



HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INDOOR & BUILT SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY STRATEGY

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QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd
Company No: 9145032 (England)

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Registered Office: 1 -2 Frecheville Court, off Knowsley Street, Bury BL9 0UF
T: 0161 764 7040 E: mail@kcp.co.uk www.kcp.co.uk



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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the Huntingdonshire Indoor and Built Strategy for the period 2022 – 2043. Recommendations are drawn from the Huntingdonshire Needs Assessment Report April 2022.

Both the Assessment Report and the Strategy are in accordance with Sport England’s ANOG (Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance - for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities). They have been produced by specialist sport and leisure consultancy, Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP) in consultation with HDC (Huntingdonshire District Council), One Leisure, Sport England, national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), local sports clubs and key stakeholders.

1.1: Purpose

The overall aim of the indoor sports strategy is to enable HDC to make informed decisions to ensure that sport and physical activity facilities with an appropriate combination of amenities are located in the right places to ensure that the maximum number of local people take part in regular, meaningful physical activity. HDC has an aspiration and need to consider its facilities planning, particularly in the context of the changing economic landscape (post Covid-19 pandemic), its need to support a diverse community and its demographic profile (e.g., the rise in the number and proportion of older people) in the area.

The focus of this Strategy is to provide clear direction to all partners so that together they can plan and develop the more modern, efficient and sustainable range of community-based leisure, physical activity and sport facilities that Huntingdonshire’s residents require.

It provides a concise, robust, comprehensive and up-to-date evidence base in line with Huntingdonshire’s current Local Plan and sets out a strategic, action plan-based approach to the enhancement of existing, and creation of new, sporting provision.

This will ensure that residents have the option to be physically active and healthier, and where appropriate develop their physical, sporting, health and wellbeing ambitions within their local community. This report is one component of a wider suite of strategies which also includes the Authority’s Playing Pitch Strategy.

1.2: National strategic context

Sport England: Uniting the Movement 2021

Sport and physical activity has a key role in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all following the global pandemic. Reflecting this, Sport England’s 10-year strategy vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity sets out to tackle the inequalities that it states are long seen and makes the point that ‘providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity, has never been more important’. The three key Strategy objectives are:

1	2	3
Advocating for movement, sport and physical activity	Joining forces on five big issues	Creating the catalysts for change

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As well as being an advocate for sport and physical activity, via the building of evidence and partnership development, the Strategy identifies five big issues which people and communities need to address by working together. Described as the major challenges to England being an active nation over the next decade and the greatest opportunities to make a lasting difference, each is designated as a building block that, on its own, would make a difference. However, the content is that delivered together they could change things profoundly. The issues are:

- ◀ Recover and reinvent: Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.
- ◀ Connecting communities: Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.
- ◀ Positive experiences for children and young people: Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.
- ◀ Connecting with health and wellbeing: Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.
- ◀ Active environments: Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

To address these five issues, the right conditions for change need to be created: across people, organisations and partnerships to help convert plans and ideas. This will include a range of actions, including development of effective investment models and applying innovation and digital technology to ensure sport and physical activity are more accessible.

The impact of Uniting the Movement 2021 will be captured via funded programmes, interventions made, and partnerships forged. For each specific area of action, key performance indicators will be developed to help evidence the overall progress being made by all those involved in supporting sport and physical activity.

Sport England - Understanding the impact of Covid-19 January 2021

Activity levels for adults were reportedly increasing until coronavirus restrictions were introduced in March 2020. This led to unprecedented falls in activity levels during the first few weeks of full lockdown (mid-March to mid-May 2020). The proportion of the population classed as active dropped by 7% (meaning that there were just over 3 million fewer active adults).

Some audiences found it harder to be active pre-Covid and are finding it hard now. Inequalities between different groups have persisted since lockdown restrictions began in March. Those who have found it hardest to stay active include:

- ◀ People with long-term health conditions/disabilities.
- ◀ People from lower socio-economic groups.
- ◀ Women aged 16–34-year-olds and 55 years and above.
- ◀ Adults from Black, Asian and other ethnic groups.

The proportion of children and young people reporting being active during mid-May to late July 2020 (the summer term) fell by 2.3%, with just over 100,000 fewer children meeting recommended levels of activity compared to the same period 12 months earlier.

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Whilst all groups were impacted in terms of activity levels, girls fared far better than boys, whilst those from black and mixed backgrounds saw a noticeable decline in activity levels.

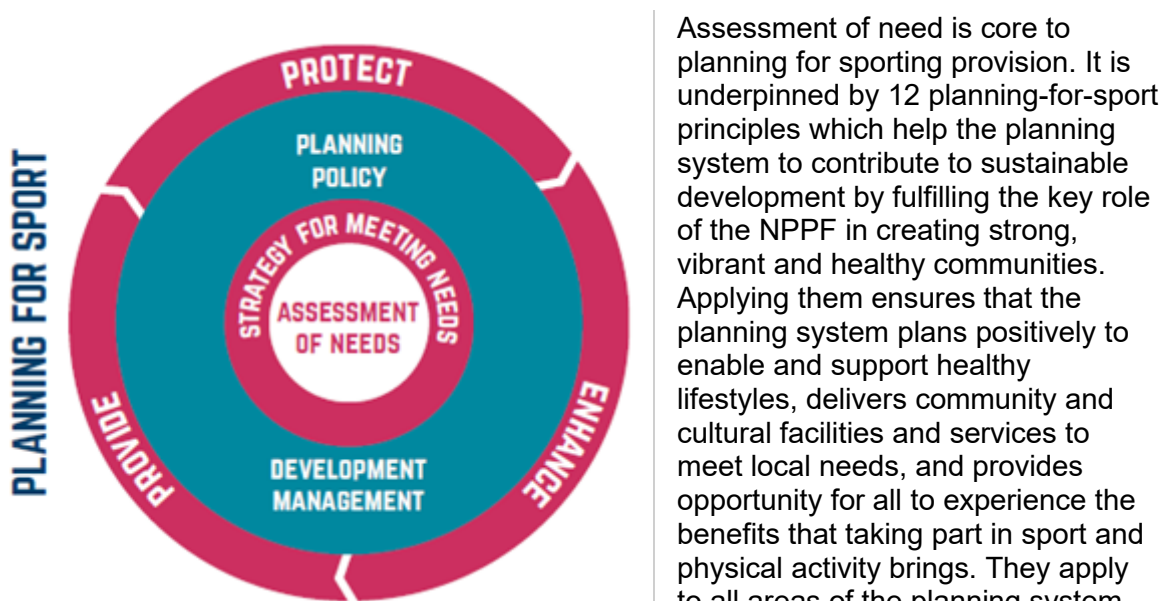
Sporting activity saw large decreases with over one million fewer children and young people (16.3%) reporting having taken part in swimming and team sports in the last week* compared to the same period 12 months earlier. Walking, cycling and fitness achieved large increases in the numbers reporting that they took part in the last week compared to the same period 12 months earlier. 1.6 million more children and young people went for a walk (+22%) or did fitness activities (+22%), whilst 1.4 million more cycled for fun or fitness (+19%).

