

**The Open Space, Green Infrastructure,
Sport and Recreation Study**

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

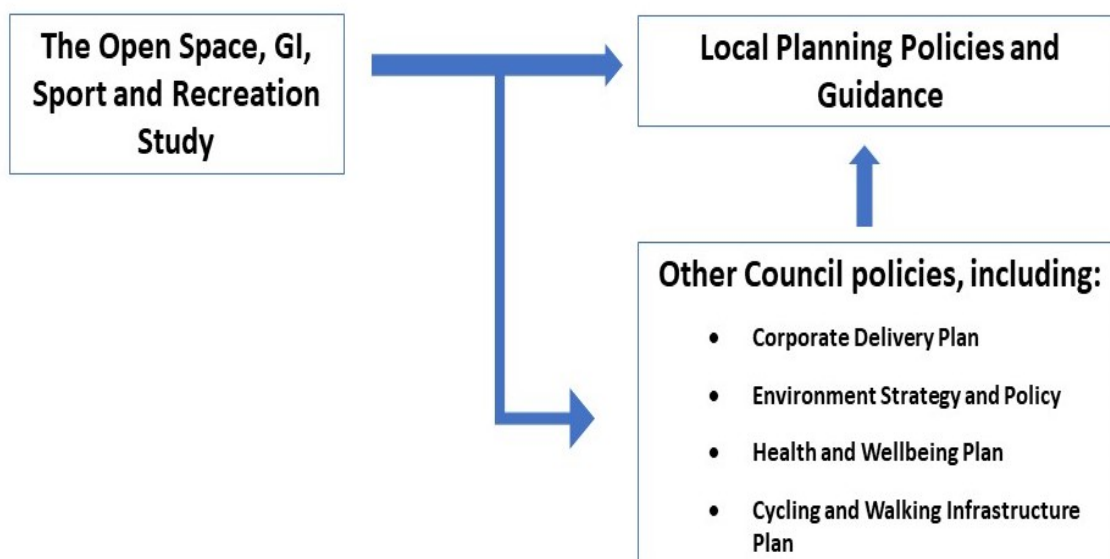
The project examined current and projected needs for open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation in Stroud District. Healthy environments and communities require open space and associated facilities to be of an appropriate quantity, quality and location. The project topic matter connects with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) themes as well as the Vision and Strategic Objectives of the Draft Stroud District Local Plan Review. These links are explained in Sections 2, 5,6, & 7 of this summary.

The project covers:

- Publicly accessible open space, including amenity and natural space, parks and recreation grounds, play space, allotments;
- Green Infrastructure, which may include both public and private land in such strategic designations;
- Outdoor sports space (especially sports pitches); and,
- Indoor/built sports and recreation facilities.

The output will inform the Council’s Local Plan Review and the Council’s decision-making process up to 2040. The Preferred Local Plan Strategy will seek to deliver at least 638 new homes per year for a twenty-year period. This growth will have implications for the themes covered by this project. The output provides the evidence base for decision making in relation to open space and GI, outdoor and built sports facilities for the period 2020-2040, and will link with and inform the preparation of the Council’s Local Plan Review, and other Council documents and strategies.

‘This study links and informs council polices and strategies’



1. Introduction

These are the principal output reports:

- Stroud Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study Main Report (Part 1)
- Stroud Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study Cluster Analysis (Part 2) – split into 8 cluster areas and an Introduction
- Stroud Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment
- Stroud Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Final Strategy Main Report (Part 1) plus appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Final Stage B Database, Maps of Clusters, List of Site Reference Numbers, Key Site Overviews (37 in total)).
- Stroud PPS Final Strategy Action Plans (Part 2)
- Stroud PPS Final Needs Assessment Reports – split into 7 individual documents due to file size (Introduction and Context, Football, Cricket, Rugby, Hockey, Tennis and Bowls, Key Findings and Issues)
- The Community and Stakeholder Consultation¹.

Separate reports are required because of the varied topic matter and methodologies involved. Merging all the content into one omnibus report would have resulted in a huge and unwieldy document.

