

SECTION 4

INDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Indoor sports and recreation facilities

Definition

- 4.1 The assessment of sports facilities covers both indoor sports facilities and outdoor sports facilities as per the PPG17 typology.
- 4.2 In terms of indoor sports and recreation facilities, the PPG17 Companion Guide indicates that the minimum range of 'core' facilities for which planning authorities should undertake local assessments is:
 - those facilities which require large, bulky buildings and are intended to generate high levels of use, to include swimming pools, indoor sports halls and leisure centres, indoor bowls centres, indoor tennis centres and ice rinks
 - community centres (in urban areas) and village halls (in rural areas).
- 4.3 This recommendation is based on the clear rationale that those facilities requiring a sizeable site are likely to attract a large number of users or will generate significant environmental impacts. Smaller facilities, such as village halls and community centres, will also be important in residential neighbourhoods and rural areas. As such, assessing the need for them is seen to be essential in order to help promote sustainable communities. Other relatively small facilities are deemed to be less important as their land requirements are limited and they tend to be associated with larger facilities.
- 4.4 The assessment of indoor facilities differs to other PPG17 typologies in that specific demand modelling can be undertaken in line with nationally accepted Sport England parameters.
- 4.5 Outdoor sports facilities is a wide-ranging category of open space and includes natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens, golf courses, wheeled sports and water sports provision with the primary purpose of participation in outdoor sports. An assessment of outdoor sports facilities is set out in subsequent sections.

Indoor sports provision

- 4.6 A broad review of indoor sport and recreation facilities has been undertaken to guide future planning in the City and District. We have used a range of complementary methods to ensure a comprehensive audit of provision, including a review of the online national database of sports facilities (Active Places), supporting desk research, discussions with key leisure providers, internal Council officers and neighbouring local authorities. In addition, we have considered all known planning applications to assess the likely level of future provision.
- 4.7 A full listing of facilities and supporting data is shown at Appendix G. In setting local accessibility standards there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other Local Authority standards for appropriate comparison and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local accessibility standards are provided within Appendix H.

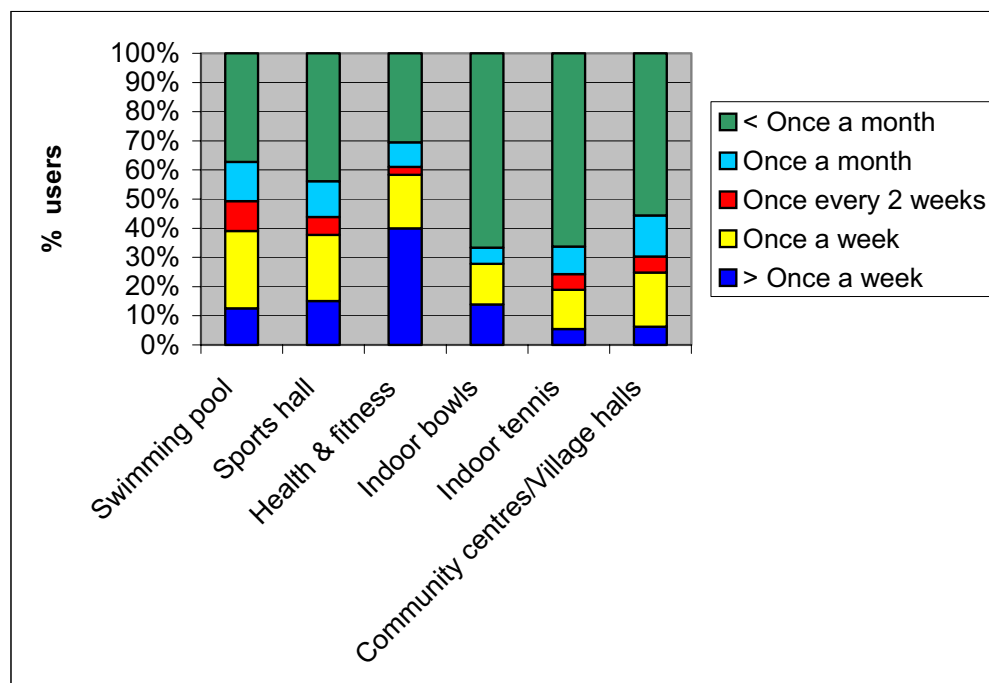
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Current position and consultation

Household survey findings

- 4.8 We have consulted with the local community in the form of a household survey asking them to indicate which facilities they use and their opinions of current provision.
- 4.9 The responses from the household survey provide a useful insight into the usage of indoor facilities within the City and District as well as public perceptions of quality and quantity of this type of provision.
- 4.10 The results of the household survey showed that swimming pools (51%) and community centres/village halls (39%) were most highly used. Approximately one third of respondents indicated that they used health and fitness (29%) and sports halls (27%) whilst a very limited number stated that they used indoor tennis (7%) or indoor bowls (3%) facilities.
- 4.11 On average, approximately two thirds of users were found to visit mainstream leisure facilities at least once a month – swimming pools (63%), sports halls (69%), sports halls (56%) and health and fitness (69%). Users of community centre/village hall facilities however were found to visit facilities less often, 56% indicating that their frequency of use was *at less than once a month*.
- 4.12 As illustrated in Figure 4.1 below, health and fitness facilities have the highest proportion of frequent users, 40% *more than once a week* and 18% *weekly*. Swimming pools (27%) and sports halls (23%) have the highest proportion of *weekly* users.

Figure 4.1 Frequency of use



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- 4.13 In terms of quality, 48% of respondents consider indoor leisure provision to be good or very good and 42% perceive it to be average. 34% of respondents were found to consider the quality of facilities to be poor or very poor. The highest satisfaction levels were attributed to the helpfulness of staff, access on foot and opening hours.
- 4.14 There was a clear division of opinion on whether indoor leisure facilities in St Albans were considered to meet the needs of local residents, 34% responding positively compared with 36% who do not feel that facilities meet their needs and 30% who did not offer an opinion. Of those respondents who stated that current provision does not meet their needs, the main reasons given were as follows:
- quality of facilities (28%)
 - lack of facilities (23%)
 - access issues (cost, travel, programming) (13%)
 - lack of information (2%).
- 4.15 One third of respondents indicated that they use indoor leisure facilities outside of the City and District, particularly in Hatfield, as well as Welwyn Garden City, Hemel Hempstead, Watford, Bushey, Luton, Potters Bar, Bedford and Milton Keynes.
- 4.16 The most commonly named facilities were:
- Hertfordshire Sports Village, Hatfield
 - Hatfield Swim Centre, Hatfield
 - Gosling Sports Centre, Welwyn Garden City
 - Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre, Hemel Hempstead
 - David Lloyd, Luton
 - Jarman Park, Hemel Hempstead.
- 4.17 Suggestions for improvements to leisure provision within the City and District were found to fall in to the following broad categories:
- enhanced swimming pool provision (10%)
 - major overhaul or replacement of Westminster Lodge (6%)
 - refurbishment or replacement of Bricket Wood swimming pool (1%)
 - modernised/new sports centre provision (8%)
 - multi-sport 'flagship' facility (2%)
 - improved accessibility (8%)
 - lower pricing for target groups (4%)
 - increased advertising of facilities/activities (3%)
 - better transport links (public transport, cycling, walking) (1%)

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- improved maintenance and management of facilities (7%)
- increased range of facilities/activities offered (5%)
- improved provision for children and young people (2%).

Local authority consultations

- 4.18 We consulted with representatives from each of the neighbouring local authorities. A summary of key points raised is set out in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1 Key points emerging from consultation with other local authorities

Neighbouring local authority	Comments
Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC)	<p>The main population centres within the borough are Radlett, Borehamwood, Bushey and Potters Bar, all of which are considered to be well served by high quality public and private leisure provision. In addition, there are over 200 sports clubs.</p> <p>On this basis, it is considered unlikely that Hertsmere residents would travel to use facilities situated within St Albans City and District, particularly following significant investment (£40m) in leisure provision over the past five years. For example, although Radlett is three miles from Bricket Wood Leisure Centre, The Venue at Borehamwood, an £18m leisure complex open since October 2000, is within two miles.</p> <p>Hertsmere Borough Council has no further major leisure facility refurbishment or redevelopment plans. The authority's priority is seeking to better utilise existing provision, particularly school facilities linked to the PESSCL programme and School Sport Co-ordinator Partnerships.</p>
North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC)	<p>The main leisure facilities in North Hertfordshire are situated in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston. Hitchin is closest in proximity to St Albans City and District but North Hertfordshire District Council does not consider facilities in St Albans to offer a significant competitive threat due to the nature of transport links and travel times between these areas.</p> <p>North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre is due to undergo refurbishment in 2005, including health and fitness provision and a new community leisure facility has recently been opened in Royston.</p>
South Bedfordshire District Council (SBDC)	<p>With Dunstable situated in the south of the district, the leisure centre is considered to serve the local catchment and it is considered unlikely that residents would travel to facilities such as Harpenden Leisure Centre.</p> <p>SBDC is progressing plans for the development of a community arts venue adjacent to Dunstable Leisure Centre. The mixed-use scheme includes a 700-seat theatre with conference facilities, restaurants, bars and residential accommodation.</p>

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Neighbouring local authority	Comments
Three Rivers District Council	<p>Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council have jointly commissioned a PPG 17 assessment to be undertaken.</p> <p>Leisure centres in the district are considered to have localised user catchments.</p> <p>Residents from St Albans are believed to travel to use playing pitch and netball provision (County facility at Parmiters School) within Three Rivers district.</p>
Watford Borough Council (WBC)	<p>Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council have jointly commissioned a PPG 17 assessment to be undertaken.</p> <p>WBC is considering options for the redevelopment of facilities in the borough and have now finalised a facility mix for a new leisure centre at Watford Woodside, which is to include an 8 court sport hall, 8 lane swimming pool and teaching pool, dance studios, fitness suite, squash courts, crèche and social facilities. The final design of the new build centre is still to be finalised.</p>
Welwyn Hatfield District Council (WHDC)	<p>Analysis has shown that facilities in Welwyn Hatfield District attract users from St Albans (AL4, AL1 and AL3), and that this constitutes 11.5% of the total user base. The main catchment is London Colney (AL4).</p> <p>WHDC highlighted the benefits of the close relationship that has been established between trust operators across Hertfordshire (eg Welwyn (Finesse), Hertsmere, Stevenage, Dacorum)</p> <p>A number of redevelopment/refurbishment proposals are in the pipeline eg Hatfield Swim Centre (health and fitness, spa, dance studio), Stanborough Park (children's play) as well as MUGAs at school sites and cycling/walking routes</p> <p>The wider Hatfield town centre redevelopment is generating interest from several private health and fitness operators.</p> <p>A new 'loyalty' card is due to be launched as a replacement to the former leisure card; a scheme open to residents and non-residents.</p>
Dacorum Council	<p>Sports centre management and sports development has recently transferred to an independent in-house trust, Dacorum Sports Trust.</p> <p>Dual use and athletics facilities are considered to have localised catchments. However, Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre has recently reopened following major refurbishment to include a swimming complex and gymnastics centre, sports hall, health and fitness and café. It is believed to attract a significant number of users from St Albans.</p> <p>A 10-minute non-peak drive time between St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Watford and Rickmansworth provides users with access to a good choice of facility provision.</p>

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Assessment of local need

- 4.19 This section of the strategy identifies the facility needs of individual and group users across the City and District by highlighting shortfalls and surpluses emerging from demand modelling, examining geographical gaps in provision and raising issues emerging through the consultation process. For each facility type, we have examined:

Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>current supply:</i> existing facilities within the City and District and an extended 5km buffer zone around its boundary• <i>proposed facilities:</i> facility development schemes that are either close to completion or planned for the future• <i>levels of demand:</i> current and future demand calculated using modelling techniques and supplemented by stakeholder and community consultation to identify whether available capacity of provision is sufficient to cater for local need
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>quality factors:</i> quality issues raised during consultation to further supplement site visit assessment findings outlined in previous sections
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>accessibility catchments:</i> application of local accessibility standards, set using household survey findings and national benchmark data, to identify priority areas falling outside of the recommended travel time/distance of specific facilities.

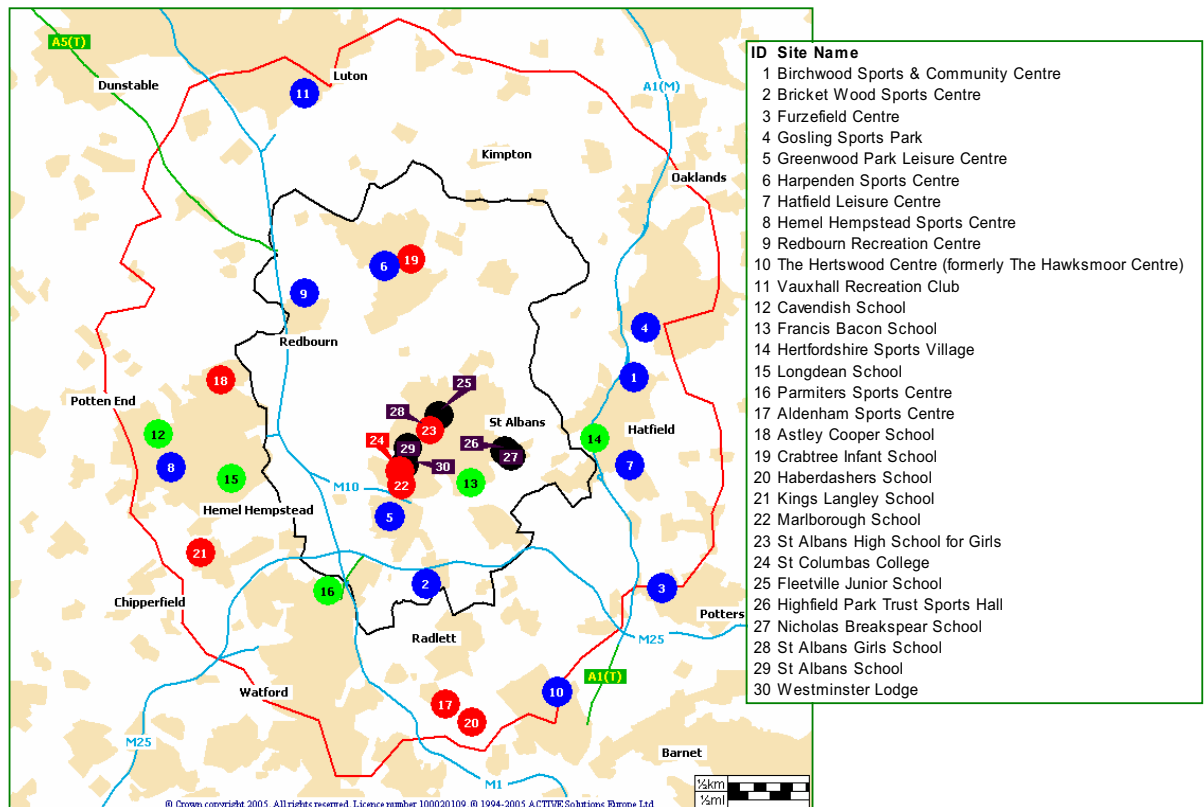
- 4.20 The foundations of all demand assessments are an analysis of the demographic nature of the resident population within a specified catchment area. As a result of the fast changing nature and high rate of development of indoor sport and recreation facilities and the affect that changing participation rates may have on the local requirement for facilities, future supply and demand has been measured only up to 2010.
- 4.21 An assessment of indoor sports provision using the geographical analysis areas was not considered appropriate due to the wider target catchment and dispersed nature of these facilities.
- 4.22 Due to the position of the City and District with respect to neighbouring local authority areas and patterns of user behaviour, there is likely to be both inward and outward migration of sports centre usage. We have therefore undertaken analysis across an extended catchment area comprising the City and District and a 5km buffer zone.
- 4.23 Once the resident population has been profiled, market penetration rates and frequency of participation rates of each sport or leisure activity are used to quantify demand. This ensures that results are specific to the requirements of the population of the City and District.

Indoor sports hall provision

Supply

4.24 The profile of existing sports hall provision within the City and District and neighbouring areas is illustrated in Figure 4.2 below. There are 22 facilities containing sports halls within the identified catchment area, nine of which are situated within the City and District. A full list of facilities is shown at Appendix G.

Figure 4.2 Sports hall facilities within the district and buffer zone



Key:

- District Boundary
- 5km Buffer Boundary
- Public Facilities
- Dual Facilities
- Club Facilities
- Planned Facilities

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- 4.25 A breakdown of the facilities and 'useful area' is shown in Table 4.2. It should be noted that The Furzefield Centre and The Hertswood Centre have been excluded from modelling calculations since they fall outside the buffer zone catchment.

Table 4.2 Sports hall supply

Type of sports hall	Sports halls in the District (Number of courts)	Sports halls in the buffer zone (Number of courts)
Sports halls with full public access	Bricket Wood Sports Centre (8) Greenwood Park Leisure Centre (2) Harpenden Sports Centre (5) Redbourn Recreation Centre (4)	Birchwood Sports & Community Centre (4) Gosling Sports Park (5) Hatfield Leisure Centre (6) Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre (9) Vauxhall Recreation Club (4)
Sports halls on school sites with dual-use access	Francis Bacon School (4)	Cavendish School (1) Hertfordshire Sports Village (12) Parmiters Sports Centre (4) Longdean Sports Centre (4)
Sports halls on school sites with club use only	Crabtree Infant School (1) Marlborough School (3) St Albans High School for Girls (4) St Columbas College (4)	Aldenham Sports Centre (9) Astley Cooper School (2) Haberdashers School (6) Kings Langley School (2)
Private facilities	-	-
TOTAL	9 (35)	13 (68)

- 4.26 Facility size and accessibility for public use are key factors taken into consideration when assessing the current level of supply. Of the 22 facilities, the following have been excluded from the demand modelling analysis, in line with Sport England recommendations:

Table 4.3 Facilities excluded from the demand model

Sports hall site	Reason for exclusion
Aldenham Sports Centre	Club use only; no casual public access.
Astley Cooper School	Two court facility. Club use only; no casual access.
Crabtree Infants School	One court facility. Club use only; no casual access.
Cavendish School	One court facility only.
Greenwood Park	Two court facility only.
Haberdashers School	Club use only; no casual public access.
Kings Langley School	Club use only; no casual public access.
Marlborough School	Club use only; no casual public access.
St Albans High School for Girls	Club use only; no casual public access.
St Columba's College	Club use only; no casual public access.

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- 4.27 For dual use leisure centres that only allow public access during out of school hours and holidays, supply is reduced by 25% to reflect these restrictions. For the purposes of the demand model, supply at Francis Bacon School, Parmiters Sports Centre and Longdean School is therefore considered to be 3 courts and Hertfordshire Sports Village is considered to be 9 courts. The full quota of courts at each public site is included within the demand model.
- 4.28 The demand modelling has therefore been calculated on the basis of a current supply of 20 badminton courts in the City and District and 63 badminton courts including the buffer zone. Full details of the facilities available at each site and the number of courts included within the demand model can be found in Appendix G, Facility Audit.

Planned facilities

- 4.29 A planned development of a four-court sports hall forms part of a Stage II New Opportunities Fund (NOF) bid submitted by St Albans Girls School. Conditional permission was granted during March 2005 and construction is due to start on site imminently.
- 4.30 A two-court sports hall owned and managed by Highfield Park Trust is in the process of opening. In line with the above rationale (Table 4.3), this facility is excluded from future demand modelling due to its size.
- 4.31 Nicholas Breakspear School in St Albans has aspirations to develop a new state-of-the-art building on its 35-acre green belt site. The development would be funded through residential housing development of the area covered by the existing buildings. The scheme would include enhanced sports facility provision to support the school's recent achievement of Specialist Sports College status. The Council is aware of these proposals but has given no indication that they are acceptable due to green belt issues.
- 4.32 Other potential developments include a new hall at Fleetville Junior School. It is unclear at this time whether these facilities will be available to the public..
- 4.33 In late 2003, the Council refused planning permission for a scheme at St Albans School for development of a new sports hall and swimming pool to the south of the main buildings between Fishpool Street, Abbey Mill Lane and Verulamium Park. These facilities were also to be used by a number of specialist and women's groups. Proposals also included facilities for the school's combined cadet force such as a rifle range. The planning application was refused on the basis that the proposals would have an unacceptable impact on the green belt, the St Albans Conservation Area and an area of Special Archaeological significance. In addition, the main buildings on the site are Grade II listed and the Abbey Gate House is an ancient monument. Following subsequent discussions with the Council an application has been resubmitted and has now been approved subject to referral to the Secretary of State and the signing of a Section 106 agreement.
- 4.34 St George's Voluntary Aided School (St George's) currently has a dated gymnasium. Its indoor sports facilities are in drastic need of improvement, particularly since there is limited capacity at Harpenden Leisure Centre, which is in heavy demand from all three local secondary schools. The Council has previously supported the school in its submission of an unsuccessful NOF application.
- 4.35 St George's submitted an 'improvement bid' to DfES via Hertfordshire County Council last year. The £2.5m sports hall scheme was the Education Authority's top priority for development yet Hertfordshire Voluntary Aided schools did not receive any

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Government monies, as all were being allocated to areas of high deprivation. The school has re-submitted its application for funding this year. Since the school is an identified 'growth school', this is now categorised as a 'basic need bid'.

- 4.36 Local badminton clubs, aerobics instructors and several other community groups have expressed interest in using new sports hall facilities at St George's. The school has strong links with the local community and, as a Specialist College for Technology, has an established culture of community use of its on-site facilities. Harpenden Cricket Club use the site for junior matches, carrying out pitch maintenance responsibilities in return. Harpenden RFC use the site when club pitches are waterlogged and the school has hosted training for the England Territorial Lacrosse Squad. A planning application has now been approved for this development.
- 4.37 In November 2003, Beaumont School in St Albans announced proposals for the development of new sports facilities in conjunction with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), which owns adjoining land, once part of its now-closed Wynches Farm research facility. Under the proposal the school playing fields and some adjoining land, all currently in the green belt, would be released for housing. New high quality sports facilities for dual community use by the school and local clubs would be provided on land owned by the LSHTM. The existing pitches are frequently waterlogged and unplayable. In addition, the pitches are too small for a school of such a size and do not meet Government guidelines. The Council is aware of the proposal and it has been considered as part of the review of the District Local Plan, but no decision has yet been taken as to whether the land should be released from the green belt.
- 4.38 The Council has been considering for some time the re-development of Westminster Lodge to include a sports hall, containing eight courts. This was also a recommendation of the last Leisure Strategy.
- 4.39 The proposed developments at St Albans Girls School, St Albans School, and Westminster Lodge could all potentially help fill the gap for public facilities in St Albans.

Demand

- 4.40 The level of demand for sports hall facilities can be determined by applying accepted sports participation rate standards (by age and gender) and peak usage parameters to the catchment population. The number of total visits during peak times is used to calculate the size of a sports hall (in badminton court units) needed to serve this demand at any one time.
- 4.41 The key assumptions are as follows:
- 60% visits during peak time
 - average visit duration = 1 hour
 - normal peak periods = 40.5 hours per week
 - at one time capacity = 5 people per badminton court.
- 4.42 On this basis, demand in year 2005 equates to 38 courts within the City and District and 132 courts within the extended catchment zone. However, based on population projections, this is likely to increase to 39 courts and 135 courts respectively during the course of this strategy (going forward to year 2010).

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- 4.43 Full demand modelling calculations and supporting assumptions are included at Appendix I.

Impact of future participation trends

- 4.44 *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives* (DCMS/Strategy Unit, December 2002) sets out the Government's long term vision for increasing participation and high performance in sport.
- 4.45 When predicting future demand for sports facilities it is important that the potential impact of this strategy is taken into consideration. For example, if Game Plan targets were to be achieved (50% participation in 2010 and 70% in 2020) and sports hall activities assumed to increase proportionately to the increase in participation, demand by 2010 would equate to 47 badminton courts within the City and District and 163 badminton courts within the extended catchment zone.

Consultation

- Hertfordshire Badminton Association believes that there is a need for a four-court badminton hall with full public access that meets the criteria set out by Sport England and the Badminton Association of England
- consultation with local sports groups and Active Sports indicated that there is a perceived deficiency of indoor sports hall provision – this was reinforced through the household survey findings
- current participation levels in basketball are relatively low, however, a development officer has recently been appointed and should this work lead to an increase in the popularity of organised basketball courses, it is likely that a shortage of facilities will be highlighted
- Westminster Lodge is in need of modernisation or replacement - with the sensitivity surrounding Verulamium Park any proposed redevelopment will attract significant public interest and scrutiny
- both the Council and Sport England are dissatisfied with the management arrangements at Francis Bacon School since the programme of use is biased towards club use/block bookings and not casual public use – however, these issues are slowly being rectified
- although several clubs indicated that their current facilities meet the needs of their club, many suggested that additional provision is required within the City and District - almost all respondents indicated that there is a need for further indoor sports halls and multi purpose halls
- St Albans City and District Netball Association have stated that there is a shortfall of indoor netball sites which could be addressed through larger sports hall provision
- all responding clubs indicated that they would like to see the development of further Council facilities in the City and District, particularly specialist facilities relating to their sport - the Westminster Lodge site was identified as the preferred location for new sport and leisure facilities.

Quantitative analysis – City and District only

- 4.46 Our demand modelling calculations indicate that there is currently a shortfall of eighteen badminton courts.

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Calculated demand	Current supply	Surplus/Deficiency
38 badminton courts	20 badminton courts	Shortfall of 18 badminton courts – the equivalent of one six-court plus three four-court (standard sized) sports halls

- 4.47 Table 4.4 below illustrates a number of scenarios based on planned facility developments described previously and the impact on this identified shortfall.

Table 4.4 Demand modelling scenarios

Scenario	Sports halls
Present situation (2005)	Undersupply of 18 badminton courts (one six-court plus three standard sized sports halls)
All proposed facilities built with public access - Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, Nicholas Breakspear School (dual-use), Fleetville Junior School (dual-use), St Albans Girls School (dual-use) and St Albans School (dual use) - <i>these schemes are only proposals at present and it is unlikely that they will all move forward to secure planning permission or funding</i>	Undersupply of 1 court (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 7 courts (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Potential case if aspirations are met – new eight-court sports hall at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre and new four-court sports halls at Nicholas Breakspear (dual-use), Fleetville Junior School (club use only), St Albans Girls School (club use only) and St Albans School (club use only)	Undersupply of 8 courts (in 2010) (two standard sized sports halls) <i>Undersupply of 16 courts (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>

Quantitative analysis – City and District plus buffer zone

- 4.48 Our demand modelling calculations indicate that there is currently a shortfall of 69 badminton courts.

Calculated demand	Current supply	Surplus/Deficiency
132 badminton courts	63 badminton courts	Shortfall of 69 badminton courts – the equivalent of 17 four-court sports halls

- 4.49 Table 4.5 below illustrates a number of scenarios based on planned facility developments described previously and the impact on this identified shortfall.

