



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

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PART 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Executive Summary of North Hertfordshire's Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy & Action Plan March 2017. The Study takes account of facilities and the sporting activities that take place within:

- ◀ Sports Halls
- ◀ Health and Fitness Facilities
- ◀ Swimming Pools
- ◀ Other Indoor Facilities

Introduction

The purpose of the Indoor Sports Facilities Study (ISFS) is to assess the provision of indoor facilities across the district of North Hertfordshire in accordance with Sport England's Guidance and to address a range of issues and key challenges that have emerged through the Strategy in partnership with stakeholders.

The Strategy will be used:

- ◀ As the basis for emerging planning policies;
- ◀ To inform the assessment of development proposals that may affect sport and recreational land and buildings;
- ◀ To contribute to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the implementation of S106 planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL);
- ◀ To inform the long-term use, amount, type and location of facilities; and to inform on-going provision and management of facilities;
- ◀ To inform the strategies and action plans of all stakeholders with respect to the facilities that they own or manage or have involvement with.

The ISFS has been developed in partnership with a range of agencies including national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) plus local clubs and leagues, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Stevenage Leisure, Herts County Sports Partnership and North Hertfordshire District Council. It will also be influenced by other councils and organisations such as Parish and Town Councils as well as local schools and other private providers.

No one stakeholder, Council, NGB or other body is responsible for delivering the recommendations within the Action Plan associated with the strategy. The strategy aims to provide a clear coherent way forward for the management and delivery of sports facilities through partnership working.

Methodology

This Strategy is based on an assessment of indoor sports facilities in accordance with Sport England's Guidance: *Assessing needs and opportunities guide for indoor and outdoor sports facilities*. This methodology has been followed to develop a clear picture of the balance between the local supply of, and demand for, indoor sports facilities.

Vision and Objectives

The vision for North Hertfordshire's Indoor sports Facilities Strategy is:

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To create a network of high quality, accessible and sustainable sport and leisure facilities, which offer inclusive services for all; enabling the inactive to become active and more residents to fulfil their potential by participating in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and well-being.

To achieve this, North Hertfordshire in partnership with key stakeholders¹ will seek to deliver the following objectives:

- ◀ Provide a range of accessible and affordable opportunities at sports facilities for all ages, abilities and ethnicities to develop an active, healthy and successful District.
- ◀ Ensure sports facilities are recognised as a key component in the drive to address health inequalities.
- ◀ Provide sports facilities that contribute positively to the local economy, raising the profile of North Hertfordshire as a destination for sport.
- ◀ Ensure sports facilities provide opportunities for talented athletes to achieve their full potential.
- ◀ Provide well maintained and managed sports facilities that are viable and sustainable in the long term.

General Priorities

The following summary identifies the key facility related priorities for North Hertfordshire. These have been arrived at by extensive consultation with NGB's and other providers and sites visits in accordance with Sport England's methodology.

- ◀ North Hertfordshire is not a priority area for the majority of national governing bodies and investment has mainly been limited.
- ◀ Development of any new sports facilities in North Hertfordshire should aim to meet the technical specification of key NGBs and any wider enhancements for storage and ancillary facilities that will facilitate the use for events and competitions as well as training.
- ◀ Indoor tennis and indoor bowls currently have just one facility each in the area to accommodate demand. This has been sufficient but should be protected to ensure continued supply, however due to significant growth in tennis membership in 2016 Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club is proactively looking to enhance their indoor provision. Should facilities in neighbouring authorities close or relocate, the demand on these facilities may increase.
- ◀ There is a large growth of futsal in the wider area and the potential for further growth is large, however there are currently no facilities available within North Hertfordshire to accommodate this demand.
- ◀ Frustration across a number of NGBs and local clubs is evident as access to facilities is limited leading to unmet demand. Development programmes and initiatives are limited.
- ◀ There is a need to make room for further development of participation initiatives, such as Back 2 Netball and Smash Up badminton in sports halls, rather than domination from other sports.
- ◀ There is a need to provide adequate links to high performance and club sport outside of the District where it is not supported from within.

¹ Key stakeholders include North Hertfordshire District Council, Sport England, National Governing Bodies of sport, the education sector, the private sector.

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- ◀ Work in partnership with North Hertfordshire District Council to identify investment opportunities to make the necessary upgrades to individual facilities.
- ◀ The Council, its partners and other stakeholders should aim to work with local schools to ensure that their sports facilities are available for community use throughout the full week.
- ◀ Where new secondary school provision is developed, consideration should be given to ensuring there is sufficient sports hall space not only for the school, but to address any small deficiency in the supply of sports halls across the District.
- ◀ The Council, its partners and other stakeholders should consider how they might expand the health and fitness offer at core leisure centre sites in order to accommodate more members and have a positive impact on the revenue cost of facilities.
- ◀ The Council should work in partnership with specialist facility operators and NGBs to ensure that ongoing relationships and sports development initiatives with NGBs are maximised.

Reviewing and Delivering the Indoor Sports facilities Strategy within the district of North Hertfordshire

As part of delivering the ISFS all parties involved should work in partnership to influence and where possible deliver the aims set out within the action plan. This will be subject to available capital and revenue resources. It is recognised that priorities will change over time and there will be a need to review the strategy to identify opportunities to ensure that actions become deliverable in the future.

Sport England’s guidance identifies that the assessment of need should be reviewed on an annual basis, following sign off by the steering group, (see listed below).. Key partners such as the District Council, Parish Councils, NGB’s, managing bodies for recreation, education and health should make it a high priority to comprise a priority list of actions based on local priorities (including a year one action plan), NGB priorities and available funding.

North Hertfordshire District Council is a partner within the strategy but in many cases will facilitate the other partners identified to deliver the recommendations.

Many of the actions will be linked to housing growth in terms of funding and site provision where possible, other external sources of funding will also be sought.

The members of the steering group could include the following:

Hertfordshire County Sport Partnership
Hertfordshire Football Association (NGB)
Badminton England (NGB)
Amateur Swimming Association (NGB)
England and Wales Cricket Board (NGB)
Volleyball England (NGB)
Lawn Tennis Association (NGB)
England Basketball (NGB)
England Squash and Racketball (NGB)
Sport England
Parish Council representative
Strategic Planning and Project Manager (Council)

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Head of Development & Building Control (Council)
Strategic Sites Planning Officer (Council)
Contracts and Projects Manager (Council)

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1 - STRATEGY VISION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Background

The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy for North Hertfordshire sets the vision and objectives for indoor sports facilities within the District. Whilst North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) has been the key driver in delivering the strategy, the plans and actions emanating from the strategy can only be delivered by and in partnership with other key stakeholders.

The Strategy builds upon the conclusions identified within the Indoor Sports Facility Assessment Report (February 2016) and provides a clear, coherent way forward for the management and delivery of sports facilities and how they contribute to the wider vision and objectives of the North Hertfordshire District Council Corporate Plan 2016-2021 and Sport England Strategy 'Towards an Active Nation 2016-2021'.

1.2 Key Documents

North Hertfordshire District Council Corporate Plan 2016-2021

The Council has the following vision for the District 'Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper.' In seeking to achieve this vision The Council has three objectives:

- ◀ **Attractive and Thriving**
to work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported;
- ◀ **Prosper and Protect**
to promote sustainable growth within our District to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage;
- ◀ **Responsive and Efficient**
to ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints.

<http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Corporate%20Plan%202016.pdf>

North Hertfordshire Partnership (NHP)

The NHP is made up of 13 member organisations who meet on a regular basis to progress the vision above. Their aspirations for the District includes themes of:

- ◀ We will support 'civic engagement' - Encouraging communities and individuals to have a greater voice and participate in local activities and community groups.
- ◀ We will support individuals and businesses to develop and grow by provision of training and skills.

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Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation

A new Government strategy for sport was released in December 2015. 'Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation'. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:

- ◀ More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ More people volunteering in sport.
- ◀ More people experiencing live sport.
- ◀ Maximising international sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising the impact of Major Events.
- ◀ A more productive sport sector.
- ◀ A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
- ◀ A more responsible sport sector.

The strategy outlines a number of outcomes to increase participation, specifically in the 14-25 age bracket. Included in these is the provision of community sports clubs on secondary school sites, effective links between schools and community, facility investment, and support to secondary schools to open, or keep open their sports facilities for community use. These specific outcomes have been considered in North Hertfordshire, specifically those targets that are supported with professional support or investment, such as the Places People Play funding opportunities.

