

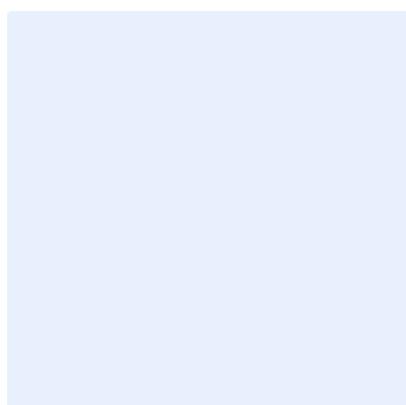


Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy

October 2021

Prepared on behalf of WYG Environment Planning Transport Limited.





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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is the Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) for Blackburn with Darwen Council. It builds upon the assessment report (2020), which evaluates the adequacy of provision for each sport and is provided under separate cover.

1.1.2 The primary purpose of the PPOSS is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches meet local and community needs of existing and future residents and visitors to the Borough. It considers the following facilities;

- Football pitches (grass and third generation turf (3G))
- Cricket pitches
- Rugby union pitches
- Rugby league pitches
- Hockey pitches (artificial grass pitches (AGPs))
- Tennis courts
- Bowling greens.

1.1.3 This document updates the 2014 Blackburn with Darwen Playing Pitch Strategy, which has successfully delivered investment into playing fields across the Borough, including the creation of new grass pitches at Woolridge Playing Fields and the provision of new high quality 3G pitches. This updated strategy sets out the vision for playing field provision up to 2037.

1.2 Vision and Objectives

1.2.1 The strategy seeks to support the Council and its partners in the creation of

'An accessible, high quality and sustainable network of sports pitches and other outdoor sports facilities that supports delivery of the Council's strategies through increased sports participation by all residents, at all levels of play, from grassroots to elite'.

1.2.2 To achieve this strategic vision, the strategy therefore seeks to deliver the following objectives;



- Ensure that facilities that meet a current and future community sport need are protected for the long term benefit of sport
- Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of playing pitches and management of sports clubs
- Ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and projected future demand
- Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer term aspirations.

These objectives are consistent with Sport England's planning principles for sport as set out in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 - Sport England Planning for Sport principles



1.2.3 More specifically, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy;



- Provides a quantified assessment of current and future needs within the Borough
- Provides information to assist asset management planning of Council owned fields and associated buildings
- Provides information to underpin the protection, enhancement and quality improvement of the existing pitch stock and ancillary facilities
- Maps out a process for improvements in community access to education and non local authority pitches
- Categorises pitches in terms of the role that they can play in future playing field provision
- Includes action plans for sites to be improved and identifies any areas where new pitch provision is required
- Makes clear recommendations in relation to the need for AGPs
- Assesses the future role of sites that are currently lapsed / disused
- Develops a process for regular updating and monitoring of the PPS.

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The assessment and strategy has been produced line with guidance by Sport England (Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities; 2014) and 'Playing Pitch Guidance, An Approach to Developing and Delivering a Playing Pitch Strategy (Sport England 2013). The assessment of playing pitches and outdoor sports use slightly different approaches. Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) is used to assess outdoor sports, refer to paragraph 2.7, whilst the PPS Guidance is used to assess playing pitches.
- 1.3.2 The priorities have been established through the preparation of a full evidence-based assessment which included extensive consultation and analysis. The Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Playing Pitch Assessment (2020) contains detailed information on how the assessment was carried out, who was consulted and detailed sport and site-specific analysis.
- 1.3.3 The Playing Pitch Guidance sets out the process for delivering a playing pitch strategy for football, cricket, rugby (league and union) and hockey. It advocates a 10 step approach illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 – Ten Step Approach.





- 1.3.4 The key phases of the strategy development included;
- a full audit of teams derived from, playing or wishing to play within the authority boundary;
 - identification of all sites containing formal playing pitches and quality assessments of all community use pitches in the Borough;
 - a full programme of consultation with local clubs, league secretaries, National Governing Bodies of Sport and external stakeholders; and
 - application and interpretation of the supply and demand information in line with the Sport England guidance to;
 - understand the situation at individual sites;
 - develop the current and projected future pictures for each sport; and
 - identify the key findings and issues that need to be addressed.
- 1.3.5 It should be noted that this strategy was prepared during the 2020 Covid 19 pandemic and parts of the consultation and data collection to inform the document were undertaken during this time. The challenges associated with the pandemic have therefore impacted on the development of the document and may on occasion impact on the results of the consultation.
- 1.3.6 This is the strategy document, which draws upon the issues set out in the assessment report and sets out a strategic framework for the delivery of playing pitches.
- 1.3.7 Recommendations and priorities have been developed following extensive scenario testing and in conjunction with the following key stakeholders;
- Officers of Blackburn with Darwen Council
 - Representatives of the Lancashire FA and The Football Foundation, Lancashire Cricket Foundation, The ECB, the RFU, England Hockey, Lancashire County Bowling Association and The LTA
 - Sport England.
- 1.3.8 The views of these groups have been used to shape this strategy and to finalise the action and implementation plan. The consultation process does not stop here - many of the identified short-term actions involve ongoing consultation with wider groups, ensuring that any priorities implemented are reflective of the needs and aspirations of current pitch users.



- 1.3.9 It is as yet unknown what impact Covid 19 will have on short and long term participation and it is therefore essential that this is monitored as part of the implementation phase.
- 1.3.10 It is hoped that the strategy will continue to build partnerships between the Council, National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Sport England, schools, further education providers, community clubs and private landowners to maintain and improve playing pitch provision. This document will provide clarity about the way forward, and allow key organisations to focus on the key issues that they can directly influence and achieve.
- 1.3.11 As outlined in the assessment report, as far as possible the strategy aims to capture all playing fields and associated pitches, as well as participation within Blackburn with Darwen. There may however be instances where a site / club is unknowingly omitted. Where pitches / playing field sites have not been recorded within the report they remain as pitches / playing field sites and for planning purposes continue to be so. Furthermore, exclusion of a pitch does not mean that it is not required from a supply and demand point of view. The strategy monitoring process will ensure that the document is kept up to date as any omissions arise.

1.4 Context and Wider Links

- 1.4.1 The strategy contributes to the delivery of many national, regional and local targets, in particular, the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The strategy will also help to deliver on the priorities of Sport England and the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport.
- 1.4.2 These documents are outlined in full in the assessment report, however link between the achievement of the objectives in this strategy document and other national, regional and local strategies and policies are summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 – Contribution of PPS towards national and local priorities

Document	Ensure valuable facilities are protected	Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of pitches and management of clubs	Ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and future demand	Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality
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National Planning Framework	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sport England – Policy on Playing Fields	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sport England: Uniting the Movement	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Football Association – Strategic Plan, and National Facilities Strategy – Delivered through Local Football Facility Plans	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inspiring Generations, ECB, 2020 - 2024	✓	✓	✓	✓
RFU Strategic Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
England Hockey National Facilities Strategy (2017 - 2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Documents				
Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan	✓		✓	✓

- 1.4.3 Analysis of the key strategic drivers set out in Table 1.1 identifies a consistent theme around increasing participation and ensuring that a network of facilities is provided that can do this, both now and in future years as the population grows and its composition changes.
- 1.4.4 An effective network of outdoor sports facilities can be central to the achievement of health improvement and participation related goals and will be key to delivering the desired outcomes of other strategies.
- 1.4.5 This document will provide a robust evidence base to assist with decision making by helping to identify where opportunities to increase participation exist. It will also outline where there is a need to enhance the facility stock through both qualitative and quantitative improvements to ensure that participation is not constrained. It recognises the uncertainties that have arisen as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and regular monitoring and proactive response to change are therefore key to the successful delivery of this strategy.

1.5 Role of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy

- 1.5.1 The end goal of this strategy is to deliver the overarching vision and achieve the specific aims and objectives set out on the previous pages. To do this, it is essential that provision for each sport continues to evolve and improve to meet with changing needs and aspirations.



- 1.5.2 Sport England's Strategy 'Uniting the Movement' sets a vision of "a nation of more equal, inclusive and connected communities. A country where people live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives". It seeks to ensure that sport and physical activity is recognised as being essential to overcome national challenges. Before the Covid 19 pandemic struck, record levels of activity were recorded in England and they now seek to ensure that these strong levels of participation return, but also to reach people who have traditionally been excluded.
- 1.5.3 The focus of this PPOSS is mainly on facilities. By building the right facilities in the right place, it makes taking part in sport and physical activity a realistic option for many and leads to a better experience for those who are already engaged. It is therefore hoped that the recommendations and actions of this PPOSS will help to achieve increases in participation, and a sustainable network of facilities to facilitate this.
- 1.5.4 The Council is facing increased pressures across all service areas as well as considerable constraints on local authority budgets. The strategy and associated action plans therefore seek to promote the provision of appropriate accessible community infrastructure and to deliver on the aspirations of the local sporting community within this context.

1.6 Structure

- 1.6.1 The remainder of this strategy is set out as follows;
- Key issues by sport
 - Recommendations – General and Sport Specific
 - Action Plans
 - Monitoring and Review



2.0 Summary of Sport Specific Issues and Needs

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This section summarises the current and projected future adequacy of provision for each sport and the key issues that this strategy seeks to address. Further detail is provided in the supporting assessment report (December 2020).
- 2.1.2 In order to help develop the recommendations/actions and to understand their potential impact a number of relevant scenario questions are tested against the key issues in this section for the playing pitch sports resulting in the sport specific recommendations.
- 2.1.3 Recommendations for delivering on the key issues identified for all the sports are set out in Section 3, while Section 4 contains site specific recommendations and actions.

2.1.4 Sport Specific Issues and Recommendations

Cricket

Supply

- 2.1.5 There are eight grass pitches in the Borough of which three are located on unsecured school sites. The majority of clubs also have a non turf wicket
- 2.1.6 There has been a decline in the club based infrastructure since the 2015 PPS, with the pitch at Sandy Lane no longer available for cricket. The former Blackburn Northern Cricket Ground remains as a lapsed site and there are no longer any non turf pitches on Blacksnape Playing Fields
- 2.1.7 The quality of the club based cricket facilities in the borough is standard to good and there has been significant recent investment, but there remain sites where improvements are required. In particular all clubs identify ongoing maintenance as key to their success, and other required improvements are split between pitch quality and changing provision.
- 2.1.8 The quality of practice facilities (availability and condition) was identified as the key concern in the previous strategy, and this remains the concern at some sites, in particular there is a need for improvement at East Lancs CC, Cherry Tree CC and Feniscowles and Pleasington CC.



- 2.1.9 Despite the good standard of cricket facilities within Blackburn with Darwen, many clubs believe that the quality of pitches remains the key issue. Almost all clubs highlight budgetary concerns in relation to maintenance and management of facilities and highlighting the challenges sourcing volunteers at all levels of cricket, with most clubs believing that they have the skills to manage their facilities but emphasising the difficulties that this brings. Whilst many qualitative issues have been identified, many of these are impacted by maintenance procedures.
- 2.1.10 In addition to the club based infrastructure, there are eight non turf pitches at Pleasington Playing Fields, a large site managed by Blackburn with Darwen Council. Site visits and consultation demonstrate that these are of poor quality and require significant improvement / reconfiguration. Improvements needed include ripped carpets, undulating outfield, undersized boundaries and issues with the pavilion and parking.

Demand

- 2.1.11 There are 38 club based teams, which represents a decline of 1 team from the previous strategy. The greatest change in participation has however been felt by clubs in the number of players registered to each team (which has declined). Participation in female cricket remains static. More than half of the teams are now junior teams, which suggests that there are strong foundations for the growth of cricket.
- 2.1.12 The expected growth of the informal weekend and midweek leagues has however not materialised and there has instead been a decline in participation. This is attributed to the impact of the poor quality facilities, as well as the timing of Ramadan.
- 2.1.13 ECB initiatives such as All Stars seek to stimulate play at a young age and it is hoped participants in these forms of the game will transition into full cricket and that the interest gained at a young age will ensure that they continue to play cricket for life. Darwen CC, Cherry Tree CC and Edgworth CC are all currently signed up the All Stars programme. Whilst this does not place extra pressures on the wickets, it adds to the requirement for space on the outfield and therefore places greater pressures on the scheduling of cricket fixtures

Adequacy of Provision

- 2.1.14 As in 2015, supply is closely matched with demand on all sites, meaning that there is little scope to increase activity without overplaying pitches (and overplay already exists on some sites). The quality of squares is generally good, although there will be a need to ensure that this is retained in order to maintain capacity. There are however opportunities to improve



capacity at both East Lancs and Feniscowles, with both sites rated as standard as opposed to good due to uneven squares and evidence of bare patches. This standard rating limits the capacity of the square.

- 2.1.15 There are clear pressures on adult wickets, with four of five sites already exceeding capacity and there are insufficient junior wickets to accommodate junior play at all sites except Cherry Tree, although it should be noted that junior teams can use the adult wickets (although adult teams cannot use junior wickets). The squares at Edgworth CC are overplayed (21 MES senior wickets and 9 junior), Darwen CC (8 MES overplay junior, adult supply consistent) and adult wickets at Cherry Tree CC are also overplayed (16 MES). East Lancs CC and Feniscowles CC are broadly at capacity.
- 2.1.16 There is scope to accommodate 1.5 MES at peak time, there are however no sites that have capacity to accommodate this play without causing overplay across the season. There is no remaining spare capacity at peak time at Darwen CC, Edgworth CC and Cherry Tree CC.
- 2.1.17 Added to the limited spare capacity in the club based infrastructure, that there is a lack of capacity at Pleasington Playing Fields to meet demand from the Weekend and Midweek League. This arises because poor quality facilities are considered unsuitable to sustain any activity and therefore modelling demonstrates supply to be insufficient. With the teams using non turf wickets, which have a high capacity of 60 MES per wicket, it is however not the seasonal capacity of these facilities that is critical, but the availability at peak time

Impact of Future Population Growth

- 2.1.18 Future population growth will have limited impact. While population growth will have limited impact on demand for cricket, the ECB through their Strategy 'Inspiring Generations' are seeking to grow cricket, looking at both traditional and non-traditional forms of the game and particularly focusing upon juniors, women and girls. These may have longer term impact on demand for cricket (as players transition into the formal club environment) but in the short term require use of good quality outfield which means that maintenance and management are of increasing importance.
- 2.1.19 Many clubs in Blackburn with Darwen are already signed up to this scheme and others have further growth aspirations, including the development of female sections and improvements to the transition between the junior and senior game. On the whole, it is the clubs that are already at capacity that are looking to grow further suggesting that solutions may be required to improve capacity for these clubs. In addition to a need for additional capacity for competitive fixtures, some clubs also identify a requirement for additional training facilities.



