

Report to: **Strategic Planning Committee**



Date of Meeting: 5 March 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

East Devon Playing Pitch Strategy

Report summary:

This report provides details of work to date on production of the Playing Pitch Strategy for East Devon. It is highlighted in the report that substantive work has been undertaken on the evidence gathering side of strategy production, this has been undertaken in accordance with Sport England guidance. As we near completion of this evidence side of work we will need to move onto the strategy (the what do we do about it) element of the work. Amongst other matters committee are asked in this report to consider how they may wish to progress matters. It is also highlighted that there is a forthcoming report to the Cabinet of East Devon District Council that will address matters and raises considerations around how the Council may choose to be more pro-active in delivery of leisure and sporting services. The available resources will impact on what the strategy should contain since any strategy should be deliverable.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That committee note the ongoing work on production of the Playing Pitch Strategy and provide in principle support for the work to date and direction of travel.
2. That committee consider making a recommendation to the Cabinet meeting on the 27th March 2024 regarding the role that the Council should play in the delivery and enhancement of playing pitch provision in the district and the resources that should be put in place to enable this work.
3. That committee note that following resolution on the Council's role in delivering the new Playing Pitch Strategy and the resourcing of this work, a strategy to address the issues highlighted by the work will be developed with the sports governing bodies and clubs and brought back to the committee as a final draft of the strategy in the summer.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure Members of committee are aware of the emerging Playing Pitch Strategy and the need, assuming the Council wishes to see better facilities, of Council actions, coordinated with others, to see delivery of enhanced pitch provision.

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk;

Links to background information

Links to background documents are contained in the body of this report.

Link to Council Plan

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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1. An overview of sports planning and provision

- 1.1 The role of a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is to understand the levels, quantities and quality of existing playing pitches, compare this against current and projected future levels of use, need and demand and to draw up actions to address requirements of the future.
- 1.2 The Planning Policy section at East Devon District Council has taken the lead role in production of this PPS. The new strategy will supersede an earlier strategy that was completed in 2015 and the new strategy has been produced in collaboration with Sport England and the following National Governing Bodies: (NGBs), at County/Regional level:
 - England and Wales Cricket Board
 - England Hockey Board
 - The Football Association
 - The Lawn Tennis Association and
 - Rugby Football Union.

- 1.3 The Playing Pitch Strategy works with and is informed by the Council's adopted Leisure Strategy and also sits alongside the Council's Built Facilities Strategy.
- 1.4 In somewhat simplified terms the Built Facilities Strategy is concerned with sports that are played indoors and the PPS is concerned with sports played outdoors. But of course in reality some sports are and can be played at competitive level both indoors and outdoors. This indoor/outdoor split applies even more so in respect of training activity, non-competitive games and differing codes, formats or variations on the mainstream sport.
- 1.5 It is highlighted that the PPS is primarily concerned with pitch and court needs, demands and provision in respect of:
- cricket,
 - hockey
 - football
 - rugby (Union) and
 - tennis.
- 1.6 It is recognised that there are many other sports that are played outdoors in East Devon, including, at higher participation levels, netball and bowls. But these other sports, inline with common approaches taken to such work, are not addressed in any depth in the PPS. In subsequent council work there may be the desire to broaden council thinking and work around such other outdoor sports. It is also recognised that many spaces used for formal sports use can also provide for wider recreation and amenity use (though noting some other uses, such as dog walking and associated waste, can be directly incompatible with sports use). Also sports pitches can provide aesthetically attractive green spaces.

2. The benefits of having an up-to-date PPS

- 2.1 An up-to-date PPS ensures that there is a good understanding of sporting activity and of the challenges that currently exist in meeting the needs of clubs and the opportunities to plan for the future.
- 2.2 The PPS is, therefore, a valuable tool to help understand where actions and activities may be directed, what resources may be needed and how and why decisions may or should be taken. It provides strong evidence to inform and justify the actions and activities of the Council and wider partners.
- 2.3 Provision of sport facilities can often be very expensive and frequently will rely on multi-agency partnership approaches to fund and deliver them. A PPS should provide a framework for agreeing and articulating such approaches and as such can be instrumental in ensuring partnership funding of initiatives. This can be especially important where funding bids are made to sport's governing bodies or third-party sponsors and organisations to help finance proposals.

