

Supply and demand

Introduction

4.1 This section outlines the current situation in Swindon in terms of pitch provision for, and demand from, football, cricket, rugby and hockey clubs. The overall supply is analysed, taking into consideration:

- overall pitch stock
- community pitches
- location of pitches
- site visits
- club consultation.

Supply: playing pitch provision in Swindon

Pitch stock

4.2 Overall, the research methods outlined in section three identified **243 playing pitches in Swindon borough**. This figure includes all known public, private, school and other pitches whether or not they are in secured public use. The full audit of pitches can be seen in Appendix C. These pitches comprise:

- 93 adult football pitches
- 70 junior football pitches
- 24 mini football pitches
- 20 cricket pitches
- 15 adult rugby union pitches
- 6 junior rugby union pitches
- 11 adult grass hockey pitches
- 4 STPs.

4.3 When comparing these findings to those of the previous PPS, it is evident that the balance of these facilities has changed during the strategy period, with a reduction in the number of adult football pitches and increases in the number of pitches catering for junior and mini football teams. The provision of synthetic facilities in the borough has also increased.

4.4 Of these pitches, 143 (58%) are full-size adult football, cricket, rugby and hockey pitches. This equates to circa one pitch for every 1,056 adults (aged 16 plus) in Swindon. This ratio is lower than the national average in 1991 (Source: The 1991 Playing Pitch Strategy) and compares unfavourably to many other authorities for which informal data is currently available (from PMP's database) as shown in Table 4.1 overleaf. It is also lower than the ratio of adults to pitches in 2001, reflecting the growing demand for smaller sized junior pitches.

Table 4.1: Ratio of adult pitches per 1000 adults

Local Authority	Ratio (Pitches: adults)
Kennett District Council	1:365
St Albans City and District Council	1:540
South Somerset District Council	1:608
Colchester City Council	1:655
Halton Borough Council	1:677
North Lincolnshire Council	1:773
North Wiltshire District Council	1:804
Derwentside District Council	1:815
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	1:867
South Ribble Borough Council	1:891
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	1:968
Northamptonshire County	1:1,015
St Helens	1:1,050
Portsmouth City Council	1:1,100
Wolverhampton City Council	1:1,537
Swindon BC	1:1056
England	1:989

4.5 The local ratio for specific sports in comparison to the estimated national average is shown in Table 4.2 below. Despite the poor ratio of pitches to the number of adults overall, it can be seen that provision of football facilities remains above the national average.

Table 4.2: Ratio of adult pitches to adults, for football and cricket

Sport	Swindon Borough Council (adults per pitch)	England (adults per pitch)
Football	1:1,623	1:1,840
Cricket	1:7,549	1:4,243
Rugby Union	1:10,065	1:8968

Community pitches

4.6 In line with ‘Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy’ (Sport England, CCPR and the NPFA 2003), our definition of ‘community pitches’ is those pitches with ‘secured community use’, recognising that this has a considerable bearing upon the value of facilities both individually and collectively to the community at large.

4.7 In practice this definition embraces:

- pitches which are in local authority management or other public ownership or management
- any facilities owned, used or maintained by clubs/private individuals which as a matter of policy or practice are available for use by large sections of the public through membership of a club or admission fee. In either case the ‘cost of use’ must be reasonable and affordable for the majority of the community.