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Table 4.5 Demand modelling scenarios

Scenario	Sports halls
Present situation (2005)	Undersupply of 69 badminton courts (17 standard sized sports halls)
Proposed facilities built with public access - Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, Nicholas Breakspear School (dual-use), Fleetville Junior School (dual-use), St Albans Girls School (dual-use) and St Albans School (dual-use) – <i>these schemes are only proposals at present and it is unlikely that they will all move forward to secure planning permission or funding</i>	Undersupply of 52 courts (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 80 courts (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Potential case if aspirations are met – new eight-court sports hall at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre and new four-court halls at Nicholas Breakspear (dual-use), Fleetwood School (club use only), St Albans Girls School (club use only) and St Albans School (club use only)	Undersupply of 61 courts (in 2010) (15 standard sized sports halls) <i>Undersupply of 89 courts (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>

- 4.50 The planned Watford Woodside Leisure Centre falls just outside the catchment area but will provide 8 courts which will also serve some residents of St Albans City and District and help to address the overall undersupply.

Setting local provision standards

- 4.51 Sport England has published a good practice tool kit on their website to assist Local Authorities in devising appropriate contributions to open space and sport/leisure provision. As part of this, Sport England, in partnership with Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships has set up a joint pilot project to help the Council ensure provision for open space, sport and recreation keeps pace with the significant growth planned for Milton Keynes. Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance has been produced as part of the pilot detailing the approach to open space provision (see Appendix J).
- 4.52 In line with this model, the provision required per 1,000 population has been calculated at a **City and District** level. The age and sex breakdown of the population taken from the 2001 Census has been applied proportionally to 1,000 of the population (see Appendix K, Tables 1 and 2) and input into the demand model as shown in Appendix L.
- 4.53 The demand model indicates that 0.3 courts are required per 1,000 population. According to the Milton Keynes example, a four-court sports hall including ancillary accommodation (e.g. circulation, reception) equals 683.1m². One court therefore equals 170.775m² and 0.3 of one court equates to 51.23m².

Local Standard: 51.23m² sports hall provision per 1,000 population

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Quality

4.54 Household respondents expressed the highest levels of satisfaction with regard to the helpfulness of staff at sports hall facilities, 41% rating this factor as *good* or *very good*.

4.55 Consultation highlighted several issues relating to the quality of local sports hall provision. These can be summarised as follows:

- of those sports clubs responding to the recent survey, 25% rated sport and leisure facilities in the City and District as poor, 62% considered provision to be average and only 12% of clubs indicated that provision was good
- 28% of household survey respondents consider facility appearance and range of facilities to be poor or very poor:

“Sports halls would be good with adequate maintenance.”

“Sports hall needs better lighting for badminton and undamaged nets.”

“Bricket Wood sports hall is badly maintained.”

- evening and weekend use by the community is currently restricted by the quality of existing sports facilities at several local schools, as they are not suitable to open for public use, for example, St George’s VA School in Harpenden and Beaumont School in St Albans.

4.56 As part of this strategy a quality standard has been developed for the City and District. This sets the minimum quality threshold to be achieved by the network of indoor recreation facilities. This threshold is set out in Section Five of this report.

Accessibility

Setting a local standard

4.57 Sport England surveys have found that 75-80% of the users of sports halls come from within a 15-minute drive time.

4.58 With respect to setting a local accessibility standard, the general perception amongst household survey respondents is that a travel time of 10 to 15 minutes is reasonable. A 15 minute travel time was found to be the 75% level overall and within four of the eight analysis areas. Respondents in seven out of the eight analysis areas indicated that they would expect to travel by car. The only variance was found to exist in Analysis Area 1 (Redbourn and surrounds) where the 75% level was a 13.75 minute walk time.

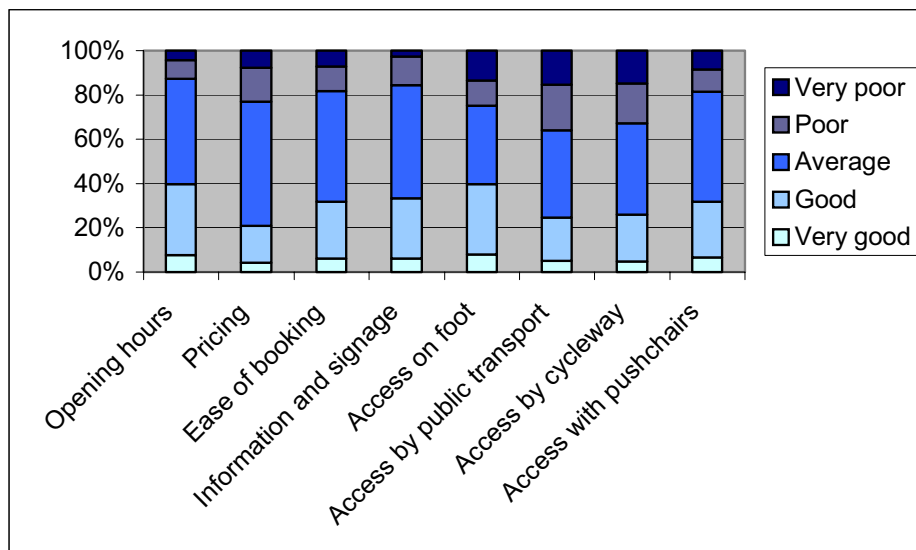
**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

15 minute drive

4.59 We therefore recommend a local accessibility standard of a 15-minute drive time.

4.60 A range of accessibility factors was also assessed via the household survey. Access on foot and opening hours were ranked highest. Conversely, access by public transport and access by cycleway were identified as areas for improvement.

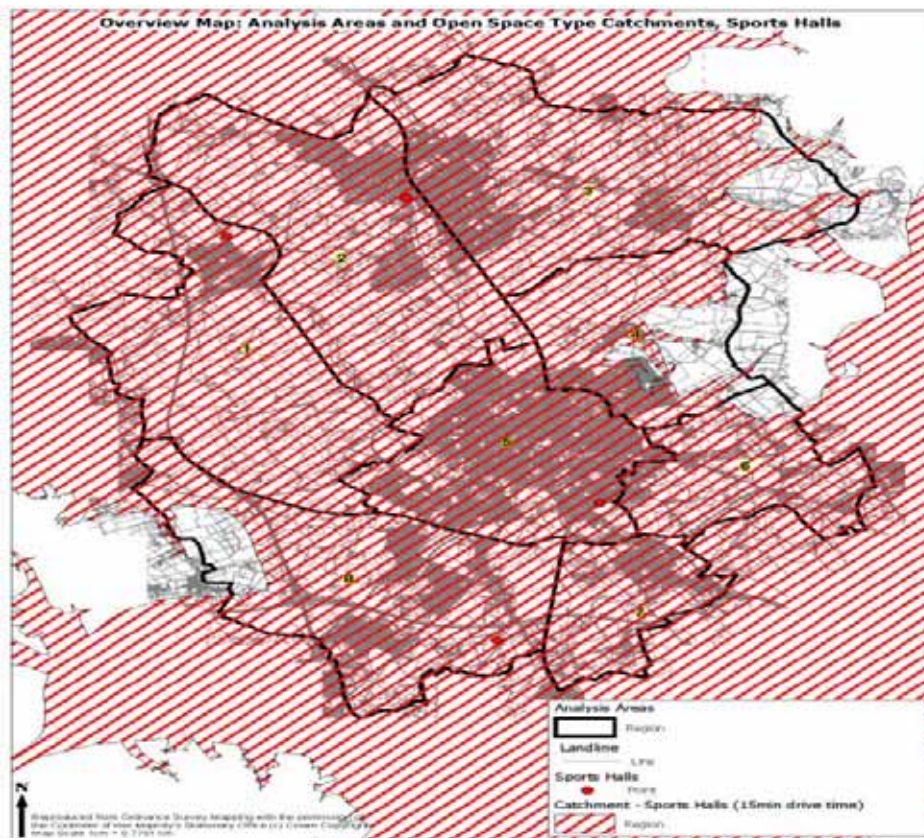
Figure 4.3 Accessibility factors for sports halls



Applying the local standard

- 4.61 A 15-minute drive time catchment has been generated for public and dual-use sports hall facilities (of three courts and above) within the City and District (depicted as red dots) to examine the extent of the geographical coverage.

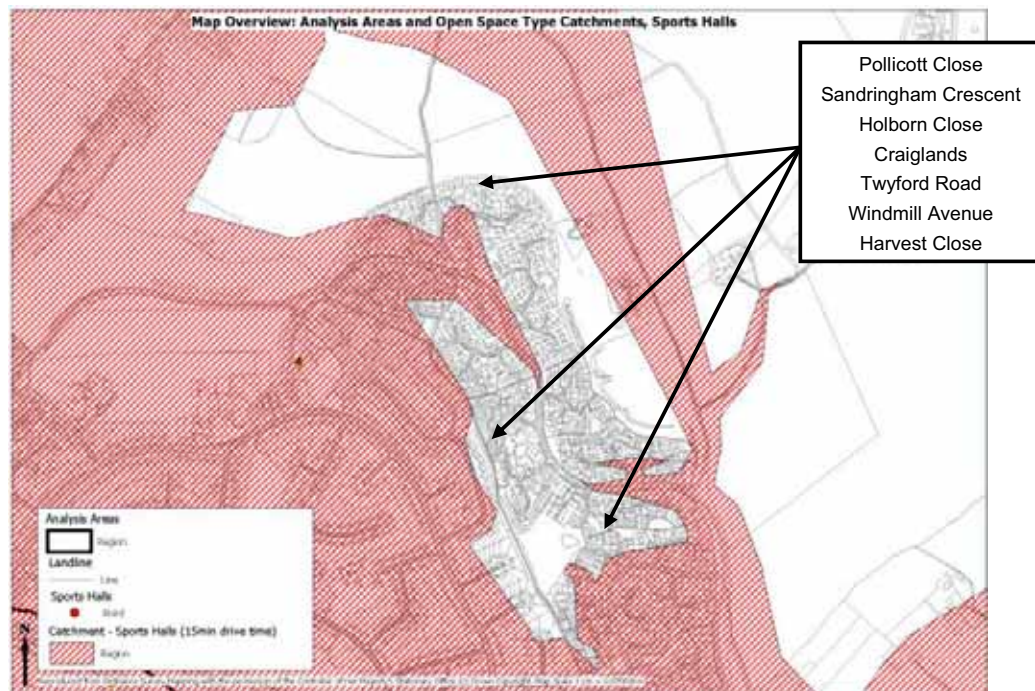
Figure 4.4 Overview of access to public sports hall facilities



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- 4.62 As illustrated previously in Figure 4.4, facilities located in Redbourn, Harpenden, St Albans and Bricket Wood provide good levels of accessibility for local residents. Although one residential area in Sandridge (Analysis Area 4) falls outside of the recommended accessibility catchment for sports halls, it can be seen from the earlier map that two facilities are situated close to the district boundary – Hertfordshire Sports Village (dual use) and Hatfield Leisure Centre (public).

Figure 4.5 Area outside the recommended accessibility catchment (Sandridge)



Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.63 In summary, the main conclusions emerging from a supply and demand assessment of sports halls provision are:
- there is currently a quantitative shortfall in sports hall facilities of 18 courts (equivalent to one six-court and three four-court halls), with demand set to rise in future years
 - should planned developments at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre (eight-court public) and Nicholas Breakspear School (four-court dual use) be progressed, the future deficiency will be reduced but not fully satisfied
 - consultation with NGBs, local sports clubs and residents reinforced perceptions of a shortfall in sports hall provision catering for badminton and netball
 - feedback from sports clubs and the local community highlighted dissatisfaction with the quality of some local sports hall facilities eg Bricket Wood Sports Centre
 - only one residential area in Sandridge falls outside of the accessibility catchment for this type of provision, although it should be highlighted that there are two facilities in the buffer zone serving the needs of this area.

Recommendations

Key recommendations to address quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in sports hall provision are:

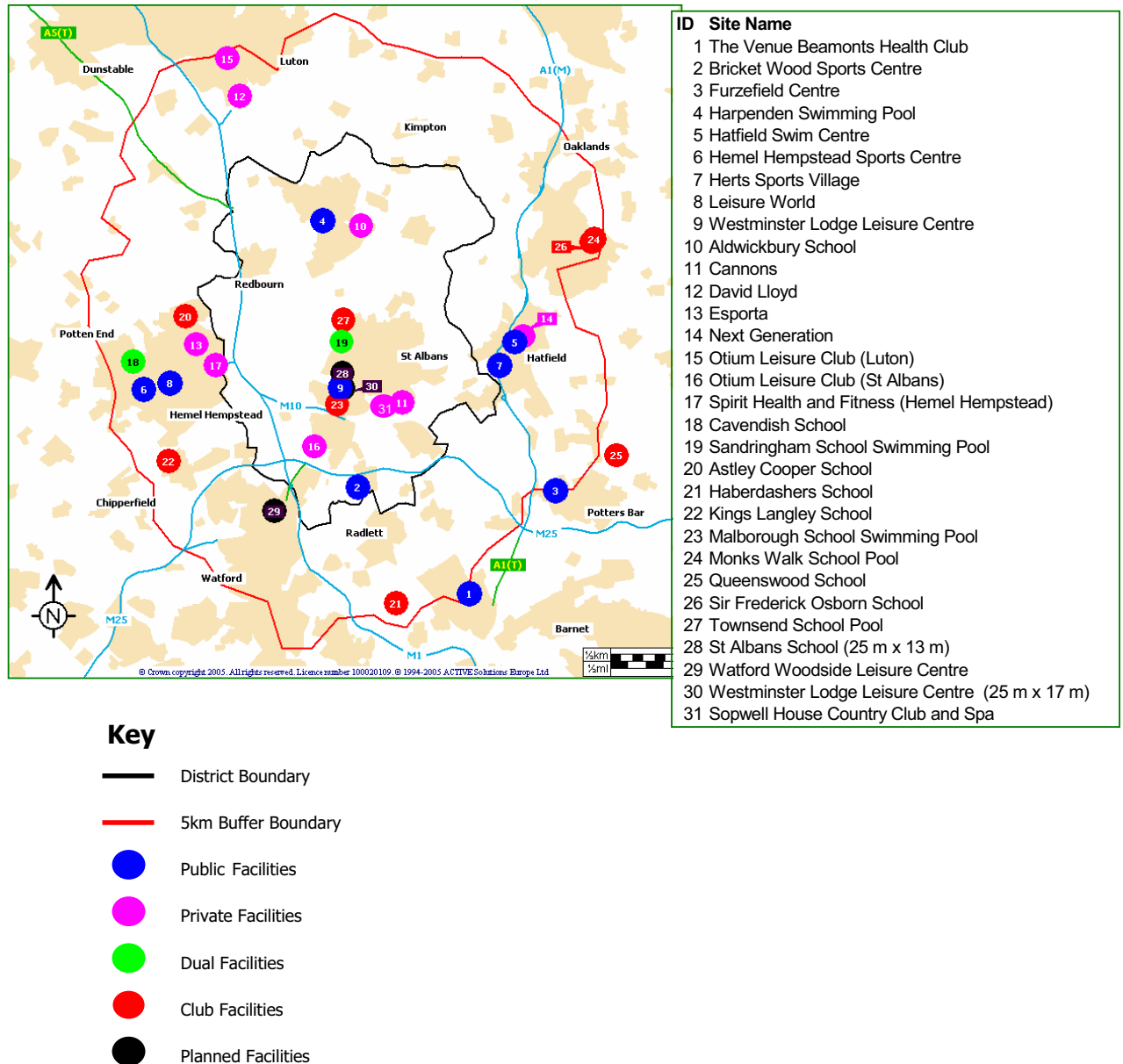
- to progress re-development proposals for Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, which include provision of an eight-court sports hall
- to support the development of a four-court sports hall with community access at Nicholas Breakspear Sports College (subject to the acceptability of proposals in planning terms)
- to consider closure of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre and to progress discussions with Watford Borough Council in relation to access arrangements for residents in the south of St Albans District
- to investigate opportunities to increase community access to existing facilities on school sites
- to encourage all providers to strive towards achievement of the Quality Standard for the City and District
- to ensure that residents living in the east of the City and District are aware of facilities provided by neighbouring Welwyn and Hatfield District Council and the benefits offered to them through recent introduction of a new loyalty card.

Swimming pool provision

Supply

4.64 The profile of existing swimming pool provision within the City and District is illustrated in Figure 4.6 below:

Figure 4.6 Swimming pool facilities within the City and district and buffer



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- 4.65 There are ten swimming pool facilities within the City and District and 25 facilities across the City and District and buffer zone, as shown below. A full list of facilities is shown at Appendix G. It should be noted that The Furzefield Centre, The Venue and Queenswood School have been excluded from modelling calculations since they fall at the edge of the buffer zone catchment. Cottonmill Swimming Pool is used for sub aqua training and does not offer casual swimming opportunities. It has therefore been excluded from consideration.

Table 4.6 Swimming pool supply

Type of swimming pool	Number of swimming pools in City and District (area, m ²)	Number of swimming pools in City and District and buffer zone (area, m ²)
Pools with full public access	Bricket Wood Sports Centre (322) Harpenden Swimming Pool (325) Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre (396)	Bricket Wood Sports Centre (322) Harpenden Swimming Pool (325) Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre (425) Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre (312.5) Leisure World (Leisure Pool) Hatfield Swim Centre (495) Herts Sports Village (425)
Pools on school sites with dual-use access	Sandringham School Swimming Pool (250)	Sandringham School Swimming Pool (250) Cavendish School (160)
Pools with club use only	Malborough School Swimming Pool (154) Townsend School Pool (200)	Malborough School Swimming Pool (154) Townsend School Pool (200) Astley Cooper School (200) Kings Langley School (230) Monks Walk School Pool (330) Haberdashers School (250) Sir Frederick Osborn School (175)
Private facilities	Cannons Aldwickbury School Otium Leisure Club Sopwell House Country Club	Cannons Aldwickbury School Otium Leisure Club Sopwell House Country Club Otium Leisure Club Luton David Lloyd

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		Spirit Health and Fitness Next Generation Esporta
TOTAL	10	25

4.66 Facility size and accessibility for public use are key factors taken into consideration when assessing the current level of supply. Full details of the level of supply at each site and the figures used for demand modelling can be found in Appendix G, Facility Audit. The demand modelling has taken into account the following factors:

- swimming pools at Aldwickbury School, Astley Cooper School, Cannons, Sopwell Country Club, Otium Leisure Club (St Albans), Haberdashers School, Kings Langley School, Monks Walk School, Marlborough School, Next Generation (Hatfield), Spirit Health and Fitness, Esporta (Hemel Hempstead) David Lloyd, Otium Leisure Club (Luton), Sir Frederick Osborn School and Townsend School have been excluded from the model because there is no access to the public for casual swimming
- supply at Cavendish School and Sandringham School has been reduced by 25% to reflect reduced public access.

4.67 The current supply of pools therefore equates to 1,231m² of water space in the City and District and 2,612m² of water space in the City and District plus buffer zone.

Planned facilities

- 4.68 Potential replacement of the pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre would have an impact on supply within the City and District, with a 25m main pool and learner pool providing a similar capacity of water space but of a more appropriate type for local needs.
- 4.69 Verulam School in Fleetville is proposing to develop a new swimming pool based on S&P Architects 'Swim 25' model.
- 4.70 Planning permission for the development of a 25 metre by six-lane pool at St Albans School was refused in November 2003. This application has now been resubmitted.
- 4.71 Planning permission for a 20m swimming pool at Harpenden Rugby Club has been approved subject to referral to the Secretary of State and the signing of a section 106 agreement. This pool is likely to be private, and is therefore not included within any demand modelling scenarios.

Demand

- 4.72 The level of demand is determined by applying accepted swimming participation rate standards (by age and gender) and peak usage parameters to the catchment population. The number of total visits during peak times is used to calculate the size of a swimming pool (in square metres) needed to serve this demand at any one time.
- 4.73 The key assumptions are as follows:
- 63% visits during peak time

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- average visit duration = 64 minutes
 - normal peak periods = 52 hours per week = 49 peak sessions
 - at one time capacity = 6m² per person
- 4.74 On this basis, current demand within the City and District is equivalent to 1,356m² and within the district and buffer zone is equivalent to 4,685m² water space. However, based on population projections, this is likely to increase to 1,389m² and 4,768m² respectively during the course of this strategy (going forward to year 2010).
- 4.75 Full demand modelling calculations and supporting assumptions are included at Appendix I.

Impact of future participation trends

- 4.76 *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives* (DCMS/Strategy Unit, December 2002) sets out the Government's long term vision for increasing participation and high performance in sport. When predicting future demand for sports facilities it is important that the potential impact of this strategy is taken into consideration.
- 4.77 For example, if Game Plan targets were to be achieved (50% participation in 2010 and 70% in 2020) and swimming levels assumed to increase proportionately to the increase in participation, demand would increase to 1,680m² for the City and District and 5,769m² for the extended catchment.

Consultation

- Hertfordshire Amateur Swimming Association has identified the lack of a suitable facility for a competitive swimming as a key issue for the City and District
- St Albans School currently uses Westminster Lodge Sports Centre - following changes in the curriculum, these facilities are unable to accommodate all of the needs of the school in relation to swimming and indoor sports
- British Canoe Union highlighted that swimming pool facilities with suitable capacity and receptive to accommodating canoeing and canoe polo would be welcomed within the City and District and confirmed that Nicholas Breakspear School is seeking a suitable pool facility to accommodate water-based activities for its newly established outdoor pursuits club.

Quantitative analysis – City and District only

- 4.78 Our demand modelling calculations indicate that there is currently a small deficiency in water space. (Sport England defines one pool unit as equivalent to 212m² - this roughly equates to a 4 x 25m pool).

Calculated demand	Current supply	Surplus/Deficiency
1,356m ²	1,231m ²	Shortfall of 125m ² water space

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4.79 Table 4.7 below illustrates a number of scenarios based on planned facility developments described previously and the impact on this identified shortfall.

Table 4.7 Demand modelling scenarios

Scenario	Swimming pools
Present situation (2005)	Undersupply of 125m ²
Replacement of Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with equivalent capacity of water space to existing	Undersupply of 158m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 450m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Replacement of the existing pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with a 25m, 8-lane pool	Undersupply of 129m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 421m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Replacement of the existing pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with a 25m, 8-lane pool and <i>closure</i> of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre	Undersupply of 451m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 743m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Assuming development of a dual-use facility at St Albans School (<i>NB this has not yet received planning permission so is unlikely at present</i>) and replacement of Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with equivalent capacity of water space to existing	Oversupply of 85m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 206m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Assuming development of a dual-use facility at St Albans School and 25m, 8-lane pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre	Oversupply of 114m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 177m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>

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Quantitative analysis – City and District plus buffer zone

- 4.80 Our demand modelling calculations indicate that there is currently a deficiency in water space equivalent to circa five 25m, 8-lane swimming pools.

Calculated demand	Current supply	Surplus/Deficiency
4,685 m ²	2,612m ²	Shortfall of 2,073m ² water space

- 4.81 Table 4.8 below illustrates a number of scenarios based on planned facility developments described previously and the impact on this identified shortfall.

Table 4.8 Demand modelling scenarios

Scenario	Swimming pools
Present situation (2005)	Undersupply of 2,073m ²
Replacement of Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with equivalent capacity of water space to existing	Undersupply of 2,155m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 3,156m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Replacement of the existing pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with a 25m, 8-lane pool	Undersupply of 2,126m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 3,127m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Replacement of the existing pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with a 25m, 8-lane pool and <i>closure</i> of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre	Undersupply of 2,449m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 3,450m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Assuming development of a dual-use facility at St Albans School (<i>NB this has not yet received planning permission so is unlikely at present</i>) and replacement of Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre with equivalent capacity of water space to existing	Undersupply of 1,911m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 2,913m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>
Assuming development of a dual-use facility at St Albans School and 25m, 8-lane pool at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre	Undersupply of 1,882m ² (in 2010) <i>Undersupply of 2,884m² (in 2010, Game Plan adjusted)</i>

- 4.82 The planned provision of an eight lane pool at Watford Woodside Leisure Centre, located just outside the buffer zone but accessible to residents living in the South of St Albans City and District will help to address this undersupply.

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Setting local provision standards

- 4.83 Sport England has published a good practice tool kit on their website to assist Local Authorities in devising appropriate contributions to open space and sport/leisure provision. As part of this, Sport England, in partnership with Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships has set up a joint pilot project to help the Council ensure provision for open space, sport and recreation keeps pace with the significant growth planned for Milton Keynes. Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance has been produced as part of the pilot detailing the approach to open space provision (see Appendix J).
- 4.84 In line with this model, the provision required per 1,000 population has been calculated at a **City and District level**. The age and sex breakdown of the population taken from the 2001 Census has been applied proportionally to 1,000 of the population (see Appendix K, Tables 1 and 2) and input into the demand model as shown in Appendix L.
- 4.85 The demand model indicates that 10.51 m² of water space per 1,000 population is required to meet current demand (in year 2005).

Local Standard: 10.51m² water space per 1,000 population

Quality

- 4.86 The quality of existing swimming pools within the City and District, particularly Westminster Lodge, has been heavily criticised by household survey respondents.
- 4.87 A high proportion of household survey respondents (43%) ranked appearance of swimming pool facilities as *poor* or *very poor*. However, once again satisfaction with regards to the helpfulness of staff was clearly evident with 42% rating this factor as *good* or *very good*.
- 4.88 As part of this strategy a quality standard has been developed for the City and District. This sets the minimum quality threshold to be achieved by the network of indoor recreation facilities. This threshold is set out in Section Five of this report.