3. Sport England Guidance and the draft status of the PPS

- 3.1 Sport England has issued detailed guidance, drawn up in collaboration with sport governing bodies, on the process for preparation of a PPS [pps-guidance-october-2013-updated.pdf \(d1h1m5892gthr7.cloudfront.net\)](https://www.cloudfront.net/d1h1m5892gthr7cloudfront.net/pps-guidance-october-2013-updated.pdf)

There are five stages of work set out:

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

- 3.2 This guidance has been followed in production of the East Devon PPS and we have also drawn on the work and content of the existing PPS. We will also draw on strategies of sport governing bodies in our work.
- 3.3 We have reached a point where Stages A, B and C (above) are nearing completion. We have, therefore, developed a very good understanding of the pitch and tennis court supply and quality issues across East Devon, clubs and teams that are using pitches, demands that are placed on them and views of sports clubs and governing bodies.
- 3.4 We do not have agreement and ‘sign-off’ from the sport’s governing bodies on completion of Stages A, B and C, and the iterative nature of the PPS work is such that these stages of work may be reviewed and updated as other work, Stages D and E, progress. We do have, however, a robust body of evidence. As such we can now tentatively consider approaches to strategy development and delivery (Stages D to E).
- 3.5 We would highlight that Stages D and E will need a body of work for completions but from an East Devon District Council officer perspective and understanding there is an emerging picture that we can present and this is set out in Appendix 1 to this committee report that will help with these stages. Please note that Appendix 1 refers to terms and matters addressed throughout this report and as such should be read in the context of full report content.

4. Developing the strategy and delivery (Stages D and E)

- 4.1 The Sports England guidance on PPS production is clear that the development of the strategy (Stage D), which specifically includes “*developing recommendations and (an) action plan*” needs to be undertaken in conjunction and agreement with sport governing bodies. The PPS should be a document that has a wide level of support and agreement and critically it needs to adopt a partnership approach to agreed actions if it is to be supported, successful and lead to implementation.

- 4.2 Part of the partnership approach, if the PPS is to be meaningful, also needs to support active involvement of East Devon District Council and this points towards differing services and departments of the Council agreeing to and 'buying into' recommendations and actions.
- 4.3 The district Council owns and manages many of the pitches across East Devon, though many are also owned, managed or operated by sports clubs themselves, charities, parish councils and in some cases private bodies or other institutions or organisations. It is stressed that the PPS is not just about District Council assets and operations, far from it, the PPS is concerned about the provision of pitches that provide public and community access regardless of who runs or operates them.
- 4.4 Part of the work, therefore, on strategy development will involve consideration of the 'ownership' (in its broadest definition) of pitches and their overall improvement and enhancement.
- 4.5 The Sports England guidance on PPS production provides very clear guidance in respect of three key terms when it comes to development and implementation of the strategy, these are:
- Protect
 - Enhance, and
 - Provide.
- 4.6 These terms are referenced throughout the Sport England Guidance (see for example pages 47 to 49 of their guidance). These terms are expanded on in the report sections below with specific commentary around district council responsibilities and general issues, understandings and challenges emerging from the PPS work to date.

5. Protect - Protection of existing pitches

- 5.1 Protection can be looked upon as not losing the sports pitches that we have now in the district. The sport England guidance (para D6) states of *".....the need to protect playing pitch provision irrespective of ownership and the degree of community access and use, along with unused sites and land allocated as a playing field in any relevant development plan document."*
- 5.2 The protect element falls very much within the planning remit and role of the council. Across England, and looking back over recent decades, there has been significant accounts of reporting of playing fields being sold on and used for development, often house building, without suitable replacement. Government policy has significantly tightened in respect of this challenge and policy provision on protecting loss of sports pitches is set out in existing and emerging local plan policy.
- 5.3 In East Devon we are aware that some losses of sports pitches have historically occurred. Where possible losses would result from development being proposed the Council has robust planning policy in place to resist such loss with policy provision to seek replacement provision or equivalent where development may otherwise be

appropriate. The very rare exception to this rule would be in exceptional cases where it can be demonstrated that an over-provision of pitches may exist in a locality.

- 5.4 From the PPS work undertaken to date (Stages A to C) we do not see, however, evidence that there is any kind of picture or pattern of over-provision (any exceptions would therefore be very rare and unusual). In all of our towns, in particular, assessment presents a general picture of pitches (including taking match play and training into account) being in very high demand and frequently they are 'over-played'. Feedback received advises of clubs finding significant challenges in finding pitches to play on and in many cases clubs report of inadequate facilities inhibiting the formation of new teams and therefore limiting the ability of people to participate in sport – this is especially so female participation.
- 5.5 In rural areas and villages the demand picture can vary slightly from towns. Levels of pitch provision vary from some village locations that do not have any facilities, others that may have little (perhaps a single cricket or football pitch) through to a few villages that are well supplied (in quantity terms at least) with pitches. In this later case Feniton is a good example of a village with good sports facilities, specifically for football and cricket, that serve a local and wider need.
- 5.6 A non-development form of 'loss' with cases highlighted in the draft PPS is where a landowner or manager cease to manage land for sports pitch use or ceases to make it available for community use or activity. The draft PPS reports on some cases where there may arguably be an over-supply consideration, a possible example being at Clyst Hydon where there were historically two cricket pitches but assessment work indicates one is no longer being maintained, this is a case where it is assumed that the local community does not generate sufficient demand to warrant maintaining two pitches.
- 5.7 There are, however, cases where landowners will cease to lease, rent or allow community use of land and pitches that they control. Where there is no need for planning permission, i.e. development is not proposed or occurring, there are typically very few direct intervention powers that can be exercised to stop such losses occurring. But where this happens, and particularly at extremes, it can have significant impacts on availability of pitches in some localities.