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- pitches at education sites which are available for use by the public through formal community use arrangements
 - any other institutional facilities which are available to the public as a result of formal dual/community agreements.
- 4.8 Pitches at educational establishments are therefore only considered to be 'secured' for community use if one or more of the following is applicable:
- there is a formal community use agreement in place
 - there is a leasing management arrangement between the Council and the school requiring the pitch to be available to community teams
 - a policy of community use minuted by the school, including the provision of a tariff of charges
 - minutes of the board of school governors allowing use of pitches by community teams
 - written commitment from the school and,
 - where it is the proved intention of the school to maintain access for community teams to its pitch(es) at peak times for the next two or more years.
- 4.9 While many schools in Swindon permit community use, few were able to demonstrate comprehensive formal agreements to meet the above criteria. Only those schools where community use was confirmed have therefore been included; specifically: Dorcan Technology College, Learning Campus, Greendown Community School, Headlands, Ridgeway, and Lainsmead and Liden Primary Schools.
- 4.10 The issue of securing the remaining pitches for community use will be returned to in section six. This links to the opportunities offered through the extended schools programme and the Building Schools for the Future Programme and the significant housing developments scheduled during the strategy period.
- 4.11 School sites are frequently unable to offer the same opportunities as other pitches because many do not have separate changing facilities and pitch hire is frequently subject to school holidays. Furthermore, there is a cost to schools to open up their sites and this must be recouped through any fees payable for the use of the pitch. While many schools in Swindon raised issues regarding the cost to the school and the increased reliance on the caretaker to open facilities as barriers to community use, almost all responding schools highlighted the poor quality of their facilities (particularly drainage) and the likely impact that additional use of these facilities would have on the pitches as the key barrier to permitting community use. Despite this, only 9% of respondents to the school survey rated the overall quality of their pitch as poor and 35% deemed it to be good.
- 4.12 19% of schools with no existing community use agreement indicated that they would consider the option of a formal agreement in the future.
- 4.13 As a result of the reasons highlighted above, and the fact that midweek curriculum use significantly reduces the capacity of pitches, those school pitches currently used by the community have been considered able to sustain one community game per week.
- 4.14 Of the 243 pitches identified, 158 **(64%) are secured for use by the local community**. As demonstrated in Table 4.3 overleaf, 65% is high in comparison to some other authorities (selected from a sample of studies undertaken by PMP). This represents a significant increase on the proportion of pitches available for community use in the 2001 study (55%). Schools that are used by the community but have no formal agreements are not included within the 65%. Should these schools be included, over 85% of all pitches

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would be secured for community use. The third generation synthetic pitch is not currently available for community use.

Table 4.3: Percentage of secured community pitches in other Local Authorities

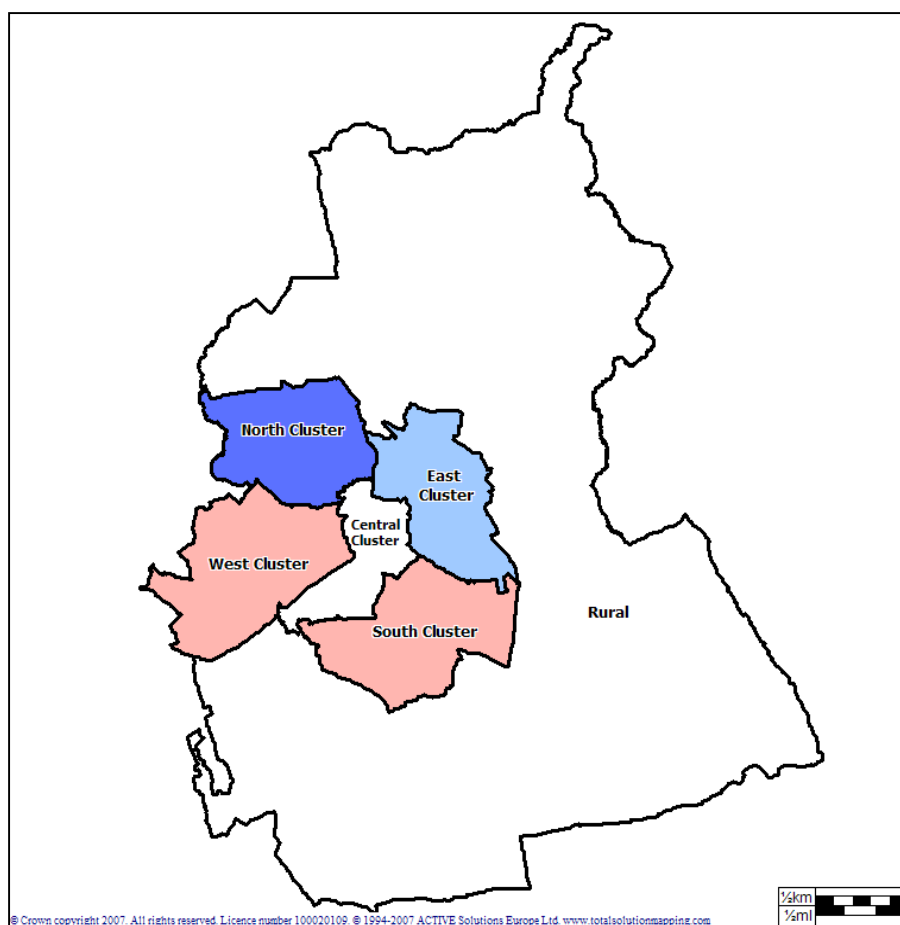
Local Authority	% of pitches secured for community use
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	44%
Derwentside District Council	47%
St Albans City and District Council	49%
Halton Borough Council	54%
Maidstone Borough Council	61%
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	64%
Swindon Borough Council	65%
Worcestershire County	66%
Croydon	72%
Wolverhampton City Council	73%

