

Report Summary

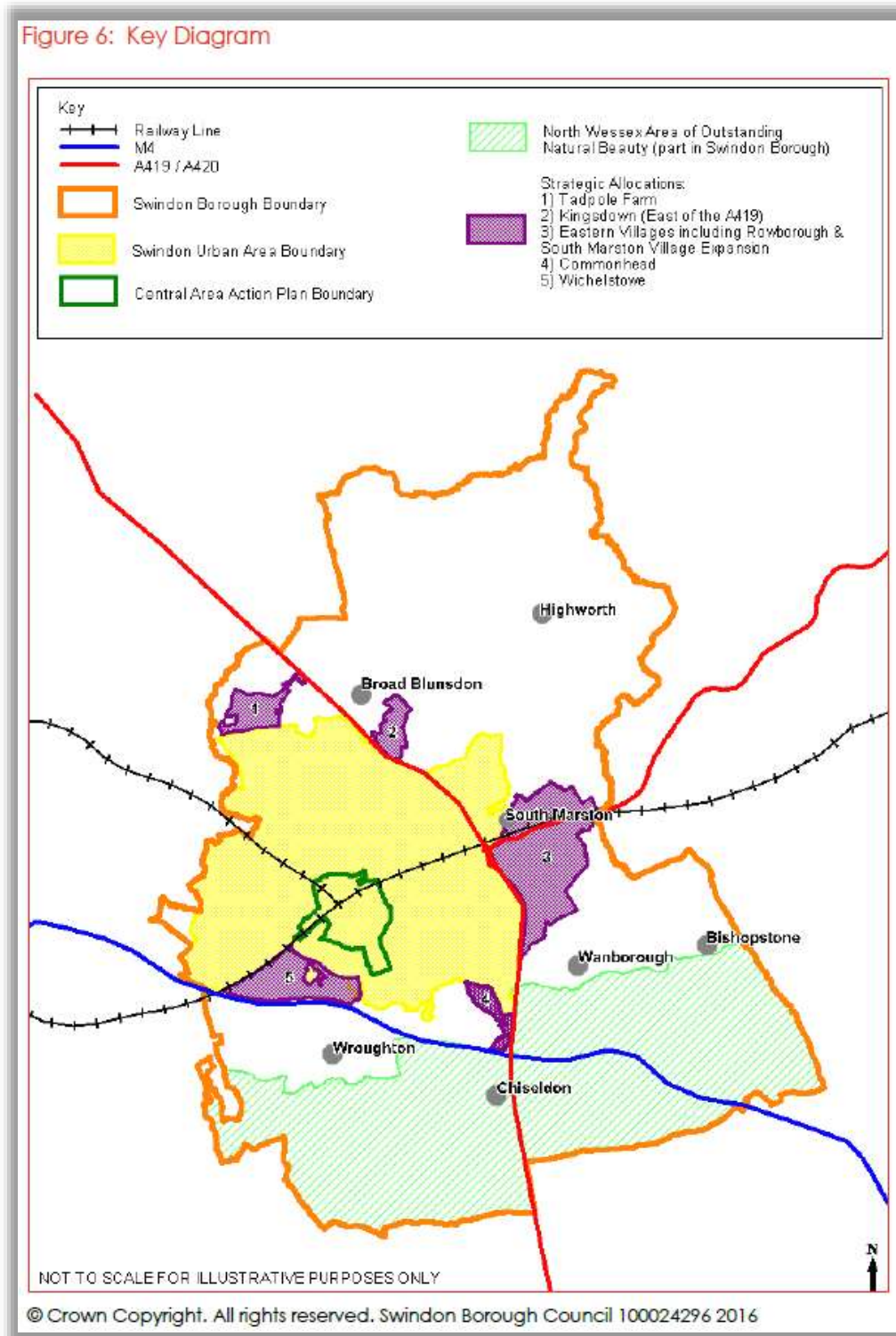
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This summary provides a brief synopsis of the results of the technical supplementary assessment of playing pitch needs to 2026.
- 1.2 On 12th February 2018, Swindon Borough Council approved the Swindon Borough Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) 2016-2021. The strategy, assessment and action plan were the product of almost 2 years of collaboration between Borough Council officers, consultants Stuart Todd Associates Ltd., Sport England, sports governing bodies, Wiltshire and Swindon Sport (WASP) and the Swindon Sports Federation. Development of the strategy involved a significant amount of audit, consultation and data analysis, producing a strategy compliant with Sport England's PPS guidance.
- 1.3 In order to ensure that the remainder of the adopted Local Plan period between 2022 and 2026 is informed by the playing pitch evidence base, demand has been projected forwards, with future demand re-calculated using updated population projections for the Borough to 2026 provided by Swindon Borough Council.
- 1.4 The revised assessment report is based on the assessment report produced for the 2016-2021 strategy, with much of it remaining the same, given that the assessment is based on the same current supply and demand data collected for the 2016-2021 strategy. The new data and information in the report relates mainly to the future demand and needs arising from the additional demand data which projects need and demand forward from the strategy period to 2026.
- 1.5 As well as re-projecting future demand to a longer time period, the revised assessment report also tests scenarios of demand arising from the strategic allocations (urban extensions) in the Borough as proposed in the adopted Local Plan with regard to the extent of population change in the period to 2026 and beyond to completion of the developments where that is currently projected by the Borough Council to be beyond 2026. This has been done using Sport England's new Playing Pitch Calculator (January 2018 version) with read-outs of the outputs from that tool set out in a new Appendix 11 to the assessment report.
- 1.6 This analysis work provides robust evidence and assessment to inform decisions on future playing pitch actions and requirements beyond 2021. In doing so, it can inform the requirements for emerging proposals at those strategic allocations yet to receive planning permission, alongside the use of Sport England's new playing pitch calculator which can provide a guide to pitch requirements associated with specific scales of development within the Borough.