6. Enhance – enhancement of the pitches that already exist

- 6.1 Enhancement is about improving the facilities we have and how they are managed. The Sport England Guidance (para D8) states “... *recommendations and actions should look to make the best use of existing provision ensuring better quality, access and management.*”
- 6.2 From a District Council perspective the enhancement side falls to services and departments at the Council that are responsible for managing and maintaining sports facilities and operating services that lease or rent pitches or courts that provide for community access. This side of matters most naturally falls to pitches that are owned by the Council or over which the Council has some form of lease or management role.

However, there may be (greater) potential for the Council to look at partnership arrangements more fully with third parties in respect of enhancement works irrespective of ownership or control.

- 6.3 In respect of pitches overall it is critical, however, to reiterate that many pitches are not owned or controlled by the District Council. Often such pitches will be maintained and managed to very high standards by dedicated staff with limited resources.
- 6.4 Challenges around the enhancement of pitches are of fundamental concern. The PPS work to date clearly shows that many pitches are played on and used for training purposes to levels that are at and beyond carrying capacities. Overuse problems are most pronounced in wet winter months when pitches can become unplayable and matches need to be cancelled or postponed. Though disruption of cricket tells us that it's not just a winter problem.
- 6.5 Enhancement of pitches through differing and better maintenance and management can go some way towards accommodating and allowing for more use. However, such works can be expensive and from a straight commercial perspective costs involved may significantly exceed financial returns resulting, for example from any scope for extra pitch rentals.
- 6.6 In respect of pitch use and impacts we specifically mention training because competitive match play alone may not result in degrees of use or overuse that necessarily warrant significant enhancement activity. The PPS assessment work suggests that on the basis of match play alone most pitches are not overused, notwithstanding the fact that under more severe weather conditions just about any pitch can become unplayable. But clubs and teams do need to train and often it will be the pitches they play matches on that form the only (or at least an important) venue for training to take place. It can be the cumulative impact of match play and training that is critical to overuse. Feedback indicates that many clubs struggle to find suitable training venues.

7. Provide – Provision of new sports pitches and facilities

- 7.1 Providing is about new and extra pitch delivery. The Sport England guidance (para D10) advises that PPS work “..... *may suggest that alongside the enhancement of existing provision new natural and/or artificial grass pitches are required to meet current and/or future demand.*”
- 7.2 In respect to provision of pitches alongside new development (for example big new housing schemes) the planning service of the Council has a direct role. But where provision is about addressing shortfalls that may exist at present the role of who may or should lead on delivery from the District Council may fall across varying departments. There is not, however, currently an overall lead department at the Council with this remit, nor one therefore, that coordinates such Council activities. The departments that this work does touch on such as Property and Estates and Leisure do not have sufficient resources in either staff or capital funding to undertake this work at present.

- 7.3 The PPS work to date, noting a clear picture of need and under-provision in many locations, and limitations on the degree to which existing pitch enhancement would address shortfalls, demonstrates a demand and need for new pitches. This is no real surprise and it was a concern highlighted in the previous PPS dating back to 2015. But providing new pitches is a significant challenge. Amongst concerns we would highlight are:
- a) **Costs** – new pitches can be expensive to provide – costs add up taking into account land acquisition, gaining permissions/authority to develop, facilitating and engineering works, laying out pitches, providing ancillary and supporting facilities, etc and then there are running costs. And
 - b) **Identifying suitable locations** – from a planning and development perspective there is a shortage of land that easily and naturally lends itself to new pitch provision. Much of East Devon is hilly and as such not great for sports that need flat pitches and also much land is of high environmental, heritage or other sensitivity to development (including for sports pitches).
- 7.4 Whilst planning permission is required for any new sports pitch provision; delivery is often most readily achieved where larger scale strategic development is proposed or is occurring. Through legal powers (specifically Section 106 agreements) we can negotiate provision of new facilities alongside development where that development is of a scale or kind that generates sufficient need to warrant the extra provision.
- 7.5 At Cranbrook, as an extreme case for East Devon, where large scale housing development is occurring there has been and will be delivery of new sports pitches and (ideally) these should be proportionate in scale to meet the needs generated by the growing population of the new town. Though an important planning matter to highlight is that legal agreements in respect of planning permissions granted cannot address matters of need that are **not** generated by the development in question. Essentially we can't grant a planning permission for a development and 'in return' seek provision to address an existing under provision of facilities.
- 7.6 Rather than provision on big development sites, what can be far more challenging, in so far as planning powers go, is addressing the cumulative need for extra sports facilities that lots of small-scale new developments might generate. Schemes for a few new houses 'here and there' will individually generate minimal need but collectively they may generate a need that is substantive. Whilst the collection of Community Infrastructure Levy money can open potential to generate funds that can be used for new pitch provision there are competing demands on what is a finite pot of monies and also there are challenges more broadly around securing actual delivery.
- 7.7 We would highlight that the expectation may be that the final PPS will point towards the need for bespoke assessment work being needed to determine appropriate levels of pitch provision at the second new community in East Devon.

