely to arise by the end of the strategy period so that the appropriate level of provision can be planned for the future. The LFAS:
- Can be used as robust evidence to protect existing leisure facilities;
  - Can and should be used in the planning of new developments to include leisure facilities on-site or contribution to off-site;

- Can help to improve the quality of offer and provision by identifying and quantifying issues relating to the quality of leisure facilities and ancillary facilities;
- Can be used by clubs and teams and facility providers to support applications for funding for the improvement of the quality, quantity and accessibility of provision;
- Helps to defend against inappropriate development or loss of facilities;
- Informs planning policy development;
- Provides a strategic view and options for the provision of facilities during the strategy period;
- Forms an important part of the “package” of strategies, evidence and actions which can contribute towards improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those who live and work in the district.

EX4 What the LFAS does not and cannot do is provide a blueprint for change to 2041. The strategy can present options based on evidence and assessment of it (and indeed recommendations) but cannot do the work necessary (for example, logistical, feasibility and viability work) required to confirm actions with 100% certainty and make things happen “on the ground”, which is the task of the many stakeholders (such as clubs, providers, owners and managers of facilities) and bodies (such as the District Council, sports governing bodies and Sport England) responsible for delivery of facilities following the strategy’s adoption.

EX5 The delivery of the strategy should include 6 or 12 monthly meetings of the steering group to monitor, action and help deliver change. If this approach is carried out on an annual basis then it should become clear at which point a significant number of changes have occurred which may significantly affect the key issues and priorities. At this stage a full review of the evidence base including the supply and demand information and assessment details may be required. A wider strategy review should take place every 5 years.

**Figure EX1: The Study Area and Sub-Areas**

EX6 The largest settlements in each sub area are Abingdon (North), Wantage and Grove (South) and Faringdon (West). The A34 dual carriageway (to Oxford/Newbury) runs through the North and South sub areas; and the River Thames flows through Abingdon to Oxford (North sub area).

### **Leisure Facilities Key Issues**

EX7 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

#### **Swimming pools**

- There are no reports of swimming clubs travelling outside of Vale of White Horse to access provision (i.e., all swimming clubs in the district use pools in the district). However, all swimming clubs in the Vale report a lack of available pool space at peak times, as well as having to rely on education-owned pools. There is a need to enhance the security of community use of pools on education sites (particularly in Abingdon).



- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a large swimming pool (at least a 4 lane 25m pool), but the public leisure centre pools (Wantage LC pool, White Horse LTC and Faringdon LC) are 'uncomfortably busy' during peak periods. Wantage LC has the busiest pool and it has the lowest quality rating; modernisation of the swimming pool is required and a new teaching pool (18m x 10m) at the LC is recommended.
- To meet current and future demand for swimming, a new learner pool (15m x 10m) in Faringdon is also recommended (e.g. Total Swimming Academies, which deliver swimming lessons to children ages 3-11).

### **Sports halls**

- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a 4+ court sports hall. However, education sites play an important role and should these sites be removed from the model there would be insufficient supply to meet demand. Especially at schools in Abingdon (Abingdon Preparatory School and School of St Helen & St Katherine), in Wantage (St John's Academy and King Alfred's Academy) and in Faringdon (St Hugh's School).
- The vast majority of sports clubs in the Vale report a lack of availability and that a lack of sports hall time is the first barrier to club expansion. Wantage LC has the busiest sports hall in the Vale at peak times. It also has the lowest quality rating and therefore modernisation is required.
- New sports hall provision (4-courts or more in size; at least 34.5m x 20m) is required in the South sub area to alleviate Wantage LC capacity issues. It is recommended that this new sports hall be provided at the new secondary at Grove Airfield (St John's Academy).

### **Activity halls, village halls, community centres and studios**

- Activity halls (ie sports halls that are less than 4 badminton courts in size), village halls, community centres and studios are an important element of the wider health, fitness and conditioning market. All residents in the district can access provision within a 15-minute drive-time of a facility that has secured community use and there is recorded sport / physical activity taking place.
- The local share of provision (considering deprivation) is poorest around Wantage. Local share is very poor from Uffington through to west Didcot. To improve 'equity' of provision across the district, new activity halls (1-3-courts in size) / dance studios should be considered in these areas.

### **Health and fitness suites**

- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gym. However, the gyms at the public leisure centres (White Horse LTC, Faringdon LC and Wantage LC) are 'uncomfortably' busy during weekday evenings.

- Wantage LC gym is in need of modernisation as it is older and showing signs of age and poor quality. Residents in the South sub area are reliant upon the LC gym; other options in the area include expensive membership clubs. Extension of the gym at Wantage LC would alleviate capacity issues.

### **Squash courts**

- There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by squash clubs as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing squash facilities / club capacities.

### **Gymnastics facilities – artistic, rhythmic and trampolining**

- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gymnastics facility. However, clubs located in the South sub area have large waiting lists. A continual ambition for the clubs is to each have a dedicated single facility in order to offer more time/space to meet demand.

### **Archery ranges**

- There is no archery club based in the South sub area. New sports hall provision at St John's Academy in Grove (4-court hall), should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including archery).

### **Tennis courts – indoor, outdoor and padel**

- There are LTA Registered Clubs with outdoor tennis courts in all sub areas, and all residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of an outdoor tennis court. However, to increase club capacities, sports lighting should be installed at Faringdon TC, Hanney TC, Uffington LTC.
- At White Horse LTC, the former outdoor tennis courts should be refurbished and new Padel Tennis courts should be considered, which are for public use; managed via online bookings and has the ability to accommodate 'pay as you play' sessions (e.g., through use of ClubSpark).

### **Netball courts**

- Education sites are relied upon by clubs. All netball clubs hire the courts they use through block-bookings throughout the season (i.e., no long-term lease agreements in place).
- The quality of courts at Boundary Park (MUGA), John Mason School and Larkmead School need to be improved to meet current user expectations.
- New sports hall provision at St John's Academy in Grove (4-court hall), should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including netball).

### **Cycling facilities – off-road circuits**

- A key initiative for British Cycling is to provide dedicated cycling facilities in safe, traffic-free environments for any cyclist of any ability to participate, train and compete.

- The nearest outdoor cycle circuit is in neighbouring Swindon, Moredon Sporting Hub has recently opened (2024) and offers an off-road cycling track for public / community sports club use. Consideration should be given to the design of the cycling infrastructure at Dalton Barracks (Strategic Housing Site) and the fitness trail planned at Valley Park (Strategic Housing Site), so that cycling can be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).

### **Athletics facilities**

- There are no gaps in provision in the Vale for a 400m synthetic surfaced track with full field events provision (all residents are within a 40-minute drive-time). However, there are no Compact Athletics Facilities in the district and no dedicated running tracks. White Horse Harriers would like a Compact Athletics Facility within Grove and Wantage; its Juniors have little exposure to Sprint Run, Throw, Jump athletics.
- Setting up a youth section would be a priority for Harwell Harriers Running Club if it had use of 'off-road' provision. Consideration should be given to the design of the fitness trail planned at Valley Park (Strategic Housing Site), so that running can be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).

### **Bowls facilities – flat Green**

- There are no gaps in provision of outdoor bowling greens (i.e., all residents of the Vale of White Horse are within a 20-minute drive-time of an outdoor bowling green). Two clubhouse facilities are showing signs of wear and tear and poor quality.

### **Croquet lawns**

- There is a gap in community club croquet lawn provision in the West sub area (no croquet lawns in this sub-area). The clubhouse facilities at Blewbury Croquet Club are showing signs of wear and tear and poor quality.

### **Water sports facilities – rowing, canoeing, sailing, jet skiing and water skiing**

- There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by water sports clubs as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing water sports facilities / club capacities.

### **Skateparks**

- Existing skateparks are located in most of the largest villages and towns. However, there are no skateparks in Shrivenham, Watchfield and Kingston Bagpuize (all in the West sub area); Kennington and Botley (North sub area); and Harwell (South sub area).

### **Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)**

- Existing MUGAs are located in the towns and largest villages in the Vale. However, new MUGAs should be considered at the Strategic Housing sites, including Dalton Barracks (North sub-area), Crab Hill Wantage (South sub-area) and Grove Airfield (South sub-area).
- Support the development of new MUGAs planned at Folly Park in Faringdon and at Land West of Abingdon Road in Drayton.

### **Parkour facilities**

- There is one site with parkour provision in the Vale (Faringdon), requires more availability of provision and is actively looking for opportunities to develop a new indoor and outdoor facility with a permanent parkour set up.

### **Climbing walls**

- There are no climbing walls in the Vale. However, the majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing climbing wall in Oxford, Swindon or Newbury.

### **Horse-riding centres**

- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of an existing horse-riding centre. However, centres are running at 75% capacity due to issues around workforce, both paid and volunteer, suitable and affordable horsepower, and skyrocketing costs.

### **Golf courses**

- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of the golf courses and facilities. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by England Golf as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing golf course facilities / club capacities.

## **Main Recommendations by District and Sub-area**

EX8 The main recommendations which apply across the district, are set out below. These set out only “headlines” and full detailed recommendations are presented in the main body of the Strategy. Sub-area recommendations are limited, in this Executive Summary, to presenting headlines for future provision.

### **District**

- Avoid, where possible, the loss of strategically valuable sports facilities that are available for community use or could contribute to meeting future community needs, unless replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.

- Improve access to meet demand, and to continue to develop the community use of sport facilities on private and education sites.
- Ensure, as far as possible, that any new sports facilities, provided as part of future educational provision in the Vale, are designed for curricular, extra-curricular, community and sports development use and made available for community use out of school hours.
- Support proposals that help address the need for sports facilities in the district (subject to the outcome of any options appraisal and feasibility study for the development of sports facilities across the district).
- Ensure that new facilities and their use are planned, managed and promoted to ensure that they lie at the heart of their local communities. Ensure they are easily accessible to all, thus reducing the need to travel, and / or work is progressed to help ensure that transport connectivity (while prioritising low carbon and active modes of travel first) are delivered in the Vale.
- When planning for major new developments and links to sports facilities, planning officers should consider the principles established by Sport England / Public Health England's Active Design Guidance.
- Ensure that new developments (e.g. residential, commercial and retail) contribute where appropriate towards the development and enhancement of financially viable sports facilities to meet identified needs, priority being given to projects identified in this Strategy. Develop costed facility priorities and incorporate these into the Community Infrastructure Levy.

### **Priority recommendations**

EX9 The following recommendations are to 'provide' new facilities to meet demand / expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision.

#### **North Sub-Area**

- New Padel tennis courts / netball courts / a MUGA at White Horse LTC.
- New skateparks in Botley and in Kennington.
- New skatepark, BMX track, MUGA, tennis and netball courts at Dalton Barracks (Strategic Housing Site).
- New MUGA at North West of Abingdon on Thames (Strategic Housing Site).
- New MUGA at Land West of Abingdon Road in Drayton.

### **South Sub-Area**

- New learner pool (18m x 10m) at Wantage LC.
- New 4-court sports hall (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m) at St. John's Academy (Grove Airfield).
- New skatepark and MUGA at Crab Hill, Wantage (Strategic Housing Site)
- New athletics facilities (compact-design) at King Alfred's School in Wantage.
- New MUGAs and Fitness Trail at Valley Park, Didcot (Strategic Housing Site).
- New dedicated provision for gymnastics in Didcot area.
- New skatepark in Harwell.

### **West Sub-Area**

- New learner pool (15m x 10m) in Faringdon (e.g. Total Swimming Academies)
- New skateparks in Kingston Bagpuize, Shrivenham and Watchfield.
- New dedicated Parkour facility in Faringdon.
- New MUGA at Folly Park in Faringdon.

### **Monitoring and Delivery**

EX10 Following consultation on the draft strategy and any changes made as a result, confirmed recommendations and actions will be set out and monitored in a "live" action plan framework which members of the steering group will have a responsibility to update and implement. Implementation will depend on steering group members co-ordinating and working closely with clubs, teams, league organisers, providers / operators, owners of current facilities and owners of facilities and potential sites for additional facilities. The action plan framework will, in time, be updated by the District Council and delivery informed by other priorities such as (but not limited to) response to the climate emergency, economic recovery and levels of deprivation. The delivery stage will also confirm options for change presented in this strategy as further work during implementation is done on feasibility, viability and implications of other actions. However, LFAS guidance recommends that an action plan is consulted upon as part of the strategy. Therefore, a "headline" action plan table is included in this draft Strategy setting out priority actions in broad terms.

EX11 To aid use of the strategy by local authority planning officers, the strategy also provides brief guidance for local authority officers in how to use and apply this strategy. The importance of the delivery stage (Stage E of the LFAS guidance and process) must not be underestimated.