Accessibility

Setting a local standard

- 4.89 National benchmarks indicate that a 15-minute drive time is an acceptable time for users to travel to swimming pool facilities.
- 4.90 Overall 75% of household survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to travel up to 15 minutes to a swimming pool and that the preferred mode of travel was by car. This view was common across seven of the eight analysis areas.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

15 minute drive

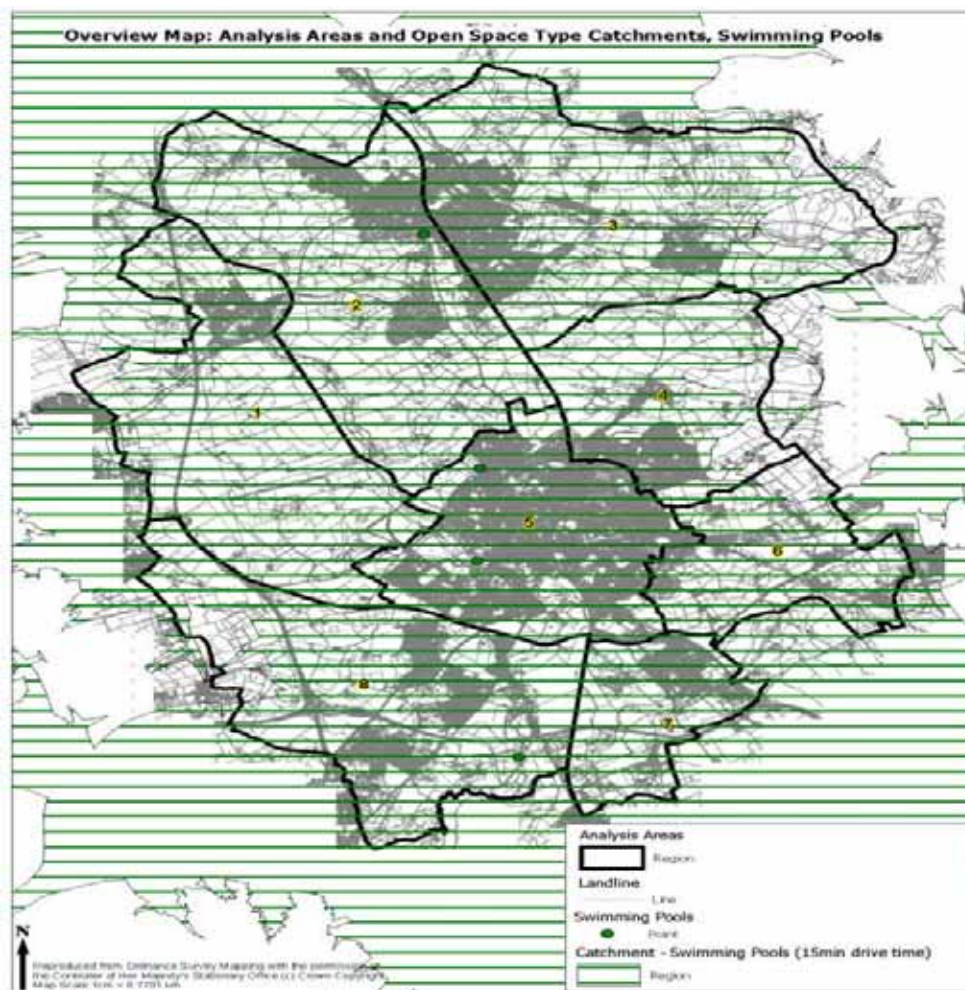
SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- 4.91 We therefore recommend a local accessibility standard of a 15-minute drive time, which would satisfy expectations in the remaining analysis area where the 75% level was a drive time of up to 20 minutes. A 15-minute drive time is also in line with accepted national standards.

Applying the local standard

- 4.92 A 15-minute drive time catchment has been generated for public and dual-use swimming pool facilities within the City and District (depicted as green dots) to examine the extent of the geographical coverage.
- 4.93 As illustrated in Figure 4.7 below, facilities located in Harpenden, St Albans and Bricket Wood provide full accessibility for local residents, all residents being within a 15-minute drive of a public swimming pool.

Figure 4.7 Overview of access to public swimming pool facilities



- 4.94 In the event of the closure of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre, residents in the south of the City and District would still fall within the 15-minute drive time catchment of Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre and the planned facility at Woodside in Watford.

Conclusions and recommendations

4.95 In summary, the main conclusions emerging from a supply and demand assessment of swimming pool provision are:

- at a district level existing provision in quantitative terms is sufficient to satisfy current levels of demand, whilst consideration of supply and demand within the City and District and extended 5km catchment suggests a shortfall in provision equivalent to circa five 25m, 8-lane swimming pools
- consultation highlighted issues with respect to the appropriateness of current district provision e.g. a lack of shallow water for beginners as well as the need for a competition venue
- the quality of existing swimming pools within the City and District, particularly Westminster Lodge, has been heavily criticised by household survey respondents
- a need for facility programming to accommodate a broader range of water based activities e.g. canoe training, canoe polo, water polo, etc

Recommendations

Key recommendations relating to future swimming provision are:

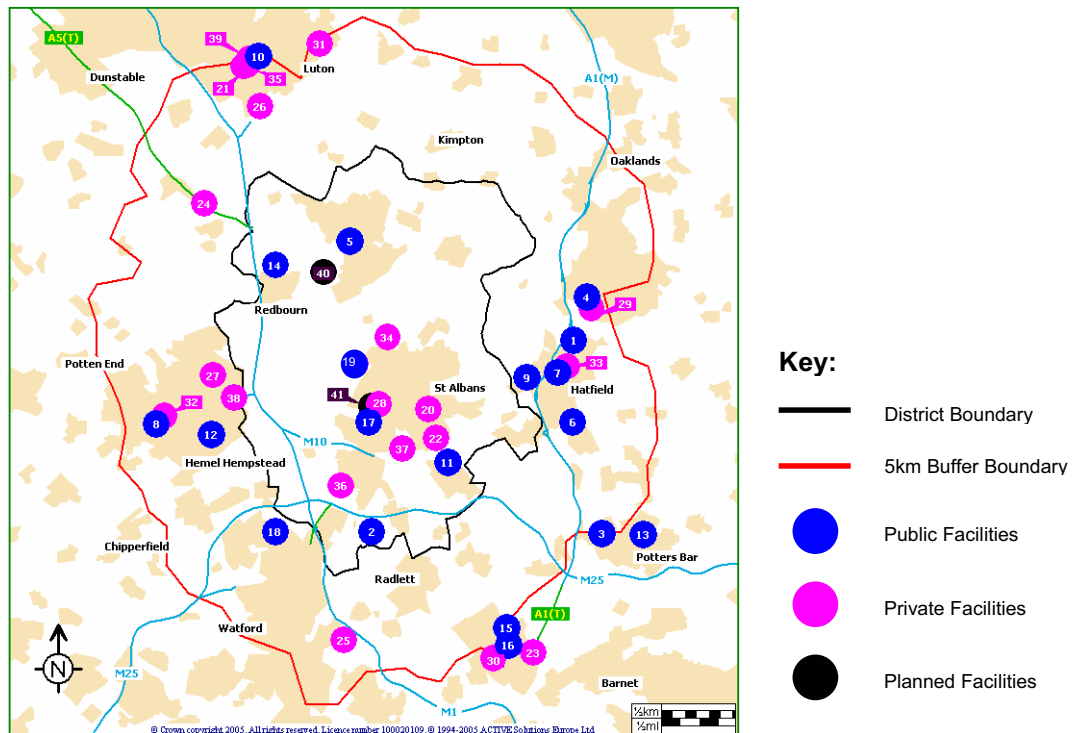
- to progress re-development proposals for Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, which include provision of a 25m, 8-lane main pool and learner pool and improved changing facilities
- to consider closure of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre and to progress discussions with Watford Borough Council in relation to access arrangements for residents in the south of St Albans District
- to encourage all providers to strive towards achievement of the Quality Standard for the City and District
- to ensure that residents living in the east of the City and District are aware of facilities provided by neighbouring Welwyn and Hatfield District Council and the benefits offered to them through recent introduction of a new loyalty card.

Health and fitness provision

Supply

- 4.96 The profile of existing health and fitness provision within the City and District and buffer zone is illustrated in Figure 4.8 below:

Figure 4.8 Health and fitness provision within the City and District and buffer



ID Site Name

- 1 Birchwood Sports & Community Centre
- 2 Bricket Wood Sports Centre
- 3 Furzeffield Centre (Beaumonts Health Club)
- 4 Gosling Sports Park
- 5 Harpenden Sports Centre (Harpers Health and Fitness)
- 6 Hatfield Leisure Centre
- 7 Hatfield Swim Centre
- 8 Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre
- 9 Hertfordshire Sports Village (Vision Health and Fitness Club)
- 10 La Phyz
- 11 London Colney Recreation Centre
- 12 Longdean Sports Centre
- 13 Potters Bar Health Club
- 14 Redbourn Recreation Centre
- 15 The Hertswood Centre (Beaumonts Health Club)
- 16 The Venue (Beaumonts Health Club)
- 17 Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre
- 18 YMCA Woodlands
- 19 Batchwood Golf & Tennis Centre (Harpers Fitness Studio)
- 20 Body Limit
- 21 Bodylines Health & Fitness Centre

ID Site Name

- 22 Cannons Health Club
- 23 Club Motivation (Borehamwood)
- 24 Club Motivation (St Albans)
- 25 David Lloyd Club (Bushey)
- 26 David Lloyd Club (Luton)
- 27 Esporta
- 28 Fitness First
- 29 Herts Country Club
- 30 Holmes Place Health Club (Elstree)
- 31 LA Fitness (Luton)
- 32 Marlowes Fitness Centre
- 33 Next Generation (Hatfield)
- 34 Old Albanians Health and Fitness Club
- 35 Otium Leisure Club (Luton)
- 36 Otium Leisure Club (St Albans)
- 37 Sopwell House Country Club and Viverano Spa
- 38 Spirit Health and Fitness (Hemel Hempstead)
- 39 Steps Fitness Centre
- 40 Harpenden Rugby Club
- 41 St Albans School

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- 4.97 There are currently 12 health and fitness facilities within the City and District and 34 across the City and District and buffer zone. A full list of facilities is shown in Appendix G. It should be noted that Furze Field Centre, Hertswood Centre, Potters Bar Health Club, Club Motivation Borehamwood and The Venue have been excluded from modelling calculations since they fall at the edge of the buffer zone catchment. Health and fitness facilities falling into each catchment are highlighted in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Health and fitness facilities

Type of facility	health and fitness facilities in City and District (no. of stations)	health and fitness facilities in buffer zone (no. of stations)
Local authority health and fitness facility	Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre (24) Bricket Wood Sports Centre (12) Harpenden Sports Centre (52) London Colney Recreation Centre (22) Redbourn Recreation Centre (14) Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre (29)	Birchwood Sports and Community Centre (20) Gosling Sports Park (70) Hatfield Leisure Centre (60) Hatfield Swim Centre (23) Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre (80) Hertfordshire Sports Village (120) La Phyzz (22) Longdean Sports Centre (25) YMCA Woodlands (34)

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Private health and fitness facilities	Body Limit (60) Cannons Health Club (250) Fitness First (209) Old Albanians Health and Fitness Club (24) Otium Leisure Club (26) Sopwell House Country Club (36)	Bodylines Health and Fitness (50) Club Motivation St Albans (17) David Lloyd (130) David Lloyd Bushey (160) Esporta (70) Herts Country Club (62) Holmes Place Health Club (105) LA Fitness Luton (58) Marlowes Fitness Centre (58) Next Generation Hatfield (160) Otium Leisure Club, Luton (20) Spirit Health and Fitness (35) Steps Fitness Centre (42)
TOTAL	12 (758)	22 (1421)

- 4.98 There are six public health and fitness facilities in the City and District – Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre, Bricket Wood Sports Centre, Harpenden Leisure Centre, London Colney Recreation Centre, Redbourn Recreation Centre and Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre – providing a total of 153 stations.
- 4.99 The largest private facilities within the City and District are Cannons Health Club at 250 stations and Fitness First at 209 stations. These serve the high budget end of the market, and are very popular with residents. In addition to Cannons and Fitness First there are a further four private facilities. In total these private facilities provide 605 stations.
- 4.100 Within the 5km buffer zone around the St Albans boundary, there are a further nine public facilities and 13 private membership facilities, including Next Generation (Hatfield) (160 stations), David Lloyd (Bushey) (160 stations), David Lloyd (Luton) (130 stations) and Holmes Place (Elstree) (105 stations).

Planned facilities

- 4.101 The re-development scheme for Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre includes proposals for expansion of health and fitness facilities to 120 – 200 stations.
- 4.102 Current proposals for development of sports facilities at St Albans School also include plans for the development of a small health and fitness suite, circa 20 stations.

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- 4.103 A recent planning application received from Harpenden Rugby Club contains proposals for development of a 50-station fitness centre.

Demand

- 4.104 The propensity of residents in the City and District to participate in health and fitness is significantly higher than the national average – 24.3% in comparison to 19.7% nationally. The total adult population within the City and District and buffer zone is 339,485.
- 4.105 Full demand modelling calculations and supporting assumptions are included at Appendix I.
- 4.106 The key assumptions are as follows:
- average health and fitness session is one hour
 - 65% of use is during peak times
 - peak times are 5-9pm Monday to Friday and 9am-5pm weekends (36 hours in a week)
 - average user participates on average 1.5 times per week or six times a month
 - at one time capacity of a health and fitness facility is calculated by the ratio of one user per station.
- 4.107 Current demand is equivalent to 598 stations within the City and District and 2,055 stations including the buffer zone. By 2010, demand for health and fitness is likely to increase to 613 stations and 2,091 stations respectively.

Quantitative analysis

- 4.108 At present there is an oversupply equivalent to 160 stations within the City and District and 124 stations across the extended catchment.

City and district

Calculated demand	Current supply	Surplus/Deficiency
598 stations	758 stations	Oversupply of 160 stations

City and district plus buffer zone

Calculated demand	Current supply	Surplus/Deficiency
2,055 stations	2,179 stations	Oversupply of 124 stations

- 4.109 Table 4.10 below illustrates a number of scenarios based on planned facility developments described previously and the associated impact.

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Table 4.10 Demand modelling scenarios – Health and Fitness

Scenario	City and District only	City and District plus buffer
Present situation	Oversupply of 160 stations	Oversupply of 124 stations
No development in next 5 years	Oversupply of 145 stations	Oversupply of 88 stations
Expansion of facilities at Westminster Lodge to 120 stations	Oversupply of 224 stations	Oversupply of 179 stations
Expansion of facilities at Westminster Lodge to 120 stations plus <i>closure</i> of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre	Oversupply of 212 stations	Oversupply of 167 stations
Expansion of facilities at Westminster Lodge to 120 stations plus small public access facility built at St Albans school (20 stations) and member facility at Harpenden Rugby Club (50 stations)	Oversupply of 294 stations	Oversupply of 249 stations

Setting local provision standards

- 4.110 Sport England has published a good practice tool kit on their website to assist Local Authorities in devising appropriate contributions to open space and sport/leisure provision. As part of this, Sport England, in partnership with Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships has set up a joint pilot project to help the Council ensure provision for open space, sport and recreation keeps pace with the significant growth planned for Milton Keynes. Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance has been produced as part of the pilot detailing the approach to open space provision (see Appendix J).
- 4.111 In line with this model, the provision required per 1,000 population has been calculated at a **City and District level**. The age and sex breakdown of the population taken from the 2001 Census has been applied proportionally to 1,000 of the population (see Appendix K, Tables 1 and 2) and input into the demand model as shown in Appendix L.
- 4.112 The demand model indicates that 4.63 stations are required per 1,000 population. According to industry benchmarks, one station equates to 4.5 m². 4.63 stations therefore equal 20.84 m².

Local Standard: 20.84m² health and fitness provision per 1,000 population

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Quality

- 4.113 Household survey respondents expressed moderate satisfaction with the overall quality of health and fitness facilities in the City and District, with 18% rating them as good or very good.
- 4.114 Over 30% felt the range of facilities and appearance to be poor or very poor. In contrast, over 20% of respondents indicated that the range and appearance of facilities was good or very good, with 25% happy or very happy with the pricing structure.
- 4.115 As part of this strategy a quality standard has been developed for the City and District. This sets the minimum quality threshold to be achieved by the network of indoor recreation facilities. This threshold is set out in Section Five of this report.

Accessibility

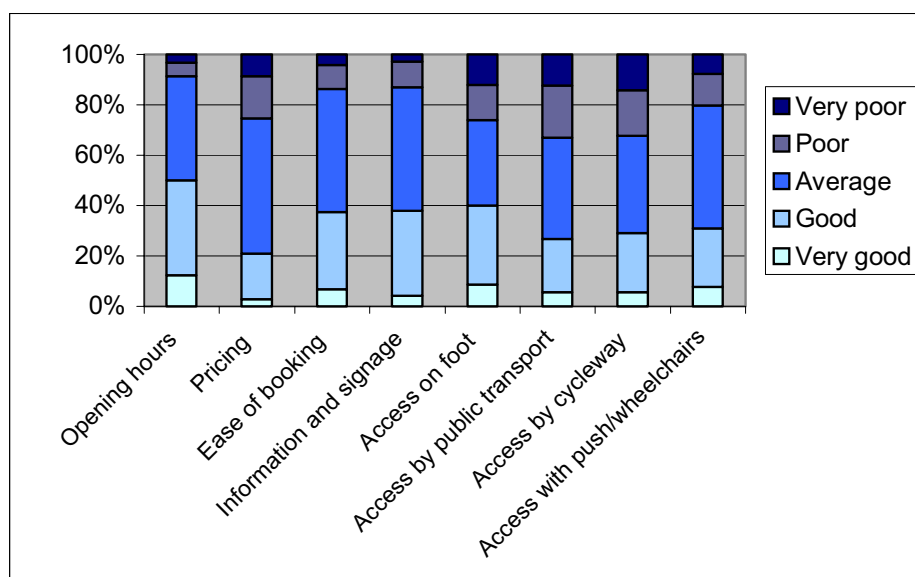
Setting a local standard

- 4.116 Industry norms support a 10-minute drive time as an acceptable travel time for health and fitness users.
- 4.117 Over 30% of respondents to the household surveys indicated that access to health and fitness facilities on foot and by public transport was good. Conversely, opening hours were identified as an area for improvement.
- 4.118 The majority of people indicated that they would expect to travel by car. The 75% level for the City and District and across five of the eight analysis areas was a travel time of up to 15 minutes.
- 4.119 Opinions of an appropriate travel time vary across the city and district, and a high number of respondents indicated that they would only be willing to travel up to 10 minutes. Due to the variations in opinion, we therefore recommend a local accessibility standard of a 10-minute drive time, which would satisfy expectations in all analysis areas and is in line with accepted national benchmarks.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

10 minute drive

Figure 4.9 Accessibility factors for health and fitness

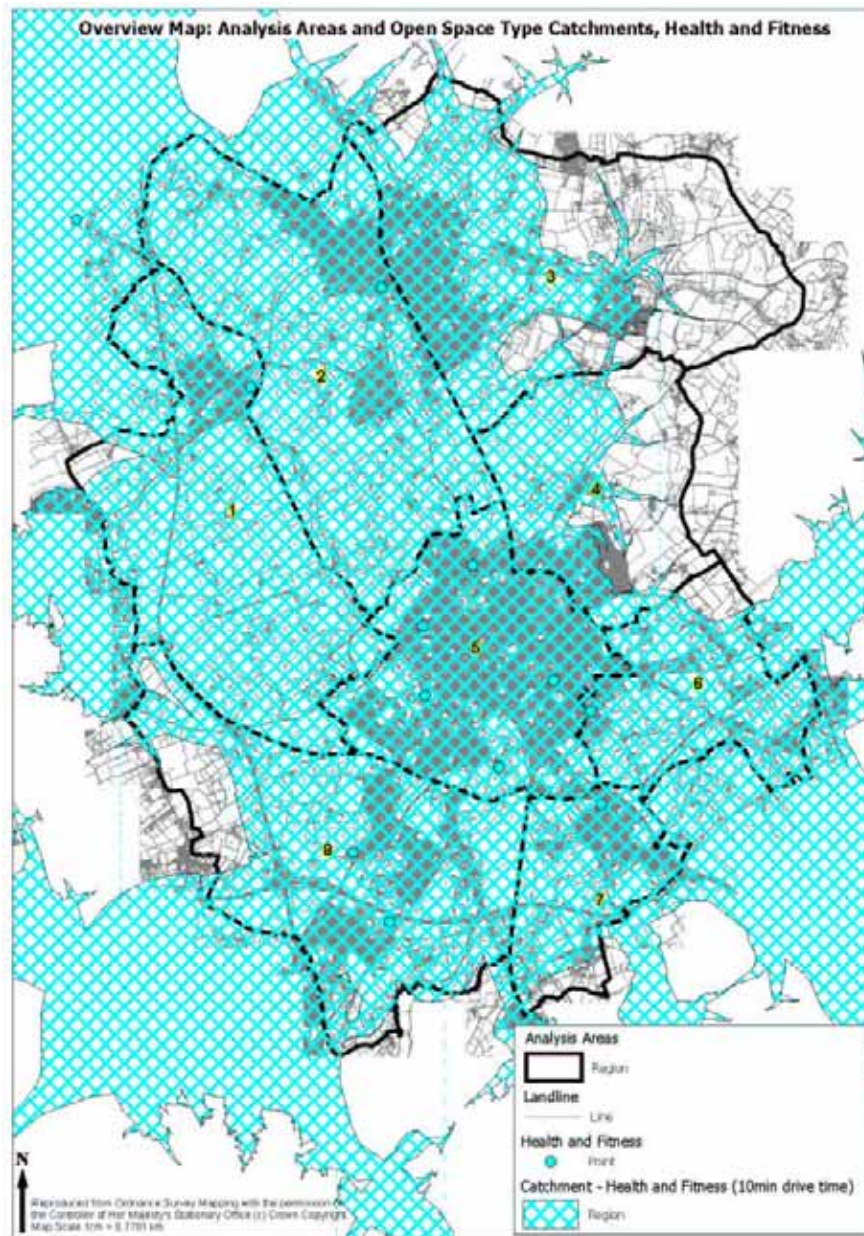


SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Applying the local standard

- 4.120 A 10-minute drive time catchment has been generated for public and private health and fitness facilities within the City and District (depicted as turquoise dots) to examine the extent of the geographical coverage.

Figure 4.10 Overview of access to health and fitness facilities



- 4.121 The plotting of facilities shows a cluster concentrated in the Central analysis area. There are two pockets of the City and District which fall outside of the recommended travel time – one in Sandridge and one in Wheathampstead. These are shown in larger scale in Figures 4.11 and 4.12 below. However, it should be noted that these areas are within the recommended travel time of health and fitness provision situated in the buffer zone.

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Figure 4.11 Area in Wheathampstead falling outside of the accessibility catchment

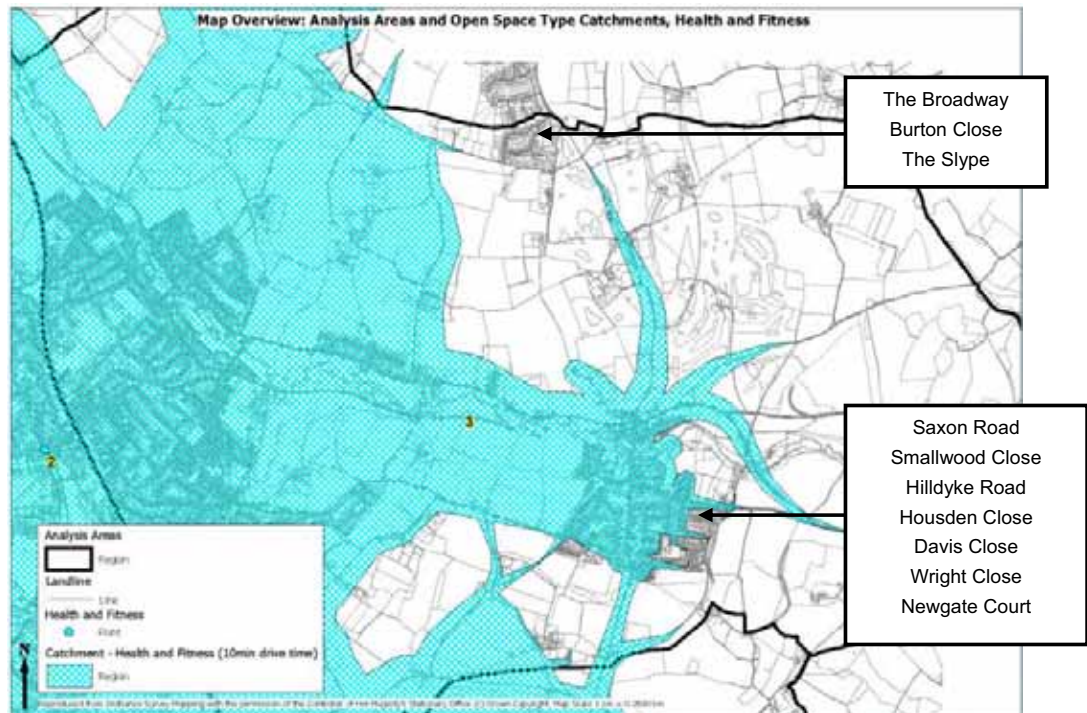
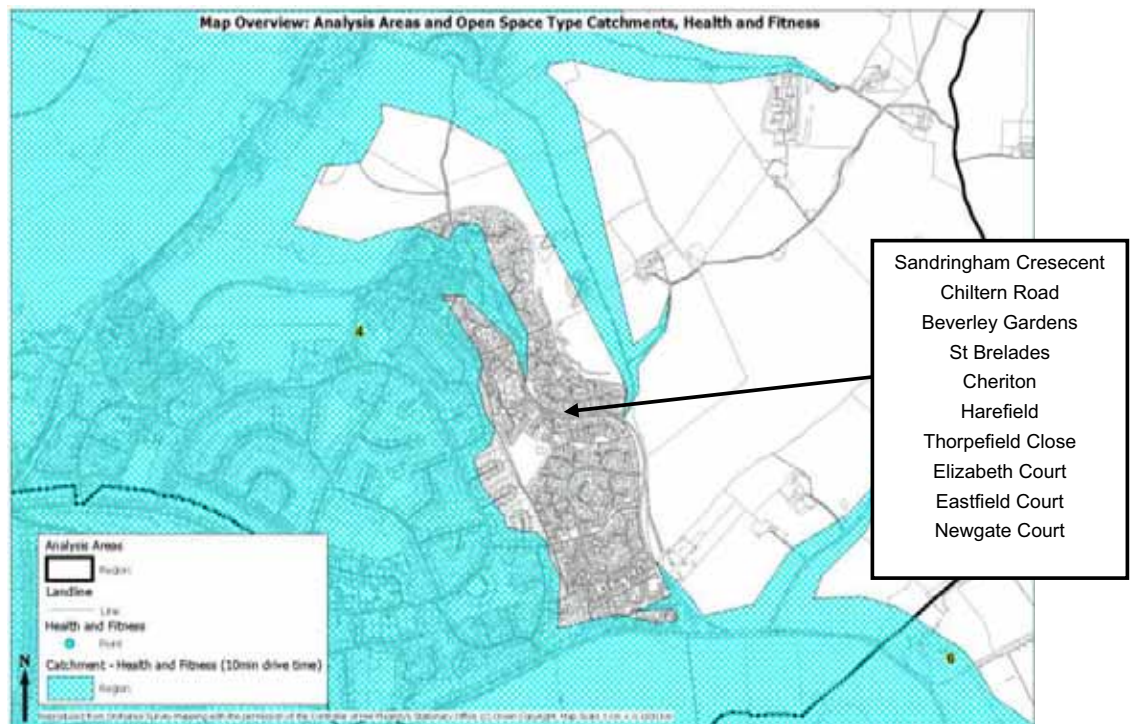


Figure 4.12 Area in Sandridge falling outside of the accessibility catchment



SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.122 In summary, the main conclusions emerging from a supply and demand assessment of health and fitness provision are:
- the market appears saturated:
 - at a district level there is an oversupply of health and fitness provision equivalent to 160 stations
 - consideration of supply and demand within the City and District and extended 5km buffer zone shows an oversupply equivalent to 124 stations
 - residents have access to six public facilities across the City and District, although the largest facility is Harpenden Sports Centre (50 stations) with most others being between 20 and 30 stations
 - two pockets of the City and District are outside of the recommended travel time for this type of provision (one in Sandridge and one in Wheathampstead) but these areas are considered to fall within the accessibility catchments for facilities situated in the buffer zone.
- 4.123 During the development of the Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy, additional analysis was conducted on the health and fitness sector by the Leisure Database Company. This approach to supply and demand analysis is based on MOSAIC profiling which uses a geo-demographic consumer classification system to profile the population of the district, and combined with details of existing facility provision, identifies estimates of latent demand for health and fitness (i.e. the number of potential users that are not currently accessing existing health and fitness provision). The analysis suggests that there is a total latent demand for health and fitness of approximately 5,093 members in the district.
- 4.124 This approach does not automatically assume that all facilities are being used to their full capacity or that additional stations are required. It suggests that there might be a number of explanations for the latent demand. These include:
- additional stations may be required
 - optimum levels of usage may not be being achieved at existing facilities
 - latent demand in given facility catchments may exist
 - facilities may need to be a certain critical mass (i.e. minimum number of stations) in order to be successful and have the opportunity to grow
 - stations in the public sector are outnumbered by those in the private sector by a considerable margin and a minimum critical mass of public sector provision must be maintained
- 4.125 The analysis indicates a strong potential for health and fitness across the district that could be met through a variety of measures.