8. The role and relevance of Artificial Grass Pitches and surface

- 8.1 To date much of this report relates directly to issues and considerations specifically or mostly relevant to grass pitches. It is important, however, to highlight the importance of artificial surfaces (i.e. non-grass surfaces) for outdoor sports use. Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs), sometimes referred to as Artificial Turf Pitches (or ATPs), play a very significant and increasingly important role in playing pitch provision and use.
- 8.2 AGPs mimic grass surfaces and have seen significant improvements over the years, with new technologies and pitch types being developed. The PPS work records that there are 11 AGPs in East Devon, though pitches at Bicton College, Exeter City Football Club Cliff Hill Training Ground and the Commando training centre at Lypstone have limited or nil community use accessibility. The other AGPs in East Devon are located at or next to school sites and provide mixed school and community use – as such they also have some limitations on community availability.
- 8.3 AGPs are also referenced in the Council's Leisure Strategy and Built Facilities Strategy but we include them in the PPS, as well, as they are of significance for outdoor pitch-based sports use (especially so for training). An important consideration to be aware of in respect of AGPs is that they come in differing forms, primarily determined by pile length (the rough equivalent to how short or long a grass may be cut to on a grass pitch) and also the dressing type used (the material that sits around and underneath the pile).
- 8.4 Differing AGP surface types have differing suitability for different sports. All competitive hockey matches are now played on AGPs, though only short pile surfaces are suitable. Competitive hockey in East Devon is played on AGPs in Sidmouth and Ottery St Mary. On a compromise basis, and up to certain league levels, competitive football matches can be played on short pile surfaces, but not rugby. Better for football, and essential for rugby, is the need for longer pile surfaces, though these are not acceptable for hockey. That said the PPS work shows that there are few football and no rugby teams that play their home matches on AGPs. Specifically in the case of rugby it is reported that there is a very clear resistance to the potential use of AGPs for competitive match play.
- 8.5 Other than for hockey, where the AGPs are essential for outdoor match play use, the key importance of AGPs is in respect of providing for training. All sports will seek to make use of the AGPs for training purposes (and for many training activities the surface type may be of limited importance). PPS feedback received reveals a picture of demand for AGP use by sports teams exceeding supply and availability.
- 8.6 The provision of additional AGPs offer particular potential for enhancement of sports pitch provision in East Devon. AGPs have the distinct advantage in that they do not suffer from wear and tear in the same way that grass surfaces do and as such they can accommodate much more use. However, they are expensive to install, do require some maintenance and if the desire is to floodlight them (and as such offer extended winter/dark month use) they can cause (additional) adverse neighbour and adverse environmental impacts. Also, noting that different sports require different surfaces for

match play purposes there is not a single surface that suits or is ideal for all and every sport.

9. Tennis in East Devon

- 9.1 Tennis is worthy of important mention in that it is also mostly played on artificial surfaces though these differ from the mainstream AGP surface types. The PPS records a total of 77 tennis courts in East Devon with 31 being outdoor floodlit courts, 39 outdoor unlit courts plus a further 7 being indoor courts, also with artificial lighting. A limited number are grass courts.
- 9.2 Some surfaces (and court areas) used for tennis do also support use for other sports. There are, for example, netball courts overlaying tennis courts in East Devon.

10. The further development of the PPS and the Strategy and Action Plan

- 10.1 The stages ahead in terms of PPS production and completion are identified as:
- Completion of the evidence gathering and assessment – **Stages A, B and C**
 - Developing the actual strategy – (the what is planned to be done about it element of work) - **Stage D**, and
 - Delivering the strategy and keeping it robust and up to date - **STAGE E**
- 10.2 **Stages A, B and C**, as already referenced in this report, are nearing completion. Subject to data and information refinement (with limited extra information gathering), referencing the extra material in the appended draft report, and potentially information challenge and verification, it would be expected that this stage of work will be completed at around Easter time.
- 10.3 **With respect to Stage D** of the work it is important to reiterate that the PPS should have wide ranging ownership and endorsement, as such and as a minimum (outside of East Devon District Council inputs and endorsement) this should include inputs from, consideration by and approval of the sports governing bodies.
- 10.4 The intention is that there will be ongoing work with the sport governing bodies over the coming weeks leading to conclusions around their inputs later in the Spring/by early Summer.
- 10.5 This leaves a question, however, around if or how East Devon District Council, at both a wider officer and Member level wishes to or should be involved with the strategy aspect of PPS production. One option would be to simply report back to committee on conclusions reached by the Sport Governing Bodies, through discussions with Planning Policy officers at the Council. This work would (or could) then come to committee with a recommendation that conclusions reached are endorsed and the PPS should be endorsed and approved/adopted.
- 10.6 However, members of the council may wish to be (more) active or pro-active in respect of the strategy side of production and be more directly involved in shaping and