2. Spatial Context

2.1 It is important to understand how demand plays out spatially to 2026. While figures in the assessment report are estimated at the sub-area level, they can be contextualised against the planned strategic allocations in the Local Plan and the location of clubs and the pitches they use. Figure 1 below identifies the location of the strategic allocations, reproduced from the adopted Local Plan.

Figure 1: Swindon Local Plan Strategic Allocations (reproduced Figure 6: Key Diagram)



Source: Swindon Local Plan 2026, Figure 6, p.19,
https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1699/swindon_borough_local_plan_2026.pdf

2.2 Local Plan policy SD2: The Sustainable Development Strategy sets out the number of dwellings to be delivered during the plan period to 2026. For the strategic allocations identified above, it is as follows:

1. Tadpole Farm – 1,695 dwellings allocation but final number 1,841
2. Kingsdown (East of A419) – 1,650 dwellings
3. Eastern Villages (New Eastern Villages, including Rowborough and South Marston Village Expansion) – about 8,140 dwellings
4. Commonhead – 890 dwellings
5. Wichelstowe – 4,064 dwellings

2.3 The population growth associated with these allocations (at least until estimated completions by the end of the plan period to 2026) has been factored in to the team generation rate calculations earlier in this assessment.

2.4 The following figures show the strategic allocations' broad locations against the PPS sub-areas and the main pitch / club locations for each sport.

Figure 2: Strategic Allocation Broad Locations, PPS Sub-areas and Main Pitch / Club Locations for Football

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Strategic Allocations and Football



Notes: Strategic allocations, sub-areas, grass football pitches in secure with unsecure community use, 3G and sand based AGPs used for football with secure and unsecure community use

Figure 3: Strategic Allocation Broad Locations, PPS Sub-areas and Main Pitch / Club Locations for Cricket

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Strategic Allocations and Cricket



Notes: Strategic allocations, sub-areas, cricket pitches with secure and unsecure community use

Figure 4: Strategic Allocation Broad Locations, PPS Sub-areas and Main Pitch / Club Locations for Hockey

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Strategic Allocations and Hockey