## 1. Introduction

### **(What is a Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy and why has it been developed?)**

- 1.1 In Autumn 2022, we (Stuart Todd Associates Ltd.) were commissioned to develop a new Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy (LFAS) for Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWDC). The strategy is compliant with the most up-to-date Sport England Assessing Needs and Opportunities guidance (issued in October 2013). This document is the Strategy and Action Plan – the Assessment Report is presented in a separate document.
- 1.2 Development of the strategy necessitates a lengthy process to gather and analyse data across different sports, consult with key stakeholders and ensure agreement of the strategy's content by sport governing bodies and Sport England. Where possible, the approach to the strategy's development has sought to expedite this process, without compromising the need to meet the requirements of the guidance. The strategy covers the period between 2023 and 2041.
- 1.3 A LFAS plays a number of important roles in sport, leisure and planning terms, and also has a direct link into the health and wellbeing agenda both in relation to formal club-based sport but also social, casual and informal sport aimed at getting people more active (with positive outcomes for mental as well as physical health). At its basic level, the LFAS provides an audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of leisure facilities, establishes the current levels of demand (and therefore whether facilities are being over or under used) and projects forward demand likely to arise by the end of the strategy period so that the appropriate level of provision can be planned for the future.
- 1.4 The LFAS:
  - Can be used as robust evidence to protect existing sports facilities;
  - Can and should be used in the planning of new developments to include leisure facilities on-site or contribution to off-site;
  - Can help to improve the quality of offer and provision by identifying and quantifying issues relating to the quality of sports facilities and ancillary facilities;
  - Can be used by clubs and teams and facility providers to support applications for funding for the improvement of the quality, quantity and accessibility of provision;
  - Helps to defend against inappropriate development or loss of facilities;
  - Informs planning policy development;
  - Provides a strategic view and options for the provision of facilities during the strategy period;
  - Forms an important part of the “package” of strategies, evidence and actions which can contribute towards improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those who live and work in the district.



- 1.5 It is for these reasons, and to ensure that the district has an up-to-date LFAS guidance compliant strategy, that it was commissioned. What the strategy does not and cannot do is provide a blueprint for change to 2041. The strategy can present options based on evidence and assessment of it (and indeed recommendations) but cannot do the work necessary (for example, logistical, feasibility and viability work) required to confirm actions with 100% certainty and make things happen “on the ground”, which is the task of the many stakeholders (such as clubs, providers, owners and managers of facilities) and bodies (such as the District Council, sports governing bodies and Sport England) responsible for delivery of facilities following the strategy’s adoption.
- 1.6 The delivery of the strategy should include 6 or 12 monthly meetings of the steering group to monitor, action and help deliver change. If this approach is carried out on an annual basis then it should become clear at which point a significant number of changes have occurred which may significantly affect the key issues and priorities. At this stage a full review of the evidence base including the supply and demand information and assessment details may be required.

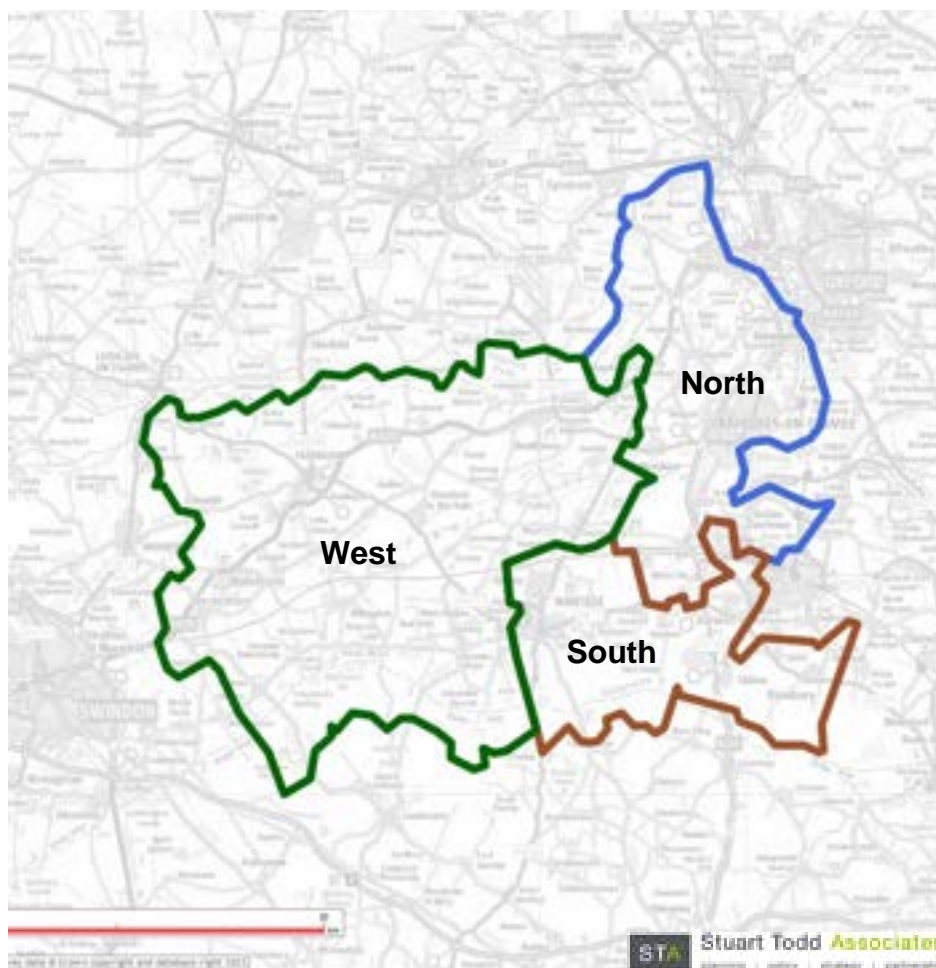


## 2. The Study Area

### (What is the extent of the study area?)

- 2.1 The study area for the LFAS is the whole of the VoWHDC area, as shown on the map below (Figure 1). The locations of all facilities identified in the study are shown in the Assessment Report which accompany this strategy document.
- 2.2 Much of the data on facilities is listed and broken down into sub-areas within the district. This has been done to help provide more localised assessment than that which can be provided at a district-wide scale. The sub areas used, as shown in Figure 1, are consistent with those used in the previous sports strategy and by VoWHDC in delivering community services and facilities. Use of these sub areas for this LFAS was confirmed by the Steering Group overseeing the work.

**Figure 1: Study Area and Sub-Areas**



- 2.3 The largest settlements in each sub area are Abingdon (North), Wantage and Grove (South) and Faringdon (West). The A34 dual carriageway (to Oxford/Newbury) runs through the North and South sub areas; and the River Thames flows through Abingdon to Oxford (North sub area).

### 3. Typology

#### (What sports and types of pitches does the strategy cover?)

3.1 Given the breadth of sports played in the Vale of White Horse, as well as the intention of VoWHDC to incorporate as many types of sports and physical activity as possible, the assessment will consider the following facility types):

- Archery ranges
- Athletics 'track & field' facilities
- Basketball courts
- Badminton courts
- Bowling greens
- Boxing gyms
- Climbing walls
- Croquet lawns
- Cycling facilities
- Dance halls and studios
- Golf courses
- Gymnastics halls
- Health and fitness suites (gyms & fitness studios)
- Martial arts facilities
- Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)
- Netball courts
- Parkour provision
- Polo pitches and horse-riding centres
- Skateparks
- Sports halls (including community and village halls with sports facilities)
- Squash courts
- Swimming pools
- Table tennis provision
- Tennis courts
- Volleyball courts
- Water sports (rowing, sailing and canoeing).

- 3.2 It should be noted that in parallel to the LFAS, the Council has also commissioned a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), to provide a strategic analysis of grass and artificial pitch supply and demand across the district. In conjunction with the PPS, the LFAS will provide a holistic analysis of sports facilities across the study area, leading to a comprehensive set of recommendations for the future development of facilities, in line with the needs of local residents.
- 3.3 It should also be noted that the Oxfordshire Cricket Board has recently completed their facility strategy and have identified key priorities to address. These have been reflected in the PPS assessment for club cricket, but they have also identified a need for performance cricket which is hosted within a community setting. It is Oxfordshire Cricket Board's intention to seek a county ground and indoor centre (that could be multi-sport) to cater for all levels of cricket, from grassroots all the way to National Counties Cricket Association and to host showcase fixtures with first class counties.

## 4. Methodology

### (How has the strategy been developed?)

- 4.1 This LFAS is based on an assessment of indoor and outdoor leisure facilities in accordance with Sport England's Guidance: Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) for indoor and outdoor leisure facilities. This methodology has been followed to develop a clear picture of the balance between the local supply of, and demand for, leisure facilities.
- 4.2 The LFAS is based on a considerable amount of background research work regarding the future needs for sport and recreation provision. It has been developed using a number of recognised sport facility planning tools and a wide-ranging consultation with relevant stakeholders. Recommended facility planning tools were applied including Sport England's Active Places and Active People data. The strategy is also informed by detailed analysis of the results of Sport England Facility Planning Model for sports halls and swimming pools (December 2023). These reports were commissioned specifically for this purpose.
- 4.3 A comprehensive audit of provision in the district was completed in December 2022 and January 2023. The audit provides a snapshot of the situation at that time and sites were reviewed on a like-for-like basis on their ability to provide for any increase in participation. A range of elements including accessibility, service provision, catchment (travel time) and affordability were assessed.
- 4.4 Consultation and research are fundamental to the validity of the strategy and key stakeholders and partners were consulted in addition to a comprehensive audit of facilities. The LFAS has been developed in partnership with a range of agencies including national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) plus local clubs and VoWHDC. It will also be influenced by other councils and organisations such as Parish and Town Councils as well as local schools and other private providers.

## 5. Consultation and Management of the Process

### (Who has been involved in the strategy's development?)

#### Steering Group

5.1 ANOG guidance requires the development of the strategy to be steered and managed by a “steering group”. This typically includes (at least) the commissioning local authority, Sport England and sports governing bodies (NGBs). The involvement of a steering group is particularly important given the importance of its members in the “grounding” and delivery of the strategy. The steering group plays a significant role by:

- considering (through “check and challenge”) information and data during the process;
- verifying and helping to localise data;
- providing a connection with local providers, clubs and teams;
- helping to put locally gathered information into a strategic context; and,
- commenting on and shaping the outputs of the study at each stage in the process and giving approval required by the ANOG guidance prior to the process moving to the next stage.

5.2 NGBs have played a key role, in particular, and their role and commitment to the process is set out in the ANOG guidance.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Vale of White Horse District Council	Lawn Tennis Association
Badminton England	Parkour UK
Basketball England	Skateboarding GB
Bowls England	England Squash
England Boxing	Swim England
British Canoeing	Table Tennis England
British Cycling	Volleyball England
British Gymnastics	Sport England
England Athletics	Active Oxfordshire
England Netball	Stuart Todd Associates Ltd.

5.3 Communication with the steering group has not simply been through meetings at key stages of the process. We have kept an ongoing dialogue with members of the steering group throughout the process.

## Consultation

- 5.4 Consultation is an integral and important part of the LFAS' development, as set out above. Consultation has been undertaken, prior to the strategy being produced, in the following ways:
- Online surveys early in the process sent to relevant clubs, facility owners, facility managers, facility providers / operators and the education sector to ascertain up-to-date baseline information about quality, accessibility, demand for leisure facilities and ancillary facilities being reviewed and other important issues of concern; and,
  - Face-to-face on-site meetings with some of those providers and operators managing and maintaining sites during the facility audit process.
- 5.5 This strategy is subject to wider consultation and views will help to inform and confirm the strategy's content. Any changes in data identified through consultation will only be updated further at this stage if it would be likely to require a fundamental change to the conclusions overall for that sport or facility type. The use of facilities and issues of concern can change from year to year and so some flexibility in the interpretation of results at the facility specific level will be required, something which will need to be acknowledged as the strategy is delivered and as solutions are identified. This is one of the reasons why the strategy cannot provide a blueprint for change but instead focuses on key actions and options for change to improve the quality of provision and respond appropriately to changes in demand now and in the future. Within this context, the actions which arise from the process are considered to be "live".

## **6. Responsibilities**

### **(Who has ownership of the strategy and who will deliver its actions?)**

- 6.1 While the development of the strategy was commissioned by the District Council (and therefore ownership of the strategy rests principally with the local authority), this does not mean that any additional facilities proposed to fill identified shortfalls or future provision must be funded and / or delivered and / or maintained by the local authority. The nature of leisure facility provision has been changing over the last decade or so nationally with the role of local authorities now moving away from that of a provider, maintainer and operator of facilities to that of a facilitator and enabler. However, the strategy has an important role in informing the current and future reviews of the Council's Local Plan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and approach to CIL and s106 planning obligations<sup>1</sup>. It will also play an important role informing the decision-making process as the Council considers planning applications (as the local planning authority) which relate to the protection, enhancement and provision of facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to any changes being brought about to the s106 and CIL regime by changes to the planning system during the strategy period.

- 6.2 New facilities are most likely to be provided in partnership by the local authority, sports organisations, national sports governing bodies, the education sector / establishments, clubs, businesses and operators, or more commonly by a combination of one or more of these. The local authority is likely to play a key enabling and co-ordination role in planning for and the delivery of new facilities across the district. The same applies to the improvement of existing facilities, where management and / or ownership of existing facilities is no longer (or never has been) the responsibility of the Council. The current landscape of facility provision therefore requires the steering group members each to (continue to) play an important role in helping to deliver the strategy's recommendations and action framework.