Lack of disposable income can cause a reduction in sports sector spend and have a negative impact upon take-up of activities which cater for children and young people as well as adults. Uncertain employment and financial circumstances mean that greater numbers of people will be looking for affordable, flexible opportunities to stay active and fewer people will be in a position to make an ongoing financial commitment to participate.

Sport England’s planning aim

Sport England aims to ensure positive planning for sport, enabling the right facilities to be provided in the right places, based on an up-to-date assessment of needs for all levels of sport and all sectors of the community. As noted earlier, this assessment report was produced for the WBC applying the principles and tools identified in Sport England’s ANOG guidance.

Figure 1.1: The Sport England Planning for Sport Model



and to planning at local authority and neighbourhood levels.

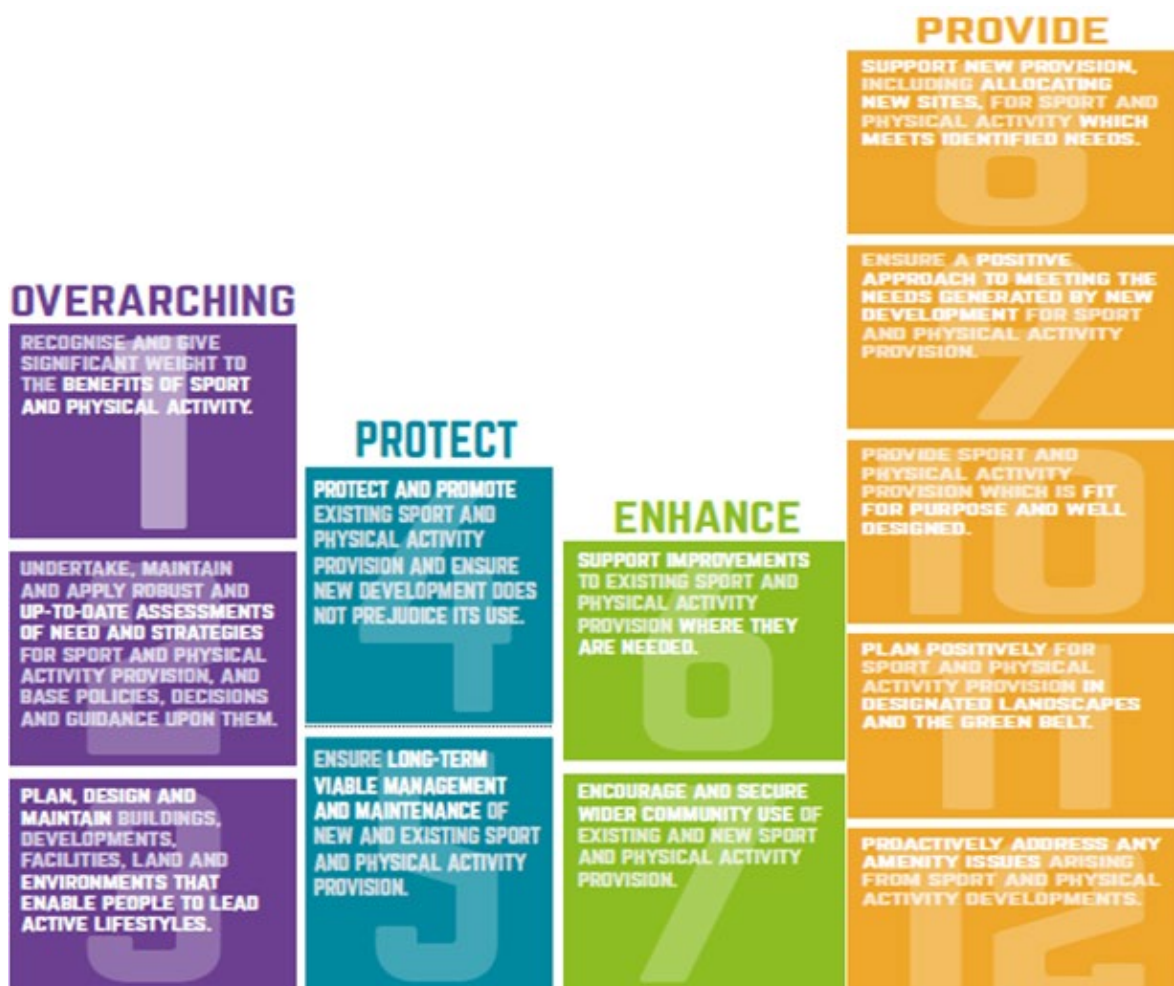
As such they are of relevance to all involved in, or looking to engage with, the planning system.

Table 1.1: Sport England planning objectives

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Protect	Enhance	Provide
To protect the right opportunities in the right places.	To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision	To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations.
Existing provision should be protected unless an assessment has demonstrated there is an excess of the provision and the specific buildings or land are surplus to requirements; or the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the former or current use.	The use of existing provision should be optimised, for example, through quality, access and management improvements supported by appropriate ancillary facilities.	Appropriate new provision that meets needs and encourages people to play sport and be physically active should be provided by adapting existing places and through new development.

Figure 1.2: Sport England’s 12 planning principles



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PART 2: LOCAL AREA CONTEXT

2.1: Local strategic context

Huntingdonshire is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its residents and understands the relationship between physical activity and health and wellbeing. It underpins this commitment in its Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Plan. It also recognises the importance of working in partnership with other agencies to deliver opportunity especially due to the geographic, demographic and cultural challenges encountered across the Borough.

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036

The Spatial Vision set out in the Local Plan is to ensure, that by 2036, *“Huntingdonshire's physical environment will support the health and wellbeing of all its residents by:*

- ◀ Supporting a diverse, thriving economy.
- ◀ Providing sufficient infrastructure to support healthy communities.
- ◀ Meeting the needs of a changing population.
- ◀ Working with our climate, landscape and heritage.

One of the Local Plan's objectives is to provide for adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of new growth and facilitate active, cohesive communities and sustainable lifestyles complemented by another which seeks to ensure inclusive and accessible provision for community needs including sports, play and open space. The Plan also acknowledges the need to provide adequate leisure provision to rural communities, ensuring facilities are in keeping with the character of the population they will serve.

Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2028

Huntingdonshire's Sustainable Community Strategy shows how the Council will build a better future for Huntingdonshire. It combines; key district, regional and sub-regional strategies, specifically the Local Development Framework. The long-term vision is to ensure current and future generations can:

Make the most of opportunities that come from living in a growing and developing District;
Enjoy the benefits of continued economic success;
Access suitable homes, jobs, services, shops, culture and leisure opportunities;
Maintain the special character of our market towns, villages and countryside; and
Live in an environment that is safe and protected from the effects of climate change and where valuable natural resources are used wisely.

