

The current picture

2.1 This section of the strategy assesses the current context for playing pitch provision both nationally and locally within Swindon borough. It contains the following information:

- context - a review of national, regional and local strategies relevant to sport and recreation in Swindon
- an analysis of demographic and participation trends
- playing pitch provision - the national context and the local context
- analysis areas - the assumed populations.

National context

2.2 Despite the explosion of local authority provision during the 1970's and recent private health and fitness boom, participation has remained static, with recently released statistics¹ highlighting that 21% of the adult population aged 16 and over (8.5 million people) take part in sport and active recreation (a minimum of three times thirty minutes per week).

2.3 The Active People survey also enables analysis on the different sports that people currently participate in. Walking remains the most popular form of physical activity with 20% of the population participating at least once a month. Fitness related activities, often done on an individual basis or in classes, dominate more traditional sports such as football, rugby, cricket and hockey. Football does however feature in the top 10 of sporting activities with a total of 2.9 million people playing once a month or more. The findings from the survey reveal the popularity of different sports varies substantially between men and women and across different regions in England.

2.4 The breakdown of participation by sport included within this Playing Pitch Strategy is shown in Table 2.1 below. It can be seen that football is by far the most popular of the pitch sports.

Table 2.1: Sport by Sport results from the Active People Survey

Sport and recreational activities	Rank Order (out of 74)	% of the adult population (16 plus) taking part at least once a month	Number of adults (16 plus) taking part at least once a month
Football (all)	5	7.1	2,910,684
Cricket	17	0.9	380,366
Rugby Union	21	0.7	267,817
Hockey-field	30	0.3	141,351

Making the case for sport

2.5 Over recent years the role of sport and active recreation in the delivery of wider quality of life benefits (as outlined in the Council's corporate priorities), has been increasingly recognised at a national level.

¹ Sport England. Active People Survey. 2006

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- 2.6 This has been driven by **Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives (DCMS/Strategy Unit, December 2002)**. This report outlines the Government's long term vision for increasing participation and high performance in sport:
- "by 2020 to increase significantly levels of sport and physical activity, particularly among disadvantaged groups, and to achieve sustained levels of success in international competition".*
- 2.7 The Government wants to encourage the growth of a mass participation culture, with the ambitious target of achieving 70% of the population active (currently 30%). However it is realised by experts within the field and those delivering sport and recreation that this target is challenging. Industry experts have therefore recommended that a lower target of 50% of the population active by 2020 is set, with a 1% increase targeted year-on-year.
- 2.8 Game Plan's remit is wider than sport alone and recognises the link between physical activity and improving health and the importance of focussing on young people. In achieving such links and targeted participation increases there is recognition of the need for more innovative solutions to provision.
- 2.9 Major investment to date and continuing investment relevant to this project has been made into schools through the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Link Strategy (PESSCL). **DfES: Learning through PE and Sport (2003)** stresses the importance of PE and sport in schools (curricular and extracurricular) and reinforces the role of schools in serving the community.
- 2.10 The case is further illustrated in **Sport Playing Its Part: The Contribution of Sport to Building Safe, Strong and Sustainable Communities (Sport England, 2005)**. This is one of a series of documents published by Sport England outlining how sport can enrich people's quality of life, raise self-esteem and confidence levels and provide enjoyment to individuals. Sport and active recreation also has the potential to contribute to strengthen community involvement, engagement, identity and civic pride.
- 2.11 Sport and other cultural (or leisure) services can be a powerful tool to engage all sections of the community and break down barriers between them. Marginalised groups are often more willing to engage with such activities than other government funded activities.
- 2.12 **Community Cohesion - An Action Guide, Local Government Association, 2004** outlines the roles that sport can play in meeting wider corporate objectives including:
- strengthening community involvement, engagement, identity and pride
 - improving community cohesion
 - reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
 - improving quality of built and natural environment and creating a sense of place
 - encouraging sustainable travel.
- 2.13 The provision of high quality playing fields in the right location will be instrumental in driving forward the health and physical activity agenda and increasing participation nationally. This Playing Pitch Strategy will guide the effective distribution of playing

pitches across Swindon and will ensure that investment is targeted to the areas in which it is most needed.