## **7. Other Strategies & Plans and Funding Opportunities**

**(What key strategies & plans and funding opportunities are relevant to the LFAS?)**

- 7.1 There are a number of important strategies and plans which are relevant and link to the LFAS, both on the sport and planning side which are briefly summarised below. It is important to note the context that they provide, both for the strategy to be produced and also for the recommendations and actions it presents. There are other strategies and plans with which this strategy has a connection. However, these cannot all be summarised here.
- 7.2 We acknowledge and recommend, however, that important links should continue to be made by appropriate bodies between this strategy for facilities and sport and those produced for issues such as health & wellbeing (including leisure and active lives), green infrastructure, transport, economic development and wider planning programmes. Appendix 1 provides a contextual summary of these various documents and of current funding opportunities.
- Current District-wide Adopted Planning Policies (Local Plan) (and Emerging Joint Local Plan 2041)
  - South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Active Communities Strategy
  - South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Infrastructure Delivery Plans
  - Neighbourhood Plans
  - National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance
  - Sport England: "Uniting the Movement" 2021-2031
  - Health and Wellbeing Strategy
  - Active Design
  - South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP5)



## 8. Decarbonisation, Sustainable Travel and Climate Change

### (What are the key issues for sport in relation to the changing climate?)

- 8.1 When considering the decarbonisation, sustainable travel and climate change agendas, there are several ways that the sport can help to minimise impact and contribute positively towards mitigating and adapting to the changing climate.
- 8.2 For example, clubs in control of their facilities and providers / owners of facilities, measures such as solar pv and heat pumps can help to secure a local supply of energy and contribute towards lowering energy costs, as can retrofitting insulation to buildings<sup>2</sup>. Small, yet important measures, like making secure and well-lit cycle storage available at sites and facilities can make a small difference and many sites already have good levels of cycle parking in appropriate locations on sites. However, this type of infrastructure provision can only be part of the answer. Leisure facility providers, nor NGBs or the local authority alone cannot be expected to provide all solutions to deliver this type of change “on the ground”. Cultural shift is also required across sport with many players using cars to get to matches and training, and a continuing challenge is likely to be that there are not and cannot be a sufficient number of facilities provided in all locations to enable a 20-minute cycle or walk to them – it seems unlikely to be viable to provide that number for each sport. Cultural shift will be difficult to embed in many sports, also because many players will simply not have the time in their day to factor in a longer journey time to play and many will not be prepared to cycle or walk significant distances to play matches or train after playing their sport for anywhere between one and several hours (and particularly if the weather is poor and they play outside). This is not to say that this is a challenge not worth addressing, but the LFAS cannot provide full answers and proposals to resolve such issues, particularly as they go beyond the remit of the strategy and will require cross-discipline, cross-department and cross-sector working within and with organisations and other stakeholders outside of sport and planning. For example, it will be the role of other strategies and plans such as Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans and Active Travel Strategies and Action Plans to help ensure that key sports hubs, in particular, which see a substantial amount of demand, are well connected by safe cycling and walking networks, while it is the role of public transport providers and local authorities to ensure that public transport also serves such facilities at the right times, right frequencies and to the most likely destinations of leisure facility users.
- 8.3 Clearly, for the environment, sport and health to benefit, and for solutions to be financially viable, a balance needs to be struck, as is the case throughout the planning system between provision of leisure facilities and resolution of adverse impact and satisfactory mitigation of these. For example, the Government has been looking at carbon assessments for developments to be brought in (which seem likely to be introduced anyway by many local authorities) and impact assessments for travel/transport and the environment already exist. Net gain (in biodiversity) for development proposals has been introduced through the Environment Act 2021 and many Local Plans already introduced such requirements through policy. There is no reason why

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<sup>2</sup> Advice is available for clubs, for example, <https://susfootball.com/net-zero-football-club/>

proposals for leisure facilities should not be required to demonstrate that they pass such tests. Authorities can already seek conditions on permissions including the design of schemes. There is clearly a role for the planning system (and planning policies in particular in Local Plans) to ensure that such tests and requirements for mitigations are introduced to ensure that communities and people's physical and mental health can still benefit from leisure facilities without compromising or having a net additional adverse impact on the environment. Much will need also to be done, outside of sport and the planning system, to help make the shift required to achieve net zero and to prevent, mitigate and adapt to climate change, while also providing fully for sport and health, within the context of the Council's commitment for Vale of White Horse to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Council is introducing mandatory use of a Climate Impact Assessment Tool by its staff which will help to understand potential impact of proposals which come forward for sport.

## **9. The Role of Strategic Housing Sites**

### **(How can major housing developments contribute towards leisure facility provision?)**

- 9.1 The assessment report captures the results of individual assessments of the demand likely to arise from the strategic housing development sites in the district, where the LFAS can still have an influence on provision (some allocations already have agreements in place for provision of leisure facilities which the assessment and strategy consider as "pipeline" commitments to additional supply). The amount of land required to accommodate these significant scales of housing also means that they present the best opportunity for provision of new leisure facilities where required, to serve both demand from the housing site, and additional and future demand from a growing population to 2041. However, when considering how best to plan for and accommodate demand arising from major developments, it is dangerous to assume that in every instance provision for leisure facilities should be provided.
- 9.2 Careful thought must be given the appropriateness, viability and practicalities of use, running and maintaining a facility if in a location away from an existing club's facilities. Economies of scale and critical mass of members and volunteers required are also important factors, with provision of single sport sites rarely representing good value or a practical solution when split sites draw members away from an existing facility (therefore, introducing additional travel for some existing members / players) and where ancillary facilities also need to be provided at significant cost.
- 9.3 Pooling or securing contributions from multiple sites can often be a more workable and appropriate solution for formal sports provision where funds can be used to strengthen and improve capacity at existing club sites or can be channelled into strategic sports hub sites within a major development site to replace existing club sites where improvements and expansion of capacity could prove challenging in the longer-term.



- 9.4 These factors have all been taken into account as the role of strategic housing sites has been considered and recommendations made about provision on each site later in this strategy.

## 10. The Vision for Leisure Facilities in the Vale of White Horse

### (What should the strategy seek to achieve?)

- 10.1 At the start of the LFAS process, the Steering Group overseeing the strategy's development agreed a Vision for the strategy. The Vision, set out below, sets the tone for the treatment of leisure facilities in the district during the strategy period to the year 2041.

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### ***Vision***

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*“The Vale of White Horse should provide a good supply of well managed and maintained leisure and recreation facilities, which are fit for purpose, meet identified needs and encourage all residents to take part in sport and physical activity.*

*There will be a positive reaction to the impacts of climate change through sports provision, seeking to contribute to opportunities for the community to access sports facilities and ancillary facilities without the need to use unsustainable forms of transport and support access to the facilities through active travel means. The strategy will support the Councils' vision to become carbon neutral by 2030 and to reduce emissions across the district.”*

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## 11. The Aims of the Leisure Facilities Strategy

### (How will the strategy meet the aspirations set out in the Vision?)

11.1 Accompanying the strategy's Vision, a set of aims has also been developed which set out what the strategy is seeking to achieve. They reflect the role of the strategy in contributing towards sport, activity, health and wellbeing; and, providing up-to-date evidence and strategy framework to help protect, enhance and provide leisure facilities and demonstrate the demand and need for leisure facilities, with the aim of provision in the right places and at the right time.

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#### Aims

- To protect, enhance and provide leisure facilities and ancillary facilities and address any shortfalls in quantity and quality.
  - To help direct investment to where improvements can have the greatest impact.
  - To encourage community access to the site by active travel means or more sustainable methods of transport.
  - To include recommendations that take account of the need to achieve carbon neutral districts and have measures in place to help ensure that facilities can be managed sustainably
  - In the approach and preparation of the needs assessment and strategy, to consider and incorporate the councils' duties under Equality Act 2010 in its recommendations.
  - The assessment will help to ensure that the planning policies in the Joint Local Plan are based on a robust and up-to-date assessment of the needs for sports facilities.
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## 12. Leisure Facilities Key Issues

12.1 This section presents a summary of the key issues for each sport facility type, providing context for the sections which follow. Headlines only are provided to give brief context for each sport facility type, with much more detail provided in the Assessment Reports.

### Swimming pools

12.2 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are no reports of swimming clubs travelling outside of Vale of White Horse to access provision (i.e., all swimming clubs in the district use pools in the district). However, clubs are having to rely on education-owned pools. There is a need to enhance the security of community use of pools on education sites. Community use agreements should be sought for Abingdon Vale SC at Abingdon School and Radley College, and for Abingdon SC at Our Lady's School.
- All swimming clubs in the Vale report a lack of available pool space at peak times and that this is the first barrier to club expansion. Wantage LC has the busiest pool in Vale – it is full-to-capacity during 93% of the hours open during peak periods (70% or above is deemed 'uncomfortably busy'). The pool is older and showing signs of age and poor quality; it is usable but does not meet current expectations.
- The second busiest pool in the Vale is White Horse LTC (full 90% of peak times) followed by Faringdon LC pool (full 89% of peak periods). All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a large swimming pool (at least a 4 lane 25m pool), but there is a need to work with operators of White Horse LTC, Faringdon and Wantage leisure centres to enable more use by clubs.
- To meet current and future demand for swimming, it is recommended that a new 18m x 10m teaching pool be annexed to the current Wantage Leisure Centre building, which will alleviate the capacity issues.
- It is also recommended that a new learner pool (15m x 10m) in Faringdon be considered further (e.g. Total Swimming Academies, which deliver swimming lessons to children ages 3-11).

## Sports halls

12.3 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- The district benefits from 10 four-court halls which meet the court dimensions recommended for a 4-court hall (34.5m x 20m). These dimensions provide a sports hall that can cater for all hall sports at the community level of participation; and the scale also meets the requirements for hall sports club development.
- However, three sports halls have slightly smaller four-court halls with dimensions of 33 x 18 m which provides for hall sports at the community level but has less space between and behind individual courts.
- In addition to the 13 four-court halls, there is an 8-court sports hall at White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre; two six-court halls (Faringdon Leisure Centre and the St Helen and St Katharine School) and a five-court hall at Radley College.
- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a 4+ court sports hall. However, education sites play an important role and should these sites be removed from the model there would be insufficient supply to meet demand. This is particularly important in the West sub area where there are two large sports halls (4+ courts) with community access; Faringdon Leisure Centre and St Hugh's School.
- As a guide, the Sport England suggests that when 80% of a hall's capacity is used then this indicates that sports halls are becoming uncomfortably busy. This should be seen only as a guide to help flag when facilities are becoming busier, rather than as a 'hard threshold.' The vast majority of sports clubs in the Vale report a lack of availability and that a lack of sports hall time is the first barrier to club expansion. Wantage LC has the busiest sports hall in the Vale of White Horse – it is full-to-capacity during 94% of the hours open during peak periods. It has the lowest quality rating; the facility is older and showing signs of age and poor quality. It is usable but does not meet current expectations and modernisation is required.
- New sports hall provision (4-courts or more in size; at least 34.5m x 20m) is required in the South sub area to alleviate Wantage LC capacity issues. It is recommended that this new sports hall be provided at St John's Academy in Grove (4-court hall).
- Across the district there are number of sports halls with cricket nets that are of an acceptable standard for indoor cricket, however securing access to these facilities has been identified as difficult. This is a challenge for both the Oxfordshire Pathway planning and the clubs, whose winter programmes are restricted.

- The other issue for indoor cricket is that new sprung-loaded floors are unsuitable for cricket, so the Oxfordshire Cricket Board should be consulted in the design phase of any new sports hall to ensure an appropriate multi-use flooring is installed.
- Sports clubs are reliant on the education sector for the supply of halls. Secure community use of sports halls at education sites through Community Use Agreements in all sub areas. Especially at schools in Abingdon (Abingdon Preparatory School and School of St Helen & St Katherine), in Wantage (St John's Academy and King Alfred's Academy) and in Faringdon (St Hugh's School).

### **Activity halls, village halls, community centres and studios**

12.4 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Activity halls (ie sports halls that are less than 4 badminton courts in size), village halls, community centres and studios are an important element of the wider health, fitness and conditioning market. They vary in size, shape, quality, access to sprung wooden floors and level of ancillary facilities. Activity types vary from low-impact to high intensity classes.
- Although all village/community halls rely mainly on volunteers to operate, many offer facilities to local communities at the times needed i.e. morning, afternoon and evening. The majority of facilities are available 7 days a week for community use but must be pre-booked as they do not have extensive opening hours.
- The village halls and community centres have an important role enabling local people to access a range of local activities. They cater for older people as well as those living in more rural areas. Given the rural nature of the district, the importance of village halls and community centres cannot be underestimated. Activity programmes within facilities can contribute to getting the inactive active or retaining the already involved. These facilities can meet the needs of the ageing population and/or those suffering from rural isolation.
- There are no geographical gaps in the provision of activity hall, village hall, community centre and studios in the Vale. Catchment mapping (using a 15-minute drive-time) shows all residents can access provision that has secured community use and there is recorded sport / physical activity taking place.
- The local share of provision (considering deprivation), is poorest around Wantage. Local share is very poor from Uffington through to west Didcot. To improve 'equity' of provision across the district, new activity halls (1-3-courts in size) / dance studios should be considered in these areas.

- Further need assessment work (e.g, viability testing/ feasibility study) is required in order to determine the exact size of the hall / number of dance studios, which should be based upon local identified demand. The local community could access sports facilities and ancillary facilities without the need to use unsustainable forms of transport, and the strategy should support access to the facilities through active travel means.

## Health and fitness suites

12.5 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gym. The gyms at White Horse LTC and Wantage LC are 'uncomfortably busy' (ie, 80% or more used-capacity) from 17:00 to 21:00 on Monday to Friday. The gym at Faringdon LC is 'uncomfortably busy' (ie, 80% or more used-capacity) for a shorter period of time, from 17:00 to 20:00 on Monday to Friday.
- There is a need to improve the quality of the gym at Wantage LC. The facility is older and showing signs of age and poor quality. It is not attractive to customers and does not meet current expectations.
- There were no issues raised with disability access of facilities as part of this study. Residents in the South sub area are reliant upon Wantage LC gym; other options in the area include expensive membership clubs. Extension of the Wantage LC gym would alleviate capacity issues.