Sport England: Towards an Active Nation

Sport England's response to the Government's strategy was to develop Towards an Active Nation:

Figure 1: Sport England Strategy: Towards and Active Nation 2016-2021

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SPORT ENGLAND STRATEGY 2016-2021

AN OVERVIEW OF
OUR STRATEGY

2016
SPORT ENGLAND
WORKING
DIFFERENTLY

HOW WE WORK
Investment principles
Behaviour change
Partnership
Insight and evaluation

WHERE WE INVEST
Tackling inactivity
Children and young people
Volunteering
Mass markets
Sustaining the core market
Working locally
Facilities

**MORE PEOPLE
ENGAGED IN SPORT**

**SUPPORT FOR
THE SECTOR**

More people from every background regularly and meaningfully engaging in sport and physical activity
Inactive people becoming active
More resilient habits
More positive attitudes among young people
More diverse volunteers
Improved progression and inclusion in talent development

A more productive, sustainable and responsible sport sector
A more demand-led sport sector that welcomes everyone
Improved governance
Improved financial efficiency
Increased and more diverse revenue generation
Increased diversity in leadership
A diverse and productive workforce

**OUR
CONTRIBUTION TO
THE GOVERNMENT'S
FIVE OUTCOMES**

- PHYSICAL WELLBEING
- MENTAL WELLBEING
- INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT
- SOCIAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Sport England has identified that it will invest in:

- ◀ Tackling inactivity
- ◀ Children and young people
- ◀ Volunteering – a dual benefit
- ◀ Taking sport and activity into the mass market
- ◀ Supporting sport's core market
- ◀ Local delivery
- ◀ Facilities

These seven investment programmes will be underpinned by a new Workforce Strategy and a new Coaching Plan, to be prepared by Sport England.

1.3 Planning and Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework specifies that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed housing needs. Planning policy when considering objectively assessed need should be based on robust, up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

North Hertfordshire own proposed Local Plan 2011-2031 includes policies and background evidence to support the retention and provision of appropriate facilities based upon this assessed need.

Sport England reflects the NPPF promoting a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities to participate in sport, in doing so adding value to the work of others and helping to deliver sustainable development goals through:

- ◀ Recognising and taking full advantage of the unique role of sport and active recreation in contributing to a wide array of policy and community aspirations, including leisure, health and education.
- ◀ Using sport and recreation as a fundamental part of the planning and delivery of sustainable communities.
- ◀ The development of partnership working using sport and active recreation as a common interest.

In line with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 73), and as presented in the diagram below, Sport England advocates that at the core of planning for sport should be a robust and up-to-date assessment of the needs for sport and active recreational facilities and opportunities for new provision. The results of the assessment should be developed into a clear strategy for meeting the identified needs and integrated into Forward Planning and applied within Development Management.

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Figure 2: Sport England Strategic Planning Model



This Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy seeks to provide all partners and stakeholders in North Hertfordshire with a valuable tool that guides internal and external investment decisions, supports applications for external funding and informs key management decisions.

1.4 Context

The District of North Hertfordshire covers an area of approximately 145 square miles and has a population of 129,318, according to the 2013 ONS mid-year estimate. This is expected to increase to 160,001 by 2037, with a particular growth expected in the 55+ age group, where population is expected to increase by 21,245.

A higher proportion of residents classify their ethnicity as White (89.5%) which is higher than the national rate of 85.4%. As a result there is a lower percentage of Asian residents (5.4%) and Black residents (2.0%) than nationally.

Population density

The most densely populated areas in North Hertfordshire are concentrated within Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston. According to the 2010 indices of deprivation², ODPM³, just 3.8% of the population live in the 30% of most deprived areas, suggesting that a relatively small percentage of the population live in deprived areas and generally the authority is less deprived than the country as a whole.

² It should be noted that the 2010 IMD has been used for this study given that the 2015 updated deprivation indices were published following the completion of the initial draft and subsequent comments from the Council.

³ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, no longer exists since 2006

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In relation to the socio-economic profile of the District, the dominant Mosaic profile is the 'Professional Rewards group, which makes up 16.3% of households, this approaches twice the national rate (9.1%). This profile is scattered around the District and is particularly notable across the more rural and less deprived areas.

Participation rates

The Sport England Active People Survey indicates that:

- ◀ The percentage of adults in North Hertfordshire doing at least 1 x 30 minutes moderate intensity sport per week is just under 4 in 10 (38.9%). This was above both the national average (35.8%) and the regional average (35.2%).
- ◀ North Hertfordshire has a population that has more club membership than national counter parts - over 3 in 10 (32.9%) of residents are members of sports club, compared with 22% and 21.6% respectively, regionally and nationally.
- ◀ More people in North Hertfordshire receive sports tuition (28.0%) than regional and national neighbours and more people had taken part in competitive sport (17.6%) than regionally (14.0%) or nationally (13.3%).

1.5 Vision and objectives

The vision for North Hertfordshire's Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy is:

North Hertfordshire Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy Vision

To create a network of high quality, accessible and sustainable sport and leisure facilities, which offer inclusive services for all; enabling the inactive to become active and more residents to fulfil their potential by participating in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and well-being.

To achieve this, North Hertfordshire in partnership with key stakeholders⁴ will seek to deliver through the following objectives:

- ◀ Provide a range of accessible and affordable opportunities at sports facilities for all ages, abilities and ethnicities to develop an active, healthy and successful District.
- ◀ Ensure sports facilities are recognised as a key component in the drive to address health inequalities.
- ◀ Provide sports facilities that contribute positively to the local economy, raising the profile of North Hertfordshire as a destination for sport.
- ◀ Ensure sports facilities provide opportunities for talented athletes to achieve their full potential.
- ◀ Provide well maintained and managed sports facilities that are viable and sustainable in the long term.

⁴ Key stakeholders include North Hertfordshire District Council, Sport England, National Governing Bodies of sport, the education sector, the private sector.

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2 - RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following key conclusions can be derived from the indoor sports facilities assessment report⁵:

2.1 Context

- ◀ North Hertfordshire has an active population in comparison to other parts of the country and as such its residents have a high propensity to participate in a wide range of sport and physical activities.
- ◀ The area is relatively affluent with 4% of the population living in the 30% most deprived communities in the country and 66% living in the 30% least deprived.
- ◀ The Council's six main sports facilities are managed by Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL); under a management contract.

2.2 Sports Halls

- ◀ North Hertfordshire appears to have an under supply of sports halls in terms of numbers, capacity and distribution; this equates to approximately one badminton court worth of additional provision according to the FPM (Facilities Planning Model). However the FPM is based on parameters that may not be in line with actual availability in North Hertfordshire so this along with consultation suggests that the actual real figure may be higher.
- ◀ The impact of natural growth of population in the area will see the need for an additional 9.63 badminton courts worth of sports hall space.
- ◀ A number of clubs have expressed a wish to access additional sports hall time in order to increase capacity and participation in various sports.
- ◀ The sports hall stock is generally old and would also benefit from investment. As an example, Fearnhill Sports Centre in Letchworth is well-used by clubs however, due to its condition it is under used by the public. Similarly, the FPM assumes that both Meridian School in Royston and Princess Helena College in Pirton are assumed to be less attractive given their age and lack of refurbishment.
- ◀ Although many school sports halls are available for community use, the easiest way to have a positive impact on supply is to encourage access to existing facilities. In particular, Highfield School in Letchworth has relatively limited community hours and increasing the availability of this facility would help relieve pressure in this part of the District.
- ◀ Community Use Agreements are not in place across school sports facilities; this should be considered to secure the use of facilities for local community groups.
- ◀ SLL has already pushed 5-a-side football to the fringes of its sports hall programmes; therefore, this approach could be adopted at other sports hall sites to enable the development of non-football participation initiatives.

