

LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE AGENDA

Wednesday, 11th February 2026 at 6.30pm

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Councillor J Abbott
Councillor K Bowers
Councillor L Bowers-Flint
Councillor G Butland
Councillor J Coleridge
Councillor T Cunningham
Councillor M Fincken

Councillor A Hooks
Councillor J Martin
Councillor A Munday
Councillor I Parker
Councillor F Ricci
Councillor G Spray (Chairman)

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

D GASCOYNE
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) or Other Registerable Interests (ORI).

Any Member with an Interest must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a DPI or ORI or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the Chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

Public Question Time - Registration and Speaking

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public may ask questions or make a statement to the Sub-Committee on matters listed on the Agenda for this meeting.

All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be heard within the 3 minutes allotted to each speaker.

Anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement is requested to register their interest by completing the Public Question Time registration [online form](#) by **midday on the second working day** before the day of the meeting.

For example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Friday, (where there is a Bank Holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Thursday). The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time.

Please note that completion of the online form does not guarantee you a place to speak during Public Question Time.

We expect our confirmed Public Question Time speakers to attend the meeting in person, and they will only be permitted to attend remotely in exceptional circumstances. The request to join the meeting remotely would need to be submitted at the time of registering a request to speak.

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The Chairman has discretion to extend the time allocated to registered speakers and to amend the order in which they may speak.

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Comments and Suggestions

We welcome comments to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended you may send these to governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION

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1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or Other Registrable Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.

3 Minutes of Previous Meetings

To approve as a correct record the minutes of previous meetings of the Local Plan Sub-Committee (copies previously circulated).

4 Public Question Time

Only Registered Speakers will be invited by the Chairman to speak during public question time.
Please see the agenda notes for guidance.

5 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy

5 - 357

6 Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan - SEA HRA Screening Report

358 - 411

7 Urgent Business - Public Session

To consider any matter, which in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

8 Exclusion of the Public and Press

To agree the exclusion of the public and press for the consideration of any items for the reasons set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

At the time of compiling this agenda there were none.

PRIVATE SESSION

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9 Urgent Business - Private Session

To consider any matter, which in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in private by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Agenda Item: 5

Report Title: Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan	
Report to: Local Plan Sub-Committee	
Date: 11 February 2026	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: N/A
Report Presented by: Alan Massow – Principal Planning Policy Officer	
Enquiries to: Alan Massow – Principal Planning Policy Officer	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Braintree District Council has commissioned Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to undertake a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS). In addition, an Open Space Assessment (Appendix 1) and Indoor Built Facilities strategy is also being produced. The PPOSS is accompanied by a Strategy & Action Plan (Appendix 2).
- 1.2 The PPOSS is a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities in the district. It has been produced in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) guidance. For the purposes of this study the district has been split into a north, central (along the A120 corridor) and south area.
- 1.3 The Strategy and Action Plan provide a framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and ancillary facilities up to 2041. This includes a vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities, includes aims to help deliver recommendations and actions in the report, makes strategic recommendations for the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock, including sport by sport recommendations, a prioritised area by area and site by site action plan, and guidance as to how the PPOSS can be delivered.
- 1.4 The PPOSS is considered to be in date for a period of three years and should be kept up to date. The recommendations in the PPOSS should also be integrated into Local Plan policy.
- 1.5 The Action Plan recommends several priority projects relating to sports provision which should be realised over the Plan period. It is a framework for improvement but does recognise resources may not be in place to implement it. It will be necessary for BDC to work with sports bodies and organisations to help deliver the actions and recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Recommendation 1 that the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) and Strategy and Action Plan is approved as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

3. Summary of Issues

Football

- 3.1 The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Assessment starts with an assessment of the supply and demand for grass football pitches and looks at the different demand types split into five different play formats from adult size pitches to mini 5 v 5. A particular problem which has been identified is the overmarking of adult pitches with smaller football formats, as this can lead to high traffic areas on the pitch resulting in damage to the surface quality and use beyond the capacity of the surface.
- 3.2 Football continues to be a popular sport with 337 teams across 53 clubs in the district. Not all clubs responded to the study with no response from about 20% of Teams.
- 3.3 There are a number of grass pitches in the district which have been assessed for their quality which is shown at Table 2.7 of appendix 1.
- 3.4 Ancillary facilities such as toilets and changing rooms have also been assessed and sites with poor facilities identified, and parking facilities have been reported as being an issue at around 5 sites. Table 2.9 of Appendix 1 shows a rating for ancillary facilities provision of the clubs.
- 3.5 The demand for women's football is also assessed, and whilst these clubs account for about 7% of clubs in the district, it is expected that this will increase significantly in the coming years.
- 3.6 Latent demand for football is also considered with several clubs reporting that additional teams could be fielded if they had access to more pitches. When this is considered with likely population growth table 2.17 shows likely team generation rates, showing a likely growth of an additional 17 teams. The majority of these teams would be generated in the south of the district.
- 3.7 Table 2.23 outlines the grass football pitch capacity analysis and helps to demonstrate the sites which require additional capacity as well as quality improvements. It should be noted that some pitches do have spare capacity but other pitches are overused, as such its necessary that any new provision is in the right place to address over use.
- 3.8 The findings for football are bulleted below.

Football – supply and demand summary

- Actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across the Braintree District totalling 24.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across 35 pitches.

- It is determined that there is currently a shortfall of adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch capacity, with the mini 7v7 played to capacity and mini 5v5 pitches displaying actual spare capacity.
- When factoring in future demand, shortfalls worsen on adult and youth pitches whilst they are created on the mini 7v7 pitches.
- Overall, the Central and Rural North analysis areas display actual spare capacity, whilst the South Analysis Area shows shortfalls for most pitch types.

Football – supply summary

- The audit identifies a total of 133 grass football pitches within the Braintree District across 58 sites, with 112 pitches available for community use across 45 sites.
- Disused provision is identified at Burches Meadow.
- In addition to formal football provision, there are eight sites across the Braintree District which accommodate recreational provision that is or can be used for football activity.
- Future provision should be established as part of the residential development at Land North East of Witham.
- Most community available pitches across the Braintree District are managed by sports clubs (43 pitches).
- Of the pitches that are available for community use, 19 are assessed as good quality, 58 as standard quality and 35 as poor quality.
- Blackmore End Playing Fields, Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road, Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field), John Ray Recreation Ground are serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.

Football – demand summary

- There are 337 affiliated teams from within 54 clubs based within the Braintree District.
- 326 teams from within 50 clubs are identified as playing regular, competitive matches on pitches within the Braintree District. This comprises of 66 adult, 118 youth 11v11, 58 youth 9v9, 63 mini 7v7 and 25 mini 5v5 teams.
- There are 23 dedicated female teams based in the District.
- Walking football and futsal teams also have a presence within the Braintree District, although this generally takes place away from grass pitch provision.
- There are seven clubs playing within the men's football pyramid structure (Braintree Town FC, Coggeshall Town FC, Earls Colne FC, Halstead Town FC, Hatfield Peverel FC, White Notley FC and Witham Town FC).
- Two clubs are identified as exporting demand outside of the Braintree District into neighbouring authorities. Braintree FC fields three futsal teams who export demand outside of the District to the sports hall at St John Payne Catholic School in Chelmsford for match play.
- In respect of imported demand, Bethel Christian Fellowship FC, which is otherwise based in Chelmsford, imports demand into the District.
- A total of four clubs identify latent demand in that they express they could field more teams if they had more pitch capacity.
- Future demand from population growth projects an increase of 17 teams, whilst a total of 10 clubs quantify growth aspirations amounting to 52 teams (including 14 female).

- Predicted participation increases will be further considered via the incorporation of a scenario in the proceeding Strategy document. This will also evidence the potential impact of other growth scenarios.

3.9 The next section looks at Third Generation Artificial Grass Pitches (3G pitches). Competitive matches can be played on 3G pitches provided they have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard tested and approved by the FA. World Rugby also assess pitches. There are 6 11v11 3G pitches in the district. A number of smaller 3G pitches are also in the area. 3G pitches within the district are identified as operating at or over capacity, with a number of teams reporting that additional capacity is required. A shortfall in provision is predicted in the future.

3G – supply and demand summary

- There is an insufficient supply of 3G pitch provision to meet football requirements, with two additional 11v11 pitches needed to meet training needs, equating to 0.25 pitches in the Rural North Analysis Area and two pitches in the South Analysis Area. Whilst there is an oversupply of 0.25 pitches in the Central Analysis Area.
- For rugby union, the creation of World Rugby compliant 3G provision may provide a solution to the identified overplay of grass pitches, although this needs to be considered against grass pitch solutions.
- No demand for access to 3G provision has been identified from any other sports, suggesting that no other demand currently requires consideration.

3G – supply summary

- There are six 11v11 3G pitches across six sites, which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.
- There are four smaller size 3G pitches. Three of these have sports lighting and are available for community use (Discovery Centre (Great Notley), Hedingham School and Lyons Hall Primary School). Whilst the pitch at Notley Green Primary School is neither available for community nor serviced by sports lighting.
- Planning applications have been approved and work has begun on the development of four 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy (23/03020/FUL), New Rickstones Academy (24/00352/FUL), Notley High School (24/00027/FUL) and Witham Sports Ground (23/03067/FUL). For this assessment, they have been included in the supply as they are newly installed. The pitches at New Rickstones Academy, Notley High School and Witham Sports Ground are fully operational and the pitch at Alec Hunter Academy is due to be fully operational by January 2026. The work is being funded through the Football Foundation and Section 106 monies from housing developments in the vicinity.
- The Braintree LFFP has three recommended projects for the creation of 11v11 3G pitches.
- Planning permission has been granted for the development of a smaller sized 3G pitch at Witham Sports and Social Club (21/00074/FUL).
- All 11v11 3G pitches are either FA or FIFA certified and can therefore be used to host competitive matches.
- No pitches in the Braintree District are World Rugby compliant.

- All 11v11 3G pitches are fully available for use during peak time hours.
- All six 11v11 3G pitches are rated as good quality having been installed in the last three years.
- Of the smaller size pitches, Notley Green Primary School is assessed as good quality and the pitches at Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Lyons Hall Primary School as standard quality. The pitch at Hedingham School is assessed as poor quality, having been installed in 2012 and the carpet has not been replaced since.
- No ancillary facility issues are identified.

3G – demand summary

- The 3G pitches currently servicing the Braintree District are reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months.
- This applies not only to midweek capacity but also to weekend capacity on account of all four of the 11v11 3G pitches being FIFA/FA approved to host competitive matches.
- All activity is currently football related across five sites, with including 36 teams gaining access for match play purposes (at the time of audit).
- As well as club training and match play activity, the pitches are also accessed for recreational football, walking football and coaching sessions as well as by commercial leagues.
- Unmet demand for 3G provision is expressed, with 10 responding football clubs representing 149 teams as well as Braintree RUFC identifying that their training requirements are not currently being met.
- Four football clubs also currently export some 3G demand outside of the Braintree District, whilst two clubs import activity into the District.
- Future football and rugby union team growth could increase 3G pitch requirements.

Cricket

- 3.10 For cricket the district has 20 grass wicket squares and 5 non-turf pitches. Generally cricket squares are of either a good or standard quality, with one site at Earls Colne Recreation Club having a poor quality outfield, with the others being either good or standard quality. In terms of changing room quality and club house quality, a number of sites are shown as having poor quality. For practice facilities there are 11 sites with 25 bays most of which are of a reasonable quality.
- 3.11 There are 16 clubs in the district with 77 teams. A majority of clubs have seen an increase or static increase in participation with one team at Rayne showing a decrease in participation for men's cricket. The broad position in Braintree District is that there is insufficient capacity for Saturday and Sunday cricket, resulting in overplay on some sites.

Cricket – supply and demand summary

- Actual spare capacity is identified amounting to 48 match equivalent sessions on a Saturday, 42 match equivalent sessions on a Sunday and 103 match equivalent sessions exist midweek.
- In total, five sites are overplayed by a total of 99 match equivalent sessions per season. Coggeshall Town Cricket Club has the highest

amount of overplay due to the amount of demand that Coggeshall Town CC fields.

- Overall, there is currently an insufficient supply of cricket squares in the Braintree District to cater for Saturday and Sunday cricket, with this projected to worsen when accounting for future demand.

Cricket – supply summary

- In total, there are 21 grass wicket squares in the Braintree District across 19 sites, with one grass wicket square being unavailable for community use.
- There are also five NTPs, with three accompanying grass wicket squares and the remaining two being standalone wickets.
- Bocking Sports Club previously accommodated a six wicket grass square; however, upon non-technical assessments, the provision seems not to have been actively maintained or used for an extended period of time.
- Church Road Playing Fields previously accommodated a grass wicket square with eight wickets that was last active circa 2016. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.
- Courtauld Sports Ground previously provided a grass wicket square but is no longer maintained, although the site is still utilised for football.
- Notley Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2000. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.
- Dusty Lane, Tye Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2011. ECB and Essex Cricket has advised that the site is too small for senior cricket and is not viable for re-instating a grass wicket square. However, the site and boundary size is sufficient for an NTP for junior cricket. Therefore, it should still be protected as a playing field for other sports unless appropriate mitigation is made off-site.
- The audit of community available grass wicket squares found 12 to be good quality and eight to be standard quality.
- The audit of ancillary facilities determines that six (30%) are accompanied by good quality provision, nine squares (45%) by standard quality provision and three (15%) by poor quality provision. The remaining two squares (10%) are not accompanied by any ancillary provision.
- There are 10 sites supplying 24 net bays, whilst four clubs report demand for new, improved and/or additional training facilities.

Cricket – demand summary

- There are 16 clubs in the Braintree District which collectively provide 80 teams, equating to 40 open age, eight senior women's, five junior girls' and 27 junior boys' teams.
- There has been a general increase in demand in recent years, with seven clubs reporting an increase in participation and only Rayne CC reporting a decrease in participation.
- It must be noted that the ECB has recently established a target of trebling the number of girls' teams across the Country by 2028, with this therefore likely to further increase in demand in the Braintree District. This will be further tested as a scenario in the Strategy.

- A total of four clubs undertake All Stars cricket, whilst two undertake Dynamo's and three have women's softball demand.
- Future demand from population forecasts equates to the predicted growth of two open age and one junior boys' teams (up to 2041), whereas six clubs indicate aspirations to increase levels of participation amounting to a total predicted growth of nine teams.

Rugby

3.12 For rugby, the district has 4 clubs of which 2 provided a respond to this study. There are 10 grass rugby pitches available in the district. Pitch conditions are mostly standard with 2 rated as poor. Generally ancillary facilities are also poor. All pitches are considered to be overplayed.

Rugby union – supply and demand summary

- No pitches in the Braintree District are considered to provide actual spare capacity, whilst four pitches across two sites that are overplayed by a total of 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week.
- There is a current capacity shortfall of 12.5 match equivalent sessions on rugby union pitches, increasing to 13 when accounting for future demand.
- There is a clear shortfall of rugby union provision, and a shortfall for the two large clubs in the District (Braintree RUFC and Witham RUFC).

Rugby union - supply summary

- There are 10 grass rugby union pitches identified across five sites, with all pitches available for community use across 13 sites.
- Of the 10 pitches provided, two are operated by education providers, two are operated by Parish Councils and the remaining six are operated by sports clubs.
- All four clubs in the Braintree District have secure site tenure either via direct ownership or being part of a wider entity that has ownership or a long-term lease agreement.
- Of pitches that are available for community use, there are eight assessed as standard and two as poor.
- Poor quality pitches are provided at Courtauld Sports Ground and Gosfield School.
- The poor quality ancillary facilities are identified at Courtauld Sports Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field.

Rugby union - demand summary

- There are four rugby clubs considered based in the Braintree District collectively providing a total of 34 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of nine senior men's, two senior women's, eight age grade boys', three age grade girls' and 12 age grade mixed teams.
- Whilst overall demand levels have increased in recent years, there has been a decline in senior activity.
- In the Braintree District, one sports lit pitch is provided at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club. These pitches are used to accommodate all training demand from Braintree and Witham rugby clubs.
- Whilst Halstead Templars and Kelvedon & Feering rugby clubs use portable lighting on its match pitches.

- Braintree RUFC reports latent demand in that they could field more teams if it had access to increased pitch provision and links this to a need for a 3G pitch.
- Two clubs (Braintree and Witham rugby clubs) report future aspirations for additional teams, whilst population projections predict a growth of one age grade mixed team.

Hockey

- 3.13 There are 2 Hockey clubs in the district at Braintree and Witham, and both clubs responded to this study. There are some smaller hockey pitches at other locations in the district. There is an insufficient supply of full size Hockey pitches at the moment, and it is likely that demand will increase in the future.

Hockey – supply and demand summary

- There is a current insufficient supply of full size hockey suitable AGPs in the Braintree District, with a shortfall of one senior team.
- When factoring in future demand, the shortfall of provision will be increased.
- Capacity issues for training activity are also identified, meaning that the supply of hockey pitches in the Braintree District is currently insufficient to meet current and future demand.

Hockey – supply summary

- There are two full size suitable AGPs in the Braintree District across the same number of sites (Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground).
- In addition to the full size AGPs, there are three smaller size hockey suitable pitches at Gosfield School, Oak Farm and Silver End Academy. However, the pitches are not suitable for purposeful hockey demand.
- The full-size pitches are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.
- Braintree HC owns the freehold of the pitch at Releet Sports Ground and therefore has security of tenure. Whilst Witham HC rents the provision at Witham Sports Ground on a seasonal basis from Freedom Leisure.
- The two full size pitches offer full availability during the peak period.
- The pitch at Releet Sports Ground is assessed as standard quality as it was last resurfaced in 2015 and Braintree HC reports it has an aspiration to upgrade its lighting to LED; however, it requires funding in order to do this.
- The pitch at Witham Sports Ground was last resurfaced in 2021 and is rated as good quality.
- Braintree HC reports the clubhouse at Releet Sports Ground is of standard quality. It reports its facilities are slowly declining in quality and are becoming outdated. The Club has a wider aspiration to refurbish the clubhouse facilities as well as improving the car parking.
- Witham HC reports the facilities at Witham Sports Ground are poor quality with basic and outdated provision provided.

Hockey – demand summary

- There are two hockey clubs (Braintree HC and Witham HC) playing in the District.
- There is a total of 32 dedicated hockey teams across the two community clubs with the most prominent being senior men's teams with 12, followed by senior women's, six for dedicated mini teams, four for junior boys and three for junior girls' teams. The senior team numbers include veteran and U21 teams.
- Both clubs have seen an increase in its teams over recent years. Growth equates to one senior and two junior teams for Braintree HC and two junior teams for Witham HC.
- Back to hockey sessions are ran by Braintree HC.
- Braintree HC currently exports some junior demand to the hockey suitable AGP at Felstead School in Uttlesford as an overspill venue, however it primarily uses the provision at The Releet Sports Ground.
- Both clubs report future demand for five additional senior teams (two men's and three women's) as well as four junior teams.
- Witham HC has future demand aspirations, but the Club states that this cannot be accommodated without increased pitch capacity at Witham Sports Ground, with some capacity taken up by football groups, or through the creation of another full-size pitch.
- In addition to hockey usage at the site, considerably football activity also takes place, particularly during midweek evenings and on Saturday mornings.

Tennis

- 3.14 The district has 4 tennis clubs at Braintree LTC, Castle Hedingham TC, Earls Colne TC and Gosfield LTC, with a majority of clubs responding. Club based tennis appears to be in a good position regarding current and future demand with no clubs reporting any issues, suggesting that there is no likely requirement for additional court space. This does however need to be monitored. There is likely to be a shortfall in non-club tennis activity with some of the available facilities having a poor quality or lack of lighting.

Tennis – Supply and demand summary

- For club-based tennis, there is seemingly sufficient capacity in the Braintree District to facilitate current and future demand. No responding clubs report any issues, suggesting that there is no requirement for additional court space. However, this should be monitored particularly in relation to provision at Gosfield Tennis Club, where one of the courts is assessed as poor quality.
- In contrast, there is likely to be a shortfall of provision for non-club activity, with few local authority courts existing and with some of the supply accessed by clubs, poor quality and/or without sports lighting. This likely leading to levels of unmet and latent demand.
- A need for additional padel courts has also been identified.

Tennis – supply summary

- A total of 57 traditional tennis courts are identified in the Braintree District across 22 sites.

- Of the courts, 55 are categorised as being available for community use at 18 sites compared to compared to 10 courts that are unavailable, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy, Gosfield School, Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf and Country Club.
- Planning permission has recently been granted (June 2025) for the construction of two tennis courts serviced by sports lighting located at Courtald Sports Ground (25/00289/FUL).
- Maltings Academy is in the process of submitting a planning application to install sports lighting on its tennis courts using S106 funding.
- Of the community courts, 15 courts are provided at club sites, seven at local authority sites, 12 at parish council sites, 18 are provided at education sites and the remaining three courts are classified as 'other' are those provided at Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf & Country Club.
- All clubs have security of tenure, either via freehold for their sites or long term lease agreements.
- Most outdoor tennis courts have a macadam surface; there are 55 of this type compared to two artificial courts.
- Of the courts, 23 are serviced by sports lighting, with 20 of these are available for community use.
- 17 courts are assessed as good quality, 20 as standard quality and 20 as poor quality.
- There are also four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, provided at The Essex Golf & Country Club and Notleys Golf Club.

Tennis – demand summary

- There are four tennis clubs in the Braintree District, with membership equating to 439, where known through consultation (it is not known for Gosfield LTC).
- Membership is seemingly on the rise, with two clubs reporting recent increases and only one reporting a decrease.
- Whilst no latent or unmet demand has been identified by clubs, it is considered to exist for recreational tennis, with LTA data identifying potential demand equating to 600 people.
- Future demand is expressed by three clubs and amounts to 60 potential additional members (35 senior and 25 junior).
- Based on identified population growth, the Sports Facilities Calculator indicates a requirement for an additional 0.74 courts, up to 2041.
- A need for 12 padel courts has been identified in the District by the LTA (meaning a shortfall of eight).

3.15 The PPOSS covers other sports as well such as Netball, Bowls, athletics, golf, cycling and BMX, Basket Ball, and other grass pitch sports such as rounders with recommendations and conclusions for those sports as well.

Strategy and Action Plan

3.16 The Strategy and Action Plan is based on the PPOSS. It provides a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2041. It provides.

- A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities.

- A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions.
 - A series of strategic recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock.
 - A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision.
 - A prioritised area-by-area and site-by-site action plan that prioritises and can address key issues.
 - Guidance as to how the PPOSS can be delivered.
- 3.17 The scope of the PPOSS focuses geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Sport included within the project are as follows:
- Football pitches (grass, third generation turf (3G) and ancillary provision).
 - Rugby union pitches.
 - Cricket pitches.
 - Hockey pitches (artificial grass pitches (AGPs)).
 - Other grass pitch sports as relevant e.g. rugby league, lacrosse, baseball/softball and American football.
 - Tennis courts (including padel and pickleball facilities).
 - Bowling greens.
 - Athletics tracks (and running).
 - Netball courts.
 - Golf courses.
 - Cycling (learn to ride space, road circuits, pump tracks, mountain biking/off road trails).
 - Basketball courts.
- 3.18 As with the PPOSS the strategy and action plan covers Braintree District, splitting it into 3 areas north, central and south.
- 3.19 The proposed vision for the Braintree District PPOSS is to:
- “To work with partners to create high quality, inclusive and sustainable sports facilities which allow communities to thrive through increasing participation and supporting health and wellbeing now and in the future.”*
- 3.20 This is supported by three aims which are to protect, enhance and provide new outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities.
- 3.21 Table 3.1 of the report outlines the headline findings and shows a number of areas which will have a shortfall in sports provision up to 2041.
- 3.22 The existing position for all sports is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of additional shortfalls for some pitch/facility types and in some areas where demand is currently being met. As a result, no provision can be deemed surplus to requirements, meaning that there is a clear need to protect all existing provision. This is unless another planning

policy exception is met, as per Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

- 3.23 Despite the identified shortfalls, most of the deficits identified could be met by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, site re-configuration, installing additional sports lighting, enabling access to existing unused sites, such as at unavailable schools, and bringing disused sites back into use. This means that significant levels of new provision will not necessarily be required, providing that other solutions can be delivered to the required degree.
- 3.24 As exceptions to the above, the shortfall of 3G pitches and padel courts can only be met via the installation of new provision given that such demand cannot be met in any alternative ways (although existing sites could be utilised). Additionally, there is also a distinct need for additional cricket provision, whilst large scale housing growth could also necessitate the need for further facilities (see Part 7 of this report).
- 3.25 Furthermore, it should also be noted that even for sports and in areas where demand is being met, this does not mean that no actions will be required over the lifespan of the PPOSS.
- 3.26 Overall the main findings of the report are;

Overall

- No playing field provision is surplus. Everything currently in the district is needed now or in future.
- Most shortfalls can be eased by quality improvements, reconfiguration, floodlighting or opening unused school sites, rather than by new pitches.
- BUT some provision can only be met through new facilities (e.g., 3G, padel, cricket squares).

Football (Grass)

- Adult and youth pitches: Significant current and future shortfalls.
- Over 30 pitches across 17 sites are overplayed.
- Improving pitch quality at key sites would remove most shortfalls.

3G Football Pitches

- Need two additional full-size 3G pitches now (mainly Rural North & South); potentially more by 2041.
- Several new pitches already approved (Alec Hunter, Witham SG, Notley HS, New Rickstones).

Rugby Union

- Heavy overplay at Braintree RUFC and Witham RUFC.
Needs include:
 - Better pitch drainage/maintenance
 - More floodlighting
 - Potential World Rugby-compliant 3G for training and match capacity

Cricket

- Major shortfalls for Saturday cricket, especially in Central and South areas.
- Overplay at Coggeshall, Kelvedon & Feering, Hatfield Peverel, Sauls Bridge and Terling.
- Need for new or improved squares, NTPs and hybrid wicket options.

Hockey

- Two full-size AGPs exist (Braintree & Witham) – both at capacity.
- Must protect sand-dressed AGPs from conversion to 3G unless fully replaced.

Tennis / Padel

- Club tennis provision is sufficient, but public recreational courts are lacking or poor quality.
- Padel shortfall: District has 4 courts; LTA identifies need for 8 more.

Bowls

- Sufficient supply, good quality overall.
- Two clubs near capacity: monitoring required.

Athletics

- Braintree Sport & Health Club 400m track is vital; needs resurfacing by 2026 to retain TrackMark accreditation.
- Club growth limited by lack of volunteer coaches, not by physical capacity.

Golf

- Healthy supply with high membership levels; retain all provision.

Cycling

- Key facility is Deanery Hill pump track (BMX) – should be protected and enhanced.

Basketball

- Plenty of MUGAs but poor quality surfaces and lack of floodlighting.
- No dedicated 3x3 courts.

Rounders

- Provision sufficient but none exists in the Rural North.

3.27 The site by site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the assessment report and provides recommendations based on the current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. This assessment is subdivided into the three areas in the district from page 76 of the report. Generally speaking for all areas it is recommended to protect the existing provision of facilities for all sports.

3.28 The Action Plan provides a very detailed site-by-site plan for every facility in Central, Rural North, and South areas, including:

- Issues to address
- Recommended actions

- Partners
- Priority level
- Cost (Low/Medium/High)
- Timescale

3.29 Covers everything from major 3G pitch builds to small-scale court refurbishments.

3.30 The reports strategic recommendations are as follows:

Protect

- Safeguard all pitches and outdoor sport sites through Local Plan policy.
- Apply NPPF paragraph 104 and Sport England Playing Fields Policy rigorously.

Enhance

- Improve pitch quality, floodlighting, drainage, and changing facilities at priority sites.
- Develop hub and key centres (tiered approach).
- Prioritise inclusive facilities (women & girls, juniors, disability access).

Provide

- New provision where essential, especially:
 - 3G pitches
 - Cricket squares / NTPs
 - World Rugby 3G
 - Padel courts
 - Additional sport lighting and upgraded AGPs

Partnerships & Funding

- Increase community use of school sites (formal agreements).
- Make better use of developer contributions (Playing Pitch Calculator, Sport Facility Calculator).
- Coordinate between BDC, NGBs, Sport England, Active Essex, clubs and education partners.

3.31 The PPOSS should be kept up to date. The report suggests how this could be done at Part 8. This includes monitoring and review of the actions identified in the strategy. It recommends a steering group to oversee the implementation at, that an annual review of the Action Plan should take place, and the evidence base should be updated every 3 years or sooner if any major changes happen.

3.32 To sum up, Braintree District faces significant current and future challenges in meeting outdoor sport demand, especially for football, rugby, cricket and 3G provision.

3.33 However, most shortfalls can be resolved through:

- Improved pitch quality
- Better use of existing sites
- Securing school access

- Strengthened ancillary facilities
- Strategic new provision where essential

3.34 The PPOSS provides a robust, defensible framework for planning policy, investment decisions, and negotiations with developers, NGBs, schools and community clubs.

4. Consultation

4.1 The Local Plan will be subject to a 6 week consultation under Regulation 18 and a further round of consultation known as a Regulation 19 consultation later this year.

5. Options

5.1 Option 1 – To approve the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Assessment and Strategy and Action Plan as evidence to support the Local Plan.

Option 2- To not approve the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Assessment and Strategy and Action Plan as evidence to support the Local Plan.

Option 1 is the preferred option.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The Local Plan is financed through the existing budget.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Local Plan could be subject to legal challenge.

8. Local Government Review - Implications

8.1 The Council is required to have an adopted Local Plan which is less than five years old. The Council is undertaking a review of the Local Plan which is planned to be submitted for examination by December 2026. It is therefore currently anticipated that the new plan would be adopted in 2027/28.

8.2 Once adopted the Plan will be the adopted Development Plan for Braintree District until a new Local Plan is developed for the new Unitary Authority Area.

9. Other Implications

9.1 None at this time.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. Next Steps

11.1 The Local Plan will be subject to a 6 week consultation.

12. List of Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1 – Braintree PPOSS – Full Assessment Report

12.2 Appendix 2 – PPOSS Strategy and Action Plan

13. Background Papers

13.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

13.2 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

13.3 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).

13.4 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012).

13.5 The Braintree District Local Plan (2022).



BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

FULL ASSESSMENT REPORT NOVEMBER 2025

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd
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BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

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BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
ANOG	Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance
BC	Bowls Club
BDC	Braintree District Council
BE	Bowls England
CC	Cricket Club
CFA	County Football Association
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
EA	England Athletics
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EFL	English Football League
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
GMA	Grounds Management Association
GPMF	Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund
HC	Hockey Club
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plan
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
NFFS	National Football Facilities Strategy
NGB	National Governing Body
NLS	National League System
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPC	Playing Pitch Calculator
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy
PQS	Performance Quality Standard
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
SE	Sport England
TC	Tennis Club
TGR	Team Generation Rate
U	Under

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1: Introduction

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been commissioned to undertake a Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for Braintree District Council (BDC). The PPOSS is being completed in conjunction with an Open Space Assessment, whilst an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy is also being delivered.

The PPOSS will provide the necessary robustness and direction to ensure that the Council has a framework for the prioritisation, provision and development of sports facilities across the public, private and independent sectors. It covers all formal playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the authority area to assist it to strategically plan for the future.

This is the Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) Assessment. It presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the Braintree District. For playing pitch sports, it is delivered in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance. This details five stages for the developing the study:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach.
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on supply of and demand for provision.
- ◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views.
- ◀ Stage D: Develop the strategy.
- ◀ Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date.

Stages A to C are covered in this report for winter sports. Summer sports will be added in due course as work continues to progress, Stage D will be covered in the ensuing strategy document. Stage E references the ongoing work that will be required once the PPOSS has been approved and adopted. This Assessment and subsequent Strategy will run to 2041, in line with the emerging Local Plan.

For "non -pitch" sports, Sport England's 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) is followed. This has a similar staged approach:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach.
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information on supply and demand.
- ◀ Stage C: Assessment – bringing the information together.
- ◀ Application: Application of an assessment.

1.2: Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach

Purpose

The ability to access high quality facilities, grass, hybrid and artificial grass pitches that provide opportunities for sport and recreation, as well as high quality, multifunctional open space makes an important contribution to the overall health and well-being of local communities. As part of an on-going commitment to improve and maintain the quality of life of people living within the Braintree District, the Council has commissioned this work to produce planning evidence sufficient to inform the needs of existing and future residents across the District.

The primary purpose of the PPOSS is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches and sports facilities meet the local needs of existing and future residents across the area. The Strategy will be produced in accordance with Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance (October 2013 as updated in March 2014) and the national planning guidance and provide robust and objective justification for future playing pitch provision.

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The PPOSS provides a hierarchy of information and recommendations for the District level, to inform future reviews of the Local Plan, support the development of a new Open Spaces SPD, and to support the determination of planning applications.

Concern at national government level over the loss of playing fields prompted the development of localised playing pitch assessments and strategies which identify current and future requirements for playing fields. Developing a strategic approach to the analysis of playing pitch supply and demand is necessary to:

- ◀ Protect playing pitches against development pressures in, and around, urban areas.
- ◀ Identify pitch (natural grass and artificial) supply and demand issues in relation to predicted population changes.
- ◀ Address 'demand' pressures created as a result of specific sports development pressures e.g., growth of mini soccer and wider use of artificial grass pitches.
- ◀ Address budget pressures and public-sector cuts.

It will support the implementation of the Local Plan policies relating to the protection, enhancement and provision of community sport and physical activity facilities and provide an evidence based framework to support negotiations with developers which may provide funding or other assistance to improve local provision.

It also provides a robust evidence base to support funding bids from national sports bodies like Sport England and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs).

The strategy will ensure that a planned approach to sport and physical activity facilities takes place in the Council's area now and up to 2033, in line with the current Local Plan period. However, in respect of any future Local Plan review a period up to 2041 will need to be addressed.

Management arrangements

The project team from the Council has worked with KKP to ensure that all relevant information is readily available and to support the consultants as necessary to ensure that project stages and milestones are delivered on time, within the cost envelope and to the required standard to meet Sport England guidance.

Further to this, a Steering Group is and has been responsible for the direction of the PPOSS from a strategic perspective. Its role is also to support, check and challenge the work of the project team. The Steering Group comprises representatives from the Council, Sport England, the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and the Active Partnership (Active Essex).

It will be important for the Steering Group to continue to meet once the PPOSS has been finalised for several reasons, including a continuing responsibility to:

- ◀ Be a champion for playing pitch provision in the area and promote the value of the PPOSS.
- ◀ Ensure implementation of the recommendations and action plan.
- ◀ Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the study and ensure that the PPOSS is updated.

Why the Strategy is being developed

A PPOSS is required for the Braintree District as the previous study was completed in 2015 and is therefore considerably out of date. The lifespan of a PPOSS is three years, although this can be extended if it is kept regularly updated.

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The PPOSS will be used as evidence to inform Braintree's Local Plan and its review and therefore needs to provide a robust spatial analysis and assessment of the provision of sports facilities and playing pitches.

The PPOSS was completed in conjunction with an Open Spaces Strategy, whilst an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy is also being delivered. The inter-relationship between the studies needs to be recognised due to the crossovers that occur e.g., sports clubs using both outdoor and indoor facilities.

It will also meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Section 8 of the NPPF deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities, with paragraph 103 discussing the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

In summary, the PPOSS will:

- ✦ Identify current supply and demand issues for sport, recreation, and open space facilities in the Council area as a whole, based on an audit and assessment of current facilities quality, quantity and accessibility, and identify provision and capacity in areas adjoining Braintree District.
- ✦ Enable the Council to plan appropriately for the protection and/or enhancement of existing sport, recreation, and open space facilities and to identify any sites which may provide surplus provision, could support new provision or facilities that could merit refurbishment within a future Local Plan review.
- ✦ Enable the Council to make strategic proposals for local authority-controlled facilities, such as investment in new and/or enhanced leisure centres or open spaces or rationalisation if appropriate.
- ✦ To identify the potential for a strategic approach to the role of schools/colleges in meeting community needs in addition for individual sites.
- ✦ To identify whether existing infrastructure (built facilities, playing pitches and open spaces) is fit for purpose to deliver local priorities, corporate priorities and wider health and wellbeing outcomes in an efficient way, now and in the future over the lifetime of any Local Plan review.
- ✦ To also include how sport, recreation and open space infrastructure can help deliver the Government and Sport England priorities based around the five outcomes (physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development) with recommendations in the strategies linking to the delivery of these outcomes. For example, this could include the provision of a hierarchy of facilities from national to local level.
- ✦ Provide policy recommendations and practical proposals for securing investment in sport and open space through planning obligations, Section 106, and other approaches for securing investment, which are consistent with the NPPF and make recommendations on new local standards for each local authority for appropriate greenspace typologies. In addition, consideration will be need to made toward the potential future implementation of the Infrastructure Levy.
- ✦ Help direct expenditure of any future Section 106 monies or other planning contributions and effective for sport, leisure and open space facilities in the local authority area.
- ✦ Identify how sport, physical activity and recreation, can contribute to the Council's corporate agenda, including the responsibility for public health, to deliver healthier lifestyles and achieve positive health outcomes.

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- ✦ Identify possible external capital or revenue funding opportunities for sport, physical activity and recreation facilities, including open space provision.
- ✦ Identify opportunities for efficiency savings at Council-owned facilities and options for alternative governance via charities, trusts, or community run organisations where appropriate.
- ✦ Identify a mechanism for appropriate monitoring and review to insure an up to date and robust strategy.

National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Section eight of the NPPF deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities, stating that “planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.”

Paragraph 104 sets three criterion that ensures existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Paragraphs 106, 107, and 108 set the parameters for the designation of Local Green Space. Such spaces may include playing fields and outdoor sport facilities.

In addition, Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of sports facilities and requires an up-to-date PPOSS to help assess planning applications against its Playing Fields Policy. Sport England will object to proposals relating to developments impacting on playing field provision (and accompanying ancillary provision) unless at least one of its five policy exceptions is met.

The exceptions are:

- ✦ **Exception 1:** Excess of provision - a robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.
- ✦ **Exception 2:** Ancillary development - the proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.
- ✦ **Exception 3:** Land incapable of forming part of a pitch - the proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:
 - ✦ reduce the size of any playing pitch;
 - ✦ result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);

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- ◀ reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- ◀ result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- ◀ prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.
- ◀ **Exception 4:** Replacement provision of equivalent or better quality and quantity - the area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:
 - ◀ of equivalent or better quality, and
 - ◀ of equivalent or greater quantity, and
 - ◀ in a suitable location, and
 - ◀ subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.
- ◀ **Exception 5:** New sports provision benefit outweighs the loss of the playing field - the proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

For Sport England and NGB context, please refer to Appendix 1.

Local context

Braintree District Local Plan

The Braintree District Local Plan is part of the Braintree District Development Plan and provides a vision/new planning framework for how the District will develop and grow up to 2033, identifying the most sustainable locations to deliver local housing needs and supporting infrastructure, such as employment, community facilities, retail, leisure and transport.

Preserving and enhancing the heritage and character, the local environment, green spaces and tackling climate change is central to the plan. It allocates land for appropriate development, sets out strategic planning policies and an overall strategy to guide decisions on the location, pattern, scale, and quality of development and/or changes in the way land and buildings are used.

The Local Plan 2033 is in two sections:

- ◀ Section 1 is a strategic plan for North Essex. It was adopted on 22nd February 2021. It is shared with Colchester and Tendring councils and covers all three authorities.
- ◀ Section 2 contains policies, maps and sites for development, housing, employment, regeneration etc within Braintree District Council. It was adopted on 25th July 2022.

The Council is required to review (and if necessary, update) the plan at least every five years to ensure it remains an up-to-date and robust planning document when determining planning applications and communities can have certainty as to what development will happen and where in the District. If the Local Plan is not up to date it holds less weight when determining planning applications.

Earlier this year the decision was made to commence work on a refresh and roll forward of the Braintree District Local Plan to 2041.

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Housing requirements

The table below summaries the housing requirements per annum for Braintree District Council for the period 2026 to 2041 as per the standard methodology.

Table 1.1: Summary of the housing requirement in the Braintree District

Housing requirement per annum	Total minimum housing requirement for the Plan period (2026 to 2041)
1,149	18,959

Braintree District Council Corporate Priorities 2024 to 2028

This strategy sets out the Council's priorities over the next four years and describes the context in which the services will work to drive forward the actions needed to achieve the vision.

Providing equal opportunities is at the heart of everything the Council will be striving for - to support communities to be strong, safe and vibrant and our businesses to thrive in a resilient local economy, whilst protecting the environment for all to enjoy.

As an ambitious Council, it strongly believes that reducing the impact inequalities have on local people and communities is of paramount importance. It will not always be easy. With ongoing uncertainty over government funding, continuing inflationary pressures and greater demand on our services, the Council will need to find ways to ensure it can balance budgets, maintain ambition and change and adapt to support the delivery of services in future years. With that in mind, this strategy outlines three key themes:

- ◀ Communities.
- ◀ Prosperity.
- ◀ Environment.

Each theme sets out priorities and how they will be achieved. The aim is to be a forward thinking council and make prevention and early intervention key ways to tackle the issues affecting communities, supporting us all to navigate the challenges we face.

Vision: To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, our people prosper and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

To shape the future for Braintree District, the Council needs to work in collaboration with partners and enable residents and businesses to thrive by listening and working with them. It also needs to be innovative and take appropriate risks to usher in a new era of providing quality services that positively impact the lives of residents and businesses.

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Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2026)

Every local area must have a Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS), setting out the priorities identified through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) that local government, the National Health Service (NHS) and other partners will deliver together through the Health & Wellbeing Board. The JHWS for Essex aims to improve the health and wellbeing of all residents by creating a culture and environment that reduces inequalities and enables residents of all ages to live healthier lives.

To achieve the above, the JHWS identifies five key priorities, all of which have specific development outcomes which need to be achieved through partnership work. These are outlined in the table below.

Table 1.2: Essex JHWS priorities and outcomes

Priority	Outcome
Improving mental health and wellbeing	Supported the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and families with a focus on the vulnerable. Reduced loneliness and social isolation. Reduced suicide through a focus on system support.
Physical activity and healthy weight	Enabled children, young people and their families to be more physically active. Improved levels of physical activity amongst adults by helping them find ways to integrate physical activity into their daily lives. Improved nutritional awareness, healthy eating, and help low-income households access affordable healthy food options.
Supporting long term independence	Improved access to advice and guidance including financial support so that residents with long-term conditions and their carers can better manage their conditions. Reduced digital exclusion to improve access to advice and support online. Help all residents have better access to opportunities in education, work, skills, housing, and their social lives.
Alcohol and substance misuse	Improve access to advice, support and treatment for residents experiencing alcohol or substance use issues. Work across the system to help address the challenges of county lines and drugs related criminality. Educate children, young people, adults, and families on the risks associated with alcohol and substance misuse.
Health inequalities & the wider determinants of Health	Ensure that all children have access to quality parenting, early years provision and education that provide the foundations for later in life. Address food poverty and ensure that all children can access healthy food. Improve access to employment, education and training for adults and young people in our most deprived communities. Embed the use of health impact assessments in planning practice to ensure new planning proposals do not negatively impact on health, health services or widen health inequalities.

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Active Essex (active partnership)

Active Essex works to promote physical activity and improve health and wellbeing across Essex. Its main goal is to inspire and support individuals and communities to become more active, offering a wide range of programs, resources, and initiatives designed to increase participation in physical activity and sports. It collaborates with local authorities, sports organisations, charities, and community groups to create accessible opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. By focusing on health, inclusivity, and engagement, it aims to reduce inactivity levels, improve mental and physical health outcomes, and enhance the quality of life for residents of the county.

Fit for the Future: Active Essex Implementation Plan 2021-31

Launched in July 2021, the Fit for the Future strategy provides a rallying call to action for the thousands of organisations and people across Essex who recognise the enormous contribution physical activity and sport makes to the health and wellbeing of everyone.

As of June 2021, there were over 1.6 million people living in Greater Essex and 901,000 are active adults who participate in over 150 minutes of physical activity per week. Active Essex wants to increase this number, unite in one direction and over the next 10 years, create an active Essex to improve everyone's health and wellbeing. To active this, the Local Partnership sets out the following key objectives.

- ✦ **Strengthening Communities-** All communities across Essex, Southend and Thurrock use the power of physical activity and sport to build resilience, connection and wellbeing.
- ✦ **Active Environments-** To work collectively to develop and provide well connected, accessible places and spaces that encourage people to be active.
- ✦ **Children and Young People-** To ensure every child has the best start in life, whereby they are active, healthy and happy.
- ✦ **Levelling Up Health and Wellbeing-** To change behaviours, which will enable and empower people to do things for themselves and their local communities. Physical activity is the highest priority for good health.
- ✦ **Sport and Physical Activity-** To support the recovery, development and growth of our sport and physical activity sector, in order to collectively increase opportunities for all.

Sporting context

In addition to the local and national key drivers set out above, the main pitch sport NGBs have sport specific key drivers, these are set out in full within Appendix 1: Sporting Context.

Agreed scope

The scope of the PPOSS focuses geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Provision included within the project is as follows:

- ✦ Football pitches (grass, third generation turf (3G) and ancillary provision).
- ✦ Rugby union pitches.
- ✦ Cricket pitches.
- ✦ Hockey pitches (artificial grass pitches (AGPs)).
- ✦ Other grass pitch sports as relevant e.g. rugby league, lacrosse, baseball/softball and American football.
- ✦ Tennis courts (including padel and pickleball facilities).
- ✦ Bowling greens.
- ✦ Athletics tracks (and running).

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- ◀ Netball courts.
- ◀ Golf courses.
- ◀ Cycling (learn to ride space, road circuits, pump tracks, mountain biking/off road trails).
- ◀ Basketball courts.

Other grass pitch sports are also included within the study where supply and/or demand is identified (e.g. rounders).

In addition, a bespoke 3G pitch section is included within this report, mainly focusing on football activity but also taking into account other sports that can use the surface type (e.g., rugby union and rugby league).

Sport England's PPS guidance applies to football, both rugby codes, cricket and hockey as well as any other grass pitch sports identified for inclusion. The ANOG applies to the remaining sports (as these are "non-pitch").

As well as considering current supply and demand, the strategy will ensure that a planned approach to sport and physical activity facilities takes place in the Council's area now and up to 2033, in line with the current Local Plan period. However, in respect of any future Local Plan review a period up to 2041 will need to be addressed.

Study area

Braintree District is located in the north of Essex between west of Colchester and north of Chelmsford and is on the A120 leading to Stansted Airport. The main towns are Braintree, Witham and Halstead with a number of key service villages: Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon with Feering and Sible Hedingham. Outside the main settlements the District has a predominantly rural character.

The study area is the Braintree District Council boundary area. Further to this sub areas or analysis areas can be used to allow a more localised assessment of provision and examination of playing pitch supply and demand at a local level. Use of analysis areas also allows local circumstances and issues to be taken into account.

Braintree has seven neighbouring authorities: South Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk, Babergh, Colchester, Maldon, Chelmsford and Uttlesford. Due to this, there is a level of imported demand and sports teams from outside the study area that use outdoor sports facilities within Braintree. In addition, it is likely that sports teams from inside the Braintree District also use facilities outside of the area.

Braintree is divided into three analysis areas to better reflect the population split within the District. Each analysis area is made up of the following parishes/wards:

Table 1.3: Table of wards within the analysis areas

Analysis area	Map ID	Ward
Rural North	7	Bumpstead
Rural North	9	Gosfield & Greenstead Green
Rural North	11	Halstead St Andrew's
Rural North	12	Halstead Trinity
Rural North	14	Hedingham
Rural North	18	Stour Valley North
Rural North	19	Stour Valley South
Rural North	20	The Colnes

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Analysis area	Map ID	Ward
Rural North	21	Three Fields
Rural North	26	Yeldham
Central	1	Bocking Blackwater
Central	2	Bocking North
Central	3	Bocking South
Central	4	Braintree Central & Beckers Green
Central	5	Braintree South
Central	6	Braintree West
Central	8	Coggeshall
Central	10	Great Notley & Black Notley
Central	16	Rayne
South	13	Hatfield Peverel & Terling
South	15	Kelvedon & Feering
South	17	Silver End & Cressing
South	22	Witham Central
South	23	Witham North
South	24	Witham South
South	25	Witham West

For a map showing the analysis areas, please see Figure 1.1 overleaf.

Further to this, there is a level of imported demand and sports teams from outside the study area that use pitches within the Braintree District. In addition, it is likely that sports teams from inside of Chelmsford use facilities outside of the Authority, for example in South Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk, Babergh, Colchester, Maldon, Chelmsford and Uttlesford. This cross-boundary movement will be taken into consideration within each sports section where relevant following consultation with neighbouring authorities and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs).

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Figure 1.1: Map of the Braintree District showing analysis areas



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1.3: Stage B: Gather information and views on supply of and demand for provision

A clear picture of the supply of and demand for playing pitches and outdoor sport across the Braintree District is required to enable an accurate assessment of quantity, quality and usage. This is achieved through site assessments and consultation with key stakeholders.

Gather supply information and views – an audit of provision

Sport England's guidance uses the following definitions of a playing pitch and playing field, as set out by the Government in the 2021 update to the 'Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015':

- ▶ **Playing pitch** – a delineated area which is used for association football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, American football, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.
- ▶ **Playing field** – the whole of a site that encompasses at least one playing pitch.

Although the statutory definition of a playing field sets out a minimum size, this PPOSS takes account of smaller size pitches that contribute to the supply side. For example, a site containing a mini 5v5 football pitch is included despite it potentially being smaller than 0.2ha. The study counts individual grass pitches (as a delineated area) as the basic unit of supply, with the definition of a playing pitch also including artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

As far as possible, this report aims to capture all of the playing pitches and relevant outdoor sport facilities within the District; however, there may be instances that have led to omissions, such as unused school sites where access was not possible (although facilities at sites not accessed are still included within the study where provision is known to exist from other sources e.g. affiliation data or club/league consultation). Where provision has not been recorded within the report, it is still considered to exist for planning purposes and will continue to do so. Furthermore, any exclusion does not mean that the provision is not required from a supply and demand point of view.

Quantity

Where known, all outdoor sports facilities are included within the PPOSS, irrespective of ownership, management and use. Sites were initially identified using Sport England's Active Places web-based database, with the Council and NGBs supporting this process by checking and updating this initial data as well as by supplying their own affiliation data.

For each site, the following details were recorded in the project database:

- ▶ Site name, address (including postcode) and location.
- ▶ Ownership and management type.
- ▶ Security of tenure.
- ▶ Community availability.
- ▶ Total number, type and quality of provision.
- ▶ Usage levels.

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Accessibility

Not all outdoor sports facilities offer the same level of access to the community. The ownership and accessibility of also influences their actual availability for community use. Each site included within the study is therefore assigned a level of community use as follows:

- ◀ **Community use** - provision in public, voluntary, private or commercial ownership or management (including education sites) recorded as being available for hire and currently in use by teams playing in community leagues.
- ◀ **Available but unused** - provision that is available for hire but are not currently used by teams which play in community leagues; this most often applies to school sites but can also apply to sites which are expensive to hire.
- ◀ **No community use** - provision which as a matter of policy or practice is not available for hire or used by teams playing in community leagues. This should include professional club sites along with some semi-professional club sites where play is restricted to the first or second team.
- ◀ **Disused** - provision that has previously been used for sport but not currently used and not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years, these fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 103 of the NPPF, with Sport England still likely to challenge a proposed loss which fails to meet such criteria. It should be emphasised that the lawful planning use of a such a site is still that of a playing field until such time as its use is formally changed or it is developed for a non-sport use.

In addition, there should be a good degree of certainty that provision will be available to the community for at least the following three years. If this is not the case, the provision is still included within the report but is noted as having unsecure tenure. A judgement is made based on the information gathered and a record of secured or unsecured community use put against each site.

Quality

The capacity of provision to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of provision affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of a sport. In extreme circumstances, it can result in a facility being unable to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

The quality of all provision identified in the audit and the ancillary facilities supporting them are assessed as part of a PPOSS, regardless of ownership, management or availability. Along with capturing any details specific to the individual facilities and sites, a quality rating is also recorded within the audit for each. These ratings are then used to help estimate the capacity (aligned to NGB guidance) to accommodate competitive and other play within the supply and demand assessment.

To ensure accurate findings, site assessments for each sport are carried out during the playing season for that sport. As such, the site assessments for sports played in the winter are conducted between November and February, whilst the sports played in the summer have assessments carried out between July and September.

In addition to undertaking non-technical assessments (using the templates provided within the guidance and as determined by NGBs), users and providers have also been consulted on the quality. In some instances, the quality rating has been adjusted to reflect this (thus establishing an "agreed quality rating").

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Furthermore, technical assessments have also been provided, where undertaken, such as those carried out by the Grounds Maintenance Association (GMA), which now provides technical assessments across football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket (known as PitchPower reports). PitchPower reports where carried out have informed the quality assessments for the PPOSS to ensure the findings align (unless there is a clear reason for a differential e.g., recent improvements).

Gather demand information and views

Presenting an accurate picture of current demand for playing pitches and outdoor sport facilities (i.e., recording how and when provision is used) is important when undertaking a supply and demand assessment. To that end, demand for provision in the Braintree District tends to fall within the following categories:

- ◀ Organised competitive play.
- ◀ Organised training.
- ◀ Informal play.

Current and future demand for provision is presented on a sport-by-sport basis within the relevant sections of this report. In addition, unmet, latent, imported and exported demand for provision is also identified within each section (unless no such demand has been identified). Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to provision; it is usually expressed, for example, when a team is in training but is unable to access a match pitch, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the competition.

In comparison, latent demand is defined as the number of additional teams (or members) that could be accommodated if access to a sufficient number of outdoor sports facilities (and ancillary provision) was available. Exported and imported demand refers to those that are playing outside of their local authority area of choice.

A variety of consultation methods have been used to collate demand information. Firstly, face-to-face consultation (normally via video call) has been carried out with key clubs and leagues (as identified by the Council and NGBs) from each sport, thus allowing for the collection of detailed demand information and an exploration of key issues to be interrogated and more accurately assessed. For all remaining clubs, telephone consultation or an online survey (converted to postal if required) has been utilised.

Local sports development officers, county associations and regional governing body officers advised which of the clubs to include in the face-to-face consultation and Sport England has also been included within the consultation process, prior to the project commencing. Issues identified by clubs returning questionnaires has been followed up by telephone or face-to-face interviews.

Key providers and other users of provision have also been contacted, including all schools as well as further and higher education establishments. This involves face-to-face meetings with secondary schools, colleges and universities and an online survey being sent to primary schools, special schools and independent schools.

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Future demand

Alongside current demand, it is important for a PPOSS to assess whether the future demand for provision can be met. One method for calculating this is by using Office of National Statistics (ONS) population projections and proposed housing growth to provide an estimate of the likely future demand for relevant facilities. Assumptions can then be made as to whether existing provision can cater for such growth via the use of team/member generation rates. This involves using an existing participation ratio and applying it to predicted growth to help estimate the change in demand for each sport that may arise in the future.

Other information sources used to help identify future demand include:

- ▶ Recent trends in the participation.
- ▶ The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate.
- ▶ Feedback from clubs on plans to develop additional teams / attract additional members.
- ▶ Any local and NGB specific sports development targets e.g., women's and girls' activity.

All future demand projections across the PPOSS for the Braintree District cover the period up until 2041, in line with the Council's emerging Local Plan Review.

The PPOSS Strategy & Action Plan (Stage D) will also contain several housing growth scenarios to test what additional demand will be generated throughout the Local Plan period.

1.4: Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views

Building on Stage B information gathered, supply and demand data is used to assess the adequacy of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision in the Braintree District and to identify key issues, challenges and aspirations. This forms the basis of this report.

Understand the situation at individual sites

Qualitative ratings are linked to a capacity rating derived from NGB guidance and tailored to suit a local area. For playing pitch sports, the quality and use of each pitch is assessed against recommended capacity to indicate how many match equivalent sessions provision could accommodate.

Potential spare capacity: Play is below the level the site could sustain.	
At capacity: Play is at a level the site can sustain.	
Overused: Play exceeds the level the site can sustain.	

As a guide, the NGBs for football, cricket, rugby union, rugby league and hockey have set a standard number of matches that each pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its quality. Given how the sports operate, this is per week for football and the rugby codes, per day for hockey and per season for cricket. This guide is set out in the table below.

Table 1.4: Capacity of playing pitches

Sport	Pitch type	Good	Standard	Poor
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week

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Sport	Pitch type	Good	Standard	Poor
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Cricket	One synthetic wicket	60 per season	60 per season	0 per season
Hockey AGPs	One AGP	4 matches per day	4 matches per day	0 matches per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a sports-lit hard court is said to have capacity for 60 members, whereas a non-lit has court has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). Other sport specific capacity guidance is detailed within the relevant sections of this report.

Develop the current and future picture of provision

Once capacity is determined on a site-by-site basis, actual spare capacity is calculated on a District-wide and an area-by-area basis via further interrogation of peak time demand (i.e., the day/time demand is most likely to exist). This then identifies whether there is overall spare capacity on provision or whether there is a shortfall.

Although spare capacity may be identified at some sites and in some areas, it does not necessarily mean that there is surplus provision. For example, spare capacity may not be available when it is needed (actual spare capacity) or a site may be retained in a 'strategic reserve' to enable rotation and to reduce wear and tear. There may also be a need to discount some capacity, for example at poor quality sites that should not be used until they are improved or at unsecure sites where long-term access cannot be guaranteed.

Conversely, where a shortfall of capacity is identified, this does not necessarily mean there is a need for increased provision via new facilities. Instead, it may be possible for deficits to be overcome through better utilisation of the existing stock, such as via quality improvements or through improving community access.

Once current capacity has been determined, future capacity can also be calculated via incorporating the future demand that has been identified as well as unmet, latent and exported demand.

Identify the key findings and issues

The Assessment Report, which is this document, is drafted and presented on a sport-by-sport basis, with data analysis undertaken on both a Council-wide and sub-area basis. This focuses on reporting research findings, consultation, site audit information and data analysis supported by detailed GIS mapping. It is agreed and 'signed off' prior to moving on to the strategy and action plan development stages.

Each included section (from Part 2 onwards) summarises the local administration of the included sport (or facility type). Each provides a summary of the supply of and demand for provision, with key issues identified and an overall supply and demand analysis undertaken.

1.5: Stage D: Develop the strategy

The Strategy follows the production of this Assessment Report, once it has been finalised and signed off by the Steering Group. It will feature:

- ◆ Headline findings.
- ◆ An overall vision and associated aims for the PPOSS.
- ◆ Sport-by-sport recommendations and scenarios.
- ◆ Strategic recommendations.
- ◆ A site-by-site and area-by-area action plan.
- ◆ Housing growth scenarios.

Additionally, it will provide detail as to how to deliver the PPOSS and keep it robust and up-to-date (Stage E).

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PART 2: FOOTBALL

2.1: Introduction

The organisation primarily responsible for the development of football in the Braintree District is Essex County FA. It is also responsible for the administration, in terms of discipline, rules and regulations, cup competitions, development of clubs and facilities, volunteers, referees, coaches and delivering national football schemes.

Facility development for football is largely the responsibility of the Football Foundation (FF), which is a charity, linked to and funded by the Premier League, The FA and the Government (via Sport England), that helps communities improve their local football facilities through grant funding. It is committed to improving the experience of playing football for everyone involved in the game. The FF also acts on behalf of The FA as the strategic NGB for football in supporting development of a PPOSS.

This section of the report focuses on the supply and demand for grass football pitches, where formal demand is generally defined through five formats of play and five pitch types, linked to the age of teams and players (please refer to the table below for more detail).

Table 2.1: Football grass pitch playing formats and pitch sizes

Format/pitch type	Age range	Recommended pitch size (metres)	Recommended pitch size including runoff (metres)
Adult	U17s+	100 x 64	106 x 70
Youth 11v11	U15s-U16s	91 x 55	97 x 61
Youth 11v11	U13s-U14s	82 x 50	88 x 56
Youth 9v9	U11s-U12s	73 x 46	79 x 52
Mini 7v7	U9s-U10s	55 x 37	61 x 43
Mini 5v5	U7s-U8s	37 x 27	43 x 33

Part 3 of this report captures supply and demand for third generation pitches (3G pitches), which is the preferred artificial surface type for football.

Local football facility plans (LFFPs)

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Game Strategy (NGS), the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project which was completed in 2020. As part of this, an LFFP has been produced for every local authority across England, with each plan being unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (the FA, Premier League, DCMS and the FF) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP draws on the PPOSS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game as well as including strategic priorities for investment across small sided football (recreational/informal and indoor activity). The LFFP also incorporates consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as under-represented communities. This includes those which may be key partners with regards to football for behavioural change and groups which may be key drivers of FA priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

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The updated LFFP for the Braintree District was produced in 2025. As it is a 'live' document it should be updated following the completion of this study as an up-to-date supply and demand assessment may present findings and recommendations that need to be incorporated for investment purposes. LFFPs identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require potential funding through the FF.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to recognise that the LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential FF investment; it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. An LFFP does, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans.

Consultation

In total there are 337 football teams across 53 clubs which originate from the Braintree District. This includes three exported teams and nine teams related to walking football and futsal. This leaves 326 teams across 50 clubs are identified as playing regular, competitive matches on football pitches during the 2024/25 season.

The current response rate from football clubs equates to a team response rate of 80% (273/342 teams and 25/54 clubs).

Most clubs that have not responded are small clubs fielding just one or two teams. Key clubs consulted as part of the study include:

- ◆ Braintree Youth.
- ◆ Great Bradfords.
- ◆ Great Notley Youth.
- ◆ Halstead Town FC.
- ◆ Hatfield Peverel FC.
- ◆ Notley Youth.
- ◆ Silver End United.
- ◆ Silver End Youth.
- ◆ Sporting 77.
- ◆ Valley Green Youth.
- ◆ White Notley FC.
- ◆ Witham Town Youth.

2.2: Supply

The audit identifies a total of 133 pitches across 58 unique sites in the Braintree District. Of these pitches, 112 are available at some level for community use (although not necessarily used) across 45 sites. All pitches that are unavailable for community use are located at education sites.

The table below shows the breakdown of the pitches which are available for community use. The South Analysis Area has the most (44) or 39%, followed by the Central Analysis Area (40 pitches) or 36%. The Rural North Analysis Area has the fewest pitches (28) or 25%.

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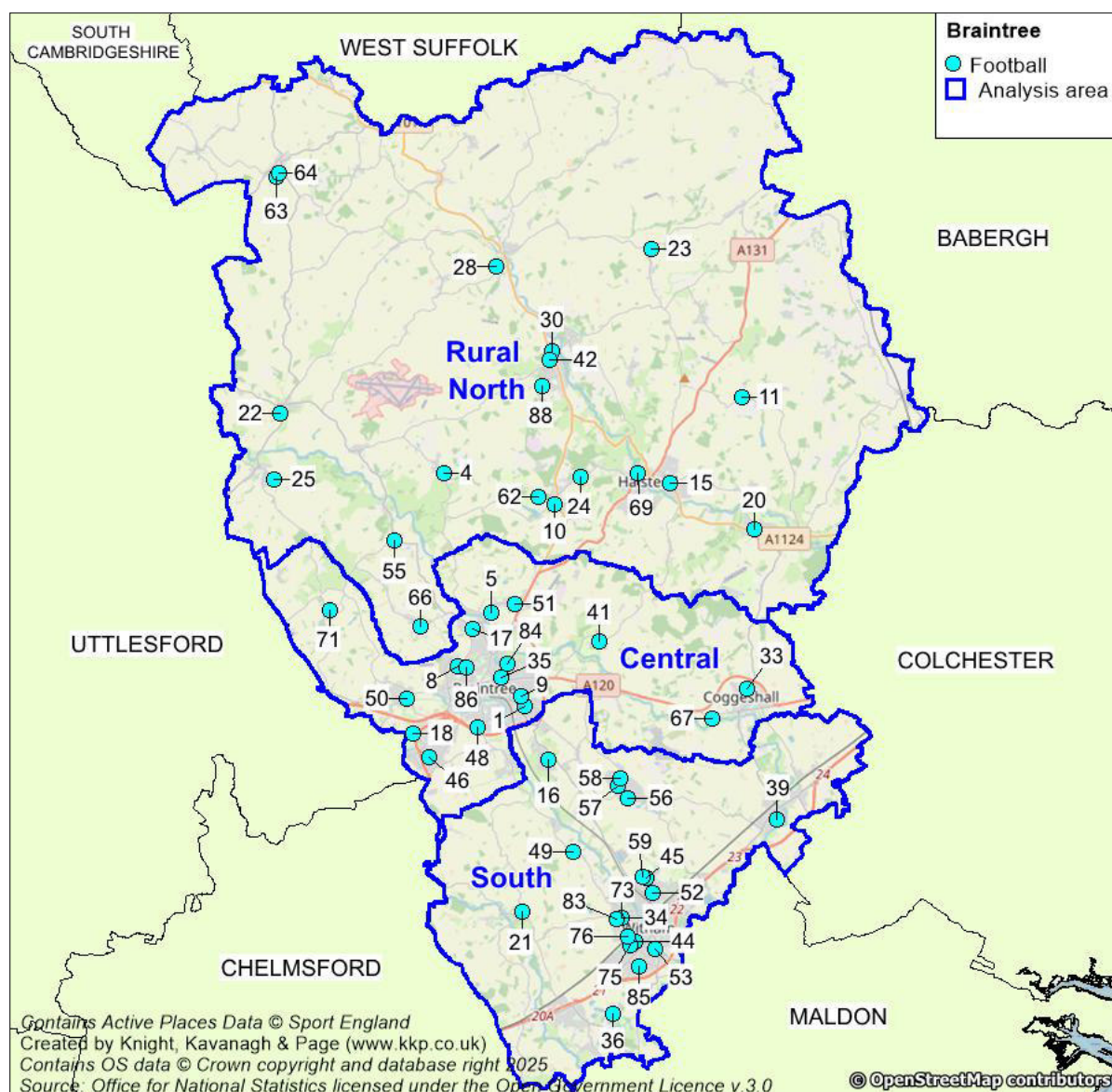
Table 2.2: Summary of number of grass football pitches available for community use

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Central	13	5	8	6	8	40
Rural North	15	-	7	4	2	28
South	16	6	7	6	9	44
Total	44	11	22	16	19	112

As shown in the table above, more adult pitches (44) are identified when compared to pitches of other sizes. Youth 11v11 pitches are the least represented with 11 pitches, followed by mini 7v7 pitches with 16 pitches.

