

South Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Conclusions

CRICKET

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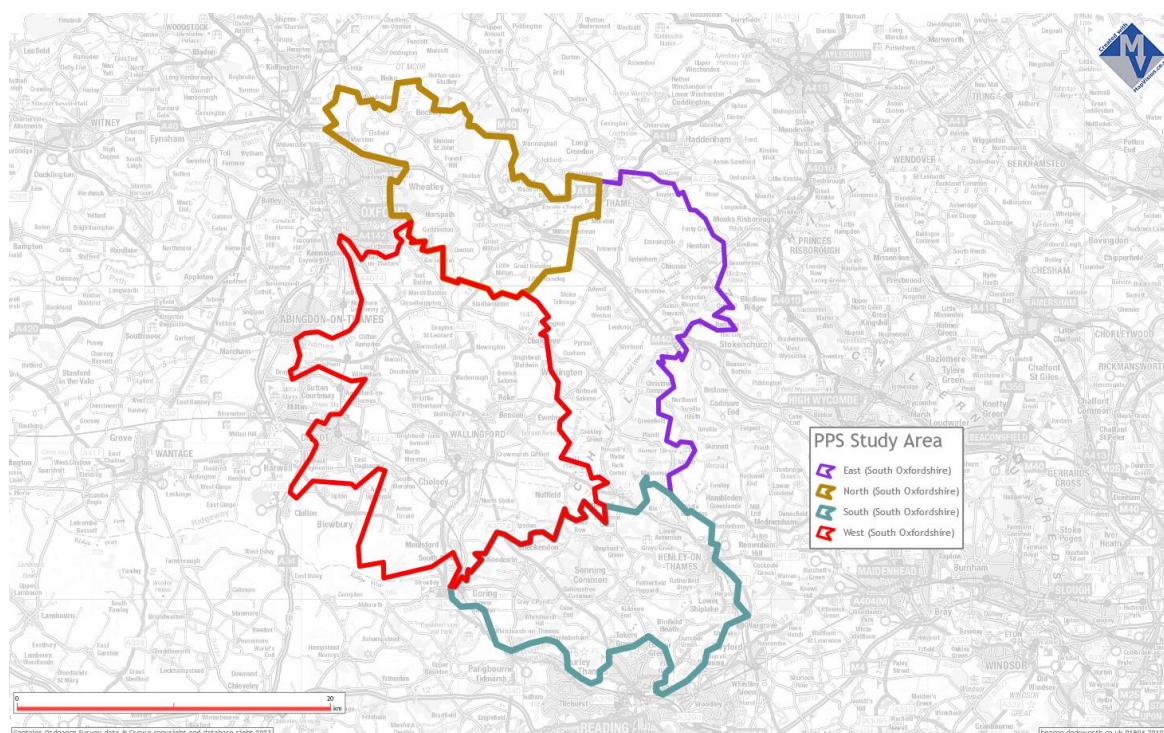
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CRICKET ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

1. This assessment uses data set out at length in the Assessment Tables, most of which are not repeated here. This is to make this report easily digestible and easy to understand. By necessity, this report summarises data as necessary and relates to as little detail as possible while still conveying the key points and issues required to arrive at conclusions and recommendations. Much of the place-specific data is set out in this report by sub-area. For clarity, the map below shows the areas covered by the sub-areas.

Figure 1: South Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy Sub-areas



Assessment Summary

2. Cricket has a tradition of playing on grass pitches which require high levels of maintenance are subject to significant wear and tear. This means it takes a lot of resources to maintain a grass cricket square to a good level, especially when there is high levels of usage. Artificial pitches are used in cricket, often to supplement grass pitches and alleviate some of the wear and tear. The artificial pitches are usually used for junior matches and training, they are very rarely used for adult matches. On this basis this assessment has been undertaken looking at the carrying capacity if the grass pitches and the artificial pitches are considered supplementary to the grass pitches to help increase some of the capacity on the site.
3. There are 44 cricket grounds that use grass pitches with community usage in the South Oxfordshire and no standalone artificial pitches in community usage. All artificial pitches are located on sites with existing grass pitches.

4. There are 22 cricket grounds with secure community use grass pitches (i.e. wickets / strips) in South Oxfordshire Local Authority at:

- Aston Rowant Cricket Club x 2
- Chalgrove Cricket Club
- Garsington Sports Club
- Grovelands Sports Ground
- Hales & Hays Meadow x 2
- Harpsden Cricket Ground
- Holton Playing Fields
- Horspath Village Recreation Ground x 2
- Peppard Common
- Station Road Playing Fields (Chinnor)
- Swyncombe Cricket Club
- Tetsworth Sports and Social Club
- Thame Town Cricket Club
- The Astons Recreation Ground
- The Jubilee Pavilion and Recreation Ground
- Woodcote Recreation Ground
- Boundary Park
- Tiddington Cricket Ground
- Moreton Cricket Club

Of these, Chalgrove CC, Hales & Hayes Meadow (x2) and Tiddington Cricket Ground also have artificial pitches.

5. There are also 22 unsecure community use grounds at

- Checkendon Playing Field
- Cow Common
- Crowmarsh Recreation Ground
- Dorchester-On-Thames Recreation Ground
- Gallowstree Common Recreation Ground
- Gardiner Recreation Ground
- Great Haseley Playing Field
- Great Milton Recreation Ground
- Lord Williams Academy (Upper School)
- Nettlebed Sports Ground
- Prestcold Cricket Club
- Stanton St John Recreation Ground
- The Village Green (Marsh Baldon)
- Warborough Village Green
- Watlington Sports Ground
- Whitchurch-on-Thames Cricket Club
- Ipsden Cricket Ground
- Stoke Row Sports and Leisure Club
- MP Sports Academy Ground x 2
- The Recreation Ground Clifton Hampden
- Cholsey Cricket Club

Of these Warborough Village Green also has an artificial pitch.