4.15 The full breakdown of the ownership of these pitches can be seen in Appendix C

Location of pitches

4.16 The location of the existing pitches in Swindon has been considered, using the geographical areas defined in section one. For reference purposes, these areas are illustrated again in Map 4.1 below.

Map 4.1: Analysis areas in Swindon



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- 4.17 Table 4.4 below illustrates the area of playing pitches available for community use in each area (excluding the synthetic pitches) and the proportion of the total pitches available. These figures measure the pitch area only (as opposed to the whole site) and assume that all pitches meet NPFA size criteria).

Table 4.4: Distribution of pitches in Swindon borough

Wards	Sub-area	Total playing pitch area (ha)	Total playing pitch area with secured community use (ha)	% of playing pitch area with secured community use
Central, Eastcott, Gorse Hill and Pinehurst	Central Cluster	14.34	8.66	60.4%
Covingham and Nythe, St Margaret, St Philip	East Cluster	34.32	16.48	48.0%
Abbey Meads, Haydon Wick, Moredon, Penhill	North Cluster	24.52	17.14	69.9%
Blunsdon, Highworth, Ridgeway, Wroughton and Chiseldon	Rural	55.42	42.22	76.2%
Dorcan, Old Town and Lawns, Walcot	South Cluster	39.46	19.26	48.8%
Freshbrook and Grange Park, Parks, Shaw and Nine Elms, Toothill and Westlea, Western	West Cluster	43.22	28.06	64.9%
	Total	211.28	131.82	62.4

- 4.18 The rural area contains both the largest overall quantity of pitches and the largest total playing pitch area with secured community use (76% of the total area). When considering this high level of provision in the context of the population of these areas, it can be concluded that residents in this area are very well provided for in terms of overall pitch provision.
- 4.19 In contrast, there are only 14 hectares of pitches in the central cluster. 60% of this area is secured for community use, the third lowest proportion of all areas. This level of provision is significantly lower than all other areas of the borough which may be expected in light of the differing land use (a particular focus on retail) and the high density environment, which means there are fewer opportunities for green space provision.

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- 4.20 Facilities at school sites are particularly important in meeting demand in the Eastern area where the second lowest overall level of provision can be found.
- 4.21 Almost 70% of all pitch area within Swindon borough is dedicated to football provision, reflecting the popularity of football in relation to the other pitch sports under consideration.
- 4.22 Swindon Borough Council are key providers of pitches across the borough, providing seven key sites dedicated primarily to football. Over half of all pitches provided are located at school sites, emphasising the role that the school estate can play in meeting the needs of local communities.
- 4.23 Six Parish Councils across the borough also provide pitches. These sites provide an important opportunity in the rural areas and ensure that residents have local facilities. Voluntary clubs are also key contributors to the sporting infrastructure in Swindon, particularly in the sports of rugby and cricket.