⁵ North Hertfordshire Indoor Sports Facilities Study Assessment Report (KKP Feb 2016)

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2.3 Swimming Pools

- ◀ North Hertfordshire appears to have a good supply of swimming pools in terms of numbers, capacity and distribution. However, stock is generally ageing and would benefit from investment.
- ◀ Hitchin Swimming Centre in particular, is a well-used facility that has seen some investment, however further investment could improve the facility further, specifically in the pool area.
- ◀ North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre requires investment in the sports hall and wet changing facilities. The Council has started work on site to make investment into this facility, which would include these areas.
- ◀ Swimming clubs report demand for more water space that cannot be met by operators at times that are suitable/acceptable to them.
- ◀ There does not appear to be a strong need to provide additional swimming pool capacity but there is a need to ensure that demand is spread evenly across pools.
- ◀ Outdoor swimming pools in Hitchin and Letchworth provide a useful additional source of supply; however this does not necessarily relate to the peak usage times for indoor pools.
- ◀ A challenge identified, mainly relative to swimming pools, is the need to make 50% of all pool time available for casual swimmers. This has an impact on the programming of pools across the area; it limits the capacity of swimming clubs to accommodate swimmers and also appears to contribute to the swimming lesson waiting lists at facilities. However, the flip side of this is that it ensures that the public can access the pool when they wish, thereby enabling more people to take part in physical activity.

2.4 Health and Fitness Facilities

- ◀ There are 16 health and fitness facilities in North Hertfordshire, which generally offer good quality facilities.
- ◀ There is a broad mix of commercial and publicly accessible health and fitness facilities throughout the area.
- ◀ UK penetration rates suggest that there are enough fitness stations to cater for the population; however, local authority facilities are operating at or near to capacity.
- ◀ This information suggests that there is the potential for growth in demand for health and fitness facilities and consideration needs to be given to increasing supply to meet this. The recent investment in local authority sites has gone some way to address this, but further expansion is potentially required.

2.5 Other Indoor Facilities

- ◀ North Hertfordshire has sufficient squash courts, indoor tennis and indoor bowls facilities to meet the needs of residents. There are plans to develop key participation drives in tennis, squash and indoor bowls within the area.
- ◀ It is important to protect the provision of facilities at Riverain Bowls Club, Hitchin and Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club facilities who are also looking to increase the number of indoor courts to meet future demand. As the only sports specific facilities in the area, both will be required to meet both current and future demands.

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The following should be considered in the development of an overarching indoor sports facilities strategy for North Hertfordshire:

- ◀ The Council and other partners and stakeholders should consider how it will accommodate future increases in demand for sports facilities in the longer term, especially swimming pools.
- ◀ The Council should continue with its plan to refurbish the swimming pool changing facilities at North Herts Leisure Centre, Letchworth, commencing in 2016.
- ◀ The Council, its partners and other stakeholders should aim to work with local schools to ensure that their sports facilities are available for community use throughout the full week.
- ◀ The Council and its partners should seek to develop a programming policy across all school and community sports facilities which maximises sports development outcomes for priority sports.
- ◀ Where new secondary school provision is developed, consideration should be given to ensuring there is sufficient sports hall space not only for the school, but to address any small deficiency in the supply of sports halls across the District.
- ◀ The Council should continually seek to address the quality of indoor and outdoor swimming pool provision across the area, subject to available funding.
- ◀ The Council, its partners and other stakeholders should consider how they might expand the health and fitness offer at core leisure centre sites in order to accommodate more members and have a positive impact on the revenue cost of facilities.
- ◀ The Council should work in partnership with specialist facility operators and NGBs to ensure that ongoing relationships and sports development initiatives with NGBs are maximised.

2.6 NGB priorities

National Governing Bodies of sport have their own key drivers and strategic priorities for facility development both nationally and locally. Below is a summary of those, where they exist.

England Basketball

The main focus of basketball in Hertfordshire is currently Hertfordshire Warriors Basketball Club, where Basketball England has recently invested £400,000 in their facility. Hertfordshire Warriors BC are based in Hertsmere Borough. In comparison North Hertfordshire is not an area where basketball is strong, there are no sports halls with 5 or even 8-10 courts, which is what basketball would require ideally and as the governing body has limited resources, for this reason is not a priority area. As a result, local basketball activity is limited. The governing body would like any new development in the area to consider accommodating basketball in sports halls.

England Netball

There are some capacity issues for netball and basketball by virtue of the heavy use of sports halls for badminton and football. England Netball is keen to further develop participation programmes in the District including Back to Netball alongside Pay & Play sessions as currently these are limited.

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The County is home to a Super League franchise - Hertfordshire Mavericks, which play home fixtures at Hertfordshire Sports Village in the neighbouring borough of Welwyn Hatfield.

There are a number of different leagues around the North Hertfordshire area. Teams from the District travel to play in competitions. Central venue leagues include those in Bedford (Bedford and District Netball League), Stevenage (Herts Indoor Netball League, Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre), East Hertfordshire (Hertford District League, Ware and Bishops Stortford District Netball League) and St Albans (St Albans Indoor Netball League, Marlborough School). There is no central venue league in North Hertfordshire. Any new development in the authority should consider the needs to netball when planning.

Volleyball England

Areas in the locality that are active for volleyball are St Albans and Watford. St Albans is home to the 2012 London Olympics beach volleyball court, which was moved to the Club as part of the Olympic Legacy. North Hertfordshire is not an authority area where volleyball is active, so it is currently not a focus for Volleyball England. Should there be any demand created for the sport in the area then the NGB would be very supportive of this.

Badminton England

The Badminton England National Strategy has a particular focus on Community Sport Networks, Smash Up sites and Play Badminton sites. Smash Up is Badminton England's youth participation initiative

No Strings Badminton is pay and play activity for 16+ age. In North Hertfordshire No Strings is offered at Hitchin Sports Centre and Royston Leisure Centre. There isn't any recorded Smash Up Badminton in the area yet. Although take up of the NGB initiatives is lower than other areas, the provision of pay and play or casual badminton is offered in many sports halls and demand is high.

Badminton England recognises the good work done by clubs in the area and supports them; however, there is a relatively low take up of NGB initiatives in the area. Badminton England recognise the work and good relationship with SLL and would like to see SLL take a more proactive approach to developing initiatives such as 'no strings badminton' but appreciates that the availability of courts has an impact on this.

The leagues generally operate on a home and away basis for fixtures, so a club will replace training nights with matches to ensure the consistent weekly booking of a sports hall. Hitchin Boys School Sports Centre is well used by a number of badminton clubs, this could be due to the badminton focus of the facility, and sprung wood floor and halogen lighting, it meets top national standards for badminton.

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Lawn Tennis Association

The LTA are working to increase tennis participation across community, club and educational environments. The LTA have a tiered approach to local authorities for prioritising investment. North Hertfordshire is currently engaged in this process. While North Hertfordshire is not currently an LTA 'focus area', Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club is a 'focus club' and they are working closely with the NGB to grow membership and tennis participation. As participant numbers continue to grow there will be an increasing need for more year-round facilities including additional indoor provision. It is likely that the LTA will provide investment in the future to support the club to further develop their facilities. There are no other private facilities and no plans for a David Lloyd Centre in the area.

The FA

The FA currently employs a full time futsal development officer, with North Hertfordshire being a priority area for futsal. There are currently no facilities available to hire for additional futsal activity. Clubs regularly enquire about availability of facilities as they look to extend sessions and there is frustration at the lack of available space in North Hertfordshire.

There is a large growth of futsal in the surrounding areas of both youth/adult participation and leagues. The potential for growth of the sport in North Hertfordshire is significant and there is funding in place for strategic growth of the game. Ideally an additional 20 hours of hall space in North Hertfordshire for futsal would support this growth. The FA identified that Letchworth Garden City Eagles is a large club locally with the potential to create a number of teams.

Cricket (ECB and Hertfordshire Cricket Ltd)

The England and Wales Cricket Board has recently launched its Cricket Unleashed initiative which is a drive to get more people playing cricket. Even though Hertfordshire has three purpose built indoor cricket centres these cannot accommodate all indoor cricket activity within the area. Therefore there is a need to ensure that other suitable facilities (e.g. sports halls) are able to accommodate some of this demand.

The current priority for the East Region is the shorter formats of the game, which includes potential indoor options (e.g. indoor league or an indoor activity). Over the next year there is likely to be a new offering from the NGB which could work in sports halls, enabling leisure operators to develop cricket programmes. This will potentially operate in a similar way to other NGB offerings (e.g. Badminton).