2.14 The **Building Schools for the Future Programme** and **Primary Capital Programme** represent the largest investment into the school estate over the next 15 years. The Department for Education and Skills issued guidance to Local Authorities in September 2005 for 'Improved Joined Up Planning and Funding' to launch the first of these initiatives with a view to enabling schools to become a 'hub' for the local community. This is further supported by the extended schools agenda whereby all secondary schools will be required to offer 'dawn till dusk' provision with effect from 2010. This agenda includes widespread community use of the schools facilities. These programmes offer the opportunity to provide significant opportunities nationwide to further joined up thinking and to provide community resources. This programme offers the opportunity to:

- protect school facilities
- enhance the value of school playing fields to the local community
- create and enhance school club links and provide home grounds for more local clubs
- facilitate the growth of mini and youth seven a side soccer
- support and improve opportunities to play sport in school
- enhance joined up thinking.

2.15 Although Swindon Borough Council has started to consider opportunities to enhance the secondary school estate through Building Schools for the Future, significant funding is unlikely to become available until after 2011. However, significant capital investment has already taken place through the PFI scheme in the Northern Sector with the development of Community Use Agreement for the associated playing field areas at the respective secondary schools. Further opportunities for the development of the secondary school estate are being taken forward through the development of an Academy at Headlands School. Swindon Borough Council has been identified as a pilot authority for the primary capital programme, which could offer further opportunities to explore how primary school playing pitch provision may be developed and accessed by the wider community. Specific opportunities will be explored later in this strategy.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).

2.16 Planning Policy Guidance Notes set out the Government's national policies on different aspects of planning.

2.17 PPG17 states that *"the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and sports and recreational facilities"*.

2.18 Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:

- supporting an urban renaissance
- supporting a rural renewal
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion

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- health and well being
 - promoting more sustainable development.
- 2.19 The policy guidance highlights the requirement for local authority decisions regarding open space, sport and recreation to be informed by local needs assessments and an audit of existing provision. Such audits should incorporate qualitative, quantitative and accessibility considerations as well as the overall non-monetary value of the land and the level of use. National standards are no longer considered to meet local needs, although they may be used as benchmarks.
- 2.20 The findings of this Playing Pitch Strategy will be integrated into the borough's Open Space Audit and Assessment, which is currently being reviewed internally, to ensure suitable standards are set for quantity, quality and accessibility, in line with PPG17 standards.

Regional context

- 2.21 The regional context is set out in the section that follows.

Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 10) for the South West

- 2.22 The Regional Planning guidance for the South West sets out a vision of:

"developing the region, in a sustainable way, as a national and European region of quality and diversity, where the quality of life for residents, the business community and visitors will be maintained and enhanced."

- 2.23 This document will be superseded by the regional Spatial Strategy, which is currently only in a draft format and is reviewed below.

Policy TCS2: Culture, Leisure and Sport

- 2.24 The RPG policy for culture, leisure and sport states that local authorities and other agencies should, in their plans, policies and proposals:
- identify and protect recreational open spaces and playing fields
 - identify sites and opportunities for the provision of new cultural, leisure and community sports facilities, particularly in areas of identified under-provision, or major new development (including the UK Sports Institute National Network Centre and the proposed new national sailing facility at Portland) and ensure that new facilities are readily accessible by sustainable modes of transport
 - maximise the use of highly managed areas such as country parks, national trails, cultural attractions and sports facilities
 - encourage less intensive recreation in other areas such as river valleys and coastal areas by providing essential facilities, such as toilets, bus stops, footpaths and cycleways in appropriate, sustainable locations.
 - maximise the positive benefits of sport, leisure, recreation and cultural development for the environment, local communities, local economies and visitors
 - reflect planning policy guidance including that contained in PPG7 (The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social

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Development), PPG13 (Transport), PPG17 (Sport and Recreation), PPG20 (Coastal Planning) and PPG21 (Tourism)

- prepare management strategies for inland and coastal waters of major recreational significance, taking into account recreational demands and the need for environmental protection.