Recommendations

Key recommendations relating to future health and fitness provision are:

- to consider closure of Bricket Wood Leisure Centre
- to expand health and fitness provision within re-development proposals for Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre to provide access to a large scale, high quality public health and fitness facility in the locality – residents in St Albans City and District have a high propensity to participate in health and fitness. Development of this facility would contribute to the achievement of a 50:50 split between public and private facilities

Indoor bowls provision

Supply

- 4.126 Harpenden & District Indoor Bowls Club is the only indoor facility located in the City and District and offers four rinks. Gosling Sports Park in Welwyn Garden City is the only facility situated within the buffer zone. This is an eight-rink facility.

Demand

- 4.127 Using the Sport England Sport Facility Calculator based on a total district population of 129,126 (Census 2001 data) and a projected future population of 136,083 (in year 2010), demand is equivalent to:

Table 4.11 Demand for indoor bowls within the City and District

Year	Number of rinks
2001	7.49
2010	7.89

- 4.128 The Sport England calculator projects a population of 457,991 for 2005 for the district and buffer and 466,077 for 2010. Demand for indoor bowls is equivalent to:

Table 4.12 Demand for indoor bowls within the City and District and buffer

Year	Number of rinks
2005	27.38
2010	27.86

Shortfalls/surpluses

- 4.129 The demand modelling findings indicate that there is a current shortfall of 3.49 rinks within the district (equivalent to one four-rink centre) and 16 rinks (equivalent to two eight-rink centres) within the district and buffer zone. This assumes there will be no new development in the next five years.

Quality

- 4.130 The quality of the range of facilities at indoor bowls centres is considered *average* (46%) to *poor* (35%). Circa 50% of household respondents rated appearance of existing facilities and helpfulness of staff as *average*.

Accessibility

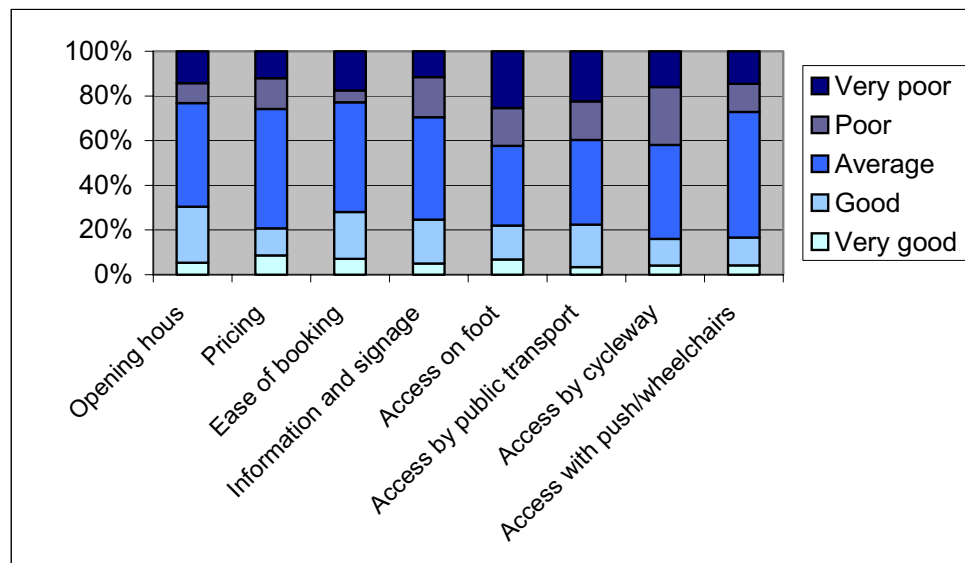
Setting a local standard

- 4.131 The 75% level for the City and District overall and within three of the eight analysis areas was a travel time of up to 20 minutes. The 75% level in the further two analysis areas was only slightly lower at 17.5 minutes. Once again, people indicated that they would expect to travel by car. We recommend an accessibility standard of a 20-minute drive time be set.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

20 minute drive

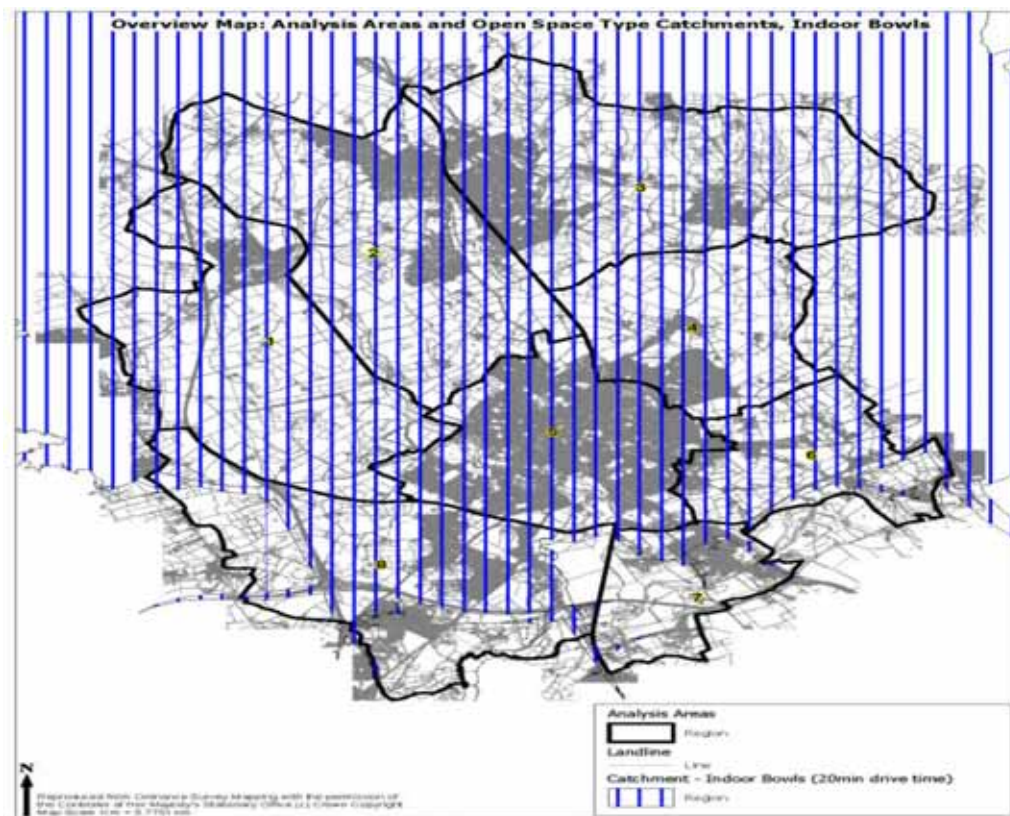
Figure 4.13 Accessibility factors for indoor bowls



4.132 Access on foot, by public transport and by cycleway are clearly the main areas of concern. Opening hours and ease of booking were rated positively.

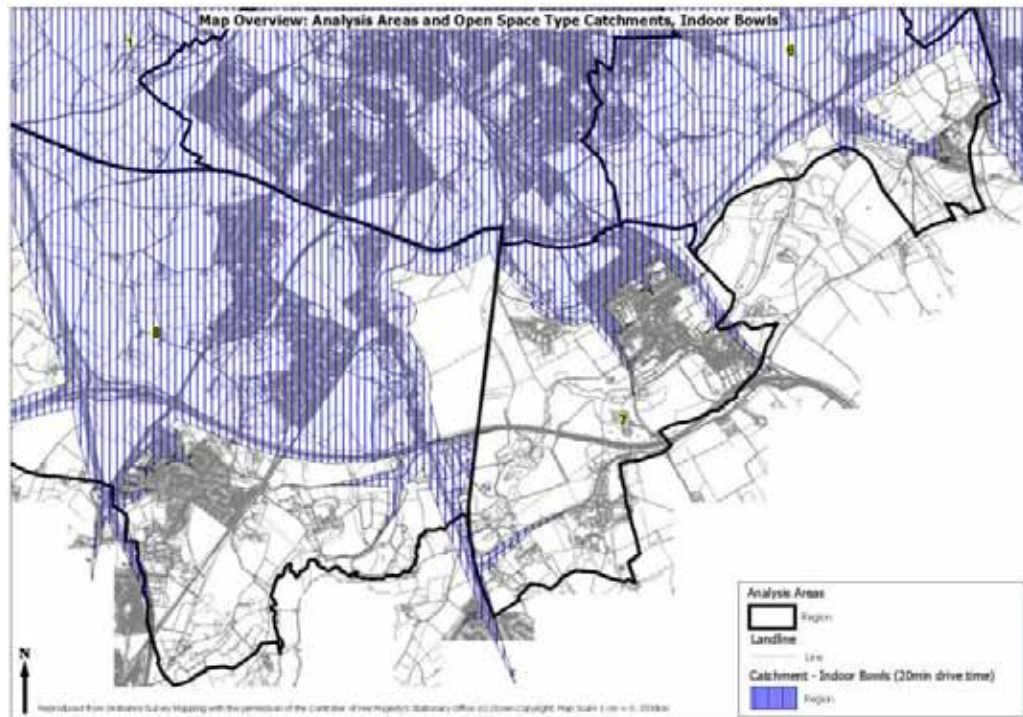
Applying the local standard

Figure 4.14 Overview of access to indoor bowls facilities



SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Figure 4.15 Areas falling outside of the accessibility catchment for indoor bowls facilities



4.133 With the existing facility situated in Harpenden to the north of the City and District, it is not surprising to see that residential areas to the far south fall just outside of this travel time catchment.

4.134 There are no purpose-built indoor bowls centres in the buffer zone area extending into neighbouring Hertsmere or Watford. However, research indicates that indoor bowls takes place at The Furzefield Centre in Potters Bar on a Thursday evening.

Conclusions and recommendations

4.135 In summary, the main conclusions emerging from a supply and demand assessment of indoor bowls are:

- there is a current shortfall of 3.49 rinks within the district (equivalent to one four-rink centre) and 16 rinks (equivalent to two eight-rink centres) within the district and buffer zone
- residential areas in the south of the City and District fall outside of the accessibility catchment for this type of provision.

Recommendations

Key recommendations relating to future indoor bowls provision are:

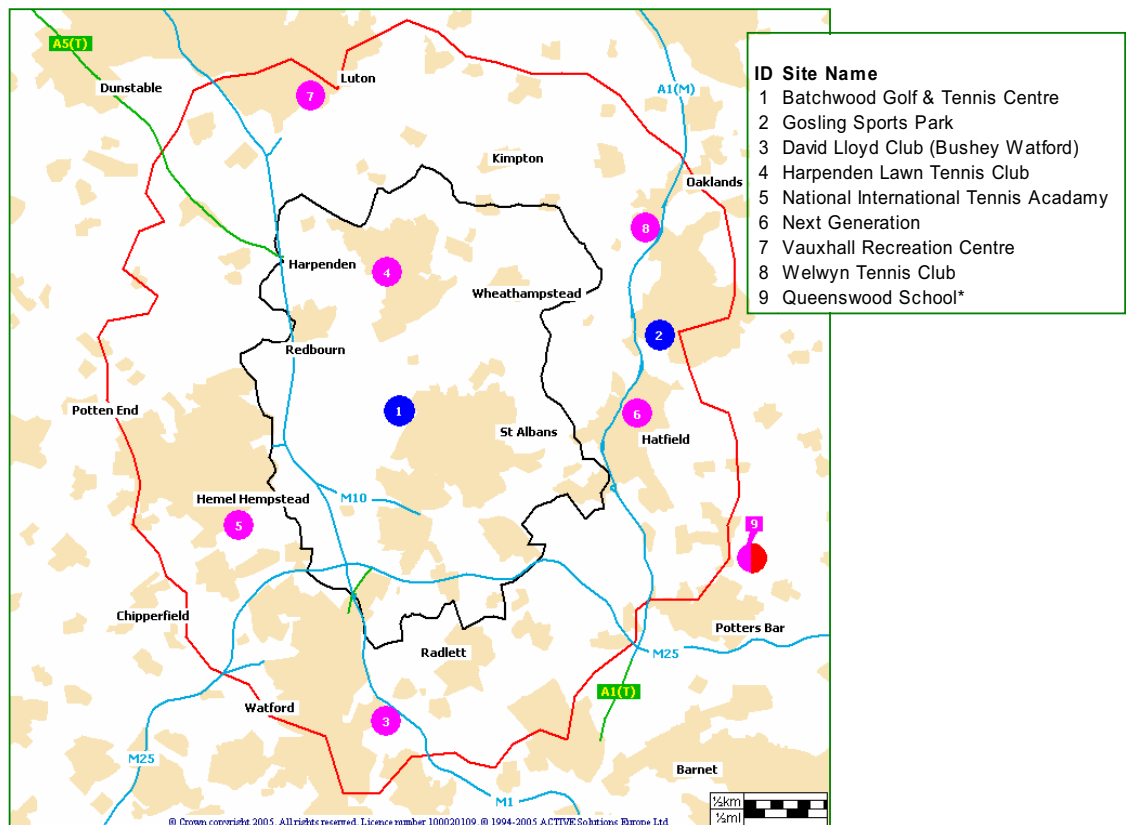
- to encourage inclusion of short mat and long mat bowls activities within the programming of leisure centre or community hall facilities, where there is evidence of demand
- to ensure good access links are established and maintained to Harpenden & District Indoor Bowls Club
- to further investigate the potential demand for increased indoor bowls provision within the south of the City and District, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and local bowls clubs.

Indoor tennis

Supply

4.136 The profile of existing indoor tennis provision within the City and District and buffer zone is illustrated in Figure 4.16 below:

Figure 4.16 Indoor tennis provision within the City and District and buffer



Key:

- District Boundary
- 5km Buffer Boundary
- Public Facilities
- Private Facilities
- Private/Club Facilities

4.137 There are two indoor tennis centres within the City and District. Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre is a public facility comprising four acrylic indoor courts and four outdoor courts, three of which are covered with an air hall in the winter. Harpenden Lawn Tennis Club is a private members club offering five artificial grass courts within a seasonal air dome structure.

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

4.138 A further six facilities are located in neighbouring areas, ranging from two to 13 inside courts:

- Next Generation (Hatfield)
- David Lloyd Club (Bushey)
- Gosling Sports Park
- Welwyn Tennis Club
- Vauxhall Recreation Centre
- National International Tennis Academy

4.139 Queenswood School is located just outside the 5km catchment area and has therefore been excluded from calculations.

4.140 The population characteristics of the City and District indicate that there is high demand for tennis compared to the national average (10.1% compared to 5%). Consultation indicated that facilities at Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre are heavily utilised and always at capacity.

4.141 According to the LTA, Britain is “*well behind indoor court provision in other European countries and well behind the projected requirements for covered courts to satisfy all sectors of the British tennis playing public*”. For example, in 1998, Britain had about one indoor court per 63,000 people, whereas Sweden had ten times that number:

Country	Inhabitants per indoor court
Sweden	6,000
Netherlands	7,000
France	14,000
Italy	20,000
Germany	21,000
Great Britain	63,000

Quantitative Analysis – City and District

4.142 Based on the four permanent indoor courts at Batchwood, St Albans City and District is above the national average providing one indoor court per 32,251 people. Factoring in Harpenden Lawn Tennis Club brings this figure to 14,334, which is comparable with most European benchmarks. The inclusion of the three courts available in winter at Batchwood reduces this figure further, to 9,923.

4.143 In ‘*Priority Project Funding, Policy and Operational Procedures*’, the LTA states that one indoor court can serve 200 regular tennis players. The sport and leisure potential profile report for St Albans shows that approximately 10.1% of the local adult population play tennis i.e. about 13,029 adults. We know from national LTA research that 5% of people in the UK play tennis and 2% of the population play regularly. It is therefore reasonable to assume that around two fifths of the 13,029 local tennis players play regularly. Using these figures, the demand for indoor tennis courts within St Albans City and District is:

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Number of local regular tennis players	= 13,029 x 2/5
	= 5,212
Number of tennis players served per indoor court	= 200
Number of indoor tennis courts required	= 5,212 / 200
	= 26 courts required.

- 4.144 Compared with the existing 9 courts there is a significant theoretical shortfall of 17 courts in the district. Furthermore, this is likely to be a conservative estimate as it calculates only the adult demand for courts, it excludes the significant demand from those aged under 18 and is based on existing players, rather than any latent demand. If the three courts at Batchwood covered by an air hall in winter are included, the shortfall is reduced slightly to 14 courts.
- 4.145 This identified shortfall backs up the consultation comments from the Hertfordshire LTA, which identified a clear shortfall in indoor court provision and the issues of capacity at Batchwood.

Quantitative Analysis – City and District plus buffer zone

- 4.146 However there is considerable provision surrounding St Albans in the buffer zone totalling 38 courts. Applying the same principle to the buffer zone area calculates demand as follows.
- 4.147 The detailed sport and leisure potential profile of the buffer zone is not known so for the basis of calculations we have assumed a mid-point between the national average of 5% and 10.1% prevalent in St Albans City and District. Given the population in the buffer zone of 457,991 and assuming approximately 7.5% of the local adult population play tennis, it could be suggested that that participation equates to a figure of 34,349.

Number of local regular tennis players	= 34,349 x 2/5
	= 13,740
Number of tennis players served per indoor court	= 200
Number of indoor tennis courts required	= 13,740 / 200
	= 69 courts required.

- 4.148 Compared with the existing provision of 47 courts (50 if the air hall covered courts in Batchwood are included) within the buffer zone and district, there is a theoretical deficit of 22 indoor courts (19 when taking into account the seasonal provision at Batchwood).

Quality

- 4.149 There is a clear division of opinion on the range of facilities, one third considering this factor to be *poor* or very *poor*, one third *average* and one third *good* or very *good*. Circa 50% of household survey respondents consider the quality of appearance of

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

such facilities to be *average*. Once again, the helpfulness of staff was ranked as *good* or *very good* by 40% of respondents.

Accessibility

Setting local standards

4.150 The National Tennis Facilities Strategy (1998-2002) indicates that “*the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) will target suitable locations for both expansion of existing facilities and the building of indoor tennis centres within a 30 minute drive*” suggesting that a 30 minute drivetime is an appropriate catchment area.

4.151 The 75% level for the City and District overall was a travel time of up to 20 minutes. This was also the response within four of the eight analysis areas. Once again people indicated that they would expect to travel by car.

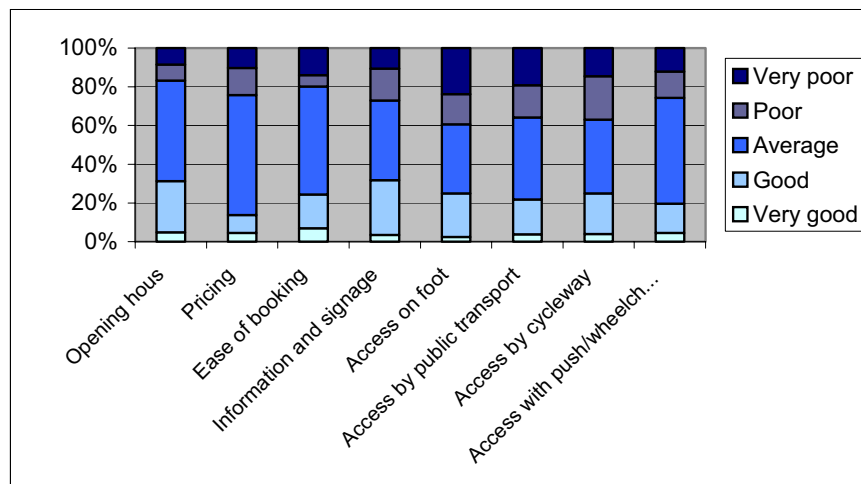
4.152 We recommend a local accessibility standard be set at a 20-minute drive time, in line with the 75% percentile for the City and District overall and within the recommended national benchmark standard.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

20 minute drive

4.153 A range of accessibility factors was also assessed via the household survey. Information and signage and opening hours were ranked highest. Conversely, access on foot, by public transport and access by cycleway were identified as areas for improvement.

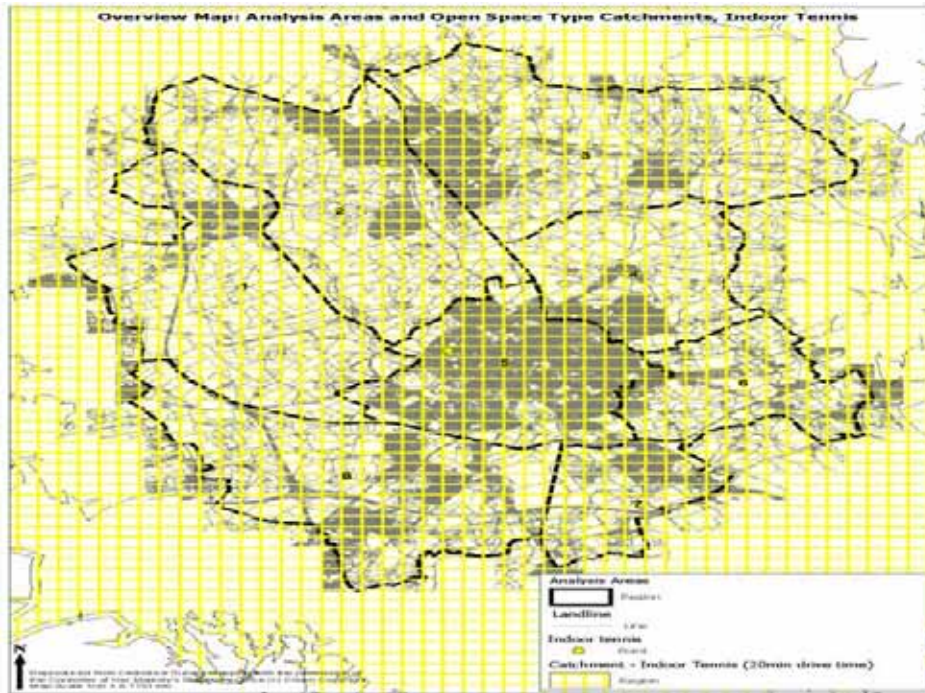
Figure 4.17 Accessibility factors for indoor tennis centres



Applying local standards

4.154 A 20-minute drive time catchment has been generated for the two indoor tennis centres within the City and District (depicted as yellow dots) to examine the extent of the geographical coverage.

Figure 4.18 Overview of access to indoor tennis centres



- 4.155 As illustrated in Figure 4.18 above, facilities located in Harpenden and St Albans provide full accessibility for local residents, with all residents being within a 20-minute drive of an indoor tennis centre.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.156 Compared with national benchmarks the district is well provided for in terms of indoor tennis, however when considering the high propensity to participate in tennis there is a theoretical shortfall in indoor court provision in St Albans and the buffer area, with the majority of this shortfall appearing to be in the city and district.
- 4.157 This theoretical shortfall is backed up through club and consultation with Hertfordshire LTA.
- 4.158 Whilst accessibility criteria suggest all residents within St Albans are within the catchment of an existing facility, evidence from Batchwood clearly points to difficulties with capacity and supports the need for an increased quantity of provision in St Albans.

Recommendations

Key recommendations relating to future indoor tennis provision are:

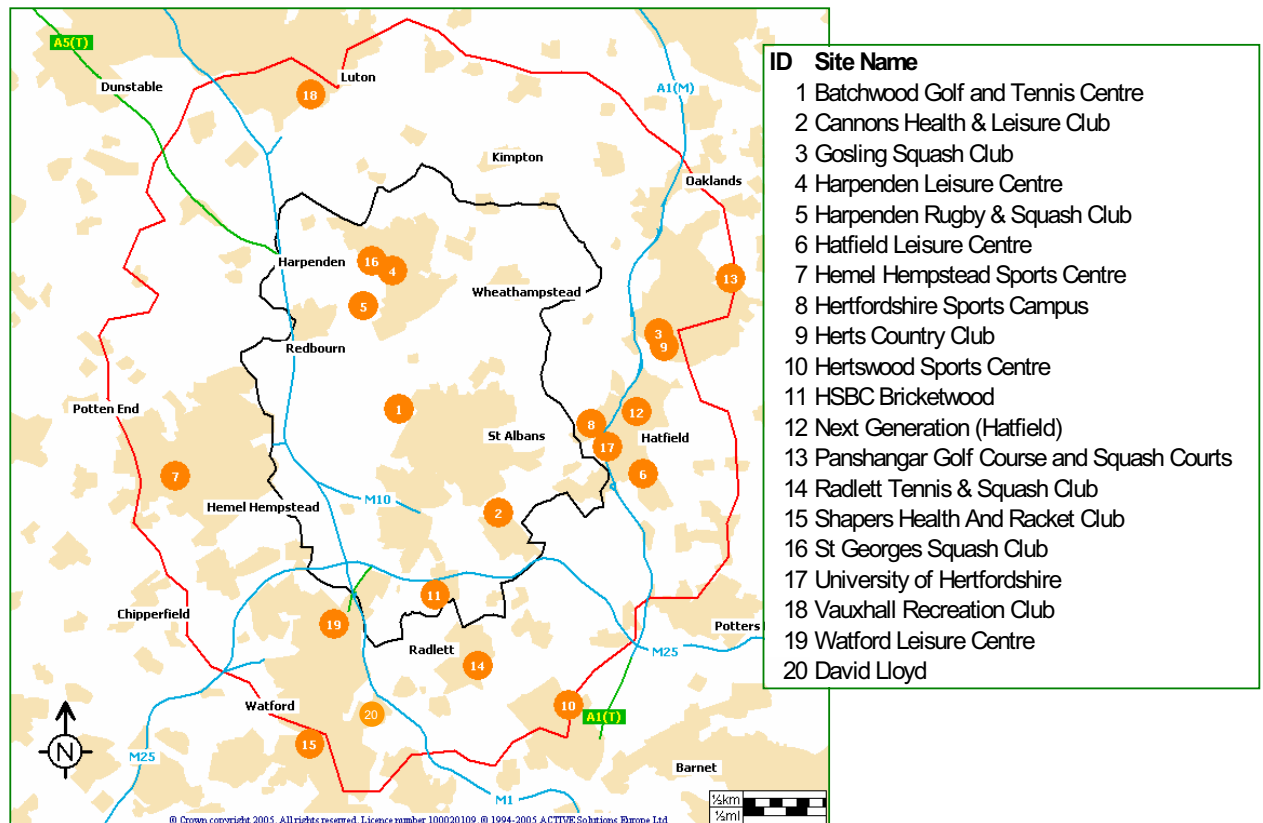
- to give consideration to attracting a major private sector tennis club provider to St Albans City and District to meet the demand for indoor tennis
- to approach the LTA and consider the potential for further public court provision across the District.