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2.7 Summary

The following summary of the NGB consultation identifies the facility related priorities for North Hertfordshire, namely:

- ◀ North Hertfordshire is not a priority area for the majority of national governing bodies and investment has mainly been limited.
- ◀ Development of any new sports facilities in North Hertfordshire should aim to meet the technical specification of key NGBs and any wider enhancements for storage and ancillary facilities that will facilitate the use for events and competitions as well as training.
- ◀ Indoor tennis and indoor bowls currently have just one facility each in the area to accommodate demand. This has been sufficient but should be protected to ensure continued supply, however due to significant growth in tennis membership in 2016 Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club is proactively looking to enhance their indoor provision. Should facilities in neighbouring authorities close or relocate, the demand on these facilities may increase.
- ◀ There is a large growth of futsal in the wider area and the potential for further growth is large, however there are currently no facilities available within North Hertfordshire to accommodate this demand.
- ◀ Frustration across a number of NGBs and local clubs is evident as access to facilities is limited leading to unmet demand. Development programmes and initiatives are limited.
- ◀ There is a need to make room for further development of participation initiatives, such as Back 2 Netball and Smash Up badminton in sports halls, rather than domination from other sports.
- ◀ There is a need to provide adequate links to high performance and club sport outside of the District where it is not supported from within.
- ◀ Work in partnership with North Hertfordshire District Council to identify investment opportunities to make the necessary upgrades to individual facilities.

The above reinforces that in many circumstances there is not sufficient access to facilities in North Hertfordshire, however investment has been made. Other facilities are still requiring refurbishment to improve the quality of the stock in the District. Although the area is not a priority for national governing bodies and no performance programmes are based here, it is still important to provide quality community facilities in order to contribute towards increasing participation.

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3 - STRATEGY AIMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This strategy is a partnership approach. All parties involved should commit to influencing and where possible deliver the recommendations set out within the Action Plan. The strategy aims to provide a clear framework for delivery by working in partnership.

Aims

The following strategy aims are based on the key issues emerging from the Assessment Report.

Aim 1

To **protect** the existing supply of indoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future needs.

Aim 2

To **enhance** indoor sports facilities through working in partnership with others to improve the quality and management of sites.

Aim 3

To enable the **provision** of new indoor sports facilities where there is a current or future demand to do so.

3.1 Recommendations

The following strategy recommendations are identified from the assessment of need identified within the North Hertfordshire Indoor Sports Facilities Study Assessment Report. The recommendations reflect the strategic drivers highlighted by Sport England's Strategic Planning Model (i.e. Protect, Provide, Enhance). The recommendations reflect these drivers and draw together the overarching need in the area for key stakeholders to work together and deliver.

PROTECT

Aim 1

To **protect** the existing supply of indoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future needs.

R1 To seek to protect the existing facility infrastructure in North Hertfordshire to ensure as many residents have access to sport and physical activities.

This does not mean that the existing infrastructure should remain static with no change. However, there is a need to ensure that where appropriate facilities exist they are used by the local community and protected as community facilities in the longer term. In addition, the sole facilities, such as the indoor tennis and indoor bowls facilities should be protected to ensure continued provision of these in the area.

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R2 To ensure facility owners are encouraged to invest in the long term maintenance of all existing indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

In order for facilities to be sustainable in the longer term there is a need to ensure that they are maintained to a high standard and have the appropriate budgets for refurbishment and periodic upgrade so that they do not fall into the state of disrepair. This will be especially important as the network of facilities which serves the District is a mixed economy of providers with varying degrees of priority given to the sports facility component of their operations. Examples would be investment in the sports hall at Fearnhill Sports Centre and North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre, both in Letchworth, plus the pool areas at Hitchin Swimming Centre and Letchworth Outdoor Pool. In addition, education facilities would benefit from investment, especially at Hitchin Sports Centre and the Priory School in Hitchin.

R3 To protect as a minimum the current public access arrangements at existing facilities through the development of community use agreements and the expansion of concessionary pricing policies.

Where community access to facilities (especially school sports facilities) is currently available there is a need to ensure access arrangements are protected via community use agreements. The Council together with Sport England should work with appropriate schools and potentially NGBs to develop agreements which reflect the needs of local communities and clubs. Aligned to these community use agreements there will be a need for an appropriate range of hire charges to be agreed across the range of facility providers in order that community clubs are not priced out of facilities.

R4 To ensure that recommendations are encapsulated in planning policy documents (Local Plans) and other relevant NHDC strategies.

It is crucial to recognise the importance of this study and ensure recommendations are acted upon. The protection of and opportunities for future provision of indoor sports facilities should be captured through policies in the emerging Local Plan and other relevant NHDC strategies. Funding arrangements through CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and other sources should be explored. Recommendations from this study could inform the preparation of a CIL Regulation 123 list should the Council decide to proceed with the preparation of a CIL and identification of infrastructure requirements within the NHDC Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP is being prepared alongside the emerging Local Plan.

ENHANCE

Aim 2

To **enhance** indoor sports facilities through working in partnership with others to improve the quality and management of sites.

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R5 To enhance the programming of facilities to provide activity, in order that residents have a wide range of opportunities to live an active lifestyle.

The programming of the sports halls and swimming pools in local authority owned facilities should be designed to accommodate as many participants as possible. Where appropriate, reviewing the programming has the potential to increase through put levels in most facilities, resulting in more participants. Ensuring the community sports facilities have a positive impact on the local community is crucial to this. North Hertfordshire District Council and Stevenage Leisure Limited should work together and consider amending the programming of facilities to increase participation opportunities, and agree targets to monitor the effectiveness of this reprogramming. Amended programming should also consider access by NGBs and local clubs to support development programmes and participation initiatives, to achieve an increase in participation and longer term participation in club settings.

R6 To enhance the quality of existing sports facilities to have a positive impact on participation opportunities in sport and physical activity across the District.

Expectations in the area are such that residents expect high quality facilities to be provided. It is clear that some of the facilities in North Hertfordshire across all sectors are in need of investment to improve quality rather than expand facilities. Key areas of investment could include improving the quality of pool area at Hitchin Swimming Centre, and the wet changing and sports hall at North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre in Letchworth. Other possible areas of investment are at Fearnhill Sports Centre, Letchworth, Knights Templar Sports Centre in Baldock, Meridian School in Royston and Princess Helena College in Pirton.

R7 To enhance the amount of provision readily available and accessible to community groups to increase sports development opportunities and participation in sport and physical activity.

Independent schools in the District have a range of sports facilities that are used by various community groups. St Christopher School in Letchworth has a main swimming pool, main sports hall, activity hall and health and fitness suite. Princess Helena College in Pirton has a main sports hall, activity hall and a lido. St Francis College in Letchworth has an activity hall and main swimming pool. Subject to resources, it would be advantageous to develop relationships with the schools in order to coordinate a clear facility offer across the District. The potential benefits to schools to expand the offer to community groups include a greater awareness of the school and facilities, greater participation opportunities for school pupils, and improved community connection. The development of a concessionary pricing policy may also be advantageous to support local sports participation and development.

PROVIDE

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Aim 3

To enable the **provision** of new indoor sports facilities where there is a current or future demand to do so.

R8 Through the effective use of the Council's planning system develop new community accessible sports facilities to address future under supply of provision as a result of population increases.

NHDC's Planning Department should develop robust planning policies that set out an approach to securing sport and recreational facilities for the longer term, where appropriate via new developments in the area. Guidance should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to develop new provision and/or the enhancement of existing indoor facilities. In recognition of the undersupply of sports halls the Council should consider identifying new provision on the Council's Regulation 123 list should it proceed with the preparation of a Community Infrastructure Levy.

Section 106 contributions or CIL, where introduced, should be used to improve the quality and scope of existing indoor facilities to enable increased capacity and use to be accommodated, enhancing the operator's ability to increase participation at relevant centres. Consideration should also be given to applying such funds to improve the quality of school sports facilities, where they enhance and extend the community use of schools.

There will be a need for NHDC to ensure that any new school developments within the Local Plan proposed strategic housing land allocations have community use agreements as part of the planning process. This will ensure that facilities are available for community use.

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Through the continued review of supply and demand the Council should also seek to clarify if any of the facilities should have a specification other than that required for a new school (e.g. sports hall available for futsal or county netball). Although this additional specification may not be funded through DfE capital funding for a new school, planning gain (e.g. Section 106 or CIL) could be used to meet any funding gap.

In relation to swimming provision, although there is no need for additional provision, where possible there will be a need to use planning gain and other possible funding opportunities available to enhance provision to enable existing facilities to accommodate increased demand as a result of population growth.

R9 To provide the right facilities in the right place; which are programmed in the right way to have maximum community benefit for residents of North Hertfordshire.