This summary:

- Identifies National Planning Policy themes and Local Plan Strategic Objectives to which the study has strong links;
- List strategy documents that have been reviewed for the project;
- Explains the different methodologies adopted for the respective project components; and,
- Provides findings and recommendations for each component. It also links the recommendations to NPPF and draft Local Plan themes and strategic objectives drawing together this information to form a coherent strategic approach to future component planning.

¹ The Community Stakeholder Consultation provided core information to inform aspects of the overall study. It reported the results of a sample household survey, as well as surveys of parish and town councils; local groups and organisations; neighbouring local authorities; and, strategic agencies and organisations of relevance. There are additional details in Section 4 of this summary.

2. Links NPPF themes and local plan strategic objectives

High quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out policies enabling communities to access such opportunities. These policies must be based on a thorough understanding of local need and the scope available for new provision.

Both the adopted and emerging draft Stroud District Local Plans embrace the principles of NPPF in the following ways.

NPPF Themes	Draft Plan Strategic Objectives ²
Achieving Sustainable Development	Strategic Objective SO5: Climate Change and environmental limits. Promoting a development strategy that mitigates global warming, adapts to climate change and respects our environmental limits by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing energy efficiency through building design • Maximising the re-use of buildings and recycling of building materials • Minimising the amount of waste produced and seeking to recover energy • Promoting the use of appropriately located brownfield land • Supporting a pattern of development that facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport • Minimising and mitigating against future flood risks, recycling water resources and protecting and enhancing the quality of our District’s surface and groundwater resource
Decision-Making	All Strategic Objectives relate to this theme.
Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities	Strategic Objective SO1: Accessible communities. Maintaining and improving accessibility to services and amenities, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare for all residents • Affordable and decent housing for local needs • Active social, leisure and recreation opportunities • Youth and adult learning opportunities Strategic Objective SO1a: Healthy, inclusive and safe communities. Developing communities that support healthy lifestyles, promote social interaction, ensure public safety and reduce the fear of crime
Promoting Sustainable Transport	Strategic Objective SO4: Transport and travel. Promoting healthier alternatives to the use of the private car and seeking to reduce CO2 emissions by using new technologies, active travel and/or smarter choices, working towards a more integrated transport system to improve access to local goods and services.
Achieving Well-designed Places	Strategic Objective SO1: Accessible communities. Maintaining and improving accessibility to services and amenities, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare for all residents • Affordable and decent housing for local needs • Active social, leisure and recreation opportunities • Youth and adult learning opportunities Strategic Objective SO1a: Healthy, inclusive and safe communities. Developing communities that support healthy lifestyles, promote social interaction, ensure public safety and reduce the fear of crime
Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment	Strategic Objective SO6: Our District’s distinctive qualities. Conserving and enhancing Stroud District’s distinctive qualities, based on landscape, heritage, townscape and biodiversity

² The draft Local Plan review strategic objectives are themselves based on a draft local plan vision which (in summary) aspires to a district that:

- is living, modern and innovative, and responding to climate change;
- supports a network of market towns, and their hinterlands;
- capitalises on local heritage, skills and knowledge;
- is adaptable to changing needs and lifestyles;
- enjoys high quality, healthy, diverse and safe lifestyles and communities; and,
- sees richness, diversity and beauty in the locality.

2. Links NPPF themes and local plan strategic objectives

In the final three sections of this summary (5,6,7) the specific recommendations of this project are linked to the above themes and objectives.

3. Overall policy context

The project examined the character and needs of the District and its residents within the context of planned sustainable growth, environmental issues, and the quest to promote active and healthy lifestyles. Consequently, the project has been shaped by many national and local policies, strategies and initiatives listed below. Summaries and full references of the following can be found in the principal reports.

National

- National Planning Policy Framework
- The Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature'
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
- A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment
- Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation
- Sport England Strategy – 'Towards an Active Nation' 2016-2021
- Sport England National 'Planning for Sport' guidance (principally, 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' and, 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities')
- The FA National Game Strategy for Participation and Development 2018-2021
- English Cricket Board: 'Inspiring Generations - Strategy Document January 2019'
- The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021
- England Hockey Strategy 'A Nation where Hockey Matters' 2017 - 2021