## Squash courts

12.6 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There is one community squash club in the Vale (Abingdon Squash & Racketball Club, which are based at Abingdon and Witney College). No issues were raised by the Club, but there could be a need to enhance security of tenure for Abingdon Squash & Racketball Club at Abingdon and Witney College (current lease expires in 2027).
- There are squash courts located in all sub areas and no geographical gaps in provision (ie, all residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a court). There are no squash clubs using White Horse LTC, Wantage LC or Faringdon LC (no block-bookings reported by leisure centre operators).
- There is spare capacity for squash during peak periods at all public leisure centres in the Vale of White Horse. However, the courts at White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre are almost full-to-capacity (88% full during peak periods). The only block-booking is made by Abingdon Judo Club (20 hours per week in the peak period) for both squash courts.

- The used-capacity of squash courts at Wantage Leisure Centre is 19% during peak periods and 52% at Faringdon Leisure Centre.
- The worst quality squash courts in the district are located at Wantage Leisure Centre ('Below Average' quality) and the remaining six squash court sites visited were 'Above Average' quality.

### **Gymnastics facilities – artistic, rhythmic and trampolining**

12.7 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are gymnastics facilities located at eight sites (across all three sub areas). However, seven of these sites are shared facilities (with other sports) – there are two sports halls, two school halls and three village halls. The only dedicated gymnastics venue is located at Wantage Gymnastics Centre (West sub area).
- All Vale residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gymnastics facility. However, three of the five clubs have waiting lists.
- Kinetics Gymnastics and Wantage Gymnastics Centre are located in the South sub area and both have large waiting lists. Kinetics use multiple venues – a dedicated single facility is a continual ambition for the club in order to offer time/space to meet demand.
- Heights Trampoline & Gymnastics Club has potential to expand but the hire costs and a lack of availability for additional sessions at the White Horse LTC prohibits this. The club would like a dedicated unit to ensure all groups (and people on its waiting list) can be offered a chance to participate in gymnastics throughout the whole day and every day of the week.

### **Archery ranges**

12.8 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Buscot Park Archers is based in Faringdon (West sub area), Oxford Archers in North Hinksey (North sub area) and Harlequin Bowmen in Harwell (North sub area). There is no archery club based in the South sub area and therefore a geographical gap in provision.
- Buscot Park Archers highlighted a need for new archery coaches in the area. The club also report a lack of availability at Faringdon Leisure Centre to book Winter indoor shooting sessions at times that are convenient.



- New sports hall provision at St John's Academy in Grove (4-court hall), should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including archery).

### **Tennis courts – indoor, outdoor and padel**

12.9 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are LTA Registered Clubs with outdoor tennis courts in all sub areas (and all residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of an outdoor tennis court).
- Clubs across the Vale have a total of 245 spare capacity for new tennis players. However, three of the five clubs in the West sub area are over-capacity (124 in total, including Faringdon TC that is 100 players over-capacity). To alleviate capacity issues at Faringdon TC, and to meet future demand in the West sub area, new tennis courts and sports lighting should be provided where needed. It is strongly encouraged current and new venues, including park tennis courts, have sustainable operating procedures in place, such as online booking, Smart Access and pay and play through use of ClubSpark.
- Support should be provided to clubs with facility development plans (e.g., Faringdon TC, Hanney TC, Uffington LTC, Oxford Sports TC and Abingdon LTC), and improvements made to the quality of outdoor tennis courts at White Horse TLC.
- The White Horse LTC is a Community Indoor Tennis Centre (CITC) – recognised by the LTA as community tennis hubs that are accessible for everyone (i.e., no club is based here). The six indoor tennis courts at the White Horse tennis centre are, on average, full-to-capacity during 87% of weekly peak periods.
- In addition to the six indoor courts, there are 10 outdoor tennis courts, however six courts are former courts as they are no longer safe to use. These courts should be refurbished and new Padel Tennis courts at White Horse LTC should be considered, which are for public use and managed via online bookings and has the ability to accommodate 'pay as you play' sessions (e.g., through use of ClubSpark).



## Netball courts

12.10 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Education sites are relied upon by clubs. All netball clubs hire the courts they use through block-bookings throughout the season (i.e., no long-term lease agreements in place). Security of community needed for netball clubs using the education sites (John Mason School, Larkmead School, St Helen's and St Katherine's School, The Manor Prep School and King Alfred's School (West Site))
- The quality of courts at Boundary Park (MUGA), John Mason School and Larkmead School need to be improved to meet current user expectations.
- Wantage LC has the busiest sports hall in the Vale of White Horse – it is full-to-capacity during 94% of the hours open during peak periods. New sports hall provision (4-courts or more in size; at least 34.5m x 20m) is needed in the South sub area to alleviate Wantage LC capacity issues.
- New sports hall provision at St John's Academy in Grove (4-court hall), should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including netball).

## Cycling facilities – off-road circuits

12.11 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Abingdon Race Team has used Dalton Barracks in Abingdon since 2014; through block-bookings throughout the season (i.e., no long-term lease agreements in place).
- A key initiative for British Cycling is to provide dedicated cycling facilities in safe, traffic-free environments for any cyclist (including disabled cyclists) of any ability to participate, train and compete. British Cycling's latest facility strategy aims for no one to travel more than 40 minutes to an 'off-road' cycle circuit. The nearest outdoor cycle circuit is in neighbouring Swindon, Moredon Sporting Hub has recently opened (2024) and offers an off-road cycling track for public / community sports club use.
- Consideration should be given to the design of the fitness trail planned at Valley Park (Strategic Housing Site), so that cycling (including disabled cycling) can be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).
- Consideration should also be given to the design of the cycling infrastructure at Dalton Barracks (Strategic Housing Site), so that cycling (including disabled cycling) can continue to be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).

## **Athletics facilities**

12.12 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are two 400m synthetic surfaced tracks with full field events provision at Radley College Sports Centre and Tilsley Park Sports Complex (both in the North sub area). There is also an informal grass running track at Dalton Barracks, which is also located in the North sub area.
- England Athletics has confirmed that a 40-minute drive time is realistic for 400m synthetic surfaced track with full field events provision. There are no gaps in provision in the Vale for a 400m track.
- Harwell Harriers Running Club run loops around Boundary Park. Having use of an 'off-road' running circuit would mean that the club could deliver training sessions in a more controlled environment and would be more appealing to prospective members. Setting up a youth section would be a priority for the club if it had use of a running track. Consideration should be given to the design of the fitness trail planned at Valley Park (Strategic Housing Site), so that running can be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).
- There are no Compact Athletics Facilities in the district and no dedicated running tracks. White Horse Harriers would like a Compact Athletics Facility within Grove and Wantage as especially the Juniors have little exposure to Sprint Run, Throw, Jump athletics.

## **Bowls facilities – flat Green**

12.13 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are no gaps in provision of outdoor bowling greens (i.e., all residents of the Vale of White Horse are within a 20-minute drive-time of an outdoor bowling green).
- The clubhouse facilities at Harwell BC and Kingston Bagpuize & Southmoor BC are deteriorating and showing signs of wear and tear and poor quality. Both clubs have plans to upgrade their clubhouse facilities, which should be supported.
- Three village halls are used by three short-mat bowls clubs in the Vale. There are no short-mat bowls clubs in the West sub area.

## Croquet lawns

12.14 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There is a gap in community club croquet lawn provision in the West sub area (no croquet lawns in this sub-area).
- At Harwell Croquet Club, the lawns are well maintained, but have never been professionally levelled, so are quite uneven. The lawns are usable for match play but quality could be improved.
- At Blewbury Croquet Club, the clubhouse facilities are deteriorating and showing signs of wear and tear and poor quality. The facility is not as attractive to customers and does not meet current expectations.

## Water sports facilities – rowing, canoeing, sailing, jet skiing and water skiing

12.15 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of the water sports facilities. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by water sports clubs as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing water sports facilities / club capacities.
- As a method of good-practice, informal access to waterways in the Vale (ie River Thames) should follow the 'Paddlers Code', which advises how to protect, respect and enjoy the waterways. To improve access to sustainable recreational pursuits, it is recommended that the local authority joins the 'Clear Access Clear Waters' campaign.

## Skateparks

12.16 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Existing skateparks are located in most of the largest villages and towns. However, there are no skateparks in Shrevenham, Watchfield and Kingston Bagpuize (all in the West sub area); Kennington and Botley (North sub area); and Harwell (South sub area). It is recommended that new skateparks at recreation grounds in these areas are considered further, and that they are 'open-access' for public use.
- Stanford in the Vale Skatepark is not fit for purpose and is in need of improvement.

- There is also a need to provide new skateparks to meet future demand, particularly in the South sub area (e.g., Wantage). Support should be provided to the development of a new skatepark proposed at Central Park, Crab Hill in Wantage. Planning permission for a new skatepark at Louie Memorial Playing Fields has been granted in Spring 2024 (with most of the funding already secured) to meet demand for a skatepark in Botley.
- Skateparks in the district are available for use during daylight hours only. None of the skateparks have sports-lights. Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the existing skateparks, but this is dependent upon local demand being identified.

### **Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)**

12.17 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Existing MUGAs are located in the towns and largest villages in the Vale and therefore the vast majority of residents are within a 20-minute walk-time of existing provision (the normal acceptable standard for adequacy of coverage). However, the provision of new MUGAs should be considered at the Strategic Housing sites, including Dalton Barracks (North sub-area), Crab Hill, Wantage (South sub-area) and Grove Airfield (South sub-area).
- Consider improving the condition of MUGAs with open access that are 'Below Average' quality, including; Appleford Drive, Southern Town Park and Stratton Way (all in Abingdon); Louie Memorial Playing Fields (Botley) and Boundary Park (Didcot) and recreation grounds in Grove, Great Coxwell and Kingston Bagpuize.
- Also consider increasing the number of hours available for use at existing MUGAs by installing sports-lights where appropriate, including; St Andrews Parish and Louie Memorial Playing Fields (both in Botley), Appleford Drive, Southern Town Park and Stratton Way (all in Abingdon) and recreation grounds in East Hanney, Grove, Great Coxwell, Kingston Bagpuize, Stanford-in-the-Vale, Sutton Courtenay and Wootton.
- Encourage educational providers with MUGAs to allow public / community use where appropriate (e.g., Faringdon Community College).
- Support the development of new MUGAs planned at Folly Park in Faringdon and at Land West of Abingdon Road in Drayton.

## Parkour facilities

12.18 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Parkour is primarily a non-competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, principally through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement. Parkour provision may be indoor (with high ceilings and a part sprung floor, static bars and box equipment) or outdoor. Generally an outdoor training area would have a spongy floor (i.e., rubbery material – the same as in a children’s Play Area) and have posts, metal bars and concrete walls/ramps installed.
- There is one site with parkour provision in the Vale – The Pump House in Faringdon. This is a shared facility between parkour and non-sport community groups. Due to the popularity of the sport in Faringdon, the Urban Movement Academy requires more availability of parkour provision and is actively looking for opportunities to develop a new indoor and outdoor facility with a permanent parkour set up.
- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing parkour provision in Faringdon. Oxford Academy in Littlemore offers parkour sessions in its sports hall, and is within a 30-minute drive-time of residents in the North sub area.

## Climbing walls

12.19 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- A climbing wall is an artificially constructed wall with grips for hands and feet, usually used for indoor climbing, but sometimes located outdoors. Some are brick or wooden constructions, but on most modern walls, the material most often used is a thick multiplex board with holes drilled into it. Recently, manufactured steel and aluminium have also been used. The wall may have places to attach belay ropes, but may also be used to practice lead climbing or bouldering.
- There are no climbing walls in the Vale. However, it is likely that residents of the Vale are using the four indoor climbing centres in neighbouring authorities; Oxford, Swindon (two centres) and Newbury. There is also a new climbing centre in Oxford.
- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing climbing wall in Oxford, Swindon or Newbury. However, new provision in the district could meet current demand (from people currently travelling outside of the district to access provision).

- All neighbouring centres have extensive opening hours (typically 10:00-22:00 on weekdays and 09:00-18:00 at weekends) with permanent equipment set-up for climbing. It is likely that facilities are available to users that want to use them.

## Horse-riding centres

12.20 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- A horse-riding centre is an equestrian facility created and maintained for the purpose of accommodating, training or competing equids, especially horses. Based on their use, they may be known as a barn, stables, or riding hall and may include commercial operations described by terms such as a boarding stable, livery yard, or livery stable.
- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of an existing horse-riding centre.
- British Equestrian research data shows over two-thirds of centres are currently struggling to keep up with enquiries and take on new clients, creating a barrier to increasing participation. Conversely, on average, centres are running at 75% capacity due to issues around workforce, both paid and volunteer, suitable and affordable horsepower, and skyrocketing costs.
- There is a need to support existing horse-riding centres in addressing capacity issues caused by a lack of suitable workforce, horsepower and costs. Particularly in the North sub area (where there are only two horse-riding centres) and in the South sub area (where future demand is highest).

## Golf courses – 18-hole courses, driving ranges and Par-3 (practice / coaching)

12.21 The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- The majority of residents in the Vale are within a 30-minute drive-time of the golf courses and facilities. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by England Golf as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing golf course facilities / club capacities.