2.1.20 The South Asian Action Plan also seeks to build participation in cricket amongst Asian Communities. The midweek league and weekend league offer strong foundations for the achievement of these goals, however participation is currently restricted by the quality of facilities as well as the timing of Ramadan. Up to five pitches are required to meet current need, but it is anticipated that further growth will generate a requirement for more (potentially 6).

2.1.21 There are also aspirations for the provision of additional cricket facilities in the Borough at Darwen Vale School. These would constitute the provision of a grass square and associated facilities as well as indoor cricket nets and would add to the existing infrastructure in the Borough.

Boroughwide Cricket Overview

2.1.22 Overall, across club sites at Blackburn with Darwen, there is no remaining spare capacity on adult wickets, although there is scope for further play at peak time) if capacity was improved. There is also overplay evident on junior wickets.

2.1.23 Table 2.1 summarises the issues on a club by club basis.

Table 2.1 – Cricket Overview

Club	Current Position	Growth Aspirations	Capacity Issues	Other Issues
Cherry Tree CC	Senior wicket overplayed. Junior wicket played to level can sustain	Creation of Female Team	No scope within existing facilities to accommodate additional team. Use of non turf wicket may be required No spare capacity at peak time	Changing facilities and clubhouse do not cater for all ages and genders. Training facilities also require improvement (mobile nets)
Darwen CC	Senior wickets played to level can sustain, junior wickets overplayed	Further growth in female cricket	No limited scope within existing facilities to accommodate additional teams. Use of non turf wicket may be required No spare capacity at peak time	Club reconfigured changing rooms to support growth in female cricket. Require further investment into facility.
East Lancashire CC	Junior wickets overplayed, but scope to accommodate	Retention and stabilisation of existing numbers	No real scope to extend existing activity, although pitch improvements would	Club looking to reconfigure clubhouse, linking with



	activity on senior wickets		provide a small amount of additional capacity 0.5 MES available at peak time	other sports to maximise use of space and incorporate necessary changing rooms. Pitch quality improvements (drainage and square) would improve capacity. Training facilities require refurbishment, no none turf wicket
Edgworth CC	Overplayed	Attraction of more players to support existing teams	Facilities already overplayed (small square). Use of non turf wickets for competitive activity would increase capacity. No spare capacity at peak time	New changing rooms required to support club activity
Feniscowles CC	Scope to accommodate additional play	No aspirations for club growth	Scope to accommodate small amount of additional play but not sufficient to meet the needs of a further team 0.5 MES available at peak time	Training facilities require refurbishment. No none turf wicket. Changing rooms require refurbishment and club struggling with drainage.

Cricket Key Issues to Address

The key priorities for the strategy to address are therefore;

- The need to increase capacity for clubs who are at capacity or are overplaying facilities – Cherry Tree, Edgworth CC, Darwen CC) - this can be delivered through a variety of methods (non turf wicket, additional pitches / second ground). There is no remaining capacity at peak time on any of these sites, as well as overplay across the season.

Development initiatives seeking to increase cricket participation are likely to generate further play and increase pressures on the existing facility stock

- The need to address qualitative issues – almost all sites have improvements that are required. East Lancashire and Feniscowles with Pleasington CC in particular are currently rated only standard, which impacts upon their capacity
- Several sites have poor quality / a lack of training facilities
- The quality of facilities at Pleasington Playing Fields is poor and require urgent improvement. The quality is perceived to be impacting upon the level of demand for the leagues that use the facilities as well as the player experience

Scenario Testing to Meet Demand

2.1.24 In order to explore the potential opportunities to address the identified issues, scenario testing has therefore been undertaken. This is summarised below.

2.1.25 Most sites are therefore at / approaching capacity or are already overplayed. Overall boroughwide, there is therefore little scope to accommodate any further play at the club bases without the creation of additional capacity.

Qualitative Improvements

2.1.26 There is scope to increase pitch quality at East Lancs CC and Feniscowles CC (both rated as standard) and this would have a direct impact on site capacity (with the number of senior games each wicket is able to accommodate increasing from 4 to 5 per season). While this would be of benefit and ensure that there are no capacity issues at these two sites, this does not generate a significant increase in capacity at the sites where the greatest pressures are experienced.

2.1.27 Both of these sites do have availability for extra fixtures at peak time, and improvements to quality would ensure that use of this spare capacity did not generate overplay.

Non Turf Wicket

2.1.28 An artificial wicket will sustain 60 MES throughout the season; while a grass wicket will sustain only 5 (or 7) depending upon quality. This significantly increases the quantities of

play that can be sustained at a site and (where permitted by league regulations) can therefore provide a sustainable option for improving capacity.

- 2.1.29 All clubs in Blackburn with Darwen except East Lancs CC have at least one non turf wicket but there is limited (if any) use of these pitches for competitive fixtures. The use of these facilities (potentially for junior play) would increase capacity and reduce pressures on the grass wickets.
- 2.1.30 Longer term however, additional cricket provision may be required to support the needs of the clubs if cricket growth is delivered and sustained and this could be delivered through the reinstatement of disused pitches and / or provision at a school site / second ground. This will be essential if additional peak time capacity is required to meet the needs of Darwen CC / Cherry Tree CC / Edgworth CC as the provision of a non turf wicket will address overplay but will not provide additional means of meeting peak time demand.

Needs of the Informal League

- 2.1.31 As highlighted currently, modelling demonstrates that the facilities for the informal league are inadequate as a result of the quality of the facilities. With demand at peak time being the key determinant of the number of pitches required, modelling suggests that to meet current needs, five non turf pitches would be required (assuming games take place at the same time). Increased participation in the weekend league would see this demand increase (minimum 6 pitches) although it would be possible to spread play across both weekend days.

Potential role of proposals at Darwen Vale Academy

- 2.1.32 Darwen Multi Academy Trust, linked with Darwen Town Deal Board are currently undertaking a feasibility study into potential improvements to playing fields on the Darwen Vale Academy site. The overall project seeks to create a sports village on the site and with cricket currently being a key component of the proposed developments, has current aspirations include draining the playing fields and the installation of an 8 strip cricket square (and associated cricket outfield) as well as the provision of on site cricket nets and a pavilion to include changing rooms, officials changing rooms and a scorers box as well as a kitchen, conditioning room and physio room. Current plans also see the inclusion of indoor cricket nets.
- 2.1.33 The project specification is still being explored, however the current intention is that the site would be set up as a Cricket Academy as well as working with Lancashire Cricket Foundation

to establish the facility as a central headquarters for women and girls teams. Darwen CC are also working with the Academy Trust on the proposals.

2.1.34 This scheme, if it was to go ahead, would increase the stock of facilities for cricket in the Borough, both indoor and outdoor. It would create capacity for an additional 40 MES per week, as well as increase the number of match equivalents that are available at peak time to 2 MES.

2.1.35 This would be a positive in that;

The existing club infrastructure is at capacity, with little room for growth without further provision. If all matches were available for community use, this would transform a boroughwide shortfall in capacity of 26 MES to spare capacity of 14 MES

The scheme would see the improvement of existing facilities at Darwen Vale School – this facilities are not currently available for use by the community / school due to the quality of pitches

The creation of an academy / base for ladies and girls will positively support cricket growth in the Borough and aid the transition between recreation and clubs.

2.1.36 To ensure the site benefitted local cricket however, it would be necessary to ensure that full community use was available at the site for clubs and local teams both currently but as projected demand grows. The degree to which the new site could benefit cricket is unclear (due to unknown access arrangements – eg peak time availability etc). As documented however, it could increase spare capacity at peak time (2 MES overall) and transform the deficit of provision into 14 MES spare capacity.

Rugby League

2.1.37 There are no rugby league pitches in Blackburn with Darwen and no existing demand for facilities.

2.1.38 For residents interested in rugby league, Accrington Wildcats are the nearest rugby union club. The club base is within reasonable travel distance of Blackburn.

2.1.39 Building on the 2021 World Cup, The RFL have a long term goal of achieving ongoing and regular participation in rugby league in Blackburn with Darwen. It will therefore be necessary to keep the impact of the potential increase in demand under review as there may be



potential for the development of a new club if demand becomes evident, although there are no clear current requirements for facilities.

Rugby League Key Issues to Address

The key priorities for the strategy to address is therefore the need to continue to review potential demand

Rugby Union

Supply

- 2.1.40 There are only eleven rugby union pitches in Blackburn, which represents an increase on the stock of facilities from 2015. In addition to Blackburn RUFC (5 pitches of which one is sports lit), Blackburn Central High School Academy, Witton Park Academy and Darwen Vale High School all now provide rugby pitches.
- 2.1.41 Availability of pitches is good, with formal access agreements to the majority of pitches secured
- 2.1.42 The quality of pitches at Blackburn RUFC varies from good to poor, with the main pitch and pitch 2 rating M1 / D3, and the fourth pitches M0/D1. The training pitch is M1 / D1. The pitches that are of lower quality are still adequate for competitive play. The club look after all pitches, but invest most strongly on the main pitch (1) as well as pitches 2 and 3. The level of drainage installed varies on each pitch. The clubhouse is however functional at best, with changing and showers urgently requiring upgrade, particularly if the club is to attract female players. While pitches have improved at Blackburn RUFC, there remains opportunity to enhance this further through increased investment in maintenance procedures (and application of this maintenance to all pitches). It is however the changing rooms and ancillary facilities that the club feel require priority attention at this point in time and they consider that the quality of changing in particular is now starting to impact upon the club's ability to attract and maintain players.

Demand

- 2.1.43 The 2015 assessment identified 16 teams at Blackburn with Darwen RUFC and the club was providing a full spectrum of development opportunities. Participation has remained relatively static. While mini participation has remained the same, there has been a reduction in the number of adult teams, as well as the loss of the boys U14 team. A new girls section has however been created (equivalent to one team) since 2015.



2.1.44 All club training takes place on the match pitches

2.1.45 Outside of the club base, the only usage of rugby pitches is for curricular use at school sites.

Adequacy of Provision

2.1.46 Match play equates to 5 match equivalent sessions and there is scope to accommodate 11 match equivalent sessions in total. This means that when considering only match play. There is spare capacity. Play is not however spread evenly across the pitches, meaning that some are subject to greater use than others.

2.1.47 When taking into account the impact of training activity on pitches, site capacity remains sufficient, but the focus of training on one pitch results in overplay on this pitch. The club have planning permission to install sports lighting on pitches 3 and 4, but at this time this has not been delivered. Installation of sports lights would help better spread training activity across a greater number of pitches, although it would increase the wear and tear on other pitches that are currently used for match play. One of these pitches is already exhibiting overplay

2.1.48 Although there are other pitches available in the borough, the club focus all activity at the club site. There is therefore a small amount of spare capacity on school facilities should these be required by the community.

2.1.49 Projections demonstrate that population growth alone will have limited impact on demand for rugby. The RFU do however wish the club to generate an additional youth team to fill the existing gap – this would create an additional match equivalent (training and match play) and would see supply only just adequate to meet demand

2.1.50 The club have aspirations to remodel their existing home ground in order to fund improvements to the changing accommodation. It should be noted however that enabling development is not accepted as justification for any loss of playing field land by Sport England. Any loss of playing field needs to comply with both Sport England Playing Fields policy and paragraph 99 of the NPPF.

Rugby Union Key Issues to Address

The key priorities for the strategy to address are therefore;



- The need to spread the impact of training across a greater number of pitches in order to alleviate overplay
- The opportunities to improve capacity through increased maintenance across all pitches (but particularly those that currently receive more limited attention)
- The need to improve the quality of the existing changing and ancillary facilities.

Scenario Testing to Meet Current Demand – Blackburn RUFC

2.1.51 In order to explore the potential opportunities to address the identified issues for Blackburn Rugby Club, scenario testing has therefore been undertaken.

Improving Capacity for Training

2.1.52 While overall, the site has 0.75 MES spare capacity, modelling demonstrates that the existing training pitch is heavily overplayed (-3.5 MES) and that training activity is restricted to this pitch as it is the only sports lit area. It is clear that with 5.25 match equivalent sessions of training, if pitches are of a standard quality and able to sustain 2 games per week, 3 sports lit pitches would be required to enable play to be spread in a way that eliminates overplay. If pitches are of the highest quality, 2 sports lit pitches with a capacity of 3 would be adequate (assuming that they do not accommodate any match play).

2.1.53 This suggests that sports lighting the additional pitches that have already received planning permission would alleviate the existing overplay, as training activity could be spread across multiple pitches.

Improving Site Capacity

2.1.54 With 5.25 match equivalent sessions training, in addition to 5 match equivalent sessions competitive activity, the existing 5 pitches are just able to sustain existing patterns of usage although the remaining spare capacity is relatively limited and there is only minimal remaining capacity to accommodate future increases in participation. Improvements to maintenance would however see pitch capacity improve and introduce flexibility into the activity scheduling as follows;



If pitch maintenance was improved from M0 to M1 on pitches 3 and 5, this would add 1 MES capacity (total)

Improving maintenance across the whole site to M2 would add 5 MES overall to the current position. If just pitches 1, 2 and 5 were improved to M2 and pitches 3 and 4 enhanced to M1, this would see an increased capacity of 3 MES.

2.1.55 This would provide spare capacity of up to 5.75 match equivalent sessions which represents significant opportunities for growth. Growth is currently forecast to equate to 1 match equivalent session.