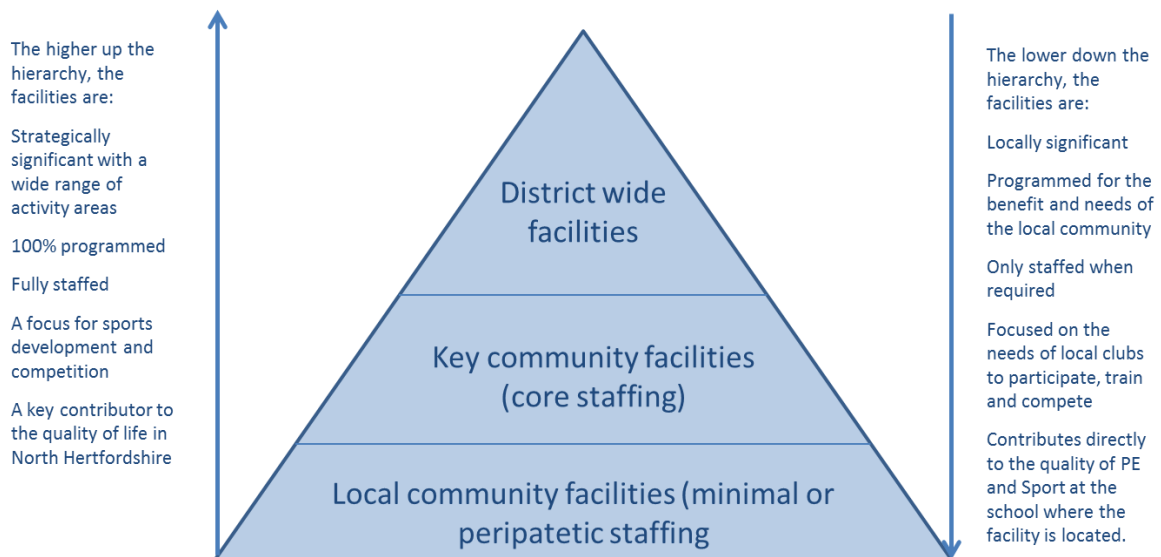
It is imperative that North Hertfordshire has the right mix of facilities in the right places. The development of a new learner/teaching/training pool at North Herts Leisure Centre, in Letchworth, is a positive addition to the swimming pool stock in North Hertfordshire and will have a positive impact in reducing the waiting lists for swimming lessons.

Alongside the potential new development there is a need to ensure that this and all other facilities are programmed in an appropriate way so that they meet the needs of local communities and sports clubs. As such, the local authority and its partners should consider how they ensure that the network of sports facilities across the District works to maximum benefit and that where possible each facility performs a specific role and function in the drive to increase participation in sport and physical activity and contribute to the wider health and well-being benefits that this delivers.

There will be a need to define a hierarchy of sports facilities across North Hertfordshire in which specific facilities have distinct roles and functions, outlined in Figure 3. Hence District-wide and key community facilities deliver orchestrated physical activity geared to extended participation and improving health whilst key neighbourhood facilities offer accredited clubs opportunities to develop their sports. Broad principles are illustrated in the hierarchy diagram shown below.

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Figure 3: Suggested facility hierarchy for North Hertfordshire – core principles



As an example, it is assumed that District wide facilities will include wet and dry facilities such as Royston and North Hertfordshire leisure centres, with key community facilities including Hitchin and Knights Templar sports centres. This then leaves schools with community use to pick up the local community need.

R10 Provide an advocacy role in developing a North Hertfordshire definition of community use which other community sports facility operators and stakeholders sign up to.

It is clear that there are variable definitions of community use currently in play in North Hertfordshire by the range of operators of community sports facilities.

The range of operators include: Stevenage Leisure Limited, the voluntary sector, academy schools and community schools, as well as the commercial sector which has a different rationale for its use. It has become apparent that not all providers are aware or concerned with other local facilities managed by other operators. A clear definition will assist in a more effective approach to community use for the benefit of local residents, to ensure that maximum value is gained through the use of the resources available.

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Community use

It is important that all potential stakeholders understand a common approach to community use and that they clearly understand the outcomes it is trying to achieve. As such the following definition of community use should be agreed by all partners in the context of North Hertfordshire's wider strategic objectives:

Community use in North Hertfordshire

The efficient, effective programming and use of leisure facilities and services for the benefit of local communities so that their use directly assists the achievement of key (national and local) targets such as:

- ◀ Improving the quality of life for residents in North Hertfordshire.
- ◀ Connecting local people to local services to enable them to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.
- ◀ Contributing to people having a more active, less sedentary lifestyle.
- ◀ Increasing participation in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ Enabling participants to achieve their full sporting potential.

By adopting the above definition and a common approach to managing facilities and services, this requires the partners involved in North Hertfordshire facilities (e.g. NHDC, individual schools, national governing bodies, local sports clubs, health partners, etc.) to:

- ◀ Ensure that they know who their users and customers are, the extent to which they currently participate and have the wherewithal to communicate effectively with them.
- ◀ Develop, use and apply their knowledge and understanding of the demographic profiles and needs of local residents.
- ◀ Develop and keep up-to-date, accurate knowledge and understanding of community need, through continually engaging and consulting with local representative agencies such as youth services, residents associations, older peoples groups, local pressure groups, etc.
- ◀ Develop and maintain a detailed knowledge and understanding of the sporting infrastructure within their community.
- ◀ Understand and appreciate the strategic definitions of 'need' applied across the District by key partner agencies such as health, housing, regeneration, education, etc.
- ◀ Commit to the achievement of strategic impacts and outcomes within the local area.

Therefore, there is a need for North Hertfordshire District Council and its wider sporting partners to work together in defining what community use should be and the objectives to be achieved from it. Adopting this approach to managing public sports and leisure facilities will enable partners to continue to:

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- ◀ Develop the various activities offered in such a way that people in local communities are able to make informed choices about them.
- ◀ Provide a variety of programmes to accommodate a broad range of sport and activity from introductory levels through recreational involvement on to performance.
- ◀ Offer a combination of direct delivery and intervention programmes with partners (e.g. sports clubs, health partners, NGBs etc.).
- ◀ Collect management information and local insight to underpin actions to extend the reach of the service, which will:
 - ◀ Introduce new people and communities to existing activities and club opportunities.
 - ◀ Introduce existing users/customers to new activities and club opportunities.
 - ◀ Enable operators to develop innovative programmes and processes to improve service impact among hard to reach groups.
- ◀ Continually re-present the sport and leisure offer to local communities.

R11 Take a more strategic approach to facility programming on a District-wide basis; including access to schools.

This objective considers how North Hertfordshire and its partners might implement a definition of community use dependant on available resources and funding. North Hertfordshire District Council could provide the link between NGB's, community sports clubs and facilities (mainly schools) in seeking to ensure that there is a District wide 'fit' to programming and the implementation of sports development and physical activity initiatives across the District.

Therefore, dependant on available resources and funding, the key drivers for North Hertfordshire District Council working in partnership with key stakeholders could be as follows:

- ◀ To achieve buy-in from NHDC leisure management, schools, academies and third sector organisations to a common definition and rationale for community use of sports facilities across the District.
- ◀ To create an advocacy group (of operators) whose role it is to influence the sport and physical activity opportunities across the District.
- ◀ To work with schools, clubs and NGB's to co-ordinate (where appropriate) the sport specific role and function of specific facilities on a community or district-wide basis.
- ◀ Ensure that all facilities, including schools, are programmed and animated to their maximum capacity reflecting local needs and contexts.
- ◀ Where feasible, ensure that the operation of all sites facilitates the collection of management information; to inform strategic and operational decision making.
- ◀ Develop an effective monitoring and evaluation process for all facilities on the back of appropriate management information.
- ◀ Ensure, where possible, that school sports facilities are accessible to the local community (i.e. a minimum of 20 to 30 hours per week). This level of access should be written into community use agreements.
- ◀ Agree a common approach to pricing to ensure that cost of access is appropriate for different client groups.

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R12 To influence the design of PE (physical education) and sports facilities at new school developments to ensure that the ability to accommodate community use easily is built into the design.

There is a need for additional community accessible sports facilities on school sites to meet local need, e.g. for futsal and netball development. Where new schools are developed in order to accommodate increases in population, there should be a requirement for these to provide community use (through a Community Use Agreement) and be designed in such a way that easily facilitates community. Sport England can play a role in delivering this.