2.25 The development of this Playing Pitch Strategy will ensure that existing playing pitch provision is retained and that new opportunities to develop new facilities and enhance existing facilities are identified in line with regional planning guidance.

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 to 2026

2.26 The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) aims to manage change and development and highlights that the South West will need to rise to the challenge of a growing population and fulfil its role in national and regional prosperity.

2.27 The Draft RSS influences the future planning of the region in a number of ways:

- as part of the statutory development plan system it provides guidance on the location and scale of development for interpretation in Local Development Frameworks
- it guides investment in transport and provides a framework for the preparation of Local Transport Plans
- it provides a spatial context for the plans, programmes and investment of other agencies and organisations in the South West.

2.28 One of the key sustainability principles to guide the spatial strategy that influence open space is sustainable communities:

- creating healthy, safe and secure places to live
- providing networks of accessible green space for people to enjoy supporting social and economic progress by enhancing education, skills development and training.

2.29 The strategy identifies Swindon as a strategically significant city and town (SSTC), which has and will continue to have a regional and sub-regional important function and potential, playing a critical role in development in the period to 2026. Aims for SSTC's include:

- improving the quality of the urban environment
- promote social cohesion and health and secure living conditions through access to and provision of good social and community facilities.

2.30 It is anticipated that Swindon will continue to grow and prosper, and a specific priority for the town is the regeneration and renewal of the urban area. The increased density of development and high quality design are key in the delivery of the vision for Swindon. Correspondingly, there is a need for Swindon to complement its economic potential with social, cultural and environmental improvements including upgrading existing and new regional sporting, leisure and cultural facilities. This Playing Pitch Strategy will support the delivery of this enhanced infrastructure.

2.31 To support this urban focused strategy, the draft RSS proposes a strategic urban extension of approximately 12,000 dwellings to the east of the A419. This

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development is aimed to provide residential, social and economic opportunities and meet identified development requirements.

- 2.32 A number of smaller, non-strategic extensions are also proposed in Swindon borough. Local Development Documents for Swindon should bring forward these proposed smaller-scale sustainable urban extensions to assist in delivering the scale of growth over the plan period, addressing the distribution of financial contributions arising from S106 agreements and other funding mechanisms to deliver key infrastructure. Section 106 agreements are legal obligations between the local planning authority and a developer that relate to the development taking place. These agreements can involve a variety of different elements and may include a commitment from the developer to provide new sports facilities or to contribute financially towards the improvement of existing sites. All developments can therefore have significant implications for pitch provision in the borough and will be returned to later in this strategy.

The Regional Plan for Sport, Sport England (SW) – Life’s Out There……Be Active in the South West 2004-2008

- 2.33 Life’s Out There……Be Active in the South West is the plan for sport and physical activity in the region. Its formulation has involved national, regional and local consultations with key stakeholders, agencies and organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors and has been facilitated by Sport England under the guidance of the new South West Sports Board.
- 2.34 The plan’s vision for sport in the southwest is that people should have the best opportunity to start, stay and succeed in sport.
- 2.35 The plan has three main aims:
- to drive up participation levels of the south west population by at least 1% year on year
 - improve performance by increasing representation at national and international levels
 - bring together a wide range of partners to create a more active and community-focused southwest.
- 2.36 The plan’s goals are categorised under start, stay and succeed, as summarised in Table 2.2 overleaf.

Table 2.2: The Regional Plan for Sport's Goals

Start	Children should have at least two hours of quality curriculum PE a week At least 50% of the population active by 2020 People have access to local free-play facilities in all communities with more than 1,000 people
Stay	80% of the population have access to at least one multi sport hub within 20 minutes of their home address Population's membership of sports clubs should increase by 100% At least 25% of the region's working population should enjoy activity through the week Protect playing fields and community access for future generations
Succeed	Increase the number of people involved in sports squads by 100% Increase the number of major events hosted in the south west Region-wide talent development system

2.37 Good quality pitch provision will be essential in implementing the plan and achieving its key goals across Swindon borough. The apparent national and regional 'bottom up' approach to sports development requires a general improvement in grass roots and community facilities. It helps young people to succeed in life and develop close links between schools and sports clubs, creating a better and more positive local community.