2.1.56 Even with the above improvements however, scheduling at peak time will remain difficult. There is spare capacity on Pitch 1 on a Sunday morning (that could accommodate growth in junior teams) and spare capacity on Pitch 2 on a Saturday afternoon (that could accommodate senior teams).

Hockey

Supply

2.1.57 There are four sand based full sized AGPs across Blackburn with Darwen, all with community use available.

2.1.58 The quality of pitches is standard to poor and there are particular concerns about the quality of the pitch at Pleckgate High School, where issues have been identified with the pitch surface, maintenance regimes and sports lighting. The maintenance regimes are poor across several of the facilities.

Demand

2.1.59 The 2015 assessment identified 11 teams in the Borough. Blackburn with Clitheroe HC are now the only club in the Borough and run 8 teams. The club have struggled to attract new players (particularly senior) and have seen a reduction in numbers due to competing interests. The quality of facilities compared to other nearby clubs is also perceived to impact on the club's ability to attract players

2.1.60 The club are based at Pleckgate High School (with a clubhouse at Blackburn Northern Sports Club). The facility is run on a tri partite agreement between Blackburn with Darwen Council, the School and the hockey club and was identified as one of the poorer facilities. All club training takes place on this pitch and equates to 5.25 hours per week.



2.1.61 The club train at the club base on a Wednesday evening, staggered with junior training first followed by senior training afterwards. Training amounts to three hours in total, while the pitch is typically booked for 4.5 – 6 hours match play (Saturday / Sunday). Total weekly usage of the pitch equates to circa 10 hours.

Adequacy of Provision

2.1.62 Analysis of existing sand based AGPs suggests that there is limited remaining spare capacity in hours (midweek) although this is primarily due to the use of these pitches by football clubs. The club do however have priority access to the pitch at Pleckgate School and are therefore able to secure access to the pitch that they require.

2.1.63 Based on existing levels of usage, analysis demonstrates that one pitch is currently adequate to meet demand. At peak time, the club does however require 3 MES (6 hours) and with the standard capacity of the pitch at Pleckgate HS being 4 MES (8 hours), this means that there is limited room for growth

2.1.64 England Hockey are working alongside the club to stabilise and grow participation and wish to ensure that the club has appropriate and sustainable facilities. In addition to the surface of the existing facility being poor, the off site clubhouse is also dated and in need of refurbishment and upgrade. The clubhouse is shared with other sports and this need is therefore identified as a cross sport issue.

2.1.65 Projections demonstrate that population growth alone will have limited impact on demand for hockey. England Hockey do however aspire to achieve a 7% year on year growth and this would result in club membership increasing significantly (up to 6 MES demand (or 12 hours) at peak time) if this was achieved

2.1.66 While one pitch is sufficient to meet current demand (although qualitative improvements are required immediately and a resurface will be necessary within this strategy period), long term, there may be a need to provide a second pitch if targeted growth rates are achieved.

2.1.67 Despite the potential to require access to a second pitch longer term, with 4 sand based pitches in the current stock, this means that not all of the sand based facilities are now required for hockey.

Hockey Key Issues to Address

The key facility issues for this strategy to address are therefore;



- The quality issues identified at the existing pitch – maintenance / pitch surface and sports lighting
- The need to upgrade the quality of the existing clubhouse at Blackburn Northern to ensure that it better meets the needs of the clubs and supports them in attracting new players and retaining existing
- The potential requirement to require access to a second pitch longer term means that a second sand based surface pitch will need to be protected
- The role of the sand based pitches that do not have a current role to play in hockey and are not potentially required to meet longer term needs. There may be scope for these pitches to meet the needs of other sports – football or rugby for example.

Scenario testing – hockey

2.1.68 No scenarios have currently been undertaken. It is clear that if aspirations for growth of the club are delivered, in order to meet the increased peak time demand (6 MES) that a second pitch would be necessary (given that only 4 – 5 MES can take place on one day on a pitch).

Tennis

Supply

2.1.69 Active courts are split between park sites, schools and private clubs with 95% of facilities located at club sites and schools. Corporation Park is the only public park containing tennis courts. This site previously included ten courts, but this has been reduced in recent years in response to demand

2.1.70 Just 11 of the courts are sports lit. This includes two located in an indoor bubble at Blackburn Northern Sports club. Most courts benefitting from sports lighting are located at club bases.

2.1.71 With the exception of two courts at Edgworth Cricket and Recreation Club (which are no longer available due to the collapse of the club), all courts that are not available for community use are located at school sites. Planning permission for the conversion of these courts into a small sided sand dressed AGP was approved in February 2021.

2.1.72 There is a wide range in the quality of facilities, with club facilities generally good, school facilities basic and the public facility of poor quality. The quality of the playing surface was identified as the key area for improvement. Even at the club sites, there are several facilities

requiring improvement, with Blackburn Northern and Crosshills Tennis Club both requiring investment.

Demand

- 2.1.73 In terms of demand, tennis in Blackburn predominantly takes place at the club sites, with more limited use of the school sites. Access to the public courts at Corporation Park is currently free of charge and unmanaged and actual levels of participation are therefore unknown.
- 2.1.74 LTA research on participation highlights the importance of the parks sector, with high proportions of grass roots tennis played on public facilities. As a consequence, the LTA is working to implement solutions across the country and has now successfully implemented technology that improves the customer journey to court. This involves the use of an access gate with key pad entry which is connected to the Clubspark venue management system. When a booking is made an automated code is generated and sent to the customer, thus allowing access to the court during the allocated booking time. Where implemented, the system has been successful in increasing participation rates, whilst also generating income that helps to improve the financial sustainability of a venue. The LTA is looking to significantly increase the number of gate access systems that are installed national as part of the Digital Participation Pathway.
- 2.1.75 The population in the catchment surrounding Corporation Park means that facility improvements are of national priority and the LTA are keen to work with the Borough Council to implement improvements to the existing facilities as a result of the existing low levels of participation in the Borough and the opportunities that they believe improvements will bring
- 2.1.76 LTA analysis indicates that Blackburn's latent demand will be attracted in the majority to good public court facilities, good customer journey and opportunities. The barriers to participation in the Borough are therefore significant due to the poor quality facilities at Corporation Park and lack of any other well promoted public opportunities across the Local Authority.

Adequacy of Existing Provision

- 2.1.77 Existing clubs are all operating within their capacity with all having more than adequate facilities to meet the demand that they currently have.
- 2.1.78 Using baseline LTA parameters, it can be concluded that the existing stock of facilities can accommodate 2,120 players. Using this as an indicator, there are sufficient facilities to



accommodate current demand, but there may insufficient courts if LTA target participation levels (3%) are achieved). In this instance, further community use of existing school sites and / or the provision of new tennis courts would be required.

2.1.79 Unless participation reaches LTA target levels (3%), projected future demand can also be met within the existing infrastructure.

2.1.80 No scenarios are required as there are no court quality or access issues identified impacting on current or future provision.

Tennis Key Issues to Address

The key facility related priorities for tennis are therefore;

- There is thought to be scope to increase the amount of usage of courts at Corporation Park as there is no current proactive marketing or promotion and no monitoring of use. LTA insight also suggests that usage of public facilities increases when more structured access is provided (improving the customer journey through online resources, controlled access etc) and the LTA therefore see improvement to this site as the key priority – this would include court quality (maintenance / surface etc) as well as the installation of technological solutions
- Several of the clubs require improvements to facilities (Crosshills Tennis Club and Blackburn Northern).
- The stock of existing facilities in numerical terms is broadly sufficient to meet current demand based on existing club membership and assumed pay and play statistics. Achievement of LTA target participation levels would however see additional provision required – this would be a long term requirement if it was necessary. Prior to the supply of additional courts, there is also potential to enhance the role of the school sites in order to increase the capacity for community tennis across the Borough.

Bowls

Supply

2.1.81 There are 27 active bowling greens. Some greens have closed since the 2015 PPS and the third green at Corporation Park is also derelict

2.1.82 Most greens are single green sites, but East Lancs Bowls Club (2) Corporation Park (2), Roe Lee Park (3) and Green Park (3) have multiple greens.

- 2.1.83 While all greens are playable, there are some site specific issues that need to be addressed. The playing surface is identified as the key quality concern and on some sites the pavilion also requires improvements. Generally however it appeared that basic maintenance regimes were being followed and it was clear that many of the busier greens were those that were of poorer quality
- 2.1.84 The sustainability of maintenance programmes is potentially the biggest challenge in the borough. Blackburn with Darwen Council are no longer responsible for the management and maintenance of any greens, as leases for all bowling greens were handed over to clubs at the beginning of the 2013 season and all clubs are therefore now managed privately.

Demand

- 2.1.85 There is a positive picture of participation in bowls overall and some clubs are experiencing an increase. This compares strongly with the national and regional picture which presents significant reductions in the number of people playing bowls. The existing levels of participation therefore need to be accommodated and capacity retained to ensure that growth can continue
- 2.1.86 In total there are 1,216 bowlers across Blackburn with Darwen which represents a high level of participation. Participation is however significantly skewed towards males and there are very few junior players
- 2.1.87 Falling membership and challenges with recruitment were the key issues raised in relation to participation.

Adequacy of Provision

- 2.1.88 Existing membership numbers are generally strong and many sites host several clubs. Average membership per green is 58 and when compared with broad parameters for sustainable club membership, there are no sites where membership is considered unsustainable (below 20 members) and indeed only ten clubs with a membership of below 50. Analysis suggests that membership of clubs at Green Park, Highfield Park, Coronation Park and Green Park are the key priorities for improvement if greens are to remain sustainable.
- 2.1.89 It is therefore clear that clubs with multiple greens are struggling to remain sustainable. The clubs in themselves have strong memberships, but the presence of 2 greens means that their capacity for membership is much greater. Sites benefitting from two greens do not



necessarily have higher memberships than those with one green (and at many of the sites, one green is used for summer and one for winter, but both must still be maintained).

- 2.1.90 Recent initiatives by the Crown Green Bowling Association seek to improve participation across the county as the key priority and there are opportunities for bowling clubs in Blackburn to work alongside Development officers to attract new members. Two green sites are currently being prioritised in order to create central venues – this may be key in Blackburn as it is clubs where there are two greens that are struggling the most
- 2.1.91 Future population growth will generate an additional 292 bowling club members by 2037. This can be accommodated within the existing stock and indeed will improve the sustainability of existing clubs.
- 2.1.92 No scenarios are required as there are no green quality or access issues identified impacting on current or future provision.

Bowls Key Issues to Address

Key Issues for Strategy to Address

2.1.93 The key facility related priorities for bowls are therefore;

There is a need to prioritise bowls development at clubs with lower levels of participation and at sites with two greens to ensure that facilities remain sustainable – there are opportunities to link in with the work of the Crown Green Bowling association

The sustainability of maintenance programmes is one of the biggest concerns across the Borough

There are some site specific quality issues that need to be addressed.

Football

Supply

- 2.1.94 There are 79 formal grass pitches available for community use, of which 41% are full sized 11v11 pitches
- 2.1.95 The proportion of pitches secured for community use is high, although there remain some primary school that are available on an unsecured basis.
- 2.1.96 Everton Playing Fields is currently disused, and Corporation Park is used as an informal pitch venue only. There is scope to mark out further provision at Witton Country Park (and since the assessment was developed, 2 9v9 pitches are now provided).



- 2.1.97 The stock of grass pitches is supported by six full sized 3G AGPs, all of which are available for community use. At the time of writing however, not all are listed on the FA register and therefore retesting is required to ensure that pitches can continue to be used for match play.
- 2.1.98 Club engagement in the management and maintenance of grass pitches is strong but over 50% of pitches are still managed and maintained by the Council / Education sector. Consultation highlights significant opportunity to improve the landscape for football in Blackburn with Darwen. With more than half of pitches owned / managed by clubs or community organisations, there are opportunities to share knowledge, maintenance equipment and machinery which are currently being missed, with clubs functioning in isolation rather than benefitting from others experiences.
- 2.1.99 The quality of pitches is standard to poor and there are concerns about the quality of pitch surface, undulations and drainage. The issues with drainage and waterlogging may be caused (or exacerbated) by the compaction that is evident. Several sites are rated poor and there are very few examples of good pitches. Added to this, many of the pitches that are rated standard achieve scores in the lower echelons of the standard rating and could become poor if not maintained appropriately. There is thought to be scope to significantly improve the quality of maintenance across the borough and the investigation of potential improvements will be a key component of the action plan.
- 2.1.100 Pitch quality, changing room quality and access to facilities are highlighted as the key concerns for clubs.

Demand

- 2.1.101 there are 312 teams (including three futsal teams and 23 senior teams playing 6v6 football). There are also an additional two teams affiliated to Blackburn Rovers (professional club) who are excluded from the analysis. Academy teams affiliated with Blackburn Rovers are also excluded as they are based at the club training ground, which is not located within Blackburn with Darwen.
- 2.1.102 This represents a significant increase from 2015, when 217 teams were identified. Whilst this represents an accurate picture of current participation, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic in terms of the number of football teams that will reaffiliate is not yet known.
- 2.1.103 It is clear however that while participation in adult football has increased slightly, it is in the younger age groups where the biggest increases have occurred, with growth in the number of teams in all age groups.



2.1.104 Consultation demonstrates that clubs primarily use AGPs for training as was also the case in 2015. It is clear that training takes place on full size 3G pitches, but also on the varying smaller sized sand based and 3G pitches. Sand based full sized pitches at Pleckgate School, Blackburn Central and Witton Park Academy are also used for football.

2.1.105 Just over 50% of clubs responding to the consultation are satisfied with the training facilities that are currently available. For those clubs that were not satisfied, the challenges accessing facilities at preferred times, as well as the cost of facility hire emerged as the key issues. There is also a perception that prime time training slots are secured by larger clubs meaning that it is difficult for smaller clubs to train. A small amount of teams train on grass pitches on a Saturday morning.