forming the strategy that is finally to be agreed. Should this be the view of Members, or committee, then it would be desirable for any debate to be shaped around the form that such involvement should take (notwithstanding the fact that members should not lose sight of the need for sport governing body endorsement and active involvement). Members of committee may be aware of the role that the LED Monitoring Forum has played in helping to shape aspects of Leisure Strategy planning and as such may see this or a similar body or grouping as a way to further the strategy aspect of the PPS.

- 10.7 Whatever approach that committee may favour in respect of member input to PPS work there is a need to consider overall timetables. The PPS has taken longer to get to this stage than would be desirable. Work started pre-covid but the pandemic put things on hold, we have then made solid but slow progress since. The aspirations is, however, to draw to conclusions in a timely manner, this should certainly be before the end of summer 2024 and ideally would be early summer. We need the PPS in place to support the local plan through plan Examination.
- 10.8 **With respect to Stage E** - Delivering the strategy and keeping it robust and up to date, this very much relates to a report that the Assistant Director for Leisure at the Council is planning to take to Cabinet on the 27 March 2024. In this report issues of overall delivery of leisure and sports services of and by the Council will be addressed in detail with options set out for how the Council may seek to go forward into the future.
- 10.9 It is important to note that the previous Playing Pitch Strategy and associated Exmouth Sports Pitch Strategy and Honiton Sports Pitch Strategy all identified significant projects to enhance provision across the district. These strategies are available at: [Open Space – Playing Pitch Strategy – East Devon](#).
- 10.10 In recommending these strategies to Members for adoption, in 2015 in the case of the Playing Pitch Strategy and 2016 and 2017 for the Exmouth and Honiton specific strategies, the need for additional resources to help deliver these strategies was highlighted. It was always envisaged that the council would play a facilitating role in the delivery of the Playing Pitch Strategy. This would be done in partnership with sports bodies and clubs through co-ordinating funding bids, negotiating with landowners and assisting with land acquisition and project delivery. Unfortunately, resources were not found to undertake this work and so the actions of the previous strategies remain undelivered. This has caused some frustration in recent times particularly in Honiton and officers are concerned about developing a further strategy to address these issues and the additional needs arising from the new strategy without clarity about the role that Members see the Council playing and the resources that would be committed to aid its delivery.
- 10.11 The new strategy needs to be deliverable, however it is acknowledged that this is not a statutory area of work and given budget constraints the Council could legitimately say that the resources needed simply do not exist. From a planning perspective it also important to note that previous work highlights how land constraints particularly in Honiton and Exmouth mean that there are no easy solutions and in some cases there may be no solutions to some of the issues highlighted. Involvement in sport and increasing activity levels generally is however vitally important to the health and

wellbeing of residents. With all of this in mind Members are asked to make a recommendation to Cabinet that consideration be given to the role that the Council wishes to take in the delivery and enhancement of playing pitches in the district and the resourcing of this work. Once officers have clarity on these matters then a strategy for addressing the issues highlighted in the work so far can be produced ensuring that the Council's role is made clear and the strategy is deliverable.

- 10.12 The PPS itself, after adoption, will need to be regularly updated. PPSs are deemed to be out of date three years after approval and as such, and over time, any PPS will carry diminishing weight and importance. Any debate on future update of the PPS and much more importantly issues about its use and implementation should, however, fall to Cabinet deliberation later in March 2024 and actions arising thereafter.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implication resulting from the report, however the implementation of the strategy could have financial implication the council must consider.

Legal implications:

There are no direct legal implications resulting from the report.

Appendix 1 – an emerging picture of sports pitch needs in East Devon

In this appendix we present an overview of emerging evidence on Sports Pitch needs in East Devon drawn from the draft Playing Pitch Strategy work to date. It should be stressed that this assessment is initial work only, it has been undertaken by officers of East Devon District Council and has not been discussed with nor agreed with Sport England or sport governing bodies or any other organisations. However, it does provide a guide to the demands that we in East Devon face. The 'we' reference does and can mean East Devon District Council and the Council actions but also it is a wider reference that will include Sport England, sport governing bodies, sports clubs themselves and anyone else with an interest in or responsibility for sports pitches.