Local context

2.38 Whilst consideration of the national and regional context is important, the local context of Swindon is equally important in determining the detail of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Local strategic documents

Our Swindon, Our Community, Our Future: A Community Strategy for Swindon 2004-2010

2.39 Swindon's Community Strategy is a long-term plan to ensure a better quality of life for residents, at the present and in the future. The document's vision is:

'to create a place where people are proud to spend time, live, work and visit and which achieves a better quality of life for all'.

2.40 Throughout the development of the community strategy there has been wide-ranging consultation to capture the views of Swindon's residents on what is important to them to improve the quality of life in the borough.

2.41 As a consequence, the strategy has six themes:

- creating a Swindon for the future
- an economically prosperous place
- a place which values its environment

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- a healthy and caring place
 - a learning and creative place
 - keeping Swindon safe.
- 2.42 The strategy also includes four cross cutting values; citizenship, pride and identity, sustainable development, equality, inclusion and cohesion, and partnership working.
- 2.43 In order to achieve the aims and objectives outlined in the strategy, a series of aims have been defined. The most relevant to this study are outlined as follows:
- ensure all new developments have local shops, leisure facilities and schools within a walking distance of 300m (10 minute walk)
 - protect, maintain and enhance the natural environment and open spaces
 - increase, by 2006, the percentage of those participating in sport and physical activity from 30% to 36%.
- 2.44 Effective distribution of high quality pitches can contribute to the achievement of the above goals.

Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 (Adopted July 2006)

- 2.45 The Local Plan forms part of the statutory development plan system that ensures an appropriate balance is struck between the demands for new development and conservation of the remainder of the built and natural environment. This is a particularly important document in light of the Council's commitment to continuing sustainable levels of development to maintain Swindon's economic status.
- 2.46 The Local Plan plays an important role in delivering the Council's vision and corporate priorities, guiding development in the borough. It will eventually be superseded by the Local Development Framework, a requirement of the new statutory planning system.
- 2.47 The specific objectives for sport, recreation, leisure and tourism contained within the local plan are:
- enable provision of, and access to recreation, leisure, sport and tourism opportunities for residents, employees and visitors
 - provide an appropriate range of open space to meet the outdoor recreational needs of Swindon's community and establish a network of green corridors that provide access to the countryside, while protecting and enhancing wildlife interests
 - maximise existing infrastructure and public service provision and ensure new development opportunities provide appropriate educational, health, cultural and other facilities to meet the needs of the community.
- 2.48 Policies outlined in the Local Plan that are of relevance to this study are outlined below:
- **R1-** Swindon town centre should be the focus of all significant sport, recreation, leisure and tourism proposals over the plan period
 - **R4** – development that would result in the loss of public open space, playing fields, allotments and other important recreational space will not be permitted

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unless under the guidance of certain parameters i.e. there is an excess, alternative provision can be made or it enhances the quality of provision

- **R5** – within strategic development areas and at Commonhead new residential development will be required to make provision of 3.2 ha of public open space per 1,000 people
- **R6** – in areas of quantitative or qualitative deficiency in open space proposals for new housing development of 25 dwellings or greater will be required to make adequate provision for open space.

2.49 The Playing Pitch Strategy will provide guidance on pitch provision throughout the borough.

Swindon Open Space Audit and Assessment (Adopted August 2004)

2.50 The audit and assessment follows PPG17 and the companion guide, and provides up to date information on open space within the borough. It can be used to support the implementation of policies in the Local Plan.

2.51 A total of 1815 open spaces were identified providing 1542 ha, of this approximately 1017 ha (66%) was publicly accessible recreational open space.

2.52 Consultation surrounding the outdoor sports provision highlighted a number of key themes relevant to this Playing Pitch Strategy:

- 25% of people surveyed (including children) participate in outdoor sports, with football outlined as the most popular sport
- greater concern was expressed over the quality and maintenance of open spaces rather than the quantity available.