6. There are 25 grounds with no community use, all at schools / Academies.
7. The Assessment Tables Report shows the location of pitches
8. There are no significant spatial gaps where there are no pitches across any sub-area.
9. In South Oxfordshire, the largest clubs and number of affiliated teams are:
 - Aston Rowant CC – 10 teams
 - Henley CC – 10 teams
 - Didcot CC – 13 teams
 - Thame Town CC – 12 teams
 - Horspath CC – 11 teams
 - Tiddington CC – 12 teams
 - Goring-on-Thames CC – 16 teams
 - Kidmore End CC – 12 teams
 - Peppard Stoke Row CC – 17 teams
 - Abingdon Vale CC – 12 teams
10. Breaking down team numbers for all clubs across the area by age and sex, there 81 boys' teams, 15 girls' teams, 6 women's teams and 83 men's teams. Women & Girls cricket and junior activity have been identified as areas of significant growth in the lifespan of this strategy. Women & Girls has been identified by the ECB as the largest growth of the game as it tries to become a gender-neutral game at all levels. The success of entry level programmes such as All Stars and Dynamos as has also driven more young people into the sport which is resulting in an increase in junior teams. This grow in junior play will help to ensure succession into all adult teams in the medium and long term.
11. Across the area, some small levels of demand (unmet or latent) have been identified. There is no quantitative data for this, but reasons given for this unmet demand include lack of coaches and home ground is at capacity. some
12. Most clubs see most of their players travelling a reasonably short distance to play at the home ground. However due to the proximity and lack of publicly accessible cricket pitches in Oxford City, there is exported demand into South Oxfordshire. This is very difficult to quantify especially as some of the larger South Oxfordshire clubs are located on the boundary with Oxford City.
13. Most grass pitches are either of a standard or good quality, as is the case with artificial pitches. The sites that are considered to have poor quality grass pitches are Great Milton Recreation Ground, Holton Playing Fields, Tetsworth Sport & Social Club and Crowmarsh Recreation Ground. The sites that are considered to have a poor-quality artificial pitch is Tiddington Cricket Ground.
14. When set alongside pitches' carrying capacity and the amount of play they accommodate during a season, grass pitches at Aston Rowant CC, Nettlebed Sports Ground, Great Haseley Playing Field, Tiddington Cricket Ground, Gallowstree Common Recreation Ground, Gardiner Recreation Ground, Peppard Common, Stoke Row Sports & Leisure Club, Crowmarsh Recreation Ground, Hales & Hayes Meadow, Warborough Village Green and Boundary

Park are considered to be overplayed. Generally speaking, those seeing high amounts of use also have appropriate maintenance levels to ensure that the quality of the pitches do not suffer from that overuse. However, that does not mean that this is an ideal position for clubs to be in and grounds seeing significant levels of overplay which may not be manageable within a maintenance regime in the long-term

15. These sites are the ground used by the biggest clubs in South Oxfordshire, as listed previously, and it demonstrates that these clubs are at capacity as these sites will be used 6 or 7 times a week to service their teams. These clubs cannot grow further without access to additional pitches constructed on the sites or access to additional pitches at other sites.
16. There may be headroom capacity to accommodate additional demand at Station Road Playing Fields (Chinnor), MP Cricket Academy Sports Ground, Holton Playing Fields, Stanton St John Recreation Ground, Prestcold Cricket Club, Swyncombe Cricket Club, Chalgrove Cricket Club, Cow Common, Dorchester-on-Thames Recreation Ground, The Astons Recreation Ground, The Village Green (Marsh Baldon), Ipsden Cricket Ground and The Recreation Ground Clifton Hampden across the area. However, it should be noted that all these grounds are used by clubs but there is some spare capacity for additional activity. Additionally Great Milton Recreation Ground has been included in the carrying capacity calculations however the pitch was rated as poor but also the ECB have stated that there is a playground in very close proximity to a short boundary, so the site is considered dangerous.
17. With the growth of Women and Girls cricket the need to improve and develop ancillary provision has been identified as a key priority by the ECB. This includes creating a more welcoming environment such as improved toilets, changing rooms, social areas and general ambience.
18. Ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and pavilions are generally in a good or standard condition however the following sites have identified their ancillary facilities as not fit for purpose, especially in support of the growth of Women & Girls Cricket: Aston Rowant Cricket Club, Tiddington Cricket Ground, Great Haseley Playing Field, Horspath Village Recreation Ground, Gardner Recreation Ground, Warborough Village Green, Jubilee Pavilion & Recreation Ground, Chalgrove Cricket Club, Moreton Cricket Club, Thame Town Cricket Club, Garsington Sports Club, MP Cricket Academy Sports Ground, The Village Green (Marsh Baldon) and Tetsworth Sports & Social Club.
19. From data and information provided, changing facilities seem to be capable of accommodating people who do not identify as male or female gender or are transitioning, by adapting existing provision as necessary. It a recognised challenge, financially, to be able to retrofit gender neutral or unisex provision into older facilities (although this does not mean that it should not be addressed), but there will be opportunities in particular, moving forward, for new facilities to be able to accommodate fully provision needed across all gender types.