The protection of existing pitches

The assessment work undertaken shows minimal evidence of an oversupply in any locality of sports pitches. The only possible exceptions are in more remote locations where there may be very good provision for a particular sport, perhaps multiple pitches where a local and wider catchment population would not fully justify such provision. Therefore, there should be a general presumption that existing sports pitches, and areas of land that may have been used for sports in the past, even though not currently used or available, should be protected from loss to alternative uses. The exception would be where loss, for example to built development, will be offset by new provision of at least an equal but preferable better quality and serving the need in its locality.

Seeking to avoid the loss of pitches where planning applications are proposing development does not typically place an additional financial burden on the Council. Rather work would typically be absorbed into regular running costs of the planning service. Though sometimes additional work is required or specialist advice may need to be bought in. What can be more challenging, however, is where the loss is a product of a landowner or manager not maintaining an area of land for sports use or excluding the public from using it. There are a number of former pitches in East Devon where this is the case and intervention actions seeking to return them into public use and accessibility could become very expensive.

The enhancement of existing pitches

The work on the PPS has recorded wide ranging concerns around the quality of existing pitches across East Devon. In dry and mild conditions pitches will frequently look good and function well but in wet winter conditions even the best of pitches can suffer very badly from use and become unplayable. The standard of pitches has been assessed through PPS work and this standard informs ability to accommodate use.

Of the 70 football pitches categorised through assessment 33% were classed as Good, 54% Standard and 13% Poor. Improving pitch quality, through enhancement work, offers scope to accommodate many more matches and whilst just about all pitches might benefit from some enhancements actions to raise the grading of many of the 67% that were graded Standard or Poor could open up potential for more use – both match play and for training. Cricket pitches

tended to be more likely to be rated Good or Standard. Rugby pitches, of which there are fewer are reported to be of variable quality.

A very common theme in engagement feedback was the overplaying of pitches. In some cases assessment suggests it may be match play alone that leads to a pattern of overplay but more typically it is a combination of match play and training that causes the most concerns (and of course exacerbated by, if not directly resulting from, wet weather).

We have not sought to quantify how much could be spent on sports pitch enhancement but if money were no object it's clear that it could run into hundreds of thousands of pounds. Facilities at sites are also of variable quality with lack of provision of facilities such as toilets, holding back activity levels.

The provision of new pitches

The PPS work shows that there are areas where there is such a shortage of pitches that enhancement work alone is very unlikely to address needs and as such new or extra provision is a logical step, assuming the aspiration is to seek to meet needs. One of the fundamental challenges is that matches are frequently played at the weekends, junior football matches for example most typically on Saturday mornings and adult matches on Saturday afternoons. Whilst some pitches may have spare carrying capacity spread across the whole week to accommodate more matches they can only be used for one match at a time and it's at the weekend, especially Saturdays, when demand peaks. It is at such times where the number of existing (or more importantly potential teams) wanting to play at the same time can exceed the pitches that exists.

Part of the solution to pitch deficiency can be the provision of new pitches. But finding suitable sites can be challenging and actually building them can be very expensive. There is a general picture of demand for new pitches in East Devon towns. In rural areas needs are more difficult to quantify and qualify and in some cases some villages have good facilities and even some smaller villages can be very well supplied (in quantity of pitch terms if not necessarily quality).

The rest of this appendix concentrates on need and demand issues specifically the main East Devon Towns.

Demand for pitches by town location

Bearing in mind enhancement and especially provision considerations we set out below an initial indicative review of pitch provision considerations by town location.

Axminster	
AGP	There is an AGP in Axminster that is not used for match play but is heavily used for training sessions by football clubs, from within the town and beyond. Feedback reports on challenges in finding suitable training slots to book. The AGP is not suitable for hockey and there are no clubs in the town or close by.

Football pitches	There are two sets of grass football pitches in use in Axminster - Cloakham Lawns and Axminster Town pitches. The former may have possible capacity for some extra use, the latter has pitches that assessment shows (especially taking any training use into account) are over-played. Axminster Town have an area at their site for a new small format pitch but have not built this. Provision would alleviate pressure to some degree on the pitches, but any new pitch would be costly to provide.
Rugby pitches	There are no rugby pitches or clubs in the town. Feedback suggests that it is very unlikely that new rugby clubs will form. No pitch need is therefore identified.
Cricket pitches	There is one cricket pitch at Cloakham Lawns and space (now used for football) where a second pitch used to exist. The one pitch was categorised as Standard quality but it does accommodate a number of teams. Given that a second pitch is not maintained it is assumed unlikely that quantified demand for extra pitches exists.
Tennis courts	There are two tennis courts at the LED Leisure centre. Compared to other towns this level of provision is low and there is potential need for extra court provision.
General observations	Generally, Axminster would appear reasonably well provided for sports pitches. The AGP provides for club training though with feedback of over-use/challenges for booking, with pressure from clubs using the facility from surrounding areas.