Adequacy of Provision

2.1.106 Overall, analysis has therefore demonstrated that as in 2015, and despite the investment in new facilities, there remain pressures on the existing facility stock, with insufficient capacity to meet the demands from adult, junior and 9v9 teams across the week and pressures at peak time for 5v5 and 7v7 teams. Pressures on 9v9 and adult pitches have actually increased since 2015 in part due to the reduction in pitch quality on key sites and in part due to the significant increase in participation.

2.1.107 These capacity issues reflect the findings of consultation with local league secretaries and club secretaries, who highlight the challenges that are faced with accommodating match play. Fixtures for the East Lancs Youth Alliance are spread across Sunday morning and into the afternoon in order to accommodate the high levels of demand. Officers also comment upon the challenges that are created in the growth of the female game, which has created additional teams who also require pitches. As a consequence, there is heavy demand in all timeslots.

2.1.108 Capacity modelling presents a complex picture and reveals that the spread of play across the weekend that is evident in Blackburn (peak time demand is Sunday morning, but there are also high levels of play on a Saturday) means that pitches must accommodate fixtures on both days and in more than one timeslot. Where pitches are of inadequate quality (or demand is too high accumulatively), capacity issues arise.

2.1.109 Specifically, for adult, youth and 9v9 pitches, modelling suggests that there are enough pitches at peak time if all pitches are available and not discounted due to overplay. For younger age groups, the issue focuses around the number of games that need to take place at peak time and there are only just enough pitches to accommodate those playing on grass.

Since the initial calculations were undertaken, two 9v9 pitches have now been provided at Witton Country Park. This reduces the pressure on 9v9 pitches slightly.

2.1.110 Pitch quality therefore continues to be the key issue impacting the adequacy of facilities in the Borough and one of the greatest concerns of clubs. Issues include compaction, drainage and poor pitch surface.

2.1.111 Quality is a particular issue at Pleasington Playing Fields, one of the largest strategic venues in the borough and Blacksnape Playing Fields, which has just been leased to Blackburn Eagles. Pitches at St Bedes RC High School are also poor and the quality of the playing field at Our Lady and St John Catholic College is so poor that there are currently no pitches marked. Both sites however contain AGPs that have an important role to play in football.

2.1.112 The quality of pitches becomes of significant importance where, as is the case in Blackburn, pitches are required to sustain games in more than one time slot at a weekend. The capacity of poor quality pitches is significantly reduced and there are several sites in the borough where this is the case.

2.1.113 Added to this, there are a series of pitches that are also in the lower echelons of the standard range. If the maintenance of these sites is not improved, particularly where heavy usage is evident, there is concern that they will become poor quality which will significantly reduce their capacity to accommodate play.

2.1.114 There is also heavy usage on many sites and there is therefore a need to ensure that maintenance programmes are sufficient to keep up with this. The pressures are typically associated with larger clubs and it is primarily sites where larger clubs play where overplay is evident as pitches are used for multiple games across the weekend.

2.1.115 The scale of some of the clubs means that there are challenges in accommodating all of the teams at one site. Most large clubs are experiencing overplay at their venues, or are close to capacity and pitch provision is constrained both at peak times and across the week. Mill Hill FC/ Darwen Rangers / Junior Gardeners in particular heavily use their facilities.

2.1.116 Where there is spare capacity, this is typically at the smaller sites and / or at schools with only one or two pitches. Notably, whilst there is overplay at club bases, there are a small number of sites that are unused.

2.1.117 AGPs play a key role in reducing the demand for grass pitches, with AFC Darwen, Witton Park and Darwen Aldridge Academy in particular acting as home grounds for several teams. Our



Lady and St John Catholic College and St Bedes RC High School are also booked during the winter months by the East Lancs Football Development Alliance. The need to sustain fixtures in multiple timeslots means that the role that AGPs could play in future years is significant.

2.1.118 Modelling suggests that there is a need to further increase the number of AGPs in the Borough (by 2) in order to accommodate training and this is reflected in consultation carried out with clubs, where it was identified that there are perceived challenges in terms of accessing provision at desirable times, particularly for smaller clubs.

2.1.119 Population growth will have limited impact on demand for football. While participation increases would see pressures on existing pitches rise, in part they would be offset by the changes to the population profile.

Football Key Issues to Address

Key Issues for Strategy to Address

2.1.120 The key facility related priorities for football are therefore;

- The capacity pressures on youth / 9v9 adult pitches – in its current form, the pitch stock does not provide adequate supply to meet demand. There may be a requirement to bring Everton Playing Fields back into use in order to ensure that there is adequate provision for future years
- There are quality issues identified at many existing pitches, and there are a number of sites where poor quality is impacting the adequacy of provision. Almost all quantitative issues arise from the poor condition of large numbers of pitches. Improving quality will therefore have a significant knock on impact to the adequacy of the pitch stock in quantitative terms (and provision will be largely adequate if quality issues were addressed)
- There are challenges accommodating some large key clubs, with Sandy Lane / Branch Road and facilities used by Mill Hill in particular experiencing capacity pressures
- The ongoing challenges of pitch maintenance and the concerns that quality may deteriorate further if maintenance is not properly addressed – there are considered to be significant opportunities to improve knowledge sharing and joint working
- The potential to increase the stock of AGPs to further reduce pressures on grass pitches – there is a need to increase capacity for both matches and training (circa 2 pitches). Existing pitches should also be regularly improved and tested to ensure that they maintain their position on the FA pitch register.
- There are opportunities to increase / secure usage of school sites to improve pitch capacity – there are some key school sites where playing field capacity is restricted due to quality, or pitches are not available. Improvements at these sites may enable the creation of football hubs – AGPs and usable grass pitches.

Football Scenario Testing to Inform Strategy



AGPs

- 2.1.121 AGPs now represent a key means of delivering football, particularly for the younger age groups as they bring many benefits (including increased capacity and ability to sustain games in bad weather). Across the country in some locations, the FA are working to relocate 5v5, 7v7 and sometimes 9v9 football onto AGPs, particularly those currently played on Council pitches. Several games can be sustained at any one time and this therefore reduces the need for grass pitches and ensures a consistently better quality of surface which supports skill development.
- 2.1.122 The pressures on grass 9v9 pitches (as well as youth pitches) mean that the transfer of play to AGPs could help to reduce the number of games on grass pitches.
- 2.1.123 The majority of 5v5 and 7v7 football in Blackburn with Darwen already takes place on 3G AGPs, at Powerleague Soccerdome.
- 2.1.124 Table 10.14 illustrates the number of pitches that would be required to accommodate all current football at peak time for 7v7 and 5v5 football and also the amount of pitches that would be required to accommodate 50% of games (with the remainder played on grass).
- 2.1.125 It considers the amount of AGPs that would be needed to accommodate all activity for each form of the game on a 3g pitch.
- 2.1.126 It reveals that if all matches for 5v5, 7v7 were to be played over the same peak period, 3 AGPs would be required. There is thought to be potential spare capacity at St Bedes RC High School and Our Lady and John Catholic College on a Sunday morning (although not consistently as these sites are often used by the ELFA in winter periods). It will however be necessary to ensure that registration on the FA Pitch Register is retained for any sites hosting match play.
- 2.1.127 This suggests that at least one further AGP will be required (assuming use of the other pitches) if current patterns of play are to continue but the Soccerdome does not reopen. The challenges that exist in accommodating existing levels of demand however suggest that 2 additional facilities may be required.



Table 10.14 – 3G pitches required if all activity / 50% was accommodated on 3G pitch

Scenario	Format of the game	Number of teams in Blackburn playing at peak time	Match Equivalent Sessions (MES) Boroughwide currently	Matches at one time per full size	Number of match sessions required (number)	Duration of match session (inc. changeover) (Hours)	Required hours of play on 3G AGP (Hours)	Available hours at peak time	Total number of pitches required to meet all play in age group
All Teams	5v5	29	14.5	4	3.6	1	4	4	1
	7v7	31	15.25	2	7.625	1	8	4	2



Scenario Testing - Potential Impact of budget / Quality Reductions

- 2.1.128 As revealed, clubs believe that the quality of pitches is starting to deteriorate due to insufficient maintenance regimes. Added to this, there is heavy usage of some key sites and pitches are suffering high levels of wear and tear.
- 2.1.129 With play taking place across the weekend and not necessarily being focused just at peak time, pitches must be able to sustain more than one game per week. This means that high-quality maintenance is more important as without this, heavy usage will see quality deteriorate and compaction (which will subsequently create drainage issues) will be exacerbated.
- 2.1.130 Financial and budget pressures were highlighted as one of the key concerns by many clubs, and local authorities are also facing an era of budgetary cuts and pressures to reduce services. While most pitches were rated as standard, many were in the lower echelons of a standard rating and could therefore easily become poor with poor weather conditions and limited maintenance procedures. Indeed, some sites have already become poor since the previous PPS
- 2.1.131 It is therefore necessary to consider the implications of a reduction in playable pitches (and consequently a reduction in capacity across the borough).
- 2.1.132 To provide an estimate of the impact of this, Table 10.14 sets out the amount of spare capacity that would remain if demand remained equivalent to current levels, but the capacity of pitches was reduced by a further 25% (an amount broadly comparable to the number of pitches in the lower echelons of the standard range). It focuses on the spare capacity across the week as this is already the critical point for most pitch types. This theoretical analysis reveals that the issues increase further and capacity becomes even more constrained.
- 2.1.133 This analysis excludes teams that already play on AGPs and therefore focuses just on those teams that are using the grass. It also takes into account the impact of other activity (for example school use).
- 2.1.134 This analysis therefore serves to indicate the importance of improving maintenance practices and as a minimum, ensuring that pitch quality does not deteriorate further. Instead, improvements are required as a matter of urgency to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet demand.



Table 10.14: Reduction in Capacity by 25%

Pitch Type	Current Capacity (MES)	Reduction by 25% (MES)	Match Equivalent s (Current Matchplay only) (MES)	Match Equivalent s (All Activity) (MES)	Spare Capacity Match Play Only (MES)	Spare Capacity All Activity (MES)
Adult Football (aged 16+)	59	44	44.5	60.5	-0.5	-15.5
Junior Football (age U13 - U16)	22	16	15.5	24.5	-0.5	-8.5
9 v 9 (age U11 and U12)	30	24	22	35	2	-9

Scenario Testing - Pitch Quality Improvement

2.1.135 While analysis demonstrates that currently, supply is closely balanced with demand and that there are capacity issues, this is in part due to the poor quality of some pitches, which means that they are only able to sustain very limited play per week. Opportunities to improve capacity (ie the future position if pitches are rated standard, rather than poor, are summarised in Table 10.15. It reveals that almost all capacity issues are addressed if pitch improvements are made.

Table 10.15– Potential Improvement to Capacity through Pitch Improvements

Pitch Type	Poor Pitches	Potential Increase in Capacity (MES)	Site Specific Impact	Impact upon Modelling (Future Position) (MES)
Adult Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape Playing Field – (3 pitches) Darwen Vale High School – (2 pitches) Pleasington Playing Fields – (3 pitches) Roman Road Recreation Ground – (1 pitch) St Bedes RC High (1 pitch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 MES 2 MES 5 MES 1 MES 1 MES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape Playing Field – overplay eliminated Darwen Vale High School – overplay eliminated Pleasington Playing Fields – overplay eliminated Roman Road – small amount of overplay remains St Bedes RC High – creates spare capacity 	4.5 MES spare capacity
Youth Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasington Playing Field (3 pitches) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 MES 		Supply equals demand



Pitch Type	Poor Pitches	Potential Increase in Capacity (MES)	Site Specific Impact	Impact upon Modelling (Future Position) (MES)
9v9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape Playing Fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 MES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small amount of overplay remains 	-2 MES overplay
7v7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape Playing Fields Memorial Ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 MES 2 MES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape PF – creates additional capacity Memorial Ground - Creates additional capacity 	Spare capacity – 24.5 MES at peak time.
5v5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape Playing Fields Memorial Ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 MES 2 MES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacksnape PF - Small amount of overplay remains Memorial Ground - Creates additional capacity 	Spare capacity – 13.5 MES but capacity pressures remain at peak time.

2.1.136 Improvements to pitch capacity will therefore address most issues and ensure that the infrastructure remains adequate in future years. The supply of youth 11v11 pitches will however remain closely balanced with demand and there remains a small deficiency in 9v9 pitches.

2.1.137 Everton Playing Fields is currently a lapsed site, but offers potential to increase the stock of facilities for these age groups if it was brought back into use. With scope to provide 3 – 4 9v9 pitches, the reinstatement of this site would see supply of 9v9 also become adequate (6 MES spare capacity).

2.1.138 The potential provision of two further AGPs will also reduce the demand for grass pitches (potentially addressing the shortages of pitch provision in 5v5 and 7v7 football), future proofing the facility stock against significant increases in participation.

2.1.139 There are currently aspirations to improve Pleasington Playing Fields by reconfiguring the site with a view to separating cricket and football and investing in pitch quality improvements. As demonstrated above, pitch quality improvements will see supply of facilities become adequate, however capacity will remain relatively closely balanced with demand.

2.1.140 The loss of more than 5 pitches at Pleasington Playing Fields, which are heavily used this season, would see boroughwide provision become insufficient again. There is scope however to offset this by improving the use of AGPs to meet demand.