Quality of pitch and ancillary facilities

- 4.24 As stated in "Towards a Level Playing Field", pitch quality is a key issue. Perceived quality of pitches (and ancillary facilities) is almost as important as actual quality as it can heavily influence the pattern of play.
- 4.25 Quality of pitches in Swindon was assessed through site visits, analysis of cancellations and consideration of user perceptions.
- 4.26 Site visits assess the degree to which the sports pitch site is fit for purpose, and differ from assessments carried out as part of the PPG17 assessment, which take into account the characteristics of the whole site. An assessment matrix (Appendix D) was used to assess the overall site and the quality of the pitches and ancillary facilities where available. The key community use sites across Swindon have been assessed, including all sites maintained by the Council. It is important to note that the assessments are a snapshot in time and therefore any natural influences such as the weather may affect the quality of the pitches.
- 4.27 The School Premises Regulations state the quality of the grassed area of team game playing fields provided for any school shall be such that it can sustain the playing of team games thereon by pupils at the school for 7 hours a week during school terms.
- 4.28 Site specific improvements will be covered in section six, and full details of the analysis for each pitch will be provided in Appendix E. Key issues emerging from site visits included:
- good weather conditions leading up to site visits ensured that the majority of pitches were rated good or average. Pitches across Swindon borough on the whole appeared fit for the purpose intended, although some pitches displayed evidence of sustained high levels of use.
 - ancillary facilities were perceived to be good overall, although three sites did not have ancillary accommodation. The standard of changing facilities at Mannington Recreation Ground were perceived to be poorer, with high levels of vandalism evident.
 - parking was adequate on most sites, although Pembroke Gardens, Trent Road and Wanborough were perceived to have poor parking facilities

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- in general, the overall condition of football pitches across Swindon was perceived to be good, with Belmont Farm, Shrewsbury Road and Burderop Park in particular highlighted as above average facilities
- grass coverage and grass length was rated as good, and the majority of pitches were also felt to be fit for purpose in terms of the slope and evenness of the pitch. Despite this, Chiseldon Recreation Ground was considered to be particularly sloping. Line markings and equipment were also rated as good overall.
- cricket pitches were good overall, although private pitches were evidently of significantly higher quality than public pitches. The key issue emerging from site visits to cricket pitches reflected the quality of the wicket / square, with Mannington Recreation Ground being particularly poor in this area.
- the site assessment matrix rates both the ancillary facilities (changing rooms, parking, etc) and pitches and provides a percentage score for each site.

4.29 The percentage scores translate into the following ratings:

Ancillary facilities

- over 90% - excellent
- 60% to 89% - good
- 40% to 59% - average
- 30% to 39% - poor
- less than 30% - very poor.

Pitches

- over 90% - excellent pitch
- 64% to 90% - good pitch
- 55% to 64% - average pitch
- 30% to 54% - below average pitch
- less than 30% - poor pitch

4.30 Full site assessments for all pitches visited can be found in Appendix E.

4.31 Site visits were supplemented through consultation. Key issues emerging from visits and consultations at the Council managed venues include:

- **Pembrook Gardens** – poor quality pitches with dog fouling problems. The changing provision is also of poor quality. Ideally the Council would like to close this facility, but it is currently used as the additional pitch capacity is needed.
- **Southbrook Recreation Ground** – Westside Football Club use this facility and, through a grant, have provided dugouts, changing facility improvements and a crowd barrier for one of the pitches. This pitch is considered to be of a higher standard than others in the borough. The other pitch is used by Westside for training and is hired by other teams.
- **Penhill Recreation Ground** – the number of pitches which can be used at this site is restricted by the size of the changing facilities. Pitch quality is however reasonable. The cricket pitch is subject to much informal use and therefore suffers from wear and tear.