2.53 Access to public sports pitches is variable across the borough according to the open space assessment. The overall findings indicate that there is a surplus of adult football pitches and cricket pitches which contrast with a shortfall in junior football, rugby and hockey pitches. The Council indicate however that they would not want to see a reduction in the level of pitches, and that there is potential to offset some unmet demand through the community use of school pitches, which is not formally acknowledged in the assessment. This playing pitch assessment will provide more clarity and detail on these issues.

2.54 Sports provision in the study areas are compared to quantity, quality and accessibility standards to provide an overview for the borough.

Swindon-This is Swindon: Culture and Leisure Strategy, 2003-2013

2.55 The vision for Swindon is to be a place that fully integrates culture into all aspects of life and work in the borough. The strategy:

- places culture, leisure and cultural planning approached at the centre of the Council's forward planning
- re-states the importance of culture, leisure and cultural planning approaches as a catalyst for development in the borough
- draws together common elements from a number of Council plans and strategies in order to establish a shared vision for cultural planning.

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2.56 The aims of the culture and leisure strategy are to:

- forge partnerships
- provide opportunities for people to gain knowledge of a broad range of cultural activities to make choices
- promote and raise the profile of cultural activities
- engender a sense of pride in Swindon
- set the direction and priorities for cultural activities
- provide services that are based on the needs and aspirations of Swindon people
- integrate cultural activity into everyday living and decision making
- improve access to involvement and participation.

2.57 Actions outlined in this strategy, that are of relevance to this Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) include:

- identify facility needs of the borough and local communities and incorporate into sports and physical activity plans
- develop a sports pitch strategy
- identify shortfalls in provision and implement ways of solving these.

Swindon – More Active More Often – Leisure Strategy 2007 - 2027

2.58 The Swindon Borough Council Leisure Strategy concludes that Swindon has more quality opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity than in other towns and cities of similar size.

2.59 The Leisure Strategy targets increased participation in sport and active recreation and discusses the facilities required to meet the needs of residents in the future and outlines how the facilities will be efficiently and effectively managed.

2.60 Public consultation concluded that while residents are willing to travel large distances to use high quality regional facilities, there remain aspirations for local facilities.

2.61 The strategy sets a series of actions for the Council and its partners, under the themes of participation, facility development and management. Targets identified in the Leisure Strategy, which overlap with and complement this Playing Pitch Strategy include:

- the creation of a sports development pathways matrix
- increasing public awareness of the benefits of physical activity
- protection of the sports facilities at Moredon Recreation Ground
- work with the private sector and schools to open their pitches to community use
- identify and develop new pitches
- improve pitch and support facilities at Walcot, Mannington, Penhill and Lydiard

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- develop a small-sided soccer centre.

2.62 This Playing Pitch Strategy will guide the Council in the achievement of some of the above objectives.

Developer Contributions to Culture and Leisure Facilities Development Control Guidance Note (Adopted September 2006)

2.63 Provision of culture and leisure facilities underpins people's quality of life. Swindon's population is projected to increase from 182,000 to 205,200 by 2011 and the demand for leisure and culture facilities will increase in line with growth.

2.64 Therefore, when a development proposal will place increased burden on facilities, there is justified reason to expect the development to make contribution to them. A housing developer will be required to make a contribution of £160 per average size dwelling towards leisure facilities.

Open Space and New Housing Development Supplementary Planning Guidance (Adopted August 2004)

2.65 Open spaces play an important role in developing communities, health and well being, enhancing biodiversity value, urban regeneration, recreation, flood prevention and education. In Swindon, a number of open spaces play a key role in providing venues for a range of community events including sporting competitions. The document sets out a recommended contribution of £135.57 per one bed dwelling towards new playing pitch provision.

Swindon Borough Council – demographics and profile

2.66 In analysing the need and demand for any new sport and recreation facility it is important to assess the size and composition of the local leisure markets and the impact they will have upon facility usage.

2.67 Swindon Borough Council is located in the South West of England and is to the northeast of Wiltshire, bordering on Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. Swindon had a population of 180,051 in 2001, and a population density of 7.82 people per hectare, which is significantly above the England average of 3.77 (Census 2001). This high population density suggests that greenspace (and consequently playing pitch provision) is at a premium.