The location of the pitches servicing the Braintree District can be seen in the figure overleaf. For a key to the maps, see Table 2.20.

Figure 2.1: Location of football pitches in the Braintree District



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Disused provision

A disused site is a site that has previously been used for sport but that is not currently being used at all by any users and are not available for community hire either (often being unmarked).

There is one site in the Braintree District which previously accommodated a football pitch but no longer does so. This relates to Burches Meadow, which previously provided one adult pitch, although it is not known when this was last provided/used.

Recreational provision

In addition to formal football provision, there are seven sites across the Braintree District which accommodate recreational provision that is or can be used for informal football activity. These are not classified as disused as they are still being accessed, although they are no longer marked out and used for affiliated football. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 2.3: Summary of recreational provision within the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Postcode	Analysis area	Comments
2	Belchamp St. Paul Playing Field	6021216	CO10 7BU	Rural North	Open space site with kickabout goals.
3	Black Notley Playing Field	6021019	CM77 8LL	Central	Open space site with kickabout goals.
19	Drury Lane	6021102	CO9 4SL	Rural North	Open space site with kickabout goals.
38	Kelvedon Recreation Ground	6020871	CO5 9AB	South	Open space site with kickabout goals which until 2022 provided an adult pitch. Site also has a playground.
40	King George V Playing Field (Braintree)	6017358	CM7 3LT	Central	Open space site with kickabout goals.
79	Meadowside Open Space	-	CM7 5UG	Central	Open space site with kickabout goals.
80	Mill Chase Playing Field	-	CO9 2DQ	Rural North	Open space site with kickabout goals.
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	-	CM3 2LS	South	Open space site, which was previously marked out for two adult pitches (circa 2012).

Future provision

Planning permission has been granted for a new community centre at Maltings Lane, Witham (23/02329/FUL) with football changing rooms in the Mulberry Green residential development which will facilitate the use of new playing field for football adjoining what has already been built but is not yet operational.

There is a planning application in place at Finchingfield Playing Fields on Bardfield Road (24/00388/FUL) for the development of one youth 11v11 and two mini 7v7 football pitches. The outcome of the application is yet to be determined.

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Planning permission at Cressing Sports and Social Club has been granted for the extension of the existing clubhouse to facilitate new changing rooms (21/03508/FUL).

A residential housing development is proposed at Land North East of Witham (25/00789/VAR) and is expected to provide future grass pitch provision. This includes a new sports ground that could indicatively accommodate two youth football pitches in addition to a pavilion.

Braintree Town FC report it aspires to upgrade and refurbish its current facilities. The Club competes in the National League, the first tier of the Non-League System (NLS). The Club is two promotions away from the English Football League (EFL) and aspires to reach its target in the coming years. Its current stadia site, at Braintree Town FC, Cressing Road, does not meet the current ground grading requirements and the facilities are in a need of a repair and upgrade due to the age of the facilities.

The home ground of Coggeshall Town FC has been identified as a draft site allocation in the Local Plan. The Club report it has outgrown its facilities and has plans to move to a large site down the road. It highlights aspirations to provide a stadia pitch, 11v11 3G pitch, grass football pitches as well as a clubhouse and ample car parking. The Club is working alongside the Council to potentially deliver these works.

Management

Most community available pitches in the District are managed by sports clubs, with this amounting to 43 pitches or 38% of all community accessible provision. In the Braintree District, 27 community available pitches are managed by parish councils (24%), 18 by education providers (16%), 11 by the Council (9%) and the remaining 13 by other entities including community associations and Freedom Leisure (12%) as shown in the table below.

Table 2.4: Management of community available pitches by pitch type

Pitch type	Council	Parish council	Education	Sports club	Other
Adult	3	11	5	20	5
Youth 11v11	1	-	7	1	2
Youth 9v9	4	6	1	7	4
Mini 7v7	2	4	2	8	1
Mini 5v5	1	6	3	7	1
Total	11	27	18	43	13

Security of tenure

Clubs are generally considered to have secure tenure where they have freehold, leasehold or formally secured use of their site/s (for example, through a community use agreement) for the next three or more years. Based on this, tenure of sites in the Braintree District is generally secure. This is particularly the case as most parish and District Council sites ensure long-term security of tenure as part of their ongoing commitment to providing a leisure offer. This can be through direct management or via a community organisation or trust.

Most sites operated by sports clubs have security of tenure, either via freehold or a lease arrangement. However, in some instances, existing agreements are coming to an end, such as for Notley Youth FC which has eight years remaining on its lease from the Braintree Hockey Club at The Releet Sports Ground.

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Silver End Youth FC report it has a 99-year lease agreement at Silver Street Field which it leases from the Pavilion Trust. Similarly, Hatfield Peverel FC highlights it leases the pitches at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground from Hatfield Peverel Parish Council with 87 years remaining on the agreement.

Similarly, consultation with Great Bradfords FC reports that it has a weekly rental agreement in place at the various sites it uses across the District. The Club reports that this is not ideal and would, as a minimum, like a rolling lease agreement at sites such as Blackmore End Playing Fields and Braintree Sport & Health Club to allow it to apply for funding in the future for site development. Generally, to attract external funding, clubs generally need long-term security of tenure. As an example, this is a requirement for some types of Football Foundation investment (freehold or a lease of 21+ years is needed for funding over £100,000).

In contrast, all community available provision which is classified as having unsecure tenure is located at schools, specifically where no community use agreements are in place. In the main, education establishments are able to state their own policies, therefore making them more likely to restrict levels of community use.

Sport England promotes the use of education providers sports facilities to be available for wider community use and provides guidance¹.

Pitch quality

The quality of football pitches across the Braintree District has been assessed via a combination of site visits (in December 2024) using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA, PitchPower assessments (see below) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating on a scale of good, standard and poor. For the full site assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; often pitches lack the drainage and maintenance necessary to sustain use. Pitches that receive little to no ongoing repair or post-season remedial work are likely to be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games they can accommodate each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality. Conversely, well maintained pitches are likely to be of a higher standard and capable of taking a number of matches without a significant reduction in surface quality.

The table below summarises the quality of community available pitches in the Braintree District. As seen, most pitches are assessed as standard, with 58 (50%) being rated as such. Of the remaining pitches, 35 (34%) community available pitches are assessed as poor and 19 (16%) are assessed as good.

Table 2.5: Pitch quality assessments (community use pitches)

Pitch type	No. of good quality pitches	No. of standard quality pitches	No. of poor quality pitches
Adult	10	23	11
Youth 11v11	1	5	5
Youth 9v9	3	11	8
Mini 7v7	2	8	6
Mini 5v5	3	11	5
Total	19	58	35

¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/use-our-school>

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The good quality pitches are located at the following sites:

- ✦ Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road (stadia pitch).
- ✦ Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road (training pitch).
- ✦ Earls Colne Recreation Club.
- ✦ Keith Bigden Memorial Ground.
- ✦ Releet Sports Ground.
- ✦ The Crops.
- ✦ The Milbank Stadium.
- ✦ Witham Town Football Club.

These generally receive a rigorous maintenance programme in order to maintain high quality. As an example, Hatfield Peverel FC reports that the pitches at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground have a good maintenance regime and state that this is regular and frequent, thus resulting in its good condition.

Similarly, Great Bradfords FC reports that the pitches at Braintree Sport & Health Club have improved since last season, due to the Club investing money into improving the drainage.

Despite the training pitch at Braintree Town FC, Cressing Road being assessed as good quality, Braintree Town FC has plans to improve the drainage on the pitch as it currently only has a natural drainage system. In addition, the Club reports the pitches need regular and sustainable work due to the clay surface and the stadium facilities are not suitable for promotion to the football league.

The pitches at Witham Sports Ground are rated as standard quality. Diamond Youth FC report the pitches have improved in quality since last season and state this is due to the Club undertaking additional maintenance works.

Most of the good quality pitches have a rigorous maintenance programme in order to maintain high quality. As an example, Coggeshall Town Youth FC reports the pitches at The Crops have improved since last season, due to the Parish Council investing in a new contractor and maintenance includes cutting, reseeding and aeration.

Earls Colne FC reports the pitches at Earls Colne Recreation Ground have a regular and frequent maintenance regime, resulting in their good condition.

Poor quality scores are generally a result of issues relating to natural drainage problems, basic maintenance regimes and signs of wear and tear. Poor quality pitches are located across 26 sites and can be seen in Table 2.22. Many of these sites are operated by either the District Council or Parish councils and schools, where maintenance tends to be less dedicated than at sites managed by sports clubs.

In the main, these pitches show significant signs of wear and tear, with many also having waterlogging problems. Some are managed by the Council, which has a maintenance programme that generally consists of regular grass cutting and line marking, plus aeration twice per year.

In some instances, sites with poor quality pitches also provide good and standard quality pitches, this includes Witham Town Football Club where the adult pitch is assessed as good quality, but the remaining pitches are assessed as standard quality.

Steeple Bumpstead Dynamos FC report the pitches at Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground have declined in quality since last season. The Club highlights this is due to increased water levels on the site, and the grass has stayed too long.

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Great Bradfords Youth state the pitches at Blackmore End Playing Fields are subject to wider public use and report this impacts the quality of the pitches and there has been damage to the goals.

Sporting 77 report the pitches at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) are poor quality due to the drainage. They are also subject to issues with dog fouling and vandalism due to the public nature of the site.

Pitchpower

The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across the Country. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the FF's PitchPower app to carry out a free on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment.

The web app is open to access by all providers, including clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches. Applicants are required to submit a PitchPower assessment for each of their pitches as a condition of a grant funding application for FF grass pitch investment, such as the GPMF (detailed later in this section).

PitchPower is less restricted by the seasonal window of in-season play than the non-technical assessments, instead being able to be undertaken at any time in the year, with assessments completed and submitted within one of three windows: July - October, November – March or April – June.

As well as the completion of other supporting information such as detail of volunteer training and what maintenance equipment is available, the assessment requires the taking of images and a single soil sample at each assessment site. There are three assessment sites for adult and youth pitches at each goal area and the centre circle, whilst for mini pitches there are two sites at the centre circle and one goal area.

The PitchPower assessments use a new five step Performance Quality Standard (PQS) rating system developed by the GMA, with the FF and Sport England agreeing alignment with the capacity guidance within the existing PPOSS guidance. This alignment is shown in the table below.

Table 2.6: Agreed equivalent PPOSS quality rating for PQS ratings

PQS rating	PPOSS quality rating
Poor	Poor
Basic	Standard
Good	Good
Advanced	Good
High	Good

In the Braintree District, nine sites have received a PitchPower assessment and the ratings of these in comparison to the PPOSS non-technical site assessment ratings are shown in the table below. Within the ratings, there are some differences between our findings and the findings of PitchPower, with this therefore requiring discussion. These differences are outlined in the following table.

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Table 2.7: Summary of PitchPower findings compared to PPOSS quality ratings

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	PitchPower rating	PPOSS rating
1	Alec Hunter Academy	Youth 11v11)	Basic	Poor
1	Alec Hunter Academy	Youth 9v9	Poor	Standard
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Adult	Good	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Adult	Advanced	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Youth (11v11)	Advanced	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Youth (9v9)	Advanced	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Mini (7v7)	Good	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Mini (7v7)	Advanced	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Mini (5v5)	Advanced	Good
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Mini (5v5)	Good	Good
40	King George V Playing Fields (Braintree)	Adult	Basic	-
40	King George V Playing Fields (Braintree)	Adult	Basic	-
41	Kings Lane Playing Field	Adult	Basic	Standard
45	New Rickstones Academy	Youth (11v11)	Poor	Poor
45	New Rickstones Academy	Youth (11v11)	Poor	Poor
45	New Rickstones Academy	Youth (11v11)	Poor	Poor
45	New Rickstones Academy	Youth (9v9)	Poor	Poor
45	New Rickstones Academy	Mini (7v7)	Poor	Poor
48	Notley Sports Centre	Adult	Poor	Poor
48	Notley Sports Centre	Youth (9v9)	Poor	Poor
49	Oak Farm	Adult	Poor	Poor
49	Oak Farm	Adult	Poor	Poor
49	Oak Farm	Youth (9v9)	Basic	Standard
51	Releet Sports Ground	Adult	Advanced	Good
51	Releet Sports Ground	Adult	Good	Good
51	Releet Sports Ground	Youth (9v9)	Good	Good
51	Releet Sports Ground	Mini (5v5)	Good	Good
75	Witham Sports Ground	Adult	Basic	Standard
75	Witham Sports Ground	Adult	Basic	Standard
75	Witham Sports Ground	Adult	Basic	Standard
75	Witham Sports Ground	Adult	Poor	Poor
75	Witham Sports Ground	Youth (9v9)	Poor	Poor

Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund²

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation in football, the FA has made it a priority to work towards improving quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the GPMF. As part of this, grass pitches identified as having quality issues by the GMA via PitchPower assessment can apply to access funding to improve pitches to good quality or sustain them at good quality.

² <https://footballfoundation.org.uk/grant/grass-pitch-maintenance-fund>

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Once a PitchPower grass pitch assessment report has been produced for a site, eligible organisations can then apply for grant funding support through the GMPF. This offers a fund of six-year tapered grants to help eligible organisations such as clubs and leagues enhance or sustain the quality of their grass pitches. The fund is a key part of the FF's Grass Pitch Improvement Programme - an ambition to deliver 20,000 quality grass pitches by 2030. If a site is categorised as 'poor' or 'basic' then organisations can apply for funding to enhance pitch quality, whilst clubs with good or standard quality pitches can also apply for a lower level of funding to sustain quality.

All applicants must have the landowners permission (as a minimum) and have received a PitchPower Pitch Assessment Report. The fund is currently open to football clubs (excluding stadia pitches used for National League System play), leagues, education establishments and parish and town councils.

Several clubs/sites in the Braintree District have been awarded funding from the FF to improve the quality of their pitches. This includes CFC Shalford (at Shalford Village Hill Playing Field), Earls Colne FC (at Earls Colne Recreation Ground) and Witham Town FC (at Witham Town Football Club).

Over marked pitches

Over marking of pitches can cause notable damage to the surface quality and lead to overuse beyond recommended capacity. In some cases, mini pitches may be marked onto senior pitches or mini matches may be played widthways across adult or youth pitches. This can lead to targeted areas of surface damage due to a large amount of play focused on high traffic areas, particularly the middle third of the pitch.

Over marking of pitches not only influences available capacity, but it may also cause logistical issues regarding kick off times; for example, when two teams of differing age formats are due to play at the same site at the same time. The table below highlights all sites containing over marked pitches in the Braintree District.

Table 2.8: Sites containing over marked pitches

Site ID	Site	Comments
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Adult pitch is overmarked with a youth 9v9 pitch
21	Fairstead Road Recreation Ground	Adult pitch is overmarked with mini 5v5 pitch
49	Oak Farm	Adult pitch is overmarked with a youth 9v9 pitch
51	Releet Sports Ground	Adult pitch is overmarked with mini 7v7 pitch
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Youth 9v9 pitch overmarked with mini 7v7 pitch

Ancillary facilities

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for football clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

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Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ◆ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
- ◆ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
- ◆ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.
- ◆ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing rooms, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience. As a result, those ancillary facilities that do not meet the above criteria must have a reduced quality rating, regardless of the overall condition of the provision.

Please note the information does not include primary schools which generally only provide mini pitches with the relevant teams not requiring access to changing rooms as teams generally come ready to play.

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The table below highlights sites across the Braintree District together with ancillary facility quality ratings and additional comments where provided and available. This includes information from both the site assessment and consultation phase of the work undertaken.

Table 2.9: Ancillary provision of the clubs that responded to consultation

Site ID	Site name	Users	Overall building quality	Changing room quality	Comments
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Great Bradfords Youth	Poor	Poor	Great Bradfords Youth report there are only toilets provided which are located within a shed.
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Great Bradfords Youth; Legion Rangers; Sporting 77	Standard	Standard	Four changing rooms with basic facilities including communal showers and toilet facilities.
9	Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road)	Braintree Town FC; Braintree Town Supporters	Poor	Poor	Site is equipped with outdated facilities that include changing rooms and toilets which are in major need of refurbishment to accommodate demand.
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Halstead Town Youth FC	Standard	N/A	Halstead Town Youth FC report it does not have access to changing rooms or toilets. This can impact the level of demand received, with leagues often requiring changing rooms in order to participate, especially at adult level and for female football.
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	Sporting 77	Poor	Poor	The pavilion is in poor condition due to it being an ageing facility and needs modernisation. Sporting 77 aspires to refurbish the changing rooms and toilets and potentially extend the building to add storage and further changing facilities. Identified as a priority project in 2025 LFFP.
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Earls Colne FC; Earls Colne Youth	Good	Standard	The Clubhouse onsite includes a kitchen/ bar and four changing rooms. The changing rooms include communal showers; however, it does have self-contained toilets. An official's changing room is also included as well as dedicated spectator toilets and disabled access.
21	Fairstead Road Recreation Ground	Terling FC	Standard	Standard	Two changing rooms on site which include communal player toilets and showers.
24	Gosfield School	Hedingham Ladies	Good	Good	In 2022, the facilities were refurbished and include changing rooms with self-contained showers and toilets.

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Site ID	Site name	Users	Overall building quality	Changing room quality	Comments
28	Great Yeldham Recreation Ground	Heddinghams United	Standard	Standard	Two changing rooms on site which include communal player toilets and showers.
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	Braintree Youth; Kelvedon FC	Poor	Poor	Site is equipped with outdated facilities that include changing rooms and toilets
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Hatfield Peverel FC	Good	Standard	Hatfield Peverel FC notes that its number of changing rooms is not adequate to meet the Club's demand, with vandalism also experienced in recent times. It highlights that it would need to extend the clubhouse to create women's and girls' changing rooms to increase the number of teams it fields.
42	Lawn Meadow	Heddinghams United; Sporting Heddingham	Standard	Standard	Two changing rooms on site which include communal player toilets and showers.
46	Notley Green	Great Notley Youth	N/A	N/A	No ancillary facilities are available on site. Great Notley Youth FC aspires to develop a pavilion and share it with the Scouts, which use the village hall.
49	Oak Farm	White Notley FC	Standard	Standard	Four changing rooms on site which include communal player toilets and showers. Officials' changing is also available with the same amenities.
50	Rayne Village Hall	Rayne Youth FC	Standard	N/A	No changing rooms are available within the clubhouse onsite.
51	Releet Sports Ground	Notley Youth FC	Standard	Poor	Site is shared with Braintree HC. There are plans in place to upgrade the facilities at the site through fund raising and volunteers. Identified as a priority project in 2025 LFFP.
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	Valley Green FC	Standard	Poor	The clubhouse is ageing and is circa 15 years old. The changing rooms have been modified and improved over the years, but aspirations exist for a brand-new clubhouse to be provided. Identified as a priority project in 2025 LFFP.
57	Silver End Village Hall	Silver End Youth	Standard	Poor	Two changing rooms on site which include communal player toilets and showers.
58	Silver Street Field	Kelvedon Social; Silver End United; Silver End Youth	Standard	Poor	Two changing rooms on site which include communal player toilets and showers. The changing rooms are not suitable for women's and girls' demand.

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Site ID	Site name	Users	Overall building quality	Changing room quality	Comments
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Steeple Bumpstead Dynamos Youth	Standard	Poor	Basic provision identified with two changing rooms and accompanying toilets.
66	The Bell Field	Great Bradfords	Standard	Standard	Clubhouse provided with three changing rooms and toilets. Great Bradfords FC report the showers need upgrading as they are outdated.
75	Witham Sports Ground	Diamond Youth FC; Fobs Peverel FC	Standard	Standard	Diamond Youth FC reports the ancillary provision at Witham Sports Ground is of adequate quality, however, it requires access to additional changing rooms.
76	Witham Town Football Club	Witham Town FC; Witham Town Youth	Standard	Standard	Fully functional clubhouse with kitchen/ bar, changing rooms, officials changing and a social space. The Club highlights plans to modernise the facility.

As seen in the table above, four sites are identified as providing poor quality changing facilities across the Braintree District, with these being Blackmore End Playing Fields, Braintree Town FC, Cressing Road, Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field), John Ray Recreation Ground. These sites are generally serviced by dated facilities that require improving or replacing and have signs of wear and tear. Each therefore requires a degree of modernisation to ensure it remains fit for purpose in the future, although this ranges from renovation to the potential of a complete re-build.

Most sites in the Braintree District have no dedicated women and girls changing rooms, although the Football Foundation report this is generally not a barrier as long as women's and girls' teams have access to compliant facilities should be provided. Facilities are generally not encouraged to have gendered changing rooms to allow for flexible use by teams regardless of gender.

Many sites are also identified as being without purposeful ancillary provision. On a site-by-site basis, this requires resolution, with facilities best suited to the userbase required. If sites are setup for and/or accessed by adult teams or women's and girls' demand, this could necessitate the need for wide ranging clubhouses, whereas if demand is only received by youth and mini teams, less sophisticated provision is likely to be warranted. This is because such demand generally shows up ready to play, with facilities such as toilets considered to be most important rather than changing rooms.

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Away from clubhouse provision, car parking is reported as being a particular issue at the following sites:

- ✦ Braintree Town FC, Cressing Road (Braintree Town FC).
- ✦ Great Bradfords FC (Blackmore End Playing Fields, Braintree Sport & Health Club and The Bell Field).
- ✦ Sporting 77 (Deanery Hill- Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field).
- ✦ Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground (Steeple Bumpstead Dynamos).
- ✦ Valley Green FC (Rickstones Sports Ground).

The above sites all suffer with a lack of car parking spaces, especially at peak times and if more than one team is playing at the same time.

Local Football Facility Plan

As identified in the table above, the 2025 LFFP for the Braintree District area identifies sites considered as priority sites for clubhouse and changing facility improvements, although there may again be a need to amend and/or add to this list based on the findings of this study. It recommends that the following nine sites should be a priority for ancillary replacement:

- ✦ Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field).
- ✦ Releet Sports Ground.
- ✦ Rickstones Sports Ground.

In addition, the LFFP also identifies replacement of ancillary provision in the Braintree Town area and South East area, with specific sites yet to be confirmed. Potential options for the former include Braintree Sport & Health Club and John Ray Recreation Ground. Whilst no potential sites have been identified in the South East area.

2.3: Demand

A total of 337 football teams from 53 clubs are identified as originating from within the Braintree District, although some of this demand either currently plays in other authorities (see exported demand section) or includes demand relating to walking football and futsal teams. This is discussed in greater detail under additional demand.

Through the audit and assessment, 326 teams from within 50 clubs are identified as playing within the District, with this comprising of 66 adult teams, 116 youth 11v11 teams, 58 youth 9v9 teams, 63 mini 7v7 teams and 25 mini 5v5 teams.

Table 2.10: Summary of number of competitive teams currently playing in the Braintree District

Age group	No. of teams
Adult Men's (18-45)	59
Adult Women's (18-45)	7
Youth Boys (12-17)	104
Youth Girls (12-17)	12
Youth Boys (10-11)	53
Youth Girls (10-11)	5
Mini Mixed (8-9)	63
Mini Mixed (6-7)	25
Total	326

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Football in the Braintree District is played predominately in the South Analysis Area with a total of 136 teams (42%) followed by the Central Analysis Area with 117 teams (36%). This is further summarised in the following table.

Table 2.11: Summary of number of competitive football teams playing affiliation matches

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5
Central	11	47	24	26	9
Rural North	20	26	9	11	7
South	33	43	25	26	9
Total	64	116	58	63	25

There are more youth 11v11 teams (116 teams) when compared to other formats of play, with mini 5v5 teams being the least represented (25 teams).

Women's and girls' demand

The FA has a current focus on growing the game for women's and girls, with this considered to be a key objective of any facility investment to ensure that facilities are suitable for female access. This also forms part of its Inspiring Positive Change Strategy.

As indicated in Table 2.12 above, there are currently 24 dedicated female teams playing within the Braintree District, representing just 7% of the total number of teams. Whilst there are also additional female participants within mixed mini teams, this is a relatively low amount when compared nationally. It is therefore anticipated that the share of female football will increase over the coming years due to the high rate of growth versus the men's game.

In addition, there are currently seven Wildcat Centres operating in the Braintree District. Wildcat centres work with County FA qualified coaches to deliver local weekly sessions, providing opportunities for girls aged 5-11 to develop fundamental skills and experience football in a safe and fun environment and Squad sessions for 12-16 year olds follow the same format. All organisations delivering Wildcat centres or Squad sessions receive a £900 grant over two years and equipment in their first year of running the programme to help develop and increase girl's participation.

Table 2.12: Summary of wildcat centres

Club	Venue	Date and Time
Great Bradfords FC	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Thursday 6-7pm
Great Notley YFC	Discovery Centre	Tuesday 6-7pm
Heddinghams United FC	Heddingham School	Friday 5-6pm
Hatfield Peverel FC	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	Saturday 11am-12pm
Valley Green FC	Rickstones Sports Ground	Saturday 08:30-9:15am
Diamond Youth FC	Silver Street Field	Saturday 10-11am
Witham Town YFC	Witham Town Football Club	Saturday 09:30-10:30am

Additional demand

In addition to the demand identified above, Braintree FC fields three futsal teams which play matches in the sports hall at St John Payne Catholic School in Chelmsford (see exported demand section for further information).

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There are six walking football teams in the District with one playing at Notley Green FC and the remaining five teams at Valley Green FC. Notley Green FC plays matches on the sand-based AGP at Releet Sports Ground and the Valley Green FC teams play matches on the grass pitches at Rickstones Sports Ground, although some activity also takes place away from grass provision (e.g., via artificial pitches and indoor sports halls).

National League System

The National League System (NLS) is a series of interconnected leagues for adult men's football clubs in England. It begins below the Football League (from the National League at Step 1) and comprises of six steps, with various leagues at each level and more leagues lower down the system than at the top. The NLS has a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the steps, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

Clubs playing within the NLS must adhere to Stadium Accreditation³ requirements set out by the FA. The higher the level of football being played the higher the requirements, and clubs cannot progress into the league above if the ground grading requirements do not meet the correct specifications. Stadium Accreditation assesses grounds from Grade 1 to 7, which aligns with Step 1 clubs down to Step 6 clubs making the transition from regional feeder leagues. Please refer to the FA website⁴ for the full specifications for each.

There are seven clubs which play within the NLS in the Braintree District, as seen in the table below.

Table 2.13: Summary of teams playing within the NLS

Team	League	Level
Braintree Town FC	National League	Step 1
Coggeshall Town FC	Isthmian League North Division	Step 4
Earls Colne FC	Essex and Suffolk Border Football League	Regional feeder league
Halstead Town FC	Essex Senior Football League	Step 5
Hatfield Peverel FC	Essex and Suffolk Border Football League	Regional feeder league
White Notley FC	Essex and Suffolk Border Football League	Regional feeder league
Witham Town FC	Isthmian League North Division	Step 4

It is important to note that the jump from a Regional Feeder League to Step 6 is significant and that as a minimum, sites require a sports-lit pitch with hardstanding areas for fans as well as turnstiles for entry. For clubs within the NLS and regional feeder leagues, promotion is not always achievable due to these facility constraints.

Linked to the above, currently at its current site (Braintree Town FC, Cressing Road) does not meet the above requirements in order to rise up the football pyramid system into the National League (Step 1). It would be required to increase its seating capacity to 4,000, which is currently not possible at its current site. This principal reason for the Club wanting to refurbish and upgrade its current site.

Similarly, consultation with Hatfield Peverel FC highlight it would need to upgrade its current infrastructure to progress to Step 7. This includes the aspiration of developing a 11v11 3G pitch as well as a refurbished clubhouse and car parking.

³ <https://premierleaguestadiumfund.co.uk/stadium-accreditation-programme>

⁴ <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/ground-grading>

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Women's National League System

Correspondingly there is a Women's National League System (WNLS) similar to the adult men's which provides structure to the women's game. This ranges from Tier 1 to Tier 6 with each Tier requiring differing Stadium Accreditation requirements.

Although women's clubs still require to meet ground requirements set out by the FA these differ from the men's National League System. Ratings range from grade A to C each with differing minimum requirements. Tier 1 and 2 in the Women's National League System is akin to Tier 3 and four of the men's National League System, although not exactly the same. The system is also hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

There is currently one team (Great Bradfords Ladies) in the Braintree District which play within the Women's National League System, as seen in the table below.

Table 2.14: Summary of teams playing within the NLS

Team	League	Level
Great Bradfords Ladies	Essex County Women's Football League	Regional feeder league

Exported/imported demand

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of the Braintree District despite being registered to the local authority. This is normally because pitch requirements cannot be met.

Two clubs are identified as exporting demand outside of the Braintree District into neighbouring authorities, with this consisting of three adult teams. The table below explores this further, with provision in Babergh and Colchester instead accessed.

Table 2.15: Summary of exported match play demand into other local authorities

Club	Exported demand (teams)	Venue	Surface	Local authority
Feering Village FC	1 x adult	Mile End Recreation Ground	Grass	Colchester
Stoke Wanderers FC	2 x adult	Assington Village Playing Field	Grass	Babergh

As identified previously, Braintree FC fields three futsal teams which export demand outside of the District into Chelmsford and plays matches in the sports hall at St John Payne Catholic School.

In respect of imported demand, Bethel Christian Fellowship FC, which is otherwise based in Chelmsford, exports demand into the District. Its adult team play on the grass pitches at Witham Sports Ground.

Latent/unmet demand

Unmet/latent demand is defined as the number of additional teams (or members) that could be accommodated if access to a sufficient number of playing pitch facilities (and ancillary provision) was available.

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Of the clubs that responded to consultation, four report levels of latent demand and provide reasoning. This is summarised in the table below.

Table 2.16: Summary of latent demand

Club	Comments
Diamond Youth FC	Could field additional teams across all its age groups if it had access to more pitches. Furthermore, it could field more teams if given access to more or better ancillary provision.
Halstead Town Youth FC	Could field additional teams across all its age groups if it had access to more pitches. Furthermore, it could field more teams if given access to more or better ancillary provision.
Steeple Bumpstead Dynamos FC	Could field additional teams across all its age groups if it had access to more pitches.
Valley Green FC	Could field additional teams across all its age groups if it had access to more pitches.

Given the relatively high level of future demand noted in the section below, it is considered that this latent demand will also be absorbed by participation increases and population growth. As such, the quantifiable figures should be merged rather than being considered separately (all clubs identifying latent demand also have future demand aspirations that captures potential growth).

Some latent and unmet demand is also reported because of a lack of training capacity. This is further explored within Part 3 of this report.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in several ways, such as through participation increases and by using population forecasts. In addition, the Strategy & Action Plan document that follows this report will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate additional demand for football that could from housing development plans across the District.

Population growth

Based on population projections to 2041 (the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) can estimate the likely additional demand for grass football pitches that will arise from any growth. This is by using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, with team generation rates then established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

It, however, does not account for the scale or distribution of housing growth in the District, proposed in the Local Plan, and this will be subject to scenarios in the Strategy and Action Plan.

For reference, total current population in the Braintree District in 2025 of 155,273 is projected to increase to 161,079 by 2041 (ONS projections). The table below shows the number of new teams that are forecasted to be generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions that this will require.

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Table 2.17: District wide team generation rates

Age group	Team generation rate	Number of new teams generated by the new population	Number of new teams generated by the new population - rounded figure	Match equivalent sessions ⁵
Adult Mens (18-45)	1:311	4.13	4	2
Adult Womens (18-45)	1:2,364	0.56	1	0.5
Youth Boys (12-17)	1:48	4.18	4	2
Youth Girls (12-17)	1:377	0.51	1	0.5
Youth Boys (10-11)	1:38	2.70	3	1.5
Youth Girls (10-11)	1:368	0.25	0	0
Mini Mixed (8-9)	1:58	3.21	3	1.5
Mini Mixed (6-7)	1:145	1.27	1	0.5

As seen, it is anticipated that there will be a likely growth of 17 additional teams, consisting of five adult, five youth 11v11, three youth 9v9, three mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 teams.

When considered across the analysis areas, the growth is outlined in the table below. The growth is projected across all three analysis areas.

Table 2.18: Population growth by analysis area in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Central	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	-	2.5
Rural North	1	0.5	-	0.5	-	2
South	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	4
Total	2.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	0.5	8.5

Notwithstanding the above, it must be noted that team generation rates are based exclusively on future population forecasts and do not account for societal factors or changes in the way people may wish to play sport. Similarly, they cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused toward certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools. This is particularly pertinent to a current drive towards increasing female participation, with this likely to result in the creation of teams above and beyond what population forecasts predict.

Participation increases

Based upon consultation respondents, 10 clubs report aspirations to increase their number of teams, equating to growth of 52 teams as shown in the table below. Broken down as eight adult, 17 youth 11v11, 14 youth 9v9, 10 mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 teams.

Table 2.19: Future demand aspirations reported by clubs

Club	Analysis area	Future demand	Pitch size	Match equivalent sessions
Braintree Town FC	Central	1 x Adult	Men's	0.5
Braintree Town FC	Central	1 x Adult	Women's	0.5

⁵ Two teams require one pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, one team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions on their relevant pitch type.

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Club	Analysis area	Future demand	Pitch size	Match equivalent sessions
Braintree Town Youth FC	Central	3 x Youth boys	Youth 11v11	1.5
Braintree Town Youth FC	Central	4 x Youth girls	Youth 11v11	2
Braintree Town Youth FC	Central	4 x Youth boys	Youth 9v9	2
Braintree Town Youth FC	Central	3 x Youth girls	Youth 9v9	1.5
Braintree Town Youth FC	Central	2 x Mini	Mini 7v7	1
Diamond Youth FC	South	2 x Youth boys	Youth 11v11	1
Diamond Youth FC	South	1 x Youth boys	Youth 9v9	0.5
Diamond Youth FC	South	1 x Youth girls	Youth 11v11	0.5
Diamond Youth FC	South	1 x Youth girls	Youth 9v9	0.5
Diamond Youth FC	South	2 x Mini	Mini 7v7	1
Great Bradfords FC	Central	2 x Adult	Men's	1
Great Notley FC	Central	1 x Youth boys	Youth 11v11	0.5
Great Notley FC	Central	1 x Youth boys	Youth 9v9	0.5
Great Notley FC	Central	2 x Mini	Mini 7v7	1
Halstead Town Youth	Rural North	2 x Youth boys	Youth 11v11	1
Halstead Town Youth	Rural North	1 x Youth boys	Youth 9v9	0.5
Halstead Town Youth	Rural North	2 x Mini	Mini 7v7	1
Halstead Town Youth	Rural North	2 x Mini	Mini 5v5	1
Hatfield Peverel FC	South	1 x Adult	Women's	0.5
Hatfield Peverel FC	South	2 x Youth girls	Youth 11v11	1
Hatfield Peverel FC	South	1 x Youth boys	Youth 9v9	0.5
Hatfield Peverel FC	South	1 x Youth girls	Youth 9v9	0.5
Hatfield Peverel FC	South	1 x Mini	Mini 7v7	0.5
Hatfield Peverel FC	South	1 x Mini	Mini 5v5	0.5
Notley Youth FC	Central	1 x Youth boys	Youth 11v11	0.5
Notley Youth FC	Central	1 x Youth boys	Youth 9v9	0.5
Notley Youth FC	Central	1 x Mini	Mini 7v7	0.5
Silver End Youth	South	1 x Adult	Men's	0.5
Silver End Youth FC	South	1 x Youth boys	Youth 11v11	0.5
Sporting 77	Central	2 x Adult	Men's	1

The total future demand reported by clubs amounts to 26 match equivalent sessions per week. This is broken down by analysis area and pitch type in the table below.

Table 2.20: Summary of future demand expressed by clubs in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Central	2	4	4.5	1.5	-	12
Rural North	-	1	0.5	1	1	3.5
South	2	3.5	2	0.5	0.5	8.5
Total	4	8.5	7	5	1.5	26

In addition, it must be noted that some aims and initiatives are likely to result in participation increasing to a greater level than what is projected through population growth. For example, the FA has a focus on growing women's and girls' demand that will likely see a greater number of female teams than what is currently predicted.

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Future demand summary

In the supply and demand analysis at the end of this section of the report, it is considered impractical for all future demand to be factored in. This is because should club aspirations be realised, this would absorb the future demand identified via population growth, rather than it being judged separately and therefore double counted. Furthermore, given the volume of demand expressed by clubs, it is unclear as to how viable such increases are. This is, thus, considered aspirational compared to the potential growth identified linked to population increases.

Based on the above, only demand identified as a consequence of population growth is factored into demand calculations. Participation increases in demand will be further considered via the incorporation of a scenario in the proceeding Strategy document. This will also include the potential impact of other growth areas e.g., additional increases in female participation.

As appropriate, the Strategy document will contain a scenario exploring the participation trends for football over the lifespan of the PPOSS and what impact this trend will have on demand locally. It is considered that this is the most likely growth scenario given the consistent growth over recent years (circa 24% increase in teams over the last seven years).

It is also important to note that future population demand (through ONS) does also not necessarily account for the population increases associated with planned housing growth in the District. Therefore, the impact of housing led growth will be considered in a separate Housing Growth section in the Strategy document.

2.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

As a guide, the FA has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without it adversely affecting its current quality. This is set out in the table below.

Table 2.21: FA match capacity guidance

Adult pitches		Youth pitches		Mini pitches	
Pitch quality	Matches per week	Pitch quality	Matches per week	Pitch quality	Matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 2.23 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play recorded to determine a capacity rating as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

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Match equivalent sessions

Pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected. As the main usage of pitches is likely to be for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions but may for example include training sessions and informal use.

One team accessing one pitch is considered to use the pitch for 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week. This is based on them playing home and away fixtures on an alternate basis (therefore only requiring access to their home pitch every two weeks).

Education sites

To account for curricular/extra-curricular use of education pitches, the current usage of such sites needs to be adjusted. The only time this would not happen is when a school does not use its pitches at all and the sole use is community use. The adjustment is typically dependent on the amount of play carried out, the number of pitches on site and whether there is access to an on-site AGP (as this can result in less grass pitch use).

In some cases, where there is no identified community use, there is little capacity to accommodate further play. Internal usage often exceeds recommended pitch capacity, which is further exacerbated by basic maintenance regimes that may not extend beyond grass cutting and line marking. As such, where not overplayed as a result of community use, many school sites are considered to have no spare capacity to accommodate further usage based on assumed curricular and extra-curricular activity.

For education sites which are available for community use, current play has been increased on a site-by-site basis following consultation with the providers. Generally, usage is increased by one match equivalent session per pitch; however, in some cases, further use is added when it is known that a particular provider uses a particular pitch heavily.

Informal use

Several football pitches on open access sites, including for example, Kelvedon Recreation Ground and King George V Playing Field and especially those managed by the District Council and parish/town councils. This often results in informal use in the form of, for example, unorganised sport (including football) and exercise groups. However, pitches are not formally marked out at these sites and as such use is not recorded and is difficult to quantify.

Peak time

Spare capacity can only be considered as actual spare capacity if pitches are available at peak time. In the Braintree District, peak time is considered to be Saturday PM for adult pitches and Sunday AM for the remaining pitch types. Peak time is based on when most teams are playing matches.

On occasion, spare capacity in the peak period is identified despite the pitch being played to capacity or overplayed, or more spare capacity is identified in the peak period than the overall spare capacity that exists. This is because most or all of the use on those particular pitches occurs outside of the peak period. Where this is the case, given that peak time usage should not be utilised over and above overall capacity, adjustments have been made.

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A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of play. Any pitch not meeting this criterion is therefore not considered to have additional capacity, although it may have capacity outside of peak time.

There may also be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to the already low carrying capacity of the pitches. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn will aid the improvement of pitch quality. Furthermore, any pitches with unsecured tenure are not considered to have actual spare capacity as no further play should be encouraged on such sites given that future access cannot be guaranteed.

The way actual spare capacity is represented in Table 2.23 is shown in the following table.

Table 2.22: Capacity balance examples

Spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of capacity balance
1	Highlighted in green with a number denotes that the pitches have actual spare capacity at peak time.
-	With a dash, this indicates that the pitch is unavailable in the peak period. If it were to be made available, actual spare capacity could exist.
0	Highlighted in orange with a zero, this indicates the pitch is played to capacity, either overall or during the peak period.
1	Not highlighted by with a value, this indicates that the pitch has spare capacity in the peak period; however, capacity has been discounted. This may be due to unsecure tenure and/or poor pitch quality.
1	Highlighted in red with a number denotes that the pitches are overplayed and have no spare capacity across the week. This includes at peak time, despite any availability at peak time which may exist.

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Table 2.23: Grass football pitch capacity analysis

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Postcode	Available for community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play ⁶	Carrying capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	Central	CM7 3NR	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	Central	CM7 3NR	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	Central	CM7 3NR	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	Central	CM7 3NR	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	30005567	Rural North	CM7 4DN	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Poor	2.5	1	1.5	0	Overplayed.
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	30005567	Rural North	CM7 4DN	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Poor	2	2	0	0	Played to capacity.
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	30005567	Rural North	CM7 4DN	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	2	2	0	0	Played to capacity.
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	30005567	Rural North	CM7 4DN	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	0	Overplayed.
5	Bocking Sports Club	6017458	Central	CM7 5JY	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	2	Standard	3.5	4	0.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	Central	CM7 1FF	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	0	4	4	1	Actual spare capacity.
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	Central	CM7 1FF	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	1	4	3	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	Central	CM7 1FF	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	2	Standard	4.5	4	0.5	0	Overplayed.
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	Central	CM7 1FF	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	0	Overplayed.
9	Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road (stadia pitch)	6003269	Central	CM7 3DE	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Good	0.5	3	2.5	0.5	Spare capacity discounted due to being a stadia pitch.
9	Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road (training pitch)	6003269	Central	CM7 3DE	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Good	0.5	3	2.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
10	Church Road Playing Fields	6021287	Rural North	CO9 1TL	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
10	Church Road Playing Fields	6021287	Rural North	CO9 1TL	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	0	1	1	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
11	Clayhills	6021051	Rural North	CO9 2NG	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	0	1	1	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.

⁶ Match equivalent sessions

⁷ Match equivalent sessions; based on pitch quality - the FA recommends a maximum number of match equivalent sessions to be accommodate per pitch type. Please refer to Section 2.4 for the full breakdown.

⁸ Red indicates overplay, green indicates potential spare capacity and amber indicates at capacity.

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Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Postcode	Available for community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play ⁶	Carrying capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	1207038	Rural North	CO9 2ES	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Poor	5.5	1	4.5	0	Overplayed.
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	1207038	Rural North	CO9 2ES	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	0	2	2	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
16	Cressing Sports and Social Club	6020925	South	CM77 8JQ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	6021160	Central	CM7 5SS	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	6021160	Central	CM7 5SS	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	2	Poor	2.5	4	1.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	6021160	Central	CM7 5SS	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	2.5	1	1.5	0	Overplayed.
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	6021143	Central	CM77 7FS	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	1	Standard	1	2	1	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	6021143	Central	CM77 7FS	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity.
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	1206961	Rural North	CO6 2NG	Yes	Community association	Secure	Adult	-	1	Good	1.5	3	1.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	1206961	Rural North	CO6 2NG	Yes	Community association	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Good	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
21	Fairstead Road Recreation Ground	6021275	South	CM3 2BU	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	1	4	3	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
21	Fairstead Road Recreation Ground	6021275	South	CM3 2BU	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
22	Finchfield Playing Fields	6012547	Rural North	CM7 4LZ	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity.
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	6012446	Rural North	CO9 3BB	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity.
24	Gosfield School	1203917	Rural North	CO9 1PF	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	-	2	Poor	2.5	2	0.5	0	Overplayed.
25	Great Bardfield Playing Fields	6021073	Rural North	CM7 4RR	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
28	Great Yeldham Recreation Ground	6021224	Rural North	CO9 4HD	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	1	Actual spare capacity.
28	Great Yeldham Recreation Ground	6021224	Rural North	CO9 4HD	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
28	Great Yeldham Recreation Ground	6021224	Rural North	CO9 4HD	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	1	4	3	0	Played to capacity at peak time.

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Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Postcode	Available for community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play ⁶	Carrying capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
28	Great Yeldham Recreation Ground	6021224	Rural North	CO9 4HD	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity.
30	Hedingham School	1204086	Rural North	CO9 3QH	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	-	2	Standard	4	4	0	0	Played to capacity.
33	Honywood Community Science School	1203754	Central	CO6 1PZ	Yes-unused	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	2	Standard	2	4	2	2	Spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
34	Howbridge Church of England Junior School	30004083	South	CM8 1BZ	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
34	Howbridge Church of England Junior School	30004083	South	CM8 1BZ	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	1039950	Central	CM7 9DZ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	4	Standard	5	8	3	3	Actual spare capacity.
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	1039950	Central	CM7 9DZ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	1	4	3	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	1039950	Central	CM7 9DZ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	2	Standard	2	8	6	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	1039950	Central	CM7 9DZ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	2	2	0	0	Played to capacity.
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	1039912	South	CM3 2JL	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	2	Good	2	6	4	1	Actual spare capacity.
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	1039912	South	CM3 2JL	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	2	Good	0.5	12	11.5	1.5	Actual spare capacity.
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	1039912	South	CM3 2JL	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	2	Good	1.5	12	10.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	1039912	South	CM3 2JL	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(11v11)	1	Good	4.5	4	0.5	0	Overplayed.
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	1039912	South	CM3 2JL	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Good	2.5	4	1.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
39	Kelvedon St Marys CE Primary Academy	30003972	Rural North	CO5 9DS	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
41	Kings Lane Playing Field	30002479	Central	CM77 8AQ	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity.
42	Lawn Meadow	6020958	Rural North	CO9 3QL	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	4.5	2	2.5	0	Overplayed.
44	Maltings Academy	1204085	South	CM8 1EP	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Poor	1	2	1	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality and unsecure tenure.
44	Maltings Academy	1204085	South	CM8 1EP	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	2	Poor	2	2	0	0	Played to capacity.
45	New Rickstones Academy	1203933	South	CM8 2SD	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	2	2	0	0	Played to capacity.

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Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Postcode	Available for community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play ⁶	Carrying capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
45	New Rickstones Academy	1203933	South	CM8 2SD	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(11v11)	3	Poor	3.5	3	0.5	0	Overplayed.
45	New Rickstones Academy	1203933	South	CM8 2SD	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Played to capacity.
46	Notley Green	30006007	Central	CM77 7US	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
46	Notley Green	30006007	Central	CM77 7US	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	6.5	2	4.5	0	Overplayed.
48	Notley Sports Centre	1003757	Central	CM7 1WY	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	-	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	0	Overplayed.
48	Notley Sports Centre	1003757	Central	CM7 1WY	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Played to capacity.
49	Oak Farm	6021256	South	CM8 1SF	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	2	Poor	3.5	2	1.5	0	Overplayed.
49	Oak Farm	6021256	South	CM8 1SF	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	0	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity.
50	Rayne Village Hall	6021228	Central	CM77 6TX	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	0	Overplayed.
50	Rayne Village Hall	6021228	Central	CM77 6TX	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	2	Standard	0	8	8	2	Actual spare capacity.
50	Rayne Village Hall	6021228	Central	CM77 6TX	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	1	4	3	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
51	Releet Sports Ground	1103129	Central	CM7 5LJ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	2	Good	5	6	1	1	Actual spare capacity.
51	Releet Sports Ground	1103129	Central	CM7 5LJ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Good	1.5	6	4.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
51	Releet Sports Ground	1103129	Central	CM7 5LJ	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Good	3	4	1	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	6021008	South	CM8 2LX	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult	-	2	Standard	8.5	4	4.5	0	Overplayed.
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	6021008	South	CM8 2LX	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	1.5	4	2.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	6021008	South	CM8 2LX	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	3	4	1	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	6021008	South	CM8 2LX	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	3	2	1	0	Overplayed.
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	6017684	South	CM8 1FX	Yes	Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	1	2	1	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	6021255	Rural North	CM7 5EZ	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	1	Actual spare capacity.
56	Silver End Academy	1043936	South	CM8 3RZ	Yes-unused	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(5v5)	2	Poor	2	4	2	2	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality and unsecure tenure.
57	Silver End Village Hall	6012505	South	CM8 3RQ	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	2	2	0	0	Played to capacity.
58	Silver Street Field	1039954	South	CM8 3QG	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
58	Silver Street Field	1039954	South	CM8 3QG	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity.
58	Silver Street Field	1039954	South	CM8 3QG	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	1	4	3	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
58	Silver Street Field	1039954	South	CM8 3QG	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	1	2	1	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
59	Southview School	30005164	South	CM8 2TA	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.

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Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Postcode	Available for community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play ⁶	Carrying capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
62	St Margarets Prep School	6010532	Rural North	CO9 1SE	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
62	St Margarets Prep School	6010532	Rural North	CO9 1SE	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
63	Steeple Bumpstead Primary School	6012619	Rural North	CB9 7ED	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	6012619	Rural North	CB9 7ED	Yes	Council	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	0	2	2	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	6012619	Rural North	CB9 7ED	Yes	Council	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	2	1	1	0	Overplayed.
66	The Bell Field	6020922	Rural North	CM7 5AQ	Yes	Parish Council	Secure	Adult	-	1	Poor	2	1	1	0	Overplayed.
67	The Crops	6021270	Central	CO6 1NT	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Good	5	3	2	0	Overplayed.
67	The Crops	6021270	Central	CO6 1NT	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	1	4	3	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
69	The Milbank Stadium	6010369	Rural North	CO9 1HR	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Good	2	3	1	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
71	The Salings Millennium Hall & Playing Field	1039957	Central	CM7 5DW	Yes	Community association	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	0	1	1	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
73	Witham Oaks Academy	50000365	South	CM8 1NA	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
73	Witham Oaks Academy	50000365	South	CM8 1NA	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Poor	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
75	Witham Sports Ground	6021212	South	CM8 1EP	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Adult	-	3	Standard	1	7	6	3	Actual spare capacity.
75	Witham Sports Ground	6021212	South	CM8 1EP	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Adult	-	1	Poor	0	1	1	1	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
75	Witham Sports Ground	6021212	South	CM8 1EP	Yes	Freedom Leisure	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	3	1	2	0	Overplayed.
76	Witham Town Football Club	1039944	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Adult	-	1	Good	11	3	8	0	Overplayed.
76	Witham Town Football Club	1039944	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(5v5)	1	Standard	1.5	4	2.5	0	Played to capacity at peak time.
76	Witham Town Football Club	1039944	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	5	4	1	0	Overplayed.
76	Witham Town Football Club	1039944	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	Sports Club	Secure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	5	2	3	0	Overplayed.
83	Powers Hall Academy		South	CM8 1NA	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	Pitches are unavailable for community use.

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Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Postcode	Available for community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play ⁶	Carrying capacity ⁷	Capacity balance ⁸	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
84	Great Bradford Junior School	-	Central	CM7 9LW	No	Education	Unsecure	Youth	(9v9)	1	Poor	1	1	0	0	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
85	Holy Family Catholic Primary School	-	South	CM8 1DX	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	2	Poor	1	4	3	2	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
86	John Bunyan Primary and Nursery School	-	Central	CM7 5UL	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	1	Standard	1	4	3	2	Pitches are unavailable for community use.
88	St Peter's C of E Primary School	-	Rural North	CO9 3NR	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini	(7v7)	2	Poor	1	4	3	2	Pitches are unavailable for community use.

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Actual spare capacity

Actual spare capacity totals 24.5 match equivalent sessions per week across 35 pitches in the Braintree District. This has been broken down by analysis area and by pitch type below.

Table 2.24: Summary of actual spare capacity (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Central	5	-	1	0.5	3.5	10
Rural North	3	-	2.5	-	0.5	6
South	4.5	-	1	0.5	2.5	8.5
Total	12.5	-	4.5	1	6.5	24.5

Most actual spare capacity is identified on adult pitches, although there is some level of spare capacity on the majority of pitch types with the exception of youth 11v11 pitches. By analysis area, most actual spare capacity is in the Central Analysis Area, followed by the South Analysis Area.

Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it can sustain (based on its quality rating), which can often be due to the low carrying capacity of pitches. In the Braintree District, 30 pitches across 17 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 43.5 match equivalent sessions per week. This is summarised site-by-site in the table below.

Table 2.25: Overplay site-by-site

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (MES per week)
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Rural North	Adult	1	1.5
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Rural North	Youth (9v9)	1	0.5
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	Youth (11v11)	2	0.5
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	Youth (9v9)	1	0.5
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Rural North	Adult	1	4.5
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	Central	Youth (9v9)	1	1.5
24	Gosfield School	Rural North	Adult	2	0.5
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	South	Youth (11v11)	1	0.5
42	Lawn Meadow	Rural North	Adult	1	2.5
45	New Rickstones Academy	South	Youth (11v11)	3	0.5
46	Notley Green	Central	Youth (9v9)	1	4.5
48	Notley Sports Centre	Central	Adult	1	0.5
49	Oak Farm	South	Adult	2	1.5
50	Rayne Village Hall	Central	Adult	1	0.5
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	South	Adult	2	4.5
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	South	Youth (9v9)	1	1
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Rural North	Youth (9v9)	1	1
66	The Bell Field	Rural North	Adult	1	1
67	The Crops	Central	Adult	1	2

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (MES per week)
75	Witham Sports Ground	South	Youth (9v9)	1	2
76	Witham Town Football Club	South	Adult	1	8
76	Witham Town Football Club	South	Mini (7v7)	1	1
76	Witham Town Football Club	South	Youth (9v9)	1	3
-	-	-	-	30	43.5

Most pitches are overplayed due to the impact of being assessed as poor or standard quality, meaning capacity is somewhat limited. However, an exception to this is the youth 11v11 pitch at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground and the adult pitches at The Crops and Witham Town Football Club as they are assessed as good quality and as such overplay is as a result of volume of demand being accommodated.

Overplay is further broken down by analysis area and pitch type in the table below. The highest level of overplay is identified on adult pitches (27 match equivalent sessions per week) and in the South Analysis Area (22 match equivalent sessions per week).

Table 2.26: Summary of overplay (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Central	3	0.5	6.5	-	-	10
Rural North	10	-	1.5	-	-	11.5
South	14	1	6	1	-	22
Braintree District	27	1.5	14	1	-	43.5

Further to the above, King George V Playing Fields (Braintree) is also utilised for match play by Braintree Churches United for adult matches. However, pitches are not formally marked out and as such use is not recorded and is difficult to quantify as overplay.

2.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify current demand (i.e., spare capacity taking away overplay) in each of the analysis areas for each pitch type, based on match equivalent sessions. Future demand is then also considered, based on forecasts of population growth. The proceeding Strategy document will use the below modelling using participation increases and participation growth trends to understand the full extent of the shortfalls if current increases continue, particularly over the next five years.

Adult pitch capacity

Table 2.27: Supply and demand balance for adult pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Central	5	3	2	0.5	1.5
Rural North	3	10	7	1	8
South	4.5	14	9.5	1	10.5
Braintree District	12.5	27	14.5	2.5	17

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The table above shows that there is a current shortfall on adult pitches amounting to 14.5 match equivalent sessions. The shortfalls are evident in the Rural North and South analysis areas, whilst there is some spare capacity in the Central Analysis Area.

When considering future demand from population growth, the table above shows the overall shortfall increases to 17 match equivalent sessions per week. Although spare capacity in the Central Analysis Area remains, whilst the shortfalls in the Rural North and South analysis areas increase.

Youth 11v11 pitch capacity

Table 2.28: Supply and demand balance for youth 11v11 pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Central	-	0.5	0.5	1	1.5
Rural North	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
South	-	1	1	1	2
Braintree District	-	1.5	1.5	2.5	4

There is a current shortfall of youth 11v11 pitch capacity amounting to 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week. The shortfalls are evident in the Central and South analysis areas, with the Rural North Analysis Area played to capacity.

When factoring in future demand, the table above shows the overall shortfall increases to four match equivalent sessions per week. A shortfall is established in the Rural North Analysis Area, whilst the shortfalls in the Central and South analysis areas increase.

Youth 9v9 pitch capacity

Table 2.29: Supply and demand balance for youth 9v9 pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Central	1	6.5	5.5	0.5	6
Rural North	2.5	1.5	1	-	1
South	1	6	5	1	6
Braintree District	4.5	14	9.5	1.5	11

Overall, the current picture, as set out in the table above, shows that there is a shortfall of youth 9v9 pitch capacity amounting to 9.5 match equivalent sessions per week. Shortfalls are evident in the Central and South analysis areas, with spare capacity evident in the Rural North Analysis Area amounting to one match equivalent session.

When factoring in future demand, the overall shortfall increases to 11 match equivalent sessions per week. Spare capacity remains in the Rural North Analysis Area albeit at a reduced level. Whilst the shortfalls in the Central and South analysis areas increase.

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Mini 7v7 pitch capacity

Table 2.30: Supply and demand balance for mini 7v7 pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Central	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	0
Rural North	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
South	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1
Braintree District	1	1	-	1.5	1.5

Mini 7v7 pitches across the Braintree District are currently operating at capacity, although a shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions exists in the South Analysis Area.

When factoring in future demand, an overall shortfall is created equating to 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week. Shortfalls are created in the Rural North Analysis Area, whilst the overall shortfall in the South Analysis Area increases to one match equivalent session per week.

Mini 5v5 pitch capacity

Table 2.31: Current supply and demand for mini 5v5 pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Central	3.5	-	3.5	-	3.5
Rural North	0.5	-	0.5	-	0.5
South	2.5	-	2.5	0.5	2
Braintree District	6.5	-	6.5	0.5	6

Mini 5v5 pitches across the District are currently operating with actual spare capacity amounting to 6.5 match equivalent sessions. Each analysis area has some level of overall spare capacity.

When factoring in future demand from population growth, spare capacity reduces but still remains, with this equating to six match equivalent session per week.

2.6: Conclusion

Using the supply and demand tables above, the table below summarises the overall Braintree District supply and demand balance by pitch type.

Table 2.32: Summary of analysis for grass football pitches (match equivalent sessions) for the District as a whole

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	12.5	27	14.5	2.5	17
Youth 11v11	-	1.5	1.5	2.5	4
Youth 9v9	4.5	14	9.5	1.5	11
Mini 7v7	1	1	-	1.5	1.5
Mini 5v5	6.5	-	6.5	0.5	6

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It is determined that there is currently a shortfall of adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch capacity, with mini 7v7 pitches played to capacity and mini 5v5 pitches displaying actual spare capacity. When factoring in future demand, shortfalls worsen on adult and youth pitches whilst they are created on the mini 7v7 pitches.

In addition to the above, it must also be recognised that some exported demand is identified, in addition to latent demand expressed by clubs. The impact of this demand returning to the District will be tested within the Strategy document.

As noted previously, the Strategy will also contain growth scenarios that will consider the impact of club aspiration and recent growth trends seen in the Braintree District over the last five years. This will show the impact of the demand across all pitch types to demonstrate the potential future supply/demand balance if trends continue.

The following tables summarise the supply and demand balance by pitch type for each analysis area. Where shortfalls are present, these could be alleviated through improving the existing stock and improving access to unsecure and unavailable provision. These will be further explored in the Strategy & Action Plan.

Central Analysis Area

In the Central Analysis Area, there is a current shortfall of youth pitches, whilst there is spare capacity on adult and the mini pitches. When accounting for future demand, the shortfall on youth pitches increases, whilst the mini 7v7 pitches are played to capacity.

Table 2.33: Summary of analysis for grass football pitches for Central Analysis Area (match equivalent sessions)

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	5	3	2	0.5	1.5
Youth 11v11	-	0.5	0.5	1	1.5
Youth 9v9	1	6.5	5.5	0.5	6
Mini 7v7	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	0
Mini 5v5	3.5	-	3.5	-	3.5

Rural North Analysis Area

There is currently a shortfall of adult pitches in the Rural North Analysis Area, with the youth 9v9 and mini 5v5 pitches displaying spare capacity and youth 11v11 and mini 7v7 pitches played to capacity. When accounting for future demand, a shortfall is established on youth 11v11 and mini 7v7 pitches, whilst the shortfall on adult pitches increases.

Table 2.34: Summary of analysis for grass football pitches for Rural North Analysis Area (match equivalent sessions)

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	3	10	7	1	8
Youth 11v11	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
Youth 9v9	2.5	1.5	1	-	1
Mini 7v7	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
Mini 5v5	0.5	-	0.5	-	0.5

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South Analysis Area

In the South Analysis Area, there is a current shortfall of most pitch types, except for mini 5v5 pitches which display actual spare capacity. When accounting for future demand, the shortfall is exacerbated on adult, youth and mini 7v7 pitches, whilst mini 5v5 still display actual spare capacity albeit at reduced levels.

Table 2.35: Summary of analysis for grass football pitches for South Analysis Area (match equivalent sessions)

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	4.5	14	9.5	1	10.5
Youth 11v11	-	1	1	1	2
Youth 9v9	1	6	5	1	6
Mini 7v7	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1
Mini 5v5	2.5	-	2.5	0.5	2

Football – supply and demand summary

- Actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across the Braintree District totalling 24.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across 35 pitches.
- It is determined that there is currently a shortfall of adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch capacity, with the mini 7v7 played to capacity and mini 5v5 pitches displaying actual spare capacity.
- When factoring in future demand, shortfalls worsen on adult and youth pitches whilst they are created on the mini 7v7 pitches.
- Overall, the Central and Rural North analysis areas display actual spare capacity, whilst the South Analysis Area shows shortfalls for most pitch types.

Football – supply summary

- The audit identifies a total of 133 grass football pitches within the Braintree District across 58 sites, with 112 pitches available for community use across 45 sites.
- Disused provision is identified at Burches Meadow.
- In addition to formal football provision, there are eight sites across the Braintree District which accommodate recreational provision that is or can be used for football activity.
- Future provision should be established as part of the residential development at Land North East of Witham.
- Most community available pitches across the Braintree District are managed by sports clubs (43 pitches).
- Of the pitches that are available for community use, 19 are assessed as good quality, 58 as standard quality and 35 as poor quality.
- Blackmore End Playing Fields, Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road, Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field), John Ray Recreation Ground are serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.

Football – demand summary

- There are 337 affiliated teams from within 54 clubs based within the Braintree District.
- 326 teams from within 50 clubs are identified as playing regular, competitive matches on pitches within the Braintree District. This comprises of 66 adult, 118 youth 11v11, 58 youth 9v9, 63 mini 7v7 and 25 mini 5v5 teams.
- There are 23 dedicated female teams based in the District.
- Walking football and futsal teams also have a presence within the Braintree District, although this generally takes place away from grass pitch provision.
- There are seven clubs playing within the men's football pyramid structure (Braintree Town FC, Coggeshall Town FC, Earls Colne FC, Halstead Town FC, Hatfield Peverel FC, White Notley FC and Witham Town FC).

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- ◀ Two clubs are identified as exporting demand outside of the Braintree District into neighbouring authorities. Braintree FC fields three futsal teams who export demand outside of the District to the sports hall at St John Payne Catholic School in Chelmsford for match play.
- ◀ In respect of imported demand, Bethel Christian Fellowship FC, which is otherwise based in Chelmsford, imports demand into the District.
- ◀ A total of four clubs identify latent demand in that they express they could field more teams if they had more pitch capacity.
- ◀ Future demand from population growth projects an increase of 17 teams, whilst a total of 10 clubs quantify growth aspirations amounting to 52 teams (including 14 female).
- ◀ Predicted participation increases will be further considered via the incorporation of a scenario in the proceeding Strategy document. This will also evidence the potential impact of other growth scenarios.

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PART 3: THIRD GENERATION ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (3G PITCHES)

3.1: Introduction

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard tested and approved by the FA for inclusion on the FA pitch register. As such, in addition to training demand, a growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play, providing that the performance standard meets FIFA quality requirements.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22', which provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. The artificial surface standards identified in Regulation 22 allows matches and training to be played on surfaces that meet the required standard, meaning full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts, can take place.

Competitive rugby league play and contact practice is permitted to take place on 3G pitches which are deemed by the Rugby Football League (RFL) to meet its Performance Standard. Pitches fall under two categories; community club pitches which require retesting every two years and elite stadia pitches which require an annual retest. Much of the criteria within the RFL performance standard test also forms part of the World Rugby test, meaning World Rugby certified 3G pitches are considered by the RFL to be able to meet rugby league requirements, subject to passing an additional RFL performance standard test.

Many test contractors offer reduced rates through efficiency savings to carry out multiple performance tests in the same session, therefore providers seeking 3G pitch compliance for a number of sports would be recommended to consider this opportunity. Other sports that are known to use 3G pitches for training and match play include American football and lacrosse.

EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy (June 2016) advises that 3G pitches should not be used for hockey matches or training and that they can only be used for lower level hockey (introductory level) as a last resort when no sand-based or water-based AGPs are available.

3.2: Supply

The Sport England recommended dimensions for a 11v11 3G artificial grass pitch for football are 100 x 64 metres. This extends to an area of 106 x 70 metres with the recommended minimum three metre run off area included. These dimensions allow for all age group match play to take place including adults, youth under 17/18 and younger age groups via overmarked pitches, e.g., the marking out of two 9v9 pitches for under 11/12s.

For rugby union, a 3G pitch must measure 100 x 70 metres for senior match play, with a 5-metre run off around the full perimeter. Smaller sized pitches can, however, be used to support training demand providing that they are installed to the correct specifications.

If a new pitch is proposed to measure below the recommended dimensions, for the relevant sports, then justification must be provided for this in relation to the identified needs it will provide for and/or site constraints. In doing so, the impacts of a reduced pitch size in meeting current and future needs must be considered, e.g., for football, a pitch not providing the recommended dimensions for adult match play and/or only being able to accommodate one rather than two overmarked 9v9 pitches. This justification needs to be included in the planning application details submitted to the relevant Local Planning Authority for the new pitch.

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Unless otherwise stated and justified for an individual pitch, proposals in this PPOSS for any new 3G artificial grass pitches are based on providing them to the recommended dimensions for the sports that they will be established to cater for.

Based on the above specification, there are six 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District across three sites. All the pitches are serviced by sports lighting and available for community use. One is located in the Rural North Analysis Area, three in the Central Analysis Area and two in the South Analysis Area.

Table 3.1: Summary of the number of 11v11 3G pitches by analysis area

Analysis area	11v11 3G pitches available for community use
Central	3
Rural North	1
South	2
Total	6

As well as the 11v11 pitches, there are also four smaller size 3G pitches, set out in the table overleaf, across four sites in the Braintree District. Three of these have sports lighting and are available for community use (Discovery Centre (Great Notley), Hedingham School and Lyons Hall Primary School). Whilst the pitch at Notley Green Primary School is neither available for community nor serviced by sports lighting.

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Table 3.2: 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Management	Postcode	Community use?	Sports lit?	Size (metres)	Certification	Expiry
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	Central	Education	CM7 3NR	Yes	Yes	100 x 64	FA	31/05/2028
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	Central	Council	CM7 1FF	Yes	Yes	100 x 67	FA	31/05/2026
29	Halstead Leisure Centre	1003742	Rural North	Freedom Leisure	CO9 2HR	Yes	Yes	100 x 64	FA	31/05/2027
45	New Rickstones Academy	1203933	South	Education	CM8 2SD	Yes	Yes	100 x 64	FA	31/05/2028
48	Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	1003757	Central	Education	CM7 1WY	Yes	Yes	100 x 64	FIFA	31/05/2028
75	Witham Sports Ground	6021212	South	Freedom Leisure	CM8 1EP	Yes	Yes	100 x 64	FA	31/05/2028

Table 3.3: Additional supply of 3G pitches (smaller size)

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Size (metres)
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	CM77 7FS	Central	Yes	Yes	55 x 37
30	Heddingham School	CM9 3QH	Rural North	Yes	Yes	82 x 55
43	Lyons Hall Primary School	CM7 9FH	Central	Yes	Yes	60 x 40
47	Notley Green Primary School	CM77 7ZJ	Central	No	No	44 x 30

Whilst not large enough to accommodate adult match play, smaller size provision can be used to accommodate youth and mini matches, in addition to training demand, providing that they are on the FA Pitch Register, of an adequate size and with appropriate run-off areas. The FA's recommended pitch size for youth football varies from 91 x 55 metres to 73 x 46 metres depending on age, whilst it is 55 x 37 metres for mini 7v7 play and 37 x 27 metres for mini 5v5 play.

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Notwithstanding the above, smaller size pitches are more commonly used to accommodate training and recreational activity. However, for training, they are not always conducive to demand, with many being too small for purposeful activity or too tight if pitch barriers are in place. This is the case at sites such as Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Lyons Hall Primary School.

Figure 3.1 identifies the location of all 3G pitches in the Braintree District, regardless of size.

Figure 3.1: Location of 3G pitches in the Braintree District



Potential future developments

The Braintree LFFP (2025) identifies sites considered as priority sites for 3G pitch development, although there will likely be a need to amend and/or add to the LFFP list based on the findings of this study. In summary, the 2025 plan has the following outstanding recommendations for new 3G pitch development:

- ▶ Braintree Town area- new 11v11 pitch.
- ▶ Coggleshall area- new 11v11 pitch.
- ▶ Southeast area- new 11v11 pitch.

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As stated above, the 2025 LFFP identifies three projects, due to the high demand for 3G provision locally and the significant rate of growth.

Planning applications have been approved and work has begun on the development of four 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy (23/03020/FUL), New Rickstones Academy (24/00352/FUL), Notley High School (24/00027/FUL) and Witham Sports Ground (23/03067/FUL). For this assessment, they have been included in the supply as they are newly installed. The pitches at New Rickstones Academy, Notley High School and Witham Sports Ground are fully operational and the pitch at Alec Hunter Academy is due to be fully operational by January 2026. The work is being funded through the Football Foundation and Section 106 monies from housing developments in the vicinity.

Planning permission has also been granted for the development of a small size 3G pitch at Witham Sports and Social Club (21/00074/FUL).

In addition, Hatfield Peverel FC has an aspiration for the development of an 11v11 3G pitch at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground to accommodate its training demand.

Elsewhere, Braintree RUFC aspires to create a 3G pitch at its home site. It states that the pitch could support its training needs and growing demand, in addition to preserving the grass pitches for match play. However, this is purely aspirational at this stage.

FA pitch register

In order for competitive matches to be played on 3G pitches, the pitch should be FIFA or IMS tested and approved and added to the FA pitch register, which can be found at: <https://footballfoundation.org.uk/3g-pitch-register>. The table below shows a summary of pitches on the FA register within the Braintree District.

Pitches undergo testing to become a FIFA Quality pitch or a FIFA Quality Pro pitch, with provision commonly constructed, installed and tested in situ to achieve either accreditation. The differences between the accreditations are that FIFA quality pitches are designed to accommodate substantial levels of regular usage, whereas FIFA Quality Pro pitches are more for high level performance, with usage levels therefore more limited to protect the standard.

For pitches used by affiliated grassroots football clubs (below regional feeder level) and clubs in the Women's Football Pyramid (Tier 3), the minimum requirement of testing is the FA Register Test. However, matches played at Step 1 to 6 of the Men's National League System must follow more stringent testing, with this including a minimum pitch size of 100 x 64 metres, a run-off area of between 1.83 metres (Step 2-6) and 2.25 metres (Step 1), a consistent playing surface shade of green and line markings must be in accordance with the Laws of Association Football. In addition, FA testing must take place annually rather than every three years.

As for 3G pitches used in the Women's Football Pyramid; at Tier 1, matches cannot be played on a 3G pitch, whilst existing 3G pitches at Tier 2 must be accredited to the FIFA Recommended Quality performance standard.

Generally, FIFA Quality pitches can be typically used for 60-85 hours per week, whereas FIFA Quality Pro pitches are able to accommodate 20-30 hours. To remain accredited, pitches must be reassessed every three years to ensure that quality has not deteriorated beyond acceptable levels, although this is required annually for clubs using 3G pitches within the football pyramid (steps 1-6).

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In the Braintree District, the 11v11 3G pitches at Alec Hunter Academy, Braintree Sport & Health Club, Halstead Leisure Centre, Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School), New Rickstones Academy and Witham Sports Ground are FA approved and can therefore be used to host competitive matches.

The smaller size pitches at Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Hedingham School are also FA approved. The former is large enough for mini 7v7 play, whilst the latter is large enough for youth 11v11 play. The accreditation for both pitches is due to expire in 2027 and at this point, re-testing will be required to ensure that this remains the case. No other smaller size pitches are certified.

Table 3.4: Summary of pitches on the FA register within the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Size (metres)	Registered?	Certification expiry
-	-	-	-	11v11	-	-
1	Alec Hunter Academy	Central	1	100 x 64	Yes	31/05/2028
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	1	100 x 67	Yes	31/05/2026
29	Halstead Leisure Centre	Rural North	1	100 x 64	Yes	31/05/2027
45	New Rickstones Academy	South	1	100 x 64	Yes	31/05/2028
48	Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	Central	1	100 x 64	Yes	31/05/2028
75	Witham Sports Ground	South	1	100 x 64	Yes	31/05/2028
-	-	-	-	Smaller size	-	-
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	Central	1	55 x 37	Yes	31/05/2027
30	Hedingham School	Rural North	1	82 x 55	Yes	31/05/2027

As highlighted above, the pitch at Hedingham School is on the register until 2027, at which point the intention is to resurface the pitch.

World Rugby compliant pitches

To enable 3G pitches to accommodate contact training and competitive rugby union matches, World Rugby has developed the Rugby Turf Performance Specification. This is to ensure that the surfaces can replicate the playing qualities of good quality grass pitches, provide a playing environment that will not increase the risk of injury and are of an adequate durability.

The specification includes a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G pitch used for any form of competitive rugby and contact training must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance.

In the Braintree District, there are no World Rugby compliant pitches. The nearest are in nearby authorities such as Colchester at Colchester Sports Park. None of the rugby clubs within the Braintree District currently access any artificial pitches for training activity.

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Management

For the 11v11 provision, the pitches at Alec Hunter Academy, Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School) and New Rickstones Academy are managed internally by the schools themselves. Whilst the 11v11 3G pitches at Braintree Sport & Health Club, Halstead Leisure Centre and Witham Sports Ground are managed by Freedom Leisure on behalf of the Council.

Of the smaller size provision, three are managed by schools and the remaining one (Discovery Centre- Great Notley) by the Council.

Availability (opening hours)

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00). Using this, the opening hours at each site with a 11v11 pitch is summarised in the table below, based on there being a potential of 18 hours of peak time availability during midweek and 16 hours at weekend.

Please note that the table below only refers to overall availability and opening hours, rather than considering current capacity, which is instead accounted for within the demand part of this section. A pitch may theoretically be open throughout the peak period but may currently be operating at capacity, especially during peak times, based on existing usage levels.

Table 3.5: Summary of 11v11 3G pitch opening hours

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Availability (opening hours)	Midweek opening hours in the peak period (hours)	Weekend opening hours in the peak period (hours)
1	Alec Hunter Academy	Central	Monday-Friday 17:00-22:00 Saturday-Sunday 08:00-18:00	18	16
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	Monday-Friday 17:00-22:00 Saturday-Sunday 08:00-18:00	18	16
29	Halstead Leisure Centre	Rural North	Monday-Friday 17:00-22:00 Saturday- Sunday 09:00-17:00	18	16
45	New Rickstones Academy	South	Monday-Friday 17:00-22:00 Saturday-Sunday 08:00-18:00	18	16
48	Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	Central	Monday-Friday 17:00-22:00 Saturday-Sunday 08:00-18:00	18	16
75	Witham Sports Ground	South	Monday-Friday 17:00-22:00 Saturday-Sunday 08:00-18:00	18	16

As seen, the pitches at Braintree Sport & Health Club and Halstead Leisure Centre have relatively extensive opening hours, with these both fully open throughout the peak periods.

The availability of smaller size pitches within the Braintree District is summarised in the table below.

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Table 3.6: Summary of smaller size 3G pitch opening hours

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Availability (opening hours)	Midweek opening hours in the peak period (hours)	Weekend opening hours in the peak period (hours)
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	Central	Monday-Friday 09:00-22:00 Saturday-Sunday 09:00-17:00	18	16
30	Heddingham School	Rural North	Monday-Friday 17:00-21:00 Saturday- Sunday 09:00-14:00	18	10
43	Lyons Hall Primary School	Central	Monday-Friday 17:00-21:00 Saturday-Sunday 09:00-16:00	18	14
47	Notley Green Primary School	Central	Not available for community use	0	0

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an AGP usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. It is therefore recommended that sinking funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, ongoing repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

All six 11v11 3G pitches are rated as good quality having been installed in the last three years. For Alec Hunter Academy, New Rickstones Academy, Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School) and Witham Sports Ground this was in 2025. Whilst the pitches at Braintree Sport & Health Club and Halstead Leisure Centre were installed in 2022 for the former and the latter in 2021.

Table 3.7: Age and quality of 11v11 3G pitches

Site ID	Site name	No. of pitches	Year installed/ resurfaced	Quality
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1	2025	Good
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1	2022	Good
29	Halstead Leisure Centre	1	2021	Good
45	New Rickstones Academy	1	2025	Good
48	Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	1	2025	Good
75	Witham Sports Ground	1	2025	Good

Regarding the smaller size provision, Notley Green Primary School is assessed as good quality and the pitches at Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Lyons Hall Primary School as standard quality. The pitch at Heddingham School is assessed as poor quality, having been installed in 2012 and the carpet has not been replaced since. The carpet is showing significant signs of wear and tear and needs to be replaced in order to remain FA certified.

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Table 3.8: Age and quality of small size 3G pitches

Site ID	Site name	No. of pitches	Year installed/resurfaced	Quality
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	1	2020	Standard
30	Hedingham School	1	2012	Poor
43	Lyons Hall Primary School	1	2016	Standard
47	Notley Green Primary School	1	2022	Good

Ancillary facilities

All 3G pitch provision in the Braintree District is accompanied by ancillary facilities that are considered adequate with no issues raised during consultation or via site assessments.

3.3: Demand

Despite extensive opening hours, 3G pitches in within the Braintree District are reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months when grass pitches cannot be used for training or recreational demand (due to a lack of sports lighting). This applies not only to midweek capacity but also to weekend capacity on account of all three of the 11v11 3G pitches being FIFA/FA approved to host competitive matches.

Currently, it is considered that most of the community-based activity on 3G pitches is football related, with no usage from other sports identified through consultation. Most of the capacity is being taken up by football clubs for training and match play purposes, although there is also a strong presence of recreational football activity taking place (e.g., via unaffiliated groups), as well as walking football and coaching sessions (e.g., Wildcats).

The pitch at Braintree Sport & Health Club is fully booked and has no capacity to take on additional users, resulting in it regularly having to turn away demand. Great Bradfords and Sporting 77 are the anchor clubs attached to the site, with most of the training and competitive demand taken up by them, particularly during the week.

At Halstead Leisure Centre, there are also issues with capacity during midweek, again leading to clubs and other user groups having to be turned down on a regular basis. This is amplified through usage by small-sided commercial leagues at the site, with Leisure Leagues operating on Monday evenings. Some capacity is available during weekends on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, although the latter generally falls outside of peak time for match play.

The recently installed 11v11 3G pitches at Alec Hunter Academy, New Rickstones Academy, Notley High School (Notley Sports Centre) and Witham Sports Ground have yet to fully develop a programme of use. Key anchor clubs attached to the sites have been identified in Table 3.9 and it is thought most of the training and competitive demand is taken up by them, particularly during the week.

In addition to the above, Soccer Sixes runs a league on the sand-based pitch at Witham Sports Ground on Monday evenings. See Part 6: Hockey of this report for further information.

For the smaller size pitches, Discovery Centre (Great Notley), Hedingham School and Lyons Hall Primary School are identified as being used for formal football training activity. All remaining usage is via recreational and casual demand.

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Hedingham School notes issues with capacity during the week; however, it has spare capacity on Saturday and Sundays for match play. The School highlight the carpet is in poor condition and note clubs such as Hedingham United FC are using other 3G pitches in the Braintree District or in neighbouring authorities such as Colchester for match play. However, weekday evening sessions are fully booked all year round, meaning that sports clubs and other user groups are again having to be turned down on a regular basis.

Demand is further detailed in the table overleaf on a site-by-site basis, with current usage compared against peak time availability for each 11v11 pitch.

Table 3.9: Current usage of 11v11 3G pitches across the Braintree District in peak time

Site ID	Site name	Club user	Midweek availability (hours)	Midweek usage (hours)	Weekend availability (hours)	Weekend usage (hours)
1	Alec Hunter Academy	Braintree Town Youth FC	18	18	16	16
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Great Bradfords FC Sporting 77	18	18	16	8
29	Halstead Leisure Centre	Coggeshall Town FC Halstead Town Youth FC Great Bradfords FC	18	18	16	12
45	New Rickstones Academy	Valley Green FC	18	18	16	16
48	Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	Great Notley FC	18	18	16	16
75	Witham Sports Ground	Silver End Youth FC	18	18	16	16

Unmet/latent demand

Unmet/latent demand is defined as the number of additional teams (or members) that could be accommodated if access to a sufficient number of playing pitch facilities (and ancillary provision) was available.

Across the Braintree District, 10 responding clubs report that they require additional access to 3G pitch provision, which represents significant unmet demand. Moreover, across these clubs, 149 teams are represented, with 77 of them not accessing any 3G pitches for training. These are significant number compared to overall demand levels.

The clubs expressing this demand and sites presently used are summarised in the table below.

Table 3.10: Current training facilities of clubs reporting unmet/latent demand

Club name	Site ID	Site used	Surface
Braintree Town FC	9	Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road	Grass
Diamond Youth FC	75	Witham Sports Ground	Sand-based
Great Bradfords FC	8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	3G

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Club name	Site ID	Site used	Surface
Great Bradfords FC	18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	3G
Great Bradfords FC	29	Halstead Leisure Centre	3G
Great Bradfords FC	43	Lyons Hall Primary School	3G
Great Notley FC	18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	3G
Notley Youth FC	51	Releet Sports Ground	Sand-based
Silver End Youth FC	75	Witham Sports Ground	Sand-based
Sporting 77	8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	3G
Sporting 77	43	Lyons Hall Primary School	3G
Sporting 77	8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Grass
Steeple Bumpstead Dynamos FC	64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Grass
Valley Green FC	52	Rickstones Sports Ground	Grass
White Notley Youth FC	49	Oak Farm	Sand-based
White Notley Youth FC	49	Oak Farm	Grass

For rugby union, Braintree RUFC report that access to a 3G pitch specific for rugby union would help to alleviate grass pitch overuse. This is linked to aspirations to potentially develop a 11v11 3G pitch at its home ground (Braintree Rugby Union Football Club) and therefore also represents a degree of unmet demand.

No unmet or latent 3G pitch demand has been identified for any other sports.

Exported/imported demand

Exported and imported demand refers to those that are playing outside of their local authority area of choice. This therefore includes demand from the Braintree District that travels outside of the District to access provision (exported demand), as well as demand from nearby authorities that travel into the District (imported demand).

No exported demand for midweek training activity has been reported.

In terms of imported demand, Danbury & Bicknacre FC import some 3G pitch demand into the Braintree District. It imports some midweek training demand to Discovery Centre (Great Notley).

Future demand

As set out in Part 2 of this report, potential football team grow from population increases equates to 17 football teams. If this growth was realised, and if all additional teams wanted to train on 3G provision, it would increase the number of 3G pitches required. This is factored into the supply and demand analysis below. However, it should also be noted that the housing led projections do not account for the potential for future demand to be higher, which could be the case particularly if recent growth trends continue.

The Strategy document will contain a scenario exploring the participation trends for football over the lifespan of the PPOSS and what impact this trend will have on 3G demand locally. It is considered that this is the most likely growth scenario given the consistent growth over recent years (circa 24% increase in teams over the last seven years).

In addition, although no rugby union demand currently accesses 3G pitches (with none, suitable for such activity), access to 3G pitches could provide a solution to the deficits identified in Part 5 of this report. This would be particularly relevant in the case of Braintree RUFC given its current overplay of its grass pitches.

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3.4: Supply and demand analysis

Football

The FA considers high quality 3G pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development, with the pitches considered to be great assets on account of being able to support intensive use and use during inclement weather. Primarily, such facilities have been installed for social use and training, however, they are increasingly being used for competition, which the FA wholly supports.

Training demand

To quantify the 3G pitch shortfalls for football, the FA has established a training model, which suggests that one 11v11 3G pitch can accommodate 38 affiliated teams (with capacity also built in for other forms of demand). This is based on an aspiration for all teams to train once per week on a 3G pitch.

For the model, in addition to 11v11 pitches being included, some smaller sized pitches can also be incorporated as nationally many are suitable for accommodating training demand, especially larger ones. To calculate their contribution, a pitch large enough to cater for youth matches (but not adult) is considered to be the equivalent of half a full-size pitch (0.5 pitches), whilst a pitch that is large enough for mini matches (but not youth or adult) is the equivalent of quarter of a full-size pitch (0.25 pitches). Any pitch smaller than this is discounted, as are any pitches that are unavailable for community use.

As identified in the future provision section, planning applications have been approved and the new 11v11 3G pitches are due to be fully operational by September 2025. Therefore, have been included in the overall supply.

The smaller size pitches at Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Heddingham School have also been incorporated as they can and do accommodate football training demand.

The contribution each pitch makes towards the modelling is summarised in the table below. This then informs the proceeding modelling tables. Any pitch too small to accommodate training demand are discounted, as well as any pitches that are unavailable for community use.

Table 3.11: Contribution of 3G pitches in meeting training requirements

Site name	Analysis area	Size (metres)	Comments	11v11 adult pitch equivalents
11v11 size	-	-	-	-
Alec Hunter Academy	Central	100 x 64	Fully available for community use	1
Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	100 x 67	Fully available for community use	1
Halstead Leisure Centre	Rural North	100 x 64	Fully available for community use	1
New Rickstones Academy	South	100 x 64	Fully available for community use	1
Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	Central	100 x 64	Fully available for community use	1
Witham Sports Ground	South	100 x 64	Fully available for community use	1

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Site name	Analysis area	Size (metres)	Comments	11v11 adult pitch equivalents
Smaller size	-	-	-	-
Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	Central	55 x 37	Large enough to accommodate training demand.	0.25
Heddingham School	Rural North	82 x 55	Large enough to accommodate training demand.	0.75

No clubs currently report using any of the pitches for training that have been discounted in the table above, further evidencing their unsuitability for this purpose.

Using the above model, with current demand totalling 337 teams (including exported demand) in the Braintree District, there is a theoretical need for up to nine 11v11 3G pitches (rounded up from 8.97). This means an existing deficit of two pitches.

Table 3.12: Current demand for 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Current demand (number of teams)	11v11 3G requirement ⁹	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Current shortfall
337	9	7	2

When considering future demand for an additional 17 teams (based on population growth identified in Part 2 of this report), the potential requirement remains for nine 11v11 3G pitches overall (rounded down from 9.3), which means a theoretical future shortfall of two pitches.

Table 3.13: Future demand for 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Future number of teams	11v11 3G requirement ¹⁰	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Future shortfall
354	9	7	2

Alternatively, the table below considers the number of 3G pitches required on the assumption that every team is to train within the respective analysis area that they play in (although it is noted that some teams may play outside of their preferred area due to a lack of pitch availability). This not only identifies where the potential need may exist, but it can also be used to guide which areas should be targeted for new provision.

Table 3.14: Current demand for 3G pitches by analysis area for training demand

Analysis area	Current demand	Current 3G requirement ¹¹	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Current shortfall
Central	117	3	3.25	0.25
Rural North	85	2	1.75	0.25
South	136	4	2	2
Braintree District	337	9	7	2

⁹ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

¹⁰ Rounded to the nearest whole number

¹¹ Rounded to the nearest whole number

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Broken down, this equates to a shortfall of 0.25 pitches in the Rural North Analysis Area and two pitches in the South Analysis Area. Whilst there is an oversupply of 0.25 pitches in the Central Analysis Area.

It must be noted that the degree of future demand has the potential to be greater than that identified via population growth (to 2041), especially if participation rates continue to rise on a similar trajectory to what has occurred in the previous seven years (24% increase in teams). This will be explored in more detail in the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document.

When factoring in future demand by population growth to 2041 and by analysis area, as shown in the table below, the shortfalls for the two analysis areas (Rural North and South) remain the same when accounting for future demand. Whilst there is still an oversupply of pitches in the Central Analysis Area equating to 0.25 pitches.

Table 3.15: Future demand for 3G pitches by analysis area for training demand

Analysis area	Future demand	Future 3G requirement ¹²	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Future shortfall
Central	122	3	3.25	0.25
Rural North	89	2	1.75	0.25
South	143	4	2	2
Total	354	9	7	2

It must also be noted that the deficits identified relate only to affiliated football training need. As there is expressed demand from other sports for use of 3G pitch provision, there may be a case for additional pitches over and above what is outlined within this section.

Notwithstanding the above, it must also be noted that the modelling assumes that all teams will want and can afford to access 3G pitch provision, which in reality may not be the case. The emphasises the need for pitches to be priced fairly to ensure community use can be attracted and maximised.

As seen in the table above, the new 11v11 3G pitches (fully operational in September 2025) are included in the overall supply and demand analysis. Two each are identified in the Central (Alec Hunter Academy and Notley High School- Notley Sports Centre) and South Analysis Area (New Rickstones Academy and Witham Sports Ground). This broadly aligns to where the PPOSS identifies demand, with demand equating to 117 teams in the Central Analysis Area and 136 teams in South Analysis Area.

As identified under future provision, three areas in the Braintree District have been recommended for the development of new 3G provision. These include the Braintree Town area (Central Analysis Area), Coggeshall area (Rural North Analysis Area) and the Southeast area (South Analysis Area). The impact of delivering these 3G pitches will be further explored in the Strategy and Action Plan document.

¹² Rounded to the nearest whole number

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Match play demand

Improving grass pitch quality is one way to increase the capacity at sites but given the cost of doing such work and the continued maintenance required (and associated costs), alternatives need to be considered that can offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. One substitute to grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches for competitive matches (with another being the use of hybrid pitches), providing that the pitch is FA/FIFA approved, sports lit and available for community use during the peak period.

In the Braintree District, the 11v11 3G pitches are FA approved to host competitive matches. Currently, 36 teams are registered as using the provision to accommodate competitive demand.

As the number of 3G pitches increases in line with meeting training demand shortfalls, so should the number of teams utilising the provision for matches, which in turn should further relieve grass pitches of use. As such, whilst the number of 3G pitches needed for matches will never outweigh the number of 3G pitches needed for training (as they would not be sustainable without midweek usage), maximising the pitches that are in place and that are proposed should be fully supported.

The use of 3G pitches for matches also emphasises the importance of maintaining good quality pitches. Should pitches become poor quality, they will likely lose accreditation to accommodate fixtures. This will then result in all teams using the provision needing to transfer to grass pitches, adding to their usage, reducing their capacity and further diminishing their quality.

This will be further explored in the proceeding Strategy document via a range of scenarios for transferring play.

The role of sand/water-based pitches

The above section assumes that all football teams should train on 3G pitches. However, in practice, there is a national need for a proportion of football training demand to be retained on hockey suitable AGPs in order to maintain the financial and commercial sustainability of such provision. This is particularly the case where the pitches must remain as hockey suitable in order to meet community and/or curricular hockey requirements.

In the Braintree District, football demand is somewhat high on the full size AGP at Witham Sports Ground. In contrast, the full size AGP at Releet Sports Ground is extremely well used for hockey, and the transfer of supplementary football usage away from the site to 3G pitches may aid capacity issues.

Table 3.16: Summary of usage of full-size hockey suitable pitches

Site ID	Site	No. of pitches	Availability in the peak period (hours)	% of hockey usage	% of football usage	Hockey club users
51	Releet Sports Ground	1	34	75%	15%	Braintree HC
75	Witham Sports Ground	1	34	60%	40%	Witham HC

For further information, please see Part 6: Hockey.

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Rugby union

Given the inclement weather often experienced throughout the winter months of the rugby union season, more clubs are becoming increasingly receptive towards training on artificial pitches. Clubs traditionally train on match pitches where sports lighting is in place, unless there is a separate grass training area. This often results in the overuse of provision and a deterioration in pitch quality, coupled with decreasing maintenance budgets.

As mentioned previously, there are no World Rugby compliant 3G pitches within the Braintree District. However, there is evidence to warrant the potential creation of World Rugby compliant 3G pitch provision given the grass rugby union pitch shortfalls evident in Part 5 of this report, both overall and at sites such as at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club.

Rugby compliant provision could offer a means to eradicating the deficits. However, grass pitch improvements may also provide a solution, and this will be tested further in the Strategy and Action Plan report to follow.

The grass pitch rugby union shortfalls evidenced are predominately generated by training demand, amounting to a total of 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week, rather than there being an insufficient level of provision to accommodate match play. As such, the focus of any World Rugby compliant pitches should first and foremost be transferring training activity from match pitches.

Other sports

No demand for access to 3G pitches has been identified from any other sports in the Braintree District and therefore, at this moment in time, no further consideration is required.

3.5: Conclusion

There is an insufficient supply of 3G pitch provision in the Braintree District to meet football demand, with a current shortfall and future shortfall of two 11v11 pitches identified, including the newly installed 11v11 3G pitches at Alec Hunter Academy, New Rickstones Academy, Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School) and Witham Sports Ground. This is due to deficits in the Central, Rural North and South analysis areas.

In addition, there is a requirement to sustain the existing supply to ensure that the deficit does not worsen, with this particularly important at Hedingham School, given the age of the pitch.

Away from football, the creation of a World Rugby compliant 3G provision may also be warranted to provide a solution to the identified overplay of grass pitches. However, this needs to be factored against grass pitch solutions to fully determine requirements (which will be explored in the subsequent Strategy document). There is also a need to assess if rugby union and football needs could be met in collaboration, or whether they should be considered separately.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

3G – supply and demand summary

- There is an insufficient supply of 3G pitch provision to meet football requirements, with two additional 11v11 pitches needed to meet training needs, equating to 0.25 pitches in the Rural North Analysis Area and two pitches in the South Analysis Area. Whilst there is an oversupply of 0.25 pitches in the Central Analysis Area.
- For rugby union, the creation of World Rugby compliant 3G provision may provide a solution to the identified overplay of grass pitches, although this needs to be considered against grass pitch solutions.
- No demand for access to 3G provision has been identified from any other sports, suggesting that no other demand currently requires consideration.

3G – supply summary

- There are six 11v11 3G pitches across six sites, which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.
- There are four smaller size 3G pitches. Three of these have sports lighting and are available for community use (Discovery Centre (Great Notley), Hedingham School and Lyons Hall Primary School). Whilst the pitch at Notley Green Primary School is neither available for community nor serviced by sports lighting.
- Planning applications have been approved and work has begun on the development of four 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy (23/03020/FUL), New Rickstones Academy (24/00352/FUL), Notley High School (24/00027/FUL) and Witham Sports Ground (23/03067/FUL). For this assessment, they have been included in the supply as they are newly installed. The pitches at New Rickstones Academy, Notley High School and Witham Sports Ground are fully operational and the pitch at Alec Hunter Academy is due to be fully operational by January 2026. The work is being funded through the Football Foundation and Section 106 monies from housing developments in the vicinity.
- The Braintree LFFP has three recommended projects for the creation of 11v11 3G pitches.
- Planning permission has been granted for the development of a smaller sized 3G pitch at Witham Sports and Social Club (21/00074/FUL).
- All 11v11 3G pitches are either FA or FIFA certified and can therefore be used to host competitive matches.
- No pitches in the Braintree District are World Rugby compliant.
- All 11v11 3G pitches are fully available for use during peak time hours.
- All six 11v11 3G pitches are rated as good quality having been installed in the last three years.
- Of the smaller size pitches, Notley Green Primary School is assessed as good quality and the pitches at Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Lyons Hall Primary School as standard quality. The pitch at Hedingham School is assessed as poor quality, having been installed in 2012 and the carpet has not been replaced since.
- No ancillary facility issues are identified.

3G – demand summary

- The 3G pitches currently servicing the Braintree District are reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months.
- This applies not only to midweek capacity but also to weekend capacity on account of all four of the 11v11 3G pitches being FIFA/FA approved to host competitive matches.
- All activity is currently football related across five sites, with including 36 teams gaining access for match play purposes (at the time of audit).
- As well as club training and match play activity, the pitches are also accessed for recreational football, walking football and coaching sessions as well as by commercial leagues.
- Unmet demand for 3G provision is expressed, with 10 responding football clubs representing 149 teams as well as Braintree RUFC identifying that their training requirements are not currently being met.
- Four football clubs also currently export some 3G demand outside of the Braintree District, whilst two clubs import activity into the District.
- Future football and rugby union team growth could increase 3G pitch requirements.

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PART 4: CRICKET

4.1: Introduction

The Essex Cricket Board is the main governing and representative body for cricket within the Braintree District. Its aim is to promote the game at all levels through partnerships with professional and recreational cricketing clubs as well as other appropriate agencies. Working closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), it is responsible for the management and development of every form of recreational cricket for men, women and children within the area. It is also currently working with the ECB on delivering its Strategy, Inspiring Generations (see Appendix 1: Context)¹³.

For senior cricket in the Braintree District, there are three main offerings (Saturday, Sunday and midweek cricket), whilst the youth league structure tends to be club-based matches which are generally played mid-week, although Sunday activity is also common. In addition, there is also a presence of recreational and unaffiliated cricket taking place, with this resulting in demand for cricket across the District all-year round (rather than just during summer months).

County Facilities Strategy

The Essex Cricket Board completed its County Facilities Strategy in July 2023, in partnership with the ECB. This is a ten-year plan which involves engagement with key stakeholders, including, leagues, active partnerships, county pitch advisors and Sport England. It is to be used to shape investment priorities, ensuring that decision-making processes are clearly explained. The Strategy considers the following facilities:

- ◆ Traditional facilities (pitches, outfielders, pavilions, practice areas).
- ◆ Non-traditional facilities (multi-use games areas, tapeball/softball spaces, courts/cages).
- ◆ Indoor facilities (multi use halls, cricket specific halls, match play venues).

The key themes emerging from the Essex County Facilities Strategy are:

- ◆ Demand for cricket in East London boroughs is very high and increasing.
- ◆ Pitches in East London are very heavily overplayed, and the quality of the pitches are unsatisfactory to players.
- ◆ Poor availability and access to high quality grounds for all pathway cricket in Essex.
- ◆ Clubs are reaching capacity and have limited growth opportunities on their existing sites.
- ◆ There is an urgent need to protect existing sites from being lost.
- ◆ There is a growing challenge of managing and producing high quality grass pitches for all levels of cricket.
- ◆ Quality of existing facility provision is mixed across Essex and the lack of quality does not meet the needs of users while also potentially hindering the growth of the game
- ◆ There is a lack of good quality indoor provision for training and matches for the recreational game.
- ◆ Huge opportunity from housing growth to develop the cricket facility stock across Essex.
- ◆ Climate change will have a significant impact on preparation of pitches and cricket across Essex.

The following recommendations have been drawn:

- ◆ Provide more sustainable playing facilities in London.
- ◆ Increase capacity and quality of club facilities to service growth of the junior and women's and girls' markets.

¹³[ECB Inspiring Generations](#)

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

- ✦ Secure access to more indoor provision to provide playing opportunities all year.
- ✦ Secure access to more sites for performance pathway.
- ✦ Invest in the grounds management workforce.
- ✦ Protection of existing sites.
- ✦ Promote and increase the usage of NTPs.
- ✦ Develop a long-term plan to minimise the impact of climate change.
- ✦ Accountable decision making.

Notwithstanding the above, it must be noted that the County Facilities Strategy is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment for cricket; it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. It therefore cannot be used in place of a PPOSS and is not an accepted evidence base for development proposals that need to be judged against the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Field Policy.

Consultation

There are 16 cricket clubs located in the Braintree District, of which 14 clubs have responded to consultation requests equating to an 88% response rate, as shown below.

Table 4.1: List of affiliated clubs with analysis area

Club	Analysis area	Responded
Braintree CC	Central	Yes
Castle Hedingham CC	Rural North	Yes
Coggeshall Town CC	Central	Yes
Chelmsford Titans CC	Rural North	Yes
Earls Colne CC	Rural North	Yes
Gestingthorpe CC	Rural North	Yes
Halstead CC	Rural North	Yes
Hatfield Peverel CC	South	Yes
Helions Bumpstead CC	Rural North	No
Kelvedon & Feering CC	South	Yes
Rayne CC	Central	Yes
Terling CC	South	Yes
Twinstead CC	Rural North	Yes
Wethersfield CC	Rural North	Yes
Wickham St Paul CC	Rural North	No
Witham CC	South	Yes

4.2: Supply

In total, there are 21 grass wicket cricket squares in the Braintree District, provided across 19 sites. Of these, 20 squares are available for community use. The unavailable grass wicket square is provided at Gosfield School (Rural North Analysis Area).

Of the community available squares, the Rural North Analysis Area accommodates 10 grass wicket squares, the South Analysis Area provides six and four squares in the Central Analysis Area. This is further summarised in the table below.

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Table 4.2: Summary of grass wicket squares available in the Braintree District

Analysis area	No. of grass wicket squares
Central	4
Rural North	10
South	6
Braintree District	20

Non-turf pitches

In addition to the grass wicket supply, there are five non-turf pitches (NTPs) across Braintree District. There are three located in the Rural North Analysis Area and one each in the Central and South analysis areas.

Of these, three accompany a grass wicket square, with these being at Earls Colne Recreation Club, Gosfield School and Witham Cricket Club. The standalone NTPs are located at educational sites.

The NTPs are further summarised in the table below.

Table 4.3: Summary of NTPs in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Number of NTPs	Position
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Rural North	Yes	1	Square
24	Gosfield School	Rural North	No	1	Square
30	Hedingham School	Rural North	Yes-unused	1	Standalone
33	Honywood Community Science School	Central	Yes	1	Standalone
101	Witham Cricket Club	South	Yes	1	Square

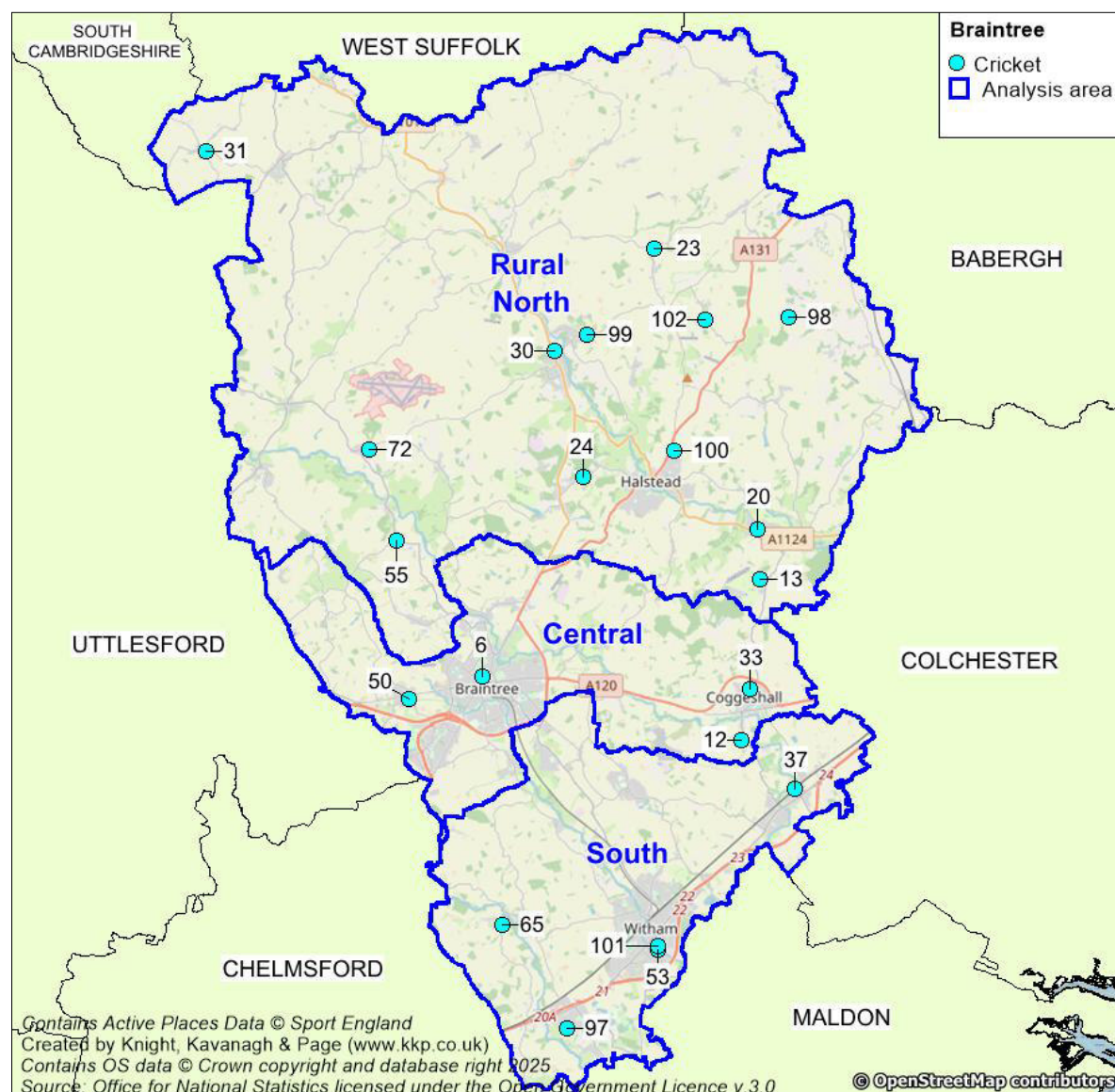
NTPs, particularly when located at club sites, can aid with training and practice and can help reduce overplay on grass wickets when used for matches. The ECB highlights that NTPs which follow its TS6 guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play. Additionally, NTPs are frequently used for junior matches across the Country.

From a school perspective, NTPs provide a reliable cricket offer, without the need for specific cricket preparation to be taken on natural turf playing field land. In many instances, schools do not have the resource or expertise to prepare natural turf wickets so NTPs provide a resource to ensure cricket can remain a key element of curricular sport.

For the location of all grass wicket and NTP cricket provision in the Braintree District, see Figure 4.1 below. For a key to the map, refer to Table 4.4.

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Figure 4.1: Location of cricket squares within the Braintree District



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Table 4.4: Key to map of cricket squares

Site ID	Site name	Post code	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of senior grass wickets	No. of non-turf wickets
6	Braintree Cricket Club	CM7 9AW	1040500	Central	Yes	10	-
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	CO6 2JT	1039949	Central	Yes	17	-
13	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)	CO6 1RQ	30009886	Central	Yes	4	-
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	CO6 2NG	1206961	Rural North	Yes	7	1
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	CO9 3BB	6012446	Rural North	Yes	6	-
24	Gosfield School	CO9 1PF	1203917	Rural North	No	7	1
30	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	1204086	Rural North	Yes-unused	-	1
31	Helions Bumpstead Recreation Ground	CB9 7AH	6021163	Rural North	Yes	4	-
33	Honywood Community Science School	CO6 1PZ	1203754	Central	Yes-unused	-	1
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	CO5 9SB	1206974	South	Yes	13	-
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	CO5 9SB	1206974	South	Yes	8	-
50	Rayne Village Hall	CM77 6TX	6021228	Central	Yes	6	-
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	CM8 1FX	6017684	South	Yes	5	-
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	CM7 5EZ	6021255	Rural North	Yes	3	-
65	Terling Cricket Club	CM3 2PN	1206957	South	Yes	10	-
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	CM7 4EQ	1041837	Rural North	Yes	5	-
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	CM3 2LB	-	South	Yes	8	-
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	CO10 7NA	-	Rural North	Yes	5	-
99	Castle Hedingham Cricket Club	CO9 3AG	-	Rural North	Yes	8	-
100	Halstead Cricket Club	CO9 2RP	-	Rural North	Yes	14	-
100	Halstead Cricket Club	CO9 2RP	-	Rural North	Yes	6	-
101	Witham Cricket Club	CM8 1HN	-	South	Yes	14	1
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	CO9 2PL	-	Rural North	Yes	4	-

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Potential future supply

Hatfield Peverel CC has submitted a planning application (25/00945/FUL) at its self-titled site for a practice facility and replacement of its existing nets.

Disused supply

Playing fields which have previously accommodated formal pitch provision are categorised as disused. A disused site is a playing field which is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. Comparably an unused site is land that continues to be accessible as open space but no longer has pitches marked.

There are five disused cricket squares identified across the Braintree District with these located at Bocking Sports Club, Church Road Playing Fields, Courtauld Sports Ground, Notley Green and Dusty Lane.

Bocking Sports Club previously accommodated a six wicket grass square; however, upon non-technical assessments, the provision seems not to have been actively maintained or used for an extended period of time.

Church Road Playing Fields previously accommodated a grass wicket square with eight wickets that was last active circa 2016. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.

Courtauld Sports Ground previously provided a grass wicket square but is no longer maintained, although the site is still utilised for football.

Notley Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2000. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.

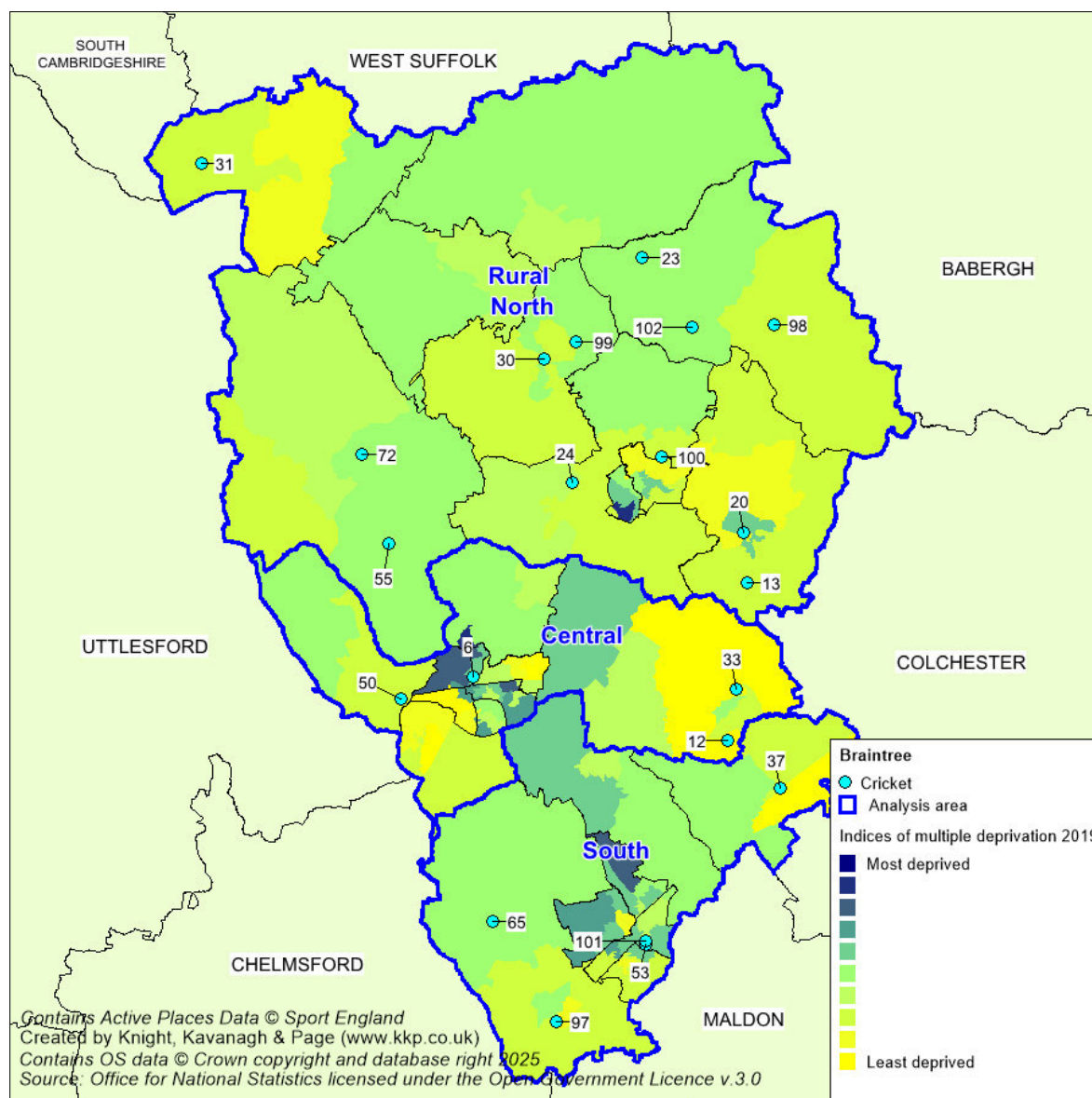
Dusty Lane, Tye Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2011. ECB and Essex Cricket has advised that the site is too small for senior cricket and is not viable for re-instating a grass wicket square. However, the site and boundary size is sufficient for an NTP for junior cricket. Therefore, it should still be protected as a playing field for other sports unless appropriate mitigation is made off-site.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

Of the cricket sites actively used by clubs, only Braintree Cricket Club is in the more deprived area of the District, as seen in the map below.

Figure 4.2: Location of cricket sites against IMD



Management and security of tenure

Each grass wicket square in the Braintree District is in use for club cricket, and all clubs have security of tenure at their primary venue, mainly via long-term arrangements or through access via the District Council or a parish council. The table below identifies the arrangements for all the affiliated clubs.

Where provision is rented from a parish council the tenure agreement is considered secure as it is expected to be provided over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Table 4.5: Summary of security of tenure for the Braintree District cricket clubs

Site ID	Site	Club	Arrangement	Tenure
6	Braintree Cricket Club	Braintree CC	Club owns the freehold	Secure
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	Coggeshall Town CC	Club owns the freehold	Secure
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Earls Colne CC	Rented via the Recreation Club	Secure
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	Gestingthorpe CC	Rented from Gestingthorpe Parish Council	Secure
31	Helions Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Helions Bumpstead CC	Leased from Helions Bumpstead Parish Council	Secure
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	Kelvedon & Feering CC	Club owns the freehold	Secure
50	Rayne Village Hall	Rayne CC	Rented from Rayne Parish Council	Secure
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	Chelmsford Titans CC	Leased from Shalford Parish Council	Secure
65	Terling Cricket Club	Terling CC	Leased from a private landowner (25 years)	Unsecure
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	Wethersfield CC	Rented from Derek Flannery Playing Fields Association	Unsecure
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	Hatfield Peverel CC	Club owns the freehold	Secure
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	Twinstead CC	Leased via a private landholder; two years remaining.	Unsecure
99	Castle Hedingham Cricket Club	Castle Hedingham CC	Leased via Hedingham Castle Estate (length of lease is unknown)	Unsecure
100	Halstead Cricket Club	Halstead CC	Club owns the freehold	Secure
101	Witham Cricket Club	Witham CC	Leased from Witham Park Trust (seven years remaining)	Unsecure
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	Wickham St Paul CC	Leased from Wickham St Paul Parish Council	Secure

Of concern are the agreements in place for Castle Hedingham CC, Twinstead CC and Wethersfield CC and Witham CC. Although these clubs lease their grounds, they have fewer than 25 years remaining on their respective lease agreements. After which point there will be no guarantee of access.

All clubs that have security of tenure on the sites they use is through a long term lease agreement in place or have arrangements with the Council, where future access is deemed to be secure. It should, however, be noted that the agreements for some clubs are relatively close to expiry. This can be problematic particularly if clubs are looking to develop their sites or apply for external funding. Many funding bodies require lease agreements of over 25 years in order for applicants to be successful.

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In addition, four clubs in the Braintree District also access secondary venues due to their size and a lack of capacity on their main square/s. These venues are most utilised via short-term rental agreements where tenure is inevitably less secure; however, this is generally not an issue as clubs do not always want to be tied into longer term arrangements when their requirements may not always necessitate access to these sites.

The following table identifies clubs that use secondary venues and the sites accessed.

Table 4.6: Summary of secondary venues

Club	Site/s accessed
Braintree CC	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club
Chelmsford Titans	Writtle Sports & Social Club (Chelmsford)
Coggeshall Town CC	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)
Witham CC	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground

Chelmsford Titans CC accesses a site which is located outside of the Braintree District in neighbouring Chelmsford. See exported demand section for further information.

Pitch quality

Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and, in some instances, become dangerous. As an example, if a square is poor quality, a ball can bounce erratically on a wicket and become a danger to players.

Cricket pitch quality in the Braintree District has been assessed via a combination of site visits undertaken in July 2025 (using non-technical assessments as determined by the ECB) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating on a scale of good, standard and poor (for the full assessment criteria, please see Appendix 2).

Of available squares, the assessments identify that 12 are good quality (60%) and the remaining eight are standard quality (40%).

Table 4.7: Summary of community available quality of grass wicket squares

Good	Standard	Poor
12	8	-

The site-by-site breakdown of this is shown in the table below. Although capacity solely derives from square quality, as outlined later in the section, the ratings for outfielders have also been included. This is because their quality can affect the accessibility of the square in addition to them also been used for cricket initiatives for junior (All Stars/Dynamos) and women's cricket (softball).

Table 4.8: Quality ratings community available grass wickets (site by site)

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	No. of squares	Square quality	Outfield quality
6	Braintree Cricket Club	Central	1	Good	Good
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	Central	1	Good	Standard
13	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)	Central	1	Good	Good
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Rural North	1	Standard	Poor

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Site ID	Site	Analysis area	No. of squares	Square quality	Outfield quality
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	Rural North	1	Standard	Standard
31	Helions Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Rural North	1	Standard	Standard
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	South	1	Good	Good
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	South	1	Good	Standard
50	Rayne Village Hall	Central	1	Standard	Standard
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	South	1	Standard	Standard
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	Rural North	1	Standard	Standard
65	Terling Cricket Club	South	1	Good	Standard
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	Rural North	1	Standard	Standard
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	South	1	Good	Good
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	Rural North	1	Good	Standard
99	Castle Hedingham Cricket Club	Rural North	1	Good	Standard
100	Halstead Cricket Club	Rural North	1	Good	Good
100	Halstead Cricket Club	Rural North	1	Good	Standard
101	Witham Cricket Club	South	1	Good	Standard
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	Rural North	1	Standard	Standard

Despite being assessed as good quality, Coggeshall Town CC report the square at its main home ground has reduced in quality since last season due to the dry weather and a lack of water pressure. This makes watering the square and outfield difficult in the dry periods. It has also experienced some issues with rabbits causing damage on the outfield.

Earls Colne CC reports that the peripheral building work at Earl Colne Recreation Club has left stones on the outfield and that football use of the cricket outfield has left worn patches. It reports the quality of the pitch has worsened in recent years and states that its outfield has worsened in one part due to poor drainage (because of a collapsed drain) and winter use by junior football.

Halstead CC report it experiences occasional problems with dog walkers using the footpath which is adjacent to its second grass wicket square.

Despite both squares being assessed as good quality, Kelvedon & Feering CC report it does not have permanent water or electricity supply to its second grass wicket square which does restrict activity and restricts the use of water to prepare the square.

Terling CC report its square has improved in quality at its self-titled site due to it deep drilling the square and the outfield.

Wethersfield CC report its square has improved in quality due to more work being undertaken to the square earlier in the season, to remove the moss. Additionally, the Club spent more time preparing each strip to improve its quality.

Rayne CC report its square has diminished in quality since the previous season at Rayne Village Hall due to a lack of preparation time and a lack of games being played/fielded by the club.

Twinstead CC report its square has declined in quality since the previous season at its self-titled site due to financial constraints impacting on improvements.

Witham CC report there are rabbit holes on the square at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground which causes problems when preparing the square on Saturdays.

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The remaining sites have been identified, through club consultation, as having no differences in quality of the square and outfield since the previous season.

In relation to NTPs, those located at Earls Colne Recreation Club and Witham Cricket Club are rated as standard quality. Conversely, the NTPs at Hedingham School and Honywood Community Science School Academy are rated as poor quality, primarily due to the age of the provision, which has resulted in quality deterioration.

PitchPower assessments

As mentioned in Part 2: Football, The Premier League, The FA and the FF are increasing efforts to improve the quality of grass pitches in England with the PitchPower app. Launched in 2020 for football and re-launched in 2022 with functionality for rugby league and rugby union pitches, and in Spring 2024 for cricket. The app is a digital self-assessment tool to allow reports and recommendations to be made more quickly and easily once submitted for review by GMA regional pitch advisors.

The functionality of PitchPower for cricket was trialled in 2023 before becoming more commonly used from 2024 and beyond, although no reports have been completed in the Braintree District at the time of writing (September 2025). Due to this, quality scores for cricket and recommendations within the PPOSS Strategy & Action Plan should be reviewed and updated as part of the Stage E process to reflect new technical assessment evidence and information as and when it becomes available.

Grass Pitch Improvement Fund¹⁴

To coincide with the utilisation of PitchPower for cricket, the ECB, in partnership with Sport England and the National Lottery, has released the Grass Pitch Improvement Fund (GPIF). This aims to tackle inequalities by providing improved access to good quality, safe playing facilities for targeted groups. Priority will be given to applications which support cricket for the following groups:

- ◀ Women's and girls' cricket.
- ◀ Cricket in diverse communities.
- ◀ Disability cricket.
- ◀ Low socio-economic groups.

Investment will be targeted into three main areas:

- ◀ Improving the quality of squares and outfields (for grass pitches rated 'unsuitable' or 'basic').
- ◀ Creating sustainable management of sites (through irrigation and machinery improvements).
- ◀ Installing hybrid pitches to increase playing capacity.

The fund will run until March 2027, or whenever the funding is fully allocated (whichever is sooner).

¹⁴<https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2024/07/23/a754a60b-a11a-4dee-aa7e-06fbdc040297/GPIF-guidance-notes.pdf>

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Ball strike

Where there is either new cricket provision being put in place, or more commonly where there is a development which may prejudice the use of an existing cricket facility, there is a requirement for a full ball strike risk assessment to be undertaken and appropriate mitigation put in place as part of the development. As such, the ECB recommends that the affected or at risk clubs and organisations seek to have a ball strike risk assessment undertaken. Further information can be provided by the ECB.

Ancillary facilities

The extent of ancillary facilities required differs between times of play. For example, senior teams playing at weekends typically need to access clubhouse and kitchen facilities to provide teas, whereas this is often not required for junior and short format open age matches, where the need is more for access to suitable changing and/or toilet facilities.

Quality and access to required match day and preparatory facilities across the Authority is varied, with clubs playing at privately managed or sports club sites generally better served than those playing at community managed provision.

Ancillary facility rating is primarily influenced by the type and quality of amenities which are available on a site, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, showering provision, car parking, dedicated umpire, spectator facilities and boundary fencing. Provision of high quality ancillary facilities is a key aspect of the ECB's Inspiring Generations Strategy, to meet the expectations of the core participation base as well as key growth markets such as women and girls, South Asian and BAME communities and All Stars and Dynamos cricket (detailed later in the section).

In the Braintree District, quality and access to required match day and preparatory facilities across the District is varied, with six (30%) are accompanied by good quality provision, nine squares (45%) by standard quality provision and three (15%) by poor quality provision. The remaining two squares (10%) are not accompanied by any ancillary provision

A summary of quality across each site as well as a description as to what is provided and the condition of this is provided in the table below.

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Table 4.9: Changing room quality (at community available sites with natural turf squares)

Site ID	Site name	Club	Management type	Clubhouse quality	Changing facility quality	Comments on changing rooms/clubhouses
6	Braintree Cricket Club	Braintree CC	Sports Club	Good	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	Coggeshall Town CC	Sports Club	Standard	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Not compatible for women and girls' demand. The Club report it is keen to improve its facilities to provide four changing rooms due to the increase in its demand in recent seasons.
13	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)	Coggeshall Town CC	Sports Club	Poor	Poor	Provision is included within a shed building and only includes one toilet and no changing rooms provided.
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Earls Colne CC	Sports Club	Good	Good	Provision is suitable for the levels of demand accessing the site. Separate women's and girl's changing rooms are provided. No issues have been raised
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	Gestingthorpe CC	Parish Council	Poor	Poor	The Club reports the changing facilities are of poor quality and in need of refurbishment. It aspires to improve the facilities. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.
31	Helions Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Helions Bumpstead CC	Parish Council	N/A	N/A	No purpose-built ancillary provision onsite.
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	Kelvedon & Feering CC	Sports Club	Good	Good	Provision is suitable for the levels of demand accessing the site. Separate women's and girl's changing rooms are provided. No issues have been raised. The Club does report it is trying to raise funds to replace two storage units for equipment and has experienced some minor damage to the exterior fencing of the ground.
50	Rayne Village Hall	Rayne CC	Parish Council	Standard	Poor	Two changing rooms on site which include communal toilets and showers. Changing facilities are in poor condition and not fit for purpose
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	Witham CC	Trust	N/A	Poor	The Club report it does not have access to a purpose built clubhouse on site, although there are two changing rooms and toilets provided. The changing provision is in poor condition and in need of a refurbishment. In addition, it reports the storage shed roof has been ripped off recently.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Management type	Clubhouse quality	Changing facility quality	Comments on changing rooms/clubhouses
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	Chelmsford Titans CC	Parish Council	Standard	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.
65	Terling Cricket Club	Terling CC	Sports Club	Standard	Poor	Two changing rooms on site which include communal toilets and showers. Changing facilities are in poor condition and not fit for purpose.
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	Wethersfield CC	Parish Council	Standard	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	Hatfield Peverel CC	Sports Club	Standard	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	Twinstead CC	Sports Club	Standard	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Separate women's and girl's changing rooms are provided.
99	Castle Hedingham Cricket Club	Castle Hedingham CC	Sports Club	Standard	Standard	Provision is suitable for the levels of demand accessing the site. Separate women's and girl's changing rooms are provided. The Club reports it has experienced theft of some equipment over the last year.
100	Halstead Cricket Club	Halstead CC	Sports Club	Poor	Poor	The Club reports the changing facilities are of poor quality and in need of refurbishment. The Club notes the pavilion is regularly broken into and vandalised.
101	Witham Cricket Club	Witham CC	Sports Club	Good	Standard	Provision is adequate with no issues have been raised. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	Wickham St Paul CC	Parish Council	Good	Standard	Changing room provision is adequate but has experienced vandalism of its scoreboard recently. Not compatible for women and girls' demand.

For women's and girls' provision, 10 clubs (77%) report not having suitable/separate changing rooms. Only Earls Colne CC, Kelvedon & Feering CC and Castle Hedingham CC report having suitable changing facilities for women's and girls' teams.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Practice facilities

Access to cricket nets is important, particularly for pre-season/winter training. Clubs access both indoor and outdoor provision before the season commences, whilst during the season, outdoor training provision supplies most of the use. In addition, outdoor practice nets can also help to accommodate recreational activity, for which there is growing demand.

In the Braintree District, the table below summarises the sites that currently contain fixed practice nets. In total, there are 11 sites supplying 25 bays. Only Gosfield School is unavailable for community use.

Table 4.10: Summary of practice nets in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Available for community use?	No. of nets/bays	Quality
6	Braintree Cricket Club	Central	Yes	2	Good
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	Central	Yes	4	Good
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	Rural North	Yes	2	Poor
24	Gosfield School	Rural North	No	2	Poor
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	South	Yes	3	Standard
65	Terling Cricket Club	South	Yes	2	Standard
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	Rural North	Yes	1	Standard
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	South	Yes	2	Good
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	Rural North	Yes	1	Standard
100	Halstead Cricket Club	Rural North	Yes	3	Good
101	Witham Cricket Club	South	Yes	3	Good

Based on consultation feedback Coggeshall Town CC, Gestingthorpe CC, Hatfield Peverel CC and Rayne CC all report a need for improved, new or additional facilities. These aspirations are further summarised below.

Table 4.11: Summary of demand for additional training facilities

Site ID	Site name	Club	Comments
13	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)	Coggeshall Town CC	The Club states it would like to install practice nets.
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	Gestingthorpe CC	The Club reports it needs to replace the old surfaces on the nets in the next few years but is proving expensive.
50	Rayne Village Hall	Rayne CC	The Club reports that it would like to install non-turf practice nets.
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	Hatfield Peverel CC	The Club would like to install an NTP and practice nets.

In addition, it should also be referenced that each site with practice facilities also supply cricket pitches and host clubs. This means that there are no separate sites with nets, which can be detrimental to supporting recreational demand (as club-based nets tend to be reserved for club usage).

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Indoor facilities

Whilst the PPOSS regards outdoor playing pitches, the cricket training programme includes accessing indoor net facilities over winter months in preparation for the start of the season. As such indoor training facilities have been discussed in the following section.

In total, nine clubs report accessing indoor provision for winter net pre-season training sessions, with the following sites in the Braintree District utilised:

- ▶ Braintree Sport & Health Club.
- ▶ Gosfield School.
- ▶ Terling Indoor Cricket Centre.

Consultation with Coggeshall Town CC report it is keen to explore providing indoor net facilities at its main home ground (Coggeshall Town Cricket Club). However, this is purely aspirational at this stage with no funding lined up. The Club currently accesses indoor nets for winter training at Peldon Cricket (Colchester).

Twinstead CC report it utilises Polstead Cricket Lane and Northern Gateway for indoor winter training (both in Colchester). Similarly, Rayne CC states it accesses Northern Gateway and Holmwood House School for indoor winter training and matches (both in Colchester).

Hatfield Peverel CC hires Plume Academy for some indoor winter training (located in Maldon).

Witham CC utilises the indoor nets at Writtle Cricket Centre (Chelmsford) for some indoor winter training sessions.

In addition, the Braintree District Indoor Cricket League runs an indoor competition during winter months for senior teams and comprises three divisions. It is accommodated at Braintree Sport & Health Club in the sports hall.

As highlighted above, several clubs report a need for access or improved access to indoor facilities for winter training purposes. Whilst this falls outside the remit of this study, it is something that should be considered moving forward, with many clubs reporting that they do not have access to sports halls or must access them at undesirable times. This is generally due to year-round block bookings being given priority.