### 13. District-wide Recommendations

13.1 The general district-wide strategic recommendations and the actions required to deliver them are presented below. These recommendations have been identified as common themes following research and stakeholder consultation.

#### PROTECT

- Avoid, where possible the loss of strategically valuable sports facilities that are available for community use or could contribute to meeting future community needs, unless replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. Continue to review plans for developments involving strategically valuable sports facilities. Ensure any loss in provision is replaced by equivalent or better provision.
- Protect and enhance community use of sports facilities on educational sites, where required. Promote partnership working between schools, Council and other facility operators in the district to develop community use and maximise utilisation of existing facilities.

#### ENHANCE

- Develop a funding strategy to maintain / enhance facility stock. Identifying lead personnel to drive this and confirm requirement for funding strategy. It is also recommended that the Council with partners could commission a full buildings survey on the swimming pools and sports halls, where necessary, to understand the cost and feasibility of bringing the stock up to date, if possible.
- Improve access to meet demand, and to continue to develop the community use of sport facilities on private and education sites. It is recommended that further work be completed to ensure longer-term community access at sites with unsecured access for community use.
- The Active Partnership for Oxfordshire; Oxfordshire Activity and Sports Partnership (OASP), have a dedicated team that engage with education facilities across the county and work with local authorities to improve access to current facilities and invest in new facilities that meet the needs of both the schools and local residents. It is suggested that further support is sought from OASP to deliver this recommendation.
- Ensure that sports facility charges are reasonable in terms of affordability to residents, and are comparable with similar facilities elsewhere. To keep community accessible sports facility charges under review and benchmark against nearest neighbouring authorities.



**PROVIDE**

- Ensure, as far as possible, that any new sports facilities, provided as part of future educational provision in the Vale of White Horse, are designed for curricular, extra-curricular, community and sports development use and made available for community use out of school hours. Statement to be included within appropriate planning policy, if possible, so it can be carried through into decisions on development. Check that any proposed school sports facilities in the Vale of White Horse have appropriate external lighting, car parking and changing facilities to enable community use.
- Support proposals that help address the need for sports facilities in the district (subject to the outcome of any options appraisal and feasibility study for the development of sports facilities across the district). Provide support to ensure development meets the needs of the district. Help guide investment into new facilities and the expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision. Consideration should also be given to the delivery of Sport England's Local Leisure Offer to give a greater spread of provision within the district in part to reduce reliance on car/reduce the length of journeys required to access a facility.
- Ensure that new facilities and their use are planned, managed and promoted to ensure that they lie at the heart of their local communities. Ensure they are easily accessible to all, thus reducing the need to travel, and / or work is progressed to help ensure that transport connectivity (while prioritising low carbon and active modes of travel first) are delivered in the Vale of White Horse.
- When planning for major new developments and links to sports facilities, planning officers should consider the principles established by Sport England / Public Health England's Active Design Guidance. Good design incorporating low carbon and carbon-reducing measures and innovations such as sustainable drainage systems, rainwater recycling, electric car and bike charging points, biomass boilers, the greater use of natural light / passivhaus design and underfloor heating, solar power for electricity generation should be considered wherever feasible.
- Ensure that new developments (e.g. residential, commercial and retail) contribute where appropriate towards the development and enhancement of financially viable sports facilities to meet identified needs, priority being given to projects identified in this Strategy. Develop costed facility priorities and incorporate these into the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- Explore opportunities for collaborative working between neighbouring authorities to maximise cross-boundary usage. Maintain and develop relationship with Oxford City, Reading and Buckinghamshire councils.
- Develop partnerships working between Council departments, health agencies, facility operators, schools, colleges, NGBs, and local sports clubs to expand the range of affordable and accessible opportunities for both residents and visitors to the Vale of White Horse.



## 14. Strategic Site On-site / Off-site Provision

- 14.1 As already noted above, strategic housing allocation sites present a significant opportunity to host facilities required as a result of demand which arises from their population, and also as locations for new facilities to help address wider demand across the sub-area or reasonable functional or spatial catchment.
- 14.2 The tables below include recommendations for the contribution that the strategic housing sites in all sub-areas can make to provision of facilities. These are based on the sites that we have been advised can still be influenced / informed by the outcomes of the LFAS. Off-site contributions for some sports are also summarised here, but are set out in detail in the assessment reports.
- 14.3 Recommendations for non-pipeline sites are flexible, however, as opportunities presented are a starting point which should continue to be informed by detailed discussions during the delivery phase of the strategy (Stage E).

### **Summary of On-site / Off-site Sport and Leisure Facility Provision at Strategic Housing Sites**

Strategic Site	On-site requirements	Off-site requirements
<b>Dalton Barracks (North sub-area)</b>	<p>New MUGA, tennis and netball courts: explore opportunity for a new multi-use games area that can be used for netball and tennis, and can be made available for extensive public use. Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the MUGA, in order to maximise the community use throughout the year.</p> <p>Skatepark: explore opportunity for a new skatepark and BMX track that has 'open-access' for public use.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the design of the cycling infrastructure at this site, so that cycling can continue to be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).</p>	<p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including sports hall and swimming pool improvements in Abingdon.</p>

<p><b>North West of Abingdon on Thames (North sub-area)</b></p>	<p>New MUGA: explore opportunity for a new multi-use games area that can be used made available for community use.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the MUGA, in order to maximise the community use throughout the year.</p>	<p>Off-site contributions should be secured towards the provision of tennis facilities within the vicinity of the development (such as White Horse LTC).</p>
<p><b>Crab Hill, Wantage (South sub-area)</b></p>	<p>New MUGA: explore opportunity for a new multi-use games area that can be made available for community use.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the MUGA, in order to maximise the community use throughout the year.</p> <p>Skatepark: explore opportunity for a new skatepark at this site that has 'open-access' for public use.</p>	<p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including improvements to Wantage Leisure Centre and a new sports hall at St John's Academy (Grove Airfield).</p>
<p><b>Grove Airfield (South sub-area)</b></p>	<p>New 4-court sports hall (L:34.5m x W:20 x H:7.5m) at St John's Academy, which should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development.</p> <p>New MUGAs: explore opportunity for a new multi-use games area that can be used for netball and tennis, and can be made available for community use out of school hours. Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the MUGA, in order to maximise the community use throughout the year.</p>	<p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including improvements to Wantage Leisure Centre.</p>
<p><b>North-west Grove (South sub-area)</b></p>	<p>No on-site requirements have been identified as part of this study.</p>	<p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including improvements to Wantage Leisure Centre and a new sports hall at St John's Academy (Grove Airfield).</p>

<p><b>Valley Park, Didcot (South sub-area)</b></p>	<p>New MUGAs at Alma Park and Common Park: explore opportunity for new multi-use games areas that can be used for netball and tennis. Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the MUGA, in order to maximise the community use throughout the year.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the design of the fitness trail planned at this site, so that cycling and running can be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).</p>	<p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including sports hall and swimming pool improvements in Didcot.</p> <p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including a new learner pool at Didcot Wave Leisure Pool and a new sports hall at Didcot North East Leisure Facility (South Oxfordshire).</p>
<p><b>North-West Valley Park, Didcot (South sub-area)</b></p>	<p>No on-site requirements have been identified as part of this study.</p>	<p>Financial contributions should be secured towards the off-site leisure facilities including a new learner pool at Didcot Wave Leisure Pool and a new sports hall at Didcot North East Leisure Facility (South Oxfordshire).</p>

## 15. Strategy Recommendations by Sub Area

15.1 The following strategy recommendations are identified from the assessment of need identified within the LFAS Assessment Report. The recommendations reflect the strategic drivers highlighted by Sport England's Strategic Planning Model (i.e. Protect, Provide, Enhance). The recommendations reflect these drivers and draw together the overarching need in the area for key stakeholders to work together and deliver.

15.2 In practice, the objectives are to:

- **Protect existing facilities:** Sport England seeks to help protect sports and recreational buildings and land, and expects these to be retained or enhanced as part of redevelopment unless an assessment has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and they are surplus to requirements or clear evidence supports their relocation.
- **Enhance the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities:** to make the best use of existing sports facilities through improving their quality, access and management. Using the supporting advice of Sport England and NGBs, ensure efficient facility management for community access to school sites.

- **Provide new facilities to meet demand:** Sport England seeks to ensure that communities have access to sufficient, high-quality sports facilities that are fit for purpose. Guiding investment into new facilities and the expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision.
- 15.3 The following tables contain a list of the priority recommendations to 'enhance' existing facilities and 'provide' new facilities, where necessary, relating to facilities in each sub area and the actions required to deliver them. The facilities to be 'protected' as part of this strategy have been included in the full Action Plan shown in Appendix 3.
- 15.4 Indicative time frames and/or priorities could be as follows (although it is recognised that many actions will run concurrently and/or take advantage of opportunities arising):
- Short term (1-3 years): Ongoing and very important; to be addressed now.
  - Medium term (3-8 years) and long term (8+ years): Important: to be addressed and planned for in Council decision making and policy.

**Priorities in North Sub-area**

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Abingdon School and Sports Centre</b>	Swimming pool Sports hall Studio Squash courts	Sports clubs using the swimming pool, sports hall and studio do not have a long-term agreement in place (i.e., no security of use). Improved access is required to meet demand, and to continue to develop the community use of sport facilities at the school.  The squash courts are the cheapest in the district to hire (£10 an hour) but have limited opening hours (after 6pm during weekdays).	<b>Protect and Enhance –</b> Continue to support user clubs and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing users. These clubs include, but are not limited to, Abingdon Vale SC (pool), North Abingdon Badminton Club (sports hall) and Tiska Martial Arts club (studio).	OSAP	Short	Officer time
			<b>Protect and Enhance –</b> Investigate whether the school would increase the community usage of these facilities. It may be difficult due to the nature of this site, but this increased community offer may help to meet demand (especially for sports hall users).	OSAP	Short	Officer time
<b>Abingdon and Witney College</b>	Sports hall Squash courts Dance studios	There is a need to enhance security of tenure for Abingdon Squash & Racketball Club (current lease of courts expires in 2027).	<b>Protect and Enhance –</b> Support Abingdon Squash & Racketball Club and Amanda Alder Dance Academy with the renewal of user agreements.	OSAP	Short	Officer time

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
		Also, Amanda Alder Dance Academy (hire agreement of dance studios in place until 2025).				
<b>Brookes Sport Botley</b>	Swimming pool Activity hall Gym Studios Squash courts	All facilities are available for community use during extensive opening hours. Swim School is at full capacity and the pool is used on a regular basis by University Swim Teams and public use for open swimming / lane swimming (cheapest non-member public swimming sessions in the district - adult prices are £4 per swim; juniors £2.50 and seniors £3).	<b>Protect or Enhance</b> – This facility should be retained or enhanced as part of redevelopment unless an assessment has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and they are surplus to requirements or clear evidence supports their relocation.	VoWHDC	Ongoing	Officer time
<b>Dalton Barracks</b>	New skatepark, BMX track and MUGA	In order to meet future demand from new residents, a new skatepark, BMX track and MUGA should be considered at this Strategic Housing site.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore opportunity for a new skatepark, BMX track and a multi-use games area that can be used for netball and tennis, and can be made available for extensive public use.	VoWHDC	Medium	S106

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
		Abingdon Race Team have been regular users of the site (former runways) since 2014.	Consideration should be given to the design of the cycling infrastructure at this site, so that cycling can continue to be accommodated (e.g. distance-markers and low-level lighting).			
<b>Forest Side Recreation Ground</b>	New skatepark	There are no skateparks in Kennington.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity to provide a new skatepark to meet demand in Kennington.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>John Mason School</b>	Sports hall	Sports hall is 'Below Average' quality. It is usable but does not meet consumer expectations. Abingdon Centre Netball Club use the hall on a regular basis but do not have long-term agreements in place (i.e., no security of use).	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user club and work with facility provider to secure CUA for existing user (Abingdon Centre Netball Club). Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations.	VOWHDC	Short	Officer time
<b>Land West of Abingdon Road, Drayton (Walnut Meadows)</b>	New MUGA	There is planning permission granted for a new MUGA at Walnut Meadows development, which is located on Land West of Abingdon Road in Drayton.	<b>Provide</b> – support the development of a new MUGA at this site for public / community sports club use.	VOWHDC	Short	CIL



Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Larkmead School</b>	Sports hall	<p>Sports hall is 'Below Average' quality. It is usable but does not meet consumer expectations.</p> <p>Comets Netball Club use the hall on a regular basis but do not have long-term agreements in place (i.e., no security of use).</p>	<p><b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user club and work with facility provider to secure CUA for existing user (Comets Netball Club). Improve the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations.</p>	VOWHDC	Short	Officer time
<b>Louie Memorial Playing Fields (Botley)</b>	MUGA New skatepark	<p>The Pavilion and the MUGA are 'Below Average' quality. Facilities are showing signs of wear and tear. The MUGA is usable but quality could be improved, as it does not meet current expectations. There are no skateparks in Botley.</p>	<p><b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of existing MUGA and Pavilion.</p> <p><b>Provide</b> – Support the development of a new skatepark to meet demand for a skatepark in Botley.</p>	SODC, Botley Parish Council	Medium	CIL