Summary

2.1.141 Table 2.1 provides a brief overview of the capacity position for each of the sports in the Borough.



Sport	Current Position	Future Position
Cricket	<p>0 MES spare capacity. Overplay of 35 MES on junior wickets. 1.5 MES spare capacity at weekends, but no scope to accommodate additional play on Darwen CC, Cherry Tree CC or Edgworth CC.</p> <p>Inadequate provision to accommodate needs of weekend / midweek leagues.</p>	<p>1 MES spare capacity at weekends - no scope to accommodate additional play on most grounds.</p>
Rugby Union	<p>6 MES available, 0.75 when taking into account training</p>	<p>0.25 MES spare capacity (when taking into account training)</p>
Hockey	<p>Current demand – 3 MES at peak time requires access to one hockey pitch.</p>	<p>Potential increase in demand may see future requirement for 6 MES – this would require access to two pitches.</p>
Rugby League	<p>No demand evident</p>	<p>No projected demand</p>
Tennis	<p>Capacity adequate to meet current demand</p>	<p>Potential requirement for future additional provision if participation increases are delivered long term.</p>
Bowls	<p>Capacity adequate to meet existing demand</p>	<p>Capacity adequate to meet projected future demand</p>
Football	<p>Adult Football – inadequate --9.5 MES peak time</p> <p>Youth Football – inadequate --4.5 MES</p> <p>9v9 Football – inadequate –5.5 MES at peak time</p> <p>7v7 Football – inadequate - -2 MES at peak time</p> <p>5v5 Football – inadequate - -2.5 MES peak time</p> <p>The above figures assume only pitches with secured community use are available.</p>	<p>Adult Football – inadequate --6.5 MES peak time</p> <p>Youth Football inadequate --3.5 MES</p> <p>9v9 Football – inadequate --6 MES at peak time</p> <p>7v7 Football – -1 MES at peak time</p> <p>5v5 Football – -1.5 MES peak time</p> <p>The above figures assume only pitches with secured community use are available.</p>

2.1.142 Building on this, the key issues to address and their relationship with the strategy aims and objectives are summarised overleaf in Table 2.2.



Sport	Key Issues to Address	Protect	Sustainable Approach to Management	Provide	Enhance
Cricket	Protection of existing cricket pitches is required				
	The number of facilities is largely adequate, but levels of play on some sites is high and there is limited spare capacity across the season. Edgworth CC, Darwen CC and Cherry Tree CC are all at capacity. Engagement with ongoing ECB initiatives is likely to result in increased demand longer term				
	Availability of facilities for training (particularly off field) is poor. This is a key issue for development as well as club satisfaction - there is a need for improvement at East Lancs CC, Cherry Tree CC and Feniscowles and Pleasington CC.				
	There are some site-specific quality issues to be addressed (maintenance /machinery / pavilion) and almost all clubs raise concerns in relation to maintenance.				
	The quality of the non turf wickets on Pleasington Playing Fields is poor – the site requires significant improvement / reconfiguration. Improvements needed include ripped carpets, undulating outfield, undersized boundaries and issues with the pavilion and parking. Five to six good quality wickets are required on the site to meet the needs of the midweek and weekend leagues.				
Rugby Union	There is scope to improve the capacity of pitches through improvements to the levels of maintenance that are carried out on each pitch (as well as investment into the drainage). This may be required to meet future demand				
	The changing facilities and clubhouse are now deemed to restrict activity and growth at the club. The poor quality of these facilities is impacting player recruitment and retention. There is a need to improve these facilities as a key priority.				
	The existing training facilities are also inadequate and there is a need to increase the sports lighting available in order to spread training load across pitches and alleviate overplay				
Rugby League	There is no current evidence of demand for rugby league. Demand should however be kept under review and potential players signposted to Accrington Wildcats in the first instance.				
Hockey	One sand based pitch is required to accommodate the demands of the existing hockey club and the sand based surface therefore requires protection.				
	The quality of the existing pitch is standard to poor and will require a resurface within this strategy period. There are also some immediate issues that need to be addressed – such as sports lighting.				



Sport	Key Issues to Address	Protect	Sustainable Approach to Management	Provide	Enhance
	<p>While one pitch is sufficient to meet current demand (although qualitative improvements are required immediately and a resurface will be necessary within this strategy period) long term, there may be a need to provide a second pitch if targeted growth rates are achieved. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that a second sand based surface is protected in order to meet these needs.</p>				



Sport	Key Issues to Address	Protect	Sustainable Approach to Management	Provide	Enhance
Tennis	There is a need to protect existing facilities to ensure that the network of courts remains adequate to meet demand. There may be a very long term requirement to provide additional courts				
	There are opportunities to increase the use of courts at Corporation Park through the introduction of new and innovative ways of providing access to facilities. Corporation Park will however require qualitative improvements if their role in tennis is to be maximised				
	Several of the clubs require qualitative improvements to facilities (Crosshills Tennis Club and Blackburn Northern).				
	There is potential to enhance the role of the school sites in order to improve the capacity of the courts.				
Bowls	There is a need to protect existing greens to ensure that there are sufficient facilities to meet future demand – all existing facilities are considered sustainable (although improvements to membership are required – see below)				
	Quality issues have been identified at several sites that may impact on current and future participation if not addressed.				
	There is a need to ensure that clubs have a strong maintenance practices, and that ongoing training and monitoring is undertaken. Consideration will need to be given as to how clubs could be supported to address maintenance issues and associated costs and to reduce the risk of clubs becoming unsustainable. This may include supporting clubs to access funding				
	There is a requirement to support efforts to sustain and increase participation and working with clubs to improve the promotion of bowls. Green Park, Highfield Park, Coronation Park are key priorities as a result of their existing membership numbers. Sites with 2 greens provide an opportunity to link with the developmental activities of the Crown Green Bowls Association.				
Football	There is a need to protect currently active grass playing fields and 3G AGPs to ensure that supply is adequate to meet current and projected future demand				
	Pitch quality is having significant implications on the adequacy of provision and there is a need to ensure that strong and tailored maintenance practices are prioritised.				
	There is a need for capital investment to facilitate pitch quality improvements				



Sport	Key Issues to Address	Protect	Sustainable Approach to Management	Provide	Enhance
	There are some pressures on key sites and evidence of overplay, and other sites where usage is much more limited. Added to this, there are capacity pressures on 9v9 and youth pitches across the Borough				
	Ancillary facilities on some sites are not appropriately serving users of the site				
	There is a need to increase the stock of AGPs in order to future proof the pitch stock				



3.0 Strategic Framework

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Section 2 summarised the context for each sport and the key issues that need to be addressed across Blackburn with Darwen drawing upon supply and demand modelling, consultation and site visits. The full assessment of issues identified, modelling and evaluation of options using site specific modelling is set out under separate cover (assessment report).

3.1.2 This section sets out a strategy for the future delivery of facilities for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, bowls and tennis across the Borough.

3.1.3 It seeks to address the issues identified for each sport and to guide the proactive improvement of playing fields and outdoor sports facilities. As in the previous Blackburn with Darwen PPS, it is focused around the following principles;

- Quality of facilities is as important as the amount of provision – the strategy seeks to ensure that the borough contains the right amount of facilities, of the right quality and type and in the right place. It promotes the protection of existing provision, but also recognises the need to improve the quality of existing facilities and the impact that qualitative improvements can have on capacity
- It is essential to maximise the role of existing resources – the strategy will seek to maximise the capacity and function of existing facilities and to address deficiencies in existing pitch stock and ensure that provision is adapted to meet with future requirements
- The strategy will seek to maximise sustainability – it will seek to build relationships between sports, promote good practice and deliver sustainable solutions for sport and recreation across the borough. It will promote investment on large sites which provide a more effective and long term solution than the creation of small sites.
- Pitch provision will be delivered in partnership. The strategy seeks to bring together key partners in the delivery of playing fields and to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and effectively aligned to maximise the value of assets to the community.
- Investment will focus upon interventions that will have the greatest impact – the strategy seeks to prioritise investment into sites where the highest impact will be felt and where



high numbers of users will benefit. It will seek to increase participation in sport and activity in terms of both numbers and standards.

3.1.4 The framework for the strategy seeks to deliver on the four key strategic objectives set out in Section 1. These are;

- Ensure that all playing fields are protected for the long term benefit of sport
- Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of playing pitches and management of sports clubs
- Ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and projected future demand
- Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer term aspirations.

3.1.5 To deliver the above objectives, a series of strategic recommendations have been developed. They provide a framework for the protection, management and enhancement of the facility infrastructure in Blackburn with Darwen and for the sport specific recommendations that are set out in Table 3.1

3.1.6 The strategic recommendations are set out below. Where relevant, further explanation on how these recommendations will be delivered is also provided.

Objective 1: Ensure that all pitches and ancillary facilities required to meet current and future needs are protected

The strategy will seek to protect pitches and outdoor sports facilities by;

- Ensuring that the Local plan contains policies protecting playing fields, building on the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF paragraph 99) and Sport England’s statutory consultee role on planning applications affecting playing field land
- Clearly identifying any pitches that are not required to meet current or projected future sporting needs and recommending the next steps for these sites.

3.1.7 The majority of playing fields in Blackburn are key to the playing field infrastructure of the Borough and it is important to understand that where a pitch is identified as being lapsed, underused or of poor quality this does not necessarily mean that the facility is surplus to requirements. Equally where proposed development is located within access of a high quality

playing pitch, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further pitch provision or improvements to existing pitches.

- 3.1.8 Sport England's Playing Field Policy only allows for development of lapsed or disused playing fields if a PPS shows a clear excess in the quantity of playing pitch provision at present and in the future across all sports, the site concerned has no special significance to sport and the development involves measures to address any deficiencies in terms of quality or accessibility identified by the PPS. The NPPF (Paragraph 99) also requires that development of playing fields should only be permitted where specific exception criteria are met.
- 3.1.9 The site specific table (Table 4.1) details which playing field sites should be afforded protection through the Local Plan (including the future of those sites currently defined as lapsed / disused) in order to meet current and / or projected future needs. This table will be reviewed as part of the ongoing monitoring of this document as strategy recommendations are delivered.
- 3.1.10 The strategy seeks to ensure that decisions relating to playing field and sporting provision are made in the best interests of both the local community and for sporting activity in the Borough. This is particularly important when considering the replacement of one or more single pitch sites with a large multi pitch venue and or AGP. Schemes should be considered on their own merit and supported where there will be an overall sporting benefit (for example increased capacity through the provision of an AGP on grass pitches). However, the provision of AGPs to mitigate the loss of playing field land must meet the requirements of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. Further guidance on this matter can be found in Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance sections 6.4 and 6.5.
- 3.1.11 It should also be ensured that the existing sporting use of playing fields is retained and is not compromised by new development. For example, where there is a development which may prejudice the use of an existing cricket facility, there is a requirement for a full ball strike risk assessment to be undertaken and appropriate mitigation put in place as part of the development. As such, the ECB recommends that the clubs and organisations seek to have a ball strike risk assessment undertaken; further information can be provided by the ECB. Those undertaking new development should also be mindful of existing noise and/or lighting from existing sports facilities and Noise and Lighting Assessments will be required to ensure appropriate and acceptable mitigation can be put in place. Issues of overshadowing from multi storey developments immediately adjacent to playing fields can also create issues from a grounds maintenance perspective i.e. lack of light leading to a deterioration in the quality of pitches.



Objective 2 Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of playing pitches and management of sports clubs

The strategy focuses upon;

- Securing long term community use arrangements at school sites, focusing particularly on schools with existing community use and sites with a variety of facilities and / or large playing fields that could offer community use
- Protecting existing security of tenure for clubs with current leases through the timely renegotiation of new leases
- Supporting clubs with aspirations to manage and maintain their own facilities (through the provision of advice, guidance and potential lease arrangements where appropriate)
- Promoting a focus on multi pitch sites rather than single pitch facilities, which are less effective to manage and maintain
- Supporting and promoting multi sport activities
- Promoting partnership working and knowledge sharing across the borough. This may include partnerships between public, voluntary and private providers
- Supporting the activities of NGBs to better promote and develop sport.

3.1.12 School sites and club bases play an important role in the facility infrastructure and some of the key sporting hubs in Blackburn with Darwen are education sites. Making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the school/college and the local clubs. The loss of school facilities for community access would generate shortfalls of provision and would see several large clubs displaced. There are good levels of security for long term access within Blackburn with Darwen but it is essential that this continues.

3.1.13 There are management issues inherent in developing, implementing and managing community use agreements. Advice and guidance can be obtained from Sport England’s Use Our Schools toolkit and Sports organisations toolkit. <https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/use-our-school>

3.1.14 This strategy therefore seeks to promote the use of school sites and prioritises action to work alongside schools to formalise long term agreements.



3.1.15 The strategy also recognises the value of clubs securing long term leases, particularly with regards the opportunities that this brings to secure funding. Clubs wishing to secure leases should meet key criteria, including;

- Clubmark / appropriate NGB charter mark accreditation
- Proactive approach to school club links
- Sustainability both financially and in terms of internal management
- Processes in place to prove capacity to maintain sites to existing / better standards

3.1.16 There has been significant success in the provision of leases within Blackburn with Darwen in recent years, with clubs taking over management of facilities. The East Lancashire Football Development Alliance has also taken on the management and maintenance of some key football hubs with significant success and the strategy seeks to further replicate this model.

3.1.17 Sites should be leased with the intention that investment can be sourced to contribute towards improvement of the site.

Objective 3 Ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and projected future demand

The strategy promotes the delivery of adequate capacity by;

- Protecting existing facilities for long term usage
- Promoting improvements to the pitch maintenance procedures and investing in pitch quality works to increase site capacity
- Maximising the role that 3g Artificial Grass Pitches play in competitive football and rugby play as well as their use for training
- Reinstating lapsed and disused playing fields / seeking additional playing pitch sites to address any identified medium – long term shortfalls
- Ensuring new development that would generate demand for additional pitches contributes towards playing pitch and outdoor sports provision in the borough– this will be addressed through the use and adaptation of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator

3.1.18 It is therefore important that the current grass playing fields are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure provision now and in the future. For most sports , any deficiencies in the

future demand position identified in Blackburn with Darwen can be overcome through maximising use of existing pitches through a combination of:

- Improving pitch maintenance to better equip the pitches to sustain the required level of use
- Improving pitch quality to improve the capacity of pitches
- Securing long term community use at school sites.

3.1.19 While the improvement of capacity through qualitative improvement offers scope to address deficiencies for most sports, new or additional cricket squares (potentially NTP) on a public or private field, as well as improving existing wickets are required to meet the levels of demand identified for cricket both now and in the future. The protection of two sand based surfaces for hockey will also need to be taken into account when planning the future 3G AGP and sand based AGP infrastructure.