Regional and Local

- The Gloucestershire 2050 Vision
- A Strategic Framework for Green Infrastructure in Gloucestershire (Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership- currently under review)
- The Future for Nature 2019-2022 (Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership)
- Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-2032 (Fit for the Future)
- The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan (2018-2023)
- Stroud District Council Corporate Delivery Plan 2018-2022
- Stroud District Local Plan (adopted November 2015)
- Stroud District Local Plan review (currently underway 2020-2040)
- Stroud District Environment Strategy 2007-2027 (currently under review)
- Stroud District Environmental Policy 2019
- Stroud District Council Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017 (currently under review to cover the period 2019-2022)
- Heritage Strategy for Stroud District
- Sport, Health & Outdoor Playing Space Wellbeing Service – Annual report 2017/18
- Draft Stroud District Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Habitats Regulations Assessment Mitigation Strategies
- Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership
- Building with Nature Benchmark– A Survey of Local Provision and Needs

The Council will keep this evidence base under review, carefully considering any potential policy implications arising from a future material change to policy context and/or direction.

4. Methodologies

The varied scope of the project made it necessary to adopt different methodological approaches for each of the core components.

The methodologies underpinning each of the principal reports are as follows.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

A multi-stranded approach was adopted including:

- Review of relevant strategies and research (national and local)
- Development and agreement of a consultation plan/programme
- Sample household survey³
- Local parish and town council survey
- Local club and organisations survey
- Strategic stakeholders survey (including neighbouring local authorities)
- Council officer surgery
- Findings and results written up into a consultation report

Although separate and more limited consultations were undertaken for specific components of the study, the Community and Stakeholder Consultation provided much of the core evidence informing the project as a whole, its conclusions and recommendations.

Publicly accessible open space and Green Infrastructure.

The starting point for this Study has been the guidance in Section 8 of the NPPF (Promoting healthy and safe communities), which adheres to but has superseded PPG17. The policy gives clear recommendations for the protection of and appropriate provision for open space, however it does not provide any detailed guidance on how to conduct an open space or GI assessment. It is therefore both logical and acceptable to reference the guidance for assessment provided in the former PPG17 and its Companion Guide.

The Companion Guide to PPG17 recommended an overall approach to this kind of study as summarised below:

- Step 1: Identify local needs;
- Step 2: Audit local provision;
- Step 3: Set provision standards;
- Step 4: Apply the provision standards;
- Step 5: Draft policies/recommendations

There are currently no agreed national standards for assessing GI provision. For the purpose of this Study, the approach adopted broadly followed the PPG17 steps identified above, and included:

³ A questionnaire survey was therefore designed by Ethos and agreed by the District Council. It was distributed to a random sample of 4000 households. In addition, an online version was promoted by the Council. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 516 surveys were completed. The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1,135 and the average household size of the households was 2.2 – slightly lower than the UK average and Stroud District as a whole

4. Methodologies

- Audit of provision: Mapping of key GI assets grouped into three themes: Wellbeing, Water and Wildlife.
- Identification of the benefits of GI and setting key principles for GI
- Analysis of the GI network:
 - Connectivity - Identification of key GI corridors and opportunities for addressing gaps in the network for both biodiversity and access (desktop analysis). The identification of key GI corridors and opportunities draws on desktop analysis of the physical assets and gaps between assets, quality data, and also through existing plans and strategies, the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP) Strategic GI, Strategic Nature Areas and Nature Improvement Areas, and national datasets e.g. Natural England's National Habitat Network Restoration dataset.
 - Quality - Opportunities for quality improvements to enhance functionality of the GI network, based on open space quality audits and available information such as SSSI condition monitoring.
 - Access – as assessment of the access to GI, using open space access standards and Natural England Access Network Mapping data.
- Draft policies and recommendations

Playing Pitches

Sport England prescribes a detailed approach for local authorities to follow when producing playing pitch strategies which cover the sports of football, cricket, rugby and hockey and other sports traditionally played on playing fields such as rounders and lacrosse. There are ten steps incorporated within five stages as follows:

- Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach
- Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision
- Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views
- Stage D: Develop the strategy
- Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date

Site inspections and club surveys and interviews have informed the above process which has been overseen by a Steering Group comprising representatives of the District Council, Sport England, National Governing Bodies of Sport and Active Gloucestershire. Consideration is given to the provision of all facilities that allow these sports to be played, including both natural turf and artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

Tennis and bowls have also been incorporated into the Playing Pitch Strategy. The method of assessment for these sports follows that set out in the Sport England report 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' (2014).