Squash courts

Supply

4.159 The locations of squash facilities within the City and District are illustrated in Figure 4.19 below. In addition, the larger facilities located just outside the City and District are also shown as there is potential for people to travel out of the City and District to play squash.

Figure 4.19 Squash Courts within St Albans City and District and buffer



Key:

- District Boundary
- 5km Buffer Boundary
- Squash

4.160 Within the City and District, two of these facilities offer public use whilst Cannons Health & Leisure Club operates on a membership only basis. There are a number of additional private clubs lying within and just outside the City and District boundary.

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Demand

- 4.161 Sport and Leisure Profile data indicates that only 4.1% of the population within the City and District expressed an interest in participating in squash. This is a low level of interest but higher than the national average, where just 3.1% of the population have the propensity to participate in this sport.
- 4.162 Participation rates in the sport are continuing to steadily decline. Around 80% of local authority sites have shown a decrease in throughput for squash over the past five years whilst more than half of the Squash Rackets Association affiliated clubs have experienced a decrease in membership over this period. These trends indicate that demand in the area will not increase dramatically in the next five years.

- Hertfordshire Squash Rackets Association stated that there is an adequate level of provision to meet current demand in the City and District.

- 4.163 As there are currently no participation parameters for squash in England, supply and demand calculations are less reliable than for other sports. It is possible however to undertake an indicative demand assessment using sports participation rates by age and gender and peak usage parameters based on research undertaken by **sportscotland**. The key assumptions made are as follows.

- 40% of visits are during peak times
- the average duration of a visit is 45 minutes
- 21 hours per week fall into the normal peak period, which is between 1700 and 2215 hours Monday to Thursday. This means that there are 28 sessions during peak times
- the at one time capacity is assumed to be 2 people per court.

Quantitative Analysis – St Albans City and District

- 4.164 Using these parameters and participation rates suggested by **sportscotland**, it is possible to calculate indicative demand. Calculations and assumptions are set out below and a full breakdown of calculations can be found in Appendix I. Demand parameters and the current population profile of the district are used to determine the likely number of peak visits per week.

Number of peak visits per week	= 719
Number of visits per peak session -	= 26
Number of squash players served per indoor court per visit=	2
Number of squash courts required	= 26 / 2 =13
	= 13 courts required

- 4.165 Although current supply in St Albans City and District equates to 17 courts suggesting that there may be an element of overprovision, the sport and leisure potential profile,

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which assesses likely local rates of participation indicates that residents of St Albans City and District have a higher propensity to participate. Due to this higher rate of participation, it appears that supply equals demand. Planned developments at Harpenden Rugby Club are likely to result in the provision of an additional squash court at this site.

Quantitative Analysis – City and District plus buffer zone

- 4.166 This situation is mirrored in the buffer zone, where the parameters and participation rates can be applied to the local population as follows:

Number of peak visits per week	= 2584
Number of visits per peak session -	= 92
Number of squash players served per indoor court per visit=	2
Number of squash courts required	= $92 / 2 = 46$
	= 46 courts required

- 4.167 A full breakdown of calculations can be found in Appendix I. Demand parameters and the current population profile of the district are used to determine the likely number of peak visits per week.
- 4.168 Total provision including the buffer is 57 courts which compared to the calculated demand of 46, suggests that there may be an element of overprovision. Again, the higher than average propensity to participate creates a higher demand and it is therefore concluded that supply equals demand at the current time.

Accessibility

- 4.169 There appears to be good geographical coverage. In combination with the network of private squash clubs, this level of provision is believed to be adequate to meet current levels of demand.

Conclusions and recommendations

Key Recommendations for the future provision of squash include:

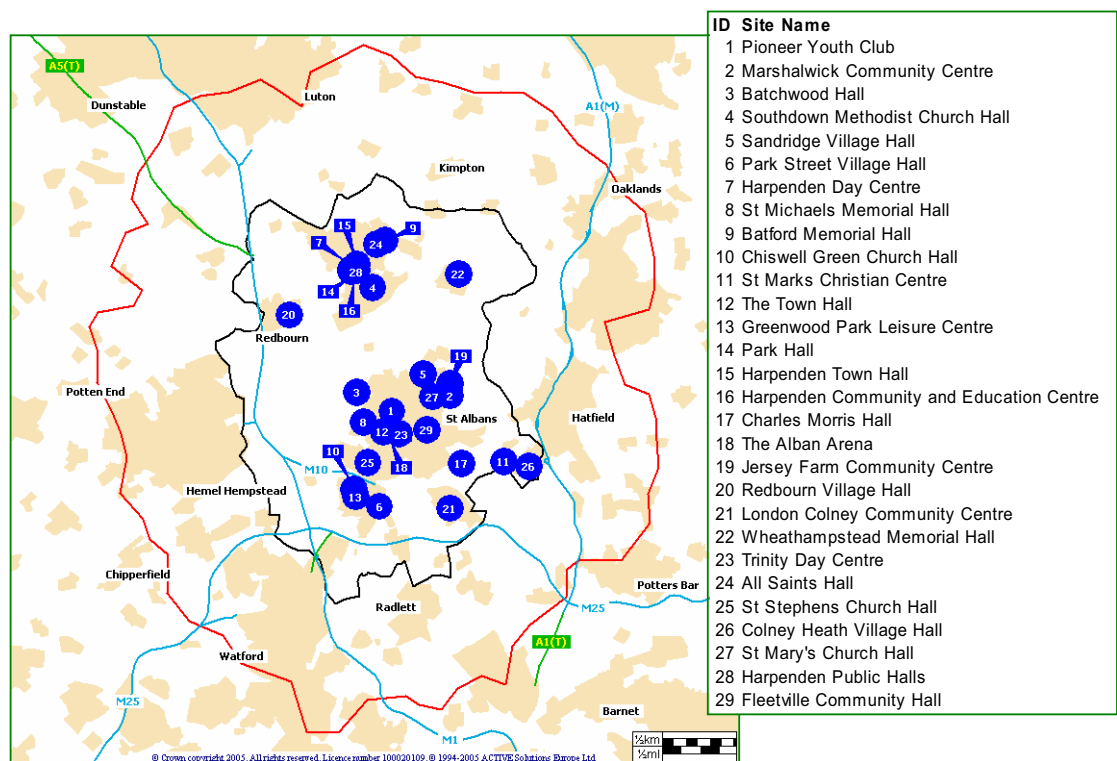
- quantitative analysis indicates that the current level of provision is sufficient to meet demand at the present time and there is an adequate geographical coverage of squash facilities.
- there is a need to monitor participation rates and work with the Squash Rackets Association and local clubs to ensure any development initiatives are supported and ensure that supply continues to meet demand.

Community centres and village halls

Supply

- 4.170 The distribution of community, village and church halls across the City and District is shown in Figure 4.20 below. The facilities audited are based on the Active Places National Facilities Database data model, which specifies marked / unmarked halls accommodating recreational activities of minimum dimensions, 18m x 10m.
- 4.171 Parish and Town Councils are key providers of these facilities. For example, Harpenden Town Council manages Park Hall, which provides an ideal venue for all functions such as wedding receptions, dinner/dances, craft fairs, sales and exhibitions.
- 4.172 A good geographical spread of facilities is clearly illustrated.

Figure 4.20 Community Centres and village halls within St Albans City & District



Key:

- District Boundary
- 5km Buffer Boundary
- Village Halls

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Demand

- 4.173 PPG17 identifies community and village halls in rural areas as a highly important community resource. Statistics from the national General Household Survey indicate that nine per cent of women take part in sport in an indoor venue such as a church hall, community centre or village hall. Local population characteristics indicate that there is demand for local access to indoor provision in community halls.
- 4.174 The results of the household survey showed that alongside swimming pools (51%), community centres/village halls (39%) were most highly used by respondents. Users of community centre/village hall facilities however, were found to visit these sites less often than mainstream leisure facilities, 56% indicating that their frequency of use was at *less than once a month*.
- 4.175 As outlined earlier in this section, of those household respondents who stated that current leisure provision does not meet their needs, two of the main reasons were as follows:
- lack of facilities (23%)
 - access issues (cost, travel, programming) (13%).
- 4.176 One of the key areas for improvement was expansion of the range of activities available and the need to cater for the full age spectrum. Small, community hall type facilities provide a flexible and accessible environment in which a wide variety of activities can be delivered at reasonable cost.
- 4.177 The new *Active Places* website will shortly enable 'power users' to model the supply and demand of village and community halls and compare this to other Local Authority benchmarks.

Quality

- 4.178 Community centres and village halls are considered *average* in terms of the quality of appearance and range of facilities offered, 55% of respondents stating this view in the case of each of these factors.

RS9 - Village Halls and Community Centres, Charity Commission for England and Wales (December 2004)

- 4.179 There are over 9,000 village halls and community centres recognised as charities in England and Wales. A Charity Commission report dated December 2004 presents the findings of research into the way in which these charities are changing. Best practice examples are used to illustrate how charities are adapting to meet the needs of their local communities.
- 4.180 The report identified a number of issues affecting the viability of some rural village halls and community centres:
- falling demand for services due to:
 - ageing rural populations
 - lack of interest among younger people or new residents in commuter villages
 - competition from nearby towns and cities due to improved accessibility and transport links

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- financial constraints leading to:
 - decreasing revenue streams
 - difficulties in funding building repairs and maintenance
 - difficulties in financing modernisation programmes in line with regulatory changes in relation to disability access and health and safety.

4.181 It was emphasised that village hall charities, in particular, were faced with the need to adapt their services and facilities. There was evidence of a move away from the traditional village hall concept to a community based ethos of charities combining to provide a broad service – the creation of a “community hub”.

4.182 Research highlighted that some charities were proving extremely effective in identifying and meeting the needs of their community whilst others were continuing to be narrow in their focus. At one extreme there was seen to be a great enthusiasm for the diversity of interests in the community and at the other a tendency to focus on problems rather than solutions.

Good Practice for the running of a Community Centre

Attributes of a successful village hall or community centre

- 4.183 As a general rule there was found to be a correlation between active, vibrant governance and an active, vibrant village hall or community centre. The report revealed a clearly identifiable link between the ability of village hall and community centre charities to attract users, their ability to attract trustees and other volunteers, and their ability to generate funding.
- 4.184 Many of the successful charities identified had a ‘cradle to grave’ policy of offering ‘something for everyone’. Thriving charities are those in which trustees are pro-active in understanding their responsibilities and in ensuring that their charity provides activities that meet local needs.
- 4.185 The research undertaken by the Charity Commission showed that a successful village hall or community centre charity usually has:
- a governing document that is workable and up-to-date, containing provisions for everything that the trustees need to do
 - a trustee body that is diverse, knows the extent of its role, responsibilities and powers and presents potential new trustees with a realistic picture of what is involved
 - a building that meets legislative requirements and that can facilitate a range of activities
 - an effective means of communicating and consulting with the local community to ensure that its needs and interests are understood and that the community knows about the charity’s activities and plans
 - a funding regime that is sustainable and diverse enough to allow trustees sufficient flexibility to direct their activities in accordance with local needs and interests

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- a strategic plan, however simple, that takes account of the impact of proposed changes on all aspects of the running of the charity.

4.186 In the governance of an effectively run village hall or community centre charity, trustees will:

- refer to their governing document to ensure that they have the power to take any proposed actions and to ensure that any proposed changes in activities are in keeping with the charity's objects
- consider whether their way of running the charity has the effect of excluding any members of the community that may be entitled to inclusion within it
- consider whether different activities and more promotion of the charity would increase community engagement with it
- be pro-active in consulting with the community their charity is set up to serve and in promoting the activities it provides
- consider a wide range of techniques for determining the needs of their community and, if one method is not successful, they should persevere with another
- only engage in commercial or non-recreational activities if they have the necessary power, where there is a clear need to do so and where these activities will not put the charitable status of the organisation at risk or impinge upon its ability to provide charitable activities
- ensure that their charity accommodates those activities that fit the needs of the community not those that they believe it should provide or those that serve their own interests
- ensure that any changes in their activities form part of a strategic plan, however simple, that takes account of the impact of proposed changes on all aspects of the running of the charity
- seek advice from the Charity Commission and/or other advisory bodies before they make any significant changes to their activities or if they are unsure whether they are authorised to carry out certain actions.

Good Practice Case Study Example

A community centre visited by the Charity Commission as part of its review visit programme was found to have inclusive practices and extremely effective ways of ensuring that the needs of the community are represented in the activities it provides.

The management at the centre has built up an extensive network of contacts within the community, which has allowed decisions about which activities to provide to be made on an understanding of the needs of a variety of often hard-to-hear groups. The charity provides a huge range of activities and has managed potential conflicts between groups to great effect. The results of their work are clearly measurable in terms of such things as improved behaviour and school results among the younger people and better relations between some ethnic groups. This measurability of impact and outcomes translates into an enhanced ability to access the funding needed to continue their activities.

Examples of the centre's inclusive approach include the installation of a toilet and shower with disability access that allows people at the centre who use a wheelchair or have problems with incontinence, or both, to be accommodated. This obvious awareness of users' possible needs sends a clear signal of welcome and understanding that makes the centre more accessible to those whose needs might otherwise make them wary of using such centres.

Other initiatives in the centre include a mixing and recording room where people can experiment with making music and another room specifically for younger people, designed to take account of the fact that young people's activities can damage decoration. These rooms are separate from the areas where the children play and from where the over 50's activities take place so that different activities do not impinge on each other. The centre has a 'cradle to grave' policy and serves a huge range of people and needs within a relatively small space.

- 4.187 It is recommended that these good practice principles relating to the management and operation of community centres and village halls are promoted and endorsed by the Council and that any new developments strongly reflect the needs of local users of all ages.

Accessibility

Setting local standards

- 4.188 The majority of people indicated that they would expect to walk to this type of facility. The 75% level for the district and three out of eight analysis areas was a 15-minute walk time. The 75% level for five out of the eight analysis areas was a 10-minute walk time. However, the most commonly stated response was 15 minutes.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

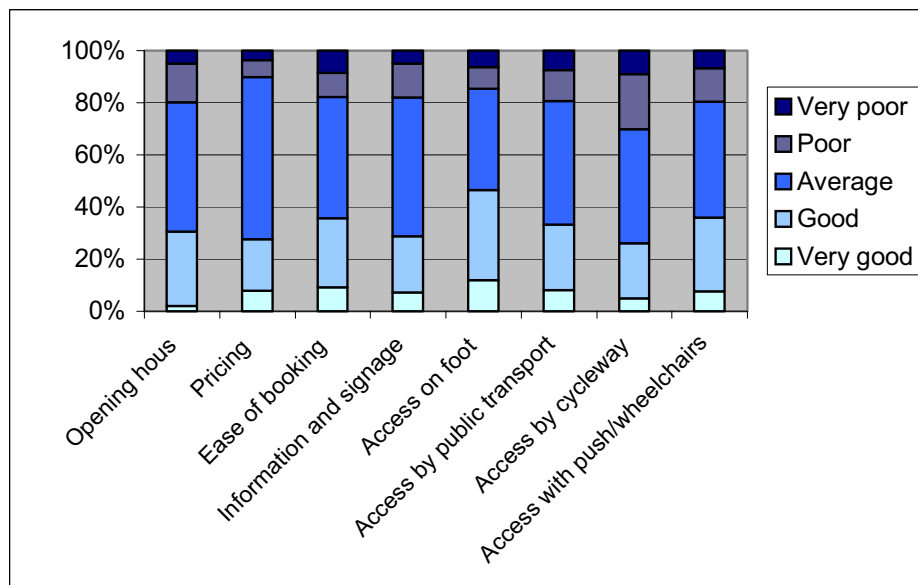
15 minute walk

- 4.189 On this basis, we recommend a local accessibility standard of a 15-minute walk time be set.

- 4.190 A range of accessibility factors was also assessed via the household survey. Access on foot, access for pushchairs/wheelchairs and ease of booking were ranked highest. Conversely, access by cycleway was most commonly ranked *poor* or *very poor*.

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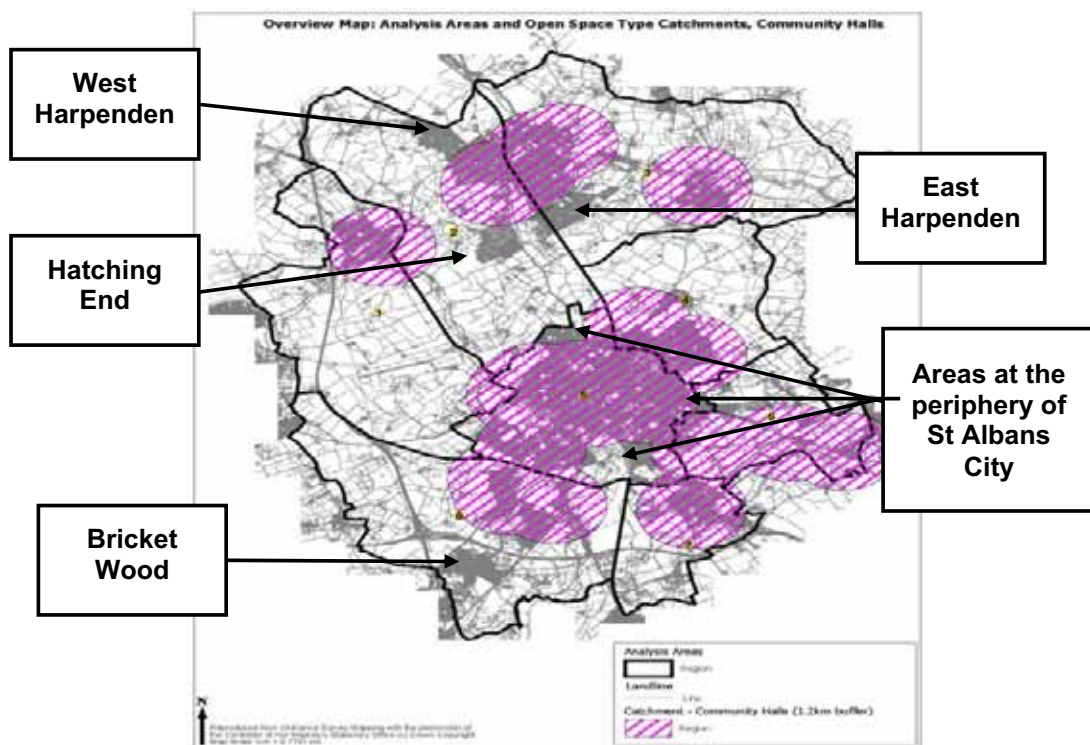
Figure 4.21 Accessibility factors for community centres/village halls



Applying local standards

- 4.191 A 15-minute walk time catchment has been generated for the network of 28 community and village hall facilities within the City and District (depicted as purple dots) to examine the extent of the geographical coverage.

Figure 4.22 Overview of access to community centres/village halls



SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- 4.192 From a geographical perspective there is a relatively good distribution of community centres and village/church halls across the City and District. Redbourn, Wheathampstead, Sandridge, Marshalwick, London Colney and Chiswell Green are within the recommended walk time of this type of indoor recreation facility. However, Figure 4.22 illustrates that there are clear deficiencies in some areas of East and West Harpenden, to the north and the south of the City and in Bricket Wood.

East Harpenden, West Harpenden and Hatching End

- 4.193 Examination of other indoor sports facilities in this vicinity highlights that although Harpenden Sports Centre and Crabtree Infant School are located in this area, their location towards the centre of Harpenden means that they will not be within the recommended walk time catchment of these areas of deficiency.

Bricket Wood

- 4.194 A detailed review of other indoor sports facilities in this area of deficiency highlights that Parmiters Sports Centre is situated in the buffer zone close to the district boundary. Although this facility falls within a 15 minute walk time of some residents living in this part of the district, as a dual-use facility day time access is likely to be restricted.

Areas at the periphery of St Albans City and District

- 4.195 Francis Bacon School (to the south) and Nicholas Breakspear School (to the east) are situated in relatively close proximity to identified areas lying outside of the accessibility catchment for community centres/village halls. However, as school sites it should once again be emphasised that day time access to these facilities is likely to be limited during term time.
- 4.196 Similarly Townsend School and Sandringham School appear to fall within a 15 minute walk time of residents in the area of deficiency to the north of the City.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.197 Local facilities, including indoor recreation and meeting space, are important to very local neighbourhoods across the City and District. These should be located at parish level and should include an indoor space (one badminton court sized to incorporate a variety of sports, recreation, play and art activities).
- 4.198 In summary, the main conclusions emerging from a supply and demand assessment of community centres and village halls are:
- a total of 28 community hall facilities were identified across the City and District, ranging from town halls to youth clubs to community centres
 - although there is a relatively good geographical spread of provision, seven distinct areas of the City and District fall outside of the recommended accessibility catchment for this type of provision
 - the results of the household survey showed that alongside swimming pools (51%), community centres/village halls (39%) were most highly used by respondents

SECTION FOUR - INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- users of community centre/village hall facilities were found to visit these sites less often than mainstream leisure facilities, 56% indicating that their frequency of use was at *less than once a month*
- lack of facilities (23%) and access issues (cost, travel, programming) (13%) were two of the main reasons current facility provision is not meeting the needs of a proportion of household survey respondents.

Recommendations

Key recommendations relating to future community centre/village hall provision are:

- for the Council to encourage local partners to widen access to existing facilities or to explore alternative solutions to meet the identified need within those priority areas currently falling outside of the accessibility catchment for this type of recreational provision
- to ensure good access routes to existing facilities are established and maintained
- to follow good practice principles as highlighted within the Charities Commission for England and Wales report..

Supply and demand: summary conclusions

4.199 The demand modelling and consultation has revealed that there is a current need for the following facilities in St Albans City and District:

- a range of sports facilities catering for all age groups and which help to encourage continuing participation in leisure and recreational activities and meet recommended accessibility parameters
- a good geographical spread of wet and dry sports provision offering specialist facilities as well as enhanced provision of community-based recreation/meeting space
- additional sports hall facilities spread evenly across the City and District residential areas to improve school and community access (casual and club) to provision – this should be met through the planned development at Westminster Lodge and through negotiation with local schools
- enhanced indoor netball provision potentially at school sites in St Albans City and District
- a competitive swimming venue in the district (25m by 8-lane pool with spectator provision)
- swimming pool facilities for canoeing and canoe polo
- replacement provision at Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, to include a sports hall and competitive swimming venue, either on the same or a nearby site
- further indoor tennis provision.

4.200 Demand for these facilities is likely to grow further over the next five years, due to the active population and participation trends in different sports.

SECTION 5
SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Quality standards for indoor sport and recreation facilities

- 5.1 The PPG17 Companion Guide reinforces that design and management are factors integral to the successful delivery of a network of high quality sport and recreation, stating that:

“Quality depends on two things: the needs and expectations of users, on the one hand, and design, management and maintenance on the other.”

- 5.2 In line with PPG17 recommendation, a quality standard for indoor sport and recreation facilities in the City and District has been set using national benchmarks, Sport England Technical Design Guidance Notes and Quest Best Practice Standards. Key objectives underpinning the establishment of a quality standard are:

- to provide clear guidance relating to facility specifications, ensuring suitability of design for the targeted range of sports and standards of play as well as individual requirements for specialist sports and uses
- to ensure high standards of management and customer service are attained, which meet or exceed customer expectation and lead to a quality leisure experience for all users of facilities within the City and District.

QS1: Quality Standard (Design and Technical) for St Albans City and District

QS1: All new build and refurbishment schemes to be designed in accordance with Sport England Guidance Notes, which provide detailed technical advice and standards for the design and development of sports facilities.

- 5.3 A full list of Sport England Design Guidance Notes is shown at Appendix M. These are available to download free from the Sport England website:

http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources/resource_downloads/design_guidelines.htm

- 5.4 The space requirement for most sports depends on the standard of play – generally the higher the standard, the larger the area required. Although the playing area is usually of the same dimensions, there is a need to build in provision for increased safety margins, increased clearance height, spectator seating, etc. Similarly, design specification varies according to level of competition with respect to flooring type and lighting lux levels, for example.
- 5.5 Sport England Design Guidance Notes are based on eight standards of play, which have been mapped against the established facility hierarchy for the City and District in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Standard of play against hierarchy of provision

Facility hierarchy	Standard of play	Abbreviation
Flagship centre comprising indoor and outdoor sports provision and a 25 metre eight-lane pool, together with associated health and fitness, changing and ancillary accommodation.	National	N
	Regional	Rg

SECTION FIVE – SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Facility hierarchy	Standard of play	Abbreviation
Individual specialist sports facilities for tennis, golf, netball and bowls. Examples: Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre, Harpenden Tennis Club, recommended new netball centre.	Regional	Rg
	County	Cy
	Top divisions, local league	TD
Community sports centres containing indoor (wet and/or dry) and potentially outdoor facilities, together with associated health and fitness, changing and ancillary accommodation. Neighbourhood centres that could be shared with secondary schools, for community and club sport and recreation. Examples: Harpenden Leisure Centre, Francis Bacon School, Redbourn Recreation Centre.	Recreational	R
	Practice	P
	Club	C
	Lower divisions, local league	LD
Local indoor or outdoor facilities , kickabout areas, multi use games areas, and children's play facilities. These should accommodate non-formal sport, community and physical activity, including outdoor facilities. Examples: Rothamsted Park Skate Park, Parish Council recreation grounds, London Colney Recreation Centre, community halls.	Recreational	R

- 5.6 We have set out details from Sport England Design Guidance Notes relating to sports halls below to illustrate the type and format of information provided and how standards of play influence the size, layout and specification.

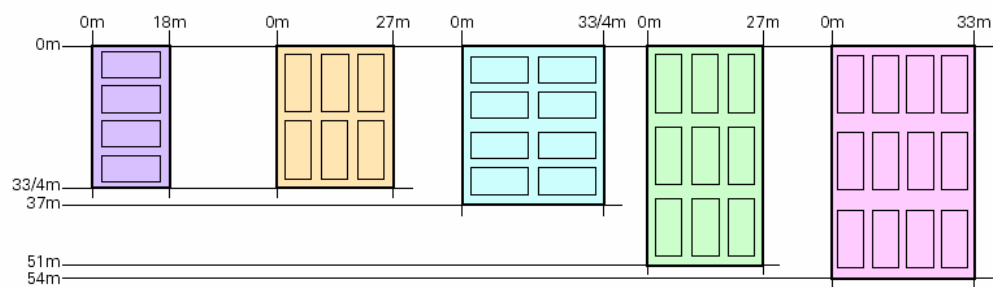
Design Guidance Note 980 - Sports Halls: Sizes and Layouts

- 5.7 This guidance note recommends the minimum dimensions for the design of multi-sports halls. Since badminton has the most demanding functional requirements in terms of lighting, roof structure, background colours and air velocities, overall hall dimensions within the guidance document are derived from the optimum arrangement of badminton courts compatible with the minimum spatial requirements of other indoor sports.
- 5.8 Figure 5.1 overleaf details guidance on selecting a sports hall to accommodate a range of sports at different levels of play.