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<p><b>Our Lady’s School</b></p>	<p>Swimming pool</p>	<p>Abingdon Swimming Club are regular users of the pool, but do not have long-term agreements in place (i.e., no security of use).</p>	<p><b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user club and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing user (Abingdon Swimming Club).</p>	<p>OSAP</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Officer time</p>
		<p>Improved access is required to meet demand, and to continue to develop the community use of sport facilities at the school.</p>	<p><b>Enhance</b> – Investigate whether the school would increase the community usage of these facilities. It may be difficult due to the nature of this site, but this increased community offer may help to meet unmet demand.</p>	<p>OSAP</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Officer time</p>
<p><b>Oxford Sports Lawn Tennis Club</b></p>	<p>Tennis Courts</p>	<p>The tennis club is 90 members under-capacity (ie there are enough courts) however there is a lack of car parking provision (particularly in the winter when the grass area by the courts is unusable).</p>	<p><b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Support Oxford Sports TC with expanding its car parking provision in partnership with Oxford Rugby Club.</p>	<p>VoWHDC, LTA</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Officer time</p>

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Radley College Sports Centre</b>	Swimming pool Athletics track	Used by Abingdon Vale Swimming Club and Didcot Barramundi Swim Club on a regular basis, but do not have long-term agreements in place (i.e., no security of use).	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user clubs and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing users (Abingdon Vale Swimming Club and Didcot Barramundi Swim Club).	VOWHDC	Short	Officer time
		No issues with the athletics facilities have been identified as part of this study.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maintain TrackMark accreditation and seek to improve the infield sports lighting to meet minimum NGB standards.	EA	Ongoing	CIL
<b>St Helen's and St Katherine's School</b>	Sports hall	Oxfordshire Netball League runs at St Helen's and St Katherine's School, totals 7.5hrs per week across 17 weeks.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support users and work with facility provider to secure CUA for existing user (Oxfordshire Netball League). <b>Enhance</b> – Investigate whether the school would increase the community usage of these facilities. It may be difficult due to the nature of this site, but this increased community offer may help to meet demand.	VOWHDC	Short	Officer time

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>The Manor Prep School</b>	Sports hall	Team Matrix Netball Club use the hall on a regular basis but do not have long-term agreements in place (i.e., no security of use).	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user club and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing user (Team Matrix Netball Club)..Investigate whether the school would increase the community usage of these facilities. It may be difficult due to the nature of this site, but this increased community offer may help to meet unmet demand.	VoWHDC	Short	Officer time
<b>Tilsley Park</b>	Athletics track	No issues with the athletics facilities have been identified as part of this study. However, community access could be improved to maximise the use of the track.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maintain TrackMark accreditation and seek to improve the infield sports lighting to meet minimum NGB standards. Enhance community access to maximise the use of the track.	EA	Ongoing	CIL
<b>White Horse Leisure &amp; Tennis Centre</b>	Swimming pool Sports hall Gym Squash courts	Swimming pool, sports hall, gym, studios and squash courts are 'uncomfortably busy' (above 80% used-	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Work with facility provider to provide more availability for clubs to use the facilities at peak times.	VoWHDC	Ongoing	Officer time

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
	Tennis centre	<p>capacity) during peak periods.</p> <p>Current and future demand for tennis in the North sub area could be met by improving the quality of the outdoor tennis courts at White Horse LTC.</p>	<p><b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity for the refurbishment of existing outdoor tennis courts. Consideration should also be given to the need for Padel tennis courts, netball courts / a MUGA.</p>	VoWHDC	Short	S106

**Priorities in South Sub-area**

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Issue / Opportunity</b>	<b>Key Action(s)</b>	<b>Lead Partners to deliver action</b>	<b>Timescale (Priority)</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>Blewbury Croquet Club</b>	Croquet lawns	The clubhouse facilities are 'Below Average' (i.e., deteriorating and showing signs of wear and tear and poor quality). The facility is not as attractive to customers and does not meet current expectations.	<b>Protect and Enhance –</b> Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations. Support Blewbury Croquet Club with plans to upgrade its clubhouse.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>Crab Hill, Wantage</b>	New skatepark and MUGA	In order to meet future demand from new residents, a new skatepark and MUGA should be considered at this Strategic Housing site.	<b>Provide –</b> Continue to support the development of a new skatepark and a multi-use games area that can be made available for extensive public use.	VoWHDC	Medium	S106
<b>Grove Airfield (including St John's Academy)</b>	New sports hall and new MUGAs	Additional space and time required for sports clubs using sports halls and future demand for sport hall activities is highest in this sub area.	<b>Provide –</b> Continue to support the development of a new 4-court (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m) sports hall at this site. New sports facilities should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development with CUAs.	VoWHDC	Medium	Various resources (see Funding Opportunities in Appendix 1)

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
		In order to meet future demand from new residents, new MUGAs should be considered at this Strategic Housing site.	<b>Provide</b> – Continue to support the development of new multi-use games areas that can be used for netball and tennis, and can be made available for extensive public use.			
<b>Harwell Bowls Club</b>	Bowls green	Plan to improve clubhouse which does not meet consumer expectations.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations. Support Harwell Bowls Club with plans to upgrade its clubhouse.	VOWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>Harwell Croquet Club</b>	Croquet lawns	The lawns are well maintained, but have never been professionally levelled, so are quite uneven. The lawns are usable for match play but quality could be improved.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations. Support Harwell Croquet Club with improving the quality of its lawn maintenance.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>Harwell Recreation Ground</b>	New skatepark	There are no skateparks in Harwell.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity to provide a new skatepark to meet demand in Harwell.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL



Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Harwell Tennis Club</b>	Tennis courts	The existing two tennis courts do not have sports-lighting.	<b>Protect and Enhance –</b> Maximise the use of existing assets by installing sports-lighting to increase usage of courts throughout the year.	VoWHDC, LTA	Medium	CIL
<b>Hendred Sports Club</b>	Tennis courts (two existing) New facilities for a range of sports.	The trustees of the Club have developed an ambitious plan to increase the number of sports available at the ground and improve the clubhouse to provide improved disability access and gender specific changing rooms.  Sports facilities planned are Grass Tennis Court, Archery, Boulderling Wall, Croquet, Dance, Simple Gym, Netball and Pickleball.	<b>Provide –</b> Continue to support the Sports Club with its development plans for new facilities (subject to the outcome of any options appraisal and feasibility study required for the development).	VoWHDC, LTA	Medium	S106

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>King Alfred's School (West Site)</b>	Sports hall New athletics facilities	Challow Netball Club use the hall on a regular basis but do not have long-term agreements in place (i.e., no security of use). White Horse Harriers has plans and outline design for a Compact Facility with an 80m 4 Lane track and throw cages and jump facilities. This could be placed in a local Senior School who have agreed maintenance and security. The lack of Athletics facilities means that the community cannot experience and are excluded from Athletics.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user clubs and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing users. Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the sports hall to meet consumer expectations. <b>Provide</b> – Ensure, as far as possible, that any new sports facilities, provided as part of future educational provision, are designed for curricular, extra-curricular, community and sports development use and made available for community use out of school hours.	VOWHDC	Short	Officer time
				VoWHDC	Ongoing	Officer time

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Upton Village Hall and Upton Park</b>	Village Hall BMX Pump Track	Kinetics Gymnastics are full to capacity and unable to provide some of its gymnasts with the facilities required for higher skill levels.	<b>Protect and Provide –</b> Explore the opportunity for a new dedicated provision for Kinetics Gymnastics in the South sub area. Keep a record of suitable buildings (eg, warehouses) that could be converted into a dedicated gymnastics facility. <b>Enhance –</b> ensure that the Pump Track is appropriately maintained in order to retain its quality.	VoWHDC, British Gymnastics, Upton Parish Council	Medium	S106 / CIL
<b>Valley Park (Didcot)</b>	New MUGAs and Fitness Trail	In order to meet future demand from new residents, a new MUGAs should be considered at this Strategic Housing site.  There is a lack of ‘off-road’ cycling and running provision in the district, and high demand from clubs.	<b>Provide –</b> Continue to support the development of new and a multi-use games areas at Alma Park and Common Park that can be made available for extensive public use.  Consideration should be given to the design of the fitness trail planned at Valley Park (Strategic Housing Site), so that cycling and running can be accommodated (e.g.	VoWHDC	Short	S106

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
			distance-markers and low-level lighting).			
<b>Wantage Gymnastic Centre</b>	Gymnastic facility	Wantage Gymnastic Club has 217 members and 400 on its waiting list. The club advised that a lack of qualified coaches is the main issue for the club and that small facility improvements (to the doors of its facility) are required.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations. Continue to support Wantage GC with improvements to its facility.	VoWHDC, British Gymnastics	Short	CIL
<b>Wantage Leisure Centre</b>	Swimming pool Sports hall Gym Studios Squash courts	Swimming pool, sports hall, gym and studios are 'uncomfortably busy' (above 80% used capacity) during peak periods.  The whole facility is showing signs of age and poor quality. The facility is usable but does not meet current expectations.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets* by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations, and expanding the gym offering. <b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity for a new 18m x 10m learner pool annexed to the current leisure centre building, to provide additional water space on-site that can free up space in the main pool.	VoWHDC, Swim England	Short	Various resources (see Funding Opportunities in Appendix 1)

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
		Squash courts are only courts in the South sub area. These are not used by a squash club and 'pay and play' court bookings total 20% used-capacity during peak periods.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Squash courts should be retained and the quality enhanced to meet the demand for 'pay and play' squash in the South sub area. Both courts should be retained to meet future demand for squash.	VoWHDC, England Squash	Ongoing	CIL

\* Wantage LC sports hall and swimming pool: diversifying the sporting offering and modernising the sports hall is recommended.

Modernisation is defined as one or more of the following:

- Upgrade of the sports hall or pool floor
- Upgrade of the lighting in the sports hall or pool area
- Upgrade of the sports hall or pool roof
- Upgrade of the changing accommodation (hall and pool changing rooms).

Undertaking planned maintenance together with dilapidation surveys can help to define the scope of refurbishment works. These refurbishments increase the attractiveness of sports halls and pools to users. There are also minor works, such as redecoration or replacing line markings, but these do not significantly alter the attractiveness of halls and pools.

**Priorities in West Sub-area**

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Faringdon Community College</b>	MUGA	The MUGA at the college is for private use only.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – explore the possibility of allowing public / community sports club use of the MUGA at this site.	OSAP	Short	Officer time
<b>Faringdon Leisure Centre</b>	Swimming pool Sports hall Gym Studio Squash courts	Swimming pool, sports hall, gym and studios are ‘uncomfortably busy’ (above 80% used capacity) during peak periods. Squash courts are only courts in the West sub area that are available for community use (Defence Academy in Shrivenham has private-use only courts). Faringdon LC squash courts are not used by a squash club and ‘pay and play’ court bookings total 52% used-capacity during peak periods.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Continue to support user clubs and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing users. These clubs include, but are not limited to, Buscot Archers (sports hall), Faringdon NC (sports hall) and Vale Tridents Junior Triathlon Club (pool). <b>Protect and Enhance</b> – squash courts should be retained and the quality enhanced to meet the demand for ‘pay and play’ squash in the West sub area. Both courts should be retained to meet future demand for squash.	OSAP  VoWHDC,	Short  Medium	Officer time  Various resources (see Funding Opportunities in Appendix 1)

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Faringdon Tennis Club (Folly Park)</b>	Tennis courts  New MUGA	Three of the five tennis clubs in the West sub area are over-capacity (124 in total, including Faringdon TC that is 100 players over-capacity). There is demand for netball to be played at Folly Park and a new MUGA could be used by clubs and the public.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by supporting Faringdon Tennis Club in its application to install sports lighting on its two remaining unlit courts. <b>Provide</b> – support the development of a new MUGA at this site for public / community sports club use.	VoWHDC, LTA England Netball	Short	CIL
<b>Kingston Bagpuize &amp; Southmoor Bowls Club</b>	Bowls green	The bowls club has 77 members and is the largest bowls club in the district. It has plans to improve its clubhouse which currently does not meet consumer expectations.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of the facility to meet consumer expectations. Support Kingston Bagpuize & Southmoor Bowls Club with plans to upgrade its clubhouse.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>Kingston Bagpuize</b>	New skatepark	There are no skateparks in Kingston Bagpuize.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity to provide a new skatepark to meet demand in Kingston Bagpuize.	VoWHDC KB Parish Council	Medium	CIL



Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
<b>Shrivenham Recreation Ground</b>	New skatepark	There are no skateparks in Shrivenham.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity to provide a new skatepark to meet demand in Shrivenham.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>Stanford in the Vale Recreation Ground</b>	Skatepark New tennis courts	Stanford in the Vale Skatepark is not fit for purpose and is in need of improvement. Stanford-in-the-Vale Parish Council has plans to develop two new outdoor tennis courts at this site.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by supporting improvements to the quality of Stanford in the Vale Skatepark. <b>Provide</b> – Support the Parish Council with its plans for two new outdoor tennis courts.	VoWHDC, LTA	Short	CIL
<b>The Pump House</b>	Parkour facilities	The Pump House in Faringdon is a shared facility between parkour and community groups. Due to the popularity of the sport in the area, the Urban Movement Academy (UMA) requires more availability of parkour provision and is looking for a new facility in central Faringdon, but it has been unable to find	<b>Protect and Provide</b> – Support the UMA in its search for a new facility with a permanent set-up of equipment to would enable more structured training sessions and more drop-in sessions to be held; concentrating on reaching the demographics that are currently not being reached.	Faringdon Town Council	Medium	S106