4. Methodologies

Indoor/Built sports facilities.

Sport England published guidance has been followed, with references provided in the relevant principal output report 'Stroud Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment'

Overall, the range of facilities identified included in this component included sports halls, swimming pools, gyms, studios, village/community halls, other specialist sports facilities. In For each of these the following have been investigated:

- **Quantity** - what facilities there are in the area, and how many?
- **Quality** – how good are facilities in terms of condition and being 'fit for purpose'
- **Accessibility** - where they are located?
- **Availability** - how available are they for 'community use'?

It is only by understanding all these elements together and their inter-relationship that a rounded view can be obtained of the supply and demand for facilities in an area. The findings of the Community and Stakeholder Consultation have helped to inform this work, together with separate consultations with sports clubs, venue managers, and national governing bodies of sport.

5. Findings and recommendations (Open Space and GI)

The report ‘Stroud District Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study’ should be read for full findings and conclusions. The report provides recommended quantity, accessibility and quality standards for open space, and key principles for GI. It provides an analysis of open space provision against the standards, (by District, Sub-Areas and Parishes), and analysis of the GI network (by District and Sub Areas).

The key recommendations contained in this section relate to one or more of the following NPPF themes and Draft Plan Strategic Objectives.

NPPF Themes	Draft Plan Strategic Objectives
Achieving Sustainable Development; Decision-Making; Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities; Achieving Well-designed Places; Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment	Strategic Objectives SO1; SO1a; SO2; SO3; SO4; SO5; SO6

Key recommendations

Protection of Open Space and GI

- The starting point of any policy adopted by the Council should be that all open space and GI should be afforded protection unless it can be clearly proved it is not required. Existing open space/GI which should be given the highest level of protection by the planning system are those which are either:
 - I. Critically important in avoiding deficiencies in accessibility, quality or quantity and scored highly in the quality assessment (or are critically important to the functioning of the GI network); **or**
 - II. Of particular nature conservation, historical or cultural value.
- The distribution of open space varies across the District, however, there are identified shortages of at least 1 typology of open space in all Parishes and clusters/sub areas. It is therefore strongly recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there is an existing shortfall of supply.
- Development proposals will protect as well as contribute to new and existing GI. The starting point will be the protection and enhancement of existing GI on site, and ensuring GI links (both for biodiversity and access) with the surrounding area. GI must be embedded into the layout of new development from initial project thinking, identification of constraints and opportunities identified in the master planning process, through to implementation, management and future maintenance.
- Development that will cause material or demonstrable harm to the functioning of the GI network should not be permitted, unless mitigation or compensation can be provided to ensure the overall multifunctionality and connectivity of the GI network is maintained. Priority should be placed on protecting the strategic GI network identified by the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, and local/district corridors identified within this study. In the future it is also anticipated that the Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Network mapping may contribute to this understanding.

5. Findings and recommendations (Open Space and GI)

Existing provision to be enhanced

- Where new housing development is proposed, should provision not be able to be provided on-site, consideration will be given to improving existing open spaces first within the parish where the development is located, and then within neighbouring parishes within or adjoining that Cluster area. Priority should be given to those sites identified as being of poor or average quality, as detailed in the quality audit.
- The priority areas for improvements/enhancements to GI (in terms of biodiversity and access) is the strategic GI network identified by the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, and the local/district corridors identified within this study. The opportunities map indicates where local opportunities for improvement exist. Other opportunities for improvement may also be identified by the Council through working with partners and local groups.
- The design and management of GI in housing and commercial developments shall follow the Building with Nature Benchmark standards⁴. As a minimum, the 5 core standards should be met. The council advocate these standards and developers will be expected to demonstrate how they meet the 5 core standards and as many of the wellbeing, wildlife and water standards as possible. For larger schemes (500 dwellings and above), the Council advocate that developers apply for accreditation by the Building with Nature Standard.
- Developments will be expected to comply will the relevant policy in the NPPF regarding Biodiversity Net Gain. Like the Green Infrastructure recommendations biodiversity enhancements and nature conservation should be embedded at all stages of development thinking from initial project ideas through to delivery and future management e.g. through creation of new habitats, construction and management plans, and linking existing biodiversity assets. Green features on buildings should be incorporated where possible e.g. green roofs and walls, bird and bat boxes, and gateways to facilitate movement of reptiles or mammals (such as hedgehogs) within their established territories or forage areas . SuDs should mimic the natural drainage of the site, and should not only serve a drainage engineering role, but positively contribute to the GI, biodiversity and visual amenity roles of the site.

Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space

- In some areas or situations it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or sport and recreation facility, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users, or use land which is not suitable for another purpose. This needs to be determined at a local level working with key organisations and stakeholders, where there is consideration of the quality, quantity and access to facilities and the other roles the open space performs at neighbourhood level and in some cases across the district.
- This study provides information on the existing supply of different types of open space, an analysis of access and identifies local issues related to quality. The cluster/sub area analysis (part 2 of this report) sets out limited opportunities for re-location/re-

⁴ <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/how-it-works>

5. Findings and recommendations (Open Space and GI)

designation of open space where there is clearly sufficient supply, in order to reduce shortfalls in supply and access to other open space typologies.

New provision of open space and GI

- Allocated sites for housing within the local plan will be required to provide open space on site in line with the open space standards. If it can be demonstrated that it is not viable or appropriate to provide the full requirement of open space on site, developers will be expected to make a contribution for off site provision in line with Table 24, through a S106 agreement.
- For small sites or smaller non-allocated sites, contributions towards open space will be secured through CIL.
- For large unallocated sites which are brought forward for development, there will be a clear expectation for on-site provision in line with the standards (and taking account of the existing supply and access to open space). Other open space contributions will be secured through CIL. This will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- Development will contribute to protecting, enhancing and creating habitats to provide a network of well-connected ecological corridors, enhancing connectivity for both people and wildlife, both within the development site and connecting to the wider surrounding area.

6. Findings and recommendations (Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sport)

The report 'The Stroud Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plans' (and accompanying Needs Assessments) should be read for full findings and conclusions. However, the main key findings and conclusions are set out below.

The key recommendations (below) relate to one or more of the following NPPF themes and Draft Plan Strategic Objectives.

NPPF Themes	Draft Plan Strategic Objectives
Decision-Making; Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities; Achieving Well-designed Places.	Strategic Objectives SO1; SO1a

Key findings and recommendations

Priorities are set out on a sport-by-sport basis.

Football

Sunday adult play is in decline, but Saturday play seems relatively stable and the main characteristics of future demand for football are a buoyant youth and minis sector - and growing demand for affordable and accessible floodlit training areas and 3G football turf pitches. There is increasing emphasis on developing opportunities for women and girls. It is probable that increase in demand for indoor small sided football and such initiatives as walking football will translate to demand for outdoor 3G FTPs and/or even grass pitches.

Analysis suggests that an additional 75 adult, junior and mini teams will be created by 2040, requiring access to the equivalent of 8-9 adult pitches, 8-10 youth pitches of varying sizes and 6-7 mini pitches. However, as well as through new provision, there are various other ways of providing increased capacity for football through making better use of existing facilities, which are set out in the Strategy documents. The PPS also takes cognisance of the priorities identified in the Stroud Local Football Facilities Plan.

Other key findings for football are:

- A minimum of four additional 3G FTPs (Football Turf Pitches) are required in the Stroud Study area to meet training requirements now and up to six to meet demand to 2040. A priority is to provide a 3G FTP in Stroud – Archway School or Marling School are potential sites.
- Generally, junior football is played on appropriately sized pitches. Several large youth football clubs are split over a number of sites and new provision should be flexible, enabling different configurations of pitch sizes in one place. Stratford Court, for example, has been identified as a key location for accommodating the whole range of one youth football club's teams on one site.
- Certain grounds require improvements to facilitate promotion and others to increase the capacity of the pitches (for example, Hardwicke AFC, Shortwood FC, Stonehouse FC, and Slimbridge FC)
- Welcoming and appropriate changing facilities are vital to sustain the growing demand for women's and girls' football. War Memorial Ground, Dursley is a priority site.