20. 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 this 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 (NCCA) and to host showcase fixtures with first class counties.
21. Comparing supply against demand across sub areas for grass pitches, supply and demand are in balance in the East, North and South sub area meaning that there is neither overplay nor capacity on the grass pitches. There is some potential headroom capacity in the West sub area. While there is headroom capacity at some grounds, the pitches still see use and so are not surplus to requirements. The Assessment Tables Report shows further details of the carrying capacity of each site.
22. It is clear from these figures that the existing supply (capacity) of cricket pitches available to club teams should be protected. There is demand at all grounds and overplay on several of them. Improving capacity at club pitches is limited but might be possible on some pitches (but not all) by making improvements to maintenance regimes and / or providing artificial pitches, and securing additional pitch capacity, if possible, on existing pitches elsewhere or new additional pitches.
23. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (endorsed by the England and Wales Cricket Board) has been used to project potential demand forward to 2041 based on population projections and estimates of change in participation rates agreed with the ECB and County Cricket Board. Results have suggested an additional capacity required of 401 match equivalents to cater for cricket, equivalent to 81 grass pitches or 7 artificial pitches. A 'usual' cricket square has 8 grass pitches or a single artificial pitch so this figure match equivalents can translate into 9 or 10 new grounds.
24. This figure is for the whole of South Oxfordshire and the figure can be broken down to estimate where this additional demand may arise based on clubs' ambition to grow, size of the clubs and the sub-areas likely to see the most population growth.
25. This For each sub-area, the additional demand to 2041 breaks down as follows:
- East sub-area = 3.44 grounds (28 grass pitches)
 - North sub-area = 2.22 grounds (18 grass pitches)
 - South sub-area = 0.12 grounds (1 grass pitch)
 - West sub-area = 4.22 grounds (34 grass pitches)
- In reality, pitch / ground numbers to be provided are rounded to the nearest whole pitch / ground.
26. It should be noted that these additional supply requirements do include already agreed pipeline cricket pitches. At the time of writing these pipeline new grounds included the following:

- Oxford Brookes University (Wheatley Campus) - North sub area – 1 new cricket ground to be included in the development which has 8 pitches and a 2 lane artificial practice net area.
- Didcot Northeast – West Sub area - 1 new cricket ground to be included in the development which has 8 pitches

Strategic Housing Allocation Sites

27. In addition to using the playing pitch calculator to project potential future additional demand for each sub-area, the calculator has also been used to project potential demand which arises just from the strategic housing allocations where the PPS can still have an influence on provision (some allocations already have agreements in place for provision of pitches which the assessment and strategy include as “pipeline” commitments to additional supply).
28. 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 grass pitches identified from the pitch calculator for all sports should be provided within the development itself.
29. It is important to note that the outputs from the Sport England calculator, which has been used to estimate demand arising from the new population on development sites, must be treated as an estimate and should be used as a starting point for negotiations for on and off-site provision and contributions. The input data is, effectively, a “snapshot” in time and input data can change from season to season. Calculations have been made based on local authority and sub-area administrative boundaries (and not spatial catchments which might cross administrative boundaries) and so discussions with neighbouring local authorities in locations where a reasonable catchment for a site extends into those authorities’ areas might be beneficial to inform discussions about the overall quantum of provision and whether that capacity is provided on-site, off-site, or through developer contributions.
30. Experience suggests that “provide and they will come” does not work for most pitch sports. Careful thought must be given the appropriateness, viability and practicalities of use, running and maintaining a pitch if in a location away from a club’s home ground. Economies of scale and critical mass of members and volunteers required are also important factors, with provision of single pitch sites rarely representing good value or a practical solution when split sites draw members away from an existing home ground (therefore, introducing additional travel for some existing members / players) and where ancillary facilities also need to be provided at significant cost. Careful consideration must be given to not create single pitch sites where no existing club is prepared to play or run and maintain the site as a satellite location. It should not be automatically assumed that a new club will simply emerge from demand, and it is important to note that demand arising from the new population will occur incrementally as the development is delivered and occupied and that without sports infrastructure and “people capacity” in place at an early stage, demand will simply gravitate towards an existing club. This can often be the result of new residents moving to new developments who

already live within the same housing market area – it cannot be automatically assumed that all new residents are new to the area and these people will already have associations with existing sports clubs (and will be likely to retain them if travel time does not introduce an impediment such that it will stop them playing at their “home” club).

31. Operation of a satellite site for an existing club must be carefully thought through if this is considered to be a workable potential solution. For critical mass within age groups, it would be likely that a club would favour moving several age groups, for example, to a new satellite pitch. The implication can be that more existing players then have to travel further to the new satellite location than the alternative of players arising from demand at a new development travelling to an existing club home ground. Support of NGBs is critical to realise effective and efficient creation of new clubs and / or the introduction of satellite sites for existing clubs.
32. Pooling or securing contributions from multiple sites can often be a more workable and appropriate solution 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.

33. Oxford Brookes University (Wheatley Campus) Housing Allocation (c.500 dwellings) – North Sub-area

The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Oxford Brookes University allocation will generate demand for around 5 grass cricket pitches. The development site already had a cricket ground on it which has been lost from the supply in recent years with uncertainty over the site. Schedule 4 of the Section 106 for the development includes an adult cricket pitch with 8 pitch square, a minimum two-lane practice net facility (which is made up of two artificial (non-turf) cricket practice surfaces constructed to Sport England / Governing Body specifications), and a pavilion to service the pitches.

34. Land North of Bayswater Brook Housing Allocation (c.1,450 dwellings) - North Sub-area

We are advised, at the time of writing this assessment report, that there remains an opportunity to influence provision for pitch sports resulting from the demand likely to be generated at the site, and with particular reference to the off-site contributions which could be sought as a result of the scale of development. The playing pitch calculator suggests that, of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the North of Bayswater Brook development will generate demand for 13 grass cricket pitches. Given that likely provision will be made through off-site contributions, these pitches would require a combined capital contribution of £633,710 and a capital cost of £724,926 to contribute towards changing room provision. The calculator suggests an annual lifecycle (per annum) cost for the pitches of £128,009. These figures are based on use of the playing pitch calculator in October 2023 and figures should be reconsidered on a quarterly basis (or at appropriate times when financial data is updated by Sport England in the calculator) to ensure that they remain up-to-date. Use of the contributions to accommodate demand arising from the development should be discussed with Oxford City

Council, Sport England and the ECB to help determine the most appropriate use of the monies to enhance provision on existing sites or contribute to additional new pitches, given the location of the site close to the city. However, options within the South Oxfordshire boundary include consideration of at least a proportion of the contributions for use in the Horspath and Holton / Wheatley areas to improve existing pitches / facilities or contribute towards new provision, if and where relevant, in line with the recommendations for the sub-area in this report.