Notes: Strategic allocations, sub-areas, full size unsecure community use sand AGPs

Figure 5: Strategic Allocation Broad Locations, PPS Sub-areas and Main Pitch / Club Locations for Rugby Union

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Strategic Allocations and Rugby Union



Notes: Strategic allocations, sub-areas, rugby union pitches with unsecure and secure community use

3. Playing Pitch Calculator Scenarios

- 3.1 Sport England have produced a new pitch calculator designed to help understand playing pitch requirements for sports in relation to specific scales of development. We have run a number of scenarios to understand likely specific requirements for the urban extensions (strategic allocations) allocated in the Local Plan. These results can then be used alongside the assessment report to identify specific pitch requirements which arise and should respond to each development. The requirements identified by the calculator to 2026 are not in addition to those identified in this report but set the context for appropriate provision in relation to the projected population growth in those allocation areas. The detailed calculator read-outs are appended to the main assessment report in Appendix 11.
- 3.2 Scenarios have been run through the calculator to show the impact of population change to 2026 across the whole Borough, and also to identify pitch requirements resulting from demand to 2026 at each of the urban extensions and for completed extensions where completion is not projected to take place until post 2026. For football, a Borough-wide scenario has also been run to respond to 60% demand taking place at the peak time of play to better represent future demand patterns against the current amount of play at the most popular (peak) time and day.
- 3.3 The calculator requires the input of the number of people arising from a given development. Therefore, to arrive at this figure, an assumption has been made of 3.5 persons per household occurring in new developments which is consistent with the developer contributions calculator adopted by Swindon Borough Council.
- 3.4 The calculator only calculates grass pitches for football and so results need to be considered against the strategy's proposed provision for 3G pitches which will absorb some capacity from grass demand. For hockey, results are provided for the number of artificial pitches required by the calculated demand. The results are summarised in the tables which follow.

Figure 6: Summary of Pitch Calculator Figures for Borough and Urban Extension Scenarios

SCENARIO A: BOROUGH-WIDE TO 2026		
POPULATION: 253,490 100% Demand in Peak Period		
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	43.16	
Youth	60.42	
Mini Soccer	42.58	
Rugby Union	8.78	
Rugby League	1.15	
Hockey	2.16	
Cricket	8.59	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 68.72 pitches / wickets
SCENARIO B: BOROUGH-WIDE TO 2026 (ADJUSTED)		
POPULATION: 253,490 60% Demand for Men's Football in Peak Period, 100% Demand for Others in Peak Period		
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	26.82	Men's football adjusted to 60% demand at peak time.
Youth	60.42	
Mini Soccer	42.58	

SCENARIO C: TADPOLE TO 2026		
POPULATION: 6,444 / DWELLINGS: 1,841		100% Demand in Peak Period
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	1.10	
Youth	1.54	
Mini Soccer	1.08	
Rugby Union	0.22	
Rugby League	0.03	
Hockey	0.05	
Cricket	0.22	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 1.76 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO Di: WICHELSTOWE TO 2026		
POPULATION: 7,949 / DWELLINGS: 2,271		100% Demand in Peak Period
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	1.35	
Youth	1.89	
Mini Soccer	1.34	
Rugby Union	0.28	
Rugby League	0.04	
Hockey	0.07	
Cricket	0.27	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 2.16 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO Dii: WICHELSTOWE TO COMPLETION		
POPULATION: 14,224 / DWELLINGS: 4,064		100% Demand in Peak Period
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	2.42	
Youth	3.39	
Mini Soccer	2.39	
Rugby Union	0.49	
Rugby League	0.06	
Hockey	0.12	
Cricket	0.48	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 3.84 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO Ei: KINGSDOWN TO 2026		
POPULATION: 5,250 / DWELLINGS: 1,500 100% Demand in Peak Period		
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	0.89	
Youth	1.25	
Mini Soccer	0.88	
Rugby Union	0.18	
Rugby League	0.02	
Hockey	0.04	
Cricket	0.18	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 1.44 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO Eii: KINGSDOWN TO COMPLETION		
POPULATION: 5,775 / DWELLINGS: 1,650 100% Demand in Peak Period		
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	0.98	
Youth	1.38	
Mini Soccer	0.97	
Rugby Union	0.20	
Rugby League	0.03	
Hockey	0.05	
Cricket	0.20	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 1.6 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO Fi: NEW EASTERN VILLAGES TO 2026		
POPULATION: 24,185 / DWELLINGS: 6,910 100% Demand in Peak Period		
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	4.12	
Youth	5.77	
Mini Soccer	4.06	
Rugby Union	0.84	
Rugby League	0.11	
Hockey	0.21	
Cricket	0.82	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 6.56 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO Fii: NEW EASTERN VILLAGES TO COMPLETION		
POPULATION: 28,490 / DWELLINGS: 8,140 100% Demand in Peak Period		
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	4.85	
Youth	6.79	
Mini Soccer	4.79	
Rugby Union	0.99	
Rugby League	0.13	
Hockey	0.24	
Cricket	0.97	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 7.6 pitches / wickets