4.3: Demand

There are 16 clubs in the Braintree District collectively providing 80 teams. This equates to 40 open age, eight senior women's, five junior girls' and 27 junior boys' teams. As seen in the table below, most teams are based in the South Analysis Area (35 teams), whilst the fewest are in the Central Analysis Area (21 teams).

Table 4.12: Summary of teams by analysis area

Analysis area	Open age	Senior women	Junior teams
Central	8	2	11
Rural North	16	1	5
South	14	5	16
Braintree District	37	8	32

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Club makeup is mixed. Most, such as Braintree, Coggeshall, Kelvedon and Feering and Witham cricket clubs are large and provide a significant number of teams within several formats. However, some are small and run only one or two teams, including Castle Hedingham, Earls Colne and Rayne cricket clubs. This is summarised club-by-club in the table below.

Table 4.13: Summary of club demand

Club	Analysis area	No. of open age teams	No. of senior women's teams	No. of junior boys' teams	No. of junior girls' teams	Total
Braintree CC	Central	4	1	3	-	8
Castle Hedingham CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	1
Coggeshall CC	Central	3	1	6	2	12
Chelmsford Titans CC	Rural North	2	-	-	-	2
Earls Colne CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	1
Gestingthorpe CC	Rural North	2	-	-	-	2
Helions Bumpstead CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	1
Halstead CC	Rural North	3	-	4	-	7
Hatfield Peverel CC	Rural North	3	1	1	-	5
Kelvedon & Feering CC	South	5	2	7	3	17
Rayne CC	Central	1	-	-	-	1
Terling CC	South	4	2	1	-	7
Twinstead CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	1
Wethersfield CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	1
Wickham St Paul CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	1
Witham CC	South	5	1	5	-	11
-	Total	40	8	27	5	80

Participation trends

As seen in the table below, demand has generally increased within the previous three years, particularly for open age cricket, with six clubs identifying growth within this format. Only Rayne CC reports a decrease in teams.

Table 4.14: Summary of team demand in the previous three years

Age bracket	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Men's open age (18–55 ages)	Braintree CC Chelmsford Titans CC Hatfield Peverel CC Kelvedon & Feering CC Terling CC Witham CC	Rayne CC	Castle Hedingham CC Coggeshall Town CC Earls Colne CC Halstead CC Gestingthorpe CC Twinstead CC Wethersfield CC
Women's open age (18–55 ages)	Braintree CC Coggeshall Town CC Kelvedon & Feering CC Terling CC	-	Castle Hedingham CC Halstead CC Hatfield Peverel CC Gestingthorpe CC Twinstead CC Witham CC

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Age bracket	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Junior (7-17 ages)	Braintree CC Halstead CC Hatfield Peverel CC Kelvedon & Feering CC Terling CC	-	Castle Hedingham CC Coggeshall Town CC Twinstead CC Witham CC

Imported/exported demand

Imported demand is demand from neighbouring authorities accessing pitches in the Braintree District to play competitive matches.

Sudbury CC imports some demand to Gestingthorpe Playing Fields, despite being predominantly based in Babergh. This is due to capacity at its home ground at Sudbury & District Cricket Club.

IPSCOL CC import some senior demand to Earls Colne Recreation Club, despite being predominantly based in Colchester. This is due to the location of the site and available capacity.

Danbury CC and Oaklands CC imports some senior demand into the District and plays at Rayne Village Hall, despite being based in Chelmsford. This is only while current play is suspended at its site in Chelmsford.

Great Baddow CC import some occasional demand into the District and play at Kelvedon & Feering Cricket Club. They are otherwise based in Chelmsford.

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of the study area, despite being registered in the Braintree District, normally because their pitch requirements cannot be met, which is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities.

Chelmsford Titans CC exports a Sunday team outside of the Braintree District and uses Writtle Sports & Social Club in Chelmsford.

Women's and girls' cricket

The ECB's strategy called "Inspiring Generations" was announced in January 2019 (currently being refreshed) and it builds on the strong foundations laid by Cricket Unleashed and supports the growth of cricket in England and Wales between 2020 and 2024. At the heart of this strategy is a single unifying purpose, which gets to the core of what the game can do for society both on and off the field to ensure that cricket is in an even stronger position than it is in 2019. The Strategy has four key priorities and activities including to increase the representation of women and girls in every level of cricket by:

- ✦ Growing the base through participation and facilities investment.
- ✦ Launching centres of excellence and a new elite domestic structure.
- ✦ Investing in girls' county age group cricket.
- ✦ Delivering a girls' secondary school programme.

In the Braintree District, two cricket clubs provide dedicated junior girls' teams. Linked to this, it must be noted that the ECB has recently established a target of trebling the number of junior girls' teams across the Country by 2028, with this therefore likely to further increase in demand in the Braintree District. This will be further tested as a scenario in the Strategy.

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For girls' cricket to grow further in the Braintree District, it is imperative that existing provision adapts to better accommodate girls' demand. Some existing clubhouses are dated and provide unsegregated changing areas as well as communal showers that are unsuitable for mixed gender access.

Additional activity

The ECB is currently running a number of initiatives across the Country which results in additional cricket demand and use of cricket facilities. Whilst these do not generally utilise grass wickets, they can impact upon availability when sessions are being held due to use of cricket outfield, making squares unusable for matches during these periods. This can mean no availability on one or two nights a week.

All Stars Cricket

In partnership with the ECB and Chance to Shine, clubs in the Braintree District can register to become an ECB All Stars cricket centre. Once registered, they can deliver the programme which aims to introduce cricket to children aged from five to eight. Subsequently, this may lead to increased interest and demand for junior cricket at clubs.

The programme has the following aims:

- ✦ Increase cricket activity for five- to eight-year-olds in the school and club environment.
- ✦ Develop consistency of message in both settings to aid transition.
- ✦ Improve generic movement skills for children, using cricket as the vehicle.
- ✦ Make it easier for new volunteers to support and deliver in the club environment.
- ✦ Use fun small-sided games to enthuse new children and volunteers to follow/play the game.

In the Braintree District, four cricket clubs currently deliver All Stars activity (see Table 4.15).

Dynamos cricket

Dynamos provides the next step for all those graduating from All Stars cricket, thus developing a pathway to retain juniors who progress, as well as being an introduction for all 8-11 year olds new to the sport. Where All Stars seeks to engage children in cricket activity and learning the skills, Dynamos seeks to engage children in learning how to play, introducing a modified softball format as competitive progression with a view to transition through to hardball cricket.

In the Braintree District, two clubs currently take part in the Dynamos initiative, with these being Braintree CC and Hatfield Peverel CC.

Softball cricket

Softball cricket is an ECB initiative aimed at women and girls to increase participation in cricket. The aim is enjoyment and participation, without pads, a hardball, a heavy bat and limited rules. Sessions are generally played on the outfield of a square and follow a festival format with each running for a maximum of two and half hours, shorter than traditional formats.

Four clubs field women's softball demand in the Braintree District. These are Braintree CC, Kelvedon & Feering CC, Terling CC and Witham CC.

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Table 4.15: Clubs involved in ECB initiatives

Club name	All Stars	Dynamos	Women/girls
Braintree CC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Castle Hedingham CC	No	No	No
Coggeshall CC	Yes	No	No
Chelmsford Titans CC	No	No	No
Earls Colne CC	No	No	No
Gestingthorpe CC	No	No	No
Halstead CC	No	No	No
Hatfield Peverel CC	Yes	Yes	No
Kelvedon & Feering CC	No	No	Yes
Rayne CC	No	No	No
Terling CC	Yes	No	Yes
Twinstead CC	No	No	No
Witham CC	No	No	Yes
Total	4/16 (25%)	2/16 (13%)	4/16 (25%)

Disability cricket

The ECB wishes to support cricket clubs to deliver cricket opportunities for those with disabilities and has setup the Disability Cricket Champion Club Programme to support clubs through guidance, resource and equipment. This is to enable them to welcome individuals with additional needs and varying abilities to support them to play, follow, officiate and volunteer.

There are currently no Disability Cricket Champion clubs in the Braintree District. However, Braintree CC has historically delivered disability opportunities.

Last Man Stands

Last Man Stands (LMS) was founded in 2005, in London. The social outdoor eight-a-side T20 cricket game is played midweek, lasts approximately two hours and is generally played on NTPs. All eight wickets are required to bowl a team out so when the seventh wicket falls, the 'Last Man Stands' on his own. This shorter format of the game has encouraged more people to participate in the sport and is increasing in popularity.

LMS does not currently operate in the Braintree District. However, it does in nearby Chelmsford, with two divisions in operation with five teams currently participating in each division located at Chelmer Park. It is likely that some Braintree District demand is being accommodated within this.

Street Cricket

Street Cricket is an ECB initiative run through the Chance to Shine Programme, with this aimed at bringing cricket to thousands of young people in urban areas. It uses the game to increase aspiration, promote social cohesion and create opportunities in diverse communities. It's a fast-paced version of the game played with a tapeball (a tennis ball wrapped in electrical tape) in small, enclosed spaces, often courts or indoor sports halls. Matches are played by six players per team and 20 balls per innings.

No Street cricket sessions currently take place in the Braintree District.

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Informal demand

Although no informal use is recorded on cricket squares in the Braintree District it is considered that informal cricket is being heavily played elsewhere, such as on parks, recreation grounds and even on macadam surfaces such as car parks. Informal formats of play are particularly often preferred amongst South Asian communities, which have a presence within the Braintree District. The ECB considers the development of cricket within these communities to be a key focus.

Latent/unmet demand

No latent or unmet demand is identified from clubs across the Braintree District.

Other usage

Earls Colne CC describe also accommodate Essex North District U15's fixtures at Earls Colne Recreation Club.

Halstead CC state its square is used by Halstead Street Rangers for friendly matches on Friday evenings for approximately five matches per season.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined via several ways, including through participation increases and by using population forecasts.

Population forecasts

Based on population projections to 2041, (the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can estimate the likely additional demand for grass wicket cricket squares that will arise from any growth. This is by using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, with team generation rates then established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

For reference, total current population in the Braintree District in 2025 of 155,273 is projected to increase to 161,079 by 2041 (ONS projections). The table below shows the number of new teams that are forecasted to generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions that this will require. It forecasts that there will be a growth of two open age and one junior boys' team.

Table 4.16: Future demand via population growth (2041)

Age group	Current population per sport age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams ¹⁵	Peak time	Average games for age group	Match equivalent session per season
Open age (18-55yrs)	34,117	1:922	2	Saturday	12	24
Women (18-55yrs)	35,416	1:5,903	0	Sunday	12	0
Boys (7-18yrs)	11,400	1:422	1	Midweek	6	6
Girls (7-18yrs)	10,900	1:2,180	0	Midweek	6	0

¹⁵ Rounded to the nearest whole number

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As seen in the table above, there are three additional teams expected to be generated by population growth alone for the Braintree District generating demand for 30 match sessions per season. These figures will be applied to the supply and demand analysis later in this section.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to acknowledge that there are plans and strategies in place to increase the number of teams at some formats beyond what current trends and population changes would suggest. For example, consultation with the ECB and the Essex Cricket Board suggests that further development of girl's participation in cricket in the Braintree District is likely as it is currently a national priority, with an aim existing to treble the number of female teams across the Country by 2028. This also applies to potential increased growth in junior cricket, linked to the abovementioned All Stars and Dynamos initiatives.

There is currently no forecasted growth for such activity using population projections, but this is only because of low levels of existing demand. For girls cricket to grow further in the Braintree District, it is imperative that existing provision adapts to better accommodate girls' demand.

In addition, the ECB's media rights deal includes a continuation of its relationship with Sky Sports, up to 2028. This now extends beyond broadcasting and is a partnership which will secure significant investment and a commitment to increase participation and drive engagement. This could therefore boost demand to levels in excess of those anticipated through the PPOSS, meaning the impact should be reviewed over coming years.

Finally, the demand identified is based solely upon current levels of formal demand from community-based cricket clubs and therefore does not capture informal or recreational activity.

Participation increases

Of the clubs in the Braintree District, six indicate aspirations to increase levels of participation in the future. This amounts to a total predicted growth of nine teams, equating to four open age, two senior women's and three junior teams.

Table 4.17: Future demand expressed by clubs

Club	Analysis area	Open age	Senior women's	Junior girls'	Junior boys'
Braintree CC	Central	1	-	-	-
Earls Colne CC	Rural North	1	-	-	-
Hatfield Peverel CC	South	-	-	1	-
Kelvedon & Feering CC	South	1	1	1	1
Rayne CC	Central	1	-	-	-
Terling CC	South	-	1	-	-
Braintree District	-	4	2	2	1

This is summarised by analysis area below. The largest proportion of future demand is expressed in the South Analysis Area with this equating to six teams.

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Table 4.18: Summary of future demand aspirations by analysis area

Analysis area	Open age	Senior women's	Junior girls'	Junior boys'
Central	2	-	-	-
Rural North	1	-	-	-
South	1	2	2	1
Braintree District	4	2	2	1

Future demand summary

In the supply and demand analysis at the end of this section of the report, it is considered unfeasible for all future demand to be factored in. This is because it is possible that club aspirations will absorb the future demand identified through population growth (and vice versa), rather than them being judged separately and therefore potentially double counted. As such, only demand identified through population growth is taken forward, with club demand considered to be more theoretical and aspirational.

Notwithstanding the above, the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document will contain a scenario that will consider the impact if clubs aspirations are realised. It will also consider a growth in female activity above and beyond what has been identified from population projections and club aspirations.

Moreover, neither club aspirations nor population projections account for the scale or distribution of housing growth across the District. This will therefore also be subject to analysis in the Strategy & Action Plan document.

4.4: Capacity analysis

Capacity analysis for cricket is measured on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis. This is due to playability (as only one match is generally played per square per day at weekends or weekday evening) and because wickets are rotated throughout the season to reduce wear and tear and to allow for repair.

The capacity of a square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. This section of the report therefore presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive match equivalent sessions per season per square that is available and that currently takes place.

For good quality squares, capacity is considered to be five matches per grass wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not deemed safe for play.

The number of matches played by each team has been derived from consultation with the clubs. Where the level of play was not made clear through the consultation process, an assumption has been made that all senior teams play between ten and 12 home matches per year and all junior teams play between four and eight matches per year depending on their age and level of competition.

The above is used to allocate capacity ratings as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

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The capacity analysis assumes that all clubs rotate their wickets evenly. However, this may not be the case at all sites, with central wickets potentially used more commonly than outer wickets that are closer to a boundary, especially for senior matches. The idea is to showcase what the capacity is or could be if best practice is followed for the whole square, rather than doing it on a wicket-by-wicket basis.

Please also note that non-turf pitches (NTPs) have been discounted from the analysis. This is because no NTPs are recorded as accommodating more than 60 matches per season, meaning all NTPs are considered to have spare capacity (subject to wider site capacity existing). This generally translates to actual spare capacity for junior cricket as peak time is midweek, whereby non-turf wickets are more commonly used and matches can be played on a variety of days. However, this is not the case where midweek demand is particularly high, with capacity still limited due to general site usage. It also does not apply to senior cricket as NTP usage is generally not allowed.

Peak time demand

An analysis of match play identifies that peak time demand for senior cricket in the Braintree District is Saturday, although a good proportion of teams are also fielded on a Sunday, including senior women's teams, as well as midweek in shorter formats of the game. In addition, peak time is midweek for junior cricket, albeit that some Sunday cricket is also recorded.

Based on the above, capacity across Saturday, Sunday and midweek requires consideration, which the following analysis looks to provide. This involves factoring in the overall capacity level at each site and current usage levels across each relevant period.

Spare capacity

The table below explains the difference between the potential spare capacity referenced in Table 4.20 and the actual spare capacity identified in the final three columns (Saturday, Sunday and midweek). This is required as not all potential spare capacity can be considered actual spare capacity.

Table 4.19: Spare capacity examples

Potential spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of spare capacity
No	If the cell has a "no" it means that the pitch is played to capacity within this period and therefore cannot accommodate any further demand.
Yes	If the cell has a "yes" that is not highlighted it means there is spare capacity to accommodate further demand within this designated peak period; however, this is discounted due to unsecure tenure, poor pitch quality, the pitch not being available for community use or the pitch already being played to capacity or being overplayed so it cannot accommodate any additional demand.
Yes	If the cell has a "yes" and is also highlighted in green it means there is actual available spare capacity within this peak period which can be utilised.

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Table 4.20: Capacity analysis of cricket squares in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Users	Security of tenure	No. of squares	Square quality	No. of grass wickets	Capacity (MES)	Current use (MES)	Capacity balance (MES)	Potential spare capacity/ availability for Saturday cricket	Potential spare capacity/ availability for Sunday cricket	Potential spare capacity/ availability for midweek cricket
6	Braintree Cricket Club	1040500	Central	Braintree CC	Secure	1	Good	10	50	47	3	No	No	No
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	1039949	Central	Braintree CC Coggeshall Town CC	Secure	1	Good	17	85	122	37	No	No	No
13	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)	30009886	Central	Coggeshall Town CC	Secure	1	Good	4	20	20	0	No	No	No
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	1206961	Rural North	Earls Colne CC	Secure	1	Standard	7	28	22	6	No	No	Yes
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	6012446	Rural North	Gestingthorpe CC	Secure	1	Standard	6	24	16	8	No	No	Yes
31	Helions Bumpstead Recreation Ground	6021163	Rural North	Helions Bumpstead CC	Secure	1	Standard	4	16	12	4	No	No	Yes
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	1206974	South	Kelvedon and Feering CC	Secure	1	Good	13	65	75	10	No	No	Yes
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	1206974	South	Kelvedon and Feering CC	Secure	1	Good	8	40	60	20	No	No	No
50	Rayne Village Hall	6021228	Central	Rayne CC	Secure	1	Standard	6	24	24	0	No	No	No
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	6017684	South	Witham CC	Unsecure	1	Standard	5	20	24	4	No	No	Yes
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	6021255	Rural North	Chelmsford Titans CC	Secure	1	Standard	3	12	12	0	No	No	No
65	Terling Cricket Club	1206957	South	Terling CC	Unsecure	1	Good	10	50	69	19	No	No	Yes
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	1041837	Rural North	Wethersfield CC	Unsecure	1	Standard	5	20	6	14	Yes	Yes	Yes
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	-	South	Hatfield Peverel CC	Secure	1	Good	8	40	49	9	No	No	Yes
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	-	Rural North	Twinstead CC	Unsecure	1	Good	5	25	17	8	No	No	Yes
99	Castle Hedingham Cricket Club	-	Rural North	Castle Hedingham CC	Unsecure	1	Good	8	40	7	33	Yes	Yes	Yes
100	Halstead Cricket Club	-	Rural North	Halstead CC	Secure	1	Good	14	130	36	94	No	Yes	Yes
100	Halstead Cricket Club	-	Rural North	Halstead CC	Secure	1	Good	6	30	11	19	Yes	Yes	Yes
101	Witham Cricket Club	-	South	Witham CC	Secure	1	Good	14	130	61	69	No	Yes	Yes
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	-	Rural North	Wickham St Paul CC	Secure	1	Standard	4	16	6	10	No	No	Yes

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Actual spare capacity

A square is only considered to have actual spare capacity if it is available for further usage during a particular peak period. Using the capacity analysis, this section considers the level of actual spare capacity available for each playing format. Actual spare capacity is not considered to exist if a site is over, at, or close to capacity, or if they are poor quality or provide unsecure tenure as future usage cannot be guaranteed.

Additionally, it should be noted that the actual spare capacity on Saturdays, Sundays and during midweek should not be viewed collectively as utilising it across different days may result in overplay. For example, a site with 12 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity per season theoretically has capacity for one additional senior team and two additional junior teams; however, it does not have capacity for both. As such, this needs to be taken into consideration on a site-by-site basis as and when demand grows.

Saturday cricket spare capacity

For open age cricket, peak time is Saturday as this is when most demand exists. As only one match can be played on each square per day, only two Saturday teams can be assigned to play home matches on one square (based on matches being played on an alternate home and away basis). As such, if a square has two Saturday teams already playing home fixtures on it, no actual spare capacity is perceived to exist for additional senior usage. If one or no teams are playing on a square on a Saturday, and it has overall capacity, secure tenure actual spare capacity for senior demand is generally identified.

In the Braintree District, there are two squares across the same number of sites that have potential capacity to accommodate further demand, as shown in the following table.

Table 4.21: Summary of actual spare capacity for Saturday cricket

Site ID	Site name	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)	Comments
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	14	Square is currently unused; capacity exists for two Saturday teams
100	Halstead Cricket Club	19	Square is currently unused; capacity exists for two Saturday teams

In total, actual spare capacity equates to 33 match equivalent sessions per season. This is found in the Rural North Analysis Area. Neither the Central nor South analysis areas have actual spare capacity on Saturdays.

Table 4.22: Actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Saturday) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)
Central	-
Rural North	33
South	-
Total	33

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Sunday cricket spare capacity

Similar to Saturday cricket, a square on a Sunday is only considered to have actual spare capacity if it is not already used by two teams at this time, has secure tenure and is not over, at, or close to capacity. Taking this into consideration, there are four squares across three sites in the Braintree District that have potential capacity to accommodate further demand, as shown in the following table.

Table 4.23: Summary of actual spare capacity for Sunday cricket

Site ID	Site name	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions per season)	Comments
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	14	Used by one Sunday team; spare capacity exists for an additional team
100	Halstead Cricket Club	94	Unused on a Sunday; capacity exists for two Sunday teams.
100	Halstead Cricket Club	19	Unused on a Sunday; capacity exists for two Sunday teams.
101	Witham Cricket Club	69	Unused on a Sunday; capacity exists for two Sunday teams.

In total, the actual spare capacity equates to 196 match equivalent sessions per season. This is predominantly found in the Rural North Analysis Area with 127 match equivalent sessions identified. The South Analysis Area has 69 match equivalent sessions identified.

Table 4.24: Actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Sunday) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions per season)
Central	-
Rural North	127
South	69
Braintree District	196

Midweek cricket spare capacity

For midweek cricket, most squares with spare capacity have actual spare capacity for an increase in demand. This is because matches can be spread across numerous days, meaning capacity is not limited to two teams. Moreover, the presence of junior wickets at certain sites, as well as NTPs, provide further capacity that is generally not available to senior demand.

Notwithstanding the above, for a square to have actual spare capacity for midweek cricket, it must have secure tenure, not be overplayed and have more than four match equivalent sessions of spare capacity as this is the minimum number of matches an additional junior team would play. However, a square is not considered to have capacity for an increase in demand if it is already used by six midweek teams or more as availability is then assumed to be limited (on average, clubs are able to play fixtures on three nights per week, with other nights reserved for other activity such as All Stars and Dynamos).

There are eight squares across seven sites in the Braintree District that have potential capacity to accommodate further demand during midweek.

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Table 4.25: Summary of actual spare capacity for midweek (junior) cricket

Site ID	Site name	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions per season)	Comments
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	8	Used by one midweek team; capacity exists for five midweek teams.
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	8	Unused midweek
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	14	Unused midweek
100	Halstead Cricket Club	94	Unused midweek
100	Halstead Cricket Club	19	Used by five midweek teams; capacity exists for one midweek team
101	Witham Cricket Club	69	Used by five midweek teams; capacity exists for one midweek team
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	10	Unused midweek

A total of 220 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity per season is identified for midweek cricket. This is predominantly found in the Rural North Analysis Area with 151 match equivalent sessions identified. The South Analysis Area has 69 match equivalent sessions identified.

Table 4.26: Actual spare capacity for midweek cricket by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions per season)
Central	-
Rural North	151
South	69
Braintree District	220

Overlay

Overlay translates to a site accommodating more demand than it can sustain based on the number of wickets provided and the quality of the square. Although it is possible to sustain certain, minimal levels of overlay providing that a regular, sufficient maintenance regime is in place, a reduction in play is recommended on overplayed squares to ensure there is no detrimental effect on quality over time.

In the Braintree District, five sites are overplayed by a total of 99 match equivalent sessions per season, as summarised below.

Table 4.27: Summary of overlay

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Overlay (match equivalent sessions per season)
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	Central	37
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	South	30
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	South	4
65	Terling Cricket Club	South	19
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	South	9
-	-	Braintree District	99

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The overplay is predominately found in the South Analysis Area with 62 match equivalent sessions each per season followed by 37 match equivalent sessions in the Central Analysis Area. There is no overplay evident in the Rural North Analysis Area.

As seen in the table above, Coggeshall Town Cricket Club has the highest amount of overplay, with this amounting to 37 match equivalent sessions per season. This is due to the amount of demand that Coggeshall Town CC fields. It should also be recognised that the square is assessed as good quality, meaning it has no potential to increase its capacity.

In addition, Kelvedon & Feering CC has 30 match equivalent sessions per season of overplay and this is predominantly due to the quantity of demand being accommodated on the squares.

Table 4.28: Summary of overplay by analysis area

Analysis area	Overplay (match equivalent sessions per season)
Central	37
Rural North	-
South	62
Braintree District	99

4.5: Supply and demand analysis

Consideration must be given to the extent to which current provision can accommodate current and future demand for both senior and junior cricket.

For actual spare capacity, please note that this is converted from the number of match equivalent sessions identified above to the number of match equivalent sessions that could feasibly be utilised by a growth in demand. This is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (12) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per square that is available). Match equivalent sessions for future demand are calculated using the average number of matches played per season (12 matches for senior Saturday teams, six matches for Sunday teams and four matches for junior teams).

In order to give an accurate representation of future demand, future demand is considered based on team generation rates which are driven by population increases, with this equating to two senior men's and one junior boys' team.

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance during the peak period for senior men's cricket (Saturday).

Saturday cricket supply and demand analysis

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance during the peak period for open age cricket (Saturday).

Table 4.29: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Saturday) in match equivalent sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total
Central	-	37	37
Rural North	48	-	48
South	-	62	62
Braintree District	48	99	51

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As seen in the table above, there is a current shortfall for Saturday cricket in the Braintree District amounting to 51 match equivalent sessions. This involves a deficit in the Central and South analysis areas (the Rural North Analysis Area has actual spare capacity).

When future demand is accounted for, the overall shortfall increases by 24 match equivalent sessions a season (two open age teams) to a total 75 match equivalent sessions per season.

Table 4.30: Future supply and demand balance for Saturday cricket in the Braintree District

Current total (match equivalent sessions)	Future competitive demand (match equivalent sessions)	Future total (match equivalent sessions)
51	24	75

Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Sunday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance for Sunday cricket, which is peak time for senior women's demand but also relevant to some open age and junior teams.

For actual spare capacity, please note that this is converted from the number of match equivalent sessions identified above to the number of match equivalent sessions that could feasibly be utilised by a growth in demand. This is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by Sunday teams (six) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per square that is available). The entirety of the spare capacity at each site is not used as this number of matches may not be able to be accommodated at peak time.

Table 4.31: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Sunday) in match equivalent sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total
Central	-	37	37
Rural North	30	-	30
South	12	62	50
Braintree District	42	99	57

There is a current shortfall for Sunday cricket in the Braintree District amounting to 57 match equivalent sessions. This involves a deficit in the Central and South analysis areas (the Rural North Analysis Area has actual spare capacity).

As there is no anticipated growth from population increases for Sunday cricket, the shortfalls remain the same to 2041.

Junior cricket supply and demand analysis (midweek)

For the junior supply and demand analysis, actual spare capacity equates to the total spare capacity at each available site or, if it is lower, the total number of additional junior teams that could be fielded on each available square (on the assumption that one square can accommodate six midweek teams), multiplied by four (the average number of matches a junior team plays). This is because junior demand at peak time is not limited to one day, although some capacity should be reserved for activity such as All Stars and Dynamos cricket.

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Table 4.32: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for junior cricket in match equivalent sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total
Central	-	37	37
Rural North	83	-	96
South	20	62	58
Braintree District	103	99	4

There is overall current spare capacity amounting to four match equivalent sessions per season for midweek cricket.

When future demand is accounted for, one junior boys' team has been applied to the above table. This means that an overall shortfall is established equating to two match equivalent sessions per season.

Table 4.33: Future supply and demand balance for midweek cricket in the Braintree District

Current total (match equivalent sessions)	Future competitive demand (match equivalent sessions)	Future total (match equivalent sessions)
4	6	2

Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that for midweek cricket there is a stock of NTPs that can be used to accommodate some of the excess demand via the transfer of play and greater utilisation.

4.6: Conclusion

In summary, the broad position in the Braintree District is that there is insufficient capacity for current demand across Saturday and Sunday cricket. This is a consequence of the 99 match equivalent sessions per season of overplay identified across five sites.

As previously stated, Coggeshall Town Cricket Club has the highest amount of overplay, with this amounting to 37 match equivalent sessions per season. This is due to the amount of demand that Coggeshall Town CC fields. It should also be recognised that the square is assessed as good quality, meaning it has no potential to increase its capacity.

In addition, Kelvedon & Feering CC has 30 match equivalent sessions per season of overplay and this is predominantly due to the quantity of demand being accommodated on the squares.

There is, however, some actual spare capacity to accommodate midweek cricket. This equates to four match equivalent sessions.

When considering future demand, the deficits are project to worsen for Saturday cricket. For midweek cricket, actual spare capacity remains albeit at a reduced level. As there is no anticipated growth from population increases for Sunday cricket, the shortfalls remain the same. The table below summarises this further.

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Table 4.34: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares across the Braintree District in match equivalent sessions per season

Peak time period	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Saturday	48	99	51	24	75
Sunday	42	99	57	-	57
Midweek	103	99	4	6	2

A scenario exploring how future demand, through club aspirations of four senior men's, two senior woman's and two junior teams will affect the future capacity analysis will be included in the proceeding Strategy document.

It will also consider how current and future shortfalls can potentially be accommodated.

Cricket – supply and demand summary

- Actual spare capacity is identified amounting to 48 match equivalent sessions on a Saturday, 42 match equivalent sessions on a Sunday and 103 match equivalent sessions exist midweek.
- In total, five sites are overplayed by a total of 99 match equivalent sessions per season. Coggeshall Town Cricket Club has the highest amount of overplay due to the amount of demand that Coggeshall Town CC fields.
- Overall, there is currently an insufficient supply of cricket squares in the Braintree District to cater for Saturday and Sunday cricket, with this projected to worsen when accounting for future demand.

Cricket – supply summary

- In total, there are 21 grass wicket squares in the Braintree District across 19 sites, with one grass wicket square being unavailable for community use.
- There are also five NTPs, with three accompanying grass wicket squares and the remaining two being standalone wickets.
- Bocking Sports Club previously accommodated a six wicket grass square; however, upon non-technical assessments, the provision seems not to have been actively maintained or used for an extended period of time.
- Church Road Playing Fields previously accommodated a grass wicket square with eight wickets that was last active circa 2016. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.
- Courtauld Sports Ground previously provided a grass wicket square but is no longer maintained, although the site is still utilised for football.
- Notley Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2000. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.
- Dusty Lane, Tye Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2011. ECB and Essex Cricket has advised that the site is too small for senior cricket and is not viable for re-instating a grass wicket square. However, the site and boundary size is sufficient for an NTP for junior cricket. Therefore, it should still be protected as a playing field for other sports unless appropriate mitigation is made off-site.
- The audit of community available grass wicket squares found 12 to be good quality and eight to be standard quality.
- The audit of ancillary facilities determines that six (30%) are accompanied by good quality provision, nine squares (45%) by standard quality provision and three (15%) by poor quality provision. The remaining two squares (10%) are not accompanied by any ancillary provision.
- There are 10 sites supplying 24 net bays, whilst four clubs report demand for new, improved and/or additional training facilities.

Cricket – demand summary

- There are 16 clubs in the Braintree District which collectively provide 80 teams, equating to 40 open age, eight senior women's, five junior girls' and 27 junior boys' teams.
- There has been a general increase in demand in recent years, with seven clubs reporting an increase in participation and only Rayne CC reporting a decrease in participation.

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- ◀ It must be noted that the ECB has recently established a target of trebling the number of girls' teams across the Country by 2028, with this therefore likely to further increase in demand in the Braintree District. This will be further tested as a scenario in the Strategy.
- ◀ A total of four clubs undertake All Stars cricket, whilst two undertake Dynamo's and three have women's softball demand.
- ◀ Future demand from population forecasts equates to the predicted growth of two open age and one junior boys' teams (up to 2041), whereas six clubs indicate aspirations to increase levels of participation amounting to a total predicted growth of nine teams.

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PART 5: RUGBY UNION

5.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is split into four areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions for clubs within the Braintree District.

The RFU governs a variety of formats and programmes, including 15-a-side, 10-a-side, 7-a-side and Tag rugby as well as T1 Rugby¹⁶. Its aim is to increase and retain participation within the game, with facilities needing to be appropriate, affordable and accessible in order to enable this.

The rugby union playing season operates from September to May, with senior men's fixtures being held on Saturday afternoons whilst ladies, juniors and mini fixtures are held on Sundays.

Consultation

There are four rugby union clubs operating in the Braintree District, with two responding to consultation requests at the time of writing. This results in a 50% response rate which is summarised in the table below.

Table 5.1: Summary of rugby club consultation

Club	Responded?
Braintree RUFC	Yes
Halstead Templars RUFC	No
Kelvdeon & Feering RUFC	No
Witham RUFC	Yes

5.2: Supply

There are 10 rugby union pitches in the Braintree District, identified across five unique sites, with all pitches available for community use.

As set out in the table below, nine are senior pitches and one is a smaller age grade pitch. There are four (40%) located in the South Analysis Area and three each (30%) in the Central and Rural North analysis areas.

Table 5.2: Summary of grass rugby union pitches available for community use

Analysis area	No. of senior pitches	No. of age grade pitches	Total
Central	3	-	3
Rural North	3	-	3
South	3	1	4
Total	9	1	10

The audit generally only identifies dedicated, line marked pitches that are serviced by goalposts (as dictated by RFU). However, there are some additional marked spaces that are used, without goalposts, particularly for age grade rugby. It is also common for age grade matches to be played on senior pitches via the use of cones.

¹⁶<https://www.englandrugby.com/play/ways-to-play/t1-rugby>

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For rugby union pitch dimension sizes please see the table below.

Table 5.3: Rugby union pitch dimensions

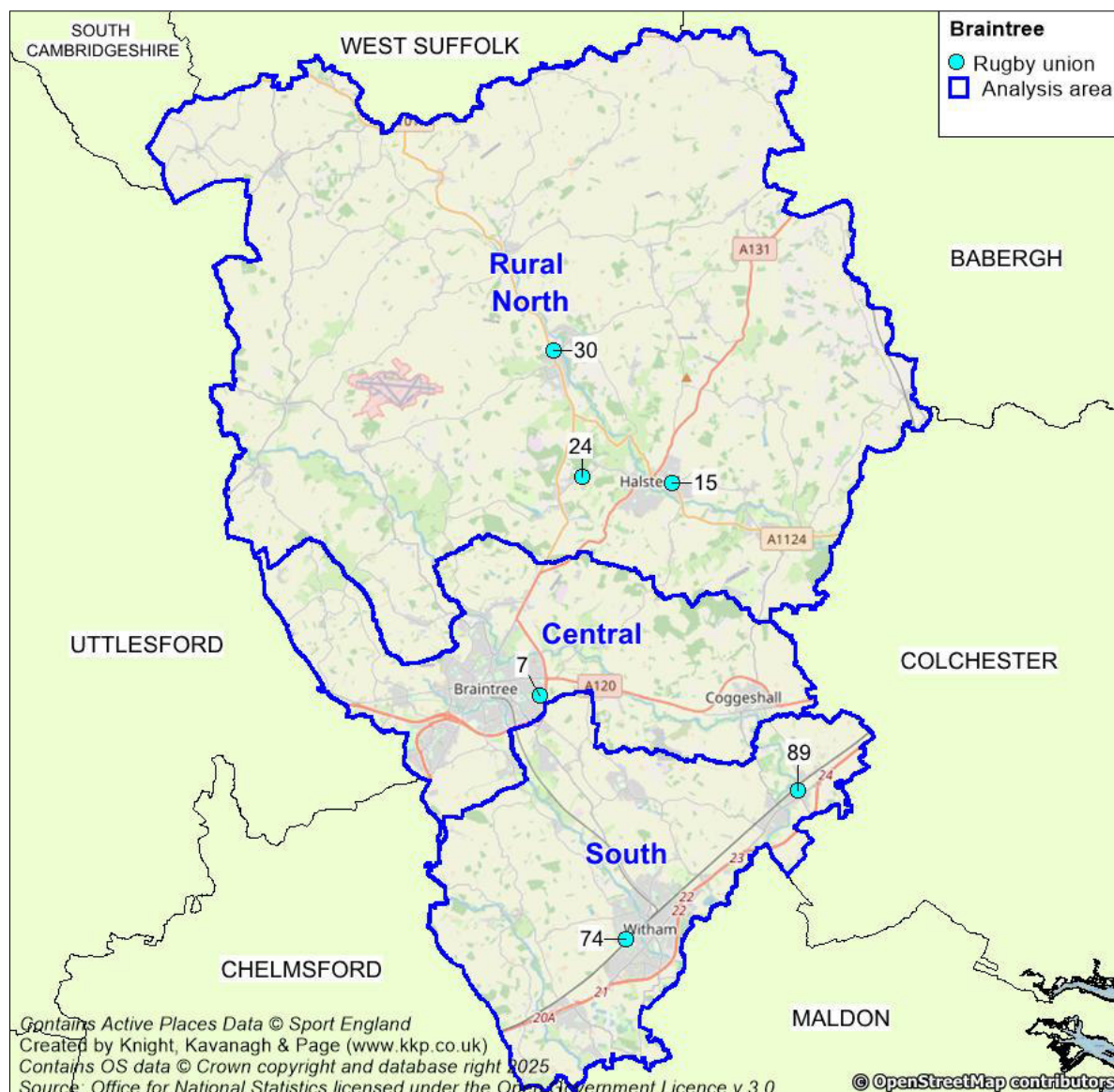
Age	Playing format	Maximum pitch dimensions (metres) ¹⁷
U7	Age grade mixed	20 x 12
U8	Age grade mixed	45 x 22
U9	Age grade mixed	60 x 30
U10	Age grade mixed	60 x 35
U11	Age grade mixed	60 x 43
U12	Age grade mixed	60 x 43
U13	Age grade boys/girls	90 x 60 (60 x 43 for girls)
U14	Age grade boys/girls	100 x 70
U15	Age grade boys/girls	100 x 70
U16	Age grade boys/girls	100 x 70
U17	Age grade boys/girls	100 x 70
U18	Colts	100 x 70
Senior	Senior	100 x 70

Figure 5.1 overleaf identifies all grass rugby union pitches currently servicing the Braintree District. For a key to the map, see Table 5.9.

¹⁷ Recommended run off area for all pitch types requires five-metres each way and a minimum in-goal length of six metres.

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Figure 5.1: Location of rugby union pitches within the Braintree District



Future provision

Braintree RUFC reports an aspiration to develop a 11v11 3G pitch to better cater for its current and potential future demand. Prior to the Pandemic, plans were drawn up, in partnership with Braintree Town FC, to develop a 3G pitch on site as a multi-sport approach. However, the funding from various parties was withdrawn. The Club is still keen to develop the pitch field all its training demand away from its match pitches to preserve their quality.

Management and security of tenure

Of the 10 pitches provided, six are operated at club sites, two by education providers (both are available for community use) and the remaining two operated by parish councils. This is summarised in the table below.

Table 5.4: Rugby union pitches by management type

Parish/town council	Education	Sports club
2	2	6

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In relation to clubs, tenure of the sites they use is generally secure. A site is thought to have secure tenure if a club has either freehold or a long-term lease agreement in place, whilst council sites are also considered to be secure as part of a long-term commitment to provide leisure facilities.

Witham RUFC own the freehold of its site and therefore is considered to have security of tenure.

Braintree RUFC's home ground is owned by the Council. In 2023, it signed a new lease agreement for this which is due to expire in 2053 (30 years in length).

Whilst Halstead Templar and Kelvedon & Ferring rugby clubs home grounds are owned by Halstead Town Council for the former and by Kelvedon Parish Council for the latter. They are considered to have secure tenure (as all Council facilities are deemed to be safeguarded for future sporting use). As both clubs have not been responsive to consultation requests, the total length of the lease agreement is unknown.

The tenure of clubs is set out in the table below.

Table 5.5: Summary of tenure for rugby union clubs

Club	Site/s used	Agreement	Tenure
Braintree RUFC	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Lease	Secure
Halstead Templars RUFC	Courtauld Sports Ground	Rented	Secure
Kelvedon & Feering RUFC	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	Rented	Secure
Witham RUFC	Witham Rugby Football Club	Freehold	Secure

Away from clubs, the education sites do not provide security of tenure for access to their rugby provision, even where community availability is offered.

Sports lighting

The provision of sports lighting at rugby union club sites can be key in ensuring that all demand can be met, particularly in terms of midweek training activity. Sports lighting is most commonly provided to service a grass pitch, although separate training areas are occasionally in place instead, or in addition. Furthermore, an increasing number of clubs are utilising 3G provision in order to relieve grass pitches of use, although this is dependent on having access to a World Rugby compliant pitch (see Part 3 for further detail).

In the Braintree District, Braintree RUFC is serviced by two sports-lit grass pitches at its home ground. In addition, it has a separate training grid which is serviced by sports lighting. It has an aspiration for a 3G pitch to be provided.

Witham RUFC is serviced by one sports-lit grass pitch at its home ground. It aspires to install additional lighting on its 2nd team pitch to enable it to spread training demand more evenly across the site.

For Halstead Templar and Kelvedon & Feering rugby clubs, they do not have access to permanent sports lighting on its grass pitches and use portable lighting.

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Pitch quality

The quality of rugby pitches across the Braintree District have been assessed via a combination of site visits undertaken in 2024 (using non-technical assessments as determined by the RFU) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating on a scale of good, standard and poor.

The assessment of rugby union pitch quality looks at two key elements; the maintenance programme and the level of drainage on each pitch. For maintenance, each pitch is given a maintenance rating of M0, M1 or M2, based on the regime that is usually undertaken, with the definitions of these shown in the table below.

Table 5.6: Definition of maintenance categories

Category	Definition
M0	Minimal or no maintenance is undertaken
M1	Regular maintenance is undertaken that extends beyond a basic regime
M2	A sophisticated, regular and dedicated maintenance regime is undertaken

For drainage, a rating of D0, D1, D2 or D3 is assigned to each pitch, as set out in the table below. This is based on whether or not drainage is adequate and considers the presence of an operational system. The figures are based upon a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the last eight years and a slit drained system at 1m centres that has been installed in the last five years.

Table 5.7: Definition of drainage categories

Category	Definition
D0	Drainage is natural but inadequate
D1	Drainage is natural and adequate
D2	A pipe drainage system is installed (at 5-metre centres and within the last eight years)
D3	A pipe and slit drainage system is installed (at 1-metre centres in the last five years)

An overall quality based on both drainage and maintenance can then be generated on a scale of good, standard and poor as shown below in the table below.

Table 5.8: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	Poor	Poor	Standard
	Natural Adequate (D1)	Poor	Standard	Good
	Pipe Drained (D2)	Standard	Standard	Good
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	Standard	Good	Good

The above was calculated for each pitch within the Braintree District following site assessments, with findings then checked and challenged against user consultation and NGB assessments/ knowledge. This has then allowed an 'agreed quality rating' to be established.

For the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

Eight pitches are assessed as standard quality and two as poor quality. There are no good quality pitches provided in the District.

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Table 5.9: Quality of senior pitches available for community use in the Braintree District

Analysis area	Good	Standard	Poor
Central	-	3	-
Rural North	-	1	2
South	-	4	-
Total	-	8	2

A site-by-site breakdown can be seen in the table overleaf.

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Table 5.10: Site quality ratings

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Postcode	Analysis area	Tenure	Management	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Sports lit?	Quality score	Quality rating
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	1206969	CM7 3PR	Central	Secure	Sports club	2	Senior	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	1206969	CM7 3PR	Central	Secure	Sports club	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	1207038	CO9 2ES	Rural North	Secure	Council	1	Senior	No	M1/D0	Poor
24	Gosfield School	1203917	CO9 1PF	Rural North	Unsecure	Education	1	Senior	No	M0/D1	Poor
30	Heddingham School	1204086	CO9 3QH	Rural North	Unsecure	Education	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	1039956	CM8 1UN	South	Secure	Sports club	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	1039956	CM8 1UN	South	Secure	Sports club	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	1039956	CM8 1UN	South	Secure	Sports club	1	Junior	No	M1/D1	Standard
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	-	CO5 9SA	South	Secure	Council	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard

Poor quality pitches are found at the following sites:

- ◀ Courtauld Sports Ground.
- ◀ Gosfield School.

The poor quality pitch at Courtauld Sports Ground suffers with waterlogging throughout the season as the natural drainage system in place is quite old, hence its poor quality rating.

Of the remaining club sites, all are rated as standard quality, with a basic level of maintenance received and a natural drainage system in place. Notwithstanding this, Braintree RUFC report it aspires to improve the drainage at its home site and to install a pipe drainage system across all its pitches, in order to improve their quality.

Similarly, Witham RUFC has a natural drainage system in place. It would like to invest money into a more enhanced maintenance regime but will need to raise funds to do this.

At Gosfield School, the pitches are rated as poor quality as they receive limited maintenance by the School and suffer from drainage issues.

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Ancillary facilities

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for rugby clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ✦ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation
- ✦ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance
- ✦ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision
- ✦ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing rooms, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience. As a result, those ancillary facilities that do not meet the above criteria must have a reduced quality rating, regardless of the overall condition of the provision.

In the Braintree District, Witham RUFC does not have suitable changing rooms for female players at its home ground, and it reports that the toilets and changing rooms are of poor quality and need renovating. It aspires to refurbish the changing rooms and install women's and girl's changing rooms.

Braintree RUFC highlight it is happy with the quality of its provision and has significant number of changing rooms to meet the level of demand it has. It does report, however, it may need to refurbish the clubhouse in the next few years to ensure the facilities remain modern and fit for purpose.

Table 5.11: Summary of ancillary provision quality

Site ID	Site name	Users	Overall building quality	Changing room quality ¹⁸	Comments
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Braintree RUFC	Standard	Standard	Standard quality clubhouse which includes nine changing rooms. It also provides a bar area and kitchen and sizeable social area. The provision satisfies the club's demand and has the correct number of changing rooms (relative to the number of teams it has).

¹⁸ Including changing areas, toilets and showering facilities.

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Site ID	Site name	Users	Overall building quality	Changing room quality ¹⁸	Comments
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Halstead Templars RUFC	Poor	Poor	The current provision is poor quality and not suitable from women/girls or disability access.
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Witham RUFC	Standard	Poor	Changing rooms not suitable for women and girls' demand.
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	Kelvedon & Feering RUFC	Poor	Poor	The current provision is poor quality and not suitable from women/girls or disability access.

5.3: Demand

Demand for rugby pitches within the Braintree District tends to fall within the categories of organised competitive play and organised training.

For competitive play, demand is split between adult rugby, age grade boys/girls' rugby (previously junior) and age grade mixed rugby (previously mini). Age grade runs from U13 to U18 level, whilst age grade mixed is for U7 to U12 level. In addition, new girls' age bands have been established, with the new age bands being at U12, U14, U16 and U18 level.

Competitive play

There are four rugby clubs considered to be based in the Braintree District collectively providing a total of 34 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of nine senior men's, two senior women's, eight age grade boys', three age grade girls' and 12 age grade mixed teams.

Demand for each club is summarised in the table below.

Table 5.12: Summary of demand

Club	Analysis area	Senior men (19+)	Senior women (19+)	Age grade boys (13-18)	Age grade girls (13-18)	Age grade mixed (6-12)
Braintree RUFC	Central	3	1	6	2	6
Halstead Templars RUFC	Rural North	1	-	-	-	-
Kelvedon & Feering RUFC	Rural North	2	-	-	-	-
Witham RUFC	South	3	1	2	1	6
Total	-	9	2	8	3	12

As seen in the table above, senior women's and age grade girls' teams are provided at Braintree RUFC and Witham RUFC. The former has one senior women's and two age grade girls' teams, whilst the latter has one senior women's and one age grade girls' team.

As shown in the table below, of the club-based demand, both the Central and South analysis areas field 18 teams each, whereas there are three teams in the Rural North Analysis Area.

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Table 5.13: Summary of number of teams by analysis area

Analysis area	Men's	Women's	Boys'	Girls'	Mini
Central	3	1	6	2	6
Rural North	3	-	-	-	-
South	3	1	2	1	6
Total	9	2	8	3	12

Participation trends

Of the responding clubs, both Braintree and Witham rugby clubs report a recent decline in the number of senior teams, although both clubs report that they have added more age grade teams over the last few seasons. This leads to an overall increase in demand.

Training demand

Throughout the Country, many rugby teams train at their home ground on match pitches. As a result, usage is concentrated which reduces the capacity for match play on these pitches and means they are more likely to be overplayed. A key factor in determining the extent of training on match pitches is the presence of sports lighting.

In the Braintree District, Braintree RUFC is serviced by two sports-lit grass pitches at its home ground. In addition, it has a separate training grid which is serviced by sports lighting. It has an aspiration for a 3G pitch to be provided.

Witham RUFC is serviced by one sports-lit grass pitch at its home ground. It aspires to install additional lighting on its 2nd team pitch to enable it to spread training demand more evenly across the site.

For Halstead Templar and Kelvedon & Feering rugby clubs, they do not have access to permanent sports lighting on its grass pitches and use portable lighting.

The activity and training arrangements for each club and the level of this is highlighted in the table below.

Table 5.14: Summary of rugby union club facility use for evening training

Site ID	Site	Club	Training demand	Match equivalent sessions on match pitches
7	Braintree Rugby Football Club	Braintree RUFC	Two sports lit senior pitches which are used for training as well as a separate training grid, amounting to 6 match equivalent sessions.	6 match equivalent sessions
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Halstead Templars RUFC	Portable sports lighting on a senior pitch amounting to 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week.	0.5 match equivalent sessions
74	Witham Rugby Football Club	Witham RUFC	One sports lit senior pitch is used for training, amounting to 3.5 match equivalent sessions.	3.5 match equivalent sessions
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	Kelvedon & Feering RUFC	Portable sports lighting on a senior pitch amounting to one match equivalent sessions per week.	1 match equivalent session

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Use of artificial pitches

The alternative to training on grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches. World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. A World Rugby compliant pitch also enables the transfer of match and training demand from grass pitches onto 3G pitches, which alleviates overplay of grass pitches and as a result protects quality.

Nationally, clubs identify the use of 3G pitches for training as a method of protecting the match pitches and providing a high quality surface for full contact practice. Competitive play continues to take place on grass pitches for the most part, with ad hoc use of 3G pitches for fixtures in the case of unsuitable pitches due to waterlogging or frost.

There are currently no World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in the Braintree District. The nearest is located in Colchester at Colchester Sports Park. None of the rugby clubs within the Braintree District currently access any artificial pitches for training activity.

See Part 3 of this report for further information.

Touch demand

Touch (also known as Touch Football or Touch Rugby) is a variant of rugby organised and administered globally by the Federation of International Touch and nationally by the England Touch Association. This affiliates to the RFU and in some areas assists in the delivery of the T1 Rugby Programme.

Both Braintree and Witham rugby clubs field Touch rugby teams which compete in friendly tournaments and matches on an ad-hoc basis.

Exported/imported demand

There is no known exported or imported rugby union demand regarding the Braintree District.

Unmet/latent demand

Unmet demand is existing demand at clubs which is not able to access sufficient supply of pitches for match play or training, it is usually expressed, for example, where a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch or where a league or club operates a waiting list. In comparison, latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision.

Braintree RUFC reports latent demand in that they could field more teams if it had access to increased pitch provision.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in several ways, such as through participation increases and by using population forecasts. In addition, the Strategy & Action Plan document that follows this report will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate additional demand for rugby union that could come from housing development plans across the Braintree District.

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Population growth

Based on population projections to 2041, (the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can estimate the likely additional demand for grass rugby union pitches that will arise from any growth. This is by using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, with team generation rates then established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

For reference, total current population in the Braintree District in 2025 of 155,273 is projected to increase to 161,079 by 2041 (ONS projections). The table below shows the number of new teams that are forecasted to be generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions that this will require. This equates to one age grade mixed team and totals 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week of demand.

Table 5.15: District-wide team generation rates

Age group	Team generation rate	Number of new teams generated	Number of new teams generated - rounded figure	Match equivalent sessions ¹⁹
Men (19-45yrs)	1:2,506	0.46	0	0
Women (19-45yrs)	1:11,690	0.10	0	0
Boys (13-18yrs)	1:693	0.41	0	0
Girls (13-18yrs)	1:1,809	0.15	0	0
Mixed (7-12yrs)	1:944	0.61	1	0.5

Notwithstanding the above, team generation rates do not account for specific development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives. As such, increased future growth is still considered possible despite population projections indicating that there will only be minimal growth. As referenced above, a growth in women and girls' rugby is thought to be particularly likely given current RFU aspirations and due to the upcoming 2025 Rugby World Cup.

Furthermore, the ONS projections do not account for the scale or distribution of housing growth in the District. This will therefore also be subject to scenarios in Strategy document and/or via future assessment work undertaken by the Council.

Participation growth

Both clubs who responded to consultation report future demand aspirations. As set out in the table below, this equates to the growth of two senior men's, two age grade boys and one age grade girls' teams.

Table 5.16: Summary of future club aspirational demand for the Braintree District

Club	Analysis area	Future team aspirations	Match equivalent sessions on a senior pitch
Braintree RUFC	Central	1 x senior men's	0.5
Witham RUFC	South	1 x senior men's 2 x age grade boys 1 x age grade girls	2

¹⁹ Two teams require one pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, one team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions on their relevant pitch type.

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In addition, the RFU identifies that future demand will also be based on club aspirations and anticipated growth due to the women's rugby World Cup in 2025. This links to "Every Rose", which is the Rugby Football Union's (RFU) strategy to grow the women's and girls' game in England. The strategy runs from 2021 to 2027 and includes the following goals:

- ◆ Increase participation: Increase the number of female players to 100,000 by 2027.
- ◆ Host a full-capacity Red Roses match at Twickenham Stadium.
- ◆ Embrace the new global season: The Red Roses will participate in two rugby world cups.
- ◆ Generate profits: The RFU will generate profits from the women's game and reinvest them into grassroots programs.

The Strategy also includes an action plan with the following headlines:

- ◆ Accessible: Retain and recruit players.
- ◆ Successful: Focus on high performance in England, Allianz P15s, and Pathway.
- ◆ Visible: Increase fan following, active engagement, and broadcast.
- ◆ Commercially viable: Focus on people and players.

The RFU also has a campaign called "Love Rugby" that aims to grow consideration for the sport. The campaign includes distributing materials to local teams, working with clubs, enlisting online influencers, and targeting spectators at Red Roses fixtures.

Future demand summary

In the supply and demand analysis at the end of this section of the report, it is considered unfeasible for all future demand to be factored in. This is because it is likely that club aspirations will absorb the future demand identified through population growth, rather than them being judged separately and therefore double counted. As such, only demand identified through population growth is taken forward, with club demand considered to be more aspirational and theoretical.

Notwithstanding the above, the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document will contain a scenario that will consider the impact if clubs aspirations are realised, as well as considering further possibilities (e.g., an increased growth of female activity).

5.4: Supply and demand analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly accommodate competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing rugby. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

To enable an accurate supply and demand assessment of rugby union pitches, the following assumptions are applied to the site-by-site and pitch-by-pitch analysis:

- ◆ All sites that are used for competitive rugby matches (regardless of whether this is secured community use) are included on the supply side.
- ◆ All competitive play is on senior size pitches, unless it is known that dedicated smaller pitches are instead used.
- ◆ From U13 upwards, teams play 15 v15 and use a full pitch, whilst age grade mixed teams use half a senior pitch.
- ◆ For senior and age grade boys/girls' teams, the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis.

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- For age grade teams playing on a senior pitch, play per week is set at 0.25 for each match played based on all teams playing across only half of one senior pitch.
- Senior men's rugby generally takes place on Saturday afternoons.
- Senior women's rugby generally takes place on Sunday afternoons.
- Junior rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- Mixed age grade rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- Training that takes place on marked pitches is reflected by the addition of match equivalent sessions to current usage levels (one training session is one match equivalent session)
- Internal use of school pitches is added to current play where community usage is also received, as determined on a site-by-site basis depending on levels of activity.

As a guide, the RFU has set a standard number of matches that each pitch should be able to accommodate, based on quality, as set out in the table below.

Table 5.17: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
	Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
	Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

Capacity is based upon a basic assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme ascertained through a combination of the quality assessment and consultation. This guide, however, is only a very general measure of potential pitch capacity. It does not account for specific circumstances at time of use, and it assumes average rainfall and an appropriate end of season rest and renovation programme.

Peak period

In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established for all types of rugby. For senior teams in the Braintree District, it is considered to be Saturday PM as all senior teams play at this time, whereas the peak time for age grade rugby is Sunday AM.

To determine 'actual spare capacity', each site with 'potential capacity' has been reviewed. A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of the game. Any pitch not meeting this criterion has consequently been discounted.

There may also be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to the already low carrying capacity of the pitches. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn will aid the improvement of pitch quality. Furthermore, any pitches with unsecured tenure are not considered to have actual spare capacity as no further play should be encouraged on such sites given that future access cannot be guaranteed.

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The way the above is represented in the Table 5.18 is as follows:

Spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of spare capacity
1	If the cell is highlighted in green with a number, it means that the pitch/es has actual spare capacity at peak time.
-	If the cell has a dash in it, it means the pitch is played to capacity during the peak period.
1	If the cell has a number in it but is not highlighted, it means the pitch has spare capacity at peak period; however, this is discounted. This could be due to unsecure tenure, poor pitch quality, the pitch not being available for community use, or the pitch already being played to capacity or being overplayed (outside of peak time).

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Table 5.18: Capacity table for rugby pitches in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Postcode	Community use?	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Sports lighting?	Non-technical assessment score	Quality rating	Site capacity (MES per week)	Current play (MES per week)	Training (MES per week)	Capacity rating (MES)	Actual spare capacity (MES)	Comments
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club (1 st team pitch)	Central	CM7 3PR	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	0	0	Used by Braintree RUFC for match play and training activity.
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club (2 nd team pitch)	Central	CM7 3PR	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard	2	3	-	1	0	Used by Braintree RUFC for match play and training activity. Overplayed by one match equivalent session.
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club (3 rd team pitch)	Central	CM7 3PR	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D1	Standard	2	2.5	6	6.5	0	Used by Braintree RUFC for match play and training activity. Overplayed by 6.5 match equivalent sessions.
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Rural North	CO9 2ES	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D0	Poor	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	Used by Halstead Templars RUFC for match play and training activity. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.
24	Gosfield School	Rural North	CO9 1PF	Yes-unused	1	Senior	No	M0/D1	Poor	1.5	1.5	-	0	0	Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure and poor quality, with school usage also likely to limit capacity.
30	Hedingham School	Rural North	CO9 3QH	Yes-unused	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard	2	1	-	1	0	Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure, with school usage also likely to limit capacity.
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D1	Standard	2	1	3.5	2.5	0	Used by Witham RUFC for match play and training activity. Overplayed by 7.5 match equivalent sessions.
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard	2	1	-	1	0	Used by Witham RUFC for match play. Played to capacity at peak time.
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	South	CM8 1UN	Yes	1	Age grade	No	M1/D1	Standard	2	4.5	-	2.5	0	Used by Witham RUFC for match play. Overplayed by one match equivalent session.
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	South	CO5 9SA	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard	2	1	1	0	0	Used by Kelvedon & Feering RUFC for match play and training activity. Played to capacity.

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Actual spare capacity

Utilising the capacity analysis above, no pitches in the Braintree District are considered to provide actual spare capacity. This is due to other pitches either being used to capacity at peak time, not having secure tenure, not being community available, or being poor quality (or because of a combination of these factors).

Overplay

There are five pitches across two sites in the Braintree District that are overplayed by a total of 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week. This is summarised by site in the table below.

Table 5.19: Summary of overplay

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of overplayed pitches	Overplay (match sessions per week)
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Central	2	7.5
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	South	1	2.5
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	South	1	2.5
-	Total	-	4	12.5

At Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club, the overplay is identified on the pitches that are used to accommodate training demand. Both sites are overplayed due to the pitches being standard quality and a high usage of demand through training and match play.

As shown in Table 5.20, most overplay is evident in the Central Analysis Area (7.5 match equivalent sessions per week).

Table 5.20: Summary of overplay by analysis area

Analysis area	Overplay (match equivalent sessions)
Central	7.5
Rural North	-
South	5
Total	12.5

5.5: Conclusion

Having considered supply and demand, the table below identifies the overall supply and demand balance (actual spare capacity against overplay) in each of the analysis areas based on match equivalent sessions per week. Future demand is based on anticipated growth from population increases.

However, please note that this currently only quantifies future demand in terms of match demand and not training activity. It is likely that additional single gender age grade teams or senior teams will require additional training capacity which may exacerbate demonstrated shortfalls.

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Table 5.21: Summary of supply and demand analysis on rugby union pitches

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions)	Overplay (match equivalent sessions)	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Central	-	7.5	7.5
Rural North	-	-	-
South	-	5	5
Total	-	12.5	12.5

There is a current shortfall of 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week to meet rugby union demand in the Braintree District as a result of overplay across two sites in use by clubs. This therefore relates to the Central and South analysis areas.

Table 5.22: Future supply and demand balance of rugby union pitches in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Total	12.5	0.5	13

The shortfalls are further exacerbated when factoring in future demand, resulting in a future shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions per week, as set out in the table below.

There is an insufficient supply of rugby union pitches to meet the current and future demand in the Braintree District. This is due to a combination of training demand on match pitches and their quality (all overplayed pitches are rated as standard quality). This also reflects the demand expressed from Braintree RUFC for World Rugby compliant 3G pitch provision. Scenarios will be run in the Strategy document to further test the need for this.

Rugby union – supply and demand summary

- ◆ No pitches in the Braintree District are considered to provide actual spare capacity, whilst four pitches across two sites that are overplayed by a total of 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week.
- ◆ There is a current capacity shortfall of 12.5 match equivalent sessions on rugby union pitches, increasing to 13 when accounting for future demand.
- ◆ There is a clear shortfall of rugby union provision, and a shortfall for the two large clubs in the District (Braintree RUFC and Witham RUFC).

Rugby union - supply summary

- ◆ There are 10 grass rugby union pitches identified across five sites, with all pitches available for community use across 13 sites.
- ◆ Of the 10 pitches provided, two are operated by education providers, two are operated by Parish Councils and the remaining six are operated by sports clubs.
- ◆ All four clubs in the Braintree District have secure site tenure either via direct ownership or being part of a wider entity that has ownership or a long-term lease agreement.
- ◆ Of pitches that are available for community use, there are eight assessed as standard and two as poor.
- ◆ Poor quality pitches are provided at Courtauld Sports Ground and Gosfield School.
- ◆ The poor quality ancillary facilities are identified at Courtauld Sports Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field.

Rugby union - demand summary

- ◆ There are four rugby clubs considered based in the Braintree District collectively providing a total of 34 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of nine senior men's, two senior women's, eight age grade boys', three age grade girls' and 12 age grade mixed teams.
- ◆ Whilst overall demand levels have increased in recent years, there has been a decline in senior activity.

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- ◀ In the Braintree District, one sports lit pitch is provided at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club. These pitches are used to accommodate all training demand from Braintree and Witham rugby clubs.
- ◀ Whilst Halstead Templars and Kelvedon & Feering rugby clubs use portable lighting on its match pitches.
- ◀ Braintree RUFC reports latent demand in that they could field more teams if it had access to increased pitch provision and links this to a need for a 3G pitch.
- ◀ Two clubs (Braintree and Witham rugby clubs) report future aspirations for additional teams, whilst population projections predict a growth of one age grade mixed team.

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PART 6: HOCKEY

6.1: Introduction

Hockey in England is governed by England Hockey (EH).

Competitive league hockey matches, and training can only be played on sand filled, sand dressed or water based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). Although competitive, adult and junior club training cannot take place on third generation turf pitches (3G), 40mm pitches may be suitable for introductory level hockey, such as school curriculum low level hockey. EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as shown below.

Table 6.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey

Category	Surface	Playing Level	Playing Level
1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	International hockey (training and matches).	Domestic National Premier League competition; Higher levels of player pathway (performance centres and upwards).
2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Domestic National Premier League competition; Higher levels of player pathway (academy centres and upwards).	All adult and junior league hockey; Intermediate or advanced school hockey; EH competitions for clubs and schools.
3	Sand filled surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	All adult and junior club training and league hockey; EH competitions for clubs and schools; Intermediate or advanced school hockey.	Lower level hockey (introductory level).
4	All 3G surfaces	No hockey.	Lower level hockey (introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

In addition to the above pitch types, EH is currently trialling a different multi-sport surface in order to better accommodate lower levels of hockey demand on a pitch that is also suitable for other sports such as netball and tennis. The surface type, known as Gen 2, is a versatile surface that will ensure that the sports do not need to compromise on the playing experience; it is a sand dressed synthetic turf with a compatible shock pad. The concept is designed to provide facilities, including at schools, with a dynamic carpet which reduces the amount of space required and enables the provision to be utilised to its full potential.