35. Berinsfield Housing Allocation (c.1,700 dwellings) – West Sub-area

The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Berinsfield Housing allocation will generate demand for around 4 grass cricket pitches, which is not enough for a new ground. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest nearby existing sites to create additional pitches and help improve the quality of existing pitches. Given that likely provision will be made through off-site contributions, these pitches would require a combined capital contribution of £170,381 and a capital cost of £194,905 to contribute towards changing room provision. The calculator suggests an annual lifecycle (per annum) cost for the pitches of £34,417. These figures are based on use of the playing pitch calculator in October 2023 and figures should be reconsidered on a quarterly basis (or at appropriate times when financial data is updated by Sport England in the calculator) to ensure that they remain up-to-date.

36. Culham Science Centre Housing Allocation (c.3,500 dwellings) – West Sub-area

The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Culham Science Centre Housing allocation will generate demand for around 8 grass cricket pitches. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with a new ground to be constructed as part of the development. However, this should be in consultation with a local club so that an anchor tenant can be found from the outset and ensure the site is fully utilised as intended.

37. Grenoble Road Housing Allocation (c.3,000 dwellings) – West Sub-area

The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Grenoble Road allocation will generate demand for around 7 grass cricket pitches. When considering the close proximity of the Northfield Housing Allocation, demand arising from these two sites would be best dealt with a new ground to be constructed as part of the development. However, this should be in consultation with a local club so that an anchor tenant can be found from the outset and ensure the site is fully utilised as intended.

38. Northfield Housing Allocation (c.1,800 dwellings) – West Sub-area

The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Northfield allocation will generate demand for around 5 grass cricket pitches. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with contributions to a new ground as part of the Grenoble Road Housing Allocation. However, if this is not possible then will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest nearby existing sites to create additional pitches and help improve the quality of existing pitches. Given that likely provision will be made through off-site contributions, these

pitches would require a combined capital contribution of £180,409 and a capital cost of £206,377 to contribute towards changing room provision. The calculator suggests an annual lifecycle (per annum) cost for the pitches of £36,443. These figures are based on use of the playing pitch calculator in October 2023 and figures should be reconsidered on a quarterly basis (or at appropriate times when financial data is updated by Sport England in the calculator) to ensure that they remain up-to-date.

39. Chalgrove Airfield (c.3,000 dwellings) – West Sub-area

The calculator suggests that of the demand projected for the sub-area as a whole, the Chalgrove Airfield allocation will generate demand for around 7 grass cricket pitches¹. When considering that this future demand is just below enough for a new ground, and there is a cricket ground that is not fully utilised bordering the development, demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with by ensuring that contributions are captured to invest in the nearby Chalgrove CC ground to create additional pitches and help improve the quality of existing pitches, training facilities and pavilion. Given that likely provision will be made through off-site contributions, these pitches would require a combined capital contribution of £320,401 and a capital cost of £364,514 to contribute towards changing room provision. The calculator suggests an annual lifecycle (per annum) cost for the pitches of £58,954. These figures are based on use of the playing pitch calculator in October 2023 and figures should be reconsidered on a quarterly basis (or at appropriate times when financial data is updated by Sport England in the calculator) to ensure that they remain up-to-date.

¹ The adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 allocates Land at Chalgrove Airfield for 3,000 homes. As of January 2024, there is no live planning application for this site. The emerging Joint Local Plan proposes to de-allocate this site for residential development. However, for the purposes of this strategy we have assessed the need generated by this allocation as it currently forms part of the development plan, and may be needed if the council receives a planning application on this site prior to the adoption of the Joint Local Plan. If the Joint Local Plan is adopted on the basis of removing the allocation, and no planning permission is in place, then the requirements for Chalgrove Airfield will not be implemented. If the site does not come forward for development, ensure, through monitoring, that sufficient pitch capacity is provided elsewhere in the sub-area, within the context of the overall strategy of provision in the sub-area, to cater for demand arising from the estimated population.

Summarising Provision

To summarise provision now and in the future, three scenarios are set out below.

Standard Scenario – main preferred use of grass pitches on club sites supplemented by artificial pitches

39. The summary picture for supply and demand in sub-areas, now and in the future is as follows.

Cricket Supply / Demand Snapshot (unsecure and secure community use combined)						
Sub-area	Teams	Surface	Supply	Demand	Supply / demand balance	Projected additional future demand
			(match equivalents)			
East	Women	Grass	430	380	50	138
	Men Juniors	Artificial	0			
North	Women	Grass	386	329	57	89
	Men Juniors	Artificial	0			
South	Women	Grass	497	430	67	5
	Men Juniors	Artificial	0			
West	Women	Grass	612	462	150	169
	Men Juniors	Artificial	240			
South Oxfordshire	Women	Grass	1,925	1,601	324	401
	Men Juniors	Artificial	240			
Projected additional demand across South Oxfordshire to 2041			Match equivalents (training & matches)		401	
			Pitches (grass)		81	
			Pitches (artificial)		7	