3.1.20 It should also be noted that changes in sport participation and trends will impact on the future need for certain types of sports facilities. Sports development work approximates unmet demand which cannot currently be quantified (i.e., it is not being suppressed by a lack of facilities) but is likely to occur. The impact of the recent Covid 19 pandemic is also as of yet unknown and therefore cannot be accurately accounted for within this PPOSS. The number of participants will be impacted in both the short and long term and participation patterns may also change. In addition, the sustainability of some existing clubs may be impacted, as the impact of a lack of use of facilities becomes apparent. As already noted, this reinforces the importance of the annual monitoring process. Retaining some spare capacity also allows pitches to be rested and improved to protect overall pitch quality in the long term.

3.1.21 It will also be important that the impact of new development and housing growth is taken into account both in terms of the quantity of additional demand that will be generated, but also the location in which the demand will be located. This strategy promotes the use of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) to assess the impact of new development and this will be discussed in detail later in this section. The future projected scenarios in this strategy document predict the impact of housing development up to the year 2037 (taking into account the likely changes to the population profile etc as well as the impact of growth) but the PPC will enable the impact of specific developments to be quantified as they arise.



Objective 4 Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer term aspirations.

The strategy promotes the provision of facilities of appropriate quality by;

- Ensuring that all pitches are maintained using maintenance regimes appropriate for the level of use that they sustain and the activities that are undertaken. This should include both regular maintenance and out of season reinstatement and capital investment
- Undertaking improvements and enhancement at sites that do not meet NGB quality standards
- Ensuring that pitches are accompanied by appropriate ancillary facilities (e.g. changing / catering where required)
- Support clubs that require improved facilities in order to play at a higher standard and developing a hierarchy of pitch and training facilities
- Implementing a programme of rest and recovery of playing fields.

3.1.22 Pitch quality, which impacts upon pitch capacity is a key issue in Blackburn with Darwen, with many existing sites not operating at full capacity due to quality challenges that are faced. Qualitative issues were highlighted by the majority of clubs in most sports as the key issue impacting club development and satisfaction.

3.1.23 In particular, there are challenges associated with maintenance including declining budgets and the importance of volunteers. Modelling and scenario testing however highlighted the opportunities to improve capacity through grass pitch enhancement.

3.1.24 Poor grass pitch quality is often not a result of issues with the pitch, but more the appropriateness of the maintenance regime for the pitch conditions that takes into account the level/standard of play. As outlined in the previous PPS, the heavy usage of pitches which are not maintained to the appropriate standard to accommodate the necessary levels of play leads to longer term issues with the pitch and a slow process of overall decline.

3.1.25 Improvements to maintenance can therefore ensure the long term sustainability of pitches, as well as help to improve quality and therefore increase pitch capacity in the shorter term. Each NGB can provide assistance with reviewing pitch maintenance regimes and ensuring that the maximum benefit is gained from the level of funding that is available.

- 3.1.26 For example, the FA, ECB and RFL in partnership have recently introduced a Pitch Advisor Scheme and have been working in partnership with The Grounds Management Association (GMA) to develop a Grass service that can be utilised by grassroots clubs with the simple aim of improving the quality of grass pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice/practical solutions on a number of areas, with the simple aim of improving the club's playing surface. This may include practical advice, as well as opportunities and guidance relating to machinery and material.
- 3.1.27 This strategy seeks to ensure engagement with Pitch Improvement Programmes (PIP) in order to help any clubs that take on the management and maintenance of sites or which are currently managing and maintaining their own pitch site. It can also be used to improve pitches owned by other providers, including the Council and schools.
- 3.1.28 In many instances, the maintenance of facilities is the primary reason for the quality issue and even where other concerns exist (for example drainage), this will be exacerbated where maintenance of facilities is not directly tailored to need.
- 3.1.29 Engagement with PIP will therefore ensure that maintenance programmes are tailored to the characteristics of the pitch and the users. The PIP is an essential toolkit in supporting self-management/maintenance of sites is anticipated that support will soon be available for revenue spend as well as capital investment through the PIP.
- 3.1.30 Pitch improvement works may also be required (in addition to tailored maintenance schedules) and requirements can also be evaluated through the same pitch improvement programmes. This strategy however seeks to ensure that pitches are being subjected to appropriate maintenance programmes prior to rectifying any underlying quality issues (to ensure that quality issues are not caused by issues with the maintenance process).
- 3.1.31 In some instances, quality may also be impacted by overplay (or alternatively, pitches may be of higher quality than they would otherwise be due to limited use). The strategy also seeks to relocate overplay in order to ensure that sites are used optimally.

3.2 Sport Specific Recommendations

- 3.2.1 Drawing upon the strategic recommendations setting out the framework for the delivery of playing fields and sports facilities across Blackburn with Darwen, sport specific recommendations are set out in Table 3.1 overleaf. The table includes the overall recommendation, as well as the key actions required to deliver each of the recommendations.



- 3.2.2 While to date and for clarity, each sport has been considered separately within this strategy, recommendations should be implemented strategically, considering opportunities for partnerships between sports. There are some good examples of sustainable clubs and multi sport partnerships already and these provide foundations for a successful future delivery model. It will be essential to ensure that good practice and insight from these successful ventures is spread across the Borough through knowledge sharing and effective training and guidance.
- 3.2.3 Section 4 therefore contains a site specific action plan, which brings together all of the recommendations for each of the sports.



Sport Specific Recommendations

Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Cricket 1	<p>Protect all current club sites. In addition to retaining the actual ground, this should include ensuring that the existing functionality at cricket grounds is protected, with risk assessments (including ball strike assessments strategy document) and appropriate mitigation in place where new developments are located in close proximity to sites.</p> <p>Protection of cricket facilities should also extend to Pleasington Playing Fields, which is a key site for the midweek and weekend amateur cricket leagues.</p>	<p>All club sites</p> <p>Pleasington Playing Fields</p>	<p>Keep list in strategy document protecting sites up to date</p> <p>Incorporate appropriate policy in Local Plan</p> <p>Ensure PPS is taken into account when making decisions on playing fields</p>
Cricket 2	<p>Support clubs to access guidance from the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with a view to tailoring maintenance procedures on each cricket ground.</p>	<p>Pitch quality at East Lancs CC / Feniscowles and Pleasington is rated as standard.</p>	<p>Work with clubs to commission Grounds Management reviews and to act on findings</p> <p>Support clubs in undertaking a machinery review and work with the Lancashire Cricket Foundation to establish a means of improving access to machinery (equipment bank for example)</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Cricket 3	<p>Invest in pitch quality improvements where GMA pitch quality assessment (see above) suggests this is required (following maintenance improvements) and where improvements are necessary to meet with league standards / needed to ensure that play can continue.</p> <p>This may include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage works • Outfield levelling • Work to improve the square • Provision of appropriate facilities (sight screens etc). 	<p>The following issues require further investigation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Lincs – drainage works and levelling • Feniscowles and Pleasington – drainage works and levelling • Edgworth CC, Cherry Tree CC – levelling 	<p>Work in partnership to identify detailed improvements required through use of PQA</p> <p>Provide support and guidance to clubs in the submission of external funding bids. This should include the identification of opportunities</p>
Cricket 4	<p>Improve clubhouse and changing facilities to ensure all clubs have a facility of adequate standard (electricity / running water / changing rooms / basic kitchen) particularly where these are needed to accommodate growth in the junior and female game and / or are required to support the delivery of targets around the women and girls game.</p>	<p>Cherry Tree CC, Darwen CC, East Lancashire CC, Feniscowles and Pleasington CC all require upgrade / improvement of their existing facilities</p>	<p>Provide support and guidance to clubs in the submission of external funding bids. This should include the identification of opportunities for funding.</p>
Cricket 5	<p>All clubs should have access to an off field training / practice facility to enhance club sustainability and improve overall performance. Adequate training facilities also help to attract younger players to the game.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherry Tree CC – require mobile net cage • East Lancashire CC -nets require refurbishment and replacement • Feniscowles and Pleasington CC – require non turf practice nets 	<p>Support clubs in the development of appropriate facilities</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Cricket 5	<p>Club based capacity is closely matched with demand at most sites and this should be monitored and addressed. Many of the clubs also have significant aspirations for growth (include in the female game as well as growing junior participation). This will place greater pressures on the facilities.</p> <p>Key priorities for addressing this issue include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting clubs in the creation of Non Turf Pitches to improve capacity and address issues of seasonal overplay. This should be subject to adherence to minimum specifications • Providing additional pitches on the existing square where there is scope to do so (again to avoid seasonal overplay) • Use of school sites / creation of new facilities at school sites where peak time demand is the issue – Darwen Vale Academy provides a particular opportunity here • Reinstatement of former pitch at Blackburn Northern New provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darwen CC is the only site with a non turf wicket on the square – proposals at Darwen Vale Academy may address issues and provide further capacity at peak time if secured for community use • Provision of NTP/additional pitches on square to address seasonal overplay for Edgworth CC and Cherry Tree CC • Where additional peak time demand is identified – seek to secure community use of existing standard / good school facilities in the first instance. QEGS, Westholme School offer appropriate facilities. 	<p>Work with Darwen Vale Academy to secure community use of any new facilities</p> <p>Review opportunities to increase capacity at existing club bases by providing more wickets on the square.</p> <p>Work with clubs and leagues to introduce use of non turf wickets in order to maximise capacity</p> <p>Monitor demand and capacity at each club base in the medium to long term and capacity in order to identify requirements for any further pitch provision.</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Cricket 6	<p>Improve Pleasington Playing Fields to ensure that it better provides for the needs of the amateur, midweek and weekend cricket leagues. This should include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced layout Qualitative improvements – including new carpets, levelling, reconfiguration Redesigned changing provision <p>The site should be reconfigured to increase the size of the existing outfields, but six NTPs should be provided to ensure that current and future demand can be met.</p> <p>Promotion of the opportunities should link with the South Asian Action Plan.</p>	Pleasington Playing Fields	<p>Work alongside the Lancashire FA, Football Foundation, ECB and the league to undertake detailed assessment of reconfiguration opportunities in order to ensure that the best pitch layout is chosen. This might also include the submission of funding bids in order to fund the required improvements. Calculations demonstrate that there is a need for the site to continue to accommodate both football and cricket.</p> <p>Work with the leagues to determine how the facility will be managed in future years. This should include discussion around opportunities to lease the facility (potentially in conjunction with the ELFDA) as well as maintenance of the status quo.</p>
Rugby Union	Protect existing club base to ensure ongoing provision for rugby union.	Blackburn RUFC	<p>Keep list in strategy document protecting sites up to date</p> <p>Incorporate appropriate policy in Local Plan</p>
Rugby Union 2	Work alongside GMA and RFU to improve maintenance procedures on the existing club base with a view to increasing pitch capacity.	Blackburn RUFC	Club to work alongside RFU and GMA to establish and implement improved maintenance regime
Rugby Union 3	Install sports lighting on the pitches where planning permission has already been received to better spread training activity and alleviate overplay.	Blackburn RUFC	Club to work alongside RFU to install sports lighting on existing pitches



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Rugby Union 4	<p>Improve quality of changing and social facilities to ensure that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of changing rooms correlates with the number of pitches that are available • There are opportunities for female teams to use changing rooms • Facilities also meet demand from junior teams • The clubhouse remains adequate to attract new players and retain existing. 	Blackburn RUFC	<p>Work alongside club to identify how clubhouse improvements should be delivered.</p> <p>Following detailed feasibility / design costing, this should include investigation into funding opportunities.</p>
Rugby League	<p>Monitor demand for rugby league – in the first instance, any demand should be referred to Accrington Wildcats.</p> <p>Longer term, if demand arises a venue may need to be found in order to meet demand.</p>	N/a	Ensure potential demand for rugby league is discussed as part of monitoring programme for this strategy.
Hockey 1	Protect sand based surfaces that are required to meet demand for hockey. A minimum of one sand based pitch is required within Blackburn with Darwen to meet the current needs of the club and a second pitch should be retained to ensure that future demand can be met.	Two pitches required – currently, hockey is played at Pleckgate High School and Westholme School. If access to either of these pitches is lost, an alternative venue will need to be retained as sand.	Ensure that adequate facilities of appropriate surface for hockey are retained – full consultation with the hockey club, pitch providers, England Hockey and the FA will be required
Hockey 2	Ensure that the quality of any pitch used for competitive hockey is appropriate, by addressing identified quality issues. The pitch at Pleckgate High School (currently used) requires improvement to lighting and maintenance. Ensure that full replacement of the surface is scheduled for delivery within the next five years.	Pleckgate High School / other hockey venue	<p>Work with providers to improve the management and communication of the existing facility – this should include open discussions on existing issues and immediate action on the identified qualitative issues.</p> <p>Ensure that ongoing contributions to the sinking fund for pitch improvements are made and that timely replacement is scheduled.</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Hockey 3	Working alongside other sports, reconfigure and upgrade the existing hockey changing rooms and clubhouse to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and help the club to attract and retain players.	Blackburn Northern Sports Club	Linking with clubs from other sports, work alongside Blackburn Northern Sports Club to design and upgrade existing facilities. This may include the reconfiguration of the current space.
Hockey 4	Monitor demand for hockey and investigate opportunities to provide a second pitch (ideally on the same site) if club activity stabilises and then grows.	To support Blackburn Clitheroe Hockey Club	Club to work with England Hockey on club development plan. Achievement of targets will potentially see second pitch required long term.
Bowls 1	<p>Protect all active bowling greens.</p> <p>There are some sites where sustainability is now questionable – priority should be given to improving participation at these sites (see Bowling Greens 4).</p>	<p>All active greens</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that the third green at Corporation Park is currently required (although see Bowls 4, potential for this facility to be used as part of new academy)</p> <p>The sustainability of facilities with under 20 members per green should be questioned. These are currently Highfield Park and Green Park (two greens) – prioritise support to clubs to increase members at these sites.</p> <p>Where sites contain two or more greens, both greens are required unless membership drops below an average of 20 members per green. All larger venues should be retained until</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure list in strategy is kept up to date • Inclusion of appropriate policy • Use of this PPS for decision making • Targeted work with clubs, linking with Bowls 4.