SCENARIO G: COMMONHEAD TO 2026		
POPULATION: 3,115 / DWELLINGS: 890		100% Demand in Peak Period
PITCH TYPE	NO. OF PITCHES	NOTES
Adult Football	0.53	
Youth	0.74	
Mini Soccer	0.52	
Rugby Union	0.11	
Rugby League	0.01	
Hockey	0.03	
Cricket	0.11	Figure is for number of grounds, equating to 0.88 pitches / wickets

4. Demand to 2026: Assessment Headlines

4.1 The figures generated by the playing pitch calculator have been considered alongside those of the projected demand to 2026. The headlines below set out both the projected demand to 2026 and the relationship of that projected demand and the outputs from the playing pitch calculator.

Football

Key headlines:

- ▶ 3G scenarios run for the original assessment have been re-run for projections to 2026. Demand increases from 4.2 x full size floodlit 3G pitches with secure community use to 4.7. Overall, therefore, this does not change the requirement set out in the 2021-2016 assessment and strategy for up to 4 x 3G pitches to be delivered with a fifth delivered if demand demonstrates it later in the period to 2026.
- ▶ Scenarios have been tested for the Borough and strategic allocations for grass pitch demand. The results suggest that across the Borough, grass pitch provision to 2026 to accommodate demand should be approximately 103.58 full size pitch equivalents plus a further 10.4 full size equivalent pitches (if mini pitches are converted to full size equivalents) equating to a total of 113.98 pitches. This reduces to 97.64 if peak demand is adjusted to reflect the current pattern of 60% adult pitch use being on Sunday mornings (rather than all play taking place at one time). This figure compares favourably to the figure which emerges from the assessment, of 89.5 full size pitch equivalents (71 existing secure use pitches plus future demand for 18.5). The difference in the two figures can be explained, in part, by how 7v7 pitch requirements are calculated with the assessment's methodology treating them as half a full size pitch and the calculator treating them as youth pitches which could take up to one whole full size pitch.
- ▶ Borough Council estimates suggest that a total of (roughly) between 19 and 24 full size grass pitch equivalents could be provided as a result of the need to respond to demand generated by developments at New Eastern Villages, Kingsdown and Wichelstowe (which will not be completed until post 2026). This compares to the new Sport England calculator's estimates of 21.85 full size pitches (when mini pitches are equated to full size pitch equivalents) beyond 2026 to completion of the developments. Therefore, the Borough Council estimates fit with the calculator's estimates.
- ▶ Allowing for movement of match play at weekends from grass to the 3G capacity provided by 4 pitches (*if it can be maximised*), the requirement for grass pitches to accommodate match day play which cannot be accommodated on 3G pitches would equate to around 36 full size pitch equivalents across the Borough where they are provided to "good" quality (or a carrying capacity equating to 108 full size match equivalents). There is currently 138 match equivalents of carrying capacity available on secure grass pitches in the Borough. This leaves 30 match equivalents (or 10 good quality / 15 standard quality adult size pitches) of *notionally* spare capacity available, if 3G scenario 2b is delivered. The grass pitches already in the pipeline to be delivered by 2021 add a further c.15 match equivalents of capacity (c.5

pitches assuming they are provided to good quality), if they are provided with secure community use, equating to c.45 match equivalents of notionally spare capacity in supply if scenario 2b is delivered, by the end of the strategy period in 2021.