To ensure that residents can access leisure opportunities, the Authority is committed to providing sufficient quality and quantity of indoor and outdoor sporting infrastructure which supports all residents. This includes supporting emerging communities, such as the one at Alconbury Wield.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-24

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough covers the following authorities: City of Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and the City of Cambridge.

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Its four key priorities are;

- ◀ Priority 1: Develop places that support health and wellbeing.
- ◀ Priority 2: Help children achieve the best start in life.
- ◀ Priority 3: Staying healthy throughout life.
- ◀ Priority 4: Provide quality health and social care.

To ensure there are ‘places that support health and wellbeing’ Board members are committed to working with the Authority’s One Leisure team to ensure that Huntingdonshire’s leisure and community centres are maintained to the highest of standards and offer activity and health referral programmes which are accessible to all.

Living Sport

Living Sport is one of the 43 active partnerships in England. It covers the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. Its vision is to improve health and wellbeing by supporting people to get active. Its intention is that this will be achieved under the auspices of its latest strategy themes, for the period 2020-2025 by:

- ◀ Advocating and influencing local strategic agendas for sport and physical activity.
- ◀ Using insight and market research to improve the promotion of activity to engage a wider audience.
- ◀ Supporting organisations delivering activity to operate effectively, with a focus on developing their workforce.
- ◀ Achieving sustainable funding with partners to address our identified needs.

Over the past 12 months, Living Sport has been proactive in getting sports clubs back up and running following the Pandemic. Consequently, through the Communities Emergency Fund it has been responsible for distributing over £400,000 to local clubs. The aims of the funding are facility improvements and support for workforce development.

Strategic leisure centres in the Authority

HDC manages the majority of key leisure centres in the Authority via its in-house operator; One Leisure. However, landownership which sites are located on, varies.

Table 2.1: Breakdown of land and facility ownership per site

Site	Land ownership	Facility ownership	Usage
One Leisure Ramsey	Abbey College/Abbey Foundation	Huntingdonshire DC	Man. agreement
One Leisure Huntingdon (Wetside)	Cam Academy Trust	Huntingdonshire DC	None
One Leisure Huntingdon (Dryside)	Huntingdonshire DC	Huntingdonshire DC	None
One Leisure St Neots	Astrea Academy Trust	Huntingdonshire DC	Man. agreement
One Leisure St Ives Indoor	Astrea Academy Trust	Huntingdonshire DC	Man. agreement
One Leisure St Ives Outdoor	Cambridgeshire County Council/HDC	Huntingdonshire DC	None

Academy trusts own the land upon which four centres are located. Three of the four have management agreements in place enabling the school to access facilities. Only One Leisure Ramsey and One Leisure St Ives are used by the adjacent school during the day.

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Ernulf Academy has its own sports hall and does not use One Leisure St Neots' indoor facilities.

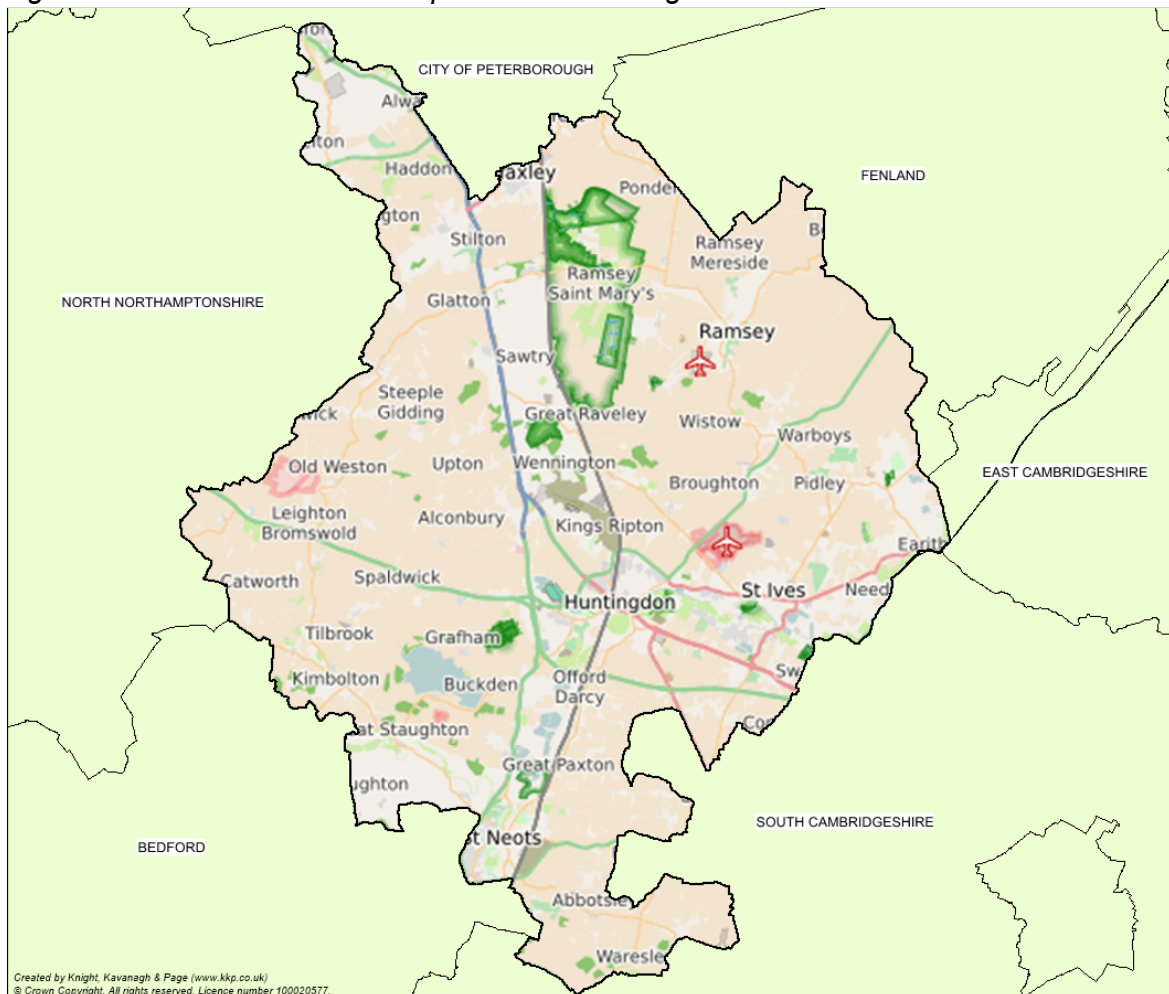
Summary of local policy

The Authority is committed to ensuring that current and future populations have good physical activity opportunities, reside within strong communities, and are supported by a successful and sustainable economy. To ensure this it has pledged to provide high quality sport and leisure facilities.