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
		suitable provision in the last 12 months.				
<b>Uffington Lawn Tennis Club</b>	Tennis courts	The club is 10 members over-capacity and has plans to install new sports-lighting of its courts to increase capacity.	<b>Protect and Enhance</b> – Maximise the use of existing assets by supporting Uffington Lawn Tennis Club in the installation of new sports-lights	VoWHDC, LTA	Short	CIL
<b>Watchfield Recreation Ground</b>	New skatepark	There are no skateparks in Watchfield.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore the opportunity to provide a new skatepark to meet demand in Watchfield.	VoWHDC	Medium	CIL
<b>Site yet to be identified</b>	New swimming pool	Provision of a learner pool should be considered to significantly enhance the offer in Faringdon.	<b>Provide</b> – Explore opportunity for a new 15m x 10m learner pool in Faringdon (e.g. Total Swimming Academies)	VoWHDC Swim England	Medium	S106

## 16. Scenarios

- 16.1 For this study we have used Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) data for swimming pools and sports halls in the Vale of White Horse. The FPM is a computerised model which helps assess the strategic provision of community sports facilities. It has been developed as a means of assessing requirements for different types of community sports facilities on a local, regional or national scale; and helping local authorities determine an adequate level of sports facility provision to meet their local needs.
- 16.2 The FPM uses census information at output area level to help establish the profile of the population, including, age, gender, and Index of Multiple Deprivation scores. These are all used in the model to estimate the demand for sports facilities.
- 16.3 The FPM also uses the information on the road network (Ordnance Survey MasterMap Highways Network) to estimate how people are prepared to travel. This is essential in helping to understand whether the current supply of sports facilities are in the right place to meet the potential demand.
- 16.4 An important feature of the FPM is that it's prescriptive and not predictive in that it does not provide precise estimates of the use of proposed facilities. Instead, it prescribes an appropriate level of provision for any defined area in relation to demand – this reflects national expectations and policies. The actual usage of a facility will be determined by a range of factors including management and promotional policies, programming and the quality or attractiveness of the facility concerned.
- 16.5 As the demand parameters are based on achieved levels of participation, Sport England believes this level of provision represents good practice rather than some unattainable ideal. This is because the levels of use/demand/throughput visits are what could be produced based on what has been observed at existing facilities. This makes the broad estimates of potential throughput generated by the FPM potentially useful when considering policy options.
- 16.6 The outputs from the FPM assessment provide a needs assessment and evidence base that contributes to securing inward investment for swimming pool and sports hall modernisation and possible further provision, and development of planning policies for the provision of indoor sports facilities. The main report (displayed in the LFAS Assessment Report Appendices) sets out the full set of findings under each of the assessment headings. It has provided a useful starting point and baseline for understanding the supply and demand balance for these sports facilities.
- 16.7 The 'local bespoke' FPM has tested different 'what if' scenarios in provision and changes in demand, this includes testing the impact of opening, relocating and closing facilities and the impact population changes would have on the needs of the sports facilities.
- 16.8 The FPM modelling runs are to provide:
  - Run 1 – a baseline assessment of provision in 2023
  - Run 2 – a forward assessment of demand for pools and halls and their distribution, based on the projected changes in population between 2023 and 2041 and changes in supply

- Run 3 – an assessment of the impact of the modelled options for changes in supply in the Vale of White Horse (and South Oxfordshire) has in meeting the demand for pools and halls and their distribution up to 2041.

## Swimming pools

16.9 The changes in swimming pool supply in the Vale of White Horse included in the modelling runs are:

- Run 2 - Addition of a learner pool at Wantage Leisure Centre, which is modelled to open in 2025. Also in Run 2, a new learner pool at Didcot Wave Leisure Centre in South Oxfordshire is modelled to open in 2025.
- Run 3 – an assessment of the impact of the modelled option for change, which includes learner pool at Wantage Leisure Centre and Abbey Sports Centre in South Oxfordshire (modelled to be replaced with a larger 4 lane 25m pool in 2031).

16.10 The headline strategic finding is that the current and future demand for swimming pools can be met by the available supply, quite surprisingly given the significant increase in the population and demand for swimming pools to 2041. Provision of the learner pool at Wantage Leisure Centre, modelled in Runs 2 and 3, is supported by the FPM findings. It enhances the swimming offer, enabling all swimming activities to take place in suitable pools, and is the only site in the south of the district.

## Interventions

16.11 Modernisation of the swimming pools is the key intervention. Based on the FPM findings the centres for modernisation, in order, are:

- Faringdon Leisure Centre:
  - An important site in terms of accessibility as it is the only pool site in the west of the district where residents have the least access to swimming pools
  - Estimated to be the third busiest site in the district across all runs, at between 61% and 62% at peak times
  - In 2024 it will be the only public leisure centre single pool site but, based on the quantitative assessment, modernisation of the site does not need to include further provision
  - Currently all activities take place in the main pool and its dimensions of 25m x 10.5m may limit this to one activity at a time; also the pool depth of 1.6m may limit the water space suitable for learn to swim
- White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre:
  - Largest swimming pool site in the district and flagship centre with the most extensive offer of a competition size pool (25m x 18m) and a learner pool (18m x10m)

- Estimated peak period utilisation of between 27% in Run 1 and 36% in Run 2
- Low proportion of capacity used because it has the largest capacity in the district, but meets the second most visits in Runs 2 and 3
- Near an area of high demand with a large increase from 2023 to 2041

16.12 Requirements for modernisation should be based on condition surveys and be subject to a feasibility study focusing on modernisation that enhances the offer and provides a more cost-effective site.

## **Sports halls**

16.13 The changes in supply in Vale of White Horse also included in the modelling runs are:

- Run 1 – Wantage Leisure Centre four-court hall, which is available for the maximum 46 hours in the weekly peak period, and King Alfred’s Academy four-court hall and activity hall, which are available for 34 hours in the weekly peak period
- Run 2 – the addition of St John’s Academy four-court hall, which is a committed project and modelled to open in 2025 with 25 hours available for community use in the weekly peak period
- Run 3 – the addition of Potential Wantage Leisure Facility four-court hall, which is an option and modelled to open in 2028 with 45 hours available for community use in the weekly peak period

16.14 The changes in supply in South Oxfordshire, relevant to Vale of White Horse, included in the modelling runs are:

- Runs 2 and 3 – Didcot North East Leisure Facility (4-courts) is modelled to open in 2028
- Run 3 – Abbey Sports Centre (4-courts) replaced with a newer larger sports hall (5-courts) is modelled to open in 2031

16.15 The headline strategic overview is that Vale of White Horse’s sports halls can meet current and future demand. Demand in Wantage is high and increases to 2041. Provision of St John’s Academy sports hall and Potential Wantage Leisure Facility means supply exceeds demand. There is scope to increase the availability for community use at educational sites to accommodate more demand. Therefore, the option to also provide Potential Wantage Leisure Facility is then not required because it leads to over provision.

### Interventions and Next Steps

16.16 The quantitative findings identify that there is sufficient supply across the district to meet demand in 2023 and 2041. The first interventions are:

- Wantage Leisure Centre:
  - Only public leisure centre in Wantage, which provides access for all residents for full peak period
  - Estimated to be 76% utilised in Run 1 and 77% in Run 2, but when Potential Wantage Leisure Facility is included in Run 3, it decreases to 49%
  - Dimensions of 33m x 18m are not suitable for club development
  - Consider the need for further modernisation as last refurbished in 2005
- King Alfred's Academy:
  - Negotiate a community use agreement, if one is not in place, to protect and retain the site for community use
  - Scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period by up to 12 hours and accommodate 609 more visits.
- St John's Academy:
  - Negotiate a community use agreement with St John's Academy Trust to provide for community use
  - Scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period by up to 21 hours and accommodate 672 more visits.

16.17 Overall, the option leads to a supply of a modern fit for purpose stock of sports halls in Wantage that can meet demand in 2041.

### Second Intervention

16.18 The second intervention is to protect the sports hall supply for community use in Abingdon. Abingdon has ten sports hall sites but only one, White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, is a public facility. Abingdon has a sufficient supply of sports halls to meet demand but is dependent on availability of the educational supply. If community use agreements are not in place, these need to be negotiated and agreed.

16.19 The key sites are:

- The School of St Helen and St Katherine:
  - Six-court hall and an activity hall, which has a 'draw effect' because of its suitability for all activities, appealing to sports clubs
  - Commitment to community use as it is currently available for 34 hours in the weekly peak period (independent schools can provide community use for school organisations and pupils' families before wider community use)

- Largest educational site capacity and the second largest in the district, at 2,716 visits in the weekly peak period
- Opened in 2016, it is currently the third most recent sports hall to open
- Demand around the site is high in 2023 and 2041
- Estimated to be 42% utilised in Run 1, 60% in Run 2 and 58% in Run 3
- Scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period by up to 12 hours and accommodate 959 more visits
- Abingdon Preparatory School
  - Four-court hall (35m x 20m) and an activity hall, which are suitable for all activities, appealing to sports clubs
  - Commitment to community use as it is currently available for 25 hours in the weekly peak period (also an independent school)
  - Accommodates 1,269 visits in the weekly peak period
  - Opened in 2007, it may need modernisation
  - Estimated to be 50% utilised in Run 1, 63% in Run 2 and 57% in Run 3
  - Scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period by up to 21 hours and accommodate 1,066 more visits

### **“Do nothing”**

16.20 A “do nothing” or absence of a strategy scenario has major implications for providing for both formal and informal sport. Demand is not fully catered for by supply at the current time in most sport facility types, particularly swimming pools and sports halls. With projected population and participation growth there would be a very significant lack of provision with major impacts on physical, mental and social health. Doing nothing also implies no improvements to facility quality, meaning that capacity to accommodate even current levels of play would be substantially reduced over time, particularly as sports hall surfaces degrade and require replacement. Doing nothing also implies that new provision or financial contributions would not be sought from development, a key source of funding and locations of new additional facilities.

## **17. Action Plan Framework and Delivery**

### **(What needs to be done to implement the strategy?)**

#### **Action Plan**

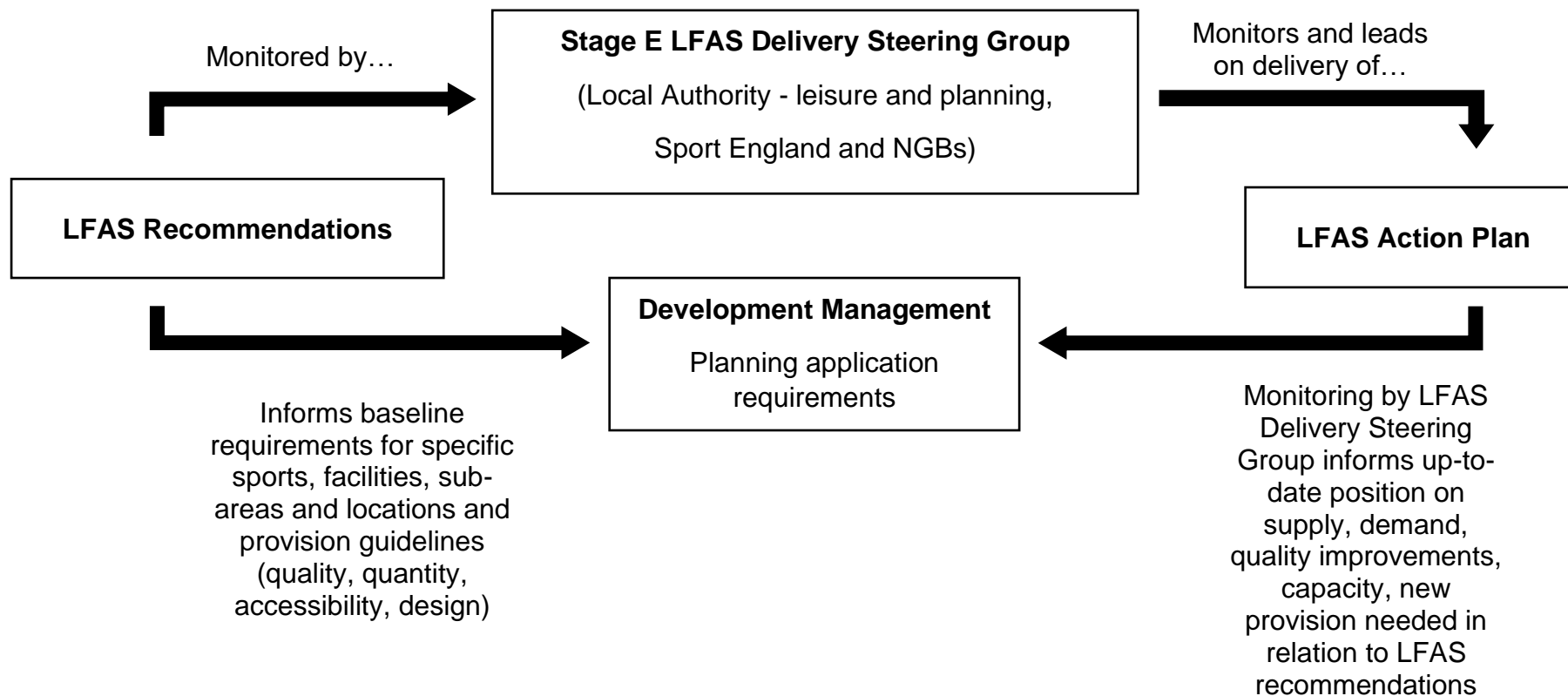
- 17.1 Following consultation on the draft strategy and any changes made as a result, confirmed recommendations and actions will be set out and monitored in a “live” action plan framework which members of the steering group will have a responsibility to update and implement. As noted earlier this implementation will also depend on steering group members co-ordinating and working closely with clubs, teams, league organisers, providers, owners of current facilities and owners of facilities and potential sites for additional facilities. The action plan framework will, in time, be updated by the District Council and delivery informed by other priorities such as (but not limited to) response to the climate emergency, economic recovery and levels of deprivation.
- 17.2 The delivery stage will also confirm options for change presented in this strategy as further work during implementation is done on feasibility, viability and implications of other actions.