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
		venue for bowls 4 has been determined.	
Bowls 2	Promote the importance of effective maintenance regimes. Green maintenance should be regular and consistent.	<p>All sites</p> <p>Sites where maintenance is identified as a particular issue – Butlers Arms, Railway Hotel, Cherry Tree, Roe Lee Park, Green Park</p>	<p>Promote greater joint working at bowling greens by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the help that is available on green maintenance / management • Improving knowledge sharing and joint working (potentially including sharing of machinery) • Provide regular training and guidance events for bowls club on the management and maintenance of facilities. • Promotion of succession planning - Ensure that training targets both existing maintenance teams and other club members to maximise succession planning, enhance knowledge and reduce reliance on small numbers of volunteers. • Considering how private clubs could be supported to address maintenance issues and associated costs and to reduce the risk of clubs becoming unsustainable – for example machinery bank • Supporting clubs in the compilation of funding bids for machinery / external funding.
Bowls 3	<p>Implement a programme of qualitative improvements to address identified site-specific issues where these impact upon play and where capital investment is still identified as being necessary following attempts to tailor maintenance procedures. All bowling greens should include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A green of appropriate standard ▪ Adequate basic pavilion. 	<p>Highfield Park – pavilion, surface and surrounds (if membership can be brought up to sustainable levels).</p> <p>Railway Hotel – green surface , pavilion</p> <p>Sandy Lane – surface</p> <p>Whitehall Park – paths and pavilion</p> <p>Olive Park – pavilion</p>	<p>Quality issues may be impacted / caused by poor maintenance regimes and this should be eliminated first as suggested in Bowls 2. Professional assessments should be undertaken in order to ascertain the work required.</p> <p>Where clubs require qualitative improvements but there is not adequate capital, support clubs in the compilation of funding bids and work alongside the committee to identify other means of generating income.</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
		<p>Cherry Tree – playing surface</p> <p>Edgworth – drainage and irrigation improvements, clubhouse</p> <p>Corporation Park – pavilion</p> <p>Green Park - pavilion</p>	
Bowls 4	<p>To ensure the existing facility infrastructure remains sustainable, support initiatives to increase participation in bowls across the borough by working alongside Crown Green Bowls Development Association to improve the promotion of bowls. This should include work to remove several key barriers to participation in the sport including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor marketing and a lack of proactive promotion; • Struggle to recruit volunteers and heavy reliance on volunteers to manage and maintain greens. <p>Support the development work of Lancashire Crown Green Bowls Association by establishing a new bowls academy in the Borough.</p>	<p>Focus should be given to participation in bowls Boroughwide, but particular emphasis placed on greens where levels of membership may start to impact on sustainability (Currently Highfield Park, Green Park) and on sites where there is more than one green (which are also typically where membership per green is low).</p> <p>Priority should be given to the identification of a site where clubs could support the Bowls Development Alliance to create an academy. This requires a central venue of 2 greens and Green Park, Roe Lee Park and Corporation Park therefore represent a particular opportunity – all of these</p>	<p>Work alongside the Crown Green Bowls Association to set up a new academy – this should start with the identification of a site and then promotion of the opportunity</p> <p>Support the Crown Green Bowls Association in development activity with clubs, including the provision of support and guidance in proactive marketing and promotion. This may include Borough wide initiatives or individual club based support (such as training and practical guidance). This should link with support provided to clubs in relation to Bowling 2 and Bowling 3.</p> <p>Seek to support other initiatives promoted by Lancashire Crown Green Bowls Association to develop bowls including Grandparents / Grandchildren sessions / Bowls and Brew and links with health related groups.</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
		greens have limited membership numbers.	
Tennis 1	Provide a hierarchy of facilities that effectively serves all types of tennis participants through the retention and protection of all existing public, school based and club tennis courts to maximise opportunities to increase the amount of tennis played in the Borough.	All existing sites	<p>Ensure the list in the strategy document is monitored</p> <p>Include appropriate policy within the local plan</p> <p>Monitor the requirement to provide additional courts – the requirement for more will be dependent upon the degree to which target participation levels are achieved and is likely to be a long term requirement only</p> <p>Work alongside the FA to promote the use of alternative venues for tennis (and football). Examples could include Multi Use Games Areas and community venues.</p>
Tennis 2	<p>Work alongside the LTA to promote Corporation Park as a sustainable venue for grass roots tennis.</p> <p>This should include court improvements as well as the introduction of technological solutions to enhance the customer journey.</p> <p>Marketing and promotion to raise awareness to improve usage of the courts will also be essential.</p>	<p>Corporation Park</p> <p>Court surface is poor – slippery, lots of debris. Refurbishment required.</p>	<p>Work alongside the LTA to initiate activity to improve Corporation Park – this should include quality assessments of the existing courts as well as identification of appropriate access and customer management systems.</p> <p>Qualitative improvements will be essential if participation improvements are to be successfully delivered.</p> <p>Work alongside the LTA to undertake relevant marketing and promotion to increase awareness. Participation initiatives should also be set up on site in order to attract new people to tennis.</p>
Tennis 3	Ensure that club bases are effectively able to meet demand by supporting improvements where these are required either to maintain / improve capacity and / or to retain player experience.	Blackburn Northern – sports lighting, reconfiguration and modernisation of clubhouse required (linking with other sports)	<p>Maintain ongoing dialogue with clubs</p> <p>Work alongside LTA to support clubs in required improvements. This may involve providing guidance with regards external funding as well as facility design.</p> <p>Support clubs to develop new initiatives to increase participation</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
		Crosshill TC – court surface, pavilion would benefit from update	
Tennis 4	Promote public usage of tennis courts at school sites	<p>Witton Park Academy / Darwen Vale School / Blackburn Central School. Witton Park Academy is a particular priority as the courts are sports lit. There is also potential for the courts at Darwen Vale Academy to be improved as part of the Academy's current proposals in combination with Darwen Town Deal Board.</p> <p>Sports lighting of courts is also a key priority of Our Lady and John Catholic College (not currently accessible to the public).</p>	<p>Engage in dialogue with schools to discuss approach to increased promotion.</p> <p>Explore opportunity to negotiate community use if courts at Our Lady and John Catholic College are sports lit.</p> <p>The strategy for promotion of available facilities at school sites should be integrated with the promotion of activities and grass roots tennis at Corporation Park.</p>
Football 1	Protect all football pitches.	All active playing fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep list in strategy document protecting sites up to date • Incorporate appropriate policy in Local Plan • Ensure PPS is taken into account when making decisions on playing fields
Football 2	Pitch quality improvements are essential if capacity is to be maintained and improved. Capacity is not currently sufficient to meet demand.	<p>Key Sites;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blacksnape Playing Fields (large club) 	<p>Engage with clubs to promote use of Pitch Power tool and then subsequent access to maintenance improvement support</p> <p>Work with Blackburn Council to use FA Pitch Improvement Programme</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
	<p>Promote immediate improvements to maintenance and ensure that maintenance is tailored to each ground and to the level of play that each pitch must accommodate.</p> <p>Support the use of the FA Pitch Power tool to all clubs and ensure full engagement with the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasington Playing Fields (hub for adult football. Capacity currently restricted) • Green Lane and St Bedes RC High School (to support needs of Mill Hill FC – adjacent sites). • Blackburn Central High School – enable new AGP / grass pitch hub • Our Lady and John Catholic College – improve grass pitch and create hub to support AGP • Pleckgate Secondary School (pitches not used by community due to poor quality). Opportunity for hub site. <p>Other Key club sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Square Meadow 	



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy Lane / Branch Road (recently received funding) • Feniscowles and Pleasington War Memorial Recreation Ground • Turton FC • Memorial Ground <p>All clubs to engage with Pitch Power.</p> <p>Note requirements at Pleasington Playing Fields may be impacted by recommendation Football 6.</p>	
<p>Football 3</p>	<p>Invest in pitch quality improvements where Pitch Quality Assessments (See Football 2) suggest that this is required (following maintenance improvements) and where improvements are necessary to meet with league standards / needed to ensure that play can continue.</p> <p>This may include decompaction, drainage works, levelling.</p>	<p>To be determined through implementation of Football 2.</p>	<p>Work in partnership FA / Provider / Users to identify detailed improvements required through use of PIP, Pitch Power etc</p> <p>Provide support and guidance to Council / clubs in the submission of external funding bids</p> <p>Continue to work with clubs and offer lease agreements to facilitate access to funding opportunities and provide long term security of tenure for key clubs.</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Football 4	Ensure that quality of AGPs is retained through regular inspections and completion of any works required for ongoing inclusion on FA pitch register	All AGPs Both DACA and St Bedes RC High School are thought to require surface refurbishment imminently.	Work alongside AGP providers to ensure that regular inspections are undertaken and that registration on the FA 3G pitch register is maintained.
Football 5	Support improvement to ancillary facilities to ensure all sites have a facility of adequate standard (electricity / running water / changing rooms / basic kitchen) where these are required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasington Playing Fields • Blacksnape Playing Field • Sandy Lane / Branch Road • Green Lane 	Provide support and guidance to clubs / Council in the submission of funding bids. This should include the identification of opportunities for funding.
Football 6	<p>Address capacity concerns across the Borough by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking the maintenance / quality improvements set out in Football 2 and Football 3 (in particular Our Lady St John to address the needs of Mill Hill JFC and Pleasington PF, Blacksnape Playing Fields) • Maximising the use of AGPs for match play as well as training • Creating a new football hub at Blackburn Central School – potentially conversion of existing sand AGP to 3G AGP and pitch improvements linked to Football 2 above • Additional new AGP to be created. Discussion will be required (linking with hockey) as to the best long term location, but other sites (in addition to Blackburn 	<p>Blackburn Central</p> <p>Everton Playing Fields</p> <p>New AGP site to be confirmed</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities to provide additional two AGPs. Any new AGP should be constructed to appropriate standard for inclusion on FA pitch register.</p> <p>Reinstate Everton Playing Fields – this could be delivered in partnership with ELFDA who already effectively manage Woolridge Playing Fields.</p> <p>Note that the Council are keen to release Roman Road Playing Fields, with a view to funding the reinstatement of Everton PF.</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
	<p>Central) include QEGS / Woolridge / Everton PF / Westholme / Witton / St Wilfrids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinstating Everton Playing Fields (to potentially be funded through release of Roman Road) <p>Proposals to improve the stock of facilities will see some football pitches at Pleasington Playing Fields. Current calculations suggest that 6 pitches should be retained at these sites, and that there is a need to improve quality (to a minimum of standard) on the retained pitches to ensure that demand is met. This assumes that the role of the new AGPs is primarily to meet the needs of younger age groups.</p>		
Football 7	<p>Work alongside providers to ensure that community access to the existing stock of facilities is maintained. This should include timely negotiation of community use agreements with schools and landowners where appropriate.</p>	<p>All grass pitch sites currently permitting community use; Blackburn Central / Witton Park Academy, Darwen Vale High School, QEGS,</p> <p>Maintaining access –</p> <p>Sites currently offering unsecured access – St Bedes RC High School, St Marys College, Avondale Primary School, Westholme School, St Stephens Primary School, Turton and Edgworth C of E Primary.</p>	<p>Engage with key school sites to ensure that long term community use agreements are maintained and that existing agreements are delivered and renewed</p> <p>Liaise with representatives of sites currently offering unsecure access to produce long term agreements</p>



Sport	Recommendation	Key Sites	Key Actions for Delivery
Football 8	Continue with current successful leasing policy, providing leases to clubs and / or organisations that meet criteria.	Potential to lease Pleasington Playing Fields	Seek opportunities to lease facilities to maximise the availability of potential funding.
Football 9	<p>Proactively appropriate facilities to support recreational football. To maximise the sustainability and use these spaces, as well as the benefits to the local community, this action should be delivered as part of a joined up approach with other sports. This should include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive identification of sites • Exploration of opportunities to effectively introduce football activity – for example gate technology on MUGAs, organised informal activity in partnership with other governing bodies. 	Recreational football is becoming increasingly important and is now a key priority of the FF and FA. Football, linked with other sports, provides an opportunity to get increasing numbers of people active as well as to maximise the usage of some existing facilities that are under utilised.	Identify appropriate sites and work alongside delivery partners to increase recreational football within the Borough.

4.0 Impact of New Development

4.1.1 The NPPF advises that specific evidence of the need for provision should be provided alongside clarity of what provision is required. The most recent Sport England guidance and advice indicates that local authorities should develop and maintain a robust and up to date evidence base for sporting provision (this PPOSS provides a starting point for this) and use the evidence base to;

- estimate the nature and level of needs that may be generated from new development(s) for sporting provision (this should be informed by the Playing Pitch Calculator); and
- establish clear deliverable actions that have the potential to help meet the needs that will be generated from new development in the area.
- based on the nature of the actions, the level of new development in an area, and the realistic ability to secure investment into sport through CIL or planning obligations, decide how best to use the CIL and planning obligations alongside one another to deliver sporting infrastructure and to support development.

4.1.2 The preparation of this Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Assessment has been informed by the use of bespoke population projections, which take into account the impact of new developments in the Borough and the strategy therefore seeks to provide the facilities that will be needed to meet the projected level of demand.

4.1.3 It should be ensured however that the impact of each new development is taken into account and the costs associated with this impact (and additional facility requirements) are considered.

Application of Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator

4.1.4 The Sport England Playing Pitch calculator (PPC) estimates the additional demand for pitches arising from specific or cumulative developments. The PPC quantifies the number of Match Equivalent Sessions that will be generated in the peak period for each pitch type, and converts that into a number of pitches. The costs associated with that pitch provision are also given. Using the PPOSS the Council can assess whether on site pitch provision is acceptable and sustainable or if improvements to existing pitches in the locality are required. The costs provided can help identify the likely financial contribution that would be required if pitches/improvements were to be provided off site.

4.1.5 The PPC can only be accurately used in areas where a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy has been developed, and remains up to date, as it directly uses information from this

document to provide an estimate of the demand that the additional population will produce. It considers;

- a) The likely number of people from the new population in each of the individual pitch sport age groups (Derived from the profile of the current population)
- b) Using the number of teams identified in the PPOSS and the profile of the population (a), the likely number of teams that will be generated by the new development
- c) The number of match equivalent sessions that will be generated by the new population and the subsequent demand in terms of pitches and changing rooms required. The pitch requirements are split into natural turf to support matchplay in the peak period and artificial surfaces to support training.