SECTION FIVE – SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Figure 5.1 Hall sizes accommodating different sports and standards of play and modular incremental sports hall dimensions

	Four-court hall 33 x 18 x 7.6m 594m ²			Six-court hall 33/4 x 27 x 7.6m 918m ²			Eight-court hall 37 x 33/4 x 7.6/9.1m 1221m ²			Nine-court hall 51 x 27 x 7.6/9.1m 1377m ²			Twelve-court hall 54 x 33 x 9.1m high 1782m ²		
Sport	Standard of play			Standard of play			Standard of play			Standard of play			Standard of play		
	C R	Cy	N	C R	Cy	N	C R	Cy	N	C R	Cy	N	C R	Cy	N
Badminton and short tennis	4	–	–	6	3	3 9.1m ht	8	3/6*	3/6*	9	6	6	12	6/9*	6
Basketball	C(LD) 1	–	–	C(TD) 1 2P	C(TD) 1 2P	1	C(LD) 2	C(TD) 1 2P	1	C(LD) 1/2P	C(TD) 1/3P	1	C(LD) 3	C(TD) 1/2*	1/2*
Gymnastics	P	–	–	P	–	–	1	P	–	2P	1	1	3P	1	1
Five-a-side football	1	P	–	2	1	–	2	1	–	3	1	P	3	3	1
Handball	1 Mini	–	–	1	–	–	2	1	– 9m ht	2	1	1 9m ht 9m ht	3	1	1
Indoor hockey	1 Unihoc	–	–	1	–	–	2	P	–	2	1	1	3	1	1
Korfball	P	–	–	P	–	–	1	–	– 2P	1	1	1 9m ht 9m ht	3P	1	1
Netball	P	–	–	P	–	–	2P	1	–	1/2P	1	1	2P	1/2*	1/2*
Volleyball	1	1	–	2	1/2P	–	2	2	1/2 10.5m ht	4	2/3*	1/3 10.5m ht	4	2/4*	2/3 10.5m ht
Sports hall athletics	P	P	–	P	1	–	2P	1	1	1	1	1	2P	1	1
Notes															
* Maximum number of courts, without spectator seating, for preliminary rounds															
P Below space standard for competition play recommended by the governing body, but suitable for practice and training															



5.9 Page 4 of the guidance note covers the size and layout of a four-court hall.

Four-court hall

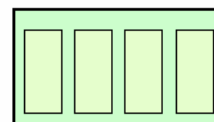
The critical minimum dimensions for this most popular size of sports hall are 33 x 18 x 7.6m. Main structure must always be aligned between the badminton courts to create four bays. Extra width can be considered to enable cricket nets to be hung alongside rather than over the badminton courts and to provide an extended spectator zone. An extra 1.5m added to the length and 0.25m to the width allows for a full-size netball court with side and end margins.

Notes

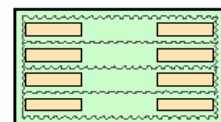
- A minimum height of 7.6m must be provided over the whole badminton court area and 7m minimum for most team games including basketball and volleyball.
- The 33 x 18m dimensions allow four doubles play badminton courts with a central division net.
- County standard badminton requires a length of 34.8m and a height of 9.1m.
- The 18m width is ideal for several of the smaller space sports. A full-length fencing piste, short mat bowls carpet and up to four table tennis tables can be accommodated across the width of the hall.
- Badminton courts can be central in the hall or offset to provide a narrow circulation zone to the entrance side of the hall.
- Bagged cricket and hall division netting can be stowed outside the critical play areas for most sports but for five-a-side football which utilises the whole space nets must be hoisted above shoulder height.
- Basketball benefits from an increase in width to 19m to allow full side margins or, alternatively, the minimum margins plus officials' space.

The diagram on page 5 shows the full markings typically used in a four-court hall with key setting out dimensions. Recommended line colour is shown on a background that denotes a

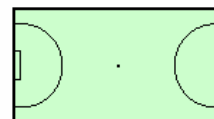
beechwood floor. Preferred positions for door openings and viewing panels are included around the perimeter. The netball play area is shown reduced to allow full safety margins. Smaller scale diagrams for individual sports are shown later in the Guidance Note. They provide background on the possibilities and restrictions inherent in planning multi-purpose spaces but do not show all line markings. **Consult governing body handbooks for this level of detail.**



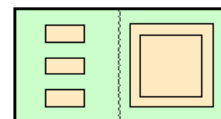
Badminton



Cricket nets



Team games



Trampoline/judo

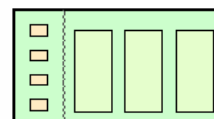
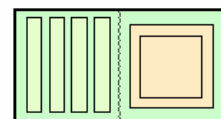
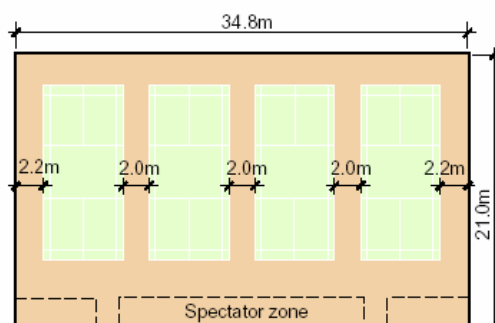


Table tennis/badminton



Short bowls/gymnastics

Different uses of a four-court hall.



An example of enhanced dimensions for county level badminton – also ideal for netball.

SECTION FIVE – SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Design Guidance Note 864 - Sports Halls: Design

- 5.10 This guidance note covers the design and planning of multi-sports halls and attendant accommodation, setting out general facility advice together with detailed information relating to the sports hall component:

Generic components	Sports hall specific design advice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• site planning• hall and centre planning• main entrance• reception and office accommodation• social and viewing areas• fitness equipment rooms• secondary halls• changing areas• cleaner's store• first aid• mechanical and electrical services• external sports facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design• structure• floor• internal walls• external walls• roof• fittings• equipment storage<ul style="list-style-type: none">- general storage- mat storage

QS2: Quality Standard (Facility Operation and Management) for St Albans City and District

QS2: All leisure providers to follow industry best practice principles in relation to a) Facilities Operation, b) Customer Relations, c) Staffing and d) Service Development and Review. The detail of the internal systems, policies and practices underpinning implementation of these principles will correlate directly to the scale of facility, varying according to the position of the facility within the levels of the established hierarchy.

- 5.11 Quest is the UK Quality Scheme for Sport and Leisure, which defines industry standards and good practice and encourages their application and development in a customer-focused management framework. Quest is recommended by the British Quality Foundation for Self Assessment in Sport and Leisure Operations.
- 5.12 Quest Facility Management is aimed at Sports and Leisure Facilities, in the commercial, voluntary and public sectors. The Facility Management Manager's Guidance Pack provides the industry standards against which managers can assess their own operation, and provides best practice information and examples to aid continuous improvement. Best practice principles of key relevance form the basis of the quality standard for St Albans. These are summarised in Table 5.2 overleaf.

SECTION FIVE – SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Table 5.2 Quality standards for the City and District relating to facility management and operation

Management issue	Quest Best Practice Principles
a) Facilities operation	
FOP 1: Systems, Standards and Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services are planned to deliver a safe and enjoyable experience for all customers. • Documented systems are in place to ensure that the key elements of service are under control and promote quality. • Systems are up to date, available to and known by all relevant staff. • There is a sensible and adequate level of inspection to meet statutory requirements and monitoring of quality standards.
FOP2: Cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of cleanliness is visibly acceptable, taking due account of customer expectations. • There are high standards of hygiene in critical areas. • Customers are not put at risk or inconvenienced as cleaning takes place.
FOP3: Housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facility is presented in a fit and tidy state, reflecting general pride in the provision by the organisation and the staff.
FOP4: Maintenance of Buildings and Plant and Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance is based on an effective preventive approach to ensure customer enjoyment and complete safety • Repair requests are actioned promptly within an effective system. • The facility is well maintained within the constraints of its age and structure.
FOP5: Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable, sufficient and well maintained equipment is available for use. • A range of equipment is provided to allow programming variety. Safety in use is achieved.
FOP6: Environmental Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable temperatures, lighting and ventilation for sporting, social and staff areas is achieved. • There is tight control of environmental factors in customer and staff sensitive areas. • Use of utilities is managed and reduced where possible as part of an environmental policy. • Sensible initiatives contribute to lessening the impact of the Facility on the environment.
FOP7: Changing Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are comfortable, appropriate and clean. • Are regularly inspected, cleaned and stocked. • Are family friendly.
FOP8: Health and Safety Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre has an up to date and specific Health and Safety Policy and Management programme. • Management and the workforce are aware of, and undertake their responsibilities in Health and Safety proactively. • Customer and staff safety is a priority in all areas of the facility.

SECTION FIVE – SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Management issue	Quest Best Practice Principles
b) Customer relations	
CR1: Customer Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality standards of customer service are defined and delivered consistently by all staff. • Staff are trained to provide customers with information, assistance and sell services proactively. • All staff are empowered to make on-the-spot decisions on the spot about customer service. • Customers have equal access and opportunity to services and facilities.
CR2: Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-active research is conducted to identify potential customer and current customer requirements. • There is an understanding of the target market, the facility users, competition and local and national trends.
CR3: Customer Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer comments and feedback are actively encouraged and acted upon. • They are seen as an opportunity to improve and help drive improvements for customers. • The Centre aims to work in partnership with its partners (if applicable), welcoming their feedback to improve customer service.
CR4: Marketing and Pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a marketing plan, which the Centre uses to identify, plan and cost all marketing activities. • Accurate, attractive and up to date information is provided for the local community/target markets through a variety of methods. • A variety of promotional methods are used within the budgetary constraints of the Centre to increase income and usage. • The organisation operates to a clear pricing policy, which seeks to ensure that subsidy is targeted effectively and is reviewed regularly.
CR5: Reception and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Reception service operates in a smooth manner with skilled, knowledgeable staff providing prompt attention to customers and first time visitors. • The administration system for bookings is customer friendly and provides a range of opportunities for one off (non-casuals) bookings, and effective regular bookings. • Customers needs are fully clarified and actioned through to completion of booking.
c) Staffing	
STAF1: Staff Supervision and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are appropriately trained, qualified and in sufficient quantity to deliver the standard of service promised to customers. • Staff are available on standby to work at short notice should there be a shortfall in staffing in critical areas. • Shift patterns include time off shift for meetings, training and personal development of individuals.
STAF2: People Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff involved in service delivery, whether paid or voluntary are seen as critical to the delivery of a quality service. • Training and development are ongoing for individuals and teams with the aim of continually improving standards of service and achieving the organisations objectives.

SECTION FIVE – SETTING QUALITY STANDARDS

Management issue	Quest Best Practice Principles
STAF3: Management Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a management style that demonstrates the ability to communicate with and motivate staff at all levels and to drive the business from the top. The decision making processes skilfully balance business goals with customer needs and staff involvement. There is a commitment for continual service improvement through the empowerment of staff (and their involvement in the Quest Action Plan).
d) Service development and review	
SDR1: Strategy and Business Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Centre has clearly identified its mission, established overall strategies and set specific objectives and targets to achieve them. The Centre has a 'Business Plan' to map out its objectives and targets. A commitment to continuous improvement is clearly demonstrated.
SDR2: Programming and Sports Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme of activities is designed to meet the facility's aims and objectives. The programme is dynamic, innovative and responsive to the requirements of the customers and potential customers. Activities contribute to healthy lifestyles, social inclusion, lifelong learning, community safety and reduction of crime and disorder. The programme considers the various types of user and use to ensure that it is balanced and promotes equality of access.
SDR3: Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Centre measures and reviews the effectiveness of its progress its Business Plan (through the Quest Self Assessment Questionnaire.) The measurements and reviews are used as a basis for continuous improvement. (The Centre operates a Quest Action Plan which is the live document encompassing the total approach to continuous improvement.) The Centre has a track record of improvements to the service and a creative approach to meeting and where possible, exceeding customer needs and expectations.
SDR4: Finance and Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management are directly involved in the development of the financial Business Plan of their site. The Centre monitors income and expenditure closely and takes appropriate action. The Centre enhances its service and Management through effective use of information technology where appropriate. The organisation has a Business Recovery Plan in place and tested recovery, should systems fail.

5.13 Further details on Quest Self-Assessment and Evaluation are available at <http://www.pmpconsult.com/quest/index.html>.

SECTION 6
OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Outdoor sports facilities

Definition

- 6.1 Outdoor sports facilities is a wide-ranging category of open space and includes natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens, golf courses and watersports provision with the primary purpose of participation in outdoor sports.
- 6.2 There are therefore clear links and overlaps between this Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (SRFS), the Green Space Strategy (GSS) and the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). Whilst the GSS provides an overview of outdoor sport in the City and District, this strategy provides a more detailed assessment of this type of provision.
- 6.3 In the following section, the findings of the broad GSS assessment are presented and then each specific facility type is covered in more detail. Water sports provision is outlined separately in Section Seven.

Current position and consultation

- 6.4 The importance of outdoor sports facilities to the residents of the City and District is clear, with 82% respondents in the household survey stating that the provision of outdoor sports facilities was very important to them.
- 6.5 53% of respondents use outdoor sports facilities on an occasional basis or more frequently, while the remaining 47% do not use outdoor sports facilities. This reinforces the importance of these facilities to the local community.
- 6.6 In addition to demand from casual users, there is high demand for outdoor sports facilities from formal teams. The PPS identified a total of 125 sports clubs, forming 429 teams across the sports of football, hockey, rugby and cricket. Consultation with these teams indicated that there was a perceived shortfall of junior facilities and synthetic pitches.
- 6.7 A summary of outdoor non-playing pitch provision is as follows:
- ten golf courses
 - two athletics tracks, one of which is a synthetic facility
 - 20 sites containing tennis courts, many of which are managed by private operators, with a relatively large proportion of these facilities also marked out for netball
 - six existing outdoor bowls facilities together with planned development of an all weather green at Redbourn Recreation Centre
 - no watersports facilities.
- 6.8 The Council is a key provider of sports facilities both outdoor and indoor and this provision is supplemented by facilities owned and managed by Parish and Town Councils, the voluntary sector and private operators.

Outdoor Sports Facility PPG17 Typology

Setting Provision Standards

- 6.9 In setting local standards for outdoor sports facilities there is a need to take into account existing local standards, national standards, Local Authority benchmark standards, current provision, site assessment findings and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix H.
- 6.10 As a result of the wide range of facility types and sizes within this typology, a broad quantity standard resulting in surplus and deficiencies would be meaningless, however a quantity standard for broad planning purposes has been established.

Quantity

- 6.11 The current provision of outdoor sports facilities is equivalent to 851.22 hectares in total across the City and District. However excluding golf courses this figure is reduced to 394.04 hectares.
- 6.12 The current provision of outdoor sports facilities therefore equates to 6.61 hectares per 1,000 population but when excluding golf courses, this drops to 2.71 ha per 1,000 population.
- 6.13 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) provides minimum standards for the provision of outdoor playing space. The standard recommends a minimum of 1.6 - 1.8 hectares per 1,000 population of outdoor sports facilities, covering playing pitches, bowling greens, tennis courts and athletics tracks. These are national standards and do not account for the local context or the demographics of the local area.
- 6.14 Analysis of the household survey indicates that on the whole, the current provision of outdoor sports facilities in the City and District is inadequate. A higher proportion of respondents feel levels are *not enough* as opposed to *about right* in five out of the eight analysis areas.
- 6.15 56% and 49% of respondents living in Analysis Areas 2 and 3 respectively consider provision to be *about right*. If golf courses are included in the calculations, these areas have by far the highest area per 1,000 head of population. If golf courses are excluded, levels of provision fall to 4.94 and 1.88 ha per head of population, a figure more in line with provision in other analysis areas.
- 6.16 However, it is suggested that respondents views may be linked to the appropriateness of current provision, i.e. the need to cater for the high demand for junior football as well as to the quality of current provision with a significant problem with drainage and waterlogging at a number of the playing pitch sites.
- 6.17 It must also be noted that much of the outdoor sports provision is located on school sites, many of which may not be accessible to the public at the present time. This may enhance the impression of an overall deficiency, concealing the fact that there is, in reality, a greater level of provision. However, although there may be opportunities for increased access to school facilities, issues relating to appropriateness of facilities must also be taken into consideration.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL STANDARD

**2.71 ha per 1,000
population
(excluding golf
courses)**

SECTION SIX – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- 6.18 In addition to the recently established local standard for outdoor playing pitches (1.35 ha per 1,000 population), it is therefore recommended that an overarching standard of 2.71 ha per 1000 population be set. This standard is in line with existing provision (excluding golf courses) and local authority benchmark data.
- 6.19 Since this typology encompasses a broad variety of outdoor sports facilities, it should be recognised that application for surplus and deficiency calculations would be meaningless and that standards should be set for broad planning need only. Local demand for sports facilities by sport is assessed later in this section.

Quality

- 6.20 The NPFA suggests benchmarks for the quality of outdoor sports facilities that include criteria such as gradients, orientation, ancillary accommodation, planting and community safety.
- 6.21 There is no overarching local standard for the quality of outdoor sports facilities in the City and District but the Playing Pitch Strategy recommends that by improving all outdoor sport provision the Council could significantly harness the development of all sports.
- 6.22 Overall, the quality of outdoor sports facility sites in the City and District is good, with 66% of all quality factors rated considered to be good or very good, and only 7% poor or very poor. Although some litter, dog fouling and vandalism problems were evident, overall cleanliness and maintenance was good and the vegetation was also rated highly.

Accessibility

- 6.23 The level of accessibility of outdoor sports facilities can be restricted on the basis that many of these facilities are situated on school sites or fall under private sports club ownership.
- 6.24 Accessibility factors rated during site assessments showed the accessibility of outdoor sports facility sites in the City and District to be good, with 45% of all quality factors rated considered to be *good* or *very good*, and only 6% *poor* or *very poor*. For example, visibility of site entrances, information and signage and accessibility by public transport are considered good.
- 6.25 Disabled access to outdoor sports facilities was rated as poor, with this factor ranked as good at only six out of 117 sites. In addition, accessibility by cycleways was considered relatively poor, as were roads, paths and cycleways within the open space sites. These are therefore the main areas identified for improvement.
- 6.26 Although the satisfaction with outdoor sports facilities is marginally lower than some other typologies the main positive points are regarding visibility at the site entrance.
- 6.27 Responses to the household survey indicated that travel by car was the preferred method of transport to reach outdoor sports facilities although relatively high numbers also indicated that they would travel on foot. A higher proportion of residents of Sandridge, London Colney and St Albans City and District indicated that they would travel on foot, perhaps reflecting the abundance of sports facilities located in these areas.

SECTION SIX – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- 6.28 Analysis of current behaviour patterns indicates that 78% of current users of outdoor sports facilities travel by car, with 78% travelling up to 15 minutes, 38% of whom travel between 10 and 15 minutes.
- 6.29 75% of respondents across the district indicated that they would be willing to travel up to 15 minutes by car, a view which was echoed by 75% of residents in four of the eight individual analysis areas.
- 6.30 Based on the analysis of both current behaviour patterns and the viewpoints expressed by participants in consultation, a local standard of a 15 minute drivetime is recommended.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

**15 minute drive
(6km)**

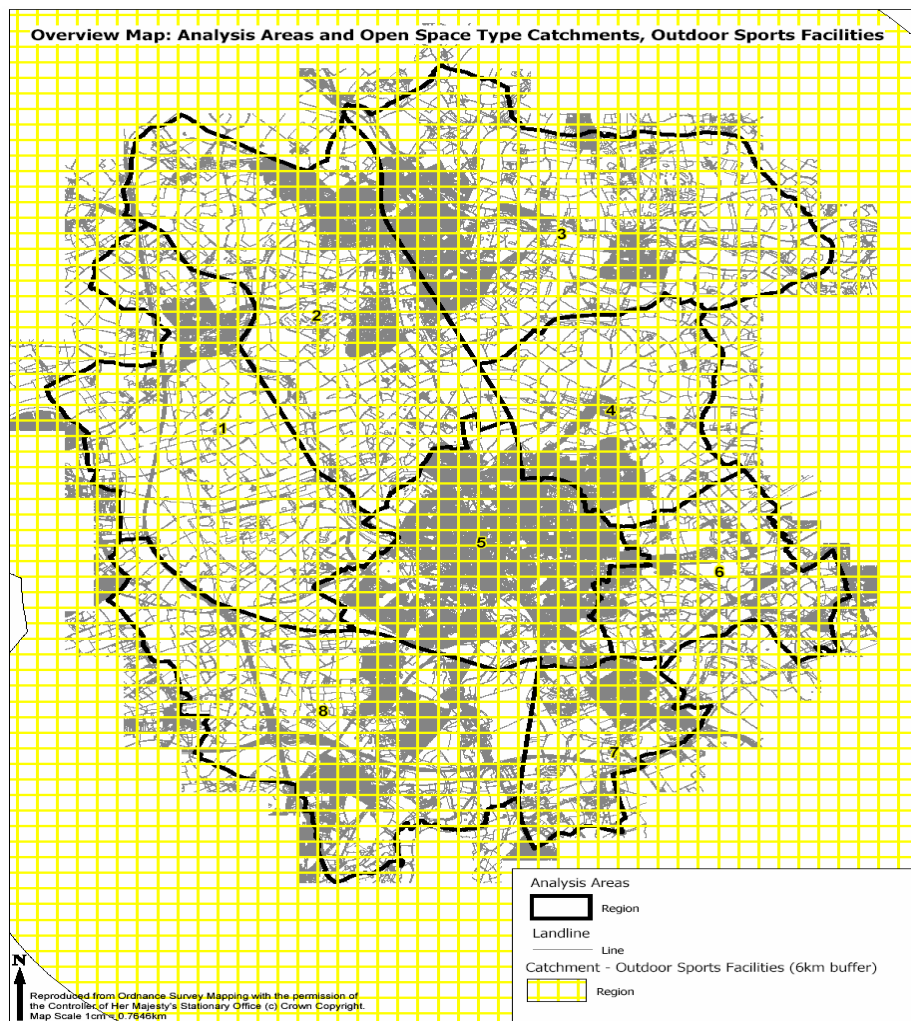
Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas

- 6.31 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.
- 6.32 Figure 6.1 overleaf presents an overview of accessibility to outdoor sports facilities. It clearly illustrates that residents throughout the City and District are within the desired accessibility catchment of this type of provision, a 15 minute drive time. However, it should be emphasised that this includes school sports pitches, many of which are not currently publicly accessible.

Value assessment – Identifying specific sites

- 6.33 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning. This can be done simply through assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.
- 6.34 Quality and accessibility are closely inter-related. Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Conversely, most sites with a low level of use have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating.
- 6.35 The popularity and value of outdoor sports facilities within the City and District is clear, and almost all sites are used frequently. This indicates that outdoor sports facilities have a vital role to play and, as a priority, consideration should therefore be given to improving those sites which are of poorer quality or accessibility. In addition, it is important to improve those sites where the quality of the overall site is good, but the actual pitch is poor.
- 6.36 Despite the high quality and usage of most of the sites, a number of facilities, primarily school playing fields, have low accessibility.
- 6.37 Partnership working at these sites represents a significant opportunity to enhance the accessibility of these facilities and their availability for use by the local community whether as sport and recreational facilities or amenity informal recreation areas.
- 6.38 Furthermore, there are a number of wider benefits of sports facilities. Not only do they provide opportunities for formal sports participation, but many also serve as important amenity green space. **It is vital that this dual role is not underestimated.**

Figure 6.1 Overview of accessibility to outdoor sports facilities



- 6.39 Many outdoor sports facility sites offer structural and landscape benefits, in addition to providing social inclusion and economic benefits. The clearest benefit is the contribution made by sports facilities to the health agenda, and increased participation in sport and active recreation.

Playing pitches

Quantity

- 6.40 The current Local Plan recommends the use of the NPFA Standard, however the PPS recommends the application of a locally derived standard of 1.35 ha per 1,000 population, developed following detailed analysis of local supply and demand. This encompasses the provision of formal community grass football, rugby and synthetic hockey pitches. The results of the PPS are based on Sport England Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) and take into account projected future Team Generation Rates (TGR) and the impact of sports development initiatives.

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- 6.41 The calculation of this local standard is set out in full in the PPS with a brief explanation provided below:

(A) Area of existing community pitches	(B) Shortfall for 2013 (hectares)	(C) Hectares required by 2013 (A+B)	2013 Population	Hectares required per 1000 population	Allowing 10% for rest and recovery
108.3	58.92	168.7	135,548	1.24	1.35

Quality

- 6.42 Although pitches were assessed against the criteria outlined for the GSS, the site visits undertaken as part of the PPS assessed the quality of pitches in the City and District in terms of fit for purpose. The key findings included:
- local authority pitches appear to be well maintained - grass was cut, markings clear and equipment, where provided, was in good condition. Arrangements had been made, where required, for clubs to put up their own nets. In general, teams are required to put up their own nets as a result of vandalism and damage to previous facilities. These sites are Park Street Recreation Ground, Cunningham Hill, Foxcroft, Cotlandswick, Harpenden Rovers FC, Folly Fields, Marford Playing Fields and Pioneer Youth Club.
 - although almost all football sites exhibited evidence of vandalism, even the leased sites. There was no vandalism at rugby sites. Although Greenwood Park is surrounded by CCTV cameras, a small amount of vandalism was still evident. There was serious vandalism at Marlborough Pavilion where remains of a car were found on the roof, Cunningham Hill (pavilion covered in graffiti) and Park Street. There was also evidence of vandalism of new nets at both Verulamium Park and Rothamsted Park.
 - litter and dog fouling is a problem at all those sites not fenced around the boundary. Low fences surround private/leased facilities and incidences of dog fouling at these sites are limited. There were large amounts of litter on the enclosed pitch at William Bird Recreation Ground.
 - changing facilities at some sites are relatively poor and in need of improvement, and some local authority sites lacked changing facilities, or appropriate changing facilities, making them unsuitable for league matches. There are no changing facilities at Foxcroft or Cotlandswick (except for the enclosed pitch leased by London Colney FC). Additionally, changing at Verulamium Park (St Michaels End), Rothamsted Park, Folly Fields and Park Street are relatively poor.