For senior teams, a full-size pitch for matches must measure at least 91.4 x 55 metres excluding surrounding run off areas which must be a minimum of two metres at the sides and three metres at the ends. EH's preference is for four metre side and five metre end run offs, with a preferred overall area of 101.4 x 63 metres.

It is considered that a hockey pitch can accommodate a maximum of four matches on one day, providing that it has sports lighting. Training is generally midweek for senior activity and requires access to a pitch and sports lights, whereas many junior teams train on a Sunday as well as during midweek.

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Consultation

There are two hockey clubs in the Braintree District with both responding to consultation requests resulting in a 100% response rate as shown below.

Table 6.2: Summary of consultation

Name of club	Responded?
Braintree HC	Yes
Witham HC	Yes

6.2: Supply

There are two full-size hockey suitable AGPs in the Braintree District located across the same number of sites (Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground). These are both available for community use and are serviced by sports lighting.

Table 6.3: Full size hockey suitable pitches in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Size (metres)
51	Releet Sports Ground	1103129	Central	Yes	Yes	98 x 62
75	Witham Sports Ground	6021212	South	Yes	Yes	91 x 55

One pitch is provided in the Central Analysis Area and one in the South Analysis Area. None are provided in the Rural North Analysis Area.

Smaller size provision

In addition to the full size AGPs, there are also three smaller size hockey suitable pitches in the Braintree District, as summarised in the table below. Only the pitch at Oak Farm is available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.

Table 6.4: Smaller size AGPs in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Analysis area	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Size (metres)
24	Gosfield School	1203917	Rural North	Yes	No	47m x 36m
49	Oak Farm	6021256	South	Yes	Yes	40m x 20m
56	Silver End Academy	1043936	South	No	No	37m x 15m

Nationally, most smaller size pitches are considered too small to accommodate any purposeful hockey demand, although some larger ones are utilised for training demand and junior play. However, in the District, none of the smaller size pitches are considered suitable as they are either too small, unavailable for community use, or without sports lighting. Based on this, the stock is discounted from this point forward as the pitches are not relevant from a hockey perspective.

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Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that the smaller size pitches can be valuable assets for accommodating curricular and extra-curricular hockey demand as well as recreational community activity where availability is offered. An example of this is at Oak Farm, where there is a high level of football demand despite the surface being suitable for hockey albeit it has no hockey goals in place.

For the location of the full size AGPs, please see Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1: Location of hockey suitable AGPs in the Braintree District



Future developments

Braintree HC reports it has an aspiration to upgrade its lighting to LED; however, it requires funding to achieve this.

Management and security of tenure

The pitch at Releet Sports Ground is managed by Braintree HC, whilst the pitch at Witham Sports Ground is managed by Freedom Leisure on behalf of the Council.

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Braintree HC owns the freehold of the pitch at Releet Sports Ground and therefore has security of tenure.

Whilst Witham HC rents the provision at Witham Sports Ground on a seasonal basis from the Council via Freedom Leisure, the Club is thought to have security of tenure as it is a Council owned site, and the Council has a commitment to continue to provide leisure provision over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

The table below summarises the Braintree District based pitches and whether security of tenure is provided to the clubs that use them.

Table 6.5: Summary of venues used by hockey clubs

Club	Site/s used	Comments	Tenure
Braintree HC	Releet Sports Ground	Primary venue	Secure
Witham HC	Witham Sports Ground	Primary venue	Secure

Availability

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00). In the Braintree District, the two full size pitches have good availability during the peak period.

Table 6.6: Availability of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	Availability	Midweek availability in the peak period (hours)	Weekend availability in the peak period (hours)
51	Releet Sports Ground	Every day until 22:00	18/18	16/16
75	Witham Sports Ground	Every day until 22:00	18/18	16/16

Please note that the above only refers to overall availability and opening hours, rather than considering current capacity, which is instead accounted for within the demand part of this section. A pitch may theoretically have good availability but may currently be operating at capacity, especially during peak times, based on existing usage levels.

In further summary, the pitch at Releet Sports Ground (Braintree HC) is fully available throughout the peak periods, as is the pitch at Witham Sports Ground.

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an AGP usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, together with maintenance levels, that most commonly affects quality. An issue for hockey nationally is that some providers did not financially plan to replace the carpet when first installed, leading to many pitches now being outside of their recommended lifespan and, consequently, poor quality.

For the PPOSS, each AGP has been assigned a quality rating of good, standard or poor following site assessments (in between December 2024 and February 2025) and provider/user consultation. This rating is linked to the condition and age of the playing surface, as well as surrounding hard areas and the maintenance that is undertaken (for the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2).

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The table below indicates when each of the full-size pitches were installed or last resurfaced within the District, together with an agreed quality rating. As seen, the pitch at Witham Sports Ground is good quality, whereas the pitch at Releet Sports Ground is standard quality.

Table 6.7: Age and quality of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site	No. of pitches	Year installed/ resurfaced	Quality
51	Releet Sports Ground	1	2015	Standard
75	Witham Sports Ground	1	2021	Good

The pitch at Releet Sports Ground is assessed as standard quality as it was last resurfaced in 2015 and is reaching the end of its recommended lifespan. However, the Club report that the playing surface is sanded on a regular basis and is still in a decent condition.

The pitch at Witham Sports Ground was last resurfaced in 2021 and is rated as good quality. Consultation with Freedom Leisure states the pitch is in good condition, despite it being used for both football and hockey activity.

Where pitches are assessed as good or standard quality, sinking funds should still be put into place (where not already provided) to ensure that refurbishment can go ahead if and when required.

Ancillary provision

Both full size AGPs in the Braintree District are serviced by ancillary provision that ranges from basic changing facilities and toilets at Witham Sports Ground and more extensive clubhouse facilities that include a bar and kitchen at Releet Sports Ground (Braintree HC).

A common issue raised by users of other sites is that social space is located separate to the pitches. For example, Witham HC currently accesses Witham Cricket Club as a home base. This is because there is no suitable social space offered to the club at Witham Sports Ground.

Witham HC uses the pavilion at Witham Sports Ground, which is shared with multiple football clubs and uses two changing rooms with toilets. The facilities are unisex and not suitable for women's and girls' demand. The Club reports the facilities are poor quality with basic and outdated provision provided.

Braintree HC reports the clubhouse at Releet Sports Ground is of standard quality and provides dedicated women's and girl's facilities. Although, it states the facilities are slowly declining in quality and are becoming outdated. The Club has a wider aspiration to refurbish the clubhouse facilities as well as improving the car parking.

6.3: Demand

Across the Braintree District there is a total of 32 dedicated hockey teams across the two community clubs with the most prominent being senior men's teams with 12, followed by senior women's, six for dedicated mini teams, four for junior boys and three for junior girls' teams. The senior team numbers include veteran and U21 teams.

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Table 6.8: Summary of number of hockey teams within the Braintree District

Name of club	Senior men	Senior women	Junior boys	Junior girls	Mini	Total
Braintree HC	5	4	3	3	3	18
Witham HC	7	3	1	-	3	14

Table 6.9: Summary of club demand within the Braintree District

Name of club	Senior men (17-55)	Senior women (17-55)	Junior boys (14-16)	Junior girls (14-16)	Junior boys (11-13)	Junior girls (11-13)	Mini mixed (5-10)	Total
Braintree HC	116	72	32	35	40	45	37	377
Witham HC	72	37	9	10	6	4	7	145

Participation trends

Both clubs have seen an increase in its teams over recent years. Growth equates to one senior and two junior teams for Braintree HC and two junior teams for Witham HC.

Away from club-based match play and training demand, there are also several initiatives supported by EH that operate across the Country, including:

- ❖ Back to Hockey.
- ❖ Flyerz Hockey.
- ❖ Hockey Heroes.
- ❖ Quicksticks.
- ❖ Rush Hockey.
- ❖ In2 Hockey.
- ❖ Walking Hockey.

Where undertaken, these initiatives add to the hockey demand at sites. Each is summarised below.

Back to Hockey

Back to Hockey sessions are fun, social, and informal and are aimed at people who either have not played for a number of years or that are looking to play for the first time. They are generally hosted by clubs, with EH providing guidance on how to deliver the programme. Benefits of clubs being involved in Back to Hockey include:

- ❖ More members.
- ❖ More casual players.
- ❖ Additional income.
- ❖ Extra publicity.
- ❖ New volunteers.

Back to Hockey sessions take place at Releet Sports Ground by Braintree HC on Saturday mornings.

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Flyerz Hockey

Flyerz is the name widely associated with grassroots disability hockey in Great Britain. There are now more than 50 Flyerz sections across England, Wales, and Scotland, providing inclusive hockey for disabled people.

In the Braintree District, there are currently no Flyerz Hockey sessions.

Hockey Heroes

Hockey Heroes is a six-week hockey programme aimed at beginners (children aged five to eight) that not only focuses on helping children develop some physical hockey skills such as dribbling, passing and goal scoring, but also places as much emphasis on character development including teamwork, communication, perseverance, and respect.

There are currently no Hockey Heroes courses operating in the Braintree District.

In2Hockey

In2Hockey is England Hockey's adapted game format aimed at players 10-14 years old and is played as a 6-a-side game without goalkeepers, or as a 7-a-side game with goalkeepers.

There are currently no In2Hockey sessions operating in the Braintree District.

Quicksticks

Quicksticks is designed to introduce young people (aged 7-11) to the game of hockey. It is 4-a-side, can be played on any surface, and uses a larger, lighter and safer ball. It is a fun, fast, safe and exciting game that has been designed so that anyone can deliver the game, regardless of previous hockey experience.

Currently no clubs in in the Braintree District offer dedicated Quicksticks delivery.

Rush hockey

Rush hockey is a new way to play hockey, designed as a small-sided hockey game for adults. It can be played by men and women in mixed or single gender teams, indoors or outdoors and on pitches of varying sizes. Teams are four or five aside and it is played with a standard hockey stick but with unique goals and balls.

No Rush hockey activity is identified in in the Braintree District.

Walking hockey

Increasing in popularity, walking hockey is perfect for players looking for a less physically demanding version of the game but still enjoy showing their skills and being involved in the team and social aspect.

There are currently no walking hockey sessions operating in in the Braintree District. The nearest offering is provided by Maldon HC.

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Imported/exported demand

Braintree HC currently exports some junior demand to the hockey suitable AGP at Felstead School in Uttlesford as an overspill venue, however, it primarily uses the provision at The Releet Sports Ground.

No imported demand into the Braintree District is identified.

Latent/unmet demand

Unmet/latent demand is defined as the number of additional teams (or members) that could be accommodated if access to enough or improved facilities (and ancillary provision) was available.

Witham HC could increase the number of teams it has, but the Club state that this cannot be accommodated without access to another pitch (or increased pitch capacity at Witham Sports Ground as some capacity is taken up by football groups).

Future demand

Growing participation is a key aim within EH's Strategy (Creating A Future for Our Game Together 2024 – 2028), whilst EH is also currently working on an updated facilities strategy, due to be completed in early 2025. As growth is a particular aim within these, it does not consider team generation rates to provide an accurate representation of potential growth, meaning population projections have not been used within this section of the report.

In relation to club aspirations, both clubs report future demand as summarised in the table below. This equates to two senior men's, three senior women's and four junior teams.

Table 6.10: Summary of future demand

Club	Future senior men's demand (teams)	Future senior women's demand (teams)	Future junior demand (teams)
Braintree HC	1	2	2
Witham HC	1	1	2

Notwithstanding the above, Witham HC states that it would need more hours at Witham Sports Ground to accommodate this level of growth as availability is currently limited. This is linked to the latent demand identified above.

Peak time demand

For matches, most senior hockey activity in the Braintree District takes place on a Saturday, whereas most junior activity occurs on a Sunday. For training, peak time is midweek evenings, although preference is generally given for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays due to clubs wanting to avoid training in close proximity to weekend matches.

6.4: Supply and demand analysis

When assessing the capacity of hockey pitches, all usage needs to be taken into account. This is because, in addition to hockey activity, there is often heavy football usage of the provision and occasionally other sporting use which can take capacity away from hockey-based demand.

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An example of this is at Witham Sports Ground, where the pitch accommodates a high level of usage for football activity. Similarly, the pitch at Releet Sports Ground is used for football training demand on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday evenings, with this taking capacity away from Braintree HC. This is despite its high levels of demand and its growth aspirations.

The table overleaf details the usage at both sites providing full size hockey suitable pitches in the Braintree District. It compares availability during peak time against hockey use and other activity as well as taking into consideration any remaining spare capacity.

Spare capacity is considered to exist for matches if there are currently less than eight teams assigned to a pitch on a Saturday or Sunday (and if the remaining capacity is not being utilised for other purposes). It exists for training if at least a section of a pitch is available for at least an hour during midweek evenings (Tuesday-Thursday).

Table 6.11: Usage of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	No. of pitches	Availability in the peak period (hours)	% of hockey usage	% of other usage (e.g., football)	Hockey club users	Training capacity comments (mid-week)	Match capacity comments (weekend)	Capacity summary
51	Releet Sports Ground	1	34	75%	25%	Braintree HC	Accommodates all training demand by Braintree HC. Notley Youth FC also use the pitch for football training.	Used by seven senior teams on a Saturday by Braintree HC for match play.	No spare capacity for midweek training but does exist for one further team on Saturdays and Sunday for match play.
75	Witham Sports Ground	1	34	60%	40%	Witham HC	Accommodates training demand by Witham HC. Some football activity is also received.	Used as the primary venue by Witham HC, with 10 teams using the venue on a weekly basis for matches. This consists of seven men's and three women's teams.	No spare capacity for midweek training or for additional match play on Saturdays. Spare capacity does exist for match play on Sundays.

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Match play analysis

It is suggested that a full-size hockey suitable, sports lit AGP is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions on one day. With teams playing on a home and away basis, this equates to one pitch being able to cater for eight 'home' teams at peak time (one team requires 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on its 'home' AGP).

Using the above calculations, on the basis that there are currently two full size hockey suitable pitches in the Braintree District, this provides a theoretical opportunity to accommodate up to 16 senior teams at peak time across the District.

The table below therefore further explores the level of capacity actually provided, firstly for senior hockey (i.e., on a Saturday).

Table 6.12: Summary of hockey pitch capacity for peak time match play (Saturday)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Potential capacity in teams	Actual capacity in teams	Number of hockey teams using the provision at peak time	Capacity balance
51	Releet Sports Ground	Central	1	8	8	9	1
75	Witham Sports Ground	South	1	8	8	10	2
-	-	Totals	2	16	16	19	3

As seen, it is determined that current provision can potentially accommodate up to 16 senior teams on a Saturday, with this equating to eight match equivalent sessions per week (where teams play on a home and away basis). With 19 senior teams currently provided (equating to 9.5 match equivalent sessions per week) and requiring access, there is a current shortfall on Saturdays for match play demand. When factoring in future demand expressed by both clubs and noting this cannot be accommodated on the pitches it currently accesses, this would further increase the shortfall.

For junior hockey matches, the need for pitches is generally less than it is for senior hockey. This is because younger age groups can play on half a pitch (meaning two fixtures can take place at one time) and because there are fewer junior teams in the Braintree District than there are senior teams. As such, provision adequate to accommodate senior demand is also likely to be adequate to accommodate junior demand, although the same capacity pressures are likely to apply where existing usage is significant.

Training analysis

In terms of capacity for training, both full size AGPs in the Braintree District have high levels of existing usage (football and hockey), with spare capacity for growth minimal. This is exacerbated by additional usage from other sports, most predominately football, which further reduces availability for hockey clubs at desired times.

Both Braintree HC and Witham HC highlight issues with accessing additional training slots at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground during midweek due to usage for football training. A similar picture to Saturday match play capacity is therefore presented.

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This means that alternative venues may be required, either via utilising pitches not currently accessed (at which point quality improvements may be necessary), or through new provision.

6.5: Conclusion

There is a current insufficient supply of full-size hockey suitable AGPs in the Braintree District, with a shortfall of 1.5 match sessions (or three senior team). This is evidenced through the limited availability in relation to both match play and training usage at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground, with future demand aspirations reported by both Braintree and Witham hockey clubs likely to increase the capacity pressures.

Based on the above, it is clear that the pitches at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground require ongoing protection for hockey. As without these pitches, both clubs would suffer even greater capacity issues and may potentially mean exporting some demand outside of the District.

To ensure that current and future match and training demand for both clubs can continue to be catered for, opportunities to increase capacity for hockey should be sought. The Strategy document will further investigate how this can be achieved through scenario testing various options including increasing capacity of existing provision and the need for new provision.

Hockey – supply and demand summary

- There is a current insufficient supply of full size hockey suitable AGPs in the Braintree District, with a shortfall of one senior team.
- When factoring in future demand, the shortfall of provision will be increased.
- Capacity issues for training activity are also identified, meaning that the supply of hockey pitches in the Braintree District is currently insufficient to meet current and future demand.

Hockey – supply summary

- There are two full size suitable AGPs in the Braintree District across the same number of sites (Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground).
- In addition to the full size AGPs, there are three smaller size hockey suitable pitches at Gosfield School, Oak Farm and Silver End Academy. However, the pitches are not suitable for purposeful hockey demand.
- The full-size pitches are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.
- Braintree HC owns the freehold of the pitch at Releet Sports Ground and therefore has security of tenure. Whilst Witham HC rents the provision at Witham Sports Ground on a seasonal basis from Freedom Leisure.
- The two full size pitches offer full availability during the peak period.
- The pitch at Releet Sports Ground is assessed as standard quality as it was last resurfaced in 2015 and Braintree HC reports it has an aspiration to upgrade its lighting to LED; however, it requires funding in order to do this.
- The pitch at Witham Sports Ground was last resurfaced in 2021 and is rated as good quality.
- Braintree HC reports the clubhouse at Releet Sports Ground is of standard quality. It reports its facilities are slowly declining in quality and are becoming outdated. The Club has a wider aspiration to refurbish the clubhouse facilities as well as improving the car parking.
- Witham HC reports the facilities at Witham Sports Ground are poor quality with basic and outdated provision provided.

Hockey – demand summary

- There are two hockey clubs (Braintree HC and Witham HC) playing in the District.
- There is a total of 32 dedicated hockey teams across the two community clubs with the most prominent being senior men's teams with 12, followed by senior women's, six for dedicated mini teams, four for junior boys and three for junior girls' teams. The senior team numbers include veteran and U21 teams.
- Both clubs have seen an increase in its teams over recent years. Growth equates to one senior and two junior teams for Braintree HC and two junior teams for Witham HC.

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- ◀ Back to hockey sessions are ran by Braintree HC.
- ◀ Braintree HC currently exports some junior demand to the hockey suitable AGP at Felstead School in Uttlesford as an overspill venue, however it primarily uses the provision at The Releet Sports Ground.
- ◀ Both clubs report future demand for five additional senior teams (two men's and three women's) as well as four junior teams.
- ◀ Witham HC has future demand aspirations, but the Club states that this cannot be accommodated without increased pitch capacity at Witham Sports Ground, with some capacity taken up by football groups, or through the creation of another full-size pitch.
- ◀ In addition to hockey usage at the site, considerably football activity also takes place, particularly during midweek evenings and on Saturday mornings.

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PART 7: TENNIS

7.1: Introduction

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the organisation responsible for the governance of tennis and padel which administers the sport locally across the Braintree District. It has recently restructured its strategic approach to target several national focus areas, with a priority on developing the sport at park sites.

The LTA provides recommended and minimum dimensions per tennis court and depending on how many courts are provided. The recommended court size for one court is 36.57 x 18.29 metres and the minimum court size is 34.75 x 17.07 metres (more sizes can be found on the LTA website).²⁰

The LTA's vision is 'Tennis Opened Up', with these words at the heart of its work and shaping everything that it does. Its mission is to grow tennis by making it welcoming, enjoyable and inspiring to everyone, whilst recognising the essential role played by volunteers, coaches, officials and tennis venues. (see Appendix 1: Context).

Consultation

There are four tennis clubs in the Braintree District: Braintree LTC, Castle Hedingham TC, Earls Colne TC and Gosfield LTC. Three clubs have responded to consultation requests, resulting in a 75% response rate as shown below.

In addition, Baker Tennis Academy is also based in the Braintree District and has been consulted.

Table 7.1: Summary of consultation responses

Club name	Analysis area	Responded?
Braintree LTC	Central	Yes
Castle Hedingham TC	Rural North	Yes
Earls Colne TC	Rural North	Yes
Gosfield LTC	Rural North	No

7.2: Supply

There are 57 traditional tennis courts identified in the Braintree District across 22 sites. Of these, 47 are categorised as being available for community use across 18 sites compared to 10 courts that are unavailable, with these at Alec Hunter Academy, Gosfield School, Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf and Country Club.

The largest number of courts are in the Rural North Analysis Area (29 courts), of which, 25 (86%) are available for community use. In contrast, the South Analysis Area provides the fewest courts (11), of which, nine (81%) are available for community use.

²⁰<https://www.lta.org.uk/support-centre/venue-support/facilities-and-funding/facilities-support/what-are-the-lta-recommended-court-dimensions/>

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Table 7.2: Summary of the number of courts by analysis area

Analysis area	No. of courts available for community use	No. of courts unavailable for community use
Central	16	4
Rural North	25	4
South	9	2
Braintree District	47	10

Please note that courts are classified as being available for community use provided that they are deemed to be easily accessible to the general population, either via pay and play or through a membership at a club (or a mixture of both). Having said this, not all courts will be in use by the community, especially those at school sites.

Figure 7.1 shows the location of courts servicing the Braintree District that are included within the study. For a key to the map, see Table 7.3.

Figure 7.1: Location of tennis courts in the Braintree District



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Table 7.3: Summary of outdoor tennis courts in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Postcode	Analysis area	Ownership	Community use?	Club user?	No. of courts	Sports lighting?	Court type	Court quality
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	CM7 3NR	Central	Education	No	-	3	No	Macadam	Poor
1	Alec Hunter Academy	1203913	CM7 3NR	Central	Education	No	-	1	No	Macadam	Poor
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	6021216	CO10 7BU	Rural North	Parish Council	Yes	-	2	No	Macadam	Standard
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	CM7 1FF	Central	Council	Yes	-	3	Yes	Macadam	Standard
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	1003714	CM7 1FF	Central	Council	Yes	-	1	Yes	Macadam	Standard
9	Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road)	6003269	CM7 3DE	Central	Club	Yes	Braintree LTC	2	Yes	Macadam	Good
9	Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road)	6003269	CM7 3DE	Central	Club	Yes	Braintree LTC	1	Yes	Artificial	Good
9	Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road)	6003269	CM7 3DE	Central	Club	Yes	Braintree LTC	1	No	Artificial	Good
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	1206961	CO6 2NG	Rural North	Club	Yes	Earls Colne TC	4	Yes	Macadam	Good
22	Finchingfield Playing Fields	6012547	CM7 4LZ	Rural North	Parish Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Good
24	Gosfield School	1203917	CO9 1PF	Rural North	Education	No	-	3	No	Macadam	Standard
27	Great Notley Country Park	30003219	CM77 7FS	Central	Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Poor
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	1039950	CM7 9DZ	Central	Parish Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Poor
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	1039950	CM7 9DZ	Central	Parish Council	Yes	-	2	No	Macadam	Poor
41	Kings Lane Playing Field	30002479	CM77 8AQ	Central	Parish Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Standard
44	Maltings Academy	1204085	CM8 1EP	South	Education	Yes	-	4	No	Macadam	Standard
48	Notley Sports Centre	1003757	CM7 1WY	Central	Education	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Standard
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	6021255	CM7 5EZ	Rural North	Parish Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Standard
57	Silver End Village Hall	6012505	CM8 3RQ	South	Parish Council	Yes	-	2	No	Macadam	Poor
57	Silver End Village Hall	6012505	CM8 3RQ	South	Parish Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Poor
70	The Ramsey Academy	1203920	CO9 2HR	Rural North	Education	Yes	-	6	No	Macadam	Poor
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	1041837	CM7 4EQ	Rural North	Parish Council	Yes	-	1	No	Macadam	Standard
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	-	CM3 2LS	South	Parish Council	Yes	-	2	Yes	Macadam	Good
90	Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club	-	CO5 9EE	South	Commercial	No	-	2	Yes	Macadam	Good
91	Gosfield Tennis Club	-	CO9 1PR	Rural North	Club	Yes	Gosfield LTC	3	Yes	Macadam	Standard
91	Gosfield Tennis Club	-	CO9 1PR	Rural North	Club	Yes	Gosfield LTC	1	Yes	Macadam	Poor
92	Castle Hedingham Tennis Club	-	CO9 3EW	Rural North	Club	Yes	Castle Hedingham TC	3	Yes	Macadam	Good
93	The Essex Golf and Country Club	-	CO6 2NS	Rural North	Commercial	No	-	1	Yes	Macadam	Good
111	Braintree & Bocking Public Gardens	-	CM7 9AE	Central	Council	Yes	-	2	No	Macadam	Poor

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Future provision

Planning permission has recently been granted (June 2025) for the construction of two tennis courts serviced by sports lighting located at Courtald Sports Ground (25/00289/FUL).

Maltings Academy is in the process of submitting a planning application to install sports lighting on its tennis courts using S106 funding.

LTA youth provision

LTA Youth provides children with an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of tennis at an early age. It utilises smaller courts, nets and rackets as well as lower-bouncing tennis balls to develop vital tennis skills and techniques. This has five levels, with the LTA stating that each stage has key aims and goals as follows:

- ◆ Blue: Learn the Basics – tennis lessons for ages 4-6.
- ◆ Red: Serve, Rally and Score – tennis lessons for ages 6-8.
- ◆ Orange: Develop a Rounded Game - tennis lessons for ages 8-9.
- ◆ Green: Test your Skills - tennis lessons for ages 9-10.
- ◆ Yellow: Take your Skills Further – tennis lessons for ages 10+.

No dedicated LTA youth courts in the Braintree District; however, full size courts can be utilised via the use of cones or other forms of temporary line markings. Although having dedicated courts is desirable and can facilitate and increase independent junior play, it is not essential to cater for such demand.

Padel

Padel tennis is relatively new to Great Britain and is growing in popularity, particularly since its recognition as a sport and integration within the LTA. It is played mainly in a doubles format on an enclosed court about a third of the size of a tennis court and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although you serve under-arm and the walls are used as part of the game with the ball allowed to bounce off them.

To further grow the sport, the LTA is focused on improving the infrastructure and the coach education pathway, with £6 million invested by the NGB since 2021. At the end of 2020, there were 87 courts, 350 in 2023 and 500 courts are now provided in 2024. There is also a projected growth of 1,000 in 2026, with it therefore envisaged that, with growing infrastructure, participation in padel will increase significantly over the coming years.

There are currently four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, located at The Essex Golf and Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club. The LTA estimates a further eight courts would need to be provided across the District to meet the demand.

In addition, consultation with the LTA and Active Essex states that there are potential options for developing more padel courts, although these are still at an early stage.

It should be noted that the LTA has recently carried out a mapping exercise that sets out the level of provision that could be sustained within a local authority, based on population and demand, with this identifying that up to 12 courts could be warranted in the Braintree District.

Notwithstanding the above, the LTA is not encouraging clubs or local authorities to convert existing tennis courts to padel courts, unless it can be shown that they have the capacity to support this. This is to ensure that the provision of traditional courts remains sufficient.

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Indoor provision

There are six indoor courts in the Braintree District provided at The Essex Golf & Country Club. Although indoor courts are not considered within the PPOSS, it is acknowledged that they can provide additional capacity for tennis demand. Further information is included in the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy that is being carried out in conjunction with the PPOSS.

Pickleball

Generally following the basic principles of tennis, pickleball is a racket or paddle sport in which two players (singles) or four players (doubles) hit a plastic ball net over a net. It is governed nationally by Pickleball England.

No pickleball is thought to be taking place on the outdoor courts in the Braintree District.

Management and security of tenure

The table below highlights the management/ownership of tennis courts within the Braintree District.

In total, 15 courts are provided at club sites (27%), five are provided at Braintree District Council managed sites (9%) and 14 at parish/town council sites (25%), with all of these available for community use. There are 18 are provided at education sites (33%), with 11 (61%) of these available for community use and the remaining three (5%) courts are classified as 'other' are those provided at Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf & Country Club.

Table 7.4: Outdoor tennis courts by management type

Community use	Sports club	Council	Parish/town council	Other	Education
Available	15	5	14	-	11
Unavailable	-	-	-	3	7
Braintree District	15	5	14	3	18

Secure tenure is provided at all tennis clubs in the Braintree District, with all clubs either owning their sites or leasing them on a long-term basis. As such, no clubs report any issues in this regard. The venues used by each club and the tenure arrangements in place are summarised in the following table.

Table 7.5: Summary of club venues and tenure

Club name	Site used	Type of tenure
Braintree LTC	Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road)	Lease
Castle Hedingham TC	Castle Hedingham Tennis Club	Freehold
Earls Colne TC	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Lease
Gosfield LTC	Gosfield Lawn Tennis Club	Freehold

Court type

Most outdoor tennis courts have a macadam surface, with 55 (96%) of the 57 courts being of this type and 45 (78%) of these are for community use. The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is ten years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels. To ensure courts can continue to be used beyond this time frame, it is recommended that a sinking fund is put into place for eventual refurbishment.

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The remaining two courts have an artificial turf surface; provided at Braintree Town FC-Cressing Road. The estimated lifespan of artificial courts is similar to that of a macadam surface, although it generally allows for greater levels of access, especially during inclement weather spells. Nevertheless, the cost of resurfacing the courts is usually more expensive and more regular maintenance is required, due to multi-sport activity on the surface which will increase the required maintenance with this also likely to reduce the surface lifespan.

Table 7.6: Summary of tennis court types across the Braintree District

Court type	Available for community use	Unavailable for community use	Total number of courts
Artificial turf	2	-	2
Macadam	45	10	55
Total	47	10	57

Sports lighting

Sports lit tennis courts enable use throughout the year and are identified by the LTA as being a key priority for growing participation nationally. The LTA reports that sports lighting allow for a 35% increase in available court time on an annual basis.

In the Braintree District, 23 out of the 57 tennis courts are serviced by sports lighting, representing 40% of the provision. Of the sports-lit courts, 20 (87%) are available for community use across the following sites:

- ✦ Braintree Sport & Health Club.
- ✦ Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road).
- ✦ Castle Hedingham Tennis Club.
- ✦ Earls Colne Recreation Club.
- ✦ Gosfield Tennis Club.
- ✦ Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club.
- ✦ Strutt Memorial Ground.
- ✦ The Essex Golf and Country Club.

The sports-lit courts unavailable for community use are located at Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf and Country Club.

A lack of sports lighting at education sites presents a key reason as to why many of the courts are unavailable for community use. Many of the providers state that making them available for lettings would not be financially viable as usage would be limited, although the LTA does offer solutions to help overcome this including initiatives such as Clubspark and Gate Access (detailed further on).

Access to courts with sports lighting is considered particularly key for clubs as it allows for greater use of provision, which in turn can help accommodate more members. To that end, it must be noted that in the Braintree District, all clubs have access to some courts that are sports lit.

Braintree LTC reports it has plans to service the remaining non-lit court with sports lighting and replace the other floodlights with LED lighting. It is currently sourcing the funding to carry this work out.

In terms of padel provision, the courts at Notleys Golf Club and The Essex Golf and Country Club are serviced by sports lighting which allows for greater use of the courts and in turn to accommodate more demand.

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Away from clubs and schools, increasing the number of local authority courts with sports lighting is also a strategic aim for the LTA due to the additional recreational demand and tennis programmes such provision can help accommodate. Of the local authority and parish council courts in the Braintree District, only four courts are currently serviced by sports lighting, located at Braintree Sport & Health Club.

LTA Quick Access Loan Scheme²¹

The LTA's mission is to grow tennis and padel by making them accessible, welcoming, and enjoyable. Ensuring local communities have access to quality facilities is critical to attracting and retaining more players. As such, the LTA's Quick Access Loan Scheme aims to provide interest-free loans to support venues investment in facilities, prioritising the installation and construction of covered courts.

The objectives of the fund are to:

- ◆ Provide covered or sports-lit playing facilities to encourage community accessible play all year.
- ◆ Retain and increase the number of participants at the venue.
- ◆ Offer and increase both non-members pay and play usage and coaching opportunities.
- ◆ Grow the numbers of adults and juniors on the coaching programme.
- ◆ Provide seamless booking of tennis courts and lessons through an [online booking system](#).

As part of the fund, the LTA will fund:

- ◆ Lighting upgrades to LED (outdoor and indoor).
- ◆ New sports lights.
- ◆ New court provision.
- ◆ Outdoor padel courts.
- ◆ Covered padel (courts and cover).
- ◆ Covered tennis courts.

Overmarking of courts

Tennis courts, particularly within schools, are often over marked by netball, basketball and/or football courts. Courts which are over marked tend to receive higher levels of use which can be detrimental to quality over time, as well as creating capacity issues if there is community demand from more than one sport.

In the Braintree District, some of the courts at the sites in the following table are overmarked.

Table 7.7: Summary of tennis court overmarking

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Tennis courts	Overmarked by
1	Alec Hunter Academy	Central	4	Two netball courts
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	Rural North	2	Two netball courts
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	3	Three netball courts
27	Great Notley Country Park	Central	1	One netball and one basketball court
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	Rural North	2	Two netball courts
44	Maltings Academy	South	4	One netball court

²¹ [Quick Access Loan Scheme for tennis facilities \(lta.org.uk\)](#)

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Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Tennis courts	Overmarked by
48	Notley Sports Centre	Central	1	One netball court
57	Silver End Village Hall	South	2	One basketball court
70	The Ramsey Academy	Rural North	6	One netball court

The majority are overmarked by netball courts which are identified in greater detail in Part 8 of this document.

Quality

The quality of tennis courts is informed through non-technical site assessments and consultation with providers to assign each court a rating of good, standard or poor. Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness, and evidence of inappropriate use such as vandalism and littering (for the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2).

Maintaining high court quality is an important aspect of tennis and therefore the non-technical assessment assesses several factors are used to determine court quality. The criterion for the non-technical assessment include assessing grip underfoot, damage to the surface, line markings, evidence of moss/lichen, slope of courts, disability access, fencing and courts being of an appropriate size for competitive tennis.

Of the courts in the Braintree District, 17 (30%) are assessed as good quality (of which 14 (82%) are available for community use), with 20 (37%) assessed as standard quality (17 (85%) available for community use) and 20 (35%) assessed as poor quality (16 (80%) available for community use).

Table 7.8: Quality of tennis courts across the Braintree District

Community use	Good	Standard	Poor
Available	14	17	16
Unavailable	3	3	4

The poor quality courts are all located at school and council sites. The following sites contain poor quality courts:

- ✦ Alec Hunter Academy.
- ✦ Braintree & Bocking Public Gardens.
- ✦ Great Notley Country Park.
- ✦ John Ray Recreation Ground.
- ✦ Silver End Village Hall.
- ✦ The Ramsey Academy.
- ✦ Gosfield Tennis Club.

Issues recorded at these sites include poor grip underfoot, the presence of moss, worn line markings and loose gravel. Moreover, maintenance is also considered to be basic and infrequent at most of the poor quality sites, which can lead to further deterioration.

Five sites with poor quality courts are operated by either the District Council or parish/town councils (at Finchingfield Playing Fields, Great Notley Country Park, John Ray Recreation Ground and Silver End Village Hall).

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Of club courts, those utilised by Braintree, Castle Hedingham and Earls Colne tennis clubs have access to either good or standard quality courts. In addition, Gosfield TC has access to three good quality courts and one poor quality court.

Through consultation, Braintree LTC reports it has plans to resurface its courts to improve their quality, with funding not yet secured to undertake these works. This is to maintain high quality.

In terms of padel provision, the outdoor padel courts at The Essex Golf and Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club are assessed as good quality having been installed in 2024 for the former and 2025 for the latter. The courts are maintained and cleaned on a regular basis to sustain the good quality.

Improving local authority courts is currently a national priority for the LTA, with a focus on suitable sites that cater for high levels of recreational demand or that have the potential to do so. This is especially if the provision is serviced (or could be serviced) by toilet provision and/or storage and sports lighting.

Renovation fund²²

The LTA has secured a £22 million investment fund to be put into public tennis courts across Britain, together with an £8.5 million investment from the LTA. This will see thousands of public park tennis courts that are in poor or unplayable condition improved for the benefit of local communities.

The LTA's ambition is to drive participation across park tennis sites, as well as ensuring the future sustainability of these facilities. As well as paying for the refurbishment of public park courts, the new investment will also pay for the implementation of sustainable operating models for the facilities, with specialist programmes (e.g., gated access and Smart Access lite) and support to ensure courts are both affordable and utilised.

Ancillary provision

Site assessments and consultation evidence suggests that most clubs are serviced by good or standard quality ancillary facilities, with no major issues identified. However, Braintree LTC aspires to refurbish its clubhouse in the near future.

In terms of padel provision, the courts at The Essex Golf & Country Club and Notleys Golf Club are serviced by good quality ancillary facilities and built alongside the courts in 2024 for the former and 2025 for the latter. The facilities include changing rooms and toilets.

For non-club courts, clubhouses and changing rooms are generally considered to be less all-encompassing, as provision requirements are generally less. Facilities such as changing rooms are not as important to recreational/park players, with the most pressing issue being to ensure accessible toilets are provided. Often, the facilities predominately service football/cricket pitch users and tend not to be readily available or suited to tennis court users. In some instances, quality is also poor.

²²<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/30-million-package-to-refurbish-4500-public-tennis-courts-in-deprived-parts-of-uk-announced>

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7.3: Demand

Competitive tennis

There are four tennis clubs in the Braintree District. Across the clubs, where known (it is not at Gosfield LTC), there is an overall membership of 439, which broken down amounts to 248 senior members and 191 junior members. The average club membership is 146, which represents substantial demand. A club-by-club breakdown can be seen in the table below.

Table 7.9: Summary of tennis club membership

Club	Sites used	Seniors	Juniors	Total
Braintree LTC	Braintree Town FC (Cressing Road)	88	111	199
Castle Hedingham TC	Castle Hedingham Tennis Club	50	20	70
Earls Colne TC	Earls Colne Recreation Club	110	60	170
Gosfield LTC	Gosfield Lawn Tennis Club	Unknown	Unknown	-
Braintree District	-	248	191	439

The largest club by far is Braintree LTC, with it having 199 members. The smallest club is Castle Hedingham TC with 70 members.

Baker Tennis Academy

Baker Tennis Academy is a coaching provider in the Braintree District, providing coaching for juniors and adults as well as competitions and holiday camps. In addition, it provides venue access to recreational users, either via a subscription or on a pay and play basis. It operates from the courts at Maltings Academy.

Participation trends

In total, two responding clubs report that membership levels have increased over recent years. These are Braintree LTC and Earls Colne TC. In contrast, Castle Hedingham TC reports that its membership is declining year on year due to members playing for other clubs or moving away from the area or the increase in membership rates.

Two responding clubs reporting demand increases and one reported a decrease in membership. This generally correlates to a national picture of growing demand, with the LTA reporting that demand has increased significantly in recent years, especially since Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

Linked to the above, the LTA has provided key participation statistics for 2024 (August). Key points are:

- ◆ In the past year 5.6 million adults played tennis with 2.6 million playing monthly and over one million playing weekly.
- ◆ Over two million adults played their tennis in parks.
- ◆ Almost four million children played tennis in the last year, with 1,398,837 playing monthly and 619,000 playing weekly.

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Informal and parks tennis

The LTA has successfully implemented technology that improves the customer journey to courts. This involves the use of an access gate with keypad entry which is connected to the Clubspark venue management system. When a booking is made an automated code is generated and sent to the customer, thus allowing access to the court during the allocated booking time. Where implemented, the system has been successful in increasing participation rates, whilst also generating income that helps to improve the financial sustainability of a venue.

The LTA is looking to significantly increase the number of gate access systems that are installed national as part of the Digital Participation Pathway. Padel is still early in development in parks, however the LTA is keen to see this development and see it as a natural offer alongside multi-sport and tennis provision.

Away from club demand, usage can be difficult to quantify as it is not always monitored, especially at sites that are free to access which is currently the case in the Braintree District (see Free Parks Tennis section). Demand for such provision is generally at its highest during summer months, especially following events such as Wimbledon, but significant capacity is likely to exist outside of this.

In relation to education providers, none report any regular demand from the community for access to its courts. It is believed by them that a lack of demand is a direct result of quality issues and a lack of sports lighting, as well as other courts being available for free. This results in the community being less likely to pay a hire charge for their provision. To help grow the use of tennis courts, the LTA has developed a package of support for local authorities and other providers by removing key barriers to participation. This is via three products known as ClubSpark, Play and Gate Access. In the Braintree District, the following sites are known to utilise some or all of the products:

- ◀ Braintree LTC.
- ◀ Castle Hedingham Tennis Club.

The LTA products are further summarised below.

ClubSpark – Improving the booking process

ClubSpark is a flexible and simple venue management platform with multiple products and applications to help venues, local authorities and coaches manage their sport. ClubSpark is a tool that is offered for free as part of LTA venue registration and allows administrators to manage all functions at their venue(s), including:

- ◀ Managed website - create and manage a mobile friendly website tailored to LA/club requirements to promote events and activities.
- ◀ Managed coaching – set up coaching lessons and courses online.
- ◀ Membership management - improve membership engagement by making it easier for the venue and for members to pay, renew and keep in touch (includes online payments, direct debits and the monitoring of revenue streams; membership modules can also be used to take season ticket payments for venues operating a non-traditional annual facility fee).
- ◀ Organise payments - set the way payments are taken, whether it's immediate pay and play, or bookable as part of a membership package.
- ◀ Court bookings – reduced administration for bookings; give staff, coaches, members and the general public access to book and pay for courts, classes or other resources online.
- ◀ Scheduling - set unique booking and price rules to suit the venue and enable lights to switch on/off automatically when linked to the LTA Premium Gate Access system.

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- ♦ Book and pay remotely - customers can make bookings and payments for a venue anytime, anywhere via the real-time booking app.
- ♦ Reporting - ClubSpark allows administrators to view reports highlighting income, court usage, revenue and number of members; this allows for identification of trends and patterns and evidence to demonstrate participation levels and impact.

LTA Play

Play is an aggregator that collects all booking and coaching information via ClubSpark pages and displays it for participants in one easy to view page. It allows players to search for venues close to them and provides booking options, removing the barriers of not knowing where courts are or how to book.

Play provides a customer journey, with a personal profile to review and manage bookings, and helpful reminders. Courts can be set to book for free of charge or at a fee agreed by the provider.

Gate Access

The LTA has developed two Gate Access gate systems that work in association with ClubSpark to secure courts and to allow access to booked customers only. Members of the public can book a court online (making payment if required) and receive a four digit access code via email to enter using a courtside keypad. The gate access system then allows entry for the time booked if a correct code is entered.

There are two gate options available: SmartAccess Premium and SmartAccess Lite. The demands and needs of users plus the setup of the venue determines the most appropriate system for each site.

Nationally, the LTA report that in the last three years, sites with a gate access system installed have attracted 64,841 unique players, leading to 609,671 courts being booked. This has generated income of over £1 million.

Additional demand

The LTA operates various tennis initiatives across the Country which result in some courts receiving additional demand. Furthermore, there are other formats away from traditional tennis that can result in increased usage. These are all detailed below.

Barclays Local Tennis League (Parks)²³

Parks local tennis league provides adults with a fun and local competitive opportunity against players of a similar ability. Beginner tennis leagues are being activated around key parks for players who are new to the game.

²³ [Play in a Barclays Local Tennis League | LTA](#)

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LTA Youth Programmes

The LTA coordinate courses for children aged 4-18, consisting of fun games and dynamic training. Specialist coaches make sure every child has the best start to their tennis journey in a safe and inclusive environment. Sessions cater to all abilities and split into the following:

- ◀ Blue Stage (Age 4-6).
- ◀ Red Stage (Age 6-8).
- ◀ Orange Stage (Age 8-9).
- ◀ Green Stage (Age 9-10).
- ◀ Yellow Stage (Age 10+).

Key points of the initiative are:

- ◀ There are assigned ages to each stage, but this only serves as a guide.
- ◀ Young people want to play in groups and with their friends, and so whatever stage they start at, all kids will see progression.
- ◀ In every LTA Youth stage, young people will be active, have fun and develop skills.

Although no LTA youth tennis courts have been identified in the Braintree District, that is not to say that sessions are not running on full size courts, particularly at club sites.

LTA Big Tennis Weekend

The LTA Big Tennis Weekend is an LTA initiative which all registered venues can access. Clubs and venues can sign up to host open days, which are free of charge, and create a relaxed and welcoming environment for those new to tennis to participate. This in turn can potentially lead to venues attracting new players.

Free Parks Tennis

Free Park Tennis is a new programme for all park tennis operators, offering people the chance to play tennis for free and providing an entry point for more players to get involved in the sport. The LTA has provided the following needs:

- ◀ Player Trends:
 - ◀ 35% of people who play tennis once per year or more do so in a park.
 - ◀ The most common type of play for park players is socially with friends or family.
- ◀ Barriers:
 - ◀ 25% of players cite not having anyone to play with as a barrier to playing more tennis.
 - ◀ 24% of players cite having nowhere to play or difficulty in accessing local courts as reasons why they do not play tennis more often.
 - ◀ 32% of these players say local courts are not affordable.
 - ◀ 75% of parks players consider themselves to be of beginner (41%) or improver (36%) standard, which is significantly lower than club players.
 - ◀ 22% of players state that a lack of equipment prevents them from playing tennis.

The key points of a free park tennis session are:

- ◀ Free for all players to book and attend.
- ◀ Run by a minimum of two trained and DBS checked Activators.
- ◀ Sessions should run all year round (weather depending).
- ◀ Run on a Saturday or Sunday morning at 10.00-11.00am.

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Court requirements are for three courts minimum in parks, or two courts at two court sites (a three court site can have up to 34 players attending). The sessions are designed for those aged eight and over, but under eights can attend when accompanied by a parent.

School demand

In relation to education sites, none report any regular demand from the community for tennis, other than through sessions provided by operators e.g., Baker Tennis Academy at Maltings Academy. Anecdotal evidence from consultation with the schools suggests that this lack of demand is due to quality issues and/or a lack of sports lighting, as well as other courts being available that are more affordable (i.e., at park sites). This results in the community being less likely to pay for access to school provision.

Padel demand

Padel is a form of tennis that is easy to play, fun and sociable. It is played mainly in a doubles format on an enclosed court about a third of the size of a tennis court and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities as it is not power dominant. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although players serve underhand and the walls are used as part of the game, with the ball allowed to bounce off them. A padel court is 20m long and 10m wide with a combination of glass and weld mesh rebound wall and fence panels supported of steel posts fixed to a concrete foundation with a synthetic turf playing surface.

In 2022, 90,000 people reportedly play padel more than once a year in England - a 493% year on year increase compared to 2021 data (15,000). This then reportedly increased to 129,000 players in 2023, exemplifying the continued growth of the sport and the need to ensure that such demand is being adequately catered for. Furthermore, the LTA reports that Essex is one of the biggest growing counties in terms of padel demand and development.

As previously identified, there are currently four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, meaning activity is likely to be limited. However, that is not to say that there is no additional demand. Several operators, both nationally and locally, have aspirations to establish provision and this would likely result in significant usage when considering national and regional trends.

Building on from the above, LTA has outlined a Padel Strategy (2024-2029). The key demand objectives are to:

- ✦ Grow the visibility of padel to increase awareness from 20% to 40% of the population, interest in playing from 7.5% to 15% and boost participation.
- ✦ Increase the number of annual padel players from 129,000 to 400,000, and monthly players from 65,000 to 200,000.
- ✦ Grow the padel coach and activator workforce from 40 to 700.
- ✦ Enable 10 players to break into the World top 200 and two players into the top 100 and inspire the padel audience.

Furthermore, to assist local authorities in strategically planning padel provision, the LTA has established, by authority, the number of padel courts that can be sustained based on population density and padel demand. The figures provided form a start point for conversation and strategic planning. It does not mean that the suggested number should be seen as a cap, but that the has LTA confidence that there is sufficient demand for the number of courts identified. Some areas where the sport is more established will create higher levels of demand.

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The LTA report 8% of total tennis demand across the Braintree District potentially would like to play padel, with this equating to 2,353 people. This works on the basis of 200 players being accommodated per court with a minimum of 12 courts could be sustained across the District.

The LTA also state this is a good ballpark figure for strategic planning but is conservative and based on padel being an emerging sport, and all likelihood is that further court provision could be sustained. The above figure is based on the current population in the Braintree District and the current data that the LTA holds rather than a future projection.

Latent/unmet demand

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision. There is currently no latent demand which was highlighted through consultation.

Latent demand for tennis nationally is reported to be high by the LTA, which has an insight tool that suggests that 18% of the five million players that pick up a racket each year would play more often if key barriers such as poor promotion of opportunities to get on court, unclear booking journeys (especially those that are 'offline') and low quality facilities were addressed.

Furthermore, the LTA conducted some research to understand how the public feels about tennis and the main barriers to accessing the sport. The research was split into club, community and education sectors, with headline findings as follows:

- ✦ Around five million people play once per year with the majority of this in parks.
- ✦ 46% of tennis played by those 14 years is on park courts.
- ✦ 80% of those that do not play tennis but would like to see parks as their first option.
- ✦ Barriers preventing use of courts located in parks include the quality of the courts, ease of booking and the number of courts available to play.
- ✦ Demand for tennis amongst those who stopped playing in the last five years is from 14 upwards.
- ✦ Although there is demand for tennis amongst working class individuals, the highest latent demand is from upper middle, middle and lower middle classes.

Further research carried out by the LTA also suggests that many more people would play tennis if they knew where courts were located, particularly local authority courts. Its assertion is that better promotion would increase demand. As such, there is a potential opportunity for local authorities and other providers to address such barriers, whilst also bettering understanding of court usage.

The LTA has also conducted its own demographic analysis of potential latent demand for the sport. Within this, it breaks all members into six different profiles, as follows:

- ✦ Tennis Titans - frequent players and tennis club members for whom tennis is their main sport and key interest.
- ✦ Tennis Troupers - often club members, largely family-oriented, middle-aged players for whom tennis is a hobby; interested in playing with teams to partnering with their kids in the sunnier seasons.
- ✦ Seasonal Spinners - largely young women, they play sport in general for athletic reasons (often being gym-goers and joggers), and enjoy their tennis a lot, though tennis is very intertwined with friends and being social.
- ✦ Wimbledon Warriors - largely young men who are keen athletes, they like tennis and want to play more, though are often held back by factors outside of the summer.

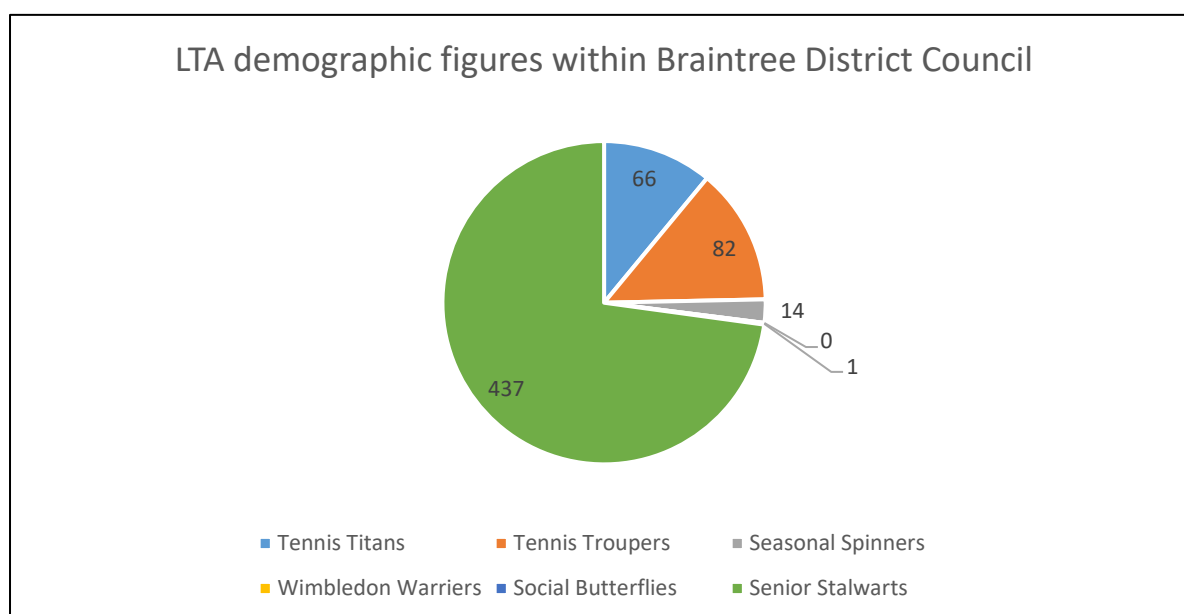
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- ✦ Social Butterflies - infrequent, younger and less experienced players for whom tennis is an occasional fun summer activity.
- ✦ Senior Stalwarts - an older group of players for whom tennis is a social habit and they play with a regular group as a way of keeping social and enjoyable gentle exercise.

A 'non-profile' demographic is also included, referred to as a term to identify certain demographics that do not match a tennis profile.

Regarding the Braintree District, the analysis identifies total demand figures for 2025 of 600 people, with Figure 7.2 illustrating this further. As can be seen, 'Senior Stalwarts' is the most common demographic with 437 members (52%), followed by 'Tennis Troupers'.

Figure 7.2: Total LTA demographic figures for the Braintree District



Also specific to the Braintree District, all responding clubs report that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision available to them and that no potential members are being turned away due to capacity issues. As such, these clubs do not report any latent or unmet demand, with the majority actively trying to recruit new members. This suggests that the latent demand identified through other methods is for non-club activity, or that other barriers aside from facilities are preventing activity.

Future demand

All the responsive clubs' report plans to increase their membership numbers. The total future demand expressed by these equates to 60 members (35 senior and 25 junior), as shown in the table below.

Table 7.10: Summary of future tennis club demand (responsive clubs)

Club	Senior	Junior
Braintree LTC	20	20
Castle Hedingham TC	5	-
Earls Colne TC	10	5
Braintree District	35	25

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In addition, the LTA also expects future growth as identified in its insight tools, with much of this demand likely to include participation outside of the club environment, which is therefore very relevant in the Braintree District. To that extent, it is key that the local authority and park sites in the Braintree District continue to be part of the ClubSpark initiative as this will allow growth in demand that occurs to be monitored.

In addition to the above, Sport England has been working with the LTA to add outdoor tennis courts to its Sports Facilities Calculator²⁴. This is a modelling tool designed to assist local planning authorities to quantify how much additional demand is generated by increasing populations and new housing areas. It uses information that Sport England has gathered on who uses facilities and applies this to the population profile of the local area, ensuring that the calculations take on board the population profile (e.g. age and gender) of the local area.

The table below sets out how many tennis courts the sports facilities calculator suggests would be required to serve the additional population growth to 2041 in the Braintree District. However, whilst this helps quantify additional demand for tennis facilities, it should not be applied for strategic gap analysis as it has no spatial dimension.

Table 7.11: Sports facilities calculator

Factor	Current population	Population estimate (2041)
ONS population projections	155,273	161,079
Population increase	-	5,806
Facilities to meet change in demand	-	0.74 courts
Estimated Cost ²⁵	-	£84,415

Please note that the Sports Facility Calculator calculations do not account for growth associated with housing developments in the district and therefore will not fully account for housing growth. Therefore, the impact of housing led growth will be considered in a separate Housing Growth section in the Strategy document.

As seen, the projected increase in population will likely lead to an increase in demand for tennis courts amounting to a requirement for an additional 0.74 courts, up to 2041 (estimated cost of £84,415). However, this demand is minimal with it not equating to a full court.

7.4: Supply and demand analysis

Club tennis

For club-based tennis, the LTA suggests that a hard court with no sports lighting can accommodate 40 members whereas a hard court with sports lighting can accommodate 60 members. Using this, the table overleaf identifies the capacity balance at all sites currently used by clubs, taking into account current and future demand.

²⁴ <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/sports-facility-calculator>

²⁵ Sport England Facilities Costs Third Quarter 2024 – (<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>)

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Table 7.12: Capacity analysis (club courts)

Site ID	Site	Club users	Current demand (members)	Future demand (members)	No of courts	Sports lighting?	Capacity (members)	Current capacity balance (members)	Future capacity balance (members)
9	Braintree Town FC-Cressing Road	Braintree LTC	199	239	4	Yes	240	41	1
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	Earls Colne TC	170	185	4	Yes	240	70	55
91	Gosfield Tennis Club	Gosfield TC	-	-	4	Yes	240	-	-
92	Castle Hedingham Tennis Club	Castle Hedingham TC	70	75	3	Yes	180	110	105

As evidenced in the table above, current supply is sufficient to meet club-based demand for three of the four clubs in the District (membership figures are unknown for Earls Colne TC). This is mostly because all the club courts have sports lighting, so the maximum capacity is achieved. Even after considering future demand aspirations, no shortfalls would be established. Although Braintree LTC could be close to capacity and a shortfall being established if all future demand is realised.

All clubs are considered to have spare capacity based on the supply of provision located at each site. However, the capacity analysis does not consider the quality of the courts and one of the courts at Gosfield Tennis Club is assessed as poor quality and therefore, there is a need to monitor/improve quality to ensure that existing and future capacity can continue to be accommodated, as part of Stage E to ensure this position remains the same.

Non-club tennis

For non-club courts, analysing supply and demand is difficult in the Braintree District as full usage figures are not known. However, whilst quality is comparatively good, usage will be being impacted upon by several factors. Primarily, there are fewer local authority courts (five courts) when compared to most other districts within Essex. For example, Chelmsford has 23 local authority courts (2025 PPOSS).

It is then being further impacted upon by a lack of sports lighting (or covered/indoor courts) at many sites, the multi-sport nature of most provision, and the fact that a high quantity of courts is located at schools, all of which will be further reducing availability. Quality improvements may also assist, with this linked to existing investment plans.

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Based on the above, whilst no capacity issues have been identified and no requirement for additional courts has been identified, increased recreational demand could be encouraged through improving the existing stock of courts. As well as increased sports lighting, quality improvements at sites such as Finchingfield Playing Fields, Great Notley Country Park, John Ray Recreation Ground and Silver End Village Hall (currently assessed as poor quality) would also be of benefit to helping attract and increase usage.

In addition, there is also likely to be demand for padel not being met within the District. There are currently four padel courts provided at The Essex Golf and Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club meaning there is a potential shortfall equating to the need for eight additional padel courts (based on LTA population modelling).

7.5: Conclusion

For club-based tennis, there is seemingly sufficient capacity in the Braintree District to facilitate current and future demand. Responding clubs do not report any issues, suggesting that there is no likely requirement for additional court space. This should, however, be closely monitored, and improvements to the existing stock should be sought to ensure this remains the case. This relates to the provision at Gosfield Tennis Club, where one of the courts is assessed as poor quality.

In contrast, there is likely to be a shortfall of provision for non-club activity, with few local authority courts existing and with some of the supply accessed by clubs, poor quality and/or without sports lighting. This likely leading to levels of unmet and latent demand. Additionally, a need for additional padel courts has also been identified.

In terms of padel provision, The Essex Golf and Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club provide two padel courts each. Given the growing popularity of the format, it is likely that there will be further demand moving forward as it is thought that take-up would be considerable were additional provision to be established.

Tennis – supply and demand summary

- ◀ For club-based tennis, there is seemingly sufficient capacity in the Braintree District to facilitate current and future demand. No responding clubs report any issues, suggesting that there is no requirement for additional court space. However, this should be monitored particularly in relation to provision at Gosfield Tennis Club, where one of the courts is assessed as poor quality.
- ◀ In contrast, there is likely to be a shortfall of provision for non-club activity, with few local authority courts existing and with some of the supply accessed by clubs, poor quality and/or without sports lighting. This likely leading to levels of unmet and latent demand.
- ◀ A need for additional padel courts has also been identified.

Tennis – supply summary

- ◀ A total of 57 traditional tennis courts are identified in the Braintree District across 22 sites.
- ◀ Of the courts, 55 are categorised as being available for community use at 18 sites compared to compared to 10 courts that are unavailable, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy, Gosfield School, Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf and Country Club.
- ◀ Planning permission has recently been granted (June 2025) for the construction of two tennis courts serviced by sports lighting located at Courtuald Sports Ground (25/00289/FUL).
- ◀ Maltings Academy is in the process of submitting a planning application to install sports lighting on its tennis courts using S106 funding.
- ◀ Of the community courts, 15 courts are provided at club sites, seven at local authority sites, 12 at parish council sites, 18 are provided at education sites and the remaining three courts are classified as 'other' are those provided at Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf & Country Club.
- ◀ All clubs have security of tenure, either via freehold for their sites or long term lease agreements.

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- ◀ Most outdoor tennis courts have a macadam surface; there are 55 of this type compared to two artificial courts.
- ◀ Of the courts, 23 are serviced by sports lighting, with 20 of these are available for community use.
- ◀ 17 courts are assessed as good quality, 20 as standard quality and 20 as poor quality.
- ◀ There are also four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, provided at The Essex Golf & Country Club and Notleys Golf Club.

Tennis – demand summary

- ◀ There are four tennis clubs in the Braintree District, with membership equating to 439, where known through consultation (it is not known for Gosfield LTC).
- ◀ Membership is seemingly on the rise, with two clubs reporting recent increases and only one reporting a decrease.
- ◀ Whilst no latent or unmet demand has been identified by clubs, it is considered to exist for recreational tennis, with LTA data identifying potential demand equating to 600 people.
- ◀ Future demand is expressed by three clubs and amounts to 60 potential additional members (35 senior and 25 junior).
- ◀ Based on identified population growth, the Sports Facilities Calculator indicates a requirement for an additional 0.74 courts, up to 2041.
- ◀ A need for 12 padel courts has been identified in the District by the LTA (meaning a shortfall of eight).

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PART 8: NETBALL

8.1: Introduction

England Netball is the governing body with overall responsibility for ensuring the effective governance of the sport.

Whilst often played indoors, there are far more outdoor courts provided and in use by the netball community than there are indoor. Nationally, England Netball reports that the challenge is that the supply of outdoor netball courts is generally not of a good enough standard for use by the community, whilst accessibility and a lack of sports lighting can also be problematic.

Consultation

Information to inform this section of the report was primarily obtained through discussions with England Netball. In addition, there are three netball clubs in the Braintree District. Of these, two clubs have responded to consultation requests, as seen below equating to a 67% response rate. Efforts are ongoing to engage with Halstead NC.

Table 8.1: Summary of netball consultation

Name of club	Responded?
Braintree Town Youth Netball Club	Yes
Halstead Netball Club	Yes
Kelevdon Netball Club	No

8.2: Supply

There are 33 netball courts identified in the Braintree District across 14 sites. Of these, 22 are available for community use across 10 sites compared to 12 courts that are unavailable at four sites (all provided at education sites).

The largest number of courts are in the Central Analysis Area (17 courts) of which 12 (71%) are available for community use followed by the South Analysis Area (10 courts), however, four (40%) of these are available for community use.

Table 8.2: Summary of the number of courts by analysis area

Analysis area	No. of courts available for community use	No. of courts unavailable for community use
Central	12	5
Rural North	6	-
South	4	6
Braintree District	22	11

A traditional netball court is 30.5 metres long and 15.25 metres wide. As such, please note that some additional courts are not included in the above figures due to them being undersized, especially those located at primary schools. Such courts are generally marked out on generic playgrounds and are not considered to be permanent or conducive for formal play. It is, however, recognised that the provision can meet curricular and extra-curricular needs.

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Figure 8.1 shows the location of the netball courts included within the study. Please see Table 8.3 for a key to the map.

Figure 8.1: Location of netball courts in the Braintree District



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Table 8.3: Netball courts in the Braintree District

Site ID	Active Places Power ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Ownership	Number of courts	Over marked?	Sports lighting	Quality
1	1203913	Alec Hunter Academy	CM7 3NR	Central	No	Education	3	Yes	No	Poor
8	1003714	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	Central	Yes	Council	3	Yes	Yes	Standard
27	30003219	Great Notley Country Park	CM77 7FS	Central	Yes	Council	1	Yes	No	Poor
30	1204086	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	Rural North	Yes	Education	3	No	No	Poor
33	1203754	Honywood Community Science School	CO6 1PZ	Rural North	Yes	Education	2	No	No	Standard
35	1039950	John Ray Recreation Ground	CM7 9DZ	Central	Yes	Parish Council	2	Yes	No	Standard
44	1204085	Maltings Academy	CM8 1EP	South	Yes	Education	1	Yes	No	Poor
45	1203933	New Rickstones Academy	CM8 2SD	South	No	Education	4	No	No	Poor
47	1044537	Notley Green Primary School	CM77 7ZJ	Central	No	Education	2	No	No	Standard
48	1003757	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	Central	Yes	Education	5	Yes	No	Standard
48	1003757	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	Central	Yes	Education	1	No	No	Standard
59	3005164	Southview School	CM8 2TA	South	No	Education	2	No	No	Poor
70	1203920	The Ramsey Academy	CO9 2HR	Rural North	Yes	Education	1	Yes	No	Standard
75	6021212	Witham Sports Ground	CM8 1EP	South	Yes	Council	2	Yes	Yes	Standard
89	-	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	CO5 9SA	Rural North	Yes	Parish Council	1	No	No	Poor

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Indoor provision

Although this report only considers the supply of outdoor netball courts, it is recognised that netball activity also takes place indoors via the use of courts that are marked out in sports halls, especially during winter months. Further information is included in the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy that is being carried out in conjunction with the PPOSS.