2.2: About Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire is situated approximately 100km (62 miles) north of London. It has strong relationships with Cambridge to the east, Peterborough to the north and Bedford to the south-west. These provide employment, shopping, leisure and health services to complement those available within the District.

Figure 1.1: Main towns and transport links – Huntingdonshire Council



Population and distribution (Data source: 2020 Mid-Year Estimate, ONS): The total population of Huntingdonshire is 178,985 (males:89,158 and females: 89,827). Population density is focused around the south and central areas of the Authority, particularly in the towns of Huntingdon and St Neots. In the north, population density is greatest in the settlements of St Ives, Sawtry and in Ramsey. The rest of the Authority is predominantly rural.

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Ethnicity: (Data source: 2011 census of population, ONS): Huntingdonshire’s ethnicity differs compared to England as a whole. According to the 2011 Census, the largest proportion (94.8%) of the local population classified their ethnicity as White; this is higher than the comparative England rate of 85.4%. The next largest population group (by self classification) is Asian, at 2.5% this is lower than the national equivalent (7.8%).

Deprivation (Data source: 2020 indices of deprivation, DCLG): Huntingdonshire experiences very low levels of deprivation. 4.7% of the Authority’s population live in areas covered by the country’s three most deprived cohorts (national average: c.30%). Conversely, 52.5% live in the three least deprived groupings. This compares to a ‘norm’ of c.30%. Areas of high deprivation are focused, generally, in the northeast (Ramsey) and the town of Huntingdon.

Health data (Data sources: ONS births and deaths, NCMP¹ and NOO²): In keeping with patterns seen alongside lower levels of health deprivation, life expectancy in Huntingdonshire is higher than the national figure; the male rate is currently 81.4 compared to 79.6 for England, and the female equivalent is 84.4 compared to 83.2 nationally.

Weight and obesity - Adult obesity rates are similar to those for the whole of England but above regional averages. Childhood obesity rates are below both regional and national averages.

	Adult obesity rates	Child obesity rates
Huntingdonshire	68.4%	28.1%
East of England	63.7%	32.4%
England	68.5%	36.7%

Active Lives Survey (ALS) 2020/21 - the percentage of Huntingdonshire’s population considered to be inactive is 23.1%. This is below both the regional (27.9%) and national (27.2%) averages. It has comparable levels of those classed as active (60.8%) when compared to the regional (60.2%) and national (61.4%) averages.

Population projections

The most recent ONS projections indicate a rise of 7.8% in Huntingdonshire’s population (+71,626) over the 25 years from 2018 to 2043. Several key points are outlined below

- ◆ The number of 0-15 year olds, falls by -1,888 (-5.8%) over the first half of the projection (to 2030).
- ◆ The number of 16-24 year olds will rise by +1.5% in the first period (+224) followed by a decline of -8.3% (-1,298) in the second period.
- ◆ There is a continuous increase in the numbers of persons aged 65+ and a need to consider varying sports offers for this age group.

2.3: Huntingdonshire housing growth

As presented above, Huntingdonshire’s population is set to increase by 7.8%. To support this increase, several key housing growth sites are planned. This will be developed

¹ National Child Measurement Program
² National Obesity Observatory

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through a wide mix of housing types and sizes, with a strong need for smaller homes due to the high proportion of single person households.

The growth areas are as follows:

- ◀ *Alconbury Weald* - it is proposed that this site will accommodate 5,000 new houses. It is scheduled for completion by 2040. It will also incorporate a new secondary school with a community available 4-court sports hall. It is anticipated that the school (Alconbury Educational Hub) will open in September 2023.
- ◀ *St Neots Eastern Expansion* - land to the east of St Neots has been given planning permission for c.4,000 new dwellings.
- ◀ *Ermine Street Development* - it is proposed to develop 1,400 new homes to the north of Huntingdon alongside the A141, however, this is still subject to planning approval due to traffic concerns on the A141 and connection challenges into Huntingdon.

Summary of the demographic profile

It is estimated that Huntingdonshire's population will increase by 7.8% until 2043 largely driven by large areas of housing growth, as identified above.

It is important to ensure there is a suite of leisure facilities to cater for rising population numbers along with the appropriate programming. For example, swimming pools and sports halls will need to be able to cater for the increased demand, underpinned by appropriate programming and ensuring that they can provide sufficient swimming lesson capacity. In addition, facilities will also need to be able to support other demographic cohorts, such as the 65+ age group with appropriate daytime activities.

2.4: Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)

This sets out planning policies for England detailing how they are expected to be applied to the planning system. It provides a framework to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities. The stated purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achievement of sustainable development (paragraphs 7-9). It establishes that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that local plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

Paragraph 96 asserts that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for health and well-being and that planning policies should be based on robust, up-to-date assessments of need for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific need and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies and surpluses in local areas should also be evaluated and this information used to inform what provision is required in an area. As a prerequisite paragraph 97 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports and recreation sites, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ◀ An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown the site to be surplus to requirements; or
- ◀ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- ◀ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

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It is, essential that Huntingdonshire as the local planning authority, retains oversight of all potential facility developments. This includes policies and potential supplementary planning documents setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development. It includes the Council's approach to ensuring that community use of new facilities is agreed at the outset to ensure that they contribute to its wider sport and physical activity aspirations and those of its partners. This is pivotal to ongoing strategy delivery.

National Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG)

This is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and adds further context to the NPPF. It is intended that the two documents should be read together. When considering how local planning authorities and developers assess the needs for sports and recreation facilities the guidance states that authorities and developers may refer to Sport England guidance.

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PART 3: NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

3.1: General findings

The principal challenge for HDC and its partners is to ensure it has sufficient, high quality, leisure provision to accommodate the growth in population anticipated by 2043.

The projected increase in the size of the population (8%) and key demographic segments within this (particularly those aged 65+), mean that the key issues for the District are whether its capacity is sufficient to accommodate this increase in demand and whether future programmes of use match residents needs.

As noted above, the major growth areas are Alconbury Weald (estimated increase in dwellings of c. 5,000) and St Neots (c.4,000 new dwellings). The new secondary school (plus a health and fitness offer) proposed as part of the Alconbury Weald development will increase sports hall capacity and health and fitness provision in the area but there are no plans to increase swimming pool capacity. No additional facility proposals are linked to the St Neots area development.

3.2: What do we know about facilities and activities in Huntingdonshire

Sports halls

Taking sports halls of all sizes into account, there are 30 sites providing 60 badminton courts in the district. Those with two or fewer courts are limited as to the range and scale of recreational and sporting activity they provide; there are 11 sites with 3+ badminton courts.

Of the 3+ badminton court halls, the largest (St Ives Leisure Centre) has 6-courts, Kimbolton School and St Neots have five courts and the remainder (apart from St Peter, Academy Leisure Sawtry, One Leisure Huntingdon, One Leisure Ramsey) all have four. The majority of halls are rated as above average or good quality, with only four rated below average. Those rated below average are St Peters School, One Leisure St Ives, Longsands Academy and Ernulf Academy.