2.68 In total there are 22 wards within Swindon borough boundaries. The population is distributed evenly across most wards, with populations primarily ranging from 8,000 to 10,000. Despite this and the high boroughwide population density, Swindon town is surrounded by significant rural countryside, reflected by lower housing densities and lower ward populations, the lowest being Ridgeway with 2,958.

2.69 The population profile is in line with South West and England averages for age groups 0 to 19, but the borough has a greater proportion of 20-44 year olds (38.5%) when compared to south west (32.4%) and England averages (35.3%). Correspondingly the proportion of those aged 45 and above is below southwest and England averages.

2.70 The existing population of 190,000 is projected to increase rapidly to 206,000 by 2011, reflecting the high levels of development predicted to take place over the next few years.

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- 2.71 Both existing and projected population and economic activity structures has implications for both the provision of pitches and will be considered when analysing current and future provision of pitches. The key implications of the population profile are considered below in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Demographic analysis summary

Demographic Indicator	Impact on facility usage
The total population is 190,051. This is projected to increase by 2011 to over 206,000.	There is a large potential user base for leisure facilities and sports pitches within Swindon. This user base is projected to grow and demand is therefore consequently likely to increase
64% of the population are below the age of 44	People aged below 44 have a high propensity to participate in physical activity and in pitch sports specifically. A high proportion of this population is aged between 0-14, which will have an impact on the demand for mini and junior pitches
22% of households in Swindon do not have a car or van, compared to 27% in England as a whole. Despite this, there are pockets of deprivation in Swindon, where the proportion of residents with access to a car is below the national average.	The number of households without a car is significantly lower than the national averages which suggest that residents are able to travel to some degree to reach facilities. Nevertheless localised sport and leisure facilities and public transport links are important to reflect the urban nature of Swindon, the need for local facilities and the importance of encouraging sustainable transport. This is particularly important in the areas of higher deprivation.
2.5% of the population are unemployed, which is lower than the national average. Additionally, Swindon has a lower proportion of residents than the national average in the lower socio economic groups.	People with higher disposable incomes have a greater propensity to participate in sport. Furthermore, the cost of using facilities and participating in sporting activity is a key barrier for residents that are unemployed or on low incomes.

Participation trends in key sports

2.72 Key national statistics, trends, issues and implications for future demand for playing pitches are outlined in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: National trends in pitch sports

	Key facts	Key trends	Implication for pitches and ancillary facilities
Football	Out of school, football has experienced the biggest growth in 'frequent' participation from 37% in 1994 to 43% in 1999.	More children are playing due to popularity of mini soccer	More mini soccer sized pitches needed
	Female soccer is now starting to grow nationally at a rapid pace	More women are playing the game	Improved quality of ancillary facilities and in particular dedicated changing facilities
	A 300-400% growth in informal 5-a-side football	More mid-week fixtures, more non-grass pitches	Players defecting to five-a-side, therefore additional synthetic turf and indoor space may be required
	The FA forecast the number of youth players to increase by 10% over next five years. The Active People survey indicates that 7% of the population now participate in football.	More pitches will be needed	The vast number of children playing mini-soccer will result in the need for more junior pitches in five year's time
Cricket	Kwik cricket – a game devised for children is played by 1.1 million pupils in 90% of the country's primary schools – 434,000 of these are girls	Increased participation by young people	More pitches used for Kwik cricket introduced in schools
	Despite the declining men's game, the number of women's clubs increased from 4,200 in 1997 to 7,611 in 2001	Increased participation by women	Improved access needed to quality training pitches and improved ancillary facilities in smaller clubs is required
	England won The Ashes in 2005. Recent losses may however result in a downturn in enthusiasm and participation.	The England and Wales Cricket Board has reported a 50% increase in participation across all forms of cricket	Increased pressure on pitch availability, and requirements for additional ancillary accommodation
Rugby Union	Rugby - Making An Impact is the most comprehensive study into participation trends in rugby union in England. 254 ex-players, 193 people involved in rugby at all levels, and 1,708 members of the public were interviewed between January and April 2003	Over the past five seasons, the average number of sides fielded by each active club has fallen to an average of 2.7 per club, from 2.9 in the 1997-98 season.	Clubs will be targeted to ensure they can run additional teams, therefore the demand for pitches will remain static or potentially increase (outcome of Rugby World Cup 2007 will have an impact)
	The number of adult males playing rugby has decreased by 12% over last five years	Decline in the men's game is recognised but many initiatives are in place to increase opportunities and promote the sport	May require better quality pitches with ancillary facilities