#### **Planning Officer Guidance on Using this Strategy**

- 17.3 To aid use of the strategy by local authority planning officers, the diagram below aims to guide local authority officers on the key factors to think about when considering development proposals / planning applications.



### Guide to Interface between Delivery and Use of Strategy Recommendations to Inform Planning Applications



- 17.4 Within this context, the following figure provides a guide for planning officers to aid use and application of this strategy when considering planning proposals.

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### Guidance / Thought Process

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The LFAS deals with facilities and sports defined in the typology. It has had input from local clubs, sports governing bodies, Sport England and key stakeholders. Consider the diagram above for context and relationship between DM and this strategy.

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The Executive Summary provides a useful overview of the strategy and its findings in broad terms.

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If you think that the proposal does or is likely to have an impact on existing or future provision / needs/ demand, or you simply do not know, initially discuss with 'Planning Policy' officers and or 'Leisure' officers.

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Identify where in the study area the proposal is and which sub-area it is within (and if it is on the edge of a sub-area).

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If on the edge of a sub-area, bear in mind that an appropriate response to development proposals may need to take into account demand from other adjoining sub-areas.

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Appropriate provision for sport to respond to demand from development may not require an on-site solution but instead require off-site provision or contributions to such provision, often at an existing facility or club base.

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Early consideration is required of how financial contributions should be collected for sport (i.e. through CIL or s106, subject to the adopted CIL regime and also whether negotiation with the Parish or Town Council is appropriate with regard to use of their CIL proportion to deliver enhancements from demand from the new development.

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Contributions are most likely to be required to focus on addressing capacity at existing sites nearest to the proposal, although this will not always be the case. This should be discussed with NGBs and / or Sport England in the first instance who maintain a strategic picture of demand during LFAS delivery.

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When considering recommendations of the strategy, they are split by sport in the main body of the strategy and by sub area. In both of these sections, recommendations are set out under the headings of "PROTECT", "ENHANCE" AND "PROVIDE".

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Loss of facilities. The "bottom-line" in this strategy is protect all facilities from loss and to protect mothballed / closed / unused facilities for future use and to accommodate potential future demand. If unavoidable, replacement could be a solution.

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## **18. Monitoring and Review**

### **(How will the implementation of the strategy and action framework be monitored and reviewed?)**

- 18.1 As referred to in the strategy recommendations, it is important that the strategy and impact of its actions are monitored to ensure that supply matches demand "on the ground". This is particularly important later during the strategy period given that future demand in the longer-term is less accurate given that it is based on projections. As actions are implemented, a "plan, deliver, monitor, manage" approach should be employed.
- 18.2 It is recommended that the strategy is reviewed after a period of 5 years or before this time should substantive changes be made to supply, demand or implications of change likely to take place during the strategy period (such as significant confirmed or adopted changes in levels of housing or population growth). Equally, other triggers for a review before this time could be changes to planning or sports policy or the methodology used to assess facilities or the desire to better understand likely provision required beyond the current adopted development plan periods.

## **Appendix 1: Summary of Other Strategies & Plans and Funding Opportunities**

**(What key strategies & plans and funding opportunities are relevant to the LFAS?)**

### National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that planning policy making and decision taking should consider the role of health and wellbeing in planning and has stringent policies around the protection of sports facilities, the disposal of which can only be considered if robust evidence can be provided to support alternative, equal and replacement provision. Particularly since county and district local authorities took on new public health responsibilities in 2013, an increasing range of statutory, corporate and planning documents, including Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Sport England and National Governing Body (NGB) strategies, reiterate the importance of creating healthy environments which can support and benefit people's wellbeing – both physical and mental.

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) helps the policies in the NPPF to be interpreted and appropriately applied through a series of questions and answers for various topics. The guidance refers to Sport England guidance in relation to assessing needs for sport and offers advice on how open space should be taken into account in planning. Again, this ties in the importance of the consideration of facilities in a wider context including health, recreation and landscape.

### Current District-wide Planning Policies

The key (non-site-specific) policies relating to leisure facilities for the local authority area are reproduced below. South and Vale district councils Emerging Joint Local Plan has the following draft policies:

- Healthy Places Policy 2 – Community facilities and services. This policy protects community facilities and services from loss; supports new or extended facilities and requires contributions for new infrastructure.
- Healthy Places Policy 4 – Education Provision. This policy ensures school and college facilities are designed to encourage community use outside school opening hours.
- Healthy Places Policy 5 – Existing open space, sport & recreation facilities. This policy seeks to protect existing open space, sport and recreation and play facilities from development.
- Healthy Places Policy 6 – New facilities for sport, physical activity and recreation. This policy supports the provision of new facilities for sport and recreation.
- IN1 – Infrastructure provision. This policy ensures new development is served and supported by appropriate infrastructure.
- Planning contributions collected to provide infrastructure and to support the maintenance for infrastructure through planning obligations, through the Community Infrastructure Levy or other mechanisms.
- This LFAS and its recommendations can inform the review of these planning policies at the appropriate time. The strategy can also inform the review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) alongside the use of section 106 planning obligations.

### Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood plans are statutory development plans which can be prepared by parish and town councils and neighbourhood plan forums in unparished areas. They provide a layer of local detailed planning policy within the context of national and district planning policies. In VoWH, the following parishes are developing or have an adopted neighbourhood plan. The VoWHDC or individual parish councils' website should be viewed to understand the up-to-date position at any point during the strategy period.

These plans are important to take into account in terms of how the strategy deals with facilities in those areas relative to policies in the plans. There is also a connection between the priorities that a community identifies in terms of infrastructure provision (including facilities), the recommendations made for specific sites in this strategy and any Community Infrastructure Levy payments made to the local community which should be recognised by all of those organisations and providers with an interest and / or responsibility in maintaining and delivering high quality spaces, sports facilities and ancillary / associated facilities.

### Health and Wellbeing

The LFAS has clear links to helping maintain and improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents in the district through the use of facilities by both formal sports clubs and teams, informal and social use of facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls, and also the use of outdoor facilities where it is part of an area of open greenspace such as a park or recreation ground.

The public health agenda and provision for sport is becoming more focused on provision for informal, casual and social play in addition to formal / competitive play, in order to help get people more active in their day to day lives. Coronavirus has brought this into perhaps sharper focus. There is also a clear role for multi-purpose community facilities in the promotion and use of facility space for sport and other wider health and recreation activities. It will be important, therefore, for the LFAS to inform the next review of VoWHDC's Active Communities Strategy. There are also close links between the provision of good quality facilities and facility infrastructure with the work of the Oxfordshire Activity and Sports Partnership (OASP) whose Vision is to "Achieve healthier and happier communities in Oxfordshire through physical activity."

The LFAS also has clear links between levels of deprivation (identified by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) across the district and impacts on health. Levels of deprivation will need to be considered alongside future programmes of improvement of existing facilities (where needed) in the district and how best to utilise greenspace for improvement in levels of activity, which may or may not involve built sports facilities. Many of the recommendations of the strategy link closely with some of the principles of "Active Design" supported by Sport England, and the appropriate provision of facilities and associated facilities (in terms of location and quality) can help contribute positively to achieving the delivery of active places "on the ground".

Sport England: “Uniting the Movement” 2021-2031

In 2021, Sport England published their latest strategy, “Uniting the Movement”<sup>3</sup>, a 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. The strategy has three objectives: advocating for movement, sport and physical activity; joining forces on five big issues (recover and reinvent, connecting communities, positive experiences for children and young people, connecting with health & wellbeing, and active environments); and, creating the catalysts for change.

The LFAS will play a clear role in helping to achieve some of these objectives in the local land-use context and there is a very clear and direct link with objectives such as supporting and delivering active environments and positive experiences for children and young people.



The Strategy’s Relationship with Health and Wellbeing and Active Travel

The LFAS has clear links to helping maintain and improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents in the District through the use of pitches by both formal sports clubs and teams, informal and social use of facilities. The public health agenda and provision for sport is becoming more focused on provision for informal, casual and social play in addition to formal / competitive play, in order to help get people more active in their day to day lives. Coronavirus brought this into perhaps sharper focus. There is also a clear role for multi-purpose facilities in the promotion and use of facility space for sport and other wider health and recreation activities.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.sportengland.org/why-were-here/uniting-the-movement>



It will be important, therefore, for the LFAS to inform the Health and Wellbeing Board's next review of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2030<sup>4</sup>. There are also close links between the provision of good quality sports facilities and facility infrastructure with the work of the Active Partnership whose Vision is "Everybody in Oxfordshire is physically active".

The data which underpins the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)<sup>5</sup> which, amongst other data, cites the link between levels of deprivation (identified by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) across the District and impacts on health. Levels of deprivation will need to be considered alongside future programmes of improvement of existing pitches and facilities (where needed) in the District and how best to utilise greenspace for improvement in levels of activity, which may or may not involve sports facilities.

Many of the recommendations of the strategy link closely with some of the principles of "Active Design" supported by Sport England<sup>6</sup>, which centre around accessibility, awareness and amenity, and the appropriate provision of sports facilities and associated facilities (in terms of location and quality) can help contribute positively to achieving the delivery of active places "on the ground".

Linked closely to the opportunity for more people to be more active through sport is the desire for a greater number of people to take active travel options more often. The Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 5<sup>7</sup>, sets out the strategic plan for transport with a vision "to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system that enables the county to thrive while protecting the environment and making Oxfordshire a better place to live for all residents". Other plans, such as the Active Travel Strategy<sup>8</sup> and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) being developed across the county (for example, and related to the District, are the plan in place at Abingdon and plans to develop a LCWIP for Didcot) seek to enable active travel change through improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure.

At the District level, there is a joint South and Vale Districts Active Communities Strategy now in place. The strategy sets out how the Councils' plan to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents and the key role that the authorities play in providing high quality active opportunities for our communities, to contribute to tackling inactivity and addressing the inequalities that challenge society. The main themes in the strategy are: enabling everyone to be active, create healthier communities through walking and cycling, maximise the potential of our natural environment, building the skills base of our communities, effective communication, promotion and consultation, and collaborative partnerships and funding advice. The LFAS should play a key component part in helping the Councils deliver improving health and wellbeing, alongside a multitude of other action plans, programmes and strategies all seeking or contributing to improved health outcomes for the residents of the districts.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/health-wellbeing>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/joint-strategic-needs-assessment>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/active-design/> for Active Design guidance. For all other Sport England advice and guidance relating to planning for sport see <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport>

## Funding Opportunities

The nature of funding for sports facilities is constantly changing and evolving, and particularly so in light of the coronavirus pandemic. This strategy, therefore, given that it covers an extensive period of time, does not seek to define what current funding opportunities are in detail due to changes which will undoubtedly occur over time. However, the list below provides a brief (but not exhaustive) summary of funding opportunities across sports. Readers should not rely on this list being either comprehensive or up-to-date and those with an interest in funding facility maintenance, improvement or additional new provision should discuss funding opportunities available to them at the time of interest with the local authority, Sport England, Sports Governing Bodies and other relevant organisations such as the Lawn Tennis Association.

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)<sup>9</sup>
- Section 106 planning obligations<sup>10</sup>
- Sport England Small Grants Programme<sup>11</sup>
- Sport England Active Together<sup>12</sup>
- Big Lottery Fund<sup>13</sup>
- Public Work Loans Board (PWLB)<sup>14</sup>
- Multi-sport Funding<sup>15</sup>

In addition to accessing capital funding opportunities, those providing additional facilities must take into account the long-term revenue implications of running, managing, maintaining and replacing facilities as they plan for the future. Many funders providing capital grants and loans will likely require a sustainable viability test and / or business plan to be in place (particularly where large sums of money are involved).

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<sup>9</sup> a charge on new developments applied by the local authority to developments which meet certain criteria and is most often collected for housing schemes on a charge per square metre – see

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/infrastructure-to-support-communities/community-infrastructure-levy-or-cil-header-page/community-infrastructure-levy-cil-payments-and-procedures/> for more information. Please note, link was live at the time of writing this LFAS.

<sup>10</sup> Section 106 planning obligations deliver infrastructure and site specific requirements related to a development that cannot be delivered through CIL but are necessary in order for planning permission to be granted. Contact the local authority for further information on the application of section 106 to sports facilities and pitches outside of CIL.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/funding/small-grants>. Please note, link was live at the time of writing this LFAS.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/our-funds>. Please note, link was live at the time of writing this LFAS.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/>. Please note, link was live at the time of writing this LFAS.



## Appendix 2: Action Plan

A detailed Action Plan and delivery monitor spreadsheet will be provided to the District Council for use with the LFAS steering group to track and monitor change and delivery of the actions and priorities during the strategy period. (Separate document – excel spreadsheet).

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