6. Findings and recommendations (Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sport)

- There is a patchwork of provision for football in Stroud town itself with: several teams playing on more than one site; a number of single pitch sites with poor or no facilities and no 3G FTP provision. A number of solutions are put forward.

Cricket

In Stroud district, there is a fairly buoyant youth sector in cricket (which it is hoped will develop further following the introduction of 'All Stars' cricket) but a more mixed picture in respect of adult teams. There are some very strong, well established and managed clubs with very good quality grounds, but there are also a number of clubs where adult play needs support. There are optimistic signs for women's cricket in the future.

Demand analysis suggests that an additional 34 adult and youth teams will be created by 2040, which would typically require access to the equivalent of 3 cricket pitches. However, as with football, there are various ways of providing increased capacity, including the provision of non turf wickets.

There is spare capacity across the district to absorb a large part of this growth, but access to a new cricket pitch and associated infrastructure in the Cam/ Dursley Cluster is particularly urgent given the growth in activity and lack of modern facilities to meet requirements at Cam CC with the projected increase in population. Access to a cricket pitch will also be required to meet growth in demand arising from new development in the Berkeley Cluster.

Other key findings for cricket are:

- In due course, consideration to be given to setting up a centre for junior cricket to bridge the gap between the All Stars programme (for up to 8 year olds) and youth development teams in a central location (such as the Owen Memorial Playing Fields at Eastington).
- Enhancement to ancillary facilities to improve the playing experience and maintain and attract new members at several grounds. Replacement facilities at Everlands Ground Cam and Whitminster Playing Fields are urgently required.
- Underused grounds where measures to increase usage would be beneficial include Stratford Court Playing Fields, Stroud and the Owen Harris Memorial Ground, Eastington
- Appropriate facilities are regarded as key components to supporting women's and girls' cricket; a specific site could be identified as focus for women and girls' cricket (such as Cam Everlands CC or Frampton upon Severn CC.)

Rugby

There is a buoyant youth sector, and strong clubs with ambitions to increase their range of teams and constantly improve their facilities. Up to 20 adult, youth and mini rugby teams will be created by 2040, requiring an additional 6-7 rugby pitches. Minchinhampton RFC and Painswick RFC in particular will be under pressure and any expansion at Cainscross RFC may also require additional pitch space. The most pragmatic solution is to try to obtain pitches at schools with community use agreements although there are none nearby to the former two clubs.

Other key findings for rugby are:

6. Findings and recommendations (Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sport)

- The need to provide and/or enhance adequate and appropriate floodlighting for training and matchplay (notably at pitches at Dursley RFC, Painswick RFC and Wotton RFC)
- The need to address the shortage of provision in Stroud for youth rugby – a minimum of 3 pitches with secure community use are required in the town
- The importance of supporting the enhancement of changing and ancillary facilities, notably at Fromehall Park (Stroud RFC) and of providing appropriate facilities to promote participation amongst women and girls.

Hockey

Hockey is experiencing considerable growth, promoted through increasing media profile and international success and the popularity of a range of initiatives to attract new players; this looks set to continue. There are two strong clubs in Stroud District which run a range of teams of both genders and all ages and who are seeing their membership increase. Two other clubs run one ladies' team each and it is important that these are supported to provide an equally valuable, but different, experience.

Given the lack of spare capacity at existing artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and the expected growth in hockey activity, there will be a need to provide an additional sand based AGP in the district to 2040. Options to meet this include a second pitch at Wotton Community Parc, providing there is sufficient space available.

Other key findings for hockey are:

- Existing artificial sand based pitches (AGPs) used for hockey should be protected as should individual club's access to such facilities.
- Community use should be subject to formal secure community use agreements at all existing sites (Stratford Park Leisure Centre AGP; Wotton Community Parc AGP and Wycliffe College AGP)
- There is a requirement for Stroud Hockey Club to be able to meet all its training and matchplay needs and to have a separate clubhouse facility at Stratford Park Leisure Centre
- There is an outstanding need for a new community sports clubhouse/changing facility at Wotton Community Park which is identified by all sports using the site. This is to include a 'clubhome' for Wotton under Edge Hockey Club.
- There is a need to ensure that there are sufficient funds and resources available for ongoing high quality maintenance (particularly to the AGP at Stratford Park Leisure Centre) and for enhancement and/or replacement of AGP facilities when required.