Most halls offer community access. One site does not offer community access; RAF Wyton. The community access offer varies at Kimbolton School as it is a boarding school. It is only available during holiday periods. Consequently, this site has been removed from the analysis.

In terms of the overall supply and demand balance in Huntingdonshire, the FPM calculates that the resident population generates demand for a minimum of 50.2 courts compared with a current available supply of 42.4 courts, giving a negative supply/demand balance of 7.8 courts. This is roughly equivalent to two 4-court sports halls.

This modelled high demand is reflected by consultation findings. Five sites are operating above the Sport England threshold of 80% occupancy during peak periods. The sites with spare capacity are St Peters School, Longsands Academy and Academy Leisure Sawtry.

The current shortfall will be addressed, to some extent by the new secondary school, however, according to Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator (SFC), planned population growth will create the need for an additional 4-court hall. This would suggest

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that two further 4-court sports halls, in addition to the one at Alconbury Weald, are required by 2043.

Swimming pools

There are 13 operational swimming pools on 13 sites in Huntingdonshire, seven of which are equal or greater than 160m² in size. The largest (a 5-lane 25m pool) is at Kimbolton School. The remainder all have 4 lanes and vary between 20-25m in length. All seven are classed as community available, with five accessible via pay and play. These are; One Leisure Huntingdon, One Leisure Ramsey, One Leisure St Ives, One Leisure St Neots and Academy Leisure Sawtry. All five sites serve key areas of population.

Kimbolton School does offer opportunities for community access on a block booking basis, however, this is limited to some evenings and weekends only. During holiday periods, it also opens the pool up for pay and play opportunity. For these reasons, this study classes it as being community available and it is included in the relevant assessments.

Table 3.1: Quality of swimming pools (160m²) in Huntingdonshire

ID	Site name	Lanes/length	Area (m ²)	Pool Condition	Changing Condition
3	Academy Leisure Sawtry	4 x 20m	160	Above average	Above average
48	Hinchingbrooke School	4 x 25m	200	Below average	Above average
61	Kimbolton School*	5 x 25m	250	Above average	Above average
80	One Leisure Huntingdon	4 x 25m	250	Below average	Good
81	One Leisure Ramsey	4 x 20m	200	Below average	Above average
82	One Leisure St Ives	4 x 25m	225	Below average	Good
84	One Leisure St Neots	4 x 25m	225	Above average	Above average

Quality is mixed, with four of the seven listed as being in below average condition. Three of the five pay and play sites fall into this category. Ratings are mainly due to facility age and the lack of significant investment. St Ives, Ramsey and Huntingdon all over 30 years old.

When taking into account FPM calculations, there is a supply/demand deficit of 815m². To put this into context one 6-lane x 25m pool equates to 325m². This deficit will be further exacerbated as a result of upcoming population growth.

Current swimming participation across all One Leisure sites is strong. This is best measured through swimming lesson participation. Each site is reportedly operating at between 85-90% of overall capacity, with the leisure operator concerned as to future capacity in relation to the proposed housing growth.

Due to the quality of the majority of community available pools and the significant shortfall in capacity, there is a need to identify where capacity can be increased whilst also looking at improving pool quality. Due to the age of certain facilities, and the need to develop environmentally efficient venues, this Strategy considers a combination of options, including development of a new energy efficient facility whilst also upgrading current provision. Huntingdonshire does not have a flagship competition pool to provide a venue for swimming clubs galas and competitions and any new development should also consider this.

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Consultation indicates that Sawtry Swimming Pool will close on a temporary basis at the end of the calendar year in 2022. The current operator has cited financial pressures including increased utilities costs as the primary why the pool is having to close. There is no confirmed date as to when the site will re-open. It should be noted that the gym and sports hall will be unaffected.

Health and fitness suites

There are 15 health and fitness suites (with over 20 stations) in Huntingdonshire, with a total of 946 stations. All facilities are rated either good or above average. There are seven gyms located nearby in neighbouring authorities, two of which have 100+ stations.

All main population areas have health and fitness facilities and 46% of the population resides within one mile of a gym. 86.1% of people living in higher deprivation are within one mile of a gym. 98% of residents live within a 20-minute drive of a facility.

There are seven publicly accessible pay and play health and fitness facilities with 20+ stations in Huntingdonshire. The remainder require some form of membership to access. An exercise referral scheme is available at all One Leisure sites. This offers district residents referred by a health professional, a discounted leisure membership to help with rehabilitation and/or prevention of certain medical conditions, such as heart disease or cancer recurrence.

Based on current UK penetration rates, there is a current shortfall of c. 300 stations in Huntingdonshire. This will, based upon projected population increases rise to c.500 stations by 2043. The challenge for the Authority is to address this current and future shortfall. This could be achieved, at least in part, via the replacement and/or redevelopment of existing One Leisure sites or absorbed (in part) by the private sector.

Gymnastics

There are five dedicated gymnastics clubs in Huntingdonshire, four of which have dedicated facilities. The five clubs are as follows: Huntingdon Gymnastics Club, Twisters Gymnastics Club, Rotations Trampolining Club, Meridian Gymnastics Club and Amy's Acro. The latter is the only club without its own dedicated facility - it uses a series of primary schools throughout the Authority.

Of the five clubs, Huntingdon and Meridian are on British Gymnastics' facility project list. Huntingdon GC wishes to upgrade its main gymnastics hall (as its over 40 years old) and Meridian GC has ambitions to move to a larger premises.

Indoor bowls

There are two dedicated indoor bowls facilities, supporting two clubs. They are located in Huntingdon and St Neots. Both venues are rated as being of below average quality and will need investment in the medium to long term.

Both are club run and require a membership to access. There is no pay and play opportunity for bowls in the Authority. Consultation indicates that both clubs have spare capacity and the focus should be on increasing membership and improving the quality of each venue.

Indoor tennis

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The one indoor tennis provision in the Authority is Huntingdon Tennis Club. There is a facility venue within a 30-minute drive of the district. Huntingdon Tennis Club is accessible via advance booking (pay and play) or registered membership and is of above average quality.

Squash

There are nine community available squash courts at four sites, all rated above average quality. Two sites offer pay and play access; the One Leisure centres in Huntingdon and St Neots.

Although England Squash states that there is a shortfall of provision (of eight courts), consultation suggests that there is currently spare capacity at both pay and play sites. One option to address the England Squash calculated shortfall could be to work with Kimbolton School to persuade it to open its courts to one of the clubs and/or the community.

Village halls/community centres

The audit identified 68 village halls in Huntingdonshire. There appears to be a good spread from north to south serving all key population centres. Consultation indicates that venue utilisation is returning to pre-Pandemic levels. Most sites (which were audited) still have some mid-week and weekend availability, however, as the Authority continues to emerge from lockdown, it is hoped that these will be taken up.