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- **Moredon Playing Fields** – this recreation ground includes four adult football pitches and two grass cricket pitches. The cricket pitches are amongst the most popular in the borough and there is high demand for these facilities. The football facilities are also sufficient to cope with demand from football clubs.
- **Mannington Recreation Ground** – has significant drainage problems with six of the nine pitches available for use throughout the football season. Of the pitch sites in the borough, this is usually the first to experience cancellations due to water logging and this is reflected in the cancellation records. Despite the poor quality of pitches at this site, the changing facilities on this site are of a reasonable quality. Cricket provision at this site has decreased to three artificial wickets due to a lack of demand. Consultation with clubs identified that this site is perceived to be one of the poorest quality in the borough.
- **Shrewsbury Road Playing Field** – new changing provision on this site has been provided which is sufficient to meet the needs of users of all four adult football pitches
- **Lydiard Park Playing Fields** – a naturally well drained site with good changing provision. This facility is popular with teams as it is situated in a country park. In the past there has been a desire to expand this facility.

Demand: pitch sport clubs in Swindon

- 4.32 Table 4.5 below illustrates the clubs and teams for football, cricket, hockey and rugby union currently playing in Swindon.

Table 4.5: The spread of teams across Swindon

Sport	Number of clubs	Number of teams
Football	63	326
Cricket	24	45
Rugby Union	3	23
Hockey	2	20
Total	93	414

- 4.33 Of the 414 teams currently playing within Swindon borough, 80% are playing football. In depth analysis of participation in football in the borough in comparison to participation in 2001 highlights a decline in the participation in the adult game, contrasting with increases in the number of junior and mini football teams. 50% of all football teams in Swindon are now junior or mini teams. This trend is reflective of the national trends.
- 4.34 While the number of cricket teams has remained static, numbers of rugby and hockey teams have declined. Consultation indicates that demand is now increasing, particularly in rugby at a young age. Although there are only two and three clubs playing hockey and rugby union in the borough respectively, all of these clubs are strong clubs, evident by the number of clubs that these teams are producing. As rugby and hockey participation is focused around the key clubs and the development opportunities these clubs offer, and residents living in all areas of the borough therefore travel to the home venues of these clubs.
- 4.35 The distribution of football teams is even across the urban areas of the borough, although it appears that participation is significantly higher in the rural area in terms of both adults

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and juniors. Participation is however largely influenced by the provision of pitches in an area.

4.36 Like football, participation in cricket is spread across the borough, although there are no teams based in the north or eastern areas of Swindon. Participation is again highest in the rural area.

4.37 A full list of all teams playing within Swindon Borough can be found in Appendix F. The key issues in terms of participation, facilities used, issues experienced by clubs and development opportunities are summarised in Appendix G.

Summary

4.38 The key issues emerging from supply and demand data detailed in section four can be summarised as:

- the ratio of adult pitches against the adult population is low in comparison to national figures, although the level of provision for football is above the national average
- there is a high proportion of the total pitch stock available for community use in comparison to the majority of known local authorities. The proportion of facilities that are accessible to the community has increased since 2001 and a further 19% of schools responding to the questionnaire indicated that they would be interested in establishing community use agreements. The key barriers to this were deemed to be the poor quality of pitches at school sites.
- the quality of pitches highlighted through consultation and site visits appears positive, although there are mixed views from responding clubs stating that the general quality is decreasing year on year and that pitches are poor value for money. The condition of voluntary managed and privately owned and managed facilities in particular was commended.
- the quality of facilities, particularly public sites, was the key issue emerging from consultation. Drainage was highlighted as a key issue for football clubs, and many clubs also highlighted that insufficient ancillary facilities at some sites restricts the level of use that can take place at sites. Many cricket clubs indicated that the quality of facilities within Swindon borough is insufficient to meet their needs and as a consequence, they travel outside to use other sites.
- while quality emerged as the key issue for clubs, many clubs and league secretaries indicated that access to appropriate facilities (due to a lack of pitches) is problematic. These issues predominantly surround junior clubs, and cricket clubs unable to access appropriate facilities on the peak day.
- the increasing participation is generating significant facility implications which are likely to increase further in future years. The growth of female sport, particularly football and rugby also generates facility implications.
- there is a lack of floodlit training facilities and indoor training facilities – this impacts on the quality of existing facilities and also on the demand for indoor facilities. This may have a detrimental impact on the future development of sport.

4.39 The supply and demand data contained in this section will be set in context by applying the Playing Pitch Methodology in section five.