Other Sports

There is evidence of robust demand for tennis in Stroud, primarily emanating from pro-active clubs, with a significant element of latent demand and increasing interest from juniors. It is likely that any such increase could be absorbed by improvements to the existing stock of facilities and, as a priority, the current level of provision should be maintained.

6. Findings and recommendations (Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sport)

However, a number of courts at park sites have quality issues; many do not charge for use. The introduction of the clubspark initiative (remote access scheme) is a possible way forward in securing funding to maintain the courts, once a certain standard has been reached. The LTA is keen to see this initiative progressed for the 6 courts (4 of which are floodlit) at Stratford Park in Stroud.

Other sites where improvements, including floodlighting, may increase the capacity and usage of tennis courts include the two courts at the War Memorial Recreation Ground in Dursley and the two courts at King George V Recreation Ground, Nailsworth.

Stroud district faces an ageing population over the life of the Strategy and a number of bowls clubs are actively pursuing recruitment drives. Additional bowlers generated through new housing will still be able to be accommodated in existing clubs but it will be important to retain and protect all existing bowling greens and enhance facilities, including pavilions, to improve the playing experience.

Finally, it is important to be aware of other sporting activities which make use of Stroud's playing fields, including archery, athletics, skateparks and cycling. An objective of Stroud District Council, as part of their Health and Wellbeing Strategy, is to develop a network of sport, health and well-being hub sites throughout the district. Some of these will be focused around playing pitches; and, possible sites have been identified.

Once the Strategy has been approved, it is envisaged that it will be delivered by a Playing Pitch Strategy Delivery Group which will oversee monitoring of changes. An individual project sub group may then manage the implementation of priority projects where necessary.

7. Findings and recommendations (Indoor/built Sports Facilities)

The report ‘Stroud District Indoor/Built Sports Facility Needs Assessment’ should be read for full findings and conclusions. The report provides recommended standards to guide both existing and future provision of key sport and recreation facilities, as well as an area-by-area schedule of recommendations for new and improved provision.

The key recommendations (below) relate to one or more of the following NPPF themes and Draft Plan Strategic Objectives.

NPPF Themes	Draft Plan Strategic Objectives
Decision-Making; Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities; Promoting Sustainable Transport; Achieving Well-designed Places	Strategic Objectives SO1; SO1a; SO4

Key Findings and Recommendations

General Leisure and Leisure Centres

Leisure trends and demands change, and so too should local authority-controlled leisure provision, if the ‘offer’ is to be sufficiently attractive to get more people into beneficial physical activity.

The scale of growth predicted in the District by 2040 will generate substantial demands for new leisure centre facilities

Leisure centres offer more than the sum total of all their parts, and the right mix of facilities can improve the financial sustainability of centres.

Health & Fitness (H&F) and studio provision are now integral to the successful operation of the best leisure centres, and these should not be thought of as just supporting the traditional main components of pools and sports halls. They are ‘big hitters’ in the quest to provide viable and attractive venues. Whilst the H&F market has expanded rapidly within the District in recent years, there may be scope for additional limited expansion. Increased population through planned growth may also heighten demand for such facilities.

Major funding opportunities arising out of developer contributions, should allow for a review of the way in which leisure centres are provided and run in the District.

With the District Council’s withdrawal from direct investment in and managing of dual-use leisure centres, developer contributions may become a vital source of funding for such school-based centres.

Swimming Pools

Quantity (1): The combined indoor waterspace offered by the Council controlled venues is estimated to be 462 square metres. An optimal amount of waterspace for the District is suggested by the Sport England FC to be 1,251 sq.m square metres of waterspace for community use (or 9.75 sq.m per 1000 people). Whilst also taking into account the role pools in the education sector can play in meeting some demand in the community, the District appears to be significantly under-provided. That said there may be some influence from the potential availability of pools outside the District (in Gloucester and Thornbury, for example).

7. Findings and recommendations (Indoor/built Sports Facilities)

The above figures don't account for the role of Stratford Park Lido in the summer months, which is considerable particularly in fine weather.

Quantity (2): Whilst existing pool stock is largely meeting local demands, an increase in population will place additional future demands upon these venues which they may not be able to accommodate.