For example, the Highfield School, Letchworth is being developed as part of the Priority Schools Building Programme, and although this development will retain the existing sports hall, any further sports facilities should refer to NGB technical specifications to provide a useful sports space for community groups.

The design of sports facilities should facilitate efficient community use, with community facilities being clustered in one area, with separate access that does not necessitate access through the main school buildings, with storage for community organisation equipment, and access to toilets and changing facilities, avoiding high caretaker costs.

To provide NHDC with a reference point in respect of what other local authorities are developing in relation to their sports facilities networks, it is accurate to state that the majority are developing fewer, better quality facilities and are giving greater importance to the location and travel connections to facilities. Furthermore, many are looking to enhance their offer by developing a more 'commercial' range of facilities alongside a wider range of health and wellbeing service providers.

Recent developments of new community leisure facilities throughout the UK have followed three key themes within their design and offering, namely:

- ◀ Core facilities which meet local need and demand for sport and physical activity and enable the operator to deliver a cost effective service with minimal subsidy.
- ◀ Additional activity areas which provide a financial return by addressing a gap in the market or enhancing the core offer.
- ◀ Co-location with other service providers which enhances working relationships across 'civic' partners and improves service delivery to the community.

The table overleaf identifies the types of facilities and activity areas included within each and the wider benefits that this delivers for the community.

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Table 1: Modern leisure facility considerations

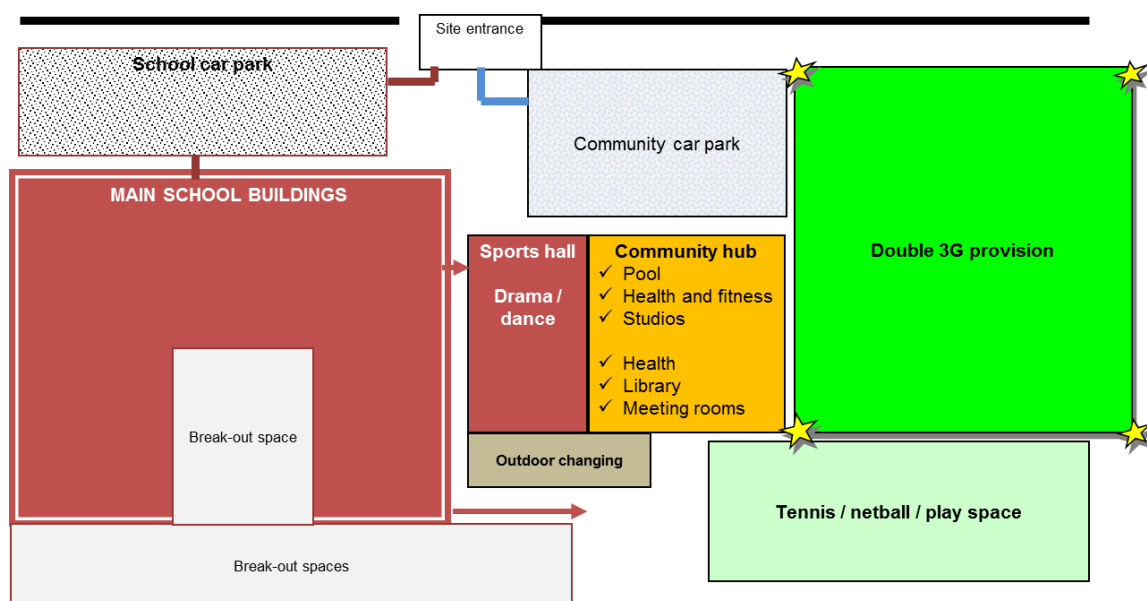
Core facilities	Additional activity areas	Co-located services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 lane 25 metre pool • Teaching pool) • Sports hall (size based upon demand and programming) • 80 - 150 station fitness suite • Large group fitness studio • Small group fitness studio • Catering hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floodlit 3G pitch • 5-a-side pitches. • Soft play • Spa facilities • Youth play (e.g. clip n' climb, interactive activity zones. • High ropes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of a school campus • Library • Health centre / GP surgery • Pharmacy • Police station/office • Council contact point • Meeting rooms • Neighbourhood managers
Benefits	Benefits	Benefits
<p>Enables operators to provide services at minimal subsidy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising income from health and fitness. • Maximising income from learn to swim. • Offering a range of community based activities. <p>Enables operators to contribute to the wider physical activity and wellbeing agenda by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering health based programmes within fitness suites & swimming pools • Being a meeting point and social venue for outdoor physical activities. 	<p>Enables operators to maximise income to underpin the cost of the operation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking a more commercial approach to programming activity areas. • Capturing data on users (e.g. parents) and using this as a way of cross selling core services (e.g. learn to swim). • Providing a return on investment. 	<p>Creation of community hubs enabling operators to link with other services to contribute to wider physical activity and wellbeing agendas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a wider range of services under one roof. • Reaching residents who would not otherwise enter a sports facility. • Offering programmes and interventions for specific client groups with health and other partners. • Cross marketing and sharing of information to address local needs.

Where facilities are developed as part of a wider school campus, consideration needs to be given to the layout, access arrangements and overall management of the site for the benefit of the school and community. The layout model below identifies the potential considerations within a co-located community hub on a school site. The main ethos for this model is that alongside the core requirements for a school, the community hub can be expanded or contracted to meet the needs of the local community and partners.

Therefore, not all hubs will be the same, but the access arrangements for the school and community need to be set out and agreed prior to development. As such, serious consideration needs to be given to the potential to develop such a model in NHDC and maximise investment in community infrastructure as a result of housing growth.

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Figure 4: Co-located hub site model



The key features of the above model are as follows:

- ◀ School access is designed in such a way that it addresses safeguarding issues and facilitates community use of facilities when they are not required by the school, thus maximising community use and minimising the revenue burden.
- ◀ The activity areas are designed and operated as community facilities, with the new secondary school and local primary schools priority booking access as required.
- ◀ The building can operate as a stand-alone community health and wellbeing centre, with the school elements incorporated within this to facilitate community access at evenings and weekends.
- ◀ The library, meeting rooms and health facility will be operated by their specific service areas; but it would be expected that joint working would be implemented to offer combined services and interventions as appropriate (e.g. targeted health promotion activities, etc.).
- ◀ In general, these types of facilities are located on or adjacent to arterial routes with good public transport access, significant visibility and presence within the area and seek to maximise the to and from work/education market.
- ◀ The above layout can be adapted to exclude schools and be developed as multi use, co-located sports hubs.

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3.2 Funding to implement the strategy

The Strategy has not addressed in detail how proposals and recommendations will be funded. It is anticipated that there will be no single funding source; rather a mix of sources and solutions will be required to deliver the vision and ambitions of the strategy. These solutions will include:

- ◀ Further development and implementation of the NHDC developer contributions process associated with planned housing development.
- ◀ Use of capital receipts from land disposal, where applicable.
- ◀ Asset rationalisation and use of revenue saving and/or future liabilities to pay back borrowing aligned to capital investment in other sites.
- ◀ Prudential borrowing where an 'invest to save' justification can be made, particularly for longer-term proposals which may be considered in light of the Council's future borrowing strategy.
- ◀ External funding sources aligned to specific facilities and/or sports (e.g. Sport England funding, other charitable grant awards and funding streams).
- ◀ 3rd party borrowing where a suitable, robust business case exists (although this is normally more expensive than prudential borrowing).

In general, the majority of new leisure centre developments have been undertaken on the basis of rationalising one or two existing facilities and developing a new larger, better quality facility which is more economical to operate. Furthermore, the new facility mix enables the operator to deliver revenue efficiencies (i.e. operate the facility at zero subsidy or better) enabling savings (and in some instances surpluses) which are often used to fund part or all of the capital repayment. A similar approach is undertaken for the refurbishment of existing facilities where increased income offsets the annualised cost of the refurbishment.

It is likely that a combination of the above approaches will be developed for the range of projects identified in NHDC. This will require a robust approach to business planning to ensure that all investment is financially sound. This has been the Council's approach in recent years and can be demonstrated by a reduction in the cost of providing leisure and the leisure contractor now pays the Council to manage the facilities.

3.3 Reviewing the strategy

Sport England's guidance identifies that the assessment of need should be reviewed on an annual basis, following sign off by the steering group. This should help to maintain the momentum and commitment built up when developing the work and ensure that the supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed. Ideally this should be a light touch review of any known changes to the supply and demand information (e.g. new facilities opened, additional availability secured, changes to opening hours in the peak period, facility closures, etc.).