40. Figures should be treated with caution and as a “top end” figure and the demand for and provision of additional pitches will need to be monitored to understand realistic demand on the ground to ensure supply accurately reflects demand prior to any new pitches being provided (particularly on new grounds). The combination of provision between grass and artificial pitches will also need to be provided to fit with real demand.
41. Additional capacity seems unlikely to be required *in full* on additional new grounds for various reasons:
- i) There may not be sufficient demand in one location to justify an additional ground (which would typically host between 8 and 12 pitches in a square).
 - ii) Maintenance could be improved at grounds where the pitch is of “standard” or “poor” quality to accommodate additional demand if the demand from teams warrants it.
 - iii) Depending on proximity to the demand arising, “mothballed” grounds could be brought back into use.
 - iv) Some or all of the additional capacity required could be accommodated on existing grounds where there is the opportunity to set a new pitch at an existing square, but only where time slots are available to accommodate new teams playing matches on Saturdays and Sundays depending on the age group and format of the game played (and subject to the ability of the club or other body responsible for maintenance to maintain the additional pitch).
 - v) There could be opportunities to better match teams and the standard of cricket being played with grounds more appropriate for those teams. For example, the need to increase capacity at some grounds could also be considered in light of the changing nature of cricket, where some grounds are now too small to accommodate comfortably adult men’s team matches. Adult teams to whom this position applies may need to move home matches to alternative grounds with smaller sites being a focus more for the junior game in the future. This could present opportunities to increase capacity at grounds where they previously did not have sufficient demand to warrant such change.
42. Levels of actual and short-term demand will need to be closely monitored to understand how real demand increases during the lifetime of the strategy, particularly after the initial strategy period. As projections of demand and need are based on assumptions around increasing growth and participation, which may or may not come to fruition, additional provision after the first few years of the strategy period in particular should be responsive to demonstrable levels of demand. This is particularly the case within cricket for the growth in junior teams given the ECB’s initiatives and programmes to increase play for juniors, targets for which are relatively ambitious. It is also important to accurately monitor change in demand “on the ground” given that projections of demand are exactly that and will therefore potentially be less accurate the further forward they go, but also because initiatives, programmes and formats of the game (and when they are played) are likely to change over time.

Scenario A - No education sites in supply

43. Only one site, Lord William’s Academy (Upper School) is used by Thame Town CC as their second ground. This site is currently used for some overflow cricket for the club which equates to 18 match equivalents, or 2 adult teams.

The club are growing and are looking for a permanent second ground, and Lord Williams' School has been identified as the preferred site. If this was removed the current demand would need to be relocated elsewhere and it will also prevent the club from growing its junior section any further.

Scenario B - Supply lost in areas of high deprivation

44. There are no cricket club home grounds located in areas of high deprivation.

Decarbonisation, Sustainable Travel and Climate Change

45. 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.

46. For example, clubs in control of their ground and providers / owners of grounds and 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.

47. Considering cycling catchments, there are no areas that are outside of a reasonable cycling distance to a cricket grounds. The assessment of grounds used by clubs suggested that only 4 club sites have secure cycle parking, and all sites could offer this infrastructure to help encourage modal shift from cars.

48. However, this type of infrastructure provision can only be part of the answer. Sports facility, pitch and ground 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 facilities, grounds and pitches provided in all locations to enable a 20 minute cycle or walk to them – it is simply 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 Playing Pitch Strategy 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.

49. There are concerns about the use of artificial pitch surfaces for sport. This is a greater concern perhaps for football and hockey than for cricket, while rugby will use artificial pitches for training and matches where demand suggests a need and play cannot be accommodated at club ground grass pitches.

Concerns focus around the use of a synthetic pitch which is predominantly plastic, and for 3G pitches used by football and rugby, the use of rubber crumb to manage the movement of the ball and consequential loss of rubber particles off-site and into the environment and watercourses.

50. For cricket, it should be considered a minor issue, with only a narrow strip of non-turf surface required to accommodate a pitch / wicket, typically one strip per main square at a ground, and non-turf surfaces being used for in-situ cricket nets. The strategy for cricket will need to recognise demand for these surfaces against cost and consideration of these environmental issues.

Key Issues Snapshot

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

- Projections for growth suggest that the junior game and Women & Girls cricket could see most growth. Increasing links with schools (including security of community use) and using their pitches and facilities could become important in accommodating growth, if it materialises “on the ground”. Such links will also help to establish and maintain a pathway through the age groups for cricket.
- Clubs with junior sections are growing significantly and outgrowing their home ground. These clubs are looking for second grounds to continue to service their membership and growth.
- Most ancillary facilities are not fit for purpose for Women & Girls, and this is market is likely to grow very fast over the period of the strategy.
- Artificial pitches are important to help protect the grass pitches by providing additional capacity to host junior matches and proved training facilities for both juniors and seniors.
- Securing community use at club home grounds where there is currently unsecure community use is critical to give clubs certainty.
- Most clubs use volunteers to prepare their pitches and are over reliant upon this resource. It is generally an ageing workforce and the demands of the role have increased due to the growth of junior cricket and many sites being in use 6 or 7 times a week.

Strategy Recommendations

52. The above assessment conclusions suggest that the approach to the PPS strategy in South Oxfordshire should be as follows:

PROTECT

District-wide

- i) Protect the existing supply of pitches (and their capacity) identified in the assessment (for existing known, projected and potential additional currently unidentified future demand) unless replacement equivalent capacity can be provided elsewhere to an equal or better standard (i.e.

- “net improvements”) reflecting the demand and type of use required “on the ground” by clubs (also see PROVIDE recommendations).
- ii) Protection from loss also extends to where a club folds, as additional capacity on a lost ground and previously used for cricket may be required by other clubs and this should be explored in relation to potential demand where this scenario happens. Such sites also need protection for future supply as the anticipated growth in junior age groups moves through into the adult game towards during the strategy period.
 - iii) Protect pitches by seeking to establish security of tenure for grounds / pitches currently considered as unsecure and explore community use on those not currently available (also see **Enhance** below). The implications of any changes to security of use will need to be understood and factored into planning for delivery during the strategy period.
 - iv) Regular monitoring of the balance between supply and demand should take place to ensure that appropriate use of any available capacity is being made and confirm that any spare “headroom” capacity to accommodate growth is not considered as “surplus” to cricket use.
 - v) Proposals for development which have an implication for the use of an existing pitch (such as change of land use) should take into account the recommendations of this strategy and policies of relevance in adopted Development Plans relevant to the site / pitch (i.e. Adopted Local Plans, other Development Plan Documents and Made Neighbourhood Plans).
 - vi) Where pitches are lost to formal pitch use, where appropriate, the Local Planning Authority should seek to ensure that there is significant policy protection through the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plans or legal means to prevent their loss as open or green space.