Quality: The existing Council-controlled pools are in good condition and well-used. However, the quality of the pool at Archway School is deteriorating.

Accessibility: There are only small parts of the District outside a reasonable travel time to one of, these two indoor public swimming pool venues at Dursley and Stroud. However, some of the excluded parts of the District may well host significant planned new development.

Sports Halls

Quantity (1): There are some activities that potentially can be housed in sports halls, but which sometimes benefit from alternative accommodation of a suitable type and location, and which can be better devoted to the bespoke needs of those activities. Activities such as gymnastics and table tennis may be cases in point.

Quantity (2): An optimal amount of sports hall space within the District is suggested to be 32 court spaces (the equivalent of 8 x 4-court sports halls for community use- 0.27 courts per 1000 population). This compares with an existing 39 courts in halls offering significant community use, but of which only 6 (at Stratford Park) are controlled by the local authority. Facilities at Archway School (Stroud), Wotton (KLB School), Dursley (Rednock School), Thomas Keble School, and Maidenhill Sports and Dance Centre (Stroud) can also be factored in, given the strong record of community use and management; this would then offer 29 court spaces.

Quantity (3): Future housing and population growth will place additional demands on sports halls.

Quality: Some of the older school facilities, such as those at Rednock and Archway Schools are in need of upgrade and repair.

Accessibility: With the withdrawal of District Council involvement from sports halls at Maidenhill and Thomas Keble Schools, the remaining Council-controlled venue at Stratford Park will only offer be accessible to around two thirds of the District's residents. The continued availability of school-based sports halls for local residents and clubs is therefore very important.

Specialist Facilities

Quantity (1): A reasonable estimate of the number of adults in the District taking part regularly in the activities cited in this section are:

- Tennis: 1,270 adults (although there may be potential for growth in this figure, and especially if an indoor venue were provided);
- Bowls: 892 adults (including circa 450 members at the existing and only indoor facility);
- Athletics (including off-track running): 7,273 adults;
- Cycling (all forms); 6,600 adults (with perhaps potential to grow further); and,

7. Findings and recommendations (Indoor/built Sports Facilities)

- Squash: 684 adults (with perhaps potential for some small additional growth).

Future housing and population growth will increase localised demand for such facilities. However, there is currently no overwhelming argument to suggest that these increases will require additional new specific venues, but with the likely exception of track and field training facilities for athletics.

Quality: Generally, the specialist facilities (where they exist) are of a good standard. The main issue currently is considered to be the lack of a 'track and field' training facility. Much 'off-track' running is recreational and for simple health and fitness: such running will often take place on the roads, streets and in parks, open spaces, and recreational corridors (such as Rights of Way). Simple way-marking and gauging of safe and attractive all-year routes would help cater further for this activity.

Accessibility: Access to the existing indoor bowls venue is as good as might be hoped for in a District like Stroud, and there are facilities to the north and south of the District.

In the absence of dedicated track and field facilities, the nearest provision in Gloucester, which is not ideal for existing established clubs requiring access to such facilities, especially for training.

There is no dedicated indoor tennis facility in the District, but some provision exists in Gloucester.

The Rush Skatepark is not well located relative to its potential core catchment population.

Village and community halls

Village and community halls are local venues for active recreation. They are important basic community facilities and need to be planned for.

The local authority has a good range and spread of village and community halls. However, in some locations natural and planned population change within the local authority may increase the demand for access to such venues.

It will be important to continue to review the level of provision, especially in areas of rapid population change.

Quantity: There is generally a good geographic and quantitative spread of such facilities within the local authority, and they serve an important sports function where more centrally-placed leisure centres are difficult to reach. Such venues will also be required in areas of planned growth to complement traditional leisure centre provision.

Quality: Most of the existing village/community halls appear to be of a good level of repair and maintenance, although of varying age and fitness for contemporary needs. In some locations their upgrading will help to meet community needs where access to more centrally placed leisure centres is difficult.

Accessibility: Surveys underpinning this assessment suggested that most respondents would be prepared to travel around 10 minutes (by foot or car) to a village/community hall (a distance of 800 meters for walking), and this suggests that there is already a good spread of such facilities in terms of access by car.