4.1.6 The Playing Pitch Calculator does not take into account the current levels of unmet demand in the area and so the resulting figures are then considered in the context of the strategic findings of the assessment in order to determine the ability of the existing facilities to accommodate the additional demand and any requirements for new and / or improved provision. The actions that should be taken to address any identified needs should therefore be guided by the findings of this Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy.

4.1.7 The pitch equivalents required detail the amount of new pitches that that the new population generates demand for in the peak period for each sport. However, using the PPOSS the Steering Group will be able to assess whether:

- Existing pitches have sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional demand at the times required;
- Improvements are needed to specific pitches to accommodate the additional demand from the housing located in that sub area, or;
- New pitches are required..

4.1.8 As documented in this strategy, in most instances in Blackburn with Darwen, the additional demand that is generated can be accommodated through qualitative improvements to the existing infrastructure although some new facility needs are identified.

4.1.9 For illustrative purposes, Table 4.2 summarises the findings of the application of the Playing Pitch Calculator for the borough as a whole.

4.1.10 The assessment report was produced on the basis of a population increase derived from a housing need of 411 new dwellings per annum over a 20 year period. Since this was produced however, the Blackburn with Darwen Economic Needs Assessment has been updated and this now sets out an increased housing need of 447 dwellings per annum, although the projected



increase in population has reduced slightly. Despite this small change, the projected increase in match equivalents set out in the assessment report remain representative of the future picture.

4.1.11 Moving forwards, the calculator should be used to determine the impact of each specific new development and as part of the implementation process, this approach should be embedded into policies of Blackburn with Darwen Council in relation to contributions from new development. The Council should work with Sport England to determine whether the process assesses the impact of individual sites, or if a price per dwelling is more appropriate to take into account the cumulative impact across all developments irrespective of size.

4.1.12 Table 4.1 therefore provides an indication of the total impact that housing growth will have on the demand for pitch provision in Blackburn with Darwen (from 2020 to 2037). It represents the findings derived from the updated picture (447 dwellings per annum – an increase of 6474 people).

Table 4.1 Application of Playing Pitch Calculator – Blackburn with Darwen

Boroughwide					
Sport	Pitch Equivalent	Capital Cost	Lifecycle cost	Changing Rooms (Number)	Changing Rooms (Capital Cost)
Adult Football	1.03	£100,041	£21,109	2.06	£345,142
Youth Football	1.41	£109,047	£22,900	1.59	£265,310
Mini Soccer	1.25	£30,214	£6,345	0.00	£0
Rugby Union	0.19	£25,204	£5,394	0.37	£62,110
Rugby League	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.32	£91,289	£18,440	0.64	£106,761
Sand Based AGPs	£22,275	£691	0.06	£9,259	£22,275
3G AGPS	£315,062	£12,018	0.65	£109,243	£315,062



4.1.13 The recently published draft Local Plan sets out the proposed locations for the new housing development and this is currently out for consultation. The majority of these sites are small (below 150 dwellings) however proposals for 1500 new dwellings in the North East corner of the Borough as a strategic housing growth site will see a greater concentration of new demand in this area of the borough. Whilst the borough has been considered as a whole and therefore the impact will be felt boroughwide, it is likely that the greatest pressures will be experienced on sites nearer to the strategic growth area, which include Roe Lee Park (bowls), Woolridge Playing Fields (Football), East Lancs Cricket Club, Blackburn Rugby Club, Pleckgate High School and Queen Elizabeth’s Grammar School.

4.1.14 Table 4.2 provides an indication of the potential impact of the proposed new strategic housing growth site (assuming maximum population of 3600). This provides an illustration of how the tool can be used.

Table 4.1 Application of Playing Pitch Calculator – Blackburn with Darwen

North East Housing Growth Site					
Sport	Pitch Equivalent	Capital Cost	Lifecycle cost	Changing Rooms (Number)	Changing Rooms (Capital Cost)
Adult Football	0.57	£55,590	£11,730	1.15	£191,786
Youth Football	0.78	£60,623	£12,731	0.87	£146,363
Mini Soccer	0.69	£16,853	£3,539	0.00	£0
Rugby Union	0.10	£13,927	£2,980	0.21	£34,320
Rugby League	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.18	£50,800	£10,262	0.36	£59,410
Sand Based AGPs	0.02	£12,433	£385	0.03	£5,168
3G AGPS	0.18	£175,283	£6,686	0.36	£60,777

4.1.15 The strategy proposes that this tool will be adapted and used to evaluate the impact of each new development in Blackburn with Darwen through the creation of a Task and Finish group who will devise a tailored approach for using the calculator and obtaining contributions.



	Recommendation	Key Actions
General 1	Establish a group to review existing S106 processes and develop a tailored approach for using the PPC and obtaining contributions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specific sub group (to include Sport England) • Meet to understand calculator and opportunities available • Review and tailor existing approach • Integrate approach within planning policy

▪



5.0 Action Plan, Implementation and Monitoring.

5.1.1 This section provides a site by site action plan. This action plan builds on and summarises the general and sport specific recommendations and sets out the key priorities for each site. It also outlines responsibilities for actions where appropriate.

Table 5.1 – Site Specific Recommendations

Provided as an excel document

5.1.2 Table 5.2 provides a brief summary of the key recommendations, briefly illustrating where new provision is required, and where sites can be considered for alternative purposes. It also summarises the qualitative improvements required and sites to be protected. Full details are set out in the recommendations (section 4) and site specific actions (section 5).



Table 5.2 – Summary of Key Priorities

Sites to be Protected	Sites to be Enhanced
<p>Cricket – All club sites and Pleasington Playing Fields</p> <p>Rugby Union – Existing Club base</p> <p>Hockey – 2 x sand based surfaces (currently Pleckgate High School and Westholme School)</p> <p>Bowling – all active bowling greens</p> <p>Tennis – all active tennis courts</p> <p>Football – all active grass football facilities, existing 3G AGPs</p> <p>All school sites required for curricular need</p>	<p>Cricket – East Lancs CC, Feniscowles and Pleasington CC, Edgworth CC, Cherry Tree CC, Darwen CC, Pleasington Playing Fields</p> <p>Rugby Union – Blackburn RUFC</p> <p>Hockey – Pleckgate High School (assuming hockey retained on site)</p> <p>Bowls – maintenance on all sites, investment also required at Highfield Park, Railway Hotel, Sandy Lane, Whitehall Park, Olive Park, Cherry Tree, Edgworth, Corporation Park and Green Park</p> <p>Tennis – Corporation Park, Blackburn Northern, Crosshill TC, Our Lady and John Catholic College</p> <p>Football – Blacksnape PF, Pleasington PF, Green Lane, St Bedes RC High School, Blackburn Central, Our Lady and St John Catholic College, Pleckgate High School, Square Meadow, Branch Road, Feniscowles and Pleasington Memorial Ground, Turton FC, Memorial Ground</p>
New Provision Required	Pitches to be Considered for Alternative Uses
<p>Cricket –New Academy at Darwen Vale Academy (including grass pitch). New NTPs at key club sites (Cherry Tree, Darwen, Edgworth).</p> <p>Football – reinstatement of Everton Playing Fields</p> <p>New 3G AGP</p>	<p>3rd bowling green at Corporation Park</p>



Implementation

- 5.1.3 Given the potential level of funding required, it is likely that investment will only be achieved through a combination of opportunities and funding sources as well as partnership opportunities.
- 5.1.4 Local authority finances remain under pressure and previous major national funding programmes are no longer available. Some funding opportunities, however, still remain and it is essential that these are capitalised upon in order to maximise the opportunities to protect and improve pitch provision across Blackburn with Darwen. Some new funding streams may also become available to support the recovery from Covid 19.
- 5.1.5 The council will seek to use assets innovatively and work on a multi-agency approach to address the facility requirements in the strategy and partnership working will be central to the achievement of this objective.
- 5.1.6 The main funding delivery mechanisms for Blackburn with Darwen and others in delivering the strategy are:
- Section 106 developer contributions and Community Infrastructure levy
 - Capital Grant funding: From schools and national agencies such as Sport England, including its small grants, community asset fund and strategic facilities fund
 - National Governing Body (NGB) support
 - Council funding: capital funding allocated to deliver facilities within the council's ownership, and potentially the use of capital receipts from the sale of existing assets, where it complies with national and Sport England Playing Fields Policy.

New facilities

- 5.1.7 In addition to the overarching strategy principles outlined earlier in this section, the following should be considered when providing any new facilities.



- Location - When planning new facilities, the existing sporting infrastructure should be taken into account. In particular, the provision of single or double pitch sites with no or limited supporting facilities should be avoided.
- Quality - Any new pitch provision should meet with the design and quality standards guidance provided by Sport England and/or the relevant NGB (detailed below). The following general criteria must also be met:
 - a high standard of design, construction and maintenance, enabling the pitch to be played at least twice per week without detrimental impact and ensuring that sites are clean and attractive facilities
 - adequate changing facilities that:
 - are flexible, fit for a variety of purposes
 - fully comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act
 - provide for a number of different groups to use the facility at the same time, in safety and comfort
 - meet current standards - Sport England & NGB guidelines
 - managed community access
 - accessible by public transport and by car
 - sufficient car and coach parking
 - size of pitches and run offs complies with NGB specification
 - located in a no-flood zone
 - security of tenure (at least 20 years) if a club is to be based at the site
 - for rugby clubs in particular, sites should include floodlit training facilities
 - All new and enhanced sports facilities must be designed in accordance with the relevant Sport England and (where applicable) National Governing Body (NGB)

design guidance in order to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and of a suitable quality.

- Sport England's web site www.sportengland.org contains a range of current guidance documents which provide detailed specifications and information regarding the design of sporting and ancillary facilities.
- This provides a link to the NGB's supported by Sport England, and to the guidance on the respective NGB websites:

5.2 Monitoring and Review

- 5.2.1 The evolving context of participation in sport and active recreation means that monitoring and review of the strategy is as important as the initial preparation of the document to ensure it remains sufficiently robust to fulfil the above roles.
- 5.2.2 Reflecting the importance of this phase of work, monitoring of the strategy represents Step 10 of the approach to the production of a playing pitch strategy set out in the guidance for the delivery of a playing pitch Strategy (Sport England 2013).
- 5.2.3 This strategy document has been developed in conjunction with a large steering group and this group will be retained to deliver the implementation phase, functioning as a Delivery and Implementation Group. Further people with appropriate expertise may be brought in to the process as and when required to maximise the benefits that the strategy can bring.
- 5.2.4 Monitoring, delivery and implementation will take place alongside the delivery and implementation of the Built Facilities Strategy.
- 5.2.5 Following adoption of the PPS, a series of task and finish groups will be set up, comprising members of this group, designed to support the implementation of specific recommendations. These may include groups to evolve the developer contributions process, groups targeting maintenance improvements and groups supporting the delivery of required participation initiatives. These sub groups will meet regularly.
- 5.2.6 The Delivery and Implementation group will seek to deliver the key actions of the strategy document, but will also keep the strategy alive by;
- Monitoring the delivery of the recommendations and actions and identifying any changes that are required to the priority afforded to each action
 - Recording changes to the pitch stock in the Borough and evaluating the impact of this on the supply and demand information



- Assessing the impact of changes to participation, including changing trends and the development of new formats of the game as well as affiliation data for each of the National Governing Bodies of Sport
- Assessing the impact of demographic changes and new population estimates / housing growth
- Ongoing consultation to understand the evolving needs of clubs and governing bodies, and any requirements for major facilities in the area
- Analysis of funding sources and new funding opportunities for the provision/improvement of sports facilities
- Reviewing growth of emerging sports, their participation rates, facilities available for them and likely facilities necessary for their support and development.

5.2.7 The ongoing monitoring of the strategy will be led by Blackburn with Darwen Council and it is anticipated that it will constitute;

- Support for the creation of sport specific forums to discuss issues arising and to lead the delivery of the strategy in conjunction with key partners
- Establishment of a working group that meets twice annually to review progress by all key partners on the strategy delivery and to discuss any issues arising

5.2.8 The steering group will also be responsible for agreement of the requirement for a full update of this playing pitch assessment and strategy.

5.2.9 The delivery, implementation and monitoring process is formalised in action plan format in Table 5.3

Table 5.3 – Monitoring Processes

Monitoring Recommendation	Recommendation /Action	Timescale
M1	Reconvene steering group and establish small delivery groups to drive the implementation of key actions. These should include (but not be limited to) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer contributions process group • Maintenance Improvement Group • Participation development group 	Short Term



Monitoring Recommendation	Recommendation /Action	Timescale
M2	<p>Record individual updates to pitch provision and any key changes that have occurred. This should include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New pitches; • Pitch improvements; • Pitch re-configuration; • Pitch loss/threat; • Review of the implications of Covid 19 in terms of facility sustainability • Changes to demand, including analysis of the recovery from Covid 19 • Community Access agreements (e.g. education or private sites); • Plans for future provision. <p>Updates should be led by Blackburn with Darwen Council and should take place with individual Council / NGB representatives.</p>	Ongoing – led by Blackburn with Darwen Council
M3	<p>Prepare annual PPS progress paper. This should include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In first years following adoption – analysis of impact of Covid 19 in terms of both supply and demand • The delivery of PPS recommendations and any changes in priority; • Changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area and other supply and demand information with implications for PPS’s key findings; • Details of any developments of a specific sport or particular format; • Details of any new or emerging issues and opportunities; • Any issues with the application of the PPS and lessons learnt; • Actions needed to keep the PPS ‘live’ and up to date. 	Annually – led by Blackburn with Darwen Council



Monitoring Recommendation	Recommendation /Action	Timescale
M4	<p>Circulate annual progress paper to steering group for comment. Full steering group meeting to be arranged if deemed to be required.</p> <p>The full annual progress paper will determine when a full refresh of the PPS is required.</p>	Annually