Summary

The KKP audit, along with the FPM, identifies a current shortfall in sports halls, fitness provision and swimming pools. The pool capacity shortfall (700-800m²) is particularly significant.

The shortfall in swimming capacity is a major concern, as this will hinder swimming development for all demographics. This includes learning to swim for younger generations, swimming club expansion along with general fitness for all casual swimmers. The key areas where demand is not met are currently around Huntingdon and St Neots.

Whilst the new secondary school (as part of the Alconbury Weald development) will address some of the sports hall shortfall, there is no current plans to address swimming pool capacity. The Authority should consider a combination of options, including developing a new facility, alongside upgrading others. Any development at One Leisure sites should also consider addressing the present (300 station) shortage of fitness provision.

Consideration should also be given to re-negotiating existing community use agreements on One Leisure sites to improve overall available community hours, particularly if the HDC intend to invest in these facilities in the future.

Huntingdon Town Council has ambitions to develop a multi-sport indoor facility in the town. This would address any future sports hall shortfall in provision in this locality. The Town Council would like this facility to focus on netball.

As well as the main facility types, the two indoor bowls centres will need to be upgraded in the medium to long term. Both are popular and to ensure that they continue to provide

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for the communities they serve they will need support (and possibly funding) to ensure they can be attractive.

Two of the gymnastics clubs in the Authority are either seeking to upgrade their facility or move to a bigger site. Again, both will require support as part of this process.

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PART 4: VISION AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS ACTION PLAN

This is Huntingdonshire's vision for sport and leisure provision for the period 2022-2043. It builds upon the conclusions identified in the Built Facilities Needs Assessment Report. It confirms that the Authority's sports halls, swimming pools and health and fitness suites are generally well positioned in relation to areas of population, however, there is undersupply across all three, particularly in relation to swimming capacity. The challenge, therefore, is to increase capacity and quality, to support Huntingdonshire's growing population.

The proposed headline aim is, thus that HDC will:

Create and maintain high quality, sustainable sport and leisure facilities which meet current and future community need, help increase participation and tackle health and age-related issues providing accessible, inclusive activities for Huntingdonshire's residents as part of an active lifestyle.

4.2: Key strategic recommendations

Below lists the strategic facility drivers for Huntingdonshire. It is important in respect of any future facility development, that these consider the Authority's 2040 carbon neutral target. This includes ensuring that its buildings reduce carbon emissions through better use of materials plus the use of renewable heat sources.

Sustain and increase swimming pool supply across the Authority

There is a short term need to protect provision under threat of closure at Sawtry. In the medium / long term (given the likely resourcing requirements) HDC should consider how it can grow swimming pool capacity across the District whilst improving the overall quality and energy efficiency of facilities. The following key actions should be taken :

- ◀ In the short term (0-6 months) and respect of Sawtry pool, it is recommended that HDC and other local partners continues to engage and offer support to the Meridian Academy Trust in order that a sustainable financial plan can be found to secure the pools short term future. This could include support in helping the Meridian Trust access funding, grants, or developing an enduring customer base to ensure the centre is sustainable, recognising the loss to the community if Meridian are unable to achieve this. **(PROTECT)**
- ◀ In the medium (3-5 yrs) term the swimming pools at both St Neots and St Ives require investment. It is suggested that both pool tanks are upgraded along with the pool surrounds to ensure that they offer the requisite quality level. It is suggested that they remain as 'local pools' catering for the towns in which they are located. **(ENHANCE)**
- ◀ HDC should in the medium / long term (5-10 yrs) consider options for the replacement of Huntingdon Swimming Pool. New facilities should have sufficient capacity and flexibility to deliver a significant proportion of the District's swimming lesson programme and support swimming clubs with galas and key competitions. Existing squash and health & fitness provision should be replaced on a like for like basis. **(ENHANCE / PROVIDE)**
- ◀ In support of the above, HDC should undertake a bespoke FPM run to consider potential changes in provision, the impact of population growth, and location

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scenarios including replacing/redeveloping the One Leisure Huntingdon on its existing site and alternative locations taking into account large housing growth sites in the vicinity of Huntingdon and its surrounds such as Alconbury Weald.

(ENHANCE/PROVIDE)

Increasing sports hall provision and capacity

Even allowing for the new sports hall at Alconbury Weald, needs assessment demand calculations indicate that two further 4-court sports halls are required in the district by 2043.

In this regard, consultation identified that Huntingdon Town Council would like to consider the feasibility of developing a dedicated indoor facility to support several key sports.

- ◀ In the short / medium term HDC should continue to work with the town council to identify potential sites for a new sports hall facility in Huntingdon in partnership with relevant National Governing Bodies. **(PROVIDE)**

Renegotiate management agreements with academy trusts prior to any future investment

Four key leisure sites are located on land owned by academy trusts. They include St Ives and St Neots leisure centres where the management agreements are designed to balance school and community use. Prior to any future HDC investment in these sites the management agreements should be reviewed to ensure that the nature and form of the long term community use arrangements at these sites are optimised **(ENHANCE)**

Support Meridian and Huntingdon Gymnastics clubs with their facility aspirations

HDC should work with both clubs and British Gymnastics to ascertain what the specific facilities required and support them to work towards achieving their objectives. For example, Meridian is looking to acquire a large venue, such as an industrial unit, to be its base and accommodate its activities and programmes. HDC should support with the Club to seek an appropriate site and also (if required), consider a change of use for a specific building. **(ENHANCE/PROVIDE)**

Work with St Neots and Huntingdon Indoor Bowling venues to support with possible facility upgrades

Both indoor bowling venues in the Authority (St Neots and Huntingdon) require long term investment. HDC should enter into a partnership with the local clubs and the EIBA to identify what facility upgrades will be required in the short/medium term and to identify possible sources of funding to help deliver these upgrades. **(ENHANCE)**

Address the future shortfall of fitness provision in the Authority (PROVIDE)

There is currently a shortfall of c. 300 stations in Huntingdonshire which will increase by c.500 stations by 2043. In the short term, the Local Authority should look at increasing (where possible) the provision at current sites as part of any refurbishment/redevelopment. Medium to longer term and in relation to potential investment Huntingdon, this should incorporate substantial health and fitness provision as part of any facility mix.

Secure appropriate developer contributions to support leisure provision. (ENHANCE / PROVIDE)

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HDC should ensure that Local Plan policy ringfences developer contributions to support creation of new, and/or the refurbishment and redevelopment of existing, community sports facilities.

It is important that the Local Authority develops a series of policies to calculate facility requirements based on the number of additional residents generated as a result of the net increase in dwellings.

Continue with the Authority's energy efficiency programme across all sites (ENHANCE)

All Local Authority owned leisure sites currently have an energy efficiency plan and have benefited from Salix Finance funding to improve facilities. Each facility will require regular investment, to ensure they remain as energy efficient as possible, in line with the Council's carbon neutral target. Future investment should focus on plant maintenance, lighting and energy sources.