Budleigh Salterton	
AGP	There is no AGP in Budleigh Salterton. No doubt provision would offer use opportunities, though AGPs at Exmouth and Bicton College are relatively close.
Football pitches	One adult and two junior pitches, at Budleigh Salterton FC, provide for football in the town. From just match play use the adult pitch is at or beyond use capacity and any extra training use will worsen problems. It is likely that there is a case for some additional football pitch provision in the town.
Rugby pitches	There are no rugby pitches or clubs in the town. Feedback suggests that it is very unlikely that new rugby clubs will form. No pitch need is therefore identified. There are two clubs in nearby Exmouth.
Cricket pitches	There are two new cricket pitches in Budleigh Salterton that support a large number of teams. In quantity pitch terms provision is good but there are some supporting facility deficits and pitch quality is not yet established.
Tennis courts	Budleigh Salterton Games Club (Tennis Section) provides a large number of courts in the town.
General observations	For a small town Budleigh Salterton appear reasonably well supplied with pitches. Additional (or at least enhanced) football pitch provision would be likely to be looked upon favourably with pressure on existing facilities, but for others sports, specifically cricket and tennis, overall provision is good.

Exmouth	
AGP	There is full size AGP and a junior size AGP in Exmouth. The full size AGP is suitable for hockey match play but there are no East Devon based teams using the facility (two Exeter based teams make some use). The pitches are widely used and in demand for training use and some junior football match play. The Football Foundation have identified Exmouth as a priority location for new AGP provision, recommending the replacement of a grass football pitch at Exmouth United with a new AGP.
Football pitches	There are a range of football pitches and Ex Dons have one team playing in the town. The only other club supporting adult teams in in the town is Exmouth United – though they do support a large number of teams at adult and also junior level. In addition Brixington Blues also support a large number of youth teams. A range of pitch sites are used by Exmouth clubs with some teams travelling out of the towns to other locations for match play. Given the size of the town football pitch provision is low and it is of some surprise that the town supports only one significant club with adult teams. The Warren View site would appear to be significantly over played, other sites and pitches potentially less so. New pitches should be available in the near future at the former Rolle College, but these will still leave a deficient in pitch availability. There is a strong case for extra football pitch provision in Exmouth.
Rugby pitches	There are two rugby clubs in Exmouth. They both support a range of adult and junior teams, but do so on just three adult sized and one junior sized pitch. The rugby pitches do not have sufficient capacity for training nor for match play and all are overplayed. Match play overuse being exacerbated by training use. A clear pitch deficient is identified in the town with both clubs having a case for extra pitch provision.
Cricket pitches	For a town of its size it is perhaps somewhat surprising that Exmouth is home to just one cricket pitch. But pitch assessment reports a high-quality facility and it supports a large number of adult and junior teams. The fact that there is only one pitch in Exmouth may suggest a pitch deficient, given the size of the town, but we do not have direct feedback calling for or seeking more provision.
Tennis courts	There are a range if indoor and outdoor tennis courts in Exmouth at various sites. We do not have information that may indicate that there is an unmet demand.
General observations	Exmouth has real pressure on sports pitches specifically including for football and rugby. Grass pitch numbers in the town are low compared to the population size with real pressure on the pitches that do exist and clear evidence of use on a number of pitches exceeding reasonable carrying capacity. It is the East Devon town that would appear to see the greatest need for extra pitch provision. A new AGP would alleviate pressures to some degree but it is not clear whether overall it would be sufficient to address need, especially so given that football and rugby have pitch deficits.

Honiton	
AGP	There is currently no AGP in Honiton though the Football Foundation have identified Honiton as a priority location for new AGP provision. There is an overall demand for sports pitches in Honiton, from football, rugby and hockey, that would justify provision but no single surface type would suit all sports for higher standard match play purposes. There is one hockey club based in Honiton who play home matches in Ottery St Mary and have previously raised concerns about not having facilities in the town. We are also aware of demands for football use and might expect the rugby club, should a facility be available, seeking to use it for training purposes.
Football pitches	Honiton Town adult FC support two teams playing on 2 adult pitches, overmarking the cricket pitch at Mountbatten Park Sports & Social Club. Drainage concerns are highlighted in survey work on what are recorded as Standard quality pitches. Match play does not exceed capacity but demands for training on the pitches are unknown. Honiton Town Youth are recorded as supporting 13 teams playing at St Rita's on what were recorded as three marked out pitches – two recorded to be of Standard quality and one Poor (though there may have been four in past seasons). The club advise of insufficient capacity to accommodate the number of teams/players that would want to play and also advise of lack of facilities, with this adversely impacting on girl participation.
Rugby pitches	There is one rugby club in Honiton playing with a large number of teams on two pitches in the town. The pitches have insufficient capacity to accommodate training needs of the club (and they have marginal capacity to accommodate the full match play needs). Taking into account match play and training the pitches are understood to be overplayed. Drainage concerns have been identified as a particular problem and concerns have been raised around quality of changing rooms.
Cricket pitches	Honiton Cricket club support five teams playing at the Mountbatten Park Sports & Social Club. The cricket outfield is overlaid by two football pitches and as well as this causing pitch quality concerns there can be scheduling conflicts from overlapping seasons of play. Pitch quality was assessed as being Good.
Tennis courts	There are two outdoor tennis courts in Honiton at the LED leisure centre, these are overmarket by netball courts. We do not have information that may indicate that there is an unmet demand though compared to other towns, given the size of Honiton, court numbers are low.
General observations	Honiton has been identified as having a pressure for youth football pitch provision and it also noted that the rugby pitches are overplayed with a particular lack of capacity for training use. There is a Honiton hockey club but they have no AGP to play on in the town.