Sub-Area Specific

East

- vii) Protection of pitch supply is particularly important for all club pitches as the sub area is broadly at capacity.
- viii) Protect the currently “mothballed” pitch sites (at Lewknor Recreation Ground) from development, holding in reserve to ensure that headroom capacity could be available to respond to potential demand if no other suitable site with existing use and headroom capacity is available.

North

- ix) Protection of pitch supply is particularly important for all club pitches as the sub area is broadly at capacity.
- x) Protect the currently “mothballed” pitch sites (at Horspath Sports Ground and The Parks Sports Centre (Wheatley) from development, holding in reserve to ensure that headroom capacity could be available to respond to potential demand if no other suitable site with existing use and headroom capacity is available.

South

- xi) Protection of pitch supply is particularly important for all club pitches as the sub area is broadly at capacity.
- xii) Protect the currently “mothballed” pitch sites (at Langtree School) from development, holding in reserve to ensure that headroom capacity could be available to respond to potential demand if no other suitable site with existing use and headroom capacity is available.

West

- xiii) Protection of pitch supply is particularly important for all club pitches. Although there is some spare capacity at a couple of sites, all sites are in use by local clubs who provide cricket opportunities to their local communities.
- xiv) Protect the currently “mothballed” pitch sites (at Acklings Sports Field, Cholsey Recreation Ground, Moulsoford Recreation Ground, St Birinus School, Wallingford School and Wallingford Sports Park) from development, holding in reserve to ensure that headroom capacity could be available to respond to potential demand if no other suitable site with existing use and headroom capacity is available.

ENHANCE

District-wide

- i) Gain the secure use of clubs’ pitches which do not currently have secure community use, to provide certainty of future supply and enable clubs and users to access necessary funding to invest in improvements.
- ii) Consider increasing the current use of existing pitches where spare capacity notionally exists, where physically, practically and logistically possible.
- iii) Support projected growth in the women’s and junior games by ensuring that the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities meets their needs (i.e. that they are fit for purpose) where junior and women’s teams play and train.
- iv) Support the training needs of clubs by providing in-situ practice nets where necessary to improve the capacity for training which can help retain the quality of pitches on the main square.
- v) Support proposals for improved energy efficiency and localised renewable and low carbon energy generation at facilities and grounds through measures such as LED directional lighting, solar pv, heat pumps and building insulation.
- vi) Support the continual improvement of facilities, and the workforce that prepare them, to a good quality to help attract and retain players.
- vii) Work with partners and key stakeholders to improve sustainable travel options to grounds, pitches and facilities.

- viii) Support provision of secure cycle stands and ev vehicle charge points at club and other providers' grounds and facilities to enhance provision for low carbon forms of travel.
- ix) NGBs and the local authority should work with clubs, operators and providers, on sites where facilities and / or pitch areas are shared between sports, to ensure that management, maintenance and access is shared evenly and appropriately between sports, for example, through establishment of multi-sport site Trusts or other management bodies.

Sub-Area Specific

East

- x) Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure community use at Lord William's Academy (Upper School), Nettlebed Sports Ground, Watlington Sports Ground and MP Cricket Academy Sports Ground to provide certainty of future supply.
- xi) Consider increasing the current use of existing pitches where spare capacity notionally exists, where physically, practically and logistically possible at Station Road Playing Fields (Chinnor) and MP Cricket Academy Sports Ground.
- xii) Seek to address overplay at Aston Rowant CC and Nettlebed Sports Ground if overplay is causing reduction in pitch quality, through improved maintenance, replacement of surfaces (at artificial pitches), provision of in situ practice nets for training and / or provision of additional grass or artificial pitches.
- xv) Support the improvement of club ancillary facilities to provide fit for purpose facilities, to service current membership and the growth in the Women & Girls game at Aston Rowant CC, Thame Town CC, Tetsworth Sport & Social Club and MP Cricket Academy Sports Ground. This list will need to be monitored as more and more clubs establish new women & girls' sections.

North

- xvi) Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure community use at Great Haseley Playing Field and Stanton Road St John Recreation Ground to provide certainty of future supply.
- xvii) Consider increasing the current use of existing pitches where spare capacity notionally exists, where physically, practically and logistically possible at Holton Playing Fields (Chinnor) and Stanton Road St John Recreation Ground.
- xviii) Seek to address overplay at Tiddington Cricket Ground and Great Haseley Playing Field if overplay is causing reduction in pitch quality, through improved maintenance, replacement of surfaces (at artificial pitches), provision of in situ practice nets for training and / or provision of additional grass or artificial pitches.
- xix) Support the improvement of club ancillary facilities to provide fit for purpose facilities, to service current membership and the growth in the

Women & Girls game at Tiddington Cricket Ground, Great Haseley Playing Field, Horspath Village Recreation Ground and Garsington Sports Club. This list will need to be monitored as more and more clubs establish new women & girls' sections.