SECTION SIX – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- the demand for separate female changing facilities means that, as a result of shared shower rooms, there are no sites which are suitable for female competition when male competition is booked on adjacent pitches. Increasingly, the requirement to separate juniors from adults generates further difficulties for the allocation of pitches, and there are no sites with dedicated youth changing facilities, or sufficient segregated changing rooms to accommodate children's and men's football simultaneously.
- drainage of pitches appears to be the main issue affecting quality. Drainage appears to be a problem at the majority of football sites, and with the exception of Woollam Playing Fields, there are no sites with drainage systems installed. Pitches at William Bird Recreation Ground and Rothamsted Park showed evidence of waterlogging at the time of site visits.
- the gradient of many pitches makes high level play difficult – for example, at Rothamsted Park, Greenwood Park, Cotlandswick, Park Street and Verulamium Park. In addition, many pitches have a relatively uneven surface, making playing conditions potentially dangerous. Pitches at Pioneer Youth Club, Park Street, Marlborough Club, Harpenden Rovers FC are particularly uneven. On the whole, rugby clubs were considered to have good level pitches. The pitches at Woollam Playing Fields are particularly even and flat.
- privately owned or leased facilities, which tend to be fenced in and secured, were overall of a good standard. Woollams Playing Fields and Harvesters Football Club were of a particularly high standard.

Accessibility

- 6.43 Accessibility to playing fields within all of the major Council owned parks and Greenwood Park was considered relatively good. However, many of the smaller pitch sites were more restricted, including Foxcroft and Cunningham Hill, which were considered to be relatively inaccessible with limited paths and signage.
- 6.44 The lack of access to school sports facilities reflects a key issue to emerge from the PPS. It is recommended that the implementation of official community use agreements with schools (particularly in areas that are deficient) should be considered.
- 6.45 Consultation with neighbouring authorities indicated that St Albans residents are believed to travel to use playing pitch provision in Three Rivers District.

Summary and recommendations

Sport	Solutions/recommendations
Adult Football <i>Small oversupply, except in Central area</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• improve quality of pitches across the district, particularly large sites and those with greatest quality deficiencies• designate a multi-pitch site specifically for women's football and develop appropriate changing facilities• ensure rest and recovery for all pitches• convert any remaining surplus to junior football.

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Sport	Solutions/recommendations
<p>Junior/mini Football</p> <p><i>Significant undersupply, focused in Colney Heath and Wheathampstead</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop community use agreements with schools • identify sites for development in Colney Heath, the area of greatest undersupply • ensure the new pitch at Harvesters Football Club is programmed for junior football • long term aim to provide mini and junior pitches in each area.
<p>Cricket</p> <p><i>Large undersupply, predicted to increase</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve quality of Council owned pitches, with Rothamsted Park and William Bird as key priorities • re-mark the additional pitch at Verulamium Park • develop community use agreements with schools for club use.
<p>Rugby</p> <p><i>Oversupply in adult; undersupply in junior</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop links with clubs to discuss pitch improvement/ protection • consider re-designating adult pitches to junior pitches in the short term • encourage the use of schools sites for junior rugby • seek Section 106 developer contributions • explore grant funding for pitch development.
<p>Hockey</p> <p><i>Undersupply in STPs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop 2 further STPs to address shortfall in provision – with strong demand for one pitch in the Harpenden area for use by hockey clubs currently playing outside the district • develop Highfield Park pitch for football training and hockey.
<p>Athletics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are an adequate number of tracks within a 20-minute drivetime of the residents of the district • the quality of the track at Westminster Lodge and supporting facilities must however be improved • opportunities for more local involvement in athletics should be created – with facilities at schools and local community centres incorporating programmes for athletics, and sports development programmes focusing on athletics and the provision of equipment for youth development in all disciplines.

SECTION SIX – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Sport	Solutions/recommendations
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• it is unlikely that further golf course developments are needed in the district• resources should be targeted towards improving the current supply of facilities rather than the development of new courses• emphasis to be placed on increasing accessibility both in terms of public transport and concessionary membership pricing policies.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• level of provision, although adequate at present, should be monitored as future projections indicate that demand for tennis and levels of participation could rise• whilst there is no need for additional courts, the Council should work in partnership with local clubs and Parish and Town Councils to identify sites for improvement.

Further recommendations

The Council should:

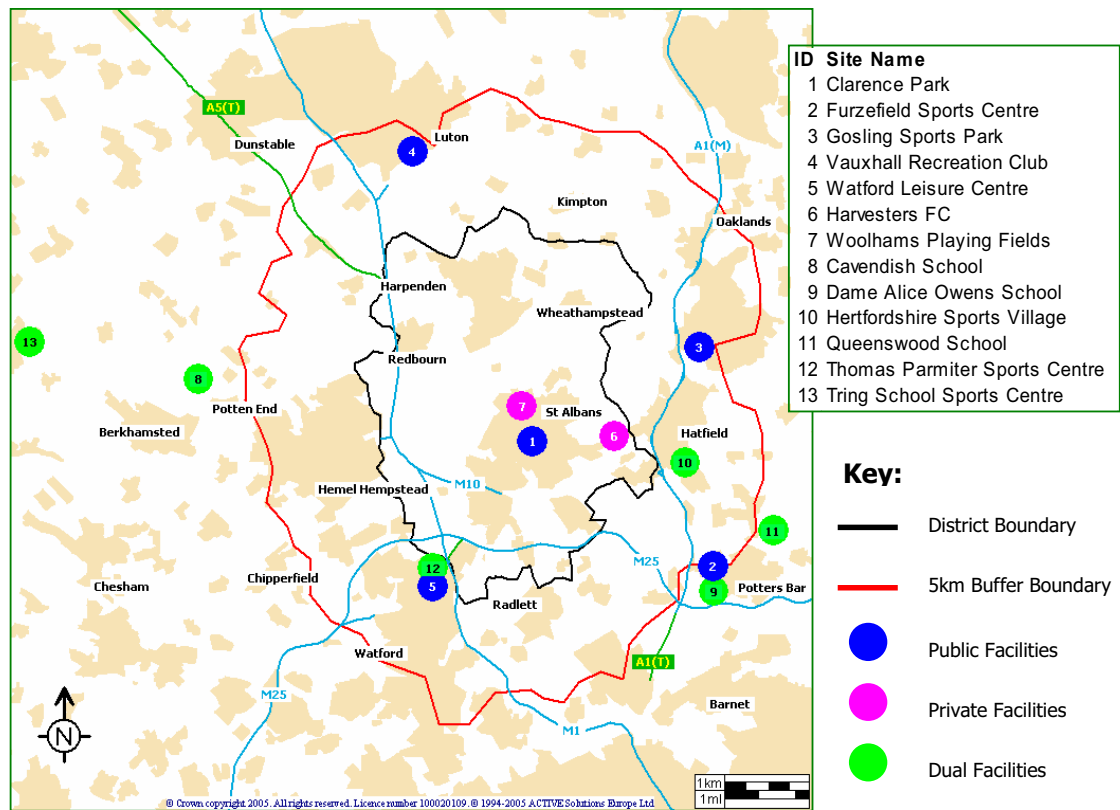
- investigate the use of, and access to, school sports facilities in areas of deficiency
- support the protection of formal outdoor sports facilities through:
 - consultation with Sport England
 - identifying and protecting playing fields and surrounding grounds that either currently or potentially could provide opportunities for enhancing and promoting biodiversity
 - in accordance with PPG17, any proposal to dispose of open space land should be put in the context of the overall analysis of open space across the city and district particularly with respect to identified deficiencies in specific areas.
- implement the recommendations as detailed in the Green Space Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy.

Synthetic turf pitches (STPs)

Supply

- 6.46 As shown in Figure 6.2 below there are three synthetic turf pitches (STPs) within the district - the Pavilion site (Clarence Park), Old Albanians (Woollams Playing Fields) and Harvesters Football Club.

Figure 6.2 STPs within St Albans City and District and buffer zone



6.47 Clarence Park STP is the only facility available for public access in the district and is heavily utilised by St Albans Hockey Club. A replacement surface has recently been laid at this site (February 2004). Other hockey clubs travel outside the district for competitive match play with Harpenden Hockey Club using facilities in Hatfield and Luton for example. Harpenden Hockey Club uses the Old Albanians STP for junior coaching on Sundays, but this facility is currently used almost exclusively for tennis. There is limited access to the STP at Harvesters Football Club, primarily school use on special occasions.

Planned facilities

6.48 There are proposals for the development of one STP within three kilometres of Highfield Park. Funding for this project has been secured although a site has not yet been identified. In addition, there are further planned developments of STPs at Roundwood Park School and Sandringham School. Harpenden Rugby Football Club has received planning approval for the development of two STPs, one sand-based and one rubber crumb (subject to referral to the Secretary of State and the signing of a section 106 agreement).

Demand

6.49 Demand has been calculated using the Playing Pitch Methodology. The recent Playing Pitch Strategy indicates that with 25 hockey teams (fielded by St Albans Hockey Club) currently playing in the district and an additional two clubs (including

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Harpenden Hockey club – see below) wishing to play in the district but currently unable to do so, there is demand for three STPs specifically for hockey.

- 6.50 Only one of the three existing pitches is available for the competitive and training needs of the clubs, so there is demand for two additional pitches for hockey use.

- consultees expressed the view that there is a significant dearth of STP provision in Harpenden. Harpenden Hockey Club operates four men's teams and four ladies' teams. Due to lack of pitch availability all club matches are currently played outside the district in Hatfield and Luton. Junior coaching sessions are held at Old Albanians STP in St Albans
- the development of a new artificial turf pitch by Harvesters Football Club is considered to be a good practice example of partnership working between a local sports club and the local authority. The Council contributed funding to this voluntary sector scheme; a much needed facility that will be heavily utilised.

Shortfalls/surpluses

- 6.51 The Playing Pitch Methodology identifies that with only one pitch available for hockey, and demand for three, there is a current undersupply of two artificial pitches for hockey.
- 6.52 The audit highlights a lack of facilities in the Harpenden area in particular. This shortfall was strongly reinforced in the consultation process and during production of the Playing Pitch Strategy. This shortfall, if not addressed, is likely to worsen due to the low numbers of teams per active population (team generation rates) which indicates that there is a high unmet demand for hockey in the district. It is likely that even if the shortfall is met, additional facilities would need to be in place to provide sufficient capacity for future club development.
- 6.53 As well as the Playing Pitch Strategy, Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) also demonstrated the need for new STP provision within the district.

Conclusions and recommendations

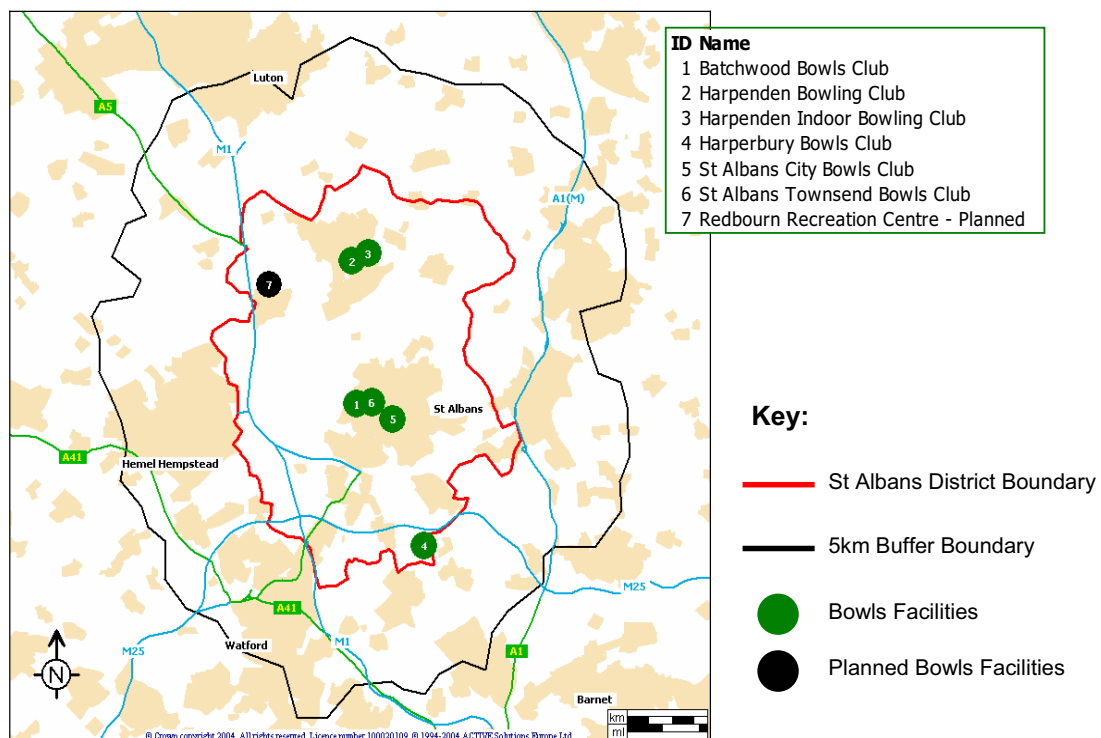
- 6.54 There is clearly a need for two additional STPs suitable for competitive hockey and training, most specifically in the Harpenden area, bringing the total number of STPs in the City and District to five. The additional pitches would need to be floodlit. This would enable further development initiatives and club development in hockey, to meet the need to create and sustain further hockey teams.
- 6.55 Although hockey should be the primary user, the pitches could also contribute towards meeting the growing demand for 5-a-side football and football training. An additional pitch in the Harpenden area and the proposed development at Highfield Park would meet the current demand.
- 6.56 The Council should continue to monitor usage and future demand depending on the success of hockey club development and the growing demand for football training facilities.

Bowling greens

Supply

- 6.57 As shown in Figure 6.3 below, there are currently six bowls facilities in the City and District. Bowling has only been audited on a district-wide basis since bowling greens serve a predominantly local catchment. There is a good geographical spread of facilities across the district. All six bowls clubs are private clubs, reflecting the profile of the participation base for the sport.

Figure 6.3 Bowls greens within St Albans City and District



Planned facilities

- 6.58 There is a proposal for development of an all-weather bowls green at Redbourn Recreation Centre. Batchwood Bowls Club is looking to obtain grant funding for the development of disabled facilities at their site.

Demand

- 6.59 Consultation has shown that bowls clubs generally consider the quality and level of provision to be good. However, accessibility to sites by public transport and accessibility for the disabled is poor.
- 6.60 There is believed to be scope to improve public transport links and disabled access at facilities. Clubs also indicated a deficiency in indoor bowling facilities.

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- Hertfordshire Bowls Association is currently working towards increasing overall participation in bowls, with a particular focus on youth development. It is their intention to increase school/club links over the next few years. The Association indicated that there is no demand for any additional facility provision within the district at the present time.

Conclusions and recommendations

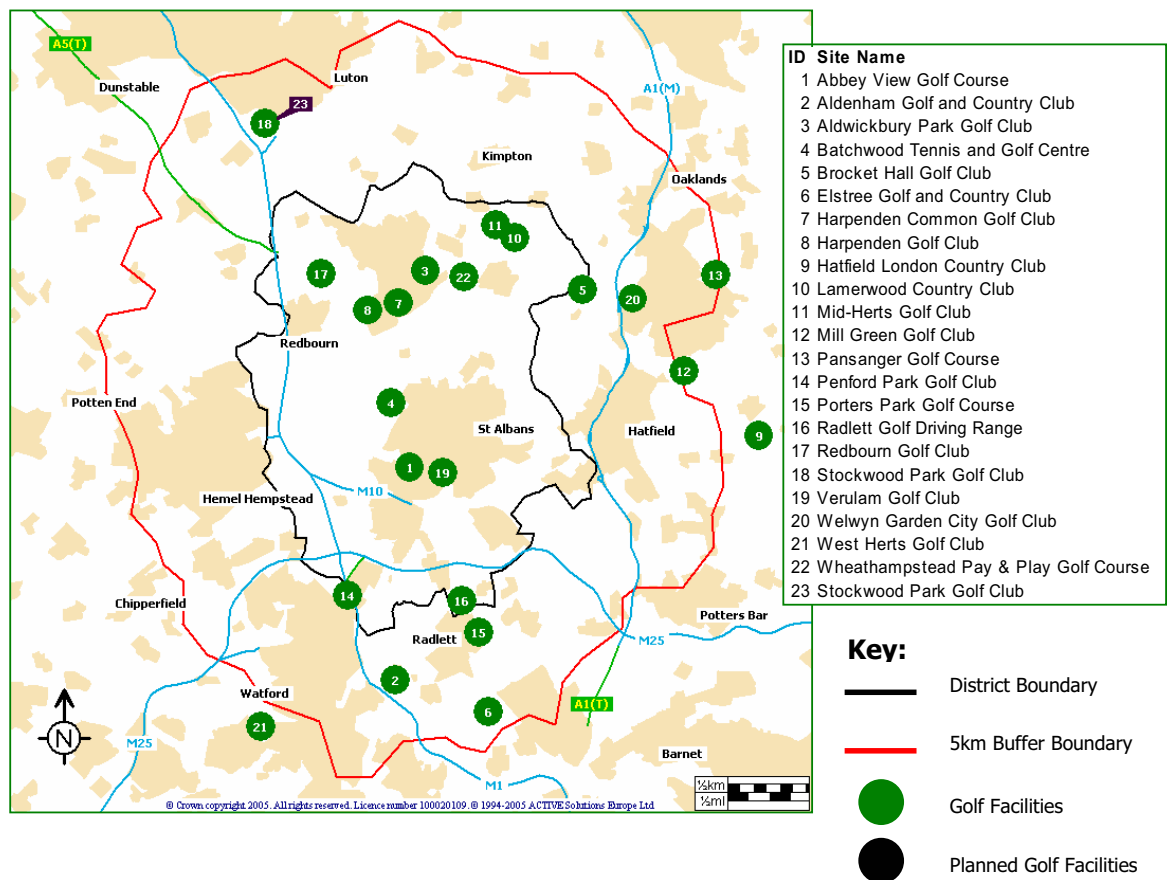
- 6.61 It is believed that there are currently sufficient outdoor bowls facilities to meet demand.

Golf

Supply

- 6.62 There are currently ten golf courses within the district. The majority of clubs have one 18-hole course on-site whilst Redbourn Golf Club and Lamerwood Country Club have both an 18-hole and a 9-hole course. Wheathampstead Pay and Play Golf Course and Abbey View Golf Course are not 18 hole facilities. Abbey View Golf Course and Batchwood Tennis and Golf Centre are public facilities.

Figure 6.4: Golf courses within St Albans City and District and buffer zone



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- 6.63 Figure 6.4 above shows there to be a good geographical spread of golf courses across the City and District, placing all residents within a reasonable travelling distance. Good public transport links to these sites are however important to ensure that they are accessible to younger golfers, particularly in the south of the district where travel distance to a golf course is longest. In addition, there is also a driving range at Harper Lane.
- 6.64 Most clubs within the district offer public pay and play access. Green fees vary across a broad price range, generally demonstrating good affordability. Green fees for a 9-hole round are £6.80 and £8.50 at Abbey View Golf Club and Wheathampstead Pay and Play Course respectively. Greens fees for an 18-hole round at local courses range in price up to £32 at Redbourn Common Golf Club.
- 6.65 The majority, with the exception of Wheathampstead Pay and Play Course, also operate club membership schemes. Initial joining fees and ongoing yearly subscriptions for these schemes are high.
- 6.66 Membership entitlements often include prioritisation of tee times during peak periods. It is therefore important to ensure that there is a good spread of facilities within the district offering unrestricted pay and play access.

Planned developments

- 6.67 Planning permission was granted in the mid 1990s for a golf course in Potters Crouch and a golf clubhouse in 2000. Golf course development has not yet taken place but it is understood that planning permission cannot lapse.

Demand

- 6.68 There is no recognised national demand modelling technique for golf. We have therefore used other methods for assessing demand. The three most characteristic methods for describing a golf market are:

Availability (population per 18 hole course)	The number of inhabitants per 18-hole course. The lower the number, the better the availability. However, this statistic does not express whether or not there is sufficient capacity for admittance to a golf club (eg limitations like waiting lists or membership unavailability). Because of the lack of data available the figures for "population per golf course or golf club" are often used.
Per capita (golfer in % of population)	Shows the percentage of registered golfers of the population. Independent golfers (non club members) are not included in the statistics by the National Golf Associations.
Capacity (or usage) (golfers per 18 holes)	How much golfers use golf courses is shown by the index 'golfers per 18 holes' or 'golfers per golf course' and is an indicator for the economic capacity of golf courses.

- 6.69 The Sport and Leisure Profile data highlights that 16% of the population within the district have a propensity to participate in golf. This is a particularly high proportion in comparison with the national average, which indicates that only 12% of the British population have the propensity to participate. This reflects a strong local demand for golf.

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6.70 A statistical overview of the UK golf market in 2000 is as follows:

Country	Availability (no of inhabitants per course)	Per Capita (golfer as a % of population)	Capacity (Usage)
<i>England</i>	25,875	1.8%	455
<i>Scotland</i>	9,476	5.1%	485
<i>Wales</i>	18,340	2.8%	522
<i>Ireland</i>	9,148	7.4%	681
<i>GB & Ireland</i>	20,295	2.4%	494

6.71 With 129,005 residents within the district, population per golf course is 12,900, in comparison with 25,875 in England. This shows that the number of golf courses is high in relation to the national average.

Growth Predictions for Golf – 2000 to 2010

GB & Ireland	2000	Outlook 2010
Golf Courses	2,983	3,600
Golfers	1,473,191	1,718,000

- Abbey View (9 hole, 1383 yards) and Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre (18 hole, 6161 yards) in St Albans are both considered excellent facilities for the development of junior golf. Under new golf professional, Nigel Lawrence, Abbey View is to once again become a Golf Foundation Starter Centre. This initiative will involve outreach work with local schools and will lead to the introduction of the sport into a greater number of schools within the area. Nigel Lawrence is also planning to establish links with local girls schools such as Loretto and to run targeted 'girls only' coaching sessions
- Batchwood Golf Club has historically struggled to change its club environment and culture but has made good progress towards increasing junior involvement over the past 18 months. For example, the club has recently organised Tri-Golf sessions as well as running a Junior Leaders Course
- Redbourn Golf Club is a good advocate of junior golf due to the structure and mix of facilities available. The club is proprietary owned and therefore accessible on a 'pay and play' basis. The club also has a driving range and Par 3 course, which strongly support youth golf development at the site
- Pay and Play facilities play an important role in the development of junior golf, both in terms of affordability and in helping to increase the attractiveness of the sport to young people, particularly girls, through promoting a more modern and open image of the game.

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Shortfalls/surpluses

- 6.72 With high rates of participation and a good geographical spread of courses, St Albans City and District is well provided for at present. The good supply of pay and play courses also indicates that there are ample opportunities for casual access.

Conclusions and recommendations

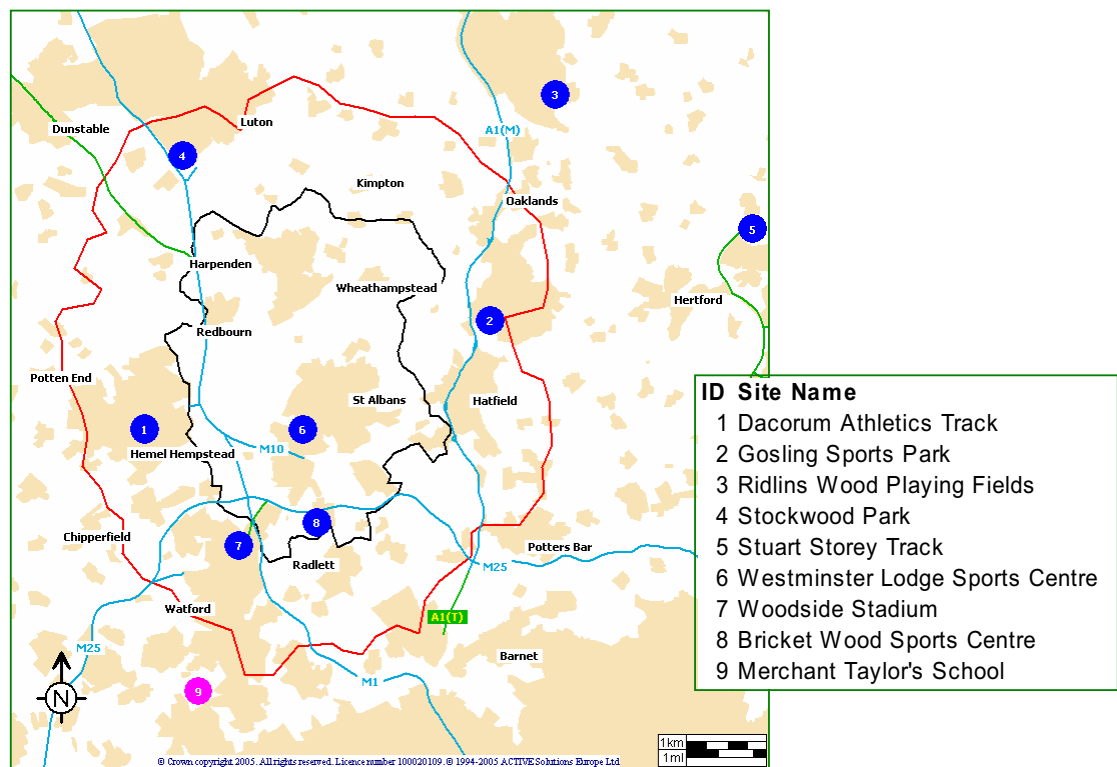
- 6.73 It is unlikely that further golf course developments are needed in the district. Resources should be put towards improving the current supply of facilities rather than the development of new courses. Emphasis should be placed on increasing accessibility both in terms of public transport and membership prices.

Athletics

Supply

- 6.74 Athletics tracks within the district and surrounding area are illustrated on Figure 6.5 below.

Figure 6.5 Athletics tracks accessible to residents within the City and District



Key:

- St Albans District
- 5km Buffer Boundary
- Public Facilities
- Private Facilities

SECTION SIX – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Table 6.1 Athletics track supply

Type of track	Number of tracks	Issues raised by map
Public facilities within the district	2	The two facilities are well spread through the district, and there are accessible tracks in neighbouring boroughs. There are very few people who are not adequately served by a track.
Private facilities within the district	0	
Public facilities within the buffer	4	
Private facilities within the buffer	0	
TOTAL	6	

6.75 Two athletics tracks are located within the district - Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre and Bricket Wood Sports Centre sites. Only the track at Westminster Lodge is a synthetic facility. The track at Bricket Wood Sports Centre, which is not synthetic, has become overgrown and is not deemed to be operational. This track does not currently meet any demand for athletics.

6.76 There are a further four athletics tracks within a five kilometre buffer of the district boundary, all of which are public facilities.

6.77 Athletics tracks are expected to serve a 20-minute catchment area. There are therefore very few people residing within the district who are not adequately served by a track.

Planned facilities

6.78 There are no projects at present that indicate further development of new athletic tracks.

Demand

6.79 Since there are no nationally recognised models for demand in athletics, this has been assessed using a combination of consultation and national trends.

6.80 The local population has a high propensity to take part in running (6.8% of the population compared 4.9% nationally), indicating that clubs in the area have a high potential to recruit new members.