Management and security of tenure

Most outdoor netball courts in the Braintree District are operated by education providers, with 24 courts falling under this management type. Of the remaining courts, six are managed by the Council (at Braintree Sport & Health Club, Great Notley Country Park and Witham Sports Ground) and three by parish councils (at John Ray Recreation Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field).

Table 8.4: Courts by management type

Community use	No. of Council courts	No. of parish council courts	No. of education courts
Available	6	3	13
Unavailable	-	-	11
Braintree District	6	3	24

The courts at Braintree Sport & Health Club, Honywood Community Science School and The Ramsey Academy are currently used by the community for netball.

However, none of the clubs using the facilities (Braintree Town Youth NC, Halstead NC and Kelvedon NC) have a long-term lease agreement in place for access the provision, with annual hire agreements instead in place. This means that only a limited security of tenure is provided across the District.

Court type

All but two of the outdoor netball courts in the Braintree District have a macadam surface, with 31 being of this type and 22 (%) of these being available for community use. The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is ten years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels.

The remaining two courts have an artificial surface and are located at Witham Sports Ground.

Sports lighting

Of the 33 outdoor netball courts being provided in the Braintree District, only five (15%) are serviced by sports lighting, with these provided at Braintree Sport & Health Club.

An absence of sports lighting on courts is an issue nationwide, with England Netball's national database (last updated in 2020) identifying that only 1,941 of 5,108 outdoor netball courts are with sports lighting throughout the Country (38%). As this percentage is higher than the level in the Braintree District, it suggests that this could be a particular issue for the District.

A lack of sports lighting presents a key reason as to why many courts are unavailable for community use. Many providers of non-sports lit courts state that making them available would not be financially viable as usage would be significantly limited.

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Over markings

Netball courts, particularly at school sites, are often overmarked, predominately by tennis courts but also on occasion by basketball and/or football courts. Provision such as this tends to receive higher levels of use which can be detrimental to quality over time, as well as potentially causing capacity issues when there is external netball demand.

In the Braintree District, 16 netball courts are overmarked compared to 15 that are dedicated for netball use. This represents a comparatively high number of standalone courts and can be attributed to most of the provision being located at secondary schools where tennis markings are also often provided.

The dedicated netball courts are provided at the following sites:

- ◆ Hedingham School.
- ◆ Honeywood Community Science School.
- ◆ New Rickstones Academy.
- ◆ Notley Green Primary School.
- ◆ Notley Sports Centre.
- ◆ Southview School.
- ◆ Feering Community Centre Playing Field.

Quality

The quality of netball courts has been informed through non-technical site assessments and consultation with providers to assign each court a rating of good, standard or poor. Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness and evidence of inappropriate use such as vandalism and/or littering (for the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2).

Of all courts in the Braintree District, 18 (55%) are assessed as standard quality and 15 (45%) as poor quality. None are rated as good quality. Of those available to the community, 16 are available for community use (88%) are standard quality and six (40%) are poor quality.

Table 8.5: Quality of all courts in the Braintree District

Community use	No. of good quality courts	No of standard quality courts	No. of poor quality courts
Available	-	16	6
Unavailable	-	2	9
Braintree District	-	18	15

The poor quality courts available for community use are found at:

- ◆ Great Notley Country Park.
- ◆ Hedingham School.
- ◆ Maltings Academy.
- ◆ Feering Community Centre Playing Field.

Issues surrounding the poor quality courts include poor grip underfoot, evidence of moss and worn line markings.

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As previously mentioned, Braintree Sport & Health Club, Honywood Community Science School and The Ramsey Academy are currently used for community netball activity, with all the courts assessed as standard quality.

Ancillary provision

Ancillary provision is generally considered to be problematic for community netball. Whilst most sites provide changing facilities and/or toilets, they are not specific for netball and are generally too far away from the courts to be realistically used. Moreover, given that most courts are located at schools, the facilities predominately service sports halls or grass pitches and are therefore not readily available or suited to netball court users. Access can then also be limited, even at sites that allow for community use as this may entail opening the main school buildings.

Braintree Sport & Health Club, Honywood Community Science School and The Ramsey Academy provide changing facilities, although these form part of the School's wider provision and are therefore not specific to the court provision.

8.3: Demand

Demand for outdoor netball tends to come in league and club-based netball that consists of matches and training, as well as additional demand through, for example, England Netball initiatives.

There are three affiliated netball clubs identified as being based in the Braintree District, with this being Braintree Town Youth NC, Halstead NC and Kelevdon NC. However, no formal league caters for the clubs within the District, meaning they compete in Colchester-based and Chelmsford-based competitions within the Colchester Netball League and Chelmsford & District Netball League.

The Colchester Netball League runs an adult and youth league with circa 60 teams in the former and 50 teams in the latter league. All activity is via a central venue format (rather than clubs and teams organising home venues and playing on a home and away basis), with matches taking place at The Gilberd School on Monday evenings.

The Chelmsford & District Netball League is reportedly the largest netball league in the Country, catering for 74 clubs and 122 teams across 13 divisions and with over 1,000 members registered. All activity is via a central venue format (rather than clubs and teams organising home venues and playing on a home and away basis), with matches taking place between four nights a week from Monday to Thursday at Beaulieu Park School.

The Chelmsford & District Junior Netball League is also one of the largest netball leagues in the Country and consists of 10 divisions with a total of 11 clubs and 101 teams playing competitive matches. Matches are held at a central venue (as opposed to teams playing home and away and arranging their own venue) at Beaulieu Park School. All summer fixtures (April to July) are played outdoors, whilst winter activity (September to April) is played indoors.

Club demand

Braintree Town Youth NC has c.145 members and trains on the outdoor courts at Braintree Sport & Health Club on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings. It exports match play demand into Chelmsford and competes in the Chelmsford Junior League.

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Kelvedon NC has c.75 members and runs four senior and four junior teams. It caters for juniors (age 5+) and adults. All training activity takes place on the outdoor courts at Honeywood Community Science School on Wednesday evenings. All its teams compete in the Colchester Netball League at The Gilberd School.

Halstead NC was contacted but declined the opportunity to take part in the study. Desk research suggests that it is based at Ramsey Academy with training taking place on Monday evenings.

Additional demand

England Netball initiatives

There are various England Netball initiatives in operation across England, with this including:

- ◀ Back to Netball.
- ◀ Bee Netball.
- ◀ Netball Now.
- ◀ Walking Netball.

Of these, Walking Netball sessions take place on the outdoor courts in the summer at Alec Hunter Academy on Tuesday evenings and on Sunday mornings at Releet Sports Ground (Braintree Hockey Club). These are also used by Braintree Walking Netball Club. This is a slower version of the sport, designed so that anyone can play regardless of age or fitness level. It can give those who are isolated an outlet, provide an activity for those who do not deem themselves fit enough and offer a stepping-stone for those looking for a pathway back into traditional netball.

No other initiatives are currently taking place in the District.

Commercial leagues

Nationally, there are several commercial netball leagues in operation from suppliers such as Power League and Go Mammoth. These cater for teams outside of the normal club environment on more of a casual/recreational basis, with them generally running all-year round (a new season begins as soon as the previous one ends). In addition to welcoming already established teams, individual players are also encouraged to sign up before being placed within a team that suits their ability.

In the Braintree District, no commercial leagues are in operation. The nearest is found in Colchester at The Gilberd School.

Recreational demand

Consultation with the Council highlight a social league is in operation across the District. Matches take place on Thursday evenings on the courts at Braintree Sport & Health Club with 18 teams playing across three divisions.

Exported/imported demand

As previously referenced, Braintree Town Youth NC, Halstead NC and Kelvedon NC all export match play demand to Colchester and Chelmsford, with no affiliated league structure present within the District. The demand is serviced by the Colchester Netball League and Chelmsford & District Netball League.

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In addition, whilst not quantifiable, it is also likely that other Braintree District residents will be travelling to Colchester and Chelmsford to play for other clubs within the Colchester Netball League, Chelmsford & District Netball League and Chelmsford & District Junior Netball League. This is due to the size of the leagues and the number of teams the leagues cater for.

Latent/unmet demand

The clubs based in the Braintree District do not report any unmet or latent demand, suggesting that they are meeting all interest within current setups.

Notwithstanding the above, the Chelmsford & District Netball League identifies that capacity may become an issue if it continues to grow. This could have a consequential impact on demand emanating from the Braintree District.

Future demand

Both Braintree Town Youth NC and Kelvedon NC reports aspirations to grow in the future; however, it does not quantify this in terms of membership or teams. Both clubs are open to growth, but with no limitations presently identified.

No other future demand is identified, although that is not to say that none exists, particularly given the nearby presence of the Colchester Netball League, Chelmsford & District Netball League and Chelmsford & District Junior Netball League.

8.4: Supply and demand analysis

As there are just three netball clubs with a presence within the Braintree District and limited other netball activity taking place, there is a low level of usage of courts with the District. In part this is due to all affiliated match play demand taking place in neighbouring authorities Chelmsford and Colchester with no league structure directly serving the District. None of the clubs raise this as an issue, with the Colchester Netball League and Chelmsford & District Netball League operating as a central venue operation at The Gilberd School for the former and Beaulieu Park School for the latter.

Where netball activity does take place in the Braintree District, this takes place on outdoor courts at Honeywood Community Science School, Braintree Sport & Health Club and The Ramsey Academy for training sessions for the clubs.

In terms of current stock, the netball courts in the District are sufficient in relation to the level of demand that is taking place. However, some improvements are needed to better the demand and ensure that the sport can continue to grow. This can be achieved via improving quality, particularly at Braintree Sport & Health Club where the provision is assessed as standard quality, where such provision would accommodate and attract greater levels of demand. In addition, increasing the number of courts that are sports-lit and increasing the number of courts that are community accessible is also important.

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8.5: Conclusion

Whilst there is a limited supply of netball provision within the Braintree District, existing demand levels are being adequately serviced (as most of the demand plays outside the District). However, improving the alternative supply in the District and creating additional provision could result in increased demand levels and consequently help the sport grow. This should be further considered alongside the findings of the Chelmsford PPOSS and in partnership with other neighbouring authorities to provide a regional solution to the issues identified.

In addition, the Chelmsford & District Netball League identifies that capacity may become an issue if it continues to grow. This could have a consequential impact on demand emanating from the Braintree District.

Netball – supply and demand summary

- Whilst there is a limited supply of netball provision within the Braintree District, existing demand levels are being adequately serviced. However, improving the alternative supply in the District and creating additional provision could result in increased demand levels and consequently help the sport grow. This should be further considered alongside the findings of the Chelmsford PPOSS and in partnership with neighbouring authorities to provide a regional solution to the issues identified.

Netball – supply summary

- There are 33 netball courts identified in the Braintree District across 14 sites. Of these, 22 are available for community use across 10 sites compared to 11 courts that are unavailable at four sites (all provided at education sites).
- Most outdoor netball courts in the Braintree District are operated by education providers, with 24 courts falling under this management type. Of the remaining courts, six are managed by the Council (at Braintree Sport & Health Club, Great Notley Country Park and Witham Sports Ground) and three by parish councils (at John Ray Recreation Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field).
- A total of three sites; Honywood Community Science School, Braintree Sport & Health Club and The Ramsey Academy are reported as being in use for netball activity across the District.
- All but two of the outdoor netball courts in the Braintree District have a macadam surface, with 31 being of this type and 22 (68%) being available for community use.
- Only five courts are serviced by sports lighting, with these provided at Braintree Sport & Health Club and Witham Sports Ground.
- There are 16 netball courts overmarked (e.g., by tennis courts) compared to 15 that are dedicated for netball use (standalone).
- There are 16 courts assessed as standard quality and 15 as poor quality (none are rated as good quality).

Netball – demand summary

- There are three netball clubs in the Braintree District known as Braintree Youth NC, Halstead NC and Kelvedon NC.
- All affiliated match play demand takes place outside of the Braintree District, in Chelmsford and Colchester via the use of central venues by the Colchester Netball League and Chelmsford & District Netball League (exported demand).

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PART 9: BOWLS

9.1: Introduction

All bowling greens in the Braintree District are flat green bowls (as opposed to crown greens). Bowls England is the NGB responsible for ensuring effective governance of flat green bowls across the Country. Bowls England has recently released a new strategy known as Fit for the Future (2021-26).

Consultation

There are eight bowling clubs in the Braintree District. Of these, six have responded to consultation requests, resulting in a response rate of 75%, as seen below.

Table 9.1: Summary of consultation responses

Club name	Analysis area	Responded?
Braintree BC	Central	Yes
Bocking Alliance BC	Central	Yes
Courtauld Halstead BC	Rural North	No
Castle Hedingham BC	Rural North	Yes
Silver End BC	South	No
Steeple Bumpstead BC	Rural North	Yes
Witham BC	South	Yes
Witham Mill Lane BC	South	Yes

Consultation was undertaken with Hatfield Peverel BC and the Club report it has folded.

9.2: Supply

There are nine flat bowling greens in the Braintree District across the same number of sites. All are available for community use.

The South Analysis Area provides four greens (44%), whilst there are three greens in the Rural North Analysis Area (33%) and the remaining two in the Central Analysis Area (22%).

Table 9.2: Summary of available greens by analysis area

Analysis area	Number of flat greens
Central	2
Rural North	3
South	4
Braintree District	9

Figure 9.1 below highlights the location of all outdoor bowling greens currently servicing the Braintree District. For a key to the map see Table 9.3 overleaf.

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Figure 9.1: Location of bowling greens in the Braintree District



Table 9.3: Key to map

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID ²⁶	Postcode	Analysis area	Users
5	Bocking Sports Club	6017458	CM7 5JY	Central	Bocking Alliance BC
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	1207038	CO9 2ES	Rural North	Courtauld Halstead BC
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	1039912	CM3 2JL	South	-
57	Silver End Village Hall	6012505	CM8 3RQ	South	Silver End BC
94	Braintree Bowling Club	-	CM7 2PA	Central	Braintree BC
95	Castle Hedingham Bowls Club	-	CO9 3HB	Rural North	Castle Hedingham BC

²⁶ Where relevant as bowling greens are not listed on APP.

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Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID ²⁶	Postcode	Analysis area	Users
96	Witham Bowls Club	-	CM8 2DZ	South	Witham BC
103	Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club	-	CB9 7DY	Rural North	Steeple Bumpstead BC
112	Witham Mill Lane Bowls Club	-	CM8 1BW	South	Witham Mill Lane BC

Eight of the nine bowling greens are in use by a club, with the exception for the green at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground. This was previously accessed by Hatfield Peverel BC but the Club has since folded.

Ownership/management

Details around the ownership and management for the bowls clubs in the Braintree District are provided in the table below. As seen, five clubs have freehold of their provision, whilst three have lease arrangements in place. This means security of tenure is provided across the District.

Table 9.4: Ownership/management arrangements for bowling clubs in the Braintree District

Name of club	Ownership/management details
Braintree BC	Club owns the freehold.
Bocking Alliance BC	Club owns the freehold.
Courtauld Halstead BC	Leases the green at Courtauld Sports Ground from the Parish Council
Castle Hedingham BC	Club owns the freehold.
Silver End BC	Leases the green at Silver End Village Hall from the Parish Council.
Steeple Bumpstead BC	Club owns the freehold.
Witham BC	Club owns the freehold.
Witham Mill Lane BC	Leases the green from Witham Town Council.

Sports lighting

Bowling greens that are serviced by sports lighting can enable increased usage, especially during evenings outside of summer months. However, in the Braintree District, no greens have sports lighting. However, bowling greens with sports lighting are somewhat rare across the Country and this is therefore comparable with the national picture.

Quality

The quality of bowling greens across the Braintree District has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◆ Good.
- ◆ Standard.
- ◆ Poor.

For bowling greens, the non-technical assessment considers several attributes of the site including the surrounding hard surfaces to the green, disability access, evenness, grass coverage and signs off unofficial use. For further detail regarding the criteria, please see Appendix 2.

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Of the bowling greens, six (66%) are assessed as good quality and three (33%) as standard quality. None are therefore assessed as poor quality, as summarised site-by-site in the table below.

Table 9.5: Summary of bowling green quality

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality
5	Bocking Sports Club	Central	Good
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Rural North	Standard
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	South	Good
57	Silver End Village Hall	South	Standard
94	Braintree Bowling Club	Central	Good
95	Castle Hedingham Bowls Club	Rural North	Good
96	Witham Bowls Club	South	Good
102	Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club	Rural North	Good
112	Witham Mill Lane Bowls Club	South	Standard

The good quality greens are located at Bocking Sports Club, Keith Bigden Memorial Ground, Braintree Bowling Club, Castle Hedingham Bowls Club, Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club and Witham Bowls Club, whilst the standard quality greens are located at Courtauld Sports Ground, Silver End Village Hall and Witham Mill Lane Bowls Club. Greater signs of wear and tear are present at the standard quality sites as well as some bare patches.

Castle Hedingham BC reports its bowling green is standard quality as it is becoming more difficult and costly to maintain to appropriate levels. In contrast, Braintree BC reports that the quality of its green has improved in recent years due to an enhanced maintenance regime. It states that it has engaged the services of a greenkeeper, which costs covered by existing funds and income from social events, membership fees and member donations.

Braintree BC reports that the quality of its green has improved in recent years due to additional volunteers working on the green and the purchase of a new mower last season.

Witham Mill Lane BC has aspirations for a better watering system and are in the process of applying for grant funding to undertake the works.

Similarly, Bocking Alliance and Steeple Bumpstead bowls clubs report its green has got significantly better over recent years due to an enhanced maintenance regime in place.

Ancillary provision

It is important to recognise the importance of ancillary provision to bowling clubs as, if the facilities onsite are of suitable quantity and quality to meet players' needs, this can help sustain and grow membership levels. This is also acknowledged by Bowls England, which offers potential grants for clubs looking to make ancillary facility improvements.

Across the Braintree District, all clubs report that they are generally satisfied with their current provision. This includes Steeple Bumpstead BC, although the Club plan to refurbish the changing and toilet area of the clubhouse.

Castle Hedingham BC reports its ancillary provision is good quality. It states that it is currently fundraising and applying for grants to replace its perimeter security fencing.

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Witham BC reports its pavilion is standard quality and has numerous plans including improving the energy efficiency of the building and upgrading the changing facilities. The Club would need funding to undertake these works that has not yet been secured.

9.3: Demand

There are eight clubs using bowling greens within the Braintree District. Membership, where known, equates to 469 members, made up of 336 senior men, 127 senior women and six junior members. This is summarised club-by-club in the table below.

Table 9.6: Membership for bowls clubs across the Braintree District

Club	Analysis area	Senior males	Senior females	Juniors	Total
Braintree BC	Central	84	29	3	116
Bocking Alliance BC	Central	63	14	-	77
Courtauld Halstead BC	Rural North	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Castle Hedingham BC	Rural North	48	25	1	74
Silver End BC	South	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Steeple Bumpstead BC	Rural North	42	8	1	51
Witham BC	South	60	40	1	101
Witham Mill Lane BC	South	39	11	-	50
-	Total	336	127	6	469

The largest club is Braintree BC with 116 members, whilst the smallest is Witham Mill Lane BC with 50 members, although this is still relatively high. Average club membership is 58.

By analysis area, the Central Analysis Area provides for the most demand for bowls, equating to 193 members or just over half of the total membership.

Table 9.7: Summary of membership by analysis area

Analysis area	Men's	Women's	Juniors	Total
Central	147	43	3	193
Rural North	90	33	2	125
South	99	51	1	151
Braintree District	336	116	6	469

Participation trends

In line with the national trend of declining membership, Bocking Alliance BC reports that it has experienced a decrease in its membership numbers over recent years. It states that this is due to ageing members.

Although Braintree BC, Castle Hedingham BC and Steeple Bumpstead BC report its senior demand has increased due to an influx of additional players over the last three years.

Additional demand

The green at Courtauld Sports Ground and Witham Mill Lane Bowls Club is available for pay and play, in addition for use by members.

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Notwithstanding the above, none of the clubs report significant uptake and the most state that any pay and play users are generally accompanied by members.

For the remaining clubs, the most prominent reason for pay and play not being offered is that there is no one on site at required times to manage the process. There is also a perceived lack of demand to make it financially viable.

Play Bowls

Play Bowls is a new product designed to assist clubs in attracting more casual, pay and play participants. Clubs are now able to sign up to the scheme, with booking slots for access then able to be secured and paid for via the Play Bowls website. The aim is for this to help the sport become much more accessible whilst making it easy for clubs to evolve and manage the demand from the casual audience.

Every affiliated flat green bowls club is now on the Play-Bowls website (pay-as-you-play).

Bowls Big Weekend

Bowls' Big Weekend gives people across the country the opportunity to play the sport for free in a relaxed, informal setting.

Bowls' Big Weekend takes place on the second bank holiday in May annually (from Friday to Monday). The aim of the weekend allows clubs across the country will open their doors to enable new participants to discover everything that is great about our sociable, accessible sport.

Bowls Bash

To increase participation, Bowls England has recently launched a product known as Bowls Bash. This is an exciting, new form of lawn bowls that is easy to play, shortened and fun for all ages and abilities. The aim is to roll the ball at the Jack; the closer you get, the more points you earn for your team, and bonus points are given for kissing the target. It is normally played in teams of two, with players delivering 30 bowls each per match, and generally lasts an hour.

None of the clubs within the Braintree District have signed up for Bowls Bash as of yet.

Latent/unmet demand

Unmet demand is existing demand at clubs which is not able to access sufficient supply of greens for match play or training. It is usually expressed, for example where a club operates a waiting list.

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision.

All responding clubs in the Braintree District report that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision available to them, and none report having a waiting list in place. As such, no clubs report any latent or unmet demand, with the majority actively trying to recruit new members. This means that it is likely that other barriers are preventing increased participation, rather than a lack of provision or capacity.

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Future demand

Bowls England is actively working to negate the stereotype that bowls is a sport is for the older generation. As such, it is taking active steps at county and national level to encourage younger players to participate. The future growth for the sport is therefore in a state of flux due to the growing professionalism of the NGB.

Using ONS projections, the number of persons aged 65 and over is likely to significantly increase for the period up to 2041 (in line with the Council's Local Plan). Due to this age band being the most likely to play bowls, demand for greens could increase, although exactly to what extent is unclear.

Of responding clubs, three report future demand aspirations, with this equating to an overall growth of 40 members (23 senior and 17 junior). This summarised by club in the following table.

Table 9.8: Summary of future demand

Club	Analysis area	Seniors	Junior
Bocking Alliance BC	Central	10	5
Steeple Bumpstead BC	Rural North	3	2
Witham Mill Lane BC	South	10	10
Braintree District	-	23	17

In addition, Bowls England is actively working to negate the stereotype that bowls is a sport for the older generation and is taking active steps at both county and national level to encourage younger players to participate. This could see the emergence of junior players within the Braintree District that is not accounted for within the above aspirations.

9.4: Supply and demand analysis

The capacity of a bowling green is very much dependent on leagues and the day that they operate, as well as how active the general membership is. The provision is likely to be most heavily used during afternoons and evenings when matches are being played, although many active greens are also used throughout mornings by club members who bowl socially. This can cause issues with access during peak times if membership is particularly high.

Based on the above, Bowls England does not have any specific guidance on bowling green capacity, stating that it can vary from site-to-site and from club-to-club. However, it notes that any green used by at least 20 members is generally considered to be sustainable, whilst any green operating with a membership of over 80 may need additional resource to ensure that it is meeting the required level of demand.

Capacity ratings for bowling greens in the Braintree District is therefore classified as follows:

Within capacity range	Membership ensures green is sustainable without capacity issues
At capacity range	Membership is at the capacity limit of the green
Outside capacity range	Membership is below or above the recommended capacity range

Following this, the table below highlights the level of usage each green in the Braintree District receives, where information is known. Where no membership information is known (i.e., for Silver End BC), further communication is required to fully understand need and any potential capacity or sustainability issues.

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Table 9.9: Supply and demand balance of bowling greens in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site	Club user	Current members	Future demand
5	Bocking Sports Club	Bocking Alliance BC	77	82
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Courtauld Halstead BC	Unknown	Unknown
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	-	-	-
57	Silver End Village Hall	Silver End BC	Unknown	Unknown
94	Braintree Bowling Club	Braintree BC	116	116
95	Castle Hedingham Bowls Club	Castle Hedingham BC	74	74
96	Witham Bowls Club	Witham BC	101	101
102	Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club	Steeple Bumpstead BC	51	51
112	Witham Mill Lane Bowls Club	Witham Mill Lane BC	50	70

The table above shows that Bocking Alliance BC, Castle Hedingham BC, Steeple Bumpstead BC and Witham Mill Lane BC are operating within a 'sustainable' capacity range. However, Braintree BC and Witham BC are running above the recommended capacity limit. That being said, both clubs do not report any usage pressures and states that all demand can be met on its provision.

Clubs with high memberships play both competitive matches and recreational matches throughout a full week to offer something for everyone within their respective membership bases, and to that end, peak time pressures are reduced for this reason.

Those clubs which have a substantial level of demand need to be monitored to ensure they have the appropriate quantity and quality of provision. Bowls England identifies that clubs operating with a membership of over 60 members per green could (but may not) have capacity issues. Emphasis in this regard should therefore be on supporting clubs with aspirations to improve their sites as this will likely improve the capacity for the provision to accommodate increased levels of demand.

9.5: Conclusion

Both current and future demand for bowls in the Braintree District can be met via the existing supply, although monitoring is required in relation to Braintree BC and Witham BC to ensure that this remains the case due to its higher membership levels.

In addition, with no clubs operating with unsustainably low numbers, it is imperative that all four greens are protected for continued bowls activity. The levels of demand recorded could not be condensed onto fewer greens.

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Bowls – supply and demand summary

- Both current and future demand for bowls in the Braintree District can be met via the existing supply, although monitoring is required in relation to Braintree BC and Witham BC to ensure that this remains the case due to its high membership.
- In addition, with no clubs operating with unsustainably low numbers, it is imperative that all four greens are protected for continued bowls activity. The levels of demand recorded could not be condensed onto fewer greens.

Bowls – supply summary

- There are nine flat bowling greens in the Braintree District across the same number of sites. All nine are available for community use. The South Analysis Area provides four greens whilst there are three greens in the Rural North Analysis Area and the remaining two in the Central Analysis Area.
- Most bowling greens are owned and managed by town council/parish council or respective sports club.
- All greens provide security of tenure.
- Six greens are assessed as good quality (66%) and three (33%) as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).

Bowls – demand summary

- There are eight bowling clubs as playing within the Braintree District.
- Membership of the clubs, where known totals 469 members, made up of 336 senior men, 127 senior women and six junior members.
- The largest club is Braintree BC with 116 members, whilst the smallest is Witham Mill Lane BC with 50 members.
- Two greens (Courtauld Sports Ground and Witham Mill Lane BC) are available for pay and play usage, although take up is relatively minimal.
- Three responding clubs report future demand aspirations, with this equating to an overall growth of 40 members (23 senior and 17 junior).

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PART 10: ATHLETICS

10.1: Introduction

England Athletics (EA) is the not-for-profit membership and development body responsible for grassroots athletics and running in England. It currently supports 1,750 affiliated clubs and organisations (covering track and field, road running, fell, hill, trail and cross-country), 147,000 registered athletes, 18,700 licensed coaches and leaders, 3,800 officials and 6.2 million regular running participants.

England Athletics purpose is to inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport. Its vision is for athletics and running to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish.

Consultation

As seen in the table below, all three clubs in the Braintree District have responded to consultation requests, resulting in a 100% response rate, as seen below.

Table 10.1: Summary of athletics consultation

Name of club	Responded?
Braintree & District AC	Yes
Halstead Runners	Yes
Witham Running Club	Yes

10.2: Supply

As set out in the table below, there is one full size purpose-built outdoor athletics track in the Braintree District, located at Braintree Sport & Health Club. The site provides an 8-lane synthetic 400-metre track and is serviced by sports lighting. It also provides for the full complement of field events including throwing cages and jumping pits.

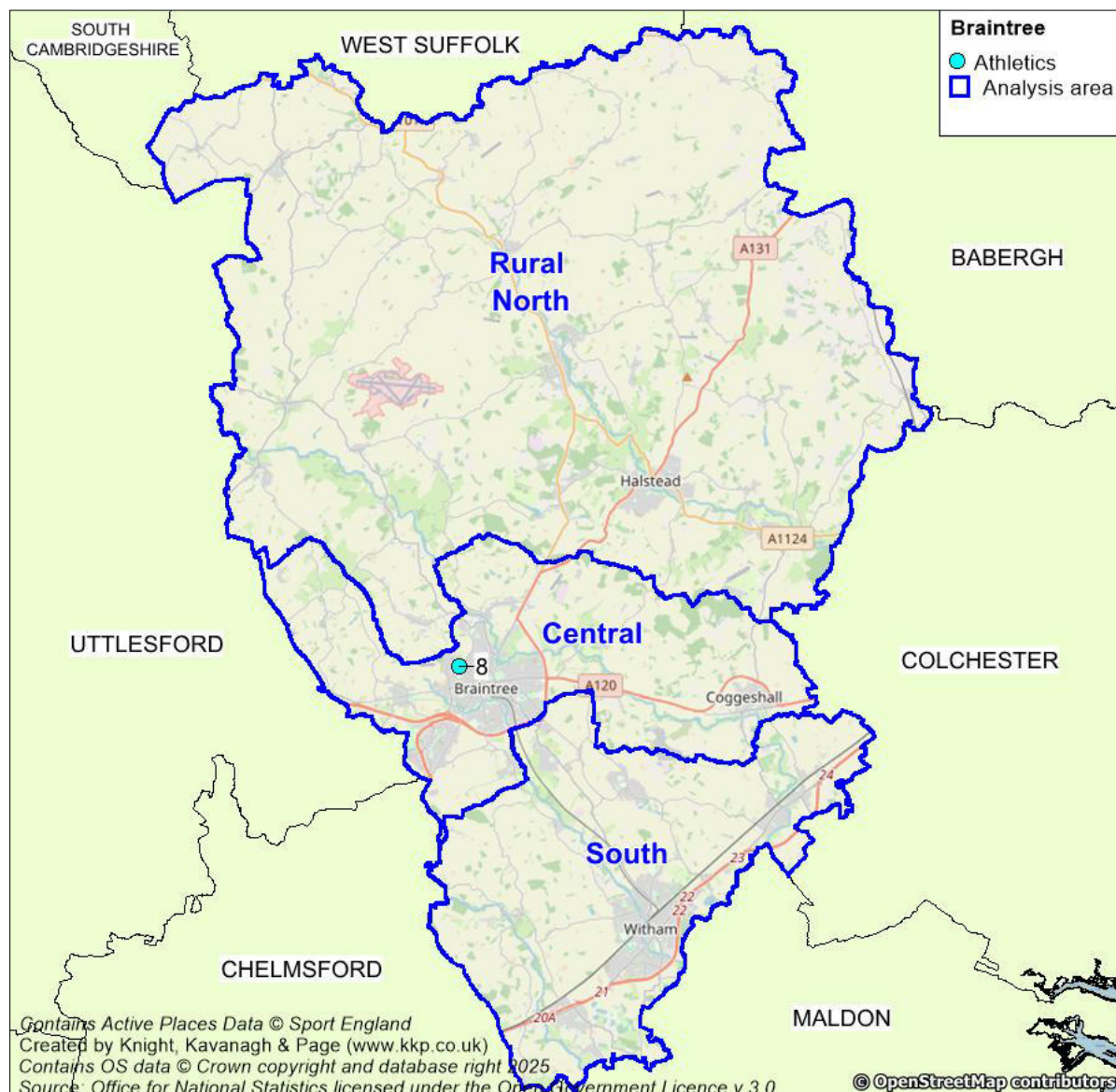
Table 10.2: Summary of outdoor athletics tracks in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Analysis area	Length	Surface type	No. of lanes	Sports lighting?
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	Central	400m	Synthetic	8	Yes

For specific locations of the facility, please see Figure 10.1 below.

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Figure 10.1: Location of athletics tracks in the Braintree District



Management

The outdoor athletics facilities at Braintree Sport & Health Club are owned and managed by Freedom Leisure (on behalf of the Council). As such, it is fully available for community use.

Quality

The quality of the athletics facilities at Braintree Sport & Health Club has been assessed via a combination of site visits using non-technical assessments and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed quality rating. Key factors which impact on the quality rating include the condition and age of the track surface, prominence of line markings and any signs of wear and tear or unofficial use (for the full site assessment criteria, please see Appendix 2).

The provision at Braintree Sport & Health Club is assessed as standard quality, primarily due to the age of the surface and some signs of wear and tear evident as well as faded line markings noted.

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TrackMark

TrackMark is UK Athletics' quality assurance scheme for outdoor track and field athletics facilities. A venue that achieves TrackMark is recognised by UK Athletics as having well managed, compliant facilities that are accessible to participants of all abilities.

Braintree Sport & Health Club is TrackMark accredited until September 2026. At which point, the track will require a respray/full resurface.

Ancillary provision

There are no issues specifically raised regarding the quality or accessibility of ancillary provision through consultation or non-technical site assessments at Braintree Sport & Health Club.

10.3: Demand

For the purposes of this study, athletics demand is considered to come in various forms, rather than just traditional track and field activity. As such, running clubs are also considered, as are organised running events and various running initiatives, some of which are governed by England Athletics. It is also acknowledged that recreational running forms a large part of demand, although this is difficult to measure.

Club demand

Braintree and District AC is a large athletics club based at Braintree Sport & Health Club. It reports it currently caters for men, women, boys and girls of all ages within amateur athletics and has a membership totalling 280 people. Broken down, this equates to 63 senior male, 58 senior female and 159 junior members. It also states that it currently has a waiting list in place of circa 30 people. The Club cites this is due to a lack of coaches and volunteers which is limiting its growth.

The Club accesses Braintree Sport & Health Club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings for training sessions via a rental agreement which is secured on an annual basis. In addition, it competes in a range of competitions and leagues meaning it also has requirements to utilise the facility on weekends.

Members compete in track and field leagues such as the Southern Athletics League and the UK Youth Development League. In addition, various cross-country and road running leagues are accessed as well as county, area and national championships.

Halstead Running Club is a road running club. It currently has 80 senior males and 60 senior females and is based at Courtauld Sports Ground as a meeting point and primarily utilises the local road network for training activity. In addition, it accesses the track at Braintree Sport & Health Club on a weekly basis between September and April.

Witham Running has 133 senior males, 68 senior females and one junior member. It uses Maltings Academy and New Rickstones Academy as a meeting point and utilises the local road network. The Club states it would like access to a running facility within Witham as the track at Braintree Sport & Health Club is fully booked. This would mean the Club could potentially grow the club including the junior section.

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Run Together

Run Together²⁷ is an official England Athletics recreational running project which aims to get the whole nation running. Its aim is to provide fun, friendly, supportive, and inclusive running opportunities for everyone, regardless of ability and availability. It believes that running is more fun and easier to become part of a lifestyle when shared with others.

There are currently no Run Together groups in the Braintree District. However, a key focus for England Athletics is increasing demand for participation in initiatives such as Run Together, meaning this could be targeted moving forward.

Parkrun

Parkrun is a series of 5k runs held on Saturday mornings in areas of open space around the UK, with 1,063 events now operating across the country. They are open to all, free, and are safe and easy to take part in. Runners must first register online to access a printed barcode which gives them access to all Parkrun events.

There is currently one Parkrun event held weekly in the Braintree District. This is operated at Great Notley Country Park, with 519 events held so far. It has attracted 102,673 unique finishers.

Couch to 5k

Couch to 5k is a national health initiative promoted by the National Health Service (NHS) to encourage absolute beginners get into running as part of establishing and maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle including regular exercise.

The plan consists of three runs per week and a day of rest in between, with a different schedule for each of the nine weeks to completion. It starts with a mix of running and walking, to gradually build up fitness and stamina, to create realistic expectations and a sense of achievability to encourage participants to stick with it. The end goal of the plan is for the participant to be able to run 5k.

Through the Couch to 5k plan the NHS particularly promotes the health benefits of running and regular exercise which underpin the initiative, such as improved heart and lung health, weight loss and possible increases in bone density which can help protect against bone diseases such as osteoporosis. This also includes mental benefits of running through goal setting and challenge setting, which can help boost confidence and self-belief. Furthermore, running regularly has been linked to combating depression.

It is believed that an increase in people running through the Couch to 5k plan may increase interest and possibly have a knock-on effect of leading to increased demand at running groups and clubs as people may wish to continue developing their running further.

Whilst no data is available in relation to take up of the Couch to 5k initiative in the Braintree District, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is popular and also growing in popularity. It is also championed by clubs in the District.

²⁷ <https://runtogether.co.uk/>

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Latent/unmet demand

In addition, as mentioned above, Braintree & District AC has a waiting list in place, with the club indicating that circa 30 people on the list. The Club cites this is due to a lack of coaches and volunteers which is limiting its growth. This is categorised as latent demand.

Of the remaining clubs, none express latent or unmet demand, with no waiting lists in place and each club open to new members. This suggests that anyone wanting to participate can do so via the clubs and facilities that are in place. It is therefore likely that other barriers are preventing participation, rather than provision or a lack of capacity.

Exported/imported demand

None of the clubs identify any exported or imported demand. However, as referenced previously, it is likely that there will be some degree of exported athletics demand from the Braintree District in order to access dedicated track and field provision outside of the District. This will likely be via host clubs.

Future demand

All clubs consulted with express an aspiration to grow membership, although the majority state that this is difficult to quantify as they will do their utmost not turn demand away. This includes Braintree & District AC, which indicate plans to increase demand despite not currently being able to achieve this due to a waiting list.

England Athletics also believes that demand for initiatives such as Park Run is likely to continue to increase in the future, although again to what extent is difficult to quantify.

10.4: Supply and demand analysis

With one dedicated athletics facility in the Braintree District, that being a standard quality track at Braintree Sport & Health Club, supply is generally sufficient to meet the identified demand in the District. This includes accommodating Braintree & District AC with a waiting list of 30 people as this is due to a lack of coaches and volunteers as opposed to relating to facility need or capacity.

However, there is also some level of qualitative improvement needed at Braintree Sport & Health Club. This is especially in regard to the surface of the track, which will require a resurface by 2026 (when its Track Mark accreditation expires).

The creation of an additional formal facility could be considered given the number of housing developments to be built over the next few years, EA support the development of a new generation of innovative athletics & running facilities (NewGen), as well as a country-wide network of indoor athletics facilities developed as part of future indoor multisport projects.

10.5: Conclusion

The Braintree District has one, standard quality 400 metre athletics track and it can be determined that the site currently accommodates the existing levels of demand (albeit the Club is significantly sized with membership of 280). However, given the standard quality rating relating to the TrackMark accreditation, which is due to expire in 2026, resurfacing of the track should be a priority to ensure continued usage of the track.

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As the track at Braintree Sport & Health Club is the only dedicated athletic facility within the District and serves a wider authority demand, consideration could also be given to the development of additional track provision, such as play, compact, mini, or active tracks, to enhance accessibility and participation in athletics. This will be further explored in the Strategy & Action Plan.

Away from track and field activity, emphasis should be placed on supporting the other activities taking place in the Braintree District, with a focus on retaining and increasing participation and growing the various initiatives that exist. This, however, does not require dedicated provision.

Athletics – supply and demand summary

- ▶ The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet current demand.
- ▶ Braintree & District AC has a waiting list of 30 members. The Club cites this is due to a lack of coaches and volunteers which is limiting its growth.
- ▶ As well as some level of qualitative improvement is needed at Braintree Sport & Health Club. This is especially in regard to the surface of the track, which will require a resurface by 2026 (when its Track Mark accreditation expires).

Athletics – supply summary

- ▶ In the Braintree District, there is one full size purpose built outdoor athletics track provided located at Braintree Sport & Health Club.
- ▶ The track at Braintree Sport & Health Club is owned and managed by Freedom Leisure (on behalf of the Council). As such, it is fully available for community use.
- ▶ The provision at Braintree Sport & Health Club is assessed as standard quality, primarily due to the age of the surface and some signs of wear and tear evident as well as faded line markings noted.
- ▶ Braintree Sport & Health Club has UKA TrackMark accreditation until September 2026. At which point, the track will require a respray/full resurface.

Athletics – demand summary

- ▶ There are three clubs in the Braintree District affiliated to England Athletics, both of which are running clubs.
- ▶ Braintree and District AC is a large athletics club based at Braintree Sport & Health Club. It has a membership totalling 280 people. It states that it currently has a waiting list in place of circa 30 people. The Club accesses Braintree Sport & Health Club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings for training sessions via a rental agreement which is secured on an annual basis. In addition, it competes in a range of competitions and leagues meaning it also has requirements to utilise the facility on weekends.
- ▶ Halstead Running Club is a road running club. It currently has 80 senior males and 60 senior females and is based at Courtauld Sports Ground as a meeting point and primarily utilises the local road network for training activity. In addition, it accesses the track at Braintree Sport & Health Club on a weekly basis between September and April.
- ▶ Witham Running has 133 senior males, 68 senior females and one junior member. It uses Maltings Academy and New Rickstones Academy as a meeting point and utilises the local road network.
- ▶ There is one Park Run event in the Braintree District held on a weekly basis, with this located at Great Notley Country Park.
- ▶ Future growth aspirations are identified by both running clubs and England Athletics, although this is not quantified and does not account for any track and field demand.

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PART 11: GOLF

11.1: Introduction

Golf is the fifth largest participation sport in England, with around 730,000 members belonging to 1,750 affiliated clubs and a further two million people playing independently outside of club membership. There are an estimated 3,000 golf courses across the Country, with approximately 90 designated as sites of special scientific interest because apart from the intensively managed trees and greens they have other habitats with high wildlife value. Many other courses also exist within designated heritage coast sites, areas of outstanding natural beauty, or listed historic parklands.

Nationally, the sport is governed by England Golf. Its role includes providing competitions for players of all ages and abilities, identifying and developing the most talented golfers, maintaining a uniform system of handicapping, administering and applying the rules, and introducing new golfers via its initiatives such as 'Get into Golf'. The core source of funding for England Golf comes from members of affiliated golf clubs who pay an annual fee to their club, with this collected and returned through county bodies.

England Golf's "The Course Planner" sets out its strategic direction to 2025 and aims to re-focus priorities, energy, and passion on key areas to help widen golf's appeal, highlighting the sport as more inclusive and accessible than ever. It also utilises "18 Tee Shots to Success" which are designed to best position growth in the game.

Consultation

This section has been informed via consultation with England Golf, which provided information relating to all facilities and clubs in the Braintree District.

11.2: Supply

The three different types of golf facilities recognised by Sport England and governed by England Golf are defined in the table below. Pitch and putt courses and miniature/crazy golf courses are not included as these are not considered to be traditional formats of the game and are not comparable offerings, although it is recognised that they can complement the more traditional offerings and act as a gateway for increased participation.

Table 11.1: Definitions of golf facilities

Facility type	Description
Standard	A standard par course, with a minimum of 9 holes but normally associated with 18-hole courses; many 9-hole courses have different tee boxes which allow the provision to be played as an 18-hole course. Some courses provide 27 holes, with any two loops of 9-holes played to make up an 18-hole round.
Par 3	Shorter length of holes than a standard course, with no hole longer than Par 3. Most likely to be a 9-hole course although 18-hole offerings do exist. Does not include pitch and putt courses, which are even shorter offerings and are not considered to be a traditional version of the sport.
Driving Range	Includes covered and uncovered driving range bays but not practice areas within golf courses; ranges are based on the hiring of balls, with users not required to retrieve, whereas practice areas are generally for members to use with their own balls (although a growing number have dispensers). Does not include 'entertainment' ranges or virtual offerings, although some driving ranges have expanded to also provide these features.

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In the Braintree District, eight golf sites provide facilities conforming with the above definitions. These are identified in Table 11.2 and Figure 11.1 below. Four in the Rural North Analysis Area, three in the South Analysis Area and one in the Central Analysis Area.

Table 11.2: Golf facilities within the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Postcode	Analysis area
93	The Essex Golf & Country Club	-	CO6 2NS	Rural North
104	Braintree Golf Club	-	CM77 8DD	Central
105	Colne Valley Golf Club	-	CO6 2LT	Rural North
106	Gosfield Lake Golf Club	-	CO9 1SE	Rural North
107	Haverhill Golf Club	-	CB9 7UW	Rural North
108	Benton Hall Golf & Country Club	-	CM8 3LH	South
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	-	CM8 2FX	South
110	The Notleys Golf Club	-	CM8 1ST	South

Figure 11.1: Location of golf courses in the Braintree District



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Standard hole golf courses

All of the golf sites in the Braintree District provide one standard hole course. Eight of these (The Essex Golf & Country Club, Braintree Golf Club, Colne Valley Golf Club, Gosfield Lake Golf Club, Haverhill Golf Club, Benton Hall Golf & Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club) provide one 18-hole course, whilst the remaining one (Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre) provide one 9-hole course. These are summarised by site in following table.

Table 11.3: Summary of standard hole provision

Site ID	Site name	Holes	Par	Yardage ²⁸			Slope rating
93	The Essex Golf & Country Club	18	73	6,965	6,629	6,026	127-129
104	Braintree Golf Club	18	70	6,192	5,898	5,608	121-128
105	Colne Valley Golf Club	18	70	6,316	5,950	5,303	127-131
106	Gosfield Lake Golf Club	18	73	6,537	6,131	5,770	113-128
107	Haverhill Golf Club	18	70	5,795	5,659	5,295	109-124
108	Benton Hall Golf & Country Club	18	72	6,461	5,954	5,638	137
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	9	36	3,103	2,914	-	125-129
110	The Notleys Golf Club	18	71	6,116	5,635	4,862	105-120

All the 18-hole courses are relatively similar in length and are within the range of what you would expect from traditional provision. The longest course is found at The Essex Golf & Country Club (6,965 yards), whilst the shortest is Haverhill Golf Club (5,795 yards).

Nationally, many 9-hole courses are shorter than the front or back nine of an 18-hole course, primarily to attract and cater for a different userbase. In the Braintree District, this is the case at Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre.

Slope ratings

Slope ratings are relatively new to golf across the World. The intention is for them to allow the handicap system to reflect course difficulty and the difference in difficulty for all players compared to scratch golfers. In effect, this enables each player to have a handicap that will vary from course-to-course, depending on difficulty, as well as a general handicap.

The maximum slope rating is 155, whereas the minimum is 55. The standard difficulty is considered to be 113, which means that the courses in the Braintree District are generally considered to be more difficult than the mean, with them collectively ranging from 105-131 (the slope rating varies depending on which tee is used).

Par 3 golf holes

Most commonly, Par 3 provision is used by beginner and casual players, although they are also frequented by more traditional golfers wanting to practice their short game, particularly when accompanying a standard hole course. There are three dedicated Par 3 courses in the Braintree District, located at Benton Hall Golf & Country Club, Gosfield Lakes Golf Club and Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre. As is common, these provide nine holes each.

²⁸ White denotes Championship tees, yellow denotes men's tees and red denotes ladies' tees.

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Table 11.4: Summary of Par 3 provision in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Holes	Par	Yardage
106	Gosfield Lake Golf Club	Rural North	9	27	-
108	Benton Hall Golf & Country Club	South	9	27	885
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	South	9	27	3,155

Given that all of the sites with Par 3 courses also provide standard hole offerings, the provision is considered to be supplementary. As such, there are no dedicated Par 3 venues in the Braintree District.

Driving range bays

Three sites in the Braintree District supply a traditional driving range in addition to their courses. There are 23 bays provided at The Essex Golf & Country Club, 15 bays at Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre and six bays provided at The Notleys Golf Club. Of these, the provision at Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre and The Notleys Golf Club is available for pay and play and serviced by sports lighting (The Essex Golf & Country Club is reserved for members and serviced by sports lighting).

Table 11.5: Summary of driving range bays within the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	No. of bays	Sports lighting?	Pay and play?
93	The Essex Golf & Country Club	23	Yes	No
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	15	Yes	Yes
110	The Notleys Golf Club	6	Yes	Yes

Nationally, many driving range providers are updating their facilities with modern technology in a bid to increase demand, such as through the installation of automatic tees or via entertainment systems such as TopTracer and FlightScope. In the Braintree District, this is the case at The Essex Golf & Country Club. Where installed, it can allow for users to simulate playing on courses across the world and provides ball tracking and statistical feedback.

Management and ownership

There are three main types of ownership and management models of golf facilities in England; members clubs, proprietary clubs, and municipal facilities. These are as summarised in the table below.

Table 11.6: Types of ownership and management of golf facilities

Management type	Description
Members	Traditionally owned by members and run by committees. They are likely to hire caterers and green staff. Most members' clubs offer some level of pay and play and encourage golf societies but are mostly focused on membership numbers.
Proprietary	Owned or managed by businesses or individuals, these can include country club type facilities at the high end of the golfing market alongside more localised facilities. Many have clubs operating within them but can also take a much more relaxed attitude to dress and traditions of golf. Pay and play opportunities tend to be a key feature of the business plan.

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Management type	Description
Municipal	These are generally owned by a local authority, although in a growing number of instances, management has been contracted and externalised to private companies. Due to a lack of financial viability, many have closed across the Country in recent years and many that remain are under threat.

It is recognised that members clubs and visitors to such clubs are normally expected to dress appropriately, have a registered handicap certificate (a certificate issued by the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU)) and be familiar with the rules and etiquette of the game. This is not uncommon at some proprietary clubs, but municipal courses tend to be more relaxed and do not require people to have handicaps, making golf much more accessible.

Consequently, municipal courses are, in many instances, seen as entry level facilities, with players using them before having the confidence to move on to a members' or high-end proprietary club (although many people can and do stay attached to a particular course). They also tend to offer a more affordable golfing experience.

The business model for members clubs tends to rely heavily on income through membership subscriptions and use of ancillary facilities, rather than from pay and play usage, although attention has somewhat switched at many sites in recent years due to demand falling. The same can be said for some proprietary clubs, although, in general, more emphasis is placed on supplementing regular activity with green fee sales. Conversely, municipal sites have always been heavily reliant on visitors even though membership packages are normally available (often in the shape of season tickets). On occasion, these can be linked to access to other local authority operated sports facilities, such as leisure centres and swimming pools.

Despite the above generalisations, each golf facility, regardless of management type, will have its own processes in terms of how much focus is placed on membership and pay and play usage, or whether it equally encourages both. There is no correct way to run a site. A club that focuses on members has guaranteed income, but this can often deter more casual players or nomadic golfers through, for example, a lack of peak time availability. In contrast, a site that depends on visitors can struggle to be viable if there are spells of inclement weather during summer months and can discourage people that want to be part of a club environment. On the other hand, more income can be brought in through regular users compared to what would be the case had they been part of a membership scheme.

In the Braintree District, there are two members clubs, with these provided at Braintree Golf Club and Haverhill Golf Club. The remaining sites are managed as proprietary venues, meaning no municipal provision is in place.

Table 11.7: Summary of management in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Management type
93	The Essex Golf & Country Club	Proprietary
104	Braintree Golf Club	Members
105	Colne Valley Golf Club	Proprietary
106	Gosfield Lake Golf Club	Proprietary
107	Haverhill Golf Club	Members
108	Benton Hall Golf & Country Club	Proprietary
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	Proprietary
110	The Notleys Golf Club	Proprietary

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Pricing

A key issue for the wider golf population is whether golf courses are available to the general population at a price point which is accessible to most residents. Better quality courses tend to cost more to use, whilst 18-hole provision is generally more expensive to access than 9-hole provision.

Nationally, over the past decade, many facilities have altered their pricing structure to allow for discounts following a previous decline in golf membership. England Golf positively encouraged this and continues to do so as its view is that clubs are more likely to experience growth when flexible packages are available. For instance, five and/or six day memberships are now common (whereby members can access a course on specific days but not on one or both weekend days), whilst discounts are regularly in place that are no longer limited solely to junior players (e.g. discounts for those aged 18-21 and 21-30 or for those aged 65 and over).

In the past, it was very common for many clubs to have waiting lists in place for membership, but this has become rarer in the present day. That being said, a rise in demand following the Covid-19 pandemic has tested this and resulted in increased capacity pressures, with a third of clubs now thought to have waiting times before new members can join.

In terms of membership pricing, England Golf reports that the average cost of a full adult membership across the Country is currently £1,071 per year. In the Braintree District, average membership fees, where known, are slightly under this, equating to £1,239 per year. However, Braintree Golf Club, The Essex Golf & Country Club, Colne Valley Golf Club and Benton Hall Golf & Country Club has considerably higher fees.

Conversely, The Notleys Golf Club, Haverhill Golf Club, Gosfield Lake Golf Club and Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre operate below the national average, and significantly so in the case of The Notleys Golf Club.

In addition to membership, green fees for pay and play users are available at each site within the Braintree District. For this, the cheapest site is Benton Hall Golf & Country Club, whereas Braintree Golf Club is the most expensive (£60 on weekdays and £75 at weekends).

Table 11.8: Pricing structures at golf facilities in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Joining fee	Full membership (per year)	Weekday green fee	Weekend green fee
93	The Essex Golf & Country Club	-	£1,306	£40	£50
104	Braintree Golf Club	-	£1,585	£60	£75
105	Colne Valley Golf Club	-	£1,350	£50	£60
106	Gosfield Lake Golf Club	-	£1,100	£55	£65
107	Haverhill Golf Club	-	£1,040	£55	£65
108	Benton Hall Golf & Country Club	-	£1,494	£15	£17
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	-	£876	£22	£28
110	The Notleys Golf Club	-	£799	£22	£30

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Quality

There are no official national or county golf facility rankings. Generally, the better course quality and supporting infrastructure is, the higher the joining/membership and green fees are likely to be. Some sites gain status through hosting county, national and international golf events and some tend to feature in ranking articles put together by golf magazines.

In terms of quality of the golf courses within the Braintree District, it is generally good across the District, with no significant issues identified, especially at higher end sites such as The Essex Golf & Country Club and Benton Hall Golf & Country Club. It is generally worse at sites such as, where the maintenance regime is less sophisticated, but this would be expected given its lower price point and likely target market.

The ancillary facilities are also for the most part good across the Braintree District, particularly given that some sites are part of wider complexes that includes, for example, hotels, bars, restaurants and gyms e.g., The Essex Golf & Country Club and Benton Hall Golf & Country Club. Many also double up as function venues for supplementary income, such as through weddings, which can provide a much-needed revenue source.

11.3: Demand

The following section examines current demand for golf in the Braintree District as well as recent trends and potential future demand. Nationally, there has been a recent growth in golf demand, particularly following Covid-19 where the sport benefitted from being one of the first activities allowed to take place. Prior to this, participation in golf had generally been in decline, although the reduction had been levelling off. Priority is now on trying to retain the increases that have been experienced.

Membership

England Golf reports that the average membership of a golf club nationally is 407, with this being based on its central national handicap platform. In the Braintree District, the current average across the sites providing courses is 586, suggesting that demand is higher than national rates (data by club is not available as this is considered to be commercially sensitive information).

It should be noted that whilst some clubs will operate below the national average, this does not necessarily indicate insufficient levels in demand. In fact, this could simply mean there is a particular emphasis on pay and play use, or it will take account of 9-hole courses having less capacity than 18-hole courses. For sites with 18-hole courses that have an emphasis on membership, it is expected that most if not all will have a membership that is higher than average.

Where demand is especially low, England Golf can assist in this regard, primarily through a variety of tools that can be used to better understand the local market. There may also be opportunities for some clubs across the area to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways where appropriate to collectively cater for all types of players.

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Membership trends

In line with a national trend of increasing membership, demand across the Braintree District has increased since 2018, with this incorporating the impact of Covid-19 (data from 2019-2021 is not available). Prior to this, levels had been decreasing since 2015, with a small decrease also seen since 2022 albeit this is minimal and shows that growth is close to being sustained.

Table 11.9: Changes in demand since 2015

2015	2016	2017	2018	2022	2023	2024	2025
368	344	402	369	574	591	601	586

Pay and play

Whilst pay and play usage has generally increased across England in recent years, usage figures at the sites within the Braintree District is not known as it is not something that is tracked by England Golf or disclosed by operators due to commercial sensitivity. However, it would be expected that demand would be higher at the propriety courses due to the other on-site amenities and the operational structures in place. In contrast, it will be lower at sites such as Braintree Golf Club and Haverhill Golf Club given that they are more focused on members.

If facilities with low membership numbers do not have high green fee demand, long-term viability is questionable. Attracting pay and play usage is key to the business model and sustainability of such sites.

Exported/imported demand

Cross-boundary demand for golf is common nationally due to the nature of the sport. Golfers do not necessarily recognise local authority borders, and many will choose a facility for a whole range of reasons other than where it is located, with factors including quality, availability, cost and where friends/family play. This can be especially pronounced at venues located close to neighbouring authorities and if there is a comparative lack of provision within those authorities.

Notwithstanding the above, exported and imported demand for golf is difficult to track as users are more likely to travel when compared to most other sports in order to gain access to facilities that best suit their needs (e.g., in terms of quality or cost). However, levels into Braintree District are expected to be higher than what would ordinarily be expected given the number and variety of sites that are within the District, especially comparative to its size/population. This will then be amplified by lower levels of provision in neighbouring authorities such as Chelmsford and Colchester (see supply and demand analysis).

Unmet demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to golf facilities. This could be reflected via a waiting list at a club, although it is likely that people on a waiting list are still playing golf elsewhere due to quantity of facilities in the area, either via membership of another club or through pay and play access. As a result, such unmet demand in the Braintree District is considered to be relatively minimal, especially given that all sites are seemingly open to additional members and are actively advertising.

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Unmet demand could also be expressed if there is a lack of provision to meet a particular golfing market. However, this is also less likely to be the case in the Braintree District given the variety of provision on offer, with multiple 18-hole, 9-hole and driving ranges provided.

Latent demand

Latent demand is demand for golf that is not currently being realised. This could be for numerous reasons, such as time constraints, financial reasons and a lack of suitable, available provision. To that end, England Golf has a mapping tool that enables an assessment of potential demand within a 20-minute drive time of each golf facility (which is considered to be a reasonable travel distance). This is based on research undertaken that identifies that 24% of adults in England are potential players, amounting to circa 9.6 million people and equating to 9% current players, 8% lapsed (former) players and 7% latent players. It can be used by providers to identify what demand may exist for their facilities, thus helping inform marketing, development and investment decisions.

Using the tool across the Braintree District, Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre is identified as having the largest latent demand, with 45,441 potential players. In comparison, Colne Valley Golf Club is identified as having the smallest potential demand, equating to 21,426 people.

The tool also breaks the potential playing population down into nine golfing segments, with these defined to help provide an indication as to what type of golfing offer each would be most likely to access. They are:

- ◆ Relaxed members.
- ◆ Older traditionalists.
- ◆ Younger traditionalists.
- ◆ Younger fanatics.
- ◆ Younger actives.
- ◆ Late enthusiasts.
- ◆ Occasional time pressed.
- ◆ Social couples.
- ◆ Casual fun.

The demand for each of the sites in the Braintree District is relatively evenly split across the nine segments. The highest demand is from “Relaxed Members” (3,471 people), whilst the lowest is from “Older Traditionalists” (3,121 people).

Whilst the reasoning for the latent demand is unknown and likely to be varied, the data does show relatively high demand which would significantly increase membership and/or pay and play usage across facilities if realised. England Golf is supportive of sites that proactively target new audiences in an attempt to tap into such demand i.e., through developing a variety of golfing offers, coaching programmes and a range of membership options.

Future demand

England Golf has an aim to increase membership of clubs nationally; however, after reaching its previous target, it no longer has a fixed goal in terms of growth. Nationally, many sites, especially the most established ones, will be happy to retain current demand levels, whilst others will be open to growing and some considerably so. In that regard, England Golf reports that many providers are proactively targeting new audiences through coaching programmes and a wider range of membership and playing options.

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In the Braintree District, each facility will have different aspirations in terms of future levels of demand. Nevertheless, with membership across the District already significantly higher than the national average, capacity to accommodate significant growth could be questionable, despite no restrictions currently being in place.

11.4: Supply and demand analysis

Nationally, England Golf utilises a figure of 3.5 million people that are considered to be regular golfers, with this defined as those that have played on a standard-length course at least twice within the last 12 months. Using this, it is able to indicate how much demand exists per facility within a catchment area before then comparing this to a national benchmark.

Within the formula, it calculates the participation number in an area by establishing what proportion of the population is likely to be golfers, which can then be used to determine the number of participants per facility. This can then be compared to the national rate, with an index created for comparison purposes. Using 100 as the average, anything below this suggests that an area has either low demand or a high facility count, whereas anything above provides evidence that an area has high demand and/or a low level of provision. The calculations for the catchment area for the Braintree District can be seen via the image below, as provided by England Golf.

Figure 11.2: Regular golfer demand index calculations for the Braintree District



As shown, the index rating for the catchment area is 65, which is below the national benchmark (100). This therefore indicates that demand is likely to be low in comparison to the number of courses available and that supply is consequently likely to be sufficient to meet demand.

Based on the above, it is considered that the golf supply in the Braintree District is adequate, particularly given that it is not just quantity levels that are high but also that there is a good variety of facilities on offer. However, it must be noted that membership levels are above the national average, which suggests that all provision requires protection as any losses would further increase capacity pressures. This high demand in comparison to the supply goes against England Golf's analysis tool, which likely means that there is significant imported demand into the Braintree District and a lack of supply in the wider region.

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11.5: Conclusion

The existing supply of golf provision in the Braintree District is sufficient to meet demand levels, with a large quantity of facilities provided that collectively offers good variety to ensure that all golfers can be catered for. However, demand is also high, particularly when accounting for needs from the wider region, which means that all existing provision needs to be protected.

Golf – supply and demand summary

- ▶ The existing supply of golf provision in the Braintree District is sufficient to meet demand levels, with a large quantity of facilities provided that collectively offers good variety to ensure that all golfers can be catered for.
- ▶ As demand levels are also high, particularly when accounting for needs from the wider region, all existing provision needs to be protected.

Golf – supply summary

- ▶ There are currently eight golf sites in operation in the Braintree District.
- ▶ Seven of the sites provide one 18-hole course each, whilst one provides one 9-hole course each.
- ▶ Three sites have a Par 3 course in addition to their standard hole offerings.
- ▶ Three sites supply a traditional driving range, with three available to the community and sports-lit.
- ▶ Of the sites, there are two members clubs (Braintree Golf Club and Haverhill Golf Club), whilst the remainder operate as proprietary venues.
- ▶ Average membership fees, where known, are slightly below the national average, although each site with an 18-hole course is in excess of this.
- ▶ Quality across the sites is good, with no issues reported.

Golf – demand summary

- ▶ The current average membership across the golf sites in the Braintree District is 586, suggesting that demand is higher than national rates (the average is 407).
- ▶ In line with a national trend of increasing membership, demand across the Braintree District has increased since 2018, despite a small reduction from 2022 data.
- ▶ Whilst pay and play usage is not known, it would be expected that demand would be higher at the propriety courses due to other on-site amenities and the operational structures in place.
- ▶ Imported demand into the Braintree District is expected to be higher than what would ordinarily be expected given the number and mix of sites that are within the District and with shortfalls existing in neighbouring authorities.
- ▶ Unmet demand is seemingly low, with no sites operating a waiting list and with active advertising ongoing.
- ▶ Using an England Golf tool, latent demand is seemingly high, with Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre identified as having the largest levels of potential demand.

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PART 12: CYCLING AND BMX

12.1: Introduction

British Cycling is the NGB for all forms of cycling. It oversees six sporting disciplines, with each having a dedicated facility type:

- ◆ Track cycling – velodromes.
- ◆ Road cycling – closed road circuits.
- ◆ Mountain biking – trails.
- ◆ BMX racing – race/pump tracks.
- ◆ Cycle speedway – cycle speedway tracks.
- ◆ Cyclocross – non-dedicated, non-permanent venues.

British Cycling aids in the development of all six formats, helping to safeguard those that wish to participate in a competitive and compelling environment. The popularity of cycling has increased since recent, elite sporting success in the Olympics and Paralympics as well as in other major championships.

BMX Freestyle is a particular growth discipline, which featured in the Olympic Games for the first time in Tokyo 2020 and will feature again in Paris 2024. BMX Freestyle is based around riders performing routines which consist of sequences of executing tricks. It can be carried out in various settings such as flat ground, urban street settings, on dirt jumps, and on halfpipes/constructed ramps. In competition, riders are judged on quality of their performance (difficulty, originality and style). BMX Freestyle tends to appeal to young people in particular and engage with a broad a diverse audience interested in lifestyle, non-traditional sports, and urban and street culture.

Consultation

Information for cycling was gathered through online research and via consultation with the affiliated clubs and British Cycling.

12.2: Supply

In the Braintree District, there are two BMX pump tracks, with these located at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) and Rayne Village Hall. They are further summarised in the table below; both are located in the Central Analysis Area.

Table 12.1: Cycling facilities within the Braintree District

Site ID	Site name	Active Places Power ID	Postcode	Analysis area	Type of provision	Year built/refurbished
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	6021160	CM7 5BL	Central	Pump track	2000/2021
50	Rayne Village Hall	6021228	CM77 6TX	Central	Pump track	2005

For the location of the cycling and BMX provision, please see Figure 12.1 overleaf.

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Figure 12.1: Location of cycling and BMX provision in the Braintree District



Future supply

Planning permission has been granted (2025) for a BMX track with associated car parking and access at Finchingfield Playing Fields (24/00388/FUL).