South

- xx) Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure community use at Checkendon Playing Field, Gallowstree Common Recreation Ground, Gardiner Recreation Ground, Prestcold Cricket Club, Whitchurch-on-Thames Cricket Club and Stoke Row Sports & Leisure Club to provide certainty of future supply.
- xxi) Consider increasing the current use of existing pitches where spare capacity notionally exists, where physically, practically and logistically possible at Prestcold Cricket Club, Swyncombe Cricket Club and Whitchurch-on-Thames Cricket Club.
- xxii) Seek to address overplay at Gallowstree Recreation Ground, Gardiner Recreation Ground, Peppard Common and Stoke Row Sports & Leisure Club if overplay is causing reduction in pitch quality, through improved maintenance, replacement of surfaces (at artificial pitches), provision of in situ practice nets for training and / or provision of additional grass or artificial pitches.
- xxiii) Support the improvement of club ancillary facilities to provide fit for purpose facilities, to service current membership and the growth in the Women & Girls game at Gardiner Recreation Ground and Stoke Row Pavilion. This list will need to be monitored as more and more clubs establish new women & girls' sections.

West

- xxiv) Gain the secure use of pitches which currently have unsecure community use at Cow Common, Dorchester-on-Thames Recreation Ground, The Village Green (Marsh Baldon), Warborough Village Green, Ipsden Cricket Ground, The Recreation Ground Clifton Hampden and Cholsey Cricket Club to provide certainty of future supply.
- xxv) Consider increasing the current use of existing pitches where spare capacity notionally exists, where physically, practically and logistically possible at Chalgrove Cricket Club, Cow Common, Dorchester-on-Thames Recreation Ground, The Astons Recreation Ground, The Village Green (Marsh Baldon), Ipsden Cricket Ground and The Recreation Ground Clifton Hampden.
- xxvi) Seek to address overplay at Crowmarsh Recreation Ground, Hales & Hayes Meadow, Warborough Village Green and Boundary Park if overplay is causing reduction in pitch quality, through improved maintenance, replacement of surfaces (at artificial pitches), provision of in situ practice nets for training and / or provision of additional grass or artificial pitches.
- xxvii) Support the improvement of club ancillary facilities to provide fit for purpose facilities, to service current membership and the growth in the Women & Girls game at Warborough Village Green, The Jubilee Pavilion & Recreation Ground, Chalgrove Cricket Club, Hales & Hay Meadow, [The](#)

[Village Green \(Marsh Baldon\)](#) and Moreton Cricket Club. This list will need to be monitored as more and more clubs establish new women & girls' sections.

PROVIDE

District-wide

- i) Assuming that unsecure sites can be secured for community use and other measures to improve existing capacity have been taken, consider providing 81 additional grass pitches capacity, or 7 additional artificial pitches, or a combination of both grass and artificial is more realistic. This could be provided (on existing grounds rather than a new ground where feasible and where the provision of additional capacity equates to real availability on the days demand requires, the majority of which is likely to occur in sub-area North and South, followed by sub-area West. Where the additional demand is for capacity at existing club home grounds and there is no additional capacity on days when new teams require pitch use, an additional new ground may be required should the team generating the demand not be willing to play at sites where there may be available capacity when it is required.
- ii) Where the loss of an existing pitch or practice nets is unavoidable, provide replacement pitch capacity with secure community use to good quality standard in a location appropriate to demand to mitigate loss.
- iii) Ensure that the provision of any new pitches and facilities meet the most up-to-date quality design standards and dimensions supported by the NGB and Sport England.
- iv) Ensure that any new facilities and other associated pitch infrastructure are provided to meet the most up-to-date Building Regulations, including, but not restricted to, those relating to accessibility.
- v) Ensure that any new pitches and facilities have a sustainable long-term business and financial management plan in place to ensure long-term viability.
- vi) Ensure that all new pitches and facilities have a secure community use agreement in place for the long-term (preferably in perpetuity) and that the appropriate body is identified to monitor and enforce such agreements.
- vii) Seek to provide additional capacity, where needed, at (or, if this is not possible, within close proximity to) existing club home grounds as a preference over sites far from home grounds, where physical, ownership and planning constraints do not prevent such change. This will help to ensure the long-term financial stability of clubs given the social tradition and culture of the sport.
- viii) For development detailed in the adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulation 123 Infrastructure list, CIL monies could be secured towards the upgrade and management of existing strategic outdoor sports and recreation provision and creation of new provision and associated facilities (this includes playing pitches as identified in the PPS). However, it is recommended that local authority officers consider the benefits of bringing forward new and improved facilities related to development through s106 planning obligations as the most appropriate mechanism to understand and apply requirements generated for sports pitches and ancillary facilities by a given population.

- ix) In cases where mitigation is required as the result of a loss of a pitch to development, and that mitigation is in the form of off-site contributions, to ensure certainty that the contributions can be used to deliver the intended provision in part or in full (and in turn help to address any “knock-on” mitigation required on the site to which the contribution applies), the Local Planning Authority should consider introducing a Grampian condition² on permission to ensure that mitigation is delivered as intended (and therefore certainty of delivery is guaranteed).
- x) The total amount of additional supply should come from a variety of sources, i.e. the projected demand is unlikely to need to be delivered solely through additional, new, grass pitches. Increased capacity to this amount will come from a combination of:
- Improved maintenance on sites that are rated as poor which will increase the number of match equivalents that the pitch can sustain.
 - Provide replacement of surfaces (at artificial pitches) which will increase the number of match equivalents that the pitch can sustain.
 - Provide in situ practice nets for training to move the usage for training from the match pitches to the practice nets.
 - Provide additional grass or artificial pitches on existing sites to increase capacity, where feasible to do so.
 - Bringing “mothballed” pitches back into use where and when necessary, provided they are in close proximity to the identified demand (i.e. providing additional capacity on sites where grass pitches are not currently in use but where there have been pitches before);
 - Provision of new additional grass pitches at new grounds provided they are in close proximity to the identified demand.
- xi) [The use of hybrid pitches in cricket is a new innovative technology but is currently not fully endorsed by the ECB. Research is ongoing in the recreational game and it will be sometime before the ECB will have detailed outcomes. This may change over the lifetime of the strategy and provide another option to increase capacity of existing sites.](#)
- xii) A “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should be taken to the provision of additional capacity. The combination of provision between grass and artificial pitches will also need to be provided to fit with real demand (for example, to match increased participation in the junior and women’s game should it materialise as projected / targeted by the ECB / the County Cricket Board)³.
- xiii) The management of existing supply and the balance between supply and demand should be closely monitored and provision managed to ensure