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4.3: Indoor and built facilities strategy action plan

Taking into account the needs assessments related to specific facilities and sports, the demographic make-up, current vision of the Council and associated organisations, plus Sport England’s Planning for Sport guidance which encourages *Protection, Enhancement* and *Provision* of new facilities, actions in respect of each of Huntingdonshire’s key facilities are identified below. This action plan is based on a short (0-2 years), medium (3-5 years) and long term (5-10 years) timeframe.

4.3.1: Management and programming

Strategic objective	Recommendation	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Importance
Drive major facility investment Protect/Enhance Provide	See site by site recommendations below	Actions identified on a site-by-site basis.	Short	HDC	High
Provide Sustain and increase swimming pool supply across the Authority	Protect facilities at Sawtry leisure centre	HDC along with other partners, to continue to engage and offer support to the Meridian Academy Trust in order that a sustainable financial plan can be found to secure the pools short term future.	Short	HDC Meridian Academy Trust	High
	Improve facilities at St Neots and St Ives	HDC to Upgrade the pools at St Neots and St Ives with new tanks, plant equipment and pool surrounds.	Medium	HDC, One Leisure	Medium
	Replacement of Huntingdon Leisure Centre	Undertake a study to investigate possible sites for new leisure provision in Huntingdon, including the commissioning of a bespoke FPM pools study.	Medium / Long	HDC, One Leisure, Sport England	High

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Strategic objective	Recommendation	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Importance
Increase sports hall capacity Provide	Assess the feasibility of developing (and if appropriate develop) a new multi-sport indoor venue in Huntingdon.	Jointly (HTC and HDC) commission a feasibility study to assess the potential to create a large multi sport in Huntingdon, in partnership with the Town Council.	Short / medium	HDC HTC	High
Address the future shortfall of fitness provision in the Authority Provide	Investigate opportunities to increase the supply of health and fitness provision where available.	Assess options to increase the scale/quality at certain sites of fitness provision at HDC managed sites - via the delivery of upgrades as part of the refurbishment/redevelopment of existing sites. When investing in school sites assess where feasible include fitness in refurbishment/extension work.	Medium	HDC Academy trusts & individual schools	Medium
Review and update the Authority's Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure appropriate developer contributions can be secured for indoor leisure provision Provide	The LDF Developer Contributions SPD, currently only covers outdoor sport provision. This needs to be updated to incorporate indoor provision too.	HDC to review its suite of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) in order to include a mechanism to secure contributions towards indoor sports facilities.	Short	HDC	High
Improve/safeguard access & management agreements at key sites. Enhance	Review management agreements at One Leisure sites where the freehold is managed by academy trusts.	Work with the academy trusts upon whose sites leisure centres are located to embed and futureproof strong community use agreements particularly at those sites where potential capital investment is being considered.	Short	HDC Academy trusts	High

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Strategic objective	Recommendation	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Importance
Improve gymnastics facility provision in the district. Enhance	Support Meridian and Huntingdon gymnastics clubs with their facility requirements	Work with clubs and British Gymnastics to gauge facility requirements and develop an investment plan around this. Certain elements of these action plan will require support from HDC, including possible funding bids.	Medium	HDC Gymnastics clubs British Gymnastics	High
Improve the quality of indoor bowls facilities in the district. Enhance	Assess opportunities to upgrade both indoor bowling facilities and work with both clubs to source funds to enable this.	Support clubs to undertake condition surveys and to apply for grants/funding to support building upgrades.	Medium	Indoor bowling clubs HDC EIBA	Medium
Planning Protect/Enhance Provide	Recognise the importance of this study – act upon recommendations made.	To adopt the Strategy as an evidence base document supporting the Local Plan and development management decisions.	Medium	Planning & Leisure Team	High
Carbon neutral programme Enhance	Continue with the energy efficiency plans across all Local Authority owned sites.	Each site has an energy efficiency plan, as part of the Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2040.The Council needs to continue upgrading facilities, as and when funding/opportunities arises.	Short	HDC	High
Monitor and review	Keep this Strategy relevant and up to date.	Complete a light touch annual strategy review. Deliver a full progress review within 5 years of adoption.	Medium	HDC	High

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4.3.2: Facility specific actions

Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Huntingdon Leisure Centre	HDC	<p>Strategic facility in for Huntingdon, split over two sites.</p> <p>The dry site is the newer facility. It has an above average 3-court sports hall, large fitness facility and two above average quality studios.</p> <p>At the second site, the (4-lane x 25m) swimming pool is rated below average quality which its two squash courts are rated good.</p>	<p>Decommission the existing swimming facility and replace it with a new facility for the town.</p> <p>This should incorporate flexible swimming provision i.e. main pool and learner facility. The new facility should preserve/replace existing squash courts and extend the health and fitness provision to c.100 stations.</p> <p>Initial work should look at commissioning a feasibility study (including FPM analysis) to assess potential locations and develop a more detailed specification, consider appropriate management options and produce an indicative business plan for the new provision.</p>	HDC	Medium / Long	High
St Neots Leisure Centre	HDC	<p>This is the main leisure facility in St Neots. It comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 x25m swimming pool. - 4 court sports hall.. - 2 squash courts. - 120 station fitness facility. - 2 studios <p>All elements rated good/above average quality.</p>	<p>Explore funding opportunities to upgrade the pool and ensure that it is environmentally sustainable moving forward –to include installing a new swimming pool tank plus new pool surrounds, plant and equipment..</p>	HDC	Medium	High

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
St Ives Leisure Centre	HDC	<p>Main centre for St Ives, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4x25m swimming pool - 6-court sports hall - 120 station fitness provision - 2 studios <p>The sports hall is used by St Ivo Academy during the day.</p> <p>The sports hall and swimming pool are both rated below average. Health and fitness facility is rated as good. The two studios are rated as above average.</p>	<p>Explore funding opportunities to upgrade the pool (with new tank, surrounds, plant & equipment) and sports hall (new floor and improved lighting).</p> <p>Sports hall will also need to be upgraded, with potential new hall surface.</p> <p>Work with the academy provider to negotiate future appropriate available community hours linked to any investment.</p>	HDC	Short	High
Ramsey Leisure Centre	HDC	<p>Council run facility serving the north of the Authority. It has a 3-court sports hall (rated good), 4-lane x 20m swimming pool (rated below average) and good rated 40 station fitness provision.</p> <p>The adjacent school (Abbey College) has daytime access to the sports hall.</p>	<p>Explore funding opportunities to upgrade the pool. Investment will need to focus on a new tank plus an upgrade of pool surrounds.</p> <p>The Council also has ambitions to create studio space by upgrading unused areas of the centre.</p>	HDC	Medium	High
Sawtry Leisure Centre	Meridian Trust	<p>This leisure centre serves the Sawtry area. It comprises a 4-lane x 20m pool, 3-court sports hall, a 20-station fitness facility and one above average studio.</p> <p>The sports hall, studio and swimming provision are rated above average.</p> <p>Fitness provision is rated good.</p> <p>The sports hall is used by the adjacent school during the day.</p>	<p>HDC and other local partners should continue to engage and offer support to the Meridian Academy Trust in order that a sustainable financial plan can be found, thus securing the pools short term future.</p>	HDC Meridian Trust	Short	High