BMX Tracks

Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) includes a small outdoor cycle park with a free-to-use pump track. Designed for BMX, off-road bikes, the track allows riders to build momentum without pedalling. It's suitable for all ages and abilities, from complete beginners to more confident riders. The track sits alongside other leisure facilities in the park, including grass football pitches and clubhouse. It is mainly utilised by Braintree BMX Club for club sessions.

The cycling provision at Rayne Village Hall includes a BMX pump track.

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There are also existing cycling routes able to be used for recreational cycling as well as club activity, and some of them are in close proximity to each other and can therefore be combined to provide longer distances. Many are located within and outside of the District, crossing boundaries with multiple authorities such as Maldon, Chelmsford and Colchester.

12.3: Demand

Club demand

The table below identifies British Cycling affiliated clubs operating within the Braintree District. There are two designated clubs with the majority all of these being identified as a standard cycling club.

Table 12.2: Summary of cycling demand within the Braintree District

Club name	Members ²⁹	Types
Braintree BMX Club	254	Club training rides / recreational rides / road racing
North Essex Velo	128	Charity rides / club training rides / competitive time trials / recreational rides / road racing

As seen, Braintree BMX Club is the largest club catering for 254 members. In comparison, North Essex Velo has 128 members.

Each club is further summarised via the sections below. As part of this, it should be noted that only Braintree BMX Club regularly accesses a formal cycling facility, with North Essex Velo using the road network.

Braintree BMX Club

Braintree BMX Club utilises the BMX track at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field). It has sole use for three hours on Tuesday nights and three hours on Saturday afternoons.

Consultation with British Cycling highlights that Braintree BMX Club is outgrowing its current facilities at a rapid rate. To realise its full growth potential, the Club would require a larger and more suitable site. It was noted that Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field) may not represent the most strategic long-term location for the Club to continue to grow and thrive. However, there may be scope for some level of development on the existing site.

Therefore, consideration should also be given to alternative locations within the District that could better support the Club's ambitions and provide the space needed for its future expansion.

The track at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field) is used for club usage and recreational sessions. Public programme sessions are also held every Sunday for five hours. Braintree BMX club is the resident community club using the site.

North Essex Velo

North Essex Velo caters for all abilities and offers a variety of rides such as time-trials and training rides. Club rides take place on a Saturday and Sunday, with these catering for a wide variety of riders including juniors, disability cyclists, novice riders and racing cyclists. The Club meets at Booking Hall Café in Rayne and utilises the local road network in the Braintree District.

²⁹ Information gathered from British Cycling data.

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Additional demand

UK Go-Ride

UK Go-Ride is a British Cycling's development programme for young people. It offers a fun and safe way to introduce young people to the sport and provides a platform to improve cycling skills. People can get involved through holiday coaching programmes or through their local accredited club which allows them to sample the various disciplines of the sport. Progression is obtainable with Go-Ride Racing, offering competition for riders to transition from school or club coaching to inter club and open regional competitions.

Across the Braintree District, one club is identified as offering Go-Ride programmes, with this known as Braintree BMX Club.

Breeze

Breeze is a British Cycling's development programme for women. It offers three categories easy going, steady and challenging to allow women of all abilities to get involved. The programme offers exercise whilst also creating a comfortable environment to meet new people.

In the Braintree District, there are currently no Breeze sessions taking place, with the nearest identified at Lesnes Abbey Woods in Bexley.

UK Ready, Set, Ride

UK Ready, Set, Ride is a British Cycling's campaign to start children learning how to ride a bike through free, quick games. This can start at any age with British Cycling providing helpful information through online activities and tutorials.

No evidence of the initiative being implemented in the Braintree District has been identified.

Latent and future demand

Whilst some latent and future demand is likely to exist for cycling, exact levels are difficult to determine given that most activity takes place outside of the club environment and is not monitored. As such, most growth will not require space within a club or at a dedicated facility. Instead, most new participants will likely take up cycling by themselves (or with friends) on a recreational basis and will utilise the local road network to fulfil this.

Notwithstanding the above, most clubs in the Braintree District express an aspiration to increase membership, with most actively looking for growth. In addition, there is a focus by British Cycling to develop youth and female participation through the UK Go-Ride, UK Ready Set Ride and UK Breeze schemes, which may lead to further increases in demand.

12.4: Supply and demand analysis

There is some club based demand identified in the Braintree District, with one BMX Club which accesses a dedicated facility at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field). Therefore, the provision should be protected and sustained and seen as a destination venue for BMX cyclists in the District.

Whilst the other club (North Essex Velo) does not require dedicated facilities as it primarily utilises roads.

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Continued implementation of initiatives promoted by British Cycling should also be explored in order to encourage more people to get into cycling. This therefore includes Go-Ride and Breeze.

12.5: Conclusion

Formal cycling provision at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field) requires protection to ensure competitive demand can continue to be met.

Cycling – supply and demand summary

- There is some club based demand identified in the Braintree District, with one BMX Club which accesses a dedicated facility at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field). Therefore, the provision should be protected and sustained and seen as a destination venue for BMX cyclists in the District.
- Whilst the other club (North Essex Velo) does not require dedicated facilities as it primarily utilises roads.
- Continued implementation of initiatives promoted by British Cycling should also be explored in order to encourage more people to get into cycling. This therefore includes Go-Ride and Breeze.

Cycling – supply summary

- In the Braintree District, there are two BMX pump tracks at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) and Rayne Village Hall.
- Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) includes a small outdoor cycle park with a free-to-use pump track. Designed for BMX, mountain and off-road bikes, the track allows riders to build momentum without pedalling. It's suitable for all ages and abilities, from complete beginners to more confident riders. It is mainly utilised by Braintree BMX Club for club sessions.

Cycling – demand summary

- There are two affiliated cycling clubs based in the Braintree District.
- Collectively, the clubs run charity rides, club training rides, competitive time trials, recreational rides, road racing and track racing.
- The track at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field) is used for club usage and recreational sessions. Public programme sessions are also held every Sunday for five hours. Braintree BMX club is the resident community club using the site. It has sole use for three hours on Tuesday nights and three hours on Saturday afternoons.
- Whilst levels of future and latent demand are identified, the nature of cycling means that most of this will not require space at a dedicated facility or within a club.

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PART 13: BASKETBALL

13.1: Introduction

Basketball England is the NGB for all basketball in England. Whilst competitive basketball is predominately played indoors, outdoor basketball is a popular recreational activity often played on dedicated courts and MUGAs. Courts come in a range of sizes including full size courts, half size courts and shooting areas (an area with a hoop (or hoops) but no markings).

Furthermore, a small sided competitive outdoor format known as 3X3 is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. Whilst traditional basketball requires full court markings and two hoops, 3X3 only requires one hoop and is played by six players (three on each side) rather than 10. The official court size is 15 meters in width and 11 metres in length.

The 3X3 format has featured in previous two Olympics (Tokyo and Paris) as well as the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. Competitions nationally are organised by Ball Out UK.

13.2: Supply

The 11 MUGAs identified in the Play Strategy are able to accommodate basketball, with each providing suitable line markings for full court activity and two hoops. As such, the supply and demand information evidenced within this is also applicable to this part of the report.

At the above sites, the provision is principally based on a tarmac surface with a single basketball hoop provided. No line markings are in place, meaning they are considered to be a shooting-specific offering. Due to the basic nature of the provision, as well as signs of wear and tear, quality is generally poor.

The full supply of basketball provision can be seen via Table 13.1 overleaf. Five of the sites are in the South Analysis Area, four are in the Central Analysis Area and three in the Rural North Analysis Area.

There are no 3x3 basketball courts identified in the Braintree District.

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Table 13.1: Summary of basketball provision

Site ID	Site	Active Places Power ID	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Court type	Sports lit?
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	6021216	CO10 7BU	Rural North	Yes	Full	No
27	Great Notley Country Park	30003219	CM77 7FS	Central	Yes	Full	No
38	Kelvedon Recreation Ground	6020871	CO5 9AB	South	Yes	Full	No
45	New Rickstones Academy	1203933	CM8 2SD	South	No	Full	No
48	Notley Sports Centre	1003757	CM7 1WY	Central	Yes	Full	No
48	Notley Sports Centre	1003757	CM7 1WY	Central	Yes	Full	No
57	Silver End Village Hall	6012505	CM8 3RQ	South	Yes	Full	No
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	6012619	CB9 7ED	Rural North	Yes	Full	No
79	Meadowside Open Space	-	CM7 5UG	Central	Yes	Full	No
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	-	CM3 2LS	South	Yes	Full	No
82	The Albert Moss Playing Field	-	CM8 3PH	South	Yes	Full	No
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	-	CO5 9SA	Rural North	Yes	Full	No

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The location of all provision suitable for basketball can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 13.1: Location of basketball suitable provision



Management

Of the existing basketball courts in the Braintree District, the majority are managed and maintained either by the Council or Parish Council. Although some are located at education sites. The majority of these are available

Notwithstanding the above, three of the basketball courts are located at education providers and therefore offer restricted community use. The main purpose of these is to accommodate curricular and extra-curricular activities, especially given that sports lighting is not provided.

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Quality

The quality of basketball courts across the Braintree District has been assessed via a combination of site visits, undertaken in July 2025. These utilised non-technical assessments to apply quality ratings as follows:

- ◆ Good.
- ◆ Standard.
- ◆ Poor.

Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness and evidence of inappropriate use (e.g. vandalism and/or littering). In summary, one basketball court is assessed as standard quality (Notley Sports Centre), the remaining 11 as poor quality. This is summarised site-by-site in the table below.

Table 13.3: Site-by-site basketball court quality in the Braintree District

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Postcode	Quality
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	Rural North	CO10 7BU	Poor
27	Great Notley Country Park	Central	CM77 7FS	Poor
38	Kelvedon Recreation Ground	South	CO5 9AB	Poor
45	New Rickstones Academy	South	CM8 2SD	Poor
48	Notley Sports Centre	Central	CM7 1WY	Standard
48	Notley Sports Centre	Central	CM7 1WY	Poor
57	Silver End Village Hall	South	CM8 3RQ	Poor
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Rural North	CB9 7ED	Poor
79	Meadowside Open Space	Central	CM7 5UG	Poor
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	South	CM3 2LS	Poor
82	The Albert Moss Playing Field	South	CM8 3PH	Poor
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	Rural North	CO5 9SA	Poor

At these sites, the surface and line markings are visibly worn, whilst litter and leaf fall is also prevalent, particularly at council sites.

In contrast, the standard quality basketball court is located at Notley Sports Centre which has an even, clearly marked surface and no signs of wear and tear.

The lack of good quality ratings is in part due to the open access nature of the provision, with vandalism reportedly high across the sites.

Sports lighting

The presence of sports lighting is considered to encourage more basketball based demand as it enables evening usage all year round. However, it is also acknowledged that it can encourage higher levels of unofficial use, which can result in increased anti-social behaviour, vandalism and littering. It is therefore only considered suitable in areas that are more secure.

In the Braintree District, none of the basketball courts are serviced by sports lighting, which is likely to be limiting demand, particularly during winter months. As evenings are when they are most likely to be accessed, this could be seen as an issue

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Ancillary provision

Most basketball courts in the Braintree District are not directly serviced by ancillary provision such as a clubhouse and changing rooms, although some are located on sites which have facilities, including Belchamp St Paul Playing Field, Great Notley Country Park, Kelvedon Recreation Ground, Silver End Village Hall, Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field. That being said, such provision is not considered to be overly important due to the nature of use that the courts receive, with this generally being informal and recreational whereby access is not required. Toilets are, however, desirable.

13.3: Demand

As with most recreational spaces, demand for outdoor basketball activity is difficult to track as usage is not recorded due to the open access nature of the provision. In addition, as most courts are dual use, many of the facilities are also used for other sports, predominately football. It is only the shooting area provision that does not provide line markings or goals/posts for other activities.

To help assess demand, wider consultation has been undertaken with Ball Out UK in order to explore facility requirements for the 3X3 basketball format. It reports that an ideal venue for tournaments is six half courts, or the equivalent of three full size courts, in addition to access to toilets. Sites such as at Ducketts Common and Finnsbury Park are put forward as best practice examples, the latter of which is currently used for the national 3X3 championship finals. Both are located in London.

Ball Out UK reports that demand for outdoor basketball is extensive, with courts (including MUGAs with hoops) regularly in use throughout the summer months. Courts in parks are identified as being particularly popular, with these like to be used by community groups as well as groups of individuals all year round.

13.4: Supply and demand analysis/conclusion

In conclusion, there is seemingly a good supply of basketball courts in the Braintree District across the MUGA and shooting area supply. However, there are clear quality issues that should be overcome to better accommodate existing usage and to encourage higher levels of demand, particularly at council sites that are poor quality. Furthermore, none of the basketball courts are serviced by sports lighting, which will be significantly impacting upon demand levels. As such, installation should be explored, where possible.

Additionally, there are no dedicated 3X3 facilities, despite this being a fast growing format of basketball. Whilst this can be played on the courts that are provided, a specific facility could be of greater benefit and attract increased demand from a wider catchment.

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Basketball- supply and demand summary

- There is seemingly a good supply of basketball courts in the Braintree District across the MUGA supply. However, there are clear quality issues that should be overcome to better accommodate existing usage and to encourage higher levels of demand.
- Additionally, there are no dedicated 3X3 facilities, despite this being a fast growing format of basketball. Whilst this can be played on the courts that are provided, a specific facility could be of greater benefit and attract increased demand from a wider catchment.

Basketball- supply summary

- All 11 MUGAs in the Braintree District are set up to accommodate basketball activity.
- One basketball court is assessed as standard quality (Notley Sports Centre) and the remaining 10 as poor quality.
- None of the basketball courts are serviced by sports lighting, which will be impacting on their capacity to accommodate demand, particularly during winter months.

Basketball- demand summary

- As with most recreational spaces, demand for outdoor basketball activity is difficult to track as usage is not recorded due to the open access nature of the provision.
- A lot of access will be for other sports, predominately football, due to the dual use nature of MUGAs.
- Courts in parks are identified as being particularly key, with usage likely to be received by community groups as well as groups of individuals all year round.

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PART 14: OTHER GRASS PITCH SPORTS

Rounders England is the NGB for the sport of rounders in England. Its key role is to co-ordinate a development network, working through local delivery partners that provide a pathway and opportunities for aspiring players to progress to whatever level of play is right for them. In addition, it provides information about the game, runs coaching and umpiring courses, tournaments, sell resources, and promotes the sport at all levels.

The mission of Rounders England is to 'Connect People through Rounders' and get more people from any background playing rounders, more often.

Supply

There are five rounders diamonds identified across seven sites in the Braintree District, all of which are available for community use.

Table 14.1: Summary of rounders diamonds

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Community available?	No. of pitches
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	Rural North	Yes	1
10	Church Road Playing Fields	Rural North	Yes	1
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Rural North	Yes	1
50	Rayne Village Hall	Central	Yes	1
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	South	Yes	1

Demand

There are currently five rounders teams which play within the Braintree Ladies Rounders League. At present, matches are played at a combination of the sites above.

Supply and demand analysis

The current level of supply is seemingly sufficient to meet community demand for rounders in the Braintree District, with all diamonds provided at local authority and parish council sites and thus are available for community use able to adequately cater for any potential future demand. That being said, there is no rounders provision provided in the North Analysis Area.

Other grass pitch sports –supply and demand summary

- ◀ The current level of supply is seemingly sufficient enough to meet community demand for rounders in the Braintree District, with all rounders diamonds provided at Council and Parish Council sites and thus are available for community use able to adequately cater for any potential future demand. That being said, there are no community available facilities in the North Analysis Area.

Other grass pitch sports – supply summary

- ◀ There are currently five rounders diamonds identified across the same number of sites in the Braintree District, with all of these available for community use.

Other grass pitch sports – demand summary

- ◀ There are currently five rounders teams which play within the Braintree Ladies Rounders League. At present, matches are played at the local authority and parish council sites across the District.

APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL CONTEXT

The following section outlines a series of national, regional and local policies pertaining to the study and which will have an important influence on the Strategy.

National context

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports facilities at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the targets set out by the Government and Sport England. It is vital that this strategy is cognisant of and works towards these targets in addition to local priorities and plans.

Department of Culture Media and Sport Get Active: A Strategy for the Future of Sport and Physical Activity (2023)

The Government published its new strategy for sport in August 2023. The 2015 government sport strategy, Sporting Future: A New Strategy for a More Active Nation, was a fundamental re-framing of sport and physical activity in the UK. It set out five outcomes delivered by sport and physical activity:

- ◀ Physical wellbeing
- ◀ Mental wellbeing
- ◀ Individual development
- ◀ Social and community development
- ◀ Sustainable economic development

This new strategy builds on the foundations of Sporting Future and retains these five outcomes at its core. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of three core priorities, with seven indicators to achieve these priorities as follows:

- ◀ **Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active**
 - ◀ Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030.
 - ◀ Focusing on evidence, data and metrics.
 - ◀ Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active.
- ◀ **Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport**
 - ◀ Helping the sector to be welcoming to all.
 - ◀ Improving how issues and concerns are dealt within the sector.
- ◀ **Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust**
 - ◀ Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment.
 - ◀ Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector.

Delivering against these priorities will help create a more active nation and a more sustainable sport sector. These aims are complementary; greater participation, stronger governance and confidence in the sector will help to drive investment, which in turn helps to attract new audiences. The vision is to make sport and physical activity accessible, resilient, fun and fair, for now and the years to come – for the benefit of individuals and the country.

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Sport England Uniting the Movement: Our 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport (2021-2031)

Sport and physical activity makes people happier and healthier, and movement is the lens through which we can make that happen. It does the same thing for our communities, with life-changing, sustainable benefits that have huge economic and social value. That's why Sport England wants sport and physical activity to be recognised as essential to help overcome these national challenges.

The Strategy recognises the need to invest in sport and physical activity through NGBs, other sports bodies and local sports clubs, organisations and community groups to increase engagement for different groups as part of our core purpose. It states that there is now a need to go further in promoting movement in general as the means to unlock sport and activity for some people.

Tackling inequalities

There are deep-rooted inequalities in sport and physical activity, which means that there are people who feel excluded from being active because the right options and opportunities aren't there. These inequalities are at the very core of the Uniting the Movement.

Sport England plans on having a laser focus on tackling inequalities in all that it does, because providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity is vitally important.

National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

The NPPF states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

Paragraph 104 sets three criterion that ensures existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- ◀ An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown that the open space, buildings or land is surplus to requirements.
- ◀ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- ◀ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

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In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

The FA National Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)

The Football Association's (FA) National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a ten-year period.

The Strategy sets out shared aims and objectives it aims to deliver on in conjunction with The Premier League, Sport England and the Government, to be delivered with support of the Football Foundation.

These stakeholders have clearly identified the aspirations for football to contribute directly to nationally important social and health priorities. Alongside this, the strategy is clear that traditional, affiliated football remains an important priority and a core component of the game, whilst recognising and supporting the more informal environments used for the community and recreational game.

Its vision is: "Within 10 years we aim to deliver great football facilities, wherever they are needed"

£1.3 billion has been spent by football and Government since 2000 to enhance existing football facilities and build new ones. However, more is needed if football and Government's shared objectives for participation, individual well-being and community cohesion are to be achieved. Nationally, direct investment will be increased – initially to £69 million per annum from football and Government (a 15% increase on recent years).

The NFFS investment priorities can be broadly grouped into six areas, recognising the need to grow the game, support existing players and better understand the different football environments:

- ◀ **Improve 20,000 Natural Turf pitches**, with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents'** (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses**, linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;
- ◀ **Support access to flexible indoor spaces**, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;
- ◀ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision**, recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;
- ◀ **Support testing of technology and innovation**, building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

Local Football Facility plans

To support in delivery of the NFFS, The FA has commissioned a national project. Over the next two years to 2025, a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) will be produced for every local

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authority across England. Each plan will be unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation, including currently underrepresented communities.

Identifying strategic priorities for football facilities across the formal, recreational and informal game, LFFPs will establish a ten-year vision for football facilities that aims to transform the playing pitch stock in a sustainable way. They will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all will be identified via LFFPs. LFFPs will guide the allocation of 90% of national football investment (The FA, Premier League and DCMS) and forge stronger partnerships with local stakeholders to develop key sites. This, together with local match-funding will deliver over one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next 10-years.

It is important to recognise that a LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Therefore, it cannot be used as a replacement for a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and it will not be accepted as an evidence base for site change of use or disposal.

A LFFP will; however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The FA: Inspiring Positive Change Through Football (2024-28)³⁰

The FA launched its new Strategy which aims to 'take English football forward, with clear focus on the biggest opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed'.

To achieve this, eight key strategic priorities are identified which include four 'Game Changer' objectives and four 'Drivers' objectives as detailed below. The strategy also outlines how The FA's plans to achieve these objectives.

Game Changers:

- ◀ Win tournaments
 - ◀ Develop pathways
 - ◀ Support elite players
 - ◀ Enhance environments
 - ◀ Collaborate and influence
- ◀ A game free from discrimination
 - ◀ Boost representation
 - ◀ Drive more inclusion
 - ◀ Tackle discrimination
- ◀ Equal opportunities for women & girls
 - ◀ Increase school participation
 - ◀ Increase club participation
 - ◀ Enhance women's competitions
 - ◀ Support female coaches and referees
- ◀ Transform the pitch landscape
 - ◀ Sustain and grow high-quality grass pitches
 - ◀ Deliver new 3G pitches
 - ◀ Support inclusivity accessibility and environmental sustainability of facilities

Drivers:

- ◀ Thriving community clubs
 - ◀ Develop club opportunities
 - ◀ Support the current and future generation of club leaders

³⁰ [FA Strategy 2024-2028: The Football Association](#)

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- ◀ Equip clubs to add long-term value to local communities
- ▶ World-class FA cups
 - ◀ Broaden commercial appeal
 - ◀ Evolve the Adobe Women's FA Cup format
- ▶ Participant led
 - ◀ Place participants at the centre of decision making
 - ◀ Create flexible models to meet participants needs
 - ◀ Provide digital tools to improve experiences
- ▶ Progressive governance
 - ◀ Support integration of women's and girls' football
 - ◀ Support governance of the NLS
 - ◀ Support our County Football Associations (CFAs)

The FA: Reaching Higher (2024-28)³¹

The FA's 2020-2024 strategy, 'Inspiring Positive Change', coincided with record growth across the sport, with more women and girls playing, coaching, officiating and supporting the flourishing professional game than ever before.

This strategy aims to build on the success achieved to date and strives to continue working to unlock the full potential of the women's and girls' game. The strategy outlines four strategic priorities as seen below.

1. **Build and Protect the Uniqueness of the Women's Game:** Continue to honour the history of women's football and recognise those who have contributed towards making it so unique, whilst ensuring the distinct qualities and unique culture of the women's game are valued and protected.
2. **Win a Major Tournament:** Continue to be world-leaders both on and off the pitch, developing players and building an inclusive talent pathway system to make football more equal and accessible at every level of the game, ensuring the England pathway and teams represent society.
3. **Build Robust, High-Quality Competition:** Create compelling competition structures and support clubs to develop to the appropriate level within the game, while enabling people to grow and develop within The FA's competition structures.
4. **Deliver Equal Opportunities for Women and Girls to Play:** Sustain growth in schools whilst tackling inequalities. Continue to grow the number of female teams and deliver vibrant league offers whilst extending and enhancing the sessional football offer. The ambition is for 90% of schools to deliver equal access for girls to play football in key stages two and three.

There are five golden threads which weave through each of the four strategic priorities and across all levels of the women's and girls' game, which will be instrumental for delivering the next phase of growth by 2028:

1. **Female Health and Wellbeing:** Develop the game to support women and girls with their health and wellbeing needs, providing them with environments in which they can thrive.
2. **Safeguarding:** Support the evolution of an ever-safer culture across the women's and girls' game.
3. **Refereeing:** Grow and nurture a new generation of referees who are representative of our society.
4. **Coaching:** Support and develop brilliant coaches capable of unleashing every player's potential in a safe and inclusive game.
5. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure the game is more reflective of our society.

³¹ [The FA Womens & Girls Football Strategy 2024-28](#)

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Inspiring Generations – Cricket’s Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28)^[1]

In October 2024 the ECB released its new strategy Inspiring Generations – Cricket’s Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28). Cricket in England and Wales has seen transformative growth since the publication of its previous strategy Inspiring Generation (2020-24). Its new strategy represents an evolution of its plans, however, many of its previous themes are still relevant. Its main purpose is to say ‘Cricket is a game for me’ through its vision:

- ◆ To become the most inclusive team sport
- ◆ To grow and unite the game
- ◆ Lead the game through global transformation

It aims to obtain this vision through six key objectives

- ◆ Make cricket diverse, inclusive and accessible
- ◆ Transform Women’s and Girl’s cricket
- ◆ Connect communities through play
- ◆ Inspire through winning England teams
- ◆ Support a thriving and sustainable men’s and women’s professional game
- ◆ Win the battle for attention

Underpinning these six ambitions are a series of enablers that cut-across multiple areas of the game, alongside Cricket’s Core Values.

The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan (2021)

The RFU strategic vision is to achieve ‘a successful and thriving game across England’.

It identifies four ‘Game Objectives’ and four ‘Driving Objectives’, to form priority focuses for the strategy. It believes that these objectives will make the greatest substantive improvements to the game and investment will be aligned to these areas.

Game objectives

- ◆ **Enjoyment** – Enable positive player experiences on and off the field.
- ◆ **Winning England** – Create the best possible high-performance system for England Rugby.
- ◆ **Welfare** – Enhance players welfare to protect and support the wellbeing of players.
- ◆ **Flourishing rugby communities** – Support clubs to sustain and grow themselves and to reflect society.

Driving objectives

- ◆ **Diversity & inclusion** – Drive rugby union in England to reflect the diversity of society.
- ◆ **Understand** – Build a deep understanding of players, volunteers and fans to shape the future of the game.
- ◆ **Connect** – Connect with and grow the rugby community and create exceptional experiences.
- ◆ **Commercial & operational excellence** – Ensure a sustainable and efficient business model delivered by an inspired workforce.

^[1]<https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2024/10/22/19a925d7-3c92-4a36-8e7b-f49cb470377f/ECB-Inspiring-Generations-2025-2028.pdf>

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A number of aims, identified as key to the achievement of these main objectives, are particularly relevant to facilities. The provision of good quality and suitable rugby union facilities will help to achieve these aims and in turn objectives:

- ◀ Enjoyment – Improve accessibility for women and girls across the game.
- ◀ Enjoyment – Make the game inclusive and attractive for 14 to 18 year olds.
- ◀ Flourishing rugby communities – Provide support to help clubs maximise the benefit from their facilities and assets.
- ◀ Diversity & Inclusion – Improve the diversity of all facets of our game and continue to create and inclusive environment for all.

England Hockey Strategy (2023 – 2028)

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found [here](#).

Aiming to make hockey more noticeable, relevant, and accessible to all, England Hockey have launched their new strategy 'Creating a Future for Our Game Together' on 3rd October. The new strategy is a continued effort to re-engage with the current hockey community and to reach out to potential newcomers to introduce them to hockey.

Underpinning the strategy and of importance to the hockey community are four values, "collaborate inclusively, care for people and places, play with spirit win with grace and resilient in everything we do".

The strategy is the culmination of two years consultation with various stakeholders across the sport and larger sporting sector. Hockey will be guided by five key objectives over the next five years.

1. Lead Positive Change: to create and champion positive change within the community by broadening and widening the engagement of the sport and making it more ethnically and culturally diverse.
2. Meaningful Growth: to make sure that our sport thrives and grows into the future, we want to nurture a love of hockey within a more diverse group of young players and communities to reflect society.
3. Drive Visible Impact: to produce and release high-quality, engaging content that shares the love of the game, captures the passion, builds a deep connection and amplifies the voices of the hockey community with new and existing participants.
4. Responsible Leadership: to provide forward thinking, compassionate and inclusive leadership. Leadership that fosters trust within physically and psychologically safe environments and which puts players, the community and sustainability at heart of every decision.
5. Inspirational International Success: inspirational club and national teams delivering podium success in Europe and on the world stage, underpinned by a thriving talent system and domestic game.

The strategy aligns with Sport England's 'Uniting the movement' strategy and UK Sport's Powering Success, Inspiring Impact' strategic plan.

Rugby Football League – National Community Facilities Strategy (2024 – 2030)

The RFL has developed a new National Facilities Strategy which will guide investment into the game from 2024 through to 2030. The proposed investment package aligned to the Strategy will not only transform facilities, but also bolster the sport's social impact, reinforcing its position as a vital part of the nation's sporting and social fabric.

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The four focus areas of the Strategy are:

- ◀ **Security of Tenure** – allowing clubs to plan for the long-term
- ◀ **Accessible and Inclusive Facilities** – providing suitable facilities for all and creating safe spaces for the wider community
- ◀ **Adequate and Appropriate Pitch Provision**– investment both in playing surfaces, and in upskilling a volunteer workforce to maintain them
- ◀ **Sustainability**– both environmental and financial

The Strategy will deliver on the four focus areas by delivering against a set of five recommendations which are set within the Strategy and are detailed below. These recommendations reflect the wider strategic aspirations across the sport and are for the RFL to work to deliver.

◀ **Focus Community Clubs**

- ◀ Ensure the RFL has sufficient capacity and resource to deliver the recommendations identified within this Strategy to support its community clubs.
- ◀ Ensure all community clubs have the knowledge and resource to provide good quality grass pitches.
- ◀ Supporting clubs to have good quality changing and social facilities which can support the scale of need at each club. These must be inclusive for all participants and benefit target user groups such as women and girls' participants.
- ◀ Ensure clubs can accommodate a sustainable operational programme for clubhouses to ensure the longevity of provision.
- ◀ Work with clubs and key partners to increase the number of clubs with secured tenure of their club facilities.
- ◀ Develop a dedicated funding programme which is specifically aimed at supporting clubs to gain security of tenure at their respective site.
- ◀ Highlight success stories and best practices from community clubs to inspire others and showcase the positive impact of these efforts.

◀ **Deliver positive social and environmental impact**

- ◀ Support clubs through training and advice on how to promote facilities for non-rugby league purposes.
- ◀ Work with Active Partnerships across England to enable higher usage and activation of rugby league assets for non-rugby league activity.
- ◀ Prioritise clubs for wellbeing hubs which may offer the widest social benefit (relative to local need) – particularly those in high deprivation areas.
- ◀ Use the activation of club facilities as a prerequisite to capital funding for club house improvements / new development.
- ◀ Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies

◀ **Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies**

- ◀ Ensure continued working with Sport England and National Governing Bodies of other sports to capitalise on shared investment opportunities.
- ◀ Work with the Football Foundation to maximise Multi-Sport funding opportunities – utilising the framework provided in this Strategy as the baseline of shared investment.
- ◀ Work closely with Active Partnerships in areas with high club densities to establish opportunities for pitch access via the Open School Facilities programme.

◀ **Technological solutions**

- ◀ Ensure the RFL gathers greater levels of information from clubs via affiliation. To include (e.g.) security of tenure information and an integrated self-assessment audit of community facilities.

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- ◀ Continue expanding the use and application of PitchPower so all clubs can self-assess provision and support clubs to make positive contributions to improving the quality of grass pitches.
- ◀ Promote technological solutions which progress clubs into being more sustainable, energy efficient and ensure their long-term viability as community assets.
- ◀ Create a platform or resource hub where clubs can access information on funding opportunities, facility management, and sustainable operational practices.
- ◀ **Working with Charitable Community Organisations and Wheelchair Rugby League**
 - ◀ Develop an investment package to support the operational delivery of professional club foundation led wheelchair activity focusing on storage and logistical solutions.
 - ◀ Prioritise capital investment into community club sites which also accommodate professional club foundations as tenants for community Rugby League activity.
 - ◀ Begin work on the feasibility of developing a national wheelchair centre which includes exploring partnership opportunities with other sports to maximise multisport value and return on investment.
 - ◀ Consult with professional club foundations, where possible, to understand the need for 3G access and work to ascertain sufficient access hours during peak times of need.

LTA – Tennis Opened Up 2024-2026

The LTA's vision for 2024-2026, is Tennis Opened Up. Its mission is to transform communities through tennis, by making it by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming, enjoyable and inspiring. The objectives of the LTA are:

- ◀ Put tennis at the heart of communities.
- ◀ Grow and diversify our audience of fans and players.
- ◀ Attract and engage the tennis workforce for the next generation.
- ◀ Be one of the most respected nations in the world for player development.
- ◀ Secure a sustainable future for tennis in Britain.

These objectives will be delivered through six strategies: Invest, Grow, Engage, Perform, Diversity and Lead. The LTA will implement a facilities strategy with a focus on parks, covered courts, Community Indoor Tennis Centres and Padel.

England Netball

In November 2021 England Netball launched a 10-year 'Adventure Strategy' for the game with a new brand identity for the organisation.

England Netball's 'Adventure Strategy' shares a purpose-led ambition for the game, to build on the momentum the sport has seen in recent years and take it to new heights for the decade ahead.

The 'Adventure Strategy' outlines the intention to:-

- ◀ accelerate the development and growth of the game at every level, from grassroots to the elite,
- ◀ elevate the visibility of the sport, and
- ◀ lead a movement to impact lives on and beyond the court.

At the heart of its purpose, England Netball, with its proud and unique female foundations, will remain dedicated to increasing opportunities for women and girls to play the game as a priority, working tirelessly to address the gender participation gap in sport that has widened since the global pandemic.

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Underpinned by years of engaging with and delivering netball for female communities, the organisation pledges to understand, support and nurture women and girls more deeply at every life stage, at every age.

The organisation is also committed to opening the sport to new audiences in every community, so netball better represents the rich diversity of the country it proudly represents, and ensures the sport continues to evolve and adapt to thrive in the future, helping to create a truly inclusive sport for all where everyone can belong, flourish and soar. A recent partnership announcement with England Men's and Mixed Netball Association (EMMNA) to help develop and grow male participation in the game, supports this commitment as England Netball pledges to promote difference and embrace the opportunity to make the sport a possibility within everyone's reach.

Transforming netball for children and young people is a strategic priority to protect the future of the sport. Working with schools and policy makers to extend physical literacy within, and after the school day with a focus on netball specific provision will pave the way for greater community participation. The organisation will accelerate the expansion of its Bee Netball programme for young children, whilst supporting teens and young women to stay in the game to keep them physically active and in the game for life.

Facility Development

The facility development aspirations stated within the Strategy are to:-

- ✦ Take a fresh look at the spaces required to support the sport, creating accessible places in every community to allow netball to be incorporated into how and where women and girls live their lives;
- ✦ Protect, enhance, and extend the network of homes that house the sport at a local and regional level;
- ✦ Develop an elite domestic professional competition that supports full time athletes underpinned by a world class infrastructure and environments.
- ✦ For England Netball to achieve its ambitions to make the game accessible to wider audiences and in every community, it encourages Local Authorities to adopt policies within Playing Pitch Strategies and Built Facilities Strategies that:-
- ✦ Facilitates informal netball activity within neighbourhood multi use games areas for example by installing combined outdoor basketball and netball goals and art courts in Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- ✦ Incorporates the cultural and health needs of women and girls within any designs for improved or new facilities.
- ✦ Protects and enhances netball facilities within all Primary and Secondary School environments so they offer a positive first experience of the sport for students and the wider community during out of school hours.
- ✦ Supports the installation of floodlights on outdoor courts to increase all year-round use.
- ✦ Facilitates the development of netball growth programmes, club training and competition within public leisure centres.
- ✦ Where appropriate, supports the development of netball homes and performance environments that enable local women and girls to pursue a career in netball as an elite athlete, official, coach or administrator.

Bowls England: Fit for the Future (2021-2026)

Bowls England's Strategy; 'Fit For The Future' frames an exciting course for the sport. The five-year plan has been designed with the ultimate goal of getting more people playing & enjoying bowls. It sets out its vision for the sport, how it plans to achieve its objectives and

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what success looks like in 2026. The priorities that will get it the target of 1 million bowls experiences per year by 2026 are:

- ▶ Building the brand of bowls by increasing focus on international & top domestic bowls, and utilizing opportunities such as Birmingham 2022 to achieve larger media coverage;
- ▶ Ensuring the sport is truly accessible to all by offering different formats of the game which suit all time constraints, as well as driving more people to clubs in new ways;
- ▶ Creating positive playing experiences for everyone who steps on the green, both for casual and competitive players, as well as growing our events calendar and introducing a Performance Pathway
- ▶ Putting volunteers first, as the lifeblood of our sport, by increasing our support for clubs in order to empower them to thrive;
- ▶ Leading the sport with purpose by developing our Governance structures, diversifying our revenue streams, and work collaboratively with all the sport's key stakeholders.

England Athletics Facility Strategy (2018 – 2025)

The purpose of this document is to set out our long term vision for athletics facilities in England. Facilities form a vital component of the overall England Athletics strategy.

The development, protection and enhancement of facilities will support our strategic plan and help England Athletics contribute to the delivery of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Futures: A New Strategy for Sport and Sport England's strategy Towards an Active Nation. Appropriate facilities help to attract and inspire new participants and provide the foundation and focus for a significant proportion of the England Athletics family.

The England Athletics Strategic Plan notes that the sport increasingly needs to become financially sustainable and that a business-like and innovative approach is a vital component of its future success. Facilities are fundamental, but they are also expensive to create and to maintain. The sport therefore faces a significant challenge to develop, improve and maintain facilities, most of which are currently operated and funded by third parties.

This strategy sets out a challenge to all those involved with the delivery of the sport to be innovative and business like in the operation and development of facilities at a time of financial challenge, as it aims "To create an innovative and inspiring network of sustainable athletic facilities, with the capacity to meet both current and future demand across England".

England Golf Course Planner – Strategic Direction (2021-2025)

England Golf has always had a mission to lead, support, inspire and deliver for its community of golfers, golf clubs and counties. To help enable this, its Course Planner forms the core of its strategy, with 18 guiding principles established that are designed to best position growth in the game:

- ▶ Strengthen governance in all aspects of the sport
- ▶ Deliver safeguarding throughout the golfing community
- ▶ Utilise data and technology to enhance decision making
- ▶ Drive equality and equity in everything it does
- ▶ Support golf clubs with member recruitment and retention
- ▶ Connect and engage with all golfers
- ▶ Inspire and educate golf's network of volunteers
- ▶ Increase golf's influence
- ▶ Advocate and inform on all elements of sustainability
- ▶ Drive diversity at all levels of golf

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- ✦ Create more opportunities for junior and young adults
- ✦ Promote the health and wellbeing of golf
- ✦ Inspire more women and girls to play golf
- ✦ Develop greater access for disabled people
- ✦ Enthuse all golfers through relatable role models
- ✦ Communicate a positive perception change for golf
- ✦ Deliver an excellent talent development pathway
- ✦ Host best-in-class competitions for all golfers

British Cycling Lead our Sports – Inspire our communities³²

British Cycling's Strategy identifies seven key priorities for cycling before the Paris Olympics in 2024. These priorities are:

- ✦ Inspiring Performances
- ✦ Grow Communities
- ✦ Engage the Next Generation
- ✦ Flagship Events
- ✦ Cycling for Everyone
- ✦ Work Together
- ✦ Equipped for Success

The seven priorities are not everything that British Cycling will do, but that can have the greatest impact over the next 36 months. The priorities are all interconnected and are cross interdependencies – achieving one strategic priority is often reliant upon achieving the other.

For each of the priorities, the Strategy sets out the measures of success:

Priority	Sub priority	Measures
Inspiring Performances	Sustain inspirational global elite cycling success	✦ Win 10 Olympic and 15 Paralympic medals. ✦ Creation of a development plan to support elite non Olympic and Paralympic disciplines. ✦ Increase by 10% the number of riders in the talent pathway across ethnic communities, disability and low socioeconomic backgrounds.
Grow Communities	Grow and serve our cycling communities	✦ Diversify and grow our cycling communities. ✦ Grow membership from 150k to 250k. ✦ Increase affiliated clubs and groups by 20%
Engage the Next Generation	Encourage more children and young people to make cycling a lifelong habit	✦ Increase the number of children and young people in clubs or groups by 20%. ✦ Increase by 10% the number of children and young people participating across ethnic communities, disability and low socio-economic backgrounds. ✦ Increased awareness and perception of British Cycling in a younger audience through yearly tracking.

³² [British Cycling Lead our Sports](#)

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Priority	Sub priority	Measures
Flagship Events	Host world class major events to excite and inspire	▶ Achieve major event hosting targets across disciplines. ▶ Support the legacy impact of both the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the Cycling World Championships 2023. ▶ Increase the opportunities for British riders to perform on home soil.
Cycling for Everyone	Ensure cycling is open to everyone	▶ Put in place robust tracking and increased diversity in facilitators and governance. ▶ 90% of our communities to believe cycling is an inclusive activity and a sport for them. ▶ Increase participation in our sport across genders, ages, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and low socioeconomic backgrounds by 10%.
Work Together	Work together with everyone who makes cycling happen	▶ A 25% increase in the percentage of cycling facilitators that feel appreciated for the work they do. ▶ Retain, grow and diversify the range of partners in line with our strategic priorities.
Equipped for Success	Deliver our strategy effectively and efficiently	▶ 100% increase in the diversity of the industries represented in the British Cycling partnership portfolio. ▶ Grow and diversify income streams.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX 2: NON TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT SHEETS

Grass football pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Football							
Please complete one form per pitch							
Site reference:			Site Name:				
6 figure grid reference			Pitch ID(s):				
Number of football pitches on site:			Pitch size:	(Adult 11v11, Youth 11v11, 9v9, 7v7 Mini, 5v5, 7v7)			
Availability			Are any other pitches marked out over this pitch?	☐			
			If yes, please indicate what pitches are overmarked? (i.e. one youth pitch is overmarked on a adult pitch) in Pitch Issues				
Weather at time of visit & date of visit							
Pitch Issues:							
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)							
Element (Gathered via a non technical site assessment)	Rating			Guidance notes			Comments
Playing surface							
Grass Cover	Good >80%	☐	Adequate 60-80%	☐	Poor <60%	☐	Advice is to walk through the middle of the pitch
Does the pitch meet The FA minimum size?	Yes - as per the FA recommended size	☐	Within FA recommended guidelines	☐	No	☐	See size chart below for recommended dimensions
Slope of pitch (gradient and cross fall)	Flat	☐	Moderate	☐	Severe	☐	
Length of grass	Good	☐	Too long	☐	Too short	☐	Good 30mm-50mm, Too long 51mm plus, Too short 29mm less
Evenness of pitch	Good	☐	Adequate	☐	Poor	☐	
Problem Areas: Evidence of dog fouling/glass/litter/vehicle tracks	None	☐	Yes - some	☐	Yes - lots	☐	
Problem Areas: Evidence of unofficial use/damage to the surface	None	☐	Yes - some	☐	Yes - lots	☐	
Problem Areas: Evidence of poor drainage	No evidence of standing water or poor drainage	☐	Some evidence of poor drainage	☐	Yes, poor drainage	☐	
Maintenance programme (information from maintenance schedule/grounds team/club survey)							Section total
Grass cutting	Yes, as required	☐	Yes, but not frequent enough	☐	No	☐	
Seeded	Yes, as required	☐	Not known	☐	No	☐	
Aerated (per year)	Three or more times	☐	Once/ twice	☐	No	☐	
Sand dressed	Within the last 12 months	☐	Within the last 2 years	☐	No	☐	
Fertilised	Within the last 12 months	☐	Within the last 2 years	☐	No	☐	
Weed killed	Within the last 12 months	☐	Within the last 2 years	☐	No	☐	
							Section total
NB If none of this information is provided you should assume that only the grass is being cut and the rest of the maintenance items should be marked with the lowest score option.							
PITCH SCORE			0.0%		RATING		Poor

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Cricket pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Cricket									
Please complete one form per pitch									
Site reference		Site Name							
6 figure grid reference		No of Pitches:							
Pitch ID		No of wickets:	Natural		Non turf				
Weather at time of visit:									
Availability									
Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused									
General comments/observations									
*You will need a cricket ball and ruler to assess wicket quality as indicated									
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer).									
Element	Rating				Guidance notes	Site comments (use the guidance notes to help complete)			
About the cricket outfield									
Grass coverage	Good	Acceptable	Poor		<80% falls below the ECB basic standard				
Length of grass	Good	Acceptable	Poor		Ideally 12mm - 25mm				
Evenness	Even		Uneven		Ball should run without deviation or ramp				
Evidence of Dog fouling/glass/stones/litter?	None	Yes	Immediate action required		May also wish to refer to user survey. If yes, refer to contractor/site manager				
Evidence of Unofficial use?	None	Yes	Immediate action required		e.g. informal, casual use, unbooked use, kids kickabout etc. May also wish to refer to user survey. If yes, refer to contractor/site				
Evidence of Damage to surface?	None	Yes	Immediate action required		e.g. from vermin/animals - rabbit, gulls and foxes etc may also wish to refer to user survey				
					section total				
Artificial Wickets									
Is the wicket and surrounds married in	Yes		No		There should be no trip points				
Evenness of wicket	Even		Uneven		There should be no contours in surface levels				
Stump holes	Yes		No		Should be no wider than a standard cricket ball				
Moss or materials in the surface	Yes		No		There should be none				
Rips or surface lifting	Yes		No		If "yes" contact site manager				
Surface worn in high traffic areas - creases	Yes		No		If "yes" contact site manager				
Hardness - does the ball rebound when thrown straight down?	Yes		No						
					section total				
Grass Wickets									
Presence of line markings	Yes		No		i.e. is wicket smooth and uniform				
Evidence of rolling	Yes		No		3mm on match wicket/12mm rest of square				
Evidence of straight cut and height	Yes		No						
Evidence of repair work on old wickets	Yes		No						
Grass coverage (square and wickets)	Yes		No		Scale: 80%+ = Yes, 80%> = No				
Hardness - does a cricket ball thrown straight down into the surface rebound/bounce?	Yes		No		Please note that <80% falls below the ECB basic standard				
					section total				
Changing/ Pavilion									
Umpires provision	Yes		No						
Toilets	Yes		No						
Hot/cold water	Yes		No						
Heating	Yes		No						
Condition of building	Good	Acceptable	Requires attention						
					section total				
Non Turf Cricket Practice Nets									
Is the wicket and surrounds married in (no trip points)	Yes		No						
Evenness of wicket (no contours in surface levels)	Even		Uneven						
Stump holes (no wider than a standard cricket ball)	Yes		No						
Moss or materials in the surface (should be none)	Yes		No						
No rips or surface lifting	Yes		No						
Surface worn in high traffic areas - crease	Yes		No						
Hardness - does the ball rebound when thrown straight down	Yes		No						
Is the steel frame/ posts upright?	Yes		No		Ideally assessed with a spirit level but can be achieved by eye.				
Are steel cross members detached?	Yes		No						
Are all posts and net fixings in place?	Yes		No						
Can a ball pass through any part of the netting?	Yes		No						
Is appropriate safety/ supervisory signage present?	Yes		No						
					section total				
Maximum score	180	Scoring	Score	Percentage Score	Facility Present?	Potential Rating:	Poor		
		Outfield	0	0%	No				
		Artificial Wickets	0	0%	No				
		Grass Wickets	0	0%	No				
		Changing/Pavilion	0	0%	No				
		Non Turf Practice	0	0%	No				
		Overall score	0	0%					

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Grass rugby union pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Rugby Union										
Please complete one form per pitch										
Site reference					Site Name					
6 figure grid reference					Pitch ID(s)					
Date of assessment					Pitch size	(Senior, Mini/Midi)				
Number of pitches on site					Are any other pitches marked out over this pitch?					
Availability					If yes, please indicate what pitches are overmarked? (i.e. one mini/ midi pitch is overmarked on a senior pitch) in Pitch Issues					
Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused										
Weather at time of visit										
General comments/observations										
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)										
Qualitative information (gathered on site)	Rating					Guidance notes	Comments			
Grass Coverage	Good		Adequate		Poor		>90% = good. <80% = poor			
Size of pitch	Acceptable (between recommended minimum and maximum sizes)		Flag for further investigation (below recommended minimum size)		Unacceptable (above maximum size)		Maximum size = width 70m, goal line to goal line 100m, in goal area 22m, run offs 5m where practical. Recommended minimum size = width 68m, goal line to goal line 94m, in goal area 6m, run offs 5m where practical.			
Length of grass	Too Long		Good		Too short		Too long = >75mm. Too short = <50mm			
Problem Areas: Evidence of glass/litter/vehicle tracks/dog fouling	None		Yes - some		Yes lots					
GOALPOSTS										
Are goalposts installed?	Yes		No							
Is there any obvious danger on posts?	Yes		No							
Are the posts stable in the ground?	Yes		No							
Is the crossbar fixed securely?	Yes		No							
Is there evidence of rust on the posts?	Yes		No							
ANCILLARY										
Is the pitch floodlit?	Yes		No							
Is there changing accommodation for the pitch?	Yes		No							
Is an appropriate level of car parking available?	Yes		No							
Pitch maintenance (information gathered via club survey/ pitch provider consultation) - refer to the guidance notes below										
Aerated (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Sand dressed (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Fertilised (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Weed killed (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never			
Chain harrowed	every week		fortnightly		monthly		never			
Pitch Maintenance Score										
Drainage	Natural (inadequate) SCORE D0		Natural (adequate) SCORE D1		Pipe drained SCORE D2		Pipe and slit drained SCORE D3		Unknown SCORE D0	Natural (adequate) = 3 or less training/match cancellations per season Natural (inadequate) = 4 or more training match cancellations per season *Based on a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the previous eight years **Based on a slit drained system at 1m centres completed in the previous five years.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Artificial grass pitches non-technical assessment (including third generation turf pitches)

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Artificial grass pitches									
Site reference			Site Name						
6 figure grid reference			Pitch ID						
Number of AGPs on site			Pitch size	Full (i.e., 100m x 60m)		Half (i.e., 60m x 40m)			
Availability									
Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused									
Type of pitch	{	Long Pile 3G (65mm with shock pad)		Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)		Short Pile 3G (40mm)			
		Sand Dressed		Sand Filled		Water based			
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Element	Rating						Guidance notes	Site comments	
Age of Surface	less than 2 years		2-5 years		5-10 years		over 10 years		
Evidence of moss/lichen (all surfaces)	None		Yes - some				Yes - lots		
Loose gravel (macadam surface)	None		Yes - some				Yes - lots		
Holes or rips in surface (macadam, art. grass or polymeric surfaces)	None		Yes - some				Yes - lots		
Grip underfoot	Good		Adequate				Poor		
Line markings - quality	Good		Adequate				Poor		
Problem Areas: Evidence of Glass/ stones/ litter	None		Yes - some				Yes - lots		
Problem Areas: Evidence of inappropriate use	None		Yes - some				Yes - lots		
Problem Areas: Evidence of damage to surface	None		Yes - some				Yes - lots	If no evidence, assume none.	
Access for disabled players. i.e.: ramps onto courts, width of gates	Good		Adequate				Poor		
Condition of posts/ nets/ goals	Good		Adequate				Poor		
Surrounding fencing	Good		Adequate				Poor		
Adequate safety margins (w here appropriate)	Yes - fully		No- but adequate				No - not adequate		
Is the AGP floodlit?	Yes						No		
Is the AGP left open at all times?	Yes						No		
Are there dug outs?	Yes						No		
Are there youth shelters/spectator seating around AGP?	Yes						No		
Is there changing accommodation for the AGP?	Yes						No		
Maximum score	93	Scoring:		Poor	<=50	Total Score		0	
				Standard	51-79				
				Good	80+	Potential Rating		Poor	

Bowling green non-technical assessment

November 2025

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Tennis and netball court non-technical assessment

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Tennis/ Netball/ Courts											
KKPref											
Site name:											
Number of courts -		Tennis		Netball		Basketball		Five-a-side			
General Playground or specific sports court area?											
Court surface				Management				Community Use?			
	Artificial turf, Clay, Grass, Macadam, Polymeric, Shale				Club, LA - Parks, Parish Council, Public, School						
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)											
Element	Rating						Comments				
About the courts											
Evidence of moss/lichen (all surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots						
Loose gravel (macadam surface)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots						
Holes or rips in surface (macadam, art. grass or polymeric surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots						
Grip underfoot	Good		Adequate		Poor						
Line markings - quality	Good		Adequate		Poor						
Surrounding fencing	Good		Adequate		Poor						
Size of courts	Yes - fully		No- but adequate		No - not adequate						
Adequate safety margins	Yes - fully		No- but adequate		No - not adequate						
Slope of courts	Flat		Slight		Gentle		Moderate				
Problem Areas: Evidence of Glass/ stones/ litter	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots						
Problem Areas: Evidence of inappropriate use	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots						
Access for disabled players - ie: ramps onto courts, width of gates	Good		Adequate		Poor						
Changing Accomodation											
Changing Accomodation	Yes		No								
About the equipment											
Posts and net	Good		Adequate		Poor						
Are the courts locked when not in use?	Yes		No								
Practice wall	Yes		No								



BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN DECEMBER 2025

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd
Company No: 9145032 (England)

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

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BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation Turf
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
ANOG	Assessing Needs & Opportunities Guide
BE	Bowls England
CFA	County Football Association
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
EA	England Athletics
ECB	England & Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
EN	England Netball
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMA	Grounds Maintenance Association
GPMF	Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund
HC	Hockey Club
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plan
NFFS	National Football Facilities Strategy
NGB(s)	National Governing Body (of sport)
NLS	National League System
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NTP	Non-Turf Pitch
MES	Match Equivalent Session
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PIP	Pitch Improvement Programme
PPC	Playing Pitch Calculator
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy
PQS	Performance Quality Standard
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
SFC	Sports Facilities Calculator
U	Under (related to participating age groups)

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd (KKP) has been appointed by Braintree District Council (BDC) to deliver a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS). The PPOSS will provide the necessary robustness and direction to ensure that the Council has a framework for the prioritisation, provision and development of sports facilities across the public, private and independent sectors. It covers all formal playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the authority area to assist it to strategically plan for the future.

Building upon the preceding Assessment Report, this Strategy and Action Plan provides a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2041 (in line with the Local Plan review). It has been developed to provide:

- ◀ A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities.
- ◀ A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions.
- ◀ A series of strategic recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock.
- ◀ A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision.
- ◀ A prioritised area-by-area and site-by-site action plan that prioritises and can address key issues.
- ◀ Guidance as to how the PPOSS can be delivered.

The Strategy is delivered in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (for "non-pitch" sports). Sport England's PPS Guidance details a stepped approach, separated into five distinct sections:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision
- ◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views
- ◀ Stage D: Develop the Strategy
- ◀ Stage E: Deliver the Strategy and keep it robust and up to date

This report represents Stage D of the process, with stages A-C covered in the preceding Assessment Report and Stage E ongoing once the study is complete. The lifespan of a PPOSS is considered to be three years, although this can be increased if updated.

The ANOG has a similar staged approach, as follows:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach.
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information on supply and demand.
- ◀ Stage C: Assessment – bringing the information together.
- ◀ Application: Application of an assessment.

Where not already implemented, the recommendations that come out of this strategy should be translated into local planning policy so that there is a mechanism in place to protect existing provision and to secure investment where the opportunity arises. The lifespan of a PPOSS is considered to be three years, although this can be increased if it is regularly kept up to date.

The PPOSS replaces the existing study (2015) for the Braintree District whilst also now covering a wider scope and additional sports.

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

The Action Plan (Part 6) recommends several priority projects relating to sports provision which should be realised over the Local Plan period. It provides a framework for improvement and, although resources may not currently be in place to implement it, potential partners and possible sources of external funding.

Partner organisations in Braintree have a vested interest in ensuring that existing playing pitches and ancillary provision are protected and enhanced. As such, many of the objectives and actions within this document need to be delivered and implemented by a wide range of bodies such as national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), sports organisations and education establishments. In many instances, BDC will not be the organisation which delivers these actions or recommendations as the PPOSS is not solely just for the Local Authority to act upon. It applies to/for all the stakeholders and partners involved.

Scope

The scope of the PPOSS focuses geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Sport included within the project are as follows:

- ✦ Football pitches (grass, third generation turf (3G) and ancillary provision).
- ✦ Rugby union pitches.
- ✦ Cricket pitches.
- ✦ Hockey pitches (artificial grass pitches (AGPs)).
- ✦ Other grass pitch sports as relevant e.g. rugby league, lacrosse, baseball/softball and American football.
- ✦ Tennis courts (including padel and pickleball facilities).
- ✦ Bowling greens.
- ✦ Athletics tracks (and running).
- ✦ Netball courts.
- ✦ Golf courses.
- ✦ Cycling (learn to ride space, road circuits, pump tracks, mountain biking/off road trails).
- ✦ Basketball courts.

In addition, 3G pitches are included, with this mainly focusing on football activity but also taking into account other sports that can use the surface type (e.g., rugby union and rugby league).

Where an outdoor sport has not been included, this is because its presence has not been evidenced. However, that is not to say that the sports are not played informally, or that localised demand does not exist.

Sport England's PPS guidance applies to football, rugby union, cricket and hockey as well as the other grass pitch sports identified. ANOG guidance applies to the remaining 'non-pitch' sports.

As well as considering current supply and demand, the strategy will ensure that a planned approach to sport and physical activity facilities takes place in the Council's area now and up to 2033, in line with the current Local Plan period. However, in respect of any future Local Plan review a period up to 2041 will need to be addressed.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Study area

Braintree District is located in the north of Essex between west of Colchester and north of Chelmsford and is on the A120 leading to Stansted Airport. The main towns are Braintree, Witham and Halstead with a number of key service villages: Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon & Feering and Sible Hedingham. Outside the main settlements the District has a predominantly rural character.

The study area is the Braintree District Council boundary area. Further to this sub areas or analysis areas are used to allow a more localised assessment of provision and examination of playing pitch supply and demand at a local level. Use of analysis areas also allows local circumstances and issues to be taken into account.

Braintree has seven neighbouring authorities: South Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk, Babergh, Colchester, Maldon, Chelmsford and Uttlesford. Due to this, there is a level of imported demand and sports teams from outside the study area that use outdoor sports facilities within Braintree. In addition, it is likely that sports teams from inside the Braintree District also use facilities outside of the area.

Braintree is divided into three analysis areas to better reflect the population split within the District. Each analysis area is made up of the following parishes/wards:

Table 1.1: Table of wards within the analysis areas

Analysis area	Map ID	Ward
Rural North	7	Bumpstead
Rural North	9	Gosfield & Greenstead Green
Rural North	11	Halstead St Andrew's
Rural North	12	Halstead Trinity
Rural North	14	Hedingham
Rural North	18	Stour Valley North
Rural North	19	Stour Valley South
Rural North	20	The Colnes
Rural North	21	Three Fields
Rural North	26	Yeldham
Central	1	Bocking Blackwater
Central	2	Bocking North
Central	3	Bocking South
Central	4	Braintree Central & Beckers Green
Central	5	Braintree South
Central	6	Braintree West
Central	8	Coggeshall
Central	10	Great Notley & Black Notley
Central	16	Rayne
South	13	Hatfield Peverel & Terling
South	15	Kelvedon & Feering
South	17	Silver End & Cressing
South	22	Witham Central
South	23	Witham North
South	24	Witham South
South	25	Witham West

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

For a map showing the analysis areas, please see Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Braintree District analysis areas



BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

PART 2: VISION AND AIMS

In line with existing corporate policies, the proposed vision for the Braintree District PPOSS is:

“To work with partners to create high quality, inclusive and sustainable sports facilities which allow communities to thrive through increasing participation and supporting health and wellbeing now and in the future.”

In addition, the following overarching aims are based on the three Sport England themes (see figure below). It is recommended that these are also adopted by the Council and its partners to enable it to achieve the overall vision of the PPOSS and Sport England planning objectives. Strategy delivery is the responsibility of, and relies upon, all relevant stakeholders.

AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

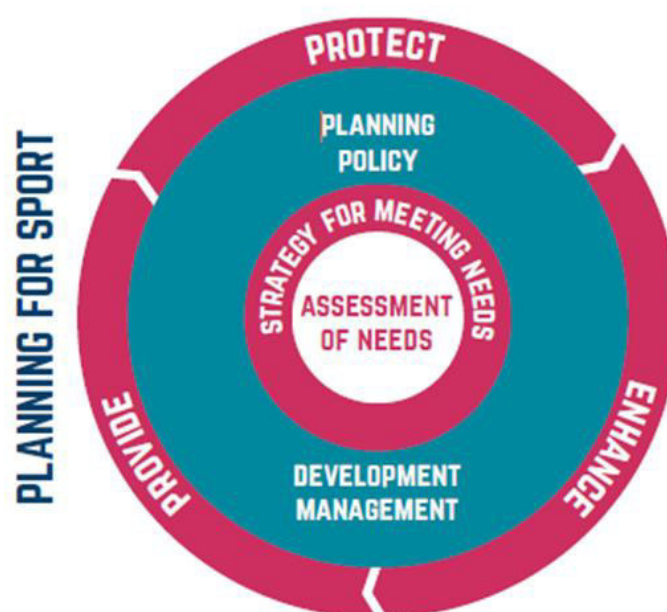
AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Figure 2.1: Sport England themes



Source: Sport England, Planning for Sport Guidance (2024)

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

PART 3: HEADLINE FINDINGS

The table below highlights the current quantitative shortfalls for each main pitch sport included within the PPOSS, as identified in the preceding Assessment Report. For qualitative findings and site-specific findings, please see Part 4: Sport Specific Recommendations and Scenarios, and Part 6: Action Plan.

Natural turf pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected. As the main usage of pitches is for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions. The table below therefore uses this for football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket, converting both the amount of play a site can accommodate (its carrying capacity) and how much play takes place (its current use) into the same unit of demand to enable an analysis to be undertaken.

Based on how the sports tend to be played, the match equivalent session unit for football, rugby union and rugby league pitches relates to a typical week within the season for each sport, whereas for cricket, the number of match equivalent sessions is over the course of a season. This is because how much play a cricket pitch can accommodate is primarily determined by the number and quality of wickets on a square, with only one match generally played per pitch per day and with the wickets rotated throughout a season to reduce wear and to allow for repair. Each wicket is therefore able to accommodate a certain amount of play per season as opposed to a week.

For artificial surfaces, the carrying capacity of the provision is much higher, meaning how much play can be accommodated is primarily determined by availability, rather than how usage adversely affects quality, as is the case with grass pitches. Therefore, the total number of pitches required is instead used to form an analysis. This is pertinent to 3G and hockey (sand/water-based pitches).

Future demand has to this point been determined by using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator, which looks at forecasted population change over a predetermined period. For Braintree District, this has been set to forecasted population rates (using ONS-based projections) to 2041, in line with the Local Plan.

Table 3.1: Current quantitative headline findings (pitch sports)

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/demand balance	Future supply/demand balance (to 2041)
Football	-	-	-
Central	Adult	Actual spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Central	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Central	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 5.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 6 match equivalent sessions
Central	Mini 7v7	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Played to capacity
Central	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 3.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 3.5 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Adult	Shortfall of 7 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 8 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Youth 11v11	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/demand balance	Future supply/demand balance (to 2041)
Rural North	Youth 9v9	Actual spare capacity of 1 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 1 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Mini 7v7	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions
South	Adult	Shortfall of 9.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 10.5 match equivalent sessions
South	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1 match equivalent session	Shortfall of 2 match equivalent sessions
South	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 6 match equivalent sessions
South	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 1 match equivalent session
South	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Adult	Shortfall of 14.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 17.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 4 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 9.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 11 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 7v7	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 6.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 6 match equivalent sessions
3G pitches	-	-	-
Central	11v11	Actual spare capacity of 0.25 pitch	Actual spare capacity of 0.25 pitch
Rural North	11v11	Shortfall of 0.25 pitch	Shortfall of 0.25 pitch
South	11v11	Shortfall of 2 pitch	Shortfall of 2 pitch
Braintree District	11v11	Shortfall of 2 pitches	Shortfall of 2 pitches
Rugby union	-	-	-
Central	Senior	Shortfall of 7.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 8 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Senior	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
South	Senior	Shortfall of 5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Senior	Shortfall of 12.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions
Hockey	-	-	-
Central	Full size	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
Rural North	Full size	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
South	Full size	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
Braintree District	Full size	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
Cricket	-	-	-
Central	Saturday	Shortfall of 37 match equivalent sessions	-

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/demand balance	Future supply/demand balance (to 2041)
Central	Sunday	Shortfall of 37 match equivalent sessions	-
Central	Midweek	Shortfall of 37 match equivalent sessions	-
Rural North	Saturday	Actual spare capacity of 48 match equivalent sessions	-
Rural North	Sunday	Actual spare capacity of 30 match equivalent sessions	-
Rural North	Midweek	Actual spare capacity of 96 match equivalent sessions	-
South	Saturday	Shortfall of 62 match equivalent sessions	-
South	Sunday	Shortfall of 50 match equivalent sessions	-
South	Midweek	Shortfall of 58 match equivalent sessions	-
Braintree District	Saturday	Shortfall of 51 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 75 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Sunday	Shortfall of 57 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 57 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Midweek	Actual spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of two match equivalent sessions

For the remaining sports, quantitative shortfalls can be more difficult to determine, with capacity guidance differing and with focus often away from formal activity. The current and future picture for each sport across Braintree District is therefore instead summarised in the table below.