² See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions#Application-of-the-six-tests> for further details on use of Grampian Conditions. Section - “When can conditions be used relating to land not in control of the applicant?” Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 21a-009-20140306. The NPPG states that Grampian Conditions are conditions which are “prohibiting development authorised by the planning permission or other aspects linked to the planning permission (eg occupation of premises) until a specified action has been taken (such as the provision of supporting infrastructure)”.

³ While projections have made assumptions about use, should for example, adult team demand come forward more for midweek than weekend matches, the balance between grass pitch and artificial pitch provision may need to change to reflect the preferred surface for midweek matches.

that supply (i.e. grounds) is best suited to the type and format of the game played and when matches take place. The provision of additional pitches and / or facilities should also be closely co-ordinated between the NGB, clubs, league administrators, Sport England, the local authority, and the landowner (where the latter is not one of the aforementioned bodies) to ensure that additional supply responds to required demand.

Sub-Area Specific

East

- xiv) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:
- Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 28 additional grass pitch capacity, or 3 additional artificial pitches, or a combination of both grass and artificial is more realistic, across this sub-area.
 - Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE, bullet point ix).
 - If additional pitches are required, capacity increases should be concentrated at the following sites as these clubs are continuing to grow and require additional facilities to service this growth. It should be noted these sites are already at or close to capacity so securing access to existing grounds with spare capacity or providing new grounds should be considered as a priority. Each site needs to undertake an assessment to identify exactly how much and where additional capacity can be provided.
 - Aston Rowant CC
 - Nettlebed Sports Ground
 - Thame Town CC

North

- xv) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:
- Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 18 additional grass pitch capacity, or 2 additional artificial pitches, or a combination of both grass and artificial is more realistic, across this sub-area.
 - Oxford Brookes University (Wheatley Campus, in Holton) development to provide on-site cricket ground to mitigate the loss of the existing pitches and accommodate future additional demand from the development. The Section 106 has been agreed and the site will provide an adult cricket pitch with 8 pitch square and a two-lane practice net facility.
 - Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE, bullet point ix).

- If additional pitches are required, capacity increases should be concentrated at the following sites as these clubs are continuing to grow and require additional facilities to service this growth. It should be noted these sites are already at or close to capacity so securing access to existing grounds with spare capacity or providing new grounds should be considered as a priority. Each site needs to undertake an assessment to identify exactly how much and where additional capacity can be provided.
 - Tiddington Cricket Ground
 - Great Haseley Playing Field
 - Horspath Village Recreation Ground

South

xvi) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:

- Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 1 additional grass pitch capacity, or 1 additional artificial pitch, or a combination of both grass and artificial is more realistic, across this sub-area.
- Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE, bullet point ix).
- If additional pitches are required, capacity increases should be concentrated at the following sites as these clubs are continuing to grow and require additional facilities to service this growth. It should be noted these sites are already at or close to capacity so securing access to existing grounds with spare capacity or providing new grounds should be considered as a priority. Each site needs to undertake an assessment to identify exactly how much and where additional capacity can be provided.
 - Checkendon Playing Field
 - Gallowstree Common Recreation Ground
 - Gardiner Recreation Ground
 - Peppard Common
 - Stoke Row Sports & Leisure Club

West

xvii) Within this sub-area, the following measures should be taken to address the current and projected demand:

- Enable the supply of additional pitch capacity to accommodate existing overplay and future demand to a total equivalent capacity of 34 additional grass pitch capacity, or 3 additional artificial pitches, or a combination of both grass and artificial is more realistic, across this sub-area.
- Providing for additional supply should come, broadly sequentially, following the process set out in the district-wide recommendation above in PROVIDE, bullet point ix).

- Didcot Northeast development will provide new on-site cricket ground to accommodate additional demand for cricket from the development. The final number of cricket pitches on the ground to be agreed.
- Culham Science Centre Housing allocation will generate demand for around 8 grass cricket pitches. Demand arising from this site will probably be best dealt with a new ground to be constructed as part of the development. However, this should be in consultation with a local club so that an anchor tenant can be found from the outset and ensure the site is fully utilised as intended
- Grenoble Road development and the Northfield development will provide demand for an additional 12 pitches. This demand is best dealt with by providing a new cricket ground on Grenoble Road utilising contributions from both Grenoble Road and the Northfield development. However, this should be in consultation with a local club so that an anchor tenant can be found from the outset and ensure the site is fully utilised as intended.
- If the Chalgrove Airfield development is delivered, then it should be delivered by improvements to Chalgrove CC site which is adjacent to the potential development.
- If additional pitches are required, capacity increases should be concentrated at the following sites as these clubs are continuing to grow and require additional facilities to service this growth. It should be noted these sites are already at or close to capacity so securing access to existing grounds with spare capacity or providing new grounds should be considered as a priority. Each site needs to undertake an assessment to identify exactly how much and where additional capacity can be provided.
 - Crowmarsh Recreation Ground
 - Hales & Hayes Meadow
 - Warborough Village Green
 - Boundary Park
 - Cholsey Cricket Club

A Note About Delivery

53. It is the responsibility of all signatories to the PPS and to users and providers, to act upon and deliver actions identified in the strategy. Responsibility for provision is not solely the responsibility of any one party.