6.81 UK Athletics' position is stated in the Athletics Facilities Strategy 2002–06. The provision of local indoor training centres is a priority for UK Athletics, preferably located on an educational site. The National Governing Body Strategy states the need for these centres to include a minimum straight of 50m, four lanes, floodlighting, grass training areas, storage, parking, changing and ancillary facilities.

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6.82 Other demand parameters outlined in the strategy include:

- an eight lane synthetic track in each English County, London Borough and large Metropolitan area with covered spectator provision and floodlighting
- one six lane synthetic track with floodlighting per 250,000 people living within a 30 minute drive time of the proposed location.

- St Albans Athletics Club is the main athletics club within the district and currently uses the track at Westminster Lodge. Consultation with the club, which has almost 200 members, highlighted that provision in St Albans is considered inadequate to meet the needs of the district due to the quality of provision and a lack of ancillary facilities (spectator seating, equipment storage, indoor training, club room). It was stated that local athletics facilities are below the standard of others in Hertfordshire. The club is aiming to increase athletics participation by promoting sports hall athletics and encouraging participation by children of primary school age.
- St Albans Striders Running Club also use track facilities at Westminster Lodge.

Shortfalls/surpluses

6.83 Due to the existence of an appropriate facility at Westminster Lodge, there is no undersupply of full size tracks, even excluding the track at Bricket Wood which has fallen into disrepair and not considered to be operational. However, there could be scope for improved ancillary provision and more local training facilities. There is demand for more training opportunities and development programmes. UK Athletics specifies that each track should have a minimum of 18 hours per week at peak times for athletics development and coaching programmes.

Conclusions and recommendations

6.84 There are an adequate number of tracks within a 20-minute drivetime of the residents of the district. However, the quality of the track and supporting facilities at Westminster Lodge must be improved and opportunities for more local involvement in athletics should be created. This means that facilities such as those at schools and local community centres should incorporate programmes for athletics, and sports development programmes should consider the use of athletics and the provision of equipment. Guidance given by UK Athletics for training centres should be the target for this strategy.

Tennis

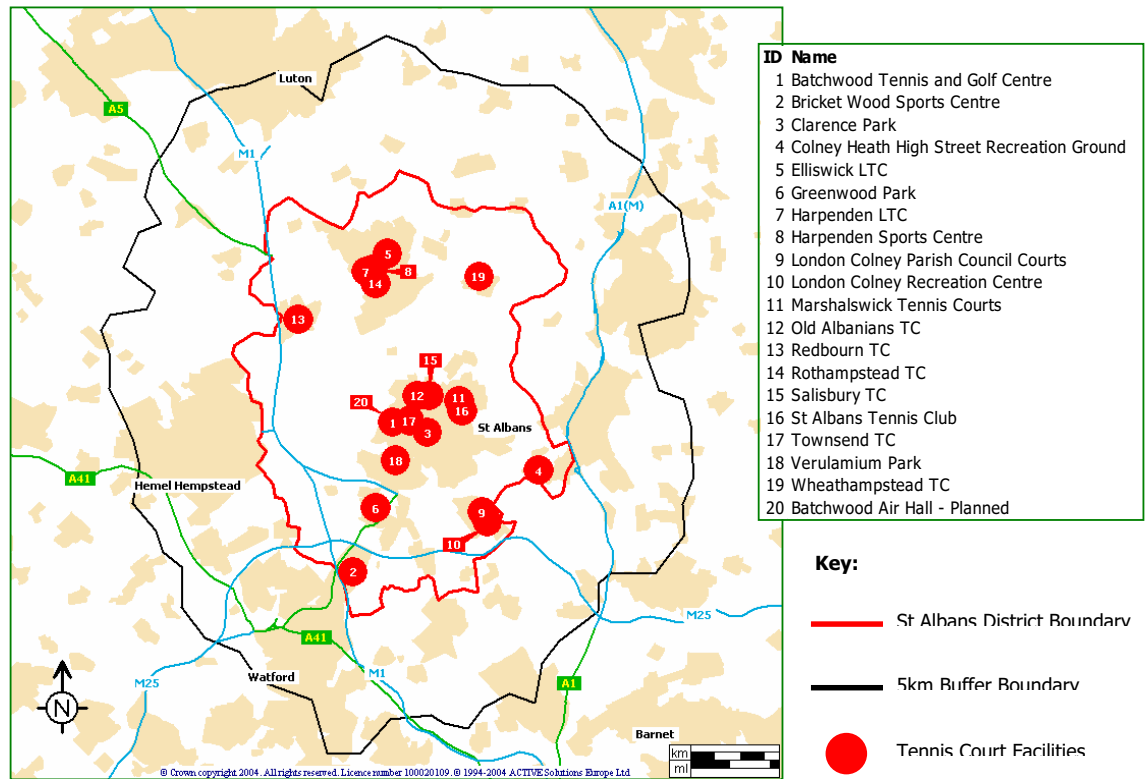
6.85 Figure 6.5 below illustrates the network of outdoor tennis court provision within the City and District. Indoor tennis provision is covered in detail in Section Four. Outdoor tennis courts are considered to have localised user catchments. As such, this facility type has been audited on a district-wide basis and no facilities within the buffer have been assessed.

6.86 There are 20 sites containing tennis courts in the district, many of which are owned and maintained by either Parish Councils or private tennis clubs. Courts are a combination of tarmac, synthetic and grass surfaces. There is a good geographical spread of courts throughout the district and at least one site within each of the major

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settlements, although there is only one court in Sandridge. Although most secondary schools have tennis courts, these are not shown since we found no examples of public access to these sites. Courts within the 5km buffer have not been audited.

Figure 6.5 Tennis courts within St Albans City and District



6.87 Harpenden Lawn Tennis Club and St Albans Tennis Club are the largest tennis clubs in the district. Harpenden Lawn Tennis Club is a private members club offering five artificial grass courts within a seasonal air dome structure. Facilities at St Albans Tennis Club comprise six all weather floodlit courts, four hard courts and three grass courts.

6.88 As outlined earlier in earlier sections, Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre is a public facility managed on behalf of the Council by Leisure Connection Ltd, which offers four acrylic indoor courts and four outdoor courts.

6.89 A number of other venues provide access to synthetic tennis courts on a seasonal basis. For example, the STP at Clarence Park is used for tennis during the summer months and the Old Albanians Sports Club STP is used almost exclusively by the tennis club from April/May through to August.

- tennis facilities at Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre, a good quality performance centre, are heavily utilised and always at capacity
- Hertfordshire LTA and local tennis clubs identified a clear shortfall in indoor and outdoor floodlit tennis court provision. These courts are required to facilitate the continued development of clubs in the area and to enable year round development programmes to be established. Consultation with clubs reinforced the importance of increased floodlit facilities.

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Demand

- 6.90 The population characteristics of the district indicate that there is high demand for tennis compared to the national average (10.1% compared to 5%).
- 6.91 Participation trends in the sport indicate that although it has declined in recent years, this decline is slowing and various national initiatives, particularly for the young, could indicate a rise again in future years.

Shortfalls/surpluses

- 6.92 With twenty sites in the district available for tennis, there is adequate coverage across all areas and opportunities for the local population to take part. However improvements need to be focused on enhancing court quality and accessibility - both in terms of pay and play rather than club membership as well as floodlighting or covering of larger sites to enable winter training.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 6.93 Future projections indicate that demand for tennis could rise again so the number of sites, although adequate at present, needs to be monitored.
- 6.94 Whilst there is no need for additional courts, the Council should work in partnership with local clubs and Parish Councils to identify sites for improvement. Court development should include surface improvements, ancillary accommodation (linked to the Playing Pitch Strategy recommendations where sites are shared with playing fields) and particularly floodlighting/temporary covering.
- 6.95 Consideration should be given to demand for improvement at Elliswick Lawn Tennis Club, in addition to floodlights at Wheathampstead and Salisbury Tennis clubs and additional floodlights at Harpenden and St Albans Tennis Clubs. There may be planning issues relating to floodlighting on these sites and if it proves impossible to gain planning permission other sites need to be identified.
- 6.96 Partnerships with netball (considered below) should also be considered to ensure that the use of courts is maximised.

Netball

Supply

- 6.97 Netball courts are sited at schools and in local parks. Many of the 20 tennis sites are also marked for netball. The sports hall section earlier in this document indicates the level of indoor netball provision.

Demand

- 6.98 Netball is played by over 1 million school pupils and 55,000 women in England and remains a popular sport. Popularity among men and boys is increasing and the re-launch of 'High 5s' netball for younger children is likely to further stimulate interest, particularly since the England netball team is currently 3rd in the world rankings.
- 6.99 The local league(s) consist of 12 clubs fielding 16 teams and there is a junior league in which competition is split into numerous age groups.

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- 6.100 Although there are no existing demand parameters for netball meaning that a numerical quantification of demand is not possible, consultation indicates that the greatest demand for netball courts from teams is for an indoor facility, suitable for hosting a number of league games.
- 6.101 The All England Netball Association (AENA) national strategy supports the need for more indoor netball facilities across the country. Other identified AENA priorities for netball are:
- for all secondary schools to have curricular and extra curricular access to a minimum of four appropriately specified, good quality netball courts
 - for each local authority to have, as a minimum, a local competition venue and local performance centre.
- 6.102 The AENA defines various categories of courts as follows:
- category 1 courts are outdoor courts intended for school, recreation and community use
 - category 2 courts are indoor or outdoor courts intended for local league, school, recreation and community use
 - category 3 courts are indoor or outdoor courts intended for county premier league and county first team use
 - category 4 courts are dedicated outdoor courts intended for higher levels of play such as national clubs league, inter county competitions and national squad training.
- 6.103 All of the first three categories are relevant to the City and District and should be provided for use by local schools, clubs, St Albans City and District Netball Association and the County Netball Association. The level and quality of netball facility provision, both outdoor and indoor, in St Albans is considered poor. Representatives from local netball clubs and leagues also highlighted a significant lack of floodlit outdoor netball courts in the district.

- one of the major concerns for St Albans City and District Netball Association is a lack of security at Westminster Lodge. Behaviour of other users, particularly basketball youths, is often intimidating. They show little respect for formal court bookings and often disrupt netball club matchplay
- netball clubs also highlighted a significant need for enhanced training provision due to a lack of floodlit outdoor courts and difficulties in accessing court time at existing sports hall sites. A general need for improvement of equipment and court surfaces was also raised. Netball clubs were supportive of increasing access to facilities on school sites.

Shortfalls/surpluses

- 6.104 There are no accepted demand parameters for netball at the present time hence detailed quantitative calculations of under / oversupply are not possible.

SECTION SIX – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- 6.105 There are no facilities that meet the minimum standard specification for Category 3 courts or four court facilities for adult and youth leagues. This deficiency relates to the central St Albans area, which is accessible for local leagues and would be the preferred location of the County Association for any County programmes and events in the District.
- 6.106 As with tennis, there is a lack of floodlit provision for training and access to indoor facilities is limited.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 6.107 A dedicated outdoor centre is required for use by the St Albans City and District Netball Association and local leagues. This would ideally be linked to a new indoor court development (containing around four courts - see sports hall recommendations) in the centre of St Albans.
- 6.108 Local leagues and clubs need access to good quality courts, and these can often be provided on school sites, in addition to dedicated facilities. They should be evenly spread throughout the district to accommodate players and potential players in all residential areas, and if on school sites they should be obtained through formal community use agreements.

Supply and demand: summary conclusions

- 6.109 Further to the earlier outlined playing pitch recommendations, the demand modelling and consultation has revealed that there is a current need for the following outdoor facilities in the City and District:
- a range of sports facilities catering for all age groups and which help to encourage continuing participation in leisure and recreational activities
 - a new STP in the Harpenden area
 - a four-court outdoor netball facility in St Albans to meet the minimum specification for both adult and junior leagues, ideally linked to an indoor facility
 - increased provision of outdoor floodlit courts for both tennis and netball throughout the district on existing sites
 - emphasis on improving existing golf provision, particularly with respect to issues of accessibility to support junior development
 - enhancement of the quality of athletics tracks and ancillary provision.
- 6.110 Demand for these facilities is likely to grow further over the next five years, due to the active population and participation trends in different sports.

SECTION 7
WATER SPORTS

Introduction

- 7.1 Outdoor water sports facilities encompass a wide variety of activities such as sailing, rowing, canoeing, power boating, water skiing and jet skiing. Many such facilities rely on natural water resources but there are a number of man-made facilities across the country providing valuable inland resources.
- 7.2 There are no purpose built watersports centres within St Albans City and District. The nearest facilities are:
- **Fairlands Valley Park in Stevenage:** An 11-acre lake offering sailing, windsurfing and angling plus a wide range of watersports courses for adults and juniors, run by Stevenage Leisure Limited. It is recognised by the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) and British Canoe Union (BCU) as a training centre and is situated within a 25-minute drive time of the majority of St Albans City and District residents.
 - **Willen Lake in Milton Keynes:** A large watersports centre offering the largest cable tow in the country in addition to a sailing centre and powerboat school, operated by Whitecap Leisure. This centre is situated within a 40-minute drive time of Harpenden, in the north of the St Albans District.
 - **Stanborough Watersports Centre in Welwyn Garden City:** A BCU and RYA approved centre offering a full range of classes (from introductory to advanced) in canoeing, sailing and windsurfing as well as a range of team building and fun activity days. The facility is managed by Finesse Leisure Partnership, the operating name for Welwyn Hatfield Leisure Ltd, a not-for-profit organisation established by Welwyn Hatfield Council in 2004 to manage and develop facilities and services at four of their established health, fitness and recreation centres.
- 7.3 In addition, there are a number of other water sports facilities in the locality. These include the Brogborough Boardsailing Club in Bedfordshire (a windsurfing lake) and the Aquadrome in Rickmansworth, which offers opportunities for waterskiing, sailing, windsurfing and canoeing, although membership to the affiliated clubs is required.

Canoeing

Strategic context

- 7.4 The British Canoe Union Facilities Strategy (1999-2004) places an emphasis on the development and improvement of existing clubs in the short-term, moving to identifying and reducing gaps in provision over the longer-term. The BCU targets the development of 20 performance centres to support the World Class Programme, based at existing clubs in the first instance. The strategy identifies priority areas for development, none of which are located in the Eastern region.

Local context

- 7.5 There are circa 450 BCU members in Hertfordshire, with several active canoe clubs (across various disciplines) and water sports centres supporting the development of canoeing:

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Canoe clubs	Canoe facilities
Bishops Stortford Canoe Club (Sprint and Marathon)	Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre, Stevenage
Hemel Hempstead Canoe Club (Sprint and Marathon) (Adult members only)	Stanborough Park Lakes, Welwyn Garden City
Herts Canoe Lifeguards	Herts Young Mariner's Base, Cheshunt
Herts Young Mariners OC (Youth)	
St Albans and Hertsmere Canoe Club (Canoe Polo)	

7.6 St Albans and Hertsmere Canoe Club is a highly successful Premier Division canoe polo club. The club does not currently train within the City and District, using swimming pool facilities in Potters Bar.

7.7 Consultation with the BCU Paddlesport Development Officer with geographical responsibility for Hertfordshire and Essex, highlighted strong potential for continued development of canoeing within Hertfordshire and St Albans District. Priorities for consideration within Hertfordshire include:

- Introducing paddle sports to the Hertfordshire Youth Games (BCU currently working with the Herts Sports Partnership)
- Developing a programme of events across Hertfordshire and Essex by the BCU, including taster sessions at Herts Young Mariners Centre and Fairlands Valley
- Considering a combined rowing/K1 event in conjunction with the Amateur Rowing Association (ARA)
- Establishing new links between schools and clubs to increase interest and participation in canoeing
- Developing a white water course in Broxbourne linked with the London 2012 Olympics. The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority has agreed to contribute funding for a 25 year period and this presents a significant opportunity for Hertfordshire
- Developing a strategy for supporting volunteers in Hertfordshire, with Herts Sports Partnership responsible for leading volunteer liaison

7.8 More specific actions for St Albans City and District could include:

- Ongoing discussions with Nicholas Breakspear RC School regarding the establishment of an Outdoor Activities Club involving canoeing. The school is investigating use of suitable local swimming pool facilities, such as Hertfordshire Sports Village; and
- Considering the potential for establishing/hosting a canoe club at the Westminster Lodge site

Rowing

Strategic context

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- 7.9 Rowing activity is separated between traditional sweep oared rowing (single oar) and sculling (two oars). In terms of access to water and clubhouse/boat storage facilities, the needs of the various disciplines are generally uniform. However, specialist training boats and land training equipment are essential for introducing novices to the sport.
- 7.10 Many clubs are river or coast based and the geographical distribution of clubs is largely dictated by the availability of good rowing water i.e. the combination of sufficient length and width for rowing boats. Rowing on river stretches is complemented by the use of rowing courses and training water. Rowing facilities being water based are rarely provided for, in terms of buildings and equipment, by local authorities. However many rowing clubs work in partnership with local authorities to develop rowing, particularly with regard to planning leases, rents and rates.
- 7.11 Nationally, sports development for rowing needs to focus on developing a strong club base and upgrading/modernising club premises and equipment to meet the needs of members and new participants in the sport. Coaching plays an important role in developing the sport and there is a need to build on and enhance international competition success.
- 7.12 Major areas of population exist where there is only a limited rowing presence at present and where there may be potential for developing a participation base. Where access to water is a problem, new opportunities should be investigated, for example, at mineral extraction sites etc. New developments will need a good stretch of water, good access, storage facilities, equipment stock and access to changing rooms and social facilities.
- 7.13 The National Junior Rowing Programme (NJRP) aims to facilitate sustainable development of rowing activity, with particular emphasis on tackling under-representation in specific geographical areas. The NJRP was established to provide support to existing schools and clubs and other organisations seeking to develop rowing within the local community. The programme provides 'dry' access using rowing machines or 'wet' access using equipment for water based activities.

Local Context

- 7.14 The Hertfordshire Rowing Development Plan targets the development of one high performance centre within the region, but identifies Bedford Lakes as the preferred location. In addition, a number of further potential sites for future development are being considered. The closest site to St Albans District is in Harlow.
- 7.15 The River Lea at Broxbourne provides the only facilities for rowing within Hertfordshire and Essex. Membership of Broxbourne Rowing Club is drawn from Barnet, Chelmsford and St Albans. In addition, there is an active rowing club at the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield.
- 7.16 In terms of potential developments, there have been ongoing discussions regarding a new watersports facility at Panshanger Park in East Hertfordshire. Although emphasis has been on canoeing and windsurfing, rowing has now been introduced into the proposed scheme.
- 7.17 Consultation with the Amateur Rowing Association's Coaching Development Officer, identified a number of potential areas for development within the City and District of St Albans:

- indoor rowing activity was highlighted as a significant opportunity to introduce young people to rowing within the City and District
- the potential for indoor rowing development within School Sport Co-ordinator Partnership networks was highlighted (e.g. Nicholas Breakspear RC School) as well as the opportunity for cross-curriculum development through PE and science links
- the launch of the new Sport England funded programme, 'Road to Health', was identified as a means by which to promote indoor rowing. This initiative will fund the establishment of equipment hubs (treadmills, ergometers, bikes) within sports centres to support health related activities

Waterskiing

Strategic context

- 7.18 The National Water Skiing Facilities Strategy 2001 – 2006 gives a strategic vision for the sport, both geographically and in relation to the technical requirements for the sport. The strategy specifies priorities for investment, with a particular emphasis on providing for those currently under-represented at the different levels of the sport.
- 7.19 The reliance on access to large stretches of water (open and enclosed) means that the development of clubs, and the sport in general, is often severely constrained by a lack of suitable or available sites. However, there are examples of shared facilities successfully accommodating both water skiing and sailing such as Telford and Dudley.
- 7.20 Research suggests that, in terms of waterskiing generally, there is a need to:
- increase access to, and participation by, target groups, particularly people with disabilities, females over 18, people on low incomes and those from ethnic communities
 - develop new cable tow sites and boat clubs in areas of gravel and mineral extraction through a variety of partnership approaches
 - harmonise use of waterspaces between skiers and other users and to minimise impact on natural habitats, through effective management
 - find solutions where conflict arises, for example through relocation of clubs
 - encourage better links between clubs, schools and community groups
 - increase the number of coaching hours available to both adults and juniors
 - increase the number of people participating in competitive skiing
 - heighten awareness of British Water Ski Codes of Practice.

National Facilities

- 7.21 There are currently six cable tow facilities (seven rigs) across the country, all of which are commercially run. Three have been developed at former gravel pits (Willen Lake in Milton Keynes, Holme Pierpoint Watersports Centre in Nottingham and Princes Club in London) and one is a former mining site (Rother Valley Country Park in Sheffield). There are two further facilities at Skegness Water Leisure Park and Chertsey.

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- 7.22 One of the country's largest clubs is Stewartby Watersports Club in Bedfordshire, which is an example of a highly successful multi-sports club offering opportunities for fishing, powerboating, water skiing, sailing and windsurfing.
- 7.23 Cable tow offers great potential for the growth of the sport, as it has the ability to accommodate large numbers of skiers at any one time (a group of 30 people per hour) at a cheaper cost than conventional boat-towed skiing. A new cable tow site is currently under development in Bedford, which is due to open in Spring 2006.

Local context

- 7.24 There is a clear deficiency of water ski facilities in Hertfordshire. There are currently no facilities within the St Albans District and the closest British Water Ski affiliated club is in Rickmansworth, although this club only has a relatively small membership base. The Lee Valley Watersports Centre at Banbury Reservoir in Chingford closed 18 months ago.
- 7.25 British Water Ski consider there to be a case for the development of two cable tow facilities in Hertfordshire. Locational criteria for new facilities are: one per one million population or a one hour drive time in major urban conurbations.
- 7.26 It is recommended that the Council engage with private sector operators to explore longer term potential for facility development within or in close proximity to the City and District. However, in the first instance, the Council ought to focus on raising awareness of opportunities to participate in waterskiing at existing sites in the region.

Sailing

Strategic context

- 7.27 The National Facilities Strategy (2004) of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) confirms seven sites identified for the World Class Performance Plan. The closest site to St Albans City and District is Grafham Water in Cambridge.
- 7.28 The National Facilities Strategy recognises the important role that the public sector can play in the development of sailing and other water sports and supports the development of facilities run by local authority partnerships, particularly in conjunction with national governing bodies.
- 7.29 In September 2004, the RYA launched its flagship grassroots initiative *Onboard*. The scheme aims to introduce a minimum of 500,000 children into sailing and windsurfing in the UK over the next 10 years. *Onboard* is a nation-wide programme which:
- raises awareness of the benefits of sailing for schools and youth groups
 - increases non-family entry into sailing
 - encourages young people to continue sailing by developing more local opportunities
 - develops more regular club activities that will offer a variety of different sailing activities for all skills and abilities.
- 7.30 The programme is co-ordinated by the RYA, supported by industry and the sport, and is being delivered locally by RYA Training Centres and Clubs. Onboard Development Officers have already been working successfully with clubs and schools in Dorset and West London respectively.

Local context

- 7.31 At present, the closest site to St Albans District offering opportunities for participation in sailing at all levels is Stanborough Watersports Centre in Welwyn Garden City. Whilst there has been no need identified for the provision of new sailing facilities within the District, it is suggested that the Council in conjunction with neighbouring authorities explores opportunities to deliver benefits to the local community through involvement in the *Onboard* scheme.

SECTION 8

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAY AND WHEELED SPORT PROVISION

Neighbourhood play areas and wheeled sports provision

Definition

- 8.1 This type of open space includes areas such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people.

The Green Spaces Strategy

- 8.2 Neighbourhood play areas are one of the open space typologies examined in detail within the Council's Green Spaces Strategy. Chapter eight of the Strategy begins by setting the strategic context for the provision of neighbourhood play areas within the District. It then summarises the main findings from household consultation, before looking in detail at the current situation in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility of neighbourhood play areas, large local play areas and small local play areas.

- 8.3 The key findings of the Green Spaces Strategy are summarised below:

- The network of provision for children and young people in St Albans City and District caters for a range of target age groups and varies greatly in terms of size and type of equipment. The Council is the major provider of these facilities but there is a network of supporting provision under Parish Council ownership and management.
- Household survey respondents strongly indicated that current levels of provision were considered insufficient to meet local need. A particular deficiency in provision for older age groups was highlighted.
- The following local provision standards were recommended:

Size of Facility	Quantity	Accessibility
Neighbourhood Play Areas	0.11 ha per 1,000 population	10 minute walk (0.8 km)
Large Local Play Areas	0.2 ha per 1,000 population	10 minute walk (0.8 km)
Small Local Play Areas	0.01 ha per 1,000 population	5 minute walk (0.4 km)

- These locally derived quantity and accessibility standards have been applied across the District, with specific gaps in provision for each size of facility shown graphically using GIS software.
- Overall the quality of play areas in the City and District was considered good, with a low percentage of quality attributes ranked poorly during site assessments carried out in support of this study.
- Using a quality matrix to assess sites against weighted factors, a benchmark quality indicator was set at 3.6, which represented a site with either a good rating across the vast majority of factors or a balance of very good, good and average

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scores. Comparative scores were then calculated for each of the neighbourhood play areas in the City and District and summary tables demonstrated whether each site fell above or below the quality benchmark.

- A Quality Vision for play areas is suggested as:

'A site providing an appropriate mix of well maintained formal equipment/facilities and in an enriched play environment to encourage informal recreation by children and young people. A safe and secure location with good access to and within the site that includes clean, litter and dog free areas for more informal play and seating for adults.'

- Value was assessed against usage and accessibility data. A value assessment sets out priority actions relating to the protection of specific sites together with opportunities for enhancement to quality and/or accessibility as well as potential re-designation.

8.4 The chapter concludes by making a number of recommendations for provision in the District:

- Produce an action plan for the protection, development and improvement of play areas within the City and District. This plan should incorporate provision owned by all providers, and should identify indicative timeframes and priorities
- Adhere to good practice guidance including NPFA and ROSPA, and target the achievement of the quality benchmark for all sites. Continued careful monitoring of play provision is important
- Consult and engage with the community to ensure that local provision is developed in line with local needs and that there is ownership of any new facility
- New provision of wheeled sports provision for teenagers should be developed in close consultation with prospective user groups of this age in local communities and designed in accordance with RoSPA good practice guidance
- Consideration should be given to new provision in East Harpenden and Wheathampstead, West Harpenden, Hatching Green and the Central Area. This provision could be linked with existing sites in other typologies, e.g. Lydekker Park, Hatching Green Amenity Greenspace.
- Although usage assessments have been undertaken as part of the Green Spaces Strategy, detailed assessments as to the reason why some sites have low usage should be considered, in order to ascertain whether the primary purpose of these sites is appropriate. Consideration should be given to whether any future maintenance and expenditure on these sites is viable considering the low usage.
- Follow the recommendations outlined as part of the value assessment regarding enhancing the accessibility of specific sites, including consideration of improvements to the access by cycleways, signage and entrance to sites.
- Ensure that protection is afforded to those play areas identified as highly valued resources