If this regular review is undertaken then a comprehensive re-assessment of supply and demand should not be required more frequently than every five years for the majority of facility types. Therefore, it will be important for the Council to review the assessment report information on an annual basis and to develop short term action plans in relation to the wider strategy. If there is no evidence of any appropriate review and subsequent

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update being undertaken within five years of an assessment being completed Sport England would not consider the assessment to be up-to-date.

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4 - ACTION PLAN

This strategy is a partnership approach. The actions in this strategy are for all partners and will be subject to available capital and revenue resources. It should be recognised that priorities will change over time and there will be a need to review the strategy to identify opportunities to ensure that actions become deliverable in the future in the light of available resources.

Headings in the following table are clarified below.

Strategic function

Each function seeks to meet at least one of the three strategic aims of the strategy, Protect, Enhance and Provide.

Aim

This refers to the recommendations listed in the strategy to deliver the strategic aims.

Recommended actions

Reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed by all partners.

Facilities

Facilities that the actions apply to.

Timescale

The action plan has been created to be delivered over a ten year period. The timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based. Timescales: On-going; (S) Short (1-2 years); (M) Medium (3-5 years); (L) Long (6+ years).

Partners

These are the main organisation(s) who should work together in helping deliver the actions. They are listed in no particular order and a lead partner will need to be agreed. The lead partner in most cases will be the owner of the asset.

Importance

The relative importance of the action in relation to addressing the needs and issues identified in the strategy.

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4.1 Management and programming actions

The following actions are relative to the overall management and programming of key facilities in North Hertfordshire. All actions identified below should take account of accessibility issues (hearing, visual and wheelchair access).

Strategic function	Aim	Recommended actions	Facilities	Timescale ⁶	Partners	Importance
Protect / Enhance Investment in facilities	Develop funding strategy to maintain / enhance facility stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Identifying lead personnel to drive this. ◀ Confirm requirement for funding strategy. ◀ Confirm personnel and resource to support this. 	All	On-going	NHDC Schools NGBs	High
Protect / Enhance Community use agreements	Maintain the current availability of existing facilities through community use agreements and concessionary pricing policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Working through NHDC and Sport England, work with appropriate schools and NGBs to develop agreements to reflect local need. ◀ Consider this on a site by site basis with a view to increasing opportunities for the ageing population. ◀ Consider concessionary pricing policy to support local participation and development. 	All	M	Sport England NGBs Schools NHDC	Medium
Enhance District wide programming	Enhance programming to accommodate as many participants as possible, leading to improved access for all sections of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Consider current programming across the District. ◀ Define the role of each facility within the wider community use offer across North Hertfordshire and work with main providers to identify programming improvements across the District. 	All	M	Schools Facility providers	Medium
Provide Identifying roles of individual facilities	Address the future under supply of leisure facilities as a result of increased demand from the growth in population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Encourage all new schools to have community use as part of the planning process. ◀ Identify where planning gain and other sources of available funding can enhance the specification beyond the basic school sports facility requirement; based on identified need. 	All	L	Sport England Facility providers Developer s	High

⁶ Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years).

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Strategic function	Aim	Recommended actions	Facilities	Timescale ⁶	Partners	Importance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify where planning gain and other sources of available funding can be used to enhance existing facilities to enable them to accommodate increased demand (e.g. swimming pools) 			NHDC	
Provide Identifying roles of individual facilities	Define a hierarchy of facilities and their roles and functions within the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the hierarchy suggested within the Action Plan. Work strategically with leisure operators and other providers to identify facilities and role. 	All	S	NHDC Sport England Facility providers	Medium
Provide Community accessible sports facilities in new school builds	Influence the design of new school builds to include community accessible sports facilities, particularly sports halls and swimming pools/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage input by NHDC, Sport England, NGBs and other relevant bodies into the design and technical specifications of any facilities of potential developments where funding is available. 	Schools with new builds	S / M	NHDC Sport England NGBs	High
Protect / Enhance / Provide Ensuring awareness and implementation locally, particularly by NHDC	To recognise the importance of this study and ensure recommendations are acted upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHDC to adopt the recommendations in this Study and ensure that they are encapsulated in planning policy documents and other relevant NHDC strategies As part of the emerging Local Plan develop policies that seek to protect and enhance existing facilities and make provision for new facilities as part of new developments or through appropriate funding mechanisms. Encourage new schools to be designed to facilitate community use in accordance with Sport England guidance (including community use agreement). 	All	S	NHDC and key stakeholders	High
Protect / Enhance / Provide	Keeping the Facilities Strategy relevant and up to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a light touch review of the study on an annual basis; Undertake a more detailed review of the supply and 		M	All	High

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Strategic function	Aim	Recommended actions	Facilities	Timescale ⁶	Partners	Importance
Monitor and review		demand information within 5 years of its completion.				

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4.2 Facility actions

Headings in the following table are clarified below.

Facility

Identifies whether it is a Local Community Facility, a Key Community Facility or a District Wide Facility.

Facilities

Identifies which aspects are assessed.

Identified challenges

Challenges identified from the assessment report findings (e.g. from quality assessment or consultation).

Recommended actions

Reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed by all partners.

Lead agency

Refers to the main organisations who should work together to help deliver the actions.

Timescale

The timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based. Timescale: (S) Short (1-2 years); (M) Medium (3-5 years); (L) Long (6+ years).

Priority

Priority rating of each action.

Cost

The actions have been ranked as low, medium or high based on cost where (L) Low = less the £50k; (M) Medium = £50 - £250K; and (H) High = £250k plus.

Aim

Relates to the three aims of the strategy – Protect, Enhance and Provide.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The following actions are developed from the information collated in the related Indoor Sports Facilities Study and are relative to each of the District's key facilities. Those with undersized facilities and commercial facilities have not been included:

Facility	Facilities	Identified challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁷	Priority	Cost ⁸	Aim
Brandles School, Baldock Local community facility	Activity hall	Potential rebuild of school on new site.	Secure use for community users. Ensure sports facilities are replaced or upgraded on new build. Any new sports hall to consider community use and individual sport requirements.	Education NHDC NGBs	M	Medium	H	Provide
Fearnhill Sports Centre, Letchworth Key community facility	Main hall Activity hall	Facility needs investment. New floor required in main sports hall.	Investment in facility to improve quality, particularly sports hall floor, leaking roof and general state of disrepair.	Education NHDC	S / M	Medium	M	Enhance
Hitchin Boys School Sports Centre, Hitchin Local community facility	Main hall Activity hall	Quality of facility.	School to continue with planned refurbishment.	Education	S / M	Low	M	Enhance
Hitchin Girls' School, Hitchin	Activity hall	Quality of facility. Parking issue during school day.	Since the Assessment Report, the School has secured planning permission and funding for a new four court	Education	M	Low	H	Provide

⁷ Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years).

⁸ Cost: (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

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Facility	Facilities	Identified challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁷	Priority	Cost ⁸	Aim
Local community facility		Changing and hall located on separate floors, no lift. Not available Friday-Sunday.	sports hall. It is not planned as a community facility.					
Hitchin Sports Centre, Hitchin	Main hall	Quality of facilities.	Identify investment opportunities to improve quality of facilities and changing.	College	S / M	Low	H	Enhance
Key community facility	H and F							
	Squash							
Knights Templar Sports Centre, Baldock	Main hall	Quality of changing facilities and activity hall.	Investment in changing facilities and activity hall. Include activity hall in SLL contract and make available for community use.	Education	S / M	Medium	H	Enhance
Key community facility	Activity hall							
	H and F							
Meridian School, Royston	Activity hall	Community use is limited due to neighbouring Royston Leisure Centre- the school also use these.	Identify investment opportunities to improve quality of facilities.	Education	M	Low	M	Enhance
Local community facility	Main hall							
North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre, Letchworth	Main pool	Swimming clubs at capacity and cannot access additional pool time.	Consider reviewing programming.	NHDC SLL NGB	S	Medium	M	Enhance
	Leisure pool							Provide