Table 3.2: Headline findings (remaining sports)

Sport	Headline findings
Tennis	For club-based tennis, there is seemingly sufficient capacity in the Braintree District to facilitate current and future demand. No responding clubs report any issues, suggesting that there is no requirement for additional court space. In contrast, there is likely to be a shortfall of provision for non-club activity, with few local authority courts existing and with some of the supply accessed by clubs, poor quality and/or without sports lighting. This likely leading to levels of unmet and latent demand.
Padel	There are currently four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, located at The Essex Golf and Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club. The LTA estimates a further eight courts would need to be provided across the District to meet the demand.
Netball	Whilst there is a limited supply of netball provision within the Braintree District, existing demand levels are being adequately serviced. However, improving the alternative supply in the District and creating additional provision could result in increased demand levels and consequently help the sport grow. This should be further considered alongside the findings of the Chelmsford PPOSS and in partnership with neighbouring authorities to provide a regional solution to the issues identified.
Bowls	Both current and future demand for bowls in the Braintree District can be met via the existing supply, although monitoring is required in relation to Braintree BC and Witham BC to ensure that this remains the case due to its high membership. In addition, with no clubs operating with unsustainably low numbers, it is imperative that all four greens are protected for continued bowls activity. The levels of demand recorded could not be condensed onto fewer greens.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Sport	Headline findings
Athletics	The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet current demand. Braintree & District AC has a waiting list of 30 members. The Club cites this is due to a lack of coaches and volunteers which is limiting its growth. As well as some level of qualitative improvement is needed at Braintree Sport & Health Club. This is especially in regard to the surface of the track, which will require a resurface by 2026 (when its Track Mark accreditation expires).
Golf	The existing supply of golf provision in the Braintree District is sufficient to meet demand levels, with a large quantity of facilities provided that collectively offers good variety to ensure that all golfers can be catered for. As demand levels are also high, particularly when accounting for needs from the wider region, all existing provision needs to be protected.
Cycling	There is some club based demand identified in the Braintree District, with one BMX club which accesses a dedicated facility at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field). Therefore, the provision should be protected and sustained and seen as a destination venue for BMX cyclists in the District.
Basketball	There is seemingly a good supply of basketball courts in the Braintree District across the MUGA supply. However, there are clear quality issues that should be overcome to better accommodate existing usage and to encourage higher levels of demand.
Other grass pitch sports	The current level of supply is sufficient enough to meet community demand for rounders in the Braintree District, with rounders diamonds provided at Council and town/parish council sites and thus are available for community use able to adequately cater for any potential future demand. That being said, there are no community available facilities in the North Analysis Area.

Conclusion

The existing position for all sports is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of additional shortfalls for some pitch/facility types and in some areas where demand is currently being met. As a result, no provision can be deemed surplus to requirements, meaning that there is a clear need to protect all existing provision. This is unless another planning policy exception is met, as per Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Despite the identified shortfalls, most of the deficits identified could be met by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, site re-configuration, installing additional sports lighting, enabling access to existing unused sites, such as at unavailable schools, and bringing disused sites back into use. This means that significant levels of new provision will not necessarily be required, providing that other solutions can be delivered to the required degree.

As exceptions to the above, the shortfall of 3G pitches and padel courts can only be met via the installation of new provision given that such demand cannot be met in any alternative ways (although existing sites could be utilised). Additionally, there is also a distinct need for additional cricket provision, whilst large scale housing growth could also necessitate the need for further facilities (see Part 7 of this report).

Furthermore, it should also be noted that even for sports and in areas where demand is being met, this does not mean that no actions will be required over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

PART 4: SPORT SPECIFIC ISSUES SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, in order to help develop actions for each sport, and to understand their potential impact, a number of relevant scenario questions are tested against the findings evidences in the preceding Assessment Report for each sport. This then informs the sport specific recommendations.

The included scenarios focus on the impact that they will have on the shortfalls and key issues identified and how they can be overcome. However, whilst each can improve the picture to a greater or lesser extent, it should be noted that carrying out some scenarios to the fullest degree is likely to be unviable and that a combination of actions will instead be required to ensure that all current and future demand can be met.

For some sports, no scenarios are included, although that is not to say that no action is required. Instead, recommendations are clear without the requirement for scenarios to be tested.

Football – grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

Football – supply and demand summary

- Actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across the Braintree District totalling 24.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across 35 pitches.
- It is determined that there is currently a shortfall of adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch capacity, with the mini 7v7 played to capacity and mini 5v5 pitches displaying actual spare capacity.
- When factoring in future demand, shortfalls worsen on adult and youth pitches whilst they are created on the mini 7v7 pitches.
- Overall, the Central and Rural North analysis areas display actual spare capacity, whilst the South Analysis Area shows shortfalls for the majority of pitch types.

Football – supply summary

- The audit identifies a total of 133 grass football pitches within the Braintree District across 58 sites, with 112 pitches available for community use across 45 sites.
- Disused provision is identified at Burches Meadow.
- In addition to formal football provision, there are eight sites across the Braintree District which accommodate recreational provision that is or can be used for football activity.
- Future provision should be established as part of the residential development at Land North East of Witham.
- Most community available pitches across the Braintree District are managed by sports clubs (43 pitches).
- Of the pitches that are available for community use, 19 are assessed as good quality, 58 as standard quality and 35 as poor quality.
- Blackmore End Playing Fields, Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road, Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field), John Ray Recreation Ground are serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.

Football – demand summary

- There are 337 affiliated teams from within 54 clubs based within the Braintree District.
- 326 teams from within 50 clubs are identified as playing regular, competitive matches on pitches within the Braintree District. This comprises of 66 adult, 118 youth 11v11, 58 youth 9v9, 63 mini 7v7 and 25 mini 5v5 teams.
- There are 23 dedicated female teams based in the District.
- Walking football and futsal teams also have a presence within the Braintree District, although this generally takes place away from grass pitch provision.
- There are seven clubs playing within the men's football pyramid structure (Braintree Town FC, Coggeshall Town FC, Earls Colne FC, Halstead Town FC, Hatfield Peverel FC, White Notley FC and Witham Town FC).

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

- Two clubs are identified as exporting demand outside of the Braintree District into neighbouring authorities. Braintree FC fields three futsal teams who export demand outside of the District to the sports hall at St John Payne Catholic School in Chelmsford for match play.
- In respect of imported demand, Bethel Christian Fellowship FC, which is otherwise based in Chelmsford, imports demand into the District.
- A total of four clubs identify latent demand in that they express they could field more teams if they had more pitch capacity.
- Future demand from population growth projects an increase of 17 teams, whilst a total of 10 clubs quantify growth aspirations amounting to 52 teams (including 14 female).
- Predicted participation increases will be further considered via the incorporation of a scenario in the proceeding Strategy document. This will also evidence the potential impact of other growth scenarios.

Scenarios

Improving pitch quality

In total, there are 30 pitches across 17 sites which are overplayed by a combined total of 43.5 match equivalent sessions per week. Improving quality of such provision (i.e., through increased maintenance or improved drainage) will increase capacity across the sites and as a consequence help to reduce both current and future shortfalls across the District.

To illustrate the above, Table 4.1 highlights the current level of overplay that would be alleviated if quality improved to good at each site. As a reminder, the capacity rating for each type and quality rating is:

Adult pitch quality	Adult matches per week	Youth pitch quality	Youth matches per week	Mini pitch quality	Mini matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 4.1: Overplay if all overplayed pitches were good quality (in match equivalent sessions)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current quality	Current capacity rating	Good quality capacity rating
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Rural North	Adult	1	Poor	1.5	0.5
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Rural North	Youth (9v9)	1	Poor	0.5	2.5
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	Youth (11v11)	2	Standard	0.5	3.5
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	Central	Youth (9v9)	1	Standard	0.5	1.5
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	Rural North	Adult	1	Poor	4.5	2.5
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	Central	Youth (9v9)	1	Poor	1.5	1.5
24	Gosfield School	Rural North	Adult	2	Poor	0.5	0.5

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current quality	Current capacity rating	Good quality capacity rating
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	South	Youth (11v11)	1	Good	0.5	0.5
42	Lawn Meadow	Rural North	Adult	1	Standard	2.5	1.5
45	New Rickstones Academy	South	Youth (11v11)	3	Poor	0.5	8.5
46	Notley Green	Central	Youth (9v9)	1	Standard	4.5	2.5
48	Notley Sports Centre	Central	Adult	1	Poor	0.5	1.5
49	Oak Farm	South	Adult	2	Poor	1.5	2.5
50	Rayne Village Hall	Central	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	0.5
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	South	Adult	2	Standard	4.5	2.5
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	South	Youth (9v9)	1	Standard	1	1
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	Rural North	Youth (9v9)	1	Poor	1	2
66	The Bell Field	Rural North	Adult	1	Poor	1	1
67	The Crops	Central	Adult	1	Good	2	2
75	Witham Sports Ground	South	Youth (9v9)	1	Poor	2	1
76	Witham Town Football Club	South	Adult	1	Good	8	8
76	Witham Town Football Club	South	Mini (7v7)	1	Standard	1	1
76	Witham Town Football Club	South	Youth (9v9)	1	Standard	3	1

As seen, some of the overplayed pitches could accommodate current demand if quality was improved. However, there are also sites which could still accommodate a level of overplay even if quality was improved due to sheer amount of demand or are already good quality. This is at the following sites:

- ✦ Courtauld Sports Ground (one adult).
- ✦ Keith Bigden Memorial Ground (one youth 11v11).
- ✦ Lawn Meadow (one adult).
- ✦ Notley Green (one youth 9v9).
- ✦ Rickstones Sports Ground (two adult).
- ✦ The Crops (one adult).
- ✦ Witham Town Football Club (one adult and one youth 9v9).

As a result of improving quality across the overplayed pitches, the existing shortfalls on adult and youth pitches would be eradicated across the Braintree District. This is shown in the table below. Please note that Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 shows total capacity and not the potential capacity created will not necessarily be in the peak period and therefore may not fully meet demand.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Table 4.2: Current supply and demand if quality improved to good at overplayed sites

Pitch type	Current total	Potential capacity with improvements
Adult	14.5	2.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	11.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	10.5
Mini 7v7	-	2
Mini 5v5	6.5	6.5

It should also be noted that if quality was improved, this will also likely require existing maintenance budgets to be maintained or enhanced over a long term period. This may not be feasible for some operators.

Further to the above, future shortfalls will be eradicated on adult and youth pitches, with adult pitches played to capacity and the youth pitches with overall actual spare capacity created.

Table 4.3: Future supply and demand if quality improved to good at overplayed sites

Pitch type	Future total	Potential capacity with improvements
Adult	17	0
Youth 11v11	4	9
Youth 9v9	11	9
Mini 7v7	1.5	0.5
Mini 5v5	6	6

Priority sites for improved pitch quality

As improving the quality of all overplayed sites may not be feasible from an investment point of view, an alternative approach is to focus on improving specific strategic sites, where large clubs such as Diamond Youth, Great Bradfords Youth, Sporting 77, Valley Green FC and Witham Town FC utilise grass pitches for match play demand. To that end, the below tables identifies six sites for grass pitch improvements that would benefit from investment and that are key to the development of football. This improvement should be led by appropriate operators/owners, with The County Football Association (CFA) and Football Foundation (FF) able to provide support and guidance as well as some potential funding.

Table 4.4: Impact of quality improvements to chosen priority sites

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current capacity rating (MES)	Good quality capacity rating (MES)
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Adult	1	1.5	0.5
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Mini (5v5)	1	0	4
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Mini (7v7)	1	0	4
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	Youth (9v9)	1	0.5	2.5
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	Mini (5v5)	1	1.5	5.5
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	Mini (7v7)	2	1.5	9.5
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	Youth (9v9)	1	1.5	1.5
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	Adult	4	3	7

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Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current capacity rating (MES)	Good quality capacity rating (MES)
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	Mini (5v5)	1	3	5
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	Mini (7v7)	2	6	10
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	Youth (9v9)	1	0	2
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	Adult	2	4.5	2.5
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	Mini (5v5)	1	2.5	4.5
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	Mini (7v7)	1	1	3
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	Youth (9v9)	1	1	1
75	Witham Sports Ground	Adult	4	3	4
75	Witham Sports Ground	Youth (9v9)	1	2	1
76	Witham Town Football Club	Adult	1	8	8
76	Witham Town Football Club	Mini (5v5)	1	2.5	3.5
76	Witham Town Football Club	Mini (7v7)	1	1	1
76	Witham Town Football Club	Youth (9v9)	1	3	1

It has been identified that Witham Town Football Club is currently in the process of improving its grass pitches through the FA's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund and has received machinery grants.

Linked to the previous scenario of improving pitch quality, strategic sites Blackmore End Playing Fields, Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field), Witham Sports Ground and Witham Town Football Club display levels of overplay. This therefore emphasises that these sites should be a key priority for investment.

Improving quality at strategic sites would create 30 equivalent sessions of additional capacity per week, with the impact of these improvements on the overall supply and demand balance shown in the table below (note that the table below is presented on a peak time model and that not all capacity from improving sites will generate capacity within the peak periods, albeit it will create an improved quality experience for users).

Based on improvements, shortfalls for adult and youth pitches would be reduced but still remain, whilst actual spare capacity would be established on mini 7v7 pitches.

Table 4.5: Impact on current supply and demand if quality improved at chosen sites

Pitch type	Current capacity (match equivalent sessions)	Potential capacity (match equivalent sessions)
Adult	14.5	2.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	1.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	3.5
Mini 7v7	-	7
Mini 5v5	6.5	11.5

As seen in the table below, future shortfalls would remain on adult and youth pitches. Mini 7v7 pitches would have overall spare capacity rather than a shortfall existing.

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Table 4.6: Impact on future supply and demand if quality improved at chosen sites

Pitch type	Future capacity (match equivalent sessions)	Potential capacity (match equivalent sessions)
Adult	17	5
Youth 11v11	4	4
Youth 9v9	11	5
Mini 7v7	1.5	5.5
Mini 5v5	6	11

New grass pitches at planned residential developments across the District

There are plans in place to provide new football grass pitch provision which are completed but not operational yet or at advanced planning stages. This includes one adult and two mini 7v7 pitches at Maltings Lane (Haygreen Road) and two adult pitches at Rivenhall Park and as well as one youth 11v11 and two mini 7v7 pitches proposed at Finchingfield Playing Fields.

On a District wide level, this increases capacity by eight match equivalent sessions per week at peak times. The shortfalls on adult and youth 11v11 pitches would still remain, albeit at reduced levels, whilst actual spare capacity is created on the mini 7v7 pitches. The impact of creating these pitches can be seen in the table below.

Table 4.7: Current supply and demand if additional pitches provided at planned residential developments across the District

Pitch type	Current capacity (match equivalent sessions)	Potential capacity (match equivalent sessions)
Adult	14.5	11.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	0.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	9.5
Mini 7v7	-	4
Mini 5v5	6.5	6.5

Loss of tenure at education sites

As highlighted in the Assessment Report, three of the community accessible sites in Braintree District are managed by education providers. The table below outlines this further.

Table 4.8: Demand taking place on grass pitches at education sites

School	Security of tenure	Club	Teams
Gosfield School	Unsecure	Halstead Town FC	One team
Hedingham School	Unsecure	Braintree Athletic Braintree Blades Stisted FC	One team One team One team
New Rickstones Academy	Secure	Witham Town FC	One team

In instances where clubs do not have formal tenure agreements in place, clubs could theoretically be asked to vacate at any time which would result in each requiring alternate provision to service existing levels of demand.

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If community access to the unsecure education sites was to be lost, shortfalls in Braintree District would be exacerbated on adult and youth 11v11 pitches, as shown in the following table.

Witham Town FC accesses the grass pitches at Rickstones Academy which has a formal use agreement in place with the sports clubs which use its facilities at the site. Therefore, tenure is already included and deemed to be secure and have been discounted from Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Impact on current supply and demand without access to unsecure sites in match equivalent sessions

Pitch type	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Adult	14.5	16.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	1.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	9.5
Mini 7v7	-	-
Mini 5v5	6.5	6.5

As shown above, to avoid the risk of the supply and demand balance worsening, it is necessary to try and ensure that grass pitches at education sites continue to stay open to community use, given the reliance upon school sites across Braintree District. However, it should be noted that in practice this can be difficult to achieve.

Whilst not always possible, securing community use agreements would ensure that demand continues to be accommodated in the long-term. Where there is external investment on sites e.g., by an NGB, Sport England, the Council or through s106 funding, there are opportunities to secure community use as part of the funding or approval agreement. This also applies to new schools or for existing schools seeking changes to provision that requires planning permission as, via planning consent, the Council can mandate the implementation of a community use agreement as part of the planning stipulations.

Bringing disused pitches back into use

Currently, there is one site identified as being disused which previously accommodated a football pitch but no longer does so. This relates to Burches Meadow, which previously provided one adult pitch, although it is not known when this was last provided/used.

In addition to the above, there are two further sites (Kelvedon Recreation Ground and Strutt Memorial Ground) which previously accommodated some football provision equating to two adult pitches at the former and one adult pitch at the latter. The sites are not classified as disused as they are still being accessed, although they are no longer marked out and used for affiliated football.

Bringing the pitches back into use for the sole benefit of adult football would add an additional four match equivalent sessions per week of peak time capacity to the overall supply and demand balance if all these pitches were brought back into use established to a minimum of standard quality with secured tenure. This is shown in the table below.

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Table 4.10: Current supply and demand if disused pitches were reinstated in match equivalent sessions

Pitch type	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Adult	14.5	10.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	1.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	9.5
Mini 7v7	-	-
Mini 5v5	6.5	6.5

As seen in the table above, if disused pitches were to be reinstated, shortfalls on adult pitches would still remain albeit at a reduced level.

Notwithstanding the above, none of the sites currently has any supporting ancillary provision and provide either one or two pitches (unless further pitches could be marked out). However, Burches Meadow could potentially accommodate multiple youth/mini pitches, which there is less of a requirement for significant ancillary provision. Further feasibility should be considered to judge the value in re-instating the pitches at both sites as ultimately each resembles a poor quality sporting offer in their existing states.

Accommodating exported demand

Currently, there are three teams across two clubs (consisting of three adult teams) which have been identified as being exported from Braintree District into neighbouring authorities. This is from the following clubs:

- ✦ Feering Village FC.
- ✦ Stoke Wanderers FC.

The impact of all demand returning to Braintree District is shown in the following table. As seen, the existing deficit would increase on adult pitches.

Table 4.11: Current supply and demand if all exported demand returned to the District in match equivalent sessions

Pitch type	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Adult	14.5	17.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	1.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	9.5
Mini 7v7	-	-
Mini 5v5	6.5	6.5

Continuation of growth trends

This scenario examines the impact of future demand based on potential growth from historical FA affiliation data. Figure 4.1 below plots the forecasted increases for the upcoming 2025/26 season, taking into account the following demand from previous seasons:

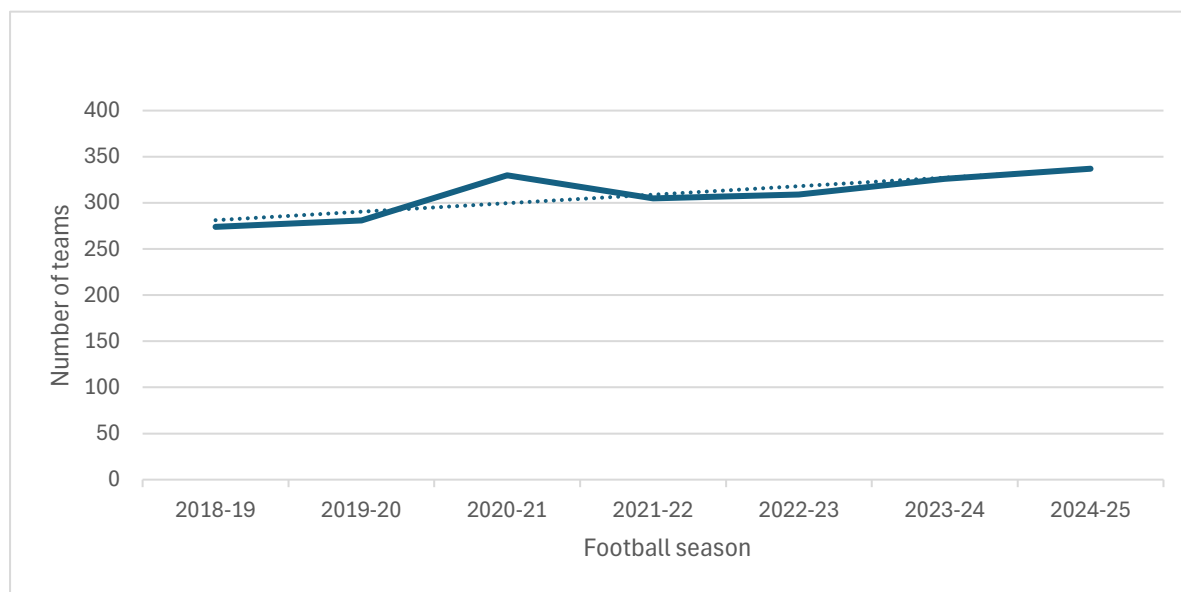
- ✦ 2018-19: 274 teams.
- ✦ 2019-20: 281 teams.
- ✦ 2020/21: 330 teams.
- ✦ 2021/22: 305 teams.
- ✦ 2022/23: 309 teams.
- ✦ 2023/24: 326 teams.
- ✦ 2024/25: 337 teams.

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Please note the reduction in teams in the 2021/22 season due to the impact of Covid.

With an average yearly increase of 3.5% in Braintree District between 2018 and 2025, this would result in an additional 12 teams and 24 match equivalent sessions per week over the next five years. On this basis, participation increases reported by clubs during consultation is a significantly lower than those identified through forecasting growth via this method.

Figure 4.1: Annual growth in football teams across Braintree District (2018-2025)



If the above future demand through forecasted growth was to be realised over the next five years, this would exacerbate existing shortfalls on adult and youth pitches and deficits would also be established on mini 7v7 pitches. This is shown in the table below.

Table 4.12: Current supply and demand if growth trends continued (to 2030) in match equivalent sessions

Pitch type	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Adult	14.5	19.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	9.5
Youth 9v9	9.5	14.5
Mini 7v7	-	4
Mini 5v5	6.5	4.5

Given the current shortfalls identified for grass football pitches, this further evidences the need to improve pitch quality at overplayed and poor quality sites and to potentially develop more pitches (which could include 3G pitches) to better support this anticipated growth in demand.

Actual growth should be monitored regularly via Stage E updates to understand which growth scenario (population forecasts, continuation of growth trends or club aspirations) is playing out to be the most accurate.

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Accounting for club future demand aspirations

During consultation, 10 clubs report aspirations to increase the number of teams that they provide, equating to a predicted growth of 52 teams - broken down as eight adult, 17 youth 11v11, 14 youth 9v9, 10 mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 teams. This was previously discounted from calculations as it is considered to be more aspirational than future growth predicted via population growth and evidenced participation trends; however, the table below explores the impact if such demand is realised.

In addition, four 11v11 3G pitches are being developed across the District (three are operational and one is opening soon at Alec Hunter Academy) and the expectation is that this will further boost participation growth.

Table 4.13: Current supply and demand with club future demand aspirations accounted for in match equivalent sessions

Pitch type	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Adult	14.5	18.5
Youth 11v11	1.5	10
Youth 9v9	9.5	16.5
Mini 7v7	-	5
Mini 5v5	6.5	5

If realised, the impact of club aspirational growth would exacerbate the shortfalls on adult and youth pitches and a shortfall established on mini 7v7 pitches. Spare capacity would still remain on mini 5v5 pitches but at a reduced level.

As noted above, it is important that Stage E monitors future club demand aspirations to help to plan for the most likely scenario.

Ancillary provision

As well as creating capacity on the pitch there is a requirement to also ensure that current and future levels of demand can be accommodated off the pitch, more specifically regarding ancillary provision and changing rooms.

As outlined in the Assessment Report, ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for rugby clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ◆ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
- ◆ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
- ◆ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.

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- ✦ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

Specifically in the Braintree District, demand for the following clubs maybe affected due to the poor quality of their changing provision:

- ✦ Blackmore End Playing Fields (Great Bradfords Youth).
- ✦ Braintree Sport & Health Club (Great Bradfords Youth).
- ✦ Braintree Town FC - Cressing Road (Braintree Town FC and Braintree Town Supporters).
- ✦ Deanery Hill - Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field (Sporting 77).
- ✦ John Ray Recreation Ground (Braintree Youth and Kelvedon FC).
- ✦ Keith Bigden Memorial Ground (Hatfield Peverel FC).
- ✦ Releet Sports Ground (Notley Youth).
- ✦ Rickstones Sports Ground (Valley Green FC).
- ✦ Witham Town Football Club (Witham Town FC).

Linked to the above, there are currently 24 dedicated female teams and future participation increases amounting to two senior women's and 12 youth girls' teams. In order for these aspirations to be realised, dedicated women's and girls' changing rooms would need to exist. Without improvements to facilities, these clubs would still to establish the aspirations and may even have issues retaining current levels of current demand.

Summary of scenarios

It is evident that a combination of improving quality, bringing back disused pitches back into use and securing community use will meet the current demand without the need for additional pitches. However, it appears that there is a need for more pitches to meet future demand, given the significant shortfalls on adult and youth 9v9 pitches.

As an alternative option increased access to 3G pitches for match play purposes would be beneficial in alleviating the remaining overplay. In effect, a multi-phased approach is required in Braintree District to alleviate identified overplay. Future demand should be monitored through Stage E.

Recommendations

- ✦ Protect existing pitches in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ✦ Improve pitch quality with a focus on overplayed pitches and strategic sites listed above such as at Blackmore End Playing Fields, Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field), John Ray Recreation Ground, Rickstones Sports Ground, Witham Sports Ground and Witham Town Football Club.
- ✦ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- ✦ Support eligible organisations to access funding to improve pitches at their sites, such as through the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF).
- ✦ Work with education sites, particularly at Gosfield School, Hedingham School and New Rickstones Academy, to provide secured community use, with a focus on those currently in use by clubs.

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- Consider bringing disused pitches back into use, subject to a sustainable programme of use and appropriate quality being developed.
- Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer, with a particular focus on multi-pitch sites and key sites for the growth of female and adult participation.
- Seek to provide a resolution for the return of demand that is currently exported from Braintree District.
- Regularly monitor future growth levels to determine if additional pitches are required, particularly for adult and youth football – this can be done via the Stage E process (see Part 8).
- Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and make on-site provision for meeting existing and future football pitch needs.
- Where a housing development is not of a size to justify on-site football provision, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality, with priority placed on priorities and needs identified in the PPOSS Action Plan and the LFFP.
- Where a development is of a size to justify on-site football provision, focus on the creation of multi-pitch sites with community use that reduce existing shortfalls, with accompanying clubhouse provision included given that single pitch sites without appropriate ancillary facilities can be unsustainable.

Third generation turf (3G) pitches

Assessment Report summary

3G – supply and demand summary

- There is an insufficient supply of 3G pitch provision to meet football requirements, with two additional 11v11 pitches needed to meet training needs, equating to 0.25 pitches in the Rural North Analysis Area and two pitches in the South Analysis Area. Whilst there is an oversupply of 0.25 pitches in the Central Analysis Area.
- For rugby union, the creation of World Rugby compliant 3G provision may provide a solution to the identified overplay of grass pitches, although this needs to be considered against grass pitch solutions.
- No demand for access to 3G provision has been identified from any other sports, suggesting that no other demand currently requires consideration.
- 3G – supply summary**
- There are six 11v11 3G pitches across six sites, which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.
- There are four smaller size 3G pitches. Three of these have sports lighting and are available for community use (Discovery Centre (Great Notley), Hedingham School and Lyons Hall Primary School). Whilst the pitch at Notley Green Primary School is neither available for community nor serviced by sports lighting.
- Planning applications have been approved and work has begun on the development of four 11v11 3G pitches in the Braintree District, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy (23/03020/FUL), New Rickstones Academy (24/00352/FUL), Notley High School (24/00027/FUL) and Witham Sports Ground (23/03067/FUL). For this assessment, they have been included in the supply as they are newly installed. The pitches at New Rickstones Academy, Notley High School and Witham Sports Ground are fully operational and the pitch at Alec Hunter Academy is due to be fully operational by January 2026. The work is being funded through the Football Foundation and Section 106 monies from housing developments in the vicinity.
- The Braintree LFFP has three recommended projects for the creation of 11v11 3G pitches.
- Planning permission has been granted for the development of a smaller sized 3G pitch at Witham Sports and Social Club (21/00074/FUL).
- All 11v11 3G pitches are either FA or FIFA certified and can therefore be used to host competitive matches.
- No pitches in the Braintree District are World Rugby compliant.

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- ▶ All 11v11 3G pitches are fully available for use during peak time hours.
- ▶ All six 11v11 3G pitches are rated as good quality having been installed in the last three years.
- ▶ Of the smaller size pitches, Notley Green Primary School is assessed as good quality and the pitches at Discovery Centre (Great Notley) and Lyons Hall Primary School as standard quality. The pitch at Hedingham School is assessed as poor quality, having been installed in 2012 and the carpet has not been replaced since.

3G – demand summary

- ▶ The 3G pitches currently servicing the Braintree District are reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months.
- ▶ This applies not only to midweek capacity but also to weekend capacity on account of all four of the 11v11 3G pitches being FIFA/FA approved to host competitive matches.
- ▶ All activity is currently football related across five sites, with including 36 teams gaining access for match play purposes (at the time of audit).
- ▶ As well as club training and match play activity, the pitches are also accessed for recreational football, walking football and coaching sessions as well as by commercial leagues.
- ▶ Unmet demand for 3G provision is expressed, with 10 responding football clubs representing 149 teams as well as Braintree RUFC identifying that their training requirements are not currently being met.
- ▶ Four football clubs also currently export some 3G demand outside of the Braintree District, whilst two clubs import activity into the District.
- ▶ Future football and rugby union team growth could increase 3G pitch requirements.

Scenarios

Accommodating football training demand

In order to satisfy current football training demand (based on the FA's scenario of one 11v11 3G pitch equivalent being able to cater for 38 community football teams) there is a theoretical need for nine 11v11 3G pitches in Braintree District. This results in a shortfall of two 11v11 3G pitches to accommodate all football training demand, as seen below. Broken down, this equates to a shortfall of 0.25 pitches in the Rural North Analysis Area and two pitches in the South Analysis Area. Whilst there is an oversupply of 0.25 pitches in the Central Analysis Area.

Table 4.14: Current demand for 3G pitches in Braintree District (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Analysis area	Current demand	Current 3G requirement ¹	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Current shortfall
Central	117	3	3.25	0.25
Rural North	85	2	1.75	0.25
South	136	4	2	2
Braintree District	337	9	7	2

Accommodating future football demand

When factoring in future demand of 17 teams (from projecting population growth to 2041), the requirement remains the same, with nine 11v11 3G pitches required in Braintree District overall.

¹ Rounded to the nearest whole number

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Future demand expressed by clubs equates to the growth of 52 football teams. If this was to be achieved there would be a total of 389 teams playing within the District, which means that there will be a need for 10 11v11 3G pitches. This has previously been discounted from calculations as it is considered to be more aspirational than future growth predicted via population growth.

Table 4.15: Potential football training demand for 3G pitches incorporating club aspirations

Analysis area	Potential future demand	Future 11v11 3G pitch requirement ²	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Future 11v11 3G pitch shortfall
Central	141	4	3.25	0.75
Rural North	92	2	1.75	0.25
South	153	4	2	2
Total	389	10	7	3

As an alternative method for forecasting future demand, predicted growth through a trend based analysis, using historic affiliation data for Braintree District and over a five year period, would equate to an additional 12 teams. If this level of increase was to be achieved, there would be a total of 349 teams within Braintree District by 2030, which would lead to a theoretical need for nine 11v11 3G pitches and a shortfall of two. This is shown in the table below.

Table 4.16: Impact of future demand positions for 3G pitches based on growth trends

Future demand positions	Future number of teams	11v11 3G requirement ³	Current number of 11v11 3G pitch equivalents	Future shortfall
Population growth (up to 2041)	354	9	7	2
Participation increases	389	10	7	3
Trend based growth (from affiliation)	349	9	7	2

Moving football match play demand to 3G pitches

Moving match play to 3G pitches in addition to training demand is supported by the FA, which is particularly keen to work with local authorities to understand the potential demand for 11v11 3G pitches should all competitive matches that are presently played on council pitches be transferred. This is due to a recognition that councils often have budget restraints, with improving and maintaining pitches to an appropriate standard not always possible.

Within Braintree District, there are currently 139 teams playing at local authority and parish council sites at peak time across the formats of play.

Table 4.17: Number of teams currently using council pitches in Braintree District⁴

Pitch type	Pitch size	Peak period	No. of teams
Adult	11v11	Saturday PM	16
Youth	11v11	Sunday AM	61
Youth	9v9	Sunday AM	26
Mini	7v7	Sunday AM	26

² Rounded to the nearest whole number

³ Rounded to the nearest whole number

⁴ Includes town and parish council pitches

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Pitch type	Pitch size	Peak period	No. of teams
Mini	5v5	Sunday AM	10
-	-	Total	139

The FA suggests an approach for estimating the number of 11v11 3G pitches required to accommodate the above demand for competitive matches, as seen in the table below.

Table 4.18: 11v11 3G pitches required for the transfer of council pitch demand

Format	No. of teams at peak time	No. of matches at peak time	No. of 3G units required per match ⁵	Total 3G units required	No. of 3G pitches required
Adult	16	8	32	256	4
Youth 11v11	61	30.5	32	976	15.25
Youth 9v9	26	13	10	130	2.03
Mini 7v7	26	13	8	104	1.63
Mini 5v5	10	5	4	20	0.31

As there are currently six 11v11 3G pitches provided in Braintree District, this results in a deficit of 17 pitches. However, as this is more than the number of pitches required for existing training demand, it may not be considered practical to provide this many as sustainability would then become questionable (unless certain future demand scenarios are achieved). Pitches generally need high levels of midweek usage to be operationally viable.

An alternative approach to consider is the transfer of all mini football from grass to 3G pitches, with the FA having an ambition to transfer 50% of all mini play on to 3G pitches nationally. Thus, a programme of play has been created for Braintree District to determine how many 3G pitches would be required to accommodate this. The table below tests a scenario that would enable all mini 5v5 and mini 7v7 football to transfer based on a programme of play at current peak time (Sunday AM).

Table 4.19: Moving all mini matches to 3G pitches

Time	AGP	Total games/teams
9.30am – 10.30am	4 x 5v5	4/8
10.30am – 11.30am	2 x 7v7	2/4
11.30am – 12.30pm	2 x 7v7	2/4
12.30pm – 1.30pm	2 x 7v7	2/4

Based on the above programming and separate start times for the formats, the overall need is for eight 11v11 3G pitches to accommodate all current mini match play demand in Braintree District (based on 63 teams playing 7v7 football and 25 teams playing mini 5v5 football at peak time). As such, it is considered all current mini football demand could be accommodated on the supply of 3G pitches, if training requirements were to be met.

⁵ Based on how pitches are split within a full size 3G pitch

World Rugby compliant 3G pitches

World Rugby produced the 'performance specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. The RFU generally supports the development of 3G pitches which support rugby union, particularly where grass rugby pitches are over capacity and where a pitch would support the growth of the game at the host site and for the local rugby partnership, including local clubs and education establishments.

There are currently no World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in Braintree District, meaning no clubs are utilising the provision for training (or matches). However, given the level of shortfall on grass pitches that has been identified (12.5 match equivalent sessions per week currently and 13 match equivalent sessions per week when factoring in future demand from population growth), the creation of World Rugby compliant provision could be warranted. In particular, there is a need for provision to service Braintree RUFC given the deficits identified at its home ground and the improbability of other improvements fully resolving the shortfalls.

If a World Rugby compliant new pitch is to be sought, focus should therefore be placed on accommodating demand from clubs with shortfalls at Braintree Rugby Football Club (Braintree RUFC) equating to 7.5 match equivalent sessions per week of overplay. A pitch could be developed in situ for the host club, or if nearby providing sufficient access was enabled. This is to improve the supply and not to enable the dispersal of existing pitches.

When establishing the creation of World Rugby compliant 3G pitch provision, this could be through developing provision primarily for rugby union. Alternatively, the provision could be established in conjunction with reducing 3G shortfalls for football, although this may necessitate the need for more pitches as the outcomes for football would be reduced. For the development of any 3G pitch at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club (or any other suggested sites), there is a need to ensure that Sport England's Playing Field Policy is adhered to. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that any 3G pitch proposal on this site would need to protect/replace any cricket pitches that would be affected.

New site options

The table below identifies potential sites which could, in theory, be suitable for future development to meet the shortfall of 3G pitches. However, for the development of any 3G pitch at the sites below (or any other sites in the future), there is a need to ensure that NPPF requirements and Sport England's Playing Field Policy is adhered to, particularly when the loss of grass provision is entailed.

The sites listed have been identified by a combination of the findings from the Assessment Report, the 2025 Braintree LFFP, operator aspirations, consultation with Essex County FA and the basic feasibility for installing a pitch due to having the available land and on-site management options.

Each of the sites will require a feasibility study to be undertaken to determine if they are indeed suitable in meeting known need. Such a full feasibility would also need to include a range of matters including site characteristics as well as sports, financial and planning issues. This should be done in consultation with Essex County FA, the RFU (where applicable) and the FF as well as Sport England and any other relevant NGBs. It is crucial to recognise that this list is only presented as a starting point for discussion and should be updated as part of the Stage E process.

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Table 4.20: Potential 3G pitch site options in Braintree District

Analysis area	Current shortfall	Site name	Comments
Central	None for football, but a need for rugby union	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Site provides three senior rugby pitches and is heavily accessed and overplayed by Braintree RUFC. There are aspirations to create a 3G pitch to support the Club's training needs and growing demand, in addition to preserving the grass pitches for match play. It should, however, be acknowledged that any proposal on this site would need to protect/replace any cricket pitches that would be affected.
Central	None for football	Braintree Town area	There is a potential need for an additional 11v11 3G pitch in the Analysis Area, despite no theoretical shortfall, as the 11v11 3G pitches are operating at capacity. Key clubs include Braintree Youth (19 teams), Great Bradfords Youth (27 teams) and Notley Youth FC (18 teams). Releat Sports Ground, John Ray Recreation Ground and Braintree Sport & Health Club have been identified as potential sites. Based on the FA 1:38 training model, actual site usage and club demand is key consideration beyond this. This might justify future provision subject to a suitable business plan and programme of use.
Rural North	One 11v11 pitch for football	Coggeshall area	Given the identified shortfalls in the Rural North Analysis Area, the development of a 11v11 3G pitch should be targeted within this Analysis Area, Honywood School has been identified as a potential option as well as the wider Coggeshall area.
South	Two 11v11 pitches for football	South East area	Given the identified shortfalls in the South Analysis Area, the development of a 11v11 3G pitch should be targeted within this Analysis Area in order to support demand in the Coggeshall and Witham. It should be noted that Honywood Science Community School will also pick up some demand from the South Analysis Area. Key clubs to provide for include Hatfield Peverel FC (22 teams), Witham Town Youth FC (39 teams) and Coggeshall Town Youth FC (12 teams).

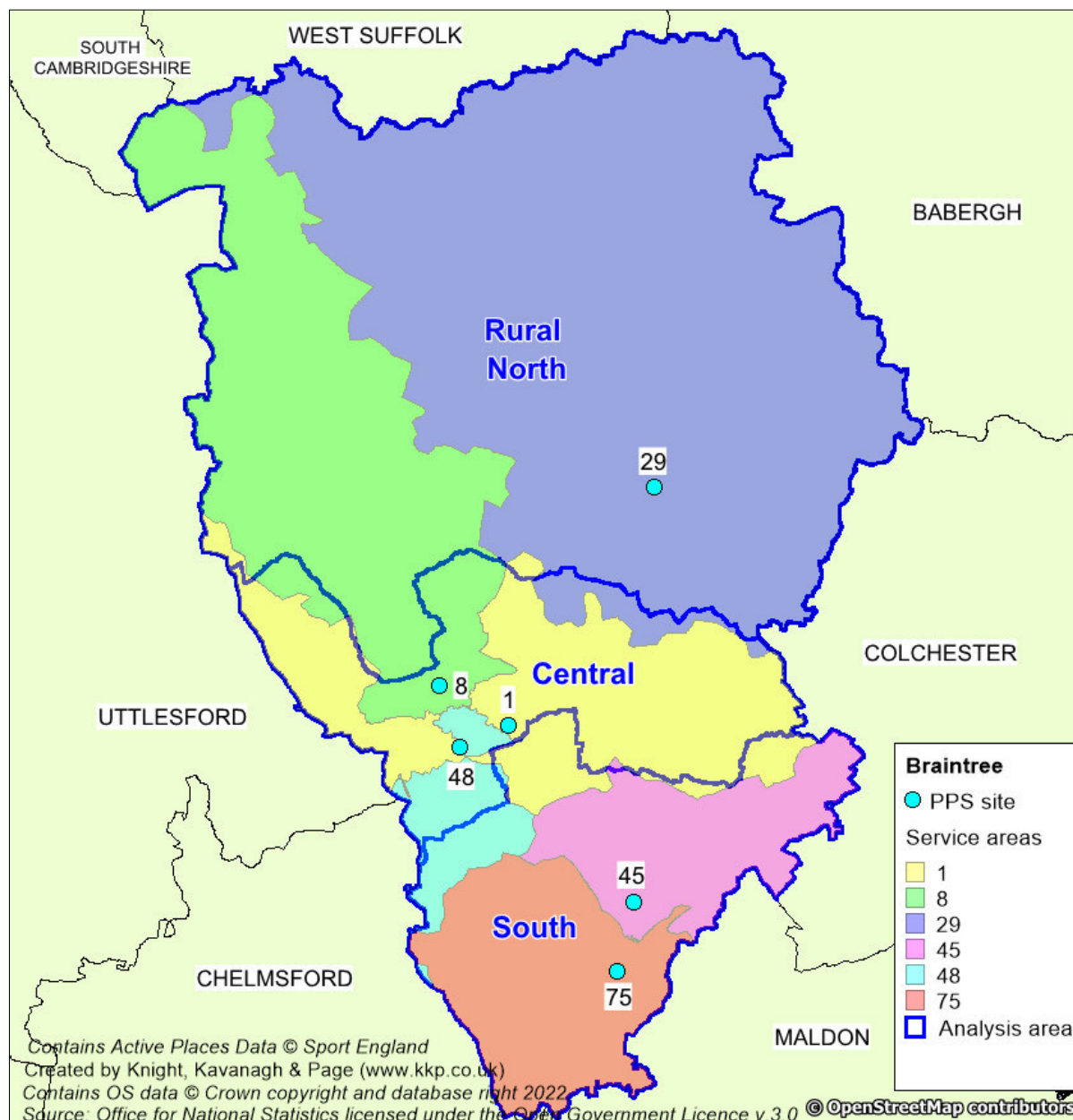
If the above 3G pitch options were to be delivered, this would eradicate shortfalls across the Braintree District, in addition to meeting some potential future demand requirements.

Figure 4.2 below adds the above, illustrating the service areas of the existing 11v11 size 3G pitches in the Braintree District, using the road network to present the catchment area for each pitch. This allows for visualisation of which locations should be prioritised for new 3G pitch developments.

As can be seen the pitch at Alec Hunter Academy services the largest catchment area and attracts demand from the three analysis areas (Central, South and Rural North). As well as this, the pitches at Braintree Sport & Health Club and Notley Sports Centre attract demand from two of the three analysis areas (Central and Rural North).

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Figure 4.2: Braintree District 3G pitch service area map



The recommended dimensions for an 11v11 3G artificial grass pitch for football are 100 x 64 metres. This extends to an area of 106 x 70 metres with the recommended minimum three metre run off area included. These dimensions allow for all age group match play to take place including adults, youth under 17/18 and younger age groups via overmarked pitches, e.g., the marking out of two 9v9 pitches for under 11/12s.

If a new pitch is proposed to measure below the recommended dimensions, then justification must be provided for this in relation to the identified needs it will provide for and/or site constraints. In doing so, the impacts of a reduced pitch size in meeting current and future needs must be considered, e.g., a pitch not providing the recommended dimensions for adult match play and/or only being able to accommodate one rather than two overmarked 9v9 pitches. This justification needs to be included in the planning application details submitted to the relevant Local Planning Authority for the new pitch.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Unless otherwise stated and justified for an individual pitch, proposals in this PPOSS for any new 3G artificial grass pitches are based on providing them to the recommended dimensions.

Recommendations

- ◆ Protect current stock of 3G pitches in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◆ Work with relevant partners to deliver additional 3G pitches to alleviate identified shortfalls, with priority placed on establishing pitches in the Rural North and South analysis areas.
- ◆ Explore creation of 3G pitches that are both football and rugby union compliant when alleviating shortfalls if they can cater for demand from Braintree RUFC or support the creation of additional 3G pitches above and beyond football training shortfalls if they can be sustainable.
- ◆ Carry out further feasibility work to identify suitable locations for new 3G pitches and ensure this is done in consultation with the relevant stakeholders including Sport England and the appropriate NGBs.
- ◆ Ensure any new 3G pitches are provided with the recommended dimensions for the sports that they will be established to cater for.
- ◆ Ensure any new 3G pitches protect/replace any other pitches that would be affected by the development (e.g., where cricket outfield is affected).
- ◆ Ensure that any new 3G pitches with external funding have community use agreements in place and seek to use this to also tie in access to grass pitch and other sporting provision, where relevant.
- ◆ Where any new 3G pitch involves the conversion of a sand-based hockey pitch, ensure support is provided from EH and that no hockey demand is negatively impacted upon.
- ◆ Seek FIFA/FA testing of all existing and new 3G pitches and ensure they are on the FA 3G Pitch Register so that they can be used for competitive football matches and ensure re-testing is carried out when it is required.
- ◆ For any pitches built to RFU specifications, seek World Rugby compliancy so that they can be used for full contact activity and ensure re-testing when it is required (every two years).
- ◆ Ensure all current and future 3G providers have a sinking fund in place for long-term sustainability and seek to resurface provision when it is required.
- ◆ Encourage more football match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches, where possible, particularly from council sites and for mini demand.
- ◆ Support all 3G pitch providers where possible to improve the sustainability of running the facility, e.g. conversion to LED sports lighting.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Rugby union - grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

Rugby union – supply and demand summary

- ▶ No pitches in the Braintree District are considered to provide actual spare capacity, whilst four pitches across two sites that are overplayed by a total of 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week.
- ▶ There is a current capacity shortfall of 12.5 match equivalent sessions on rugby union pitches, increasing to 13 when accounting for future demand.
- ▶ There is a clear shortfall of rugby union provision, and a shortfall for the two large clubs in the District (Braintree RUFC and Witham RUFC).

Rugby union - supply summary

- ▶ There are 10 grass rugby union pitches identified across five sites, with all pitches available for community use across 13 sites.
- ▶ Of the 10 pitches provided, two are operated by education providers, two are operated by Parish Councils and the remaining six are operated by sports clubs.
- ▶ All four clubs in the Braintree District have secure site tenure either via direct ownership or being part of a wider entity that has ownership or a long-term lease agreement.
- ▶ Of pitches that are available for community use, there are eight assessed as standard and two as poor.
- ▶ Poor quality pitches are provided at Courtauld Sports Ground and Gosfield School.
- ▶ The poor quality ancillary facilities are identified at Courtauld Sports Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field.

Rugby union - demand summary

- ▶ There are four rugby clubs considered based in the Braintree District collectively providing a total of 34 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of nine senior men's, two senior women's, eight age grade boys', three age grade girls' and 12 age grade mixed teams.
- ▶ Whilst overall demand levels have increased in recent years, there has been a decline in senior activity.
- ▶ In the Braintree District, one sports lit pitch is provided at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club. These pitches are used to accommodate all training demand from Braintree and Witham rugby clubs.
- ▶ Whilst Halstead Templars and Kelvedon & Feering rugby clubs use portable lighting on its match pitches.
- ▶ Braintree RUFC reports latent demand in that they could field more teams if it had access to increased pitch provision and links this to a need for a 3G pitch.
- ▶ Two clubs (Braintree and Witham rugby clubs) report future aspirations for additional teams, whilst population projections predict a growth of one age grade mixed team.

Scenarios

Improving pitch quality

Maintenance and drainage solutions are an integral method in improving pitch quality at rugby union sites, ensuring that pitches can accommodate demand throughout the season. Locally, there are three sites which are identified as being overplayed in Braintree District and the following scenario explores what impact improving both the level of maintenance and installation of drainage solutions would have on the capacity of provision. It would alleviate overplay on overplayed pitches.

The table below illustrates the RFU pitch quality scoring methodology which ascertains the capacity of pitches based on the scoring criteria.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Table 4.21: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

Drainage	Maintenance Poor (M0)	Maintenance Adequate (M1)	Maintenance Good (M2)
Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

The table below looks at what capacity benefits would be ascertained through improvement of both maintenance and drainage solutions to good quality (M2/D3) improvements to both drainage and maintenance to explore maximum benefits.

Table 4.22: Capacity of overplayed pitches if quality was maximised (M2/D3)

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current quality	Sports-lit?	Current capacity rating (MES)	Good quality rating (MES)
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard	Yes	6.5	5
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard	No	1	0
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard	Yes	2.5	1
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Age grade	1	Standard	No	2.5	1

Overall, this would reduce current shortfalls from 12.5 match equivalent sessions to seven match equivalent sessions per week across Braintree District as a whole, whilst reducing future shortfalls from 13 match equivalent sessions to 7.5 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 4.23: Supply and demand balance with quality improvements in match equivalent sessions

Demand	Current capacity balance (MES)	Potential total (MES)
Current	12.5	7
Future	13	7.5

The sports-lit pitch at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club (Braintree RFC) and the pitches at Witham Rugby Union Football Club would remain overplayed even if quality was maximised, although at reduced levels. This is predominately due to high levels of training demand on the provision. Therefore, there is a need to provide additional provision as a means of reducing overplay.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Increasing access to training provision (sports-lit grass pitches)

An alternative method of addressing capacity issues is through increasing the number of sports lit pitches. Of the pitches that would remain overplayed despite quality improvements, Braintree Rugby Union Football Club has three senior pitches with only one senior pitch serviced by sports lighting. Whilst Witham Rugby has two senior and one age grade pitch, with only one senior pitch serviced by sports lighting.

For Braintree Rugby Union Football Club, if it was to have the remaining two senior pitches serviced by sports lighting, this would allow training demand to be evenly dispersed across the pitches, whilst also potentially improving the user experience. As a result, 2.5 match equivalent sessions of overplay could be transferred to the pitches, which will have a significant benefit on shortfalls across the site.

The following table further explores the above and the potential capacity impact if training demand was to be evenly dispersed. It shows that the site would go from being overplayed to being at a balanced capacity.

Table 4.24: Capacity with additional sports lighting at club sites

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Quality	Capacity rating (MES)	Potential capacity balance (MES)
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard (M1/D1)	6.5	2.5
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard (M1/D1)	2.5	0.5
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Age grade	1	Standard (M1/D1)	2.5	0.5

If additional sports lighting was carried out in conjunction with pitch quality improvements, a shortfall would still exist on the senior pitch at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club whilst overall spare capacity would be established at Witham Rugby Union Football Club.

Table 4.25: Capacity with additional sports lighting and quality improvements at club sites

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Quality	Capacity rating (MES)	Potential capacity balance (MES)
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard (M1/D1)	6.5	1
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	1	Standard (M1/D1)	2.5	1
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	Age grade	1	Standard (M1/D1)	2.5	1

Notwithstanding the above, it is considered unlikely for pitch quality and sports lighting to be maximised at the site, with this also likely to place additional pressures on the Club (e.g., from a maintenance perspective). An alternative could therefore be needed, such as via the supply or additional grass pitches or through the creation of a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Increasing pitch stock

In addition to maximising pitch quality and sports lighting, additional pitch provision is required to fully alleviate identified shortfalls at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club. The table below therefore explores how many pitches are needed.

At Braintree Rugby Union Football Club, two additional pitches would each need to be provided to a good quality to meet demand from Braintree RFC. Whilst one additional pitch is required for Witham RFC, providing it is established at a good quality (and that existing pitches are also improved).

Table 4.26: Number of new pitches required to alleviate overplay

Site ID	Site name	Current capacity rating (MES)	Good quality rating (MES)	Club users	No. of pitches required
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	7.5	5	Braintree RFC	2
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	5	2	Witham RFC	1

An alternative to creating new pitches is the creation of World Rugby compliant 3G pitches, as previously set out. Similarly, although shortfalls could be alleviated via improving quality and establishing additional sports lighting, a 3G pitch is also being proposed at Coronation Park. Providing this is World Rugby compliant (in addition to supporting football use) will lessen the need for other solutions at the site and help enable the Club's growth.

World Rugby (WR) complaint 3G pitches

As previously set out, there is evidence to support the creation of a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch, despite no such provision currently existing in Braintree District. To that end, there is an aspiration from Braintree RFC to install a pitch at its self-titled site to support its growing demand and training activity. Furthermore, if a pitch was provided that it could access, this could offer a solution to the overplay currently experienced by the Club.

The following table further explores the creation of a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch and the potential capacity impact it could have if all training demand from Braintree RFC was to be transferred. As seen, shortfalls would be significantly reduced equating to 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 4.27: Capacity if training demand was transferred to a World Rugby 3G pitch

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Quality	Capacity rating (MES)	Potential capacity balance (MES)
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	Senior	2	Standard (M1/D1)	7.5	0.5

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Accommodating future demand from club aspirations

Future demand expressed through club aspirations and by the RFU projects the number of rugby union teams to grow by five teams across Braintree District, which broken down equates to one team in the Central Analysis Area and four teams in the South Analysis Area. This has previously been discounted from calculations as it is considered to be more aspirational than future demand predicted via population growth; however, if such demand is realised, it will increase shortfalls throughout the District, as shown in the following table.

Table 4.28: Supply and demand balance with future demand aspirations accounted for

Analysis area	Current supply/ demand balance (MES)	Future supply/ demand balance (MES)
Central	7.5	8
Rural North	0	0
South	5	7
Braintree District	12.5	15

This growth would further amplify the need to action other scenarios presented and the need for additional pitches and/or access to World Rugby compliant 3G pitch provision.

The table below explores the impact of the future demand on a club-by-club basis and how it can be sufficiently accommodated.

In addition, especially for clubs with future demand for women's and girls' activity, it is imperative that the accompanying ancillary facilities are adequate in quality and inclusive. All rugby clubs which have a target to create female teams are currently serviced by only standard quality or poor quality provision.

The table explores the impact of the future demand on a club-by-club basis and how it can be sufficiently accommodated.

Table 4.29: Summary of provision required to accommodate future demand aspirations

Club	Future team aspirations	Future demand (MES)	Comments
Braintree RUFC	1 x senior men's	0.5	To accommodate current demand, the Club needs to improve its current pitch stock and access an additional pitch. This future demand would entail a further pitch being required (or access to a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch).
Witham RUFC	1 x senior men's 2 x age grade boys 1 x age grade girls	2	To accommodate current demand, the Club needs to improve its current pitch stock and access an additional pitch. This future demand would entail a further pitch being required (or access to a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch).

Ancillary provision

As well as creating capacity on the pitch there is a requirement to also ensure that current and future levels of demand can be accommodated off the pitch, more specifically regarding ancillary provision and changing rooms.

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

As outlined in the Assessment Report, ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for rugby clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ◆ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
- ◆ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
- ◆ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.
- ◆ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

Specifically in the Braintree District, demand for the following clubs maybe affected due to the poor quality of their changing provision:

- ◆ Courtauld Sports Ground (Halstead Templars RUFC).
- ◆ Feering Community Centre Playing Field (Kelvedon & Feering RUFC).
- ◆ Witham Rugby Union Football Club (Witham RUFC).

Without improvements to facilities these clubs could struggle to attract new participants and teams, particularly women and girls, and may even have issues retaining current levels of demand.

Recommendations

- ◆ Protect existing pitches in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◆ Improve pitch quality at all sites used by clubs through improved maintenance and/or the installation of drainage systems, with a focus on those currently overplayed (Braintree Rugby Union Football Club and Witham Rugby Union Football Club).
- ◆ Support clubs in taking part in the GMA pitch advisory service to explore technical requirements to improve pitch quality to address overplay.
- ◆ Consider an increase to the level of sports lighting used by clubs to further alleviate overplay and to better accommodate training demand i.e., at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club.
- ◆ Explore the creation of a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch, particularly if it can cater for demand from Braintree RFC.
- ◆ Where World Rugby compliant 3G provision is provided, seek the transfer of demand from overplayed grass pitches.
- ◆ Ensure future demand can be adequately accommodated, particularly in regard to women's and girls' demand.
- ◆ Improve the ancillary facilities servicing the clubs and ensure facilities are inclusive and have appropriate segregation.

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

- ◀ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site rugby provision, ensure that any proposals for new pitches will attract adequate demand.
- ◀ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site rugby provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.

Hockey - artificial grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

Hockey – supply and demand summary

- ◀ There is a current insufficient supply of full size hockey suitable AGPs in the Braintree District, with a shortfall of one senior team.
- ◀ When factoring in future demand, the shortfall of provision will be increased.
- ◀ Capacity issues for training activity are also identified, meaning that the supply of hockey pitches in the Braintree District is currently insufficient to meet current and future demand.

Hockey – supply summary

- ◀ There are two full size suitable AGPs in the Braintree District across the same number of sites (Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground).
- ◀ In addition to the full size AGPs, there are three smaller size hockey suitable pitches at Gosfield School, Oak Farm and Silver End Academy. However, the pitches are not suitable for purposeful hockey demand.
- ◀ The full-size pitches are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.
- ◀ Braintree HC owns the freehold of the pitch at Releet Sports Ground and therefore has security of tenure. Whilst Witham HC rents the provision at Witham Sports Ground on a seasonal basis from Freedom Leisure.
- ◀ The two full size pitches offer full availability during the peak period.
- ◀ The pitch at Releet Sports Ground is assessed as standard quality as it was last resurfaced in 2015 and Braintree HC reports it has an aspiration to upgrade its lighting to LED; however, it requires funding in order to do this.
- ◀ The pitch at Witham Sports Ground was last resurfaced in 2021 and is rated as good quality.
- ◀ Braintree HC reports the clubhouse at Releet Sports Ground is of standard quality. It reports its facilities are slowly declining in quality and are becoming outdated. The Club has a wider aspiration to refurbish the clubhouse facilities as well as improving the car parking.
- ◀ Witham HC reports the facilities at Witham Sports Ground are poor quality with basic and outdated provision provided.

Hockey – demand summary

- ◀ There are two hockey clubs (Braintree HC and Witham HC) playing in the District.
- ◀ There is a total of 32 dedicated hockey teams across the two community clubs with the most prominent being senior men's teams with 12, followed by senior women's, six for dedicated mini teams, four for junior boys and three for junior girls' teams. The senior team numbers include veteran and U21 teams.
- ◀ Both clubs have seen an increase in its teams over recent years. Growth equates to one senior and two junior teams for Braintree HC and two junior teams for Witham HC.
- ◀ Back to hockey sessions are ran by Braintree HC.
- ◀ Braintree HC currently exports some junior demand to the hockey suitable AGP at Felstead School in Uttlesford as an overspill venue, however it primarily uses the provision at The Releet Sports Ground.
- ◀ Both clubs report future demand for five additional senior teams (two men's and three women's) as well as four junior teams.
- ◀ Witham HC has future demand aspirations, but the Club states that this cannot be accommodated without increased pitch capacity at Witham Sports Ground, with some capacity taken up by football groups, or through the creation of another full size pitch.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

- ◀ In addition to hockey usage at the site, considerably football activity also takes place, particularly during midweek evenings and on Saturday mornings.

Scenarios

Accommodating match play demand

One full size hockey pitch with sports lighting is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions on one day, which equates to one pitch being able to cater for eight 'home' teams at peak time based on them playing on a home and away basis (one team requires 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on its 'home' pitch).

Using the above calculations, on the basis that there are currently two full size hockey suitable pitches in, this provides a theoretical opportunity to accommodate up to eight matches and 16 senior teams at peak time across the District at peak time (on Saturdays).

Table 4.30: Summary of hockey pitch capacity for match play

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Potential capacity in teams	Actual capacity in teams	Number of hockey teams using the provision at peak time	Capacity balance (in teams)
51	Releet Sports Ground	Central	1	8	8	9	1
75	Witham Sports Ground	South	1	8	8	10	2
-	-	Totals	2	16	16	19	3

As seen, it is determined that current provision can potentially accommodate up to 16 senior teams on a Saturday, with this equating to eight match equivalent sessions per week (where teams play on a home and away basis). With 19 senior teams currently provided (equating to 9.5 match equivalent sessions per week) and requiring access, there is a current shortfall on Saturdays for match play demand. When factoring in future demand expressed by both clubs and noting this cannot be accommodated on the pitches it currently accesses, this would further increase the shortfall.

Accommodating training demand

In terms of capacity for training, both full size AGPs in the Braintree District have high levels of existing usage (football and hockey), with spare capacity for growth minimal. This is exacerbated by additional usage from other sports, most predominately football, which further reduces availability for hockey clubs at desired times.

Both Braintree HC and Witham HC highlight issues with accessing additional training slots at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground during midweek due to usage for football training. A similar picture to Saturday match play capacity is therefore presented.

This means that alternative venues may be required, either via utilising pitches not currently accessed (at which point quality improvements may be necessary), or through new provision.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Protecting sand-based AGPs for hockey

As both full size pitches located in Braintree District are used extensively for hockey, these should not be considered for 3G pitch conversion unless a replacement pitch in a suitable location is provided. As such, all the pitches should be protected for future hockey usage and attempts should be made for this to be ensured through planning management e.g., through having permitted development rights removed (meaning planning permission would be required for a surface change).

Furthermore, given both full size pitches are played to capacity in the District and both clubs are showing a growth trend, Stage E should continue to monitor the continued growth of the clubs to assess whether a third pitch is required in the area, especially if football training activity is difficult to move off the sites.

Recommendations

- ◆ Ensure the full size hockey suitable AGPs at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground are protected for continued hockey usage.
- ◆ Encourage football users to transfer to 3G pitch provision as and when new 3G pitches are provided to free up capacity for hockey.
- ◆ Resurface the pitch at Releet Sports Ground when required and ensure an adequate maintenance programme is in place.
- ◆ Upgrade the sports lighting at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground to LED.
- ◆ Ensure all providers have a sinking fund in place for long-term sustainability.
- ◆ Improve ancillary facilities at Releet Sports Ground and Witham Sports Ground.
- ◆ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- ◆ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site provision, ensure that any proposals for new pitches will attract adequate demand.

Cricket squares

Assessment Report summary

Cricket – supply and demand summary

- ◆ Actual spare capacity is identified amounting to 48 match equivalent sessions on a Saturday, 42 match equivalent sessions on a Sunday and 103 match equivalent sessions exist midweek.
- ◆ In total, five sites are overplayed by a total of 99 match equivalent sessions per season. Coggeshall Town Cricket Club has the highest amount of overplay due to the amount of demand that Coggeshall Town CC fields.
- ◆ Overall, there is currently an insufficient supply of cricket squares in the Braintree District to cater for Saturday and Sunday cricket, with this projected to worsen when accounting for future demand.

Cricket – supply summary

- ◆ In total, there are 21 grass wicket squares in the Braintree District across 19 sites, with one grass wicket square being unavailable for community use.
- ◆ There are also five NTPs, with three accompanying grass wicket squares and the remaining two being standalone wickets.
- ◆ Bocking Sports Club previously accommodated a six wicket grass square; however, upon non-technical assessments, the provision seems not to have been actively maintained or used for an extended period of time.
- ◆ Church Road Playing Fields previously accommodated a grass wicket square with eight wickets that was last active circa 2016. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

- ▶ Courtauld Sports Ground previously provided a grass wicket square but is no longer maintained, although the site is still utilised for football.
- ▶ Notley Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2000. However, the square is no longer maintained but the site is still used for football.
- ▶ Dusty Lane, Tye Green previously accommodated a grass wicket square that was last active circa 2011. ECB and Essex Cricket has advised that the site is too small for senior cricket and is not viable for re-instating a grass wicket square. However, the site and boundary size is sufficient for an NTP for junior cricket. Therefore, it should still be protected as a playing field for other sports unless appropriate mitigation is made off-site.
- ▶ The audit of community available grass wicket squares found 12 to be good quality and eight to be standard quality.
- ▶ The audit of ancillary facilities determines that six (30%) are accompanied by good quality provision, nine squares (45%) by standard quality provision and three (15%) by poor quality provision. The remaining two squares (10%) are not accompanied by any ancillary provision.
- ▶ There are 10 sites supplying 24 net bays, whilst four clubs report demand for new, improved and/or additional training facilities.

Cricket – demand summary

- ▶ There are 16 clubs in the Braintree District which collectively provide 80 teams, equating to 40 open age, eight senior women's, five junior girls' and 27 junior boys' teams.
- ▶ There has been a general increase in demand in recent years, with seven clubs reporting an increase in participation and only Rayne CC reporting a decrease in participation.
- ▶ It must be noted that the ECB has recently established a target of trebling the number of girls' teams across the Country by 2028, with this therefore likely to further increase in demand in the Braintree District. This will be further tested as a scenario in the Strategy.
- ▶ A total of four clubs undertake All Stars cricket, whilst two undertake Dynamo's and three have women's softball demand.
- ▶ Future demand from population forecasts equates to the predicted growth of two open age and one junior boys' teams (up to 2041), whereas six clubs indicate aspirations to increase levels of participation amounting to a total predicted growth of nine teams.

Scenarios

Improving quality/addressing overplay

Although a regular, sufficient maintenance regime can sustain sites with minimal levels of overplay (e.g., at), a reduction in play is recommended to ensure there is no detrimental effect on quality over time. As such, attempts should be made to reduce identified