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	Key facts	Key trends	Implication for pitches and ancillary facilities
	Women's participation has increased significantly in recent years - from approximately 2,000 players in 1988, to 8,000 by 1998	Increase in participation by women. Women's rugby is still a minority sport but is stronger than ever, particularly in universities.	Improved clubhouse facilities and increased access to pitches
Hockey	Hockey is one of top five most popular games in schools, although adult participation declined from 20% in 1994, to 17% in 1999 and the number of children citing it as enjoyable dropped from 13% to 10% over the same period	Slight decline in youth participation. Emphasis therefore is placed on promoting hockey among young people to secure the future of the game. However, many clubs still do not have access to STPs	Continuing requirement for STPs and improved clubhouse facilities to meet league requirements and to encourage club/team formation may be required.

- 2.73 Whilst the above provides a useful indication as to the changing nature of pitch sports, it must be acknowledged that trends vary across the country. The local context is therefore discussed below.
- 2.74 The analysis of participation rates for the borough is extremely important to ascertain the propensity of residents to partake in physical exercise. In addition, Active People also enables a range of other important sport related measures are included such as club membership, involvement in competition, receiving tuition or coaching and contributing to sport through voluntary activity.
- 2.75 The survey results for Swindon taken from the October 2005 – October 2006 survey indicate that 19.5% of the population participate in sport and recreational activities, which places Swindon within the middle 50% of Local Authorities in England. However, this score puts Swindon amongst the worst four in the southwest, for which the average is 21.9%. The national average for adults is 21%.
- 2.76 Participation, specifically in football will be measured against other local authorities using data derived from the FA County Administration System. This will be returned to in section five.

Playing pitch provision

Provision in England - A lack of reliable data

- 2.77 The Register of Recreational Land was undertaken in the early 1990s, however, the data collected has not been updated, and therefore it is an increasingly unreliable source and should be treated purely as historical data.
- 2.78 Despite this, the statistics tend to reflect the most recent pitch audit – the Register of English Football Facilities (REFF) – which was commissioned by the Football Foundation and the Football Association in 2001 and completed in February 2002. The information collected went ‘live’ on the REFF website (www.reff.org.uk) in November 2002. Research revealed that there are 35,044 grass football pitches in England (21,640 adult, 8,418 junior, 4,986 mini).
- 2.79 Most recently, analysis of football play by the FA reveals that 82% of all football is played on public sector land of which approximately 25% is on school sites.
- 2.80 In July 2004 Sport England launched the Active Places website (www.activeplaces.com). This website contains information about all sports facilities in England (of certain types) and includes information on pitches in each local authority. This database should be updated following completion of this strategy using Active Places Power. The Active Places database now indicates that 93% of residents are within a 20-minute drivetime of at least one playing pitch.

A lack of monitoring

- 2.81 With the exception of REFF and Active Places there are no other reliable data sources concerning the numbers of pitches in England. In addition, there is no nationally established system for monitoring change.
- 2.82 The exact number of pitches being lost to development or neglect remains a contentious issue. The DCMS has established a Playing Fields Monitoring Group, tasked with publishing some definitive data.
- 2.83 By virtue of statutory instrument made in 1996, Sport England is a statutory consultee on proposals for development that affect playing fields, land used as playing fields at any time in the last five years which remains undeveloped, or land which is identified for use as a playing field in a development plan. All applications that local planning authorities are minded to approve, but have attracted an objection from Sport England, will be referred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for consideration.
- 2.84 The local planning authority must notify Sport England when a relevant planning application is received to develop a pitch. Data stored by Sport England on statutory consultations since 1999 reveals the increasing pressure that is being placed upon pitches throughout the country (table 2.5 overleaf).
- 2.85 Recently published figures suggest that nationally, sixty-two new playing fields were created in 2004/05 and in contrast, only two playing fields were completely lost neither of which had previously been accessible to the general public. Of all applications regarding playing pitches, 96% resulted in either no change to the overall level of pitch provision or an improvement on the pitches previously there. During 2004/05 there were 1271 planning applications for development on playing fields, 1087 cases of which were concluded within the year and 184 are still awaiting a decision. Of the 1087 concluded cases, 1040 (96 per cent) represented either a