- ▶ Between 2022 and 2026, there are further potential implications for supply of pitches with additional grass pitches being sought at the strategic allocations at Wichelstowe, New Eastern Villages and Kingsdown. If the calculator is applied to likely completions at these developments and resulting population by 2026, this equates to 16.85 full size equivalent pitches for football.
- ▶ Therefore, based on delivery of 16 pitches between 2022 and 2026 pitches provided to a “good” quality, they would provide match equivalents of around 48 matches. Adding this to the spare capacity in current pitches if 4 x 3Gs are delivered (30 match equivalents), plus the new capacity introduced by pitches currently in the pipeline which will deliver before 2021 (c.15 match equivalents), there is notional spare capacity in grass pitch provision of 93 match equivalents (or 31 full size equivalent pitches) by 2026.
- ▶ Existing commitments should continue to be honoured, given the opportunity to provide good quality new surfaces and facilities, in order to ensure that gaps in spatial provision and demand are filled and to ensure that new areas of demand arising from population growth are satisfied.
- ▶ While the notional spare capacity figure seems high, it is not recommended that an equivalent number of pitches are lost. Indeed, there are many reasons why this notionally spare capacity should be retained (even if pitches need to be “mothballed” and the greenspace retained), as “headroom capacity”, at least until the end of the strategy period in 2026:
 - Not all spare capacity is likely to be available capacity on the days and at the times that might be required for it to be used;
 - Not all spare capacity is capacity available wholly on single sites – i.e. most spare capacity arises from pitches already in use and to lose the capacity on these pitches would mean that teams would have to be moved to alternative pitches or sites to play home matches which could be unacceptable in terms of proximity to the team’s core supply of players, club roots, etc.;
 - It is yet unknown the impact of the transfer of local authority controlled sites to parish councils – with regards to which pitches will remain as secure in tenure, and also whether any pitches will be lost from formal pitch use to other leisure uses;
 - The strategy is only short-term and assessment period only medium-term – additional capacity is likely to be needed beyond 2026 to accommodate known growth in the population beyond that date within the context of an extended plan period for the next Local Plan;
 - There may be unforeseeable issues in delivering the 3G provision identified by scenario 2b which could lead to a delay in the provision of the capacity as anticipated; and,
 - To allow for flexibility of when demand changes season to season;
 - To allow for the likely delivery of any new pitch hubs at strategic allocations towards the end of development delivery;
 - Should all teams calculated in the projections of demand for 3Gs not migrate to a 3G surface to play matches (for example, due to cost, distance away from a 3G pitch, favouring their current home pitch as a preferred ground, etc.).
- ▶ There is no suggestion, even if pitches fall out of use, that green open space should be lost. Green infrastructure, protected by policies in the Local Plan, should be retained for many reasons outside of their use for sport (for example, leisure, recreation and physical and mental health, use by other pitch and outdoor sport, habitats and biodiversity, air quality and quality of life, performing a sustainable drainage role, etc.).

Hockey

Key headlines:

- ▶ Between the two hockey clubs there are 20 teams, with 9 of these being adult teams and the rest junior. There has been some interest in the Borough in establishing school-links hockey and informal sessions such as Back to Hockey. Following England Hockey’s (EH) target for doubling participation rates by 2026, a 100% increase in current numbers of players registered with clubs across age groups by the end of the strategy period (2026) suggests that an additional 63 players could arise at North Wilts HC (equating to almost 3.5 additional teams) and 163 at Swindon HC (equating to almost 10 additional teams), a total of around 13 teams (equivalent) across the Borough. Working through the

required number of hours for training on weekday evenings and matches at weekends for the total number of anticipated teams by 2026, a total of almost 35 hours of full size pitch time will be needed to accommodate demand, an increase of 15 hours on current levels of time used. Demand by 2026 equates to a need for 2-3 full size pitches to accommodate match day play on Saturdays and Sundays. Training needs can easily fit within this level of provision, amounting to almost 14 hours of time on a full size pitch during midweek evenings for both clubs (where training is held on one third of a pitch for one team and with 1 full size AGP supporting up to 18 hours of weekday evening time).