Ottery St Mary	
AGP	There is one AGP in Ottery St Mary located at the Kings School/LED leisure centre. This AGP is used by both of the two Hockey Clubs located in East Devon, for both match play and training. It is also reported to be heavily used by other sports clubs, notably football teams, for training purposes.
Football pitches	Ottery St Mary Football Club supports 16 teams at youth and adult level all playing home matches on two adult and two junior pitches at Washbrook Meadows. Adult pitches are reported to be of a good standard. There is potentially some limited spare capacity from match play use but this would not take into account any use and impacts arising from training.
Rugby pitches	There are no rugby clubs in Ottery St Mary.
Cricket pitches	Ottery St Mary Cricket Club supports 14 teams playing at what is reported as a busy ground of good quality.
Tennis courts	There are five recorded outdoor tennis courts in Ottery St Mary. We do not have information that would indicate that there is any an unmet demand.
General observations	Ottery St Mary supports a wide range of sports and clubs on a decent supply of sports pitches and courts.

Seaton	
AGP	There is no AGP in Seaton but there is one at the nearby Colyton Grammar School LED site. The Colyton LED is suitable for hockey use but supports no hockey clubs. The AGP is, however, used by a range of other sports clubs for training purposes. The Football Foundation have identified the Seaton/Sidmouth area as a priority location for new small sized AGP provision.
Football pitches	Seaton Town FC support three adult teams and a youth team playing at the single pitch Colyford Road site. This was recorded as a good pitch but with tight margins. Match play at the pitch is close to capacity and any training use may well result in a pitch that is overplayed. The club also support a further seven youth teams playing at a single pitch site at Elizabeth Road Recreation Ground.
Rugby pitches	There are no rugby clubs in Seaton.
Cricket pitches	Seaton Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club at Court Lane have a pitch that was rated as good though is playing at close to capacity. The club supports an impressive 13 teams at adult and junior levels at this site.
Tennis courts	There are eight tennis courts in Seaton. We do not have information to indicate that there is an unmet demand and this is a comparatively high level of provision at the town compared to other towns.
General observations	Seaton would appear poorly provided for in respect of football pitches but tennis court provision is high, the cricket pitch is of good quality and the Colyton AGP is relatively close by, but heavily booked.

Sidmouth	
AGP	There is one AGP in Sidmouth that is suitable for and extensively used for club hockey matches. The AGP supports training use for other sports. It is not floodlit but there have been past proposals for floodlighting. See also comments in respect of Seaton and small size additional AGP.
Football pitches	Sidmouth Town Football Club supports 19 teams at adult and youth level. They play on a range of pitches in Sidmouth and Sidford with adult games played at the Manstone Recreation Ground pitch which is rated as Good, based just on match play it would appear to have some spare capacity. Youth teams play at Byes Lane pitches at Sidford, St John's International School and at the relatively close by settlement of Newton Poppleford, at Back Lane. Balls Sport FC also play at Byes Lane and the football pitches here would appear to offer some spare capacity for match play use.
Rugby pitches	Sidmouth Rugby Football Club supports 17 teams at adult and youth level. The Blackmore forms the main town centre pitch used by the club and they also use two pitches Byes Lane in Sidford. The Sidford pitches are overplayed for match use and these and The Blackmore will be exacerbated by any training demands. Pitch maintenance and storage have been highlighted as concerns. It should be noted that there is a third rugby pitch at Sidford but there is no record of the levels of use made of this.
Cricket pitches	Sidmouth Cricket Club support 17 cricket clubs at adult and youth levels. They play at the Sidmouth Cricket Club Field that is rated as good.
Tennis courts	Sidmouth (including Sidford) has 13 tennis courts which is a high number compared to other towns. We do not have information on unmet need and given levels of provision this would appear unlikely.
General observations	Sidmouth (including Sidford) has good overall sports facilities. As with other towns supporting rugby clubs there is pressure on pitches but Sidmouth has more pitches than other locations. The cricket pitch is well used and there is very good tennis court provision. It is a town, however, where the football team travels out of town for some youth football matches.

It should be noted that at Cranbrook pitch delivery is occurring alongside new development and in this Appendix provision and use levels are not specifically commented on. There will need to be bespoke work undertaken for the second new community that is planned for East Devon.