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benefit or no change to the level of formal sporting provision. The majority of these are from applicants wanting to improve the quality of their sporting facilities. A reduction in sporting capacity (where the development of a site affected a proportion of the playing field) occurred in 47 cases (4 per cent). While 16 of these sites were local authority owned playing fields, the remaining 31 were private clubs.

Table 2.5: Statutory consultations with Sport England

Region	Number of consultations received					
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
East	38	93	88	116	144	197
East Midlands	30	74	112	140	137	151
London	25	36	39	59	59	40
North East	37	36	71	74	96	85
North West	92	129	145	193	175	72
South East	147	214	162	234	237	227
South West	48	36	73	83	181	149
West Midlands	111	162	161	213	194	199
Yorkshire	97	95	134	185	190	151
England	625	875	985	1297	1413	1271

- 2.86 As shown in Table 2.5, Sport England was consulted on more planning applications during 2003 / 2004 than in any other year and the total level declined slightly by 2004/05. Trends in the South West followed this national pattern. During 2004 /05, Sport England objected to 98 planning applications with compromised the provision of outdoor sports facilities. Of these, 51 did not go ahead.
- 2.87 Recently released figures by the DCMS state that £157 million has been invested over the last year in 482 outdoor facilities and 157 indoor facilities. This includes synthetic pitches and sports halls amongst other facility types.
- 2.88 The DCMS commended these improvements, highlighting the role that investment in facilities can have in increasing the level of physical activity across the country. Sport England continue to safeguard pitches as well as helping to enhance sporting facilities by only giving approval for alterations where there are increased benefits for sporting facilities.
- 2.89 The supply of pitches in Swindon will be considered in detail in section four.

Summary

- 2.90 Table 2.6 overleaf summarises the main implications that the contextual review has on Swindon and the provision of playing pitches.

Table 2.6: Summary of contextual review

Area	Key Issues	Role of this strategy in achieving these objectives
National context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of meeting wider national policy objectives, particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provision of opportunities for identified target groups - promoting the health related benefits of sport and leisure activities - increasing mass participation levels • the importance of closely reflecting National Governing Body of Sport priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it will highlight geographical deficiencies in provision and participation (through the number of teams) and provide suitable recommendations • recognises initiatives aimed at increasing participation levels to look at the future provision
Regional Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting regional importance of sport and associated outdoor sports facilities in providing opportunities for all to progress and improve their quality of life and health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon is outlined as an area of urban development, associated to population growth there is a requirement to ensure sports pitch provision in the future is sufficient to meet demand • sports pitch provision and usage can contribute towards the aim of a year on year increase in participation, of at least 1%
Local Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to ensure that sports development priorities and facility development are closely linked • recognition of the role that sports can play in the achievement of wider Council initiatives and priorities • importance of providing an environment where people feel safe • increase the number of people who have the opportunity to take part in various sporting activity, in particular in under-represented groups and areas • ensuring school outdoor sports facilities are used to supplement demand • meeting the needs of the growing population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing the role of school pitches through building schools for the future initiative PFI initiative whilst highlighting deficient areas where school provision could help alleviate undersupply • sports facilities, including grass pitch, provision can help create sustainable, cohesive and healthy communities • significant housing development in the borough provides the Council with opportunity to raise S106 monies to dedicate for the provision, repair and maintenance of sports pitch provision • despite the opportunities the significant housing growth brings, this will also generate increased pressure on pitches and green spaces