- ▶ Scenarios have been tested for the Borough and strategic allocations. The results suggest that just over 2 AGPs (full size) are required for hockey use to 2026. This compares well with the conclusions of the assessment and does not suggest the need for any change to assessment conclusions with additional capacity available at current (unsecure) community use sites at Isambard (although there are quality issues) and St Joseph's School, either of which should continue to be the focus for discussion about establishing them as secure community use facilities for hockey.
- ▶ From calculations run for the strategic allocations results confirm that in relation to demand generated by additional population, the sites at Wichelstowe (in the pipeline) and one additional pitch at New Eastern Villages or Kingsdown would be appropriate locations to serve the hockey needs arising in the northern part of the Borough where the new pitches can have secure community use in peak hours.

Cricket

Key headlines:

- ▶ Projecting potential demand forward arising from club aspirations to grow and growth in the population, suggests that up to 54 grass pitches (i.e. wickets / strips) could be required to accommodate the number of teams likely to be generated by 2026 and if clubs are to move away from or secure use at unsecure sites. This is an increase from 2016-2021 figures. 8 artificial pitches are needed across the Borough to cater for additional demand which represents no increase from 2016-2021 figures.
- ▶ However, figures should be treated as a "top end" figure and provision and actual supply of additional pitches will need to be monitored to understand realistic demand on the ground to ensure supply accurately reflects demand. The combination of provision between grass and artificial pitches will also need to be provided to fit with real demand¹.
- ▶ Scenarios have been tested for the Borough and strategic allocations. The results suggest that across the Borough demand could equate to a need for 8.59 grounds or 68.72 pitches where provision is based on 8 pitches per ground. However, given the variation in pitch provision at grounds, the number of grounds required could be less if, for example, 10 pitches were supplied at a ground (in that case equating to a demand for 6.87 grounds). The difference between the 68 pitches generated by the calculator and the figure of 54 pitches identified above could be explained, in part, by the assessment's methodology which also derives a figure for capacity requirements for junior teams playing and training on artificial pitches (with some capacity for adult training too), and therefore discounting some demand from the total grass requirement.
- ▶ With regard to calculations for strategic allocations, there are clearly opportunities to provide additional capacity at a strategic allocation from demand generated by population growth and also to fill spatial gaps in provision (for example at New Eastern Villages). However, provision, particularly in relation to growth at the other strategic allocations should be considered in relation to provision of a minimum of 5 or 6 pitches / wickets for viability reasons, in conjunction with the needs and demand from existing clubs to ensure capacity is provided where it will be used but also in reasonably close proximity to where new demand from growth is likely to be generated.

¹ While projections have made assumptions about use, should for example, adult team demand come forward more for midweek than weekend matches, the balance between grass pitch and artificial pitch provision may need to change to reflect the preferred surface for midweek matches.

Rugby Union

Key headlines:

- ▶ Projecting demand forward as a result of population change and growth aspirations of clubs, and adding in the current under-supply of capacity (where future provision is made purely on grass pitches) and a desire to move use of unsecure sites that clubs use to secure sites, the pitch requirement (for pitches of M1/D3 standard) by 2026 and based on secure sites could equate to an equivalent capacity of up to 15.5 full size pitches in the Borough assuming that all aspirational demand can be met, which may be more challenging in reality and beyond the scope of the provision of playing pitches and ancillary facilities. This is an increase of 1.5 pitches from the 2021 assessment. The demand is formed from 7.5 pitch equivalents in response to demand at Supermarine, 2.5 at Swindon Old Boys and 5 at Swindon RFC (with a further 0.5 in the south east sub area possibly accommodated at Nationwide subject to preferred location for demand and users of this location). The figures do not take into account improvements to the quality and capacity of existing pitches which could increase the amount of play that pitches can sustain and reduce the need for additional new pitches. Neither do they take into account the capacity which could be introduced by new pitches in the pipeline, namely, a third pitch at Swindon RFC and up to 2 additional pitches at the Polo Ground in the Wroughton and Chiseldon sub area which could provide secure pitch capacity for Swindon Old Boys RFC and help to remove some use from the pitches at Supermarine (for example moving American Football and / or Rugby League teams to the new site).
- ▶ If the sites in the pipeline are taken into account, this would reduce the demand to 12.5 or fewer pitch equivalents across the Borough, fulfil the demand in Wroughton and Chiseldon, reduce the demand in Blunsdon and Highworth at Supermarine and reduce the demand in the north east at Swindon RFC. Improvements to club pitches would reduce the figure further and demand generated from aspirational demand in the 2020-2026 period should be established “on the ground” before additional pitches in that period are introduced.
- ▶ Scenarios have been tested for the Borough and strategic allocations. The results suggest that 8.78 full size grass pitches will be required to meet demand to 2026. This figure seems low when put alongside the figure of 15.5 identified by the revised assessment but the calculator figure could represent a lower end of provision to aim for with further review in 2021 to ascertain the reality of demand on the ground, particularly at Supermarine, if measures have been put in place to increase capacity on site. Should demand on the ground at that point suggest that the additional capacity to 15.5 pitches is required solutions will need to be found to deliver around 6.5 pitches or equivalent capacity between 2021 and 2026. The figure generated by the calculator may underestimate demand from aspirational growth, unmet and latent demand as Team Generation Rates (TGRs) which are used in the calculator will not always capture this. However, these types of demand can be difficult to satisfy where the capacity of clubs to host growth is limited by issues other than pitch capacity.
- ▶ Figures arising from likely demand at the strategic allocations would support some provision for rugby union at a site such as the New Eastern Villages although any provision made at a strategic allocation would need to be part of a demonstrable solution to club needs and demand with a pitch or pitches not provided in isolation but as part of a new rugby club or hub site. Satellite club sites may be a preferable solution for clubs where their location is favourable.

5. Other Pitch Sports

- 5.1 The direction of travel of provision for the other sports assessed in the PPS remains the same in the period to 2026. As softball, American Football and Rugby League only use a small amount of pitch capacity, the key issue remains to ensure that they are provided for during the strategy period to 2021. Assuming a new home can be found for both American Football and Rugby League, such as at the Polo Ground, provision made is likely to be sufficient for a further 5 years to 2026.
- 5.2 Rugby league is anticipated to grow by a further additional team by 2026 (compared to half of one additional team by 2021) which would suggest between an additional 0.5 and 1.0 match equivalent capacity in addition to 2 match equivalents current demand. This can be accommodated on a single pitch. New quantitative figures are available for rugby league,

utilising the playing pitch calculator, and suggest a total need for 1.15 pitches, which aligns with the conclusions of the assessment projections.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 There have been some changes to demand having projected forward additional population across sports. This does not mean that there is additional pitch demand for all sports (for example, hockey has stayed the same in terms of the number of pitches required).
- 6.2 However, while the overall quantum has increased for some sports, the “direction of travel” set by the 2016-2021 assessment and strategy remains with no substantial changes to recommendations made in the revised assessment report.
- 6.3 The main changes to the 2016-2021 assessment have related to reflection on the impact of the strategic allocations and re-enforcing the importance of the “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach to provision adopted in the strategy (for example, caution attached to the notional level of spare capacity in grass football pitch supply). The implications of increased demand and changes to supply (including as part of that the security of community use) will need to be monitored and then reviewed in 2021 so that delivery projected now can be assessed and re-adjusted against demand emerging “on the ground”.