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Ernulf Academy	Astrea Academy Trust	School has a below average condition 4-court hall.	Support the School to secure funding to upgrade the sports hall.	HDC Astrea Academy Trust One Leisure	Medium	Medium
Hinching-brooke School	Hinchingbrooke Foundation Academy Trust	Popular site for community sport, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An above average 4-court sports hall - A below average condition 4 lane x 25m swimming pool. <p>The pool is well used by clubs/learn to swim schools and the School also hires out its 3G/grass provision.</p>	Support school to secure funding to upgrade the swimming pool; a new pool tank/surrounds will be required.	Hinchingbrooke Foundation HDC	Medium	High
Kimbolton School	Kimbolton School	Private boarding school which has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5-lane x 25m pool (above average) - 4 court sports hall (above average) - Two squash courts (above average). <p>The pool is available on a block booking basis for evening use but the sports hall and squash courts are mainly used by the school. There is some flexibility during holiday periods when students are off campus.</p>	Work with the School to explore options to increase levels of regular weekday evening community use, particularly for the swimming pool and sports hall.	Kimbolton School HDC Living Partnership	Medium	Medium
Longsands Academy	Astrea Academy Trust	The school has a below average, under-utilised 4-court sports hall. Sports accommodated include basketball, netball, indoor cricket and martial arts It presently has 50% spare capacity.	Support the school to secure funding to upgrade the hall and concurrently work it to increase utilisation.	Astrea Academy Trust HDC	Medium	Medium

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
St Peters School	Cam Academy Trust	It has a 3-court sports hall which is rated below average. Community use is limited due to hall quality and school use pressures. The absence of specific funds is currently hindering the upgrade of the sports facility.	Commission a feasibility study to explore the partnership-based option to develop a multi-sport facility on the site – with a particular view to it being a netball venue. Use the feasibility to assess management options and prepare an outline business plan.	Cam Academy Trust HDC HTC England Netball	Short	High
Huntingdon Indoor Bowls Club	Huntingdon Indoor Bowls Club	6-rink indoor bowls facility rated below average	Work with the Club to deliver a condition appraisal of the facility and identify grants/ funding to support an upgrade.	Club HDC EIBA	Medium	Medium
St. Neots & District Indoor Bowls Club	St. Neots & District Indoor Bowls Club	8-rink indoor bowls facility rated as below average.	Work with the Club to deliver a condition appraisal of the facility and then identify grants/funding to support upgrades.	Club HDC EIBA	Medium	Medium
Hemingford Pavilion	Hemingford Pavilion	High quality membership-based squash facility with four good quality squash courts – part of a multi sports club.	Support the Club (when required) to maintain quality of their squash courts.	Club/HDC England Squash	Low	Low
Huntingdon Gymnastics Club	Huntingdon Gymnastics Club	Dedicated facility; large gymnastics hall and smaller matted area. The building is 40+ years old and needs upgrading. The Club is on British Gymnastics' facility project upgrade list.	Identify the financial support required to upgrade its current facility.	Club HD /BG	Medium	High
Meridian Gymnastics Club	Meridian Gymnastics Club	The facility was not audited. It is understood to be a dedicated facility in the north of the Authority, on the border with Peterborough. It is on the facility project upgrade list.	Explore site options to assist the club to find a larger premises.	Club HDC BG	Medium	High
Twisters Gymnastics Club	Twisters Gymnastics Club	The facility was not audited. It is believed to have a dedicated facility in the west of the Authority	Engage with the Club to identify its needs/key challenges.	Club HDC	Low	Low

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Facility	Management	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Rotations Trampoline Club	Rotations Trampoline Club	Above average dedicated facility located in Huntingdon.	Support the Club (when required) to maintain quality of its gymnastics facility.	Club HDC BG	Low	Low
Huntingdon Tennis Centre	Huntingdon Tennis Centre	Above average 3-court acrylic indoor air dome. Part of a larger site which also has three outdoor courts.	Support the Club (when required) to maintain facility quality.	Centre HDC LTA/HTC	Low	Low
Village halls/ community centres	Various parish and town councils	(Normally small) venues which support the needs of their local community. Of the sites audit, the majority were in good condition and were well used.	Undertake a comprehensive audit to gain full understanding of community facilities and identify whether any sites require support to upgrade/expand. Work with certain site operators to encourage them to meet additional demand in rurally isolated areas.	HDC Parish/town councils	Medium	Medium
Other commercial fitness gyms	Commercial	There are several commercially operated facilities in the area.	Continue to monitor use and assess the extent to which these complement each other and other activity in the District. Ensure that any facility development complements and do not compete with HDC owned/managed venues.	HDC	Long	Low

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INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES: DRAFT STRATEGY

PART 5: MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Strategy identifies the investment and actions required to deliver and maintain a high-quality built facilities infrastructure for Huntingdonshire for the period up until 2043.

It is important that the Strategy is (and is treated as) a live document and is used in a practical manner to prioritise investment, develop key work programmes and partnerships, guide planning gain investment and ensure that built sports facilities are a vital component contributing to the quality of life of Huntingdonshire's residents.

Strategy production is just the start of the process and there is a requirement for all partners to engage in ongoing dialogue and review to ensure that a considered perspective and approach is maintained throughout its life.

It is important for Huntingdonshire to adopt a 3-5 year action plan based on Strategy recommendations and for the delivery of these to be monitored and reviewed preferably annually. To this end, it is recommended that an annual report be produced to assess progress being made on delivery of Strategy recommendations.

The process should not only review progress against the action plan but identify actual/potential changes in supply and demand. The basis for this is that the Strategy is as much about how facilities are used as it is about ensuring that local infrastructure is of a good quality.

In particular the review should include:

- ◀ Review of annual progress on recommendations made in the 3-5 year action plan; taking account of any changes required to the priority of each action (e.g. the relevance of some may increase/decrease following implementation of others).
- ◀ Learning and sharing lessons absorbed throughout the period.
- ◀ Taking account of other new facilities which come on stream in or adjacent to (or which will impact residents of) the Authority.
- ◀ Review of specific changes in the use of key sites (e.g., sport specific specialisms, changes in number of community available hours, opening times etc.).
- ◀ Any specific changes in demand at particular facilities and/or from clubs in the area (e.g., reduction or increase in club numbers, reaction to new housing growth etc.).
- ◀ Considering new sports/activities and/or formats of traditional sports that may emerge.
- ◀ Any other new or emerging issues and opportunities.

The outcome of the review will be to develop a new annual and medium-term action plan for indoor and built sports facilities in and across the Huntingdonshire authority area.