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Facility	Facilities	Identified challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁷	Priority	Cost ⁸	Aim
District wide facility	H and F	Provision of swimming lessons by operator and swim club.	Review issue of lesson provision.					
	Squash	Quality of main sports hall.	Since the Assessment Report, a new learner pool, sports hall and dance studio has been approved, to be completed in late 2017.					
Royston Leisure Centre, Royston	Main hall	Organisations have limited bookings and require more hall and pool space.	Consider reviewing programming to increase participation.	NHDC SLL NGB	S / M	Low	M	Enhance
District wide facility	Main pool	Health and fitness suite operating at capacity.	Review health and fitness capacity.					
	H and F							
St Christopher School, Letchworth	Main hall	Did not engage in the study.	Seek to liaise with the school to determine opportunity for community use.	St Christopher School	S / M	Low		Provide
Local community facility	Activity hall							
	Main pool							
	H and F							
St Francis College, Letchworth	Activity hall	Quality of activity hall and wet and dry changing facilities. There is a current waiting list for community use.	School to continue with plans to refurbish wet changing. Identify investment opportunities to improve quality of activity hall and dry changing. Seek to secure community use	St Francis College	S / M	Medium	M	Provide
Local community	Main pool							Enhance

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Facility	Facilities	Identified challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁷	Priority	Cost ⁸	Aim
facility			for users.					
The Highfield School, Letchworth Local community facility	Activity hall Main hall Activity hall	Due for a rebuild under the Priority School Building Programme – existing main sports hall will be retained.	Ensure any new facilities consider NGB technical specifications. Secure community use of facilities	The Highfield School	M	L	H	Enhance
The Princess Helena College, Pirton Local community facility	Main hall Activity hall Outdoor pool	Did not engage in the study. Main sports hall is reported to be available.	Seek to liaise with the school to determine opportunity for community use.	The Princess Helena College	S / M	Low		Provide
The Priory School, Hitchin Local community facility	Main hall Activity hall	Quality of hall and changing facilities.	Continue with planned refurbishment of changing facilities.	The Priory School	S / M	Medium	M	Enhance
Hitchin Swimming Centre & Fitness @ Archers Hitchin, Hitchin District wide facility	Main pool Outdoor pool Learner/Teaching/Training pool H and F	Quality of pool areas. Limited parking. Organisations have limited bookings and require more pool space.	Identify investment opportunities to improve quality of pool areas. Seek to formalise agreement with football club for parking. Consider reviewing programming to increase participation. Decision to be made on future of outdoor pool and investment identified if necessary.	NHDC SLL	M	Medium	L	Enhance / Provide

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Facility	Facilities	Identified challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁷	Priority	Cost ⁸	Aim
Letchworth Garden City Fitness & Wellbeing Centre, Letchworth Local community facility	Main pool H and F	Maintain quality of facilities.	Identify ongoing investment to maintain quality of the facility.	Letchworth Garden City Fitness & Wellbeing Centre	L	Medium	M	Enhance / Provide
Letchworth Outdoor Pool, Letchworth District wide facility	Outdoor pool	Quality of facility.	Decision to be made on future of outdoor pool and investment identified if necessary.	NHDC SLL	S	H		Provide
Heath Sports Centre, Royston District wide facility	H and F Squash	Quality of facility.	Consider investment opportunities to improve the quality of changing facilities.	Heath Sports Centre	M	Low	L	Enhance
Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club, Letchworth District wide facility	H and F Squash Tennis	Did not engage in the study.	As the only indoor tennis facility in North Hertfordshire this facility should be protected. Seek to liaise with the Club to determine facilities, quality and use.	Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club	L	High	M	Protect
Ickleford Sport & Recreation	Squash	Did not engage in the study.	Seek to liaise with the Club to determine facilities, quality and	Ickleford Sport &	S / M	Low		Protect

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Facility	Facilities	Identified challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁷	Priority	Cost ⁸	Aim
Club, Ickleford Local community facility			use.	Recreation Club				
Riverain Bowls Club Ltd, Hitchin District wide facility	Bowls	Maintain quality of facilities.	As the only indoor bowls facility in North Hertfordshire this facility should be protected. Identify ongoing investment to maintain quality of the facility.	Riverain Bowls Club Ltd	L	High		Protect

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4.3 Sports specific actions

Headings in the following table are clarified below.

Sport

Indoor sport assessed as part of the indoor study.

Current picture

Provides a summary of key findings from the indoor study report.

Recommended actions

Reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed by all partners.

Lead agency

Refers to the main organisations who should work together to help deliver the actions.

Timescale

The timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based. Timescale: s –Short (1-2 years); M –Medium (3-5 years); L –Long (6+ years).

Aim

Relates to the three strategic aims of the strategy – Protect, Enhance and Provide.

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Suggested sport specific recommended actions: working in partnership to understand the changes in demand to plan for the future.

Sport	Current picture	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁹	Aim
Badminton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ There is some formal badminton activity in the district, this is limited. There is demand for pay and play / casual badminton in many sports halls. ◀ There is a general need for more / improved badminton facilities in North Hertfordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Fearnhill Sports Centre needs its floor upgrading to meet Badminton England specifications. ◀ North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre requires numerous improvements. ◀ Once facilities are improved then identify a lead to drive badminton development in the District. 	Badminton England NHDC	Medium	Provide / Enhance
Basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Basketball is not a strong sport within North Hertfordshire, there are no sports halls large enough to cater for the sport at a competitive level. ◀ Recent England Basketball focus and investment has gone to Hertsmere Borough. ◀ Sports halls are heavily used for badminton and football currently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Any new school builds should consult with England Basketball and consider the technical specification for basketball, should there be further developments to identify any new basketball demand. ◀ Current sports halls should consider basketball demand in the programming. 	England Basketball Schools Facility providers NHDC	Medium	Provide / Enhance
Bowls (indoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ There is one indoor bowls facility- Riverain Bowls Club, which is currently thriving. ◀ The potential closure of Luton Indoor Bowls Centre is expected to see an increase in demand on the facility. ◀ Future population increase is expected to see a rise in the older age bands and a potential rise in demand for bowls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Work with the English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA) to protect the facility at Riverain Bowls Club, as the only indoor bowls facility in the District. 	EIBA NHDC	Long	Protect
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ New Cricket Unleashed initiative launched. ◀ Potential for indoor offering for leisure operators to develop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Liaise with NGB to understand opportunities for indoor cricket offering. ◀ Determine if this is a programming priority across North Hertfordshire's facilities. 	ECB NHDC SLL	Short	Provide / Enhance

⁹ Timescales: (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years).

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Sport	Current picture	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁹	Aim
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider need for additional indoor opportunities across Hertfordshire. 				
Futsal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Hertfordshire is a priority area for Hertfordshire FA and there is a futsal development officer that operates county wide. There are currently no facilities available to hire to develop futsal, the potential for growth is significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprogramming of sports halls should consider the potential of futsal activity. Working with Hertfordshire FA could develop the sport and increase participation in the District. 	Herts FA NHDC	Long	Provide
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> England Netball is keen to develop participation programmes in the District. Sports halls are heavily used for badminton and football currently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current sports halls should consider netball demand in the programming. Any new school builds should consult with England Netball and consider the technical specification for netball, to accommodate local demand. Identify a lead to drive netball development in the District. 	England Netball Facility providers NHDC	Medium	Provide
Swimming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main issue for clubs is lack of affordable pool time. Pool hire is limited in District owned pools at certain times to keep 50% available for public casual use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cross-district approach to programming, particularly across the local authority sites, rather than a blanket 50% available for casual swims approach may alleviate pressures both from a club perspective and also for the operator whilst still allowing consistent public access. Continuation of the Partnership Provider Programme between the ASA and leisure provider to support an increase in participation. Work with facility providers to develop community use agreements and concessionary pricing policies. Support the development of swimming clubs (and wider sections such as water polo). 	ASA Swimming clubs NHDC	Medium	Provide / Enhance

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Sport	Current picture	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale ⁹	Aim
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the ASA and local clubs are fully consulted as part of any planned changes. 			
Squash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hertfordshire is a key area for England Squash and Racketball, there has been a slight increase in participation over the past year. The priority of the NGB is protection of existing courts. Demand for courts is high at peak times and none existent during office hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the existing supply of courts in North Hertfordshire 	England Squash and Racketball NHDC	Long	Protect
Tennis (indoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is currently not a focus area for the LTA, however focus work is being done with Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and look to increase the facility at Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club, as the only indoor tennis facility in the District. 	Club LTA NHDC	Long	Protect
Volleyball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not an area active for volleyball currently, Volleyball England focus work in St Albans and Watford. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No current demand identified; reassess on an annual basis. 	Volleyball England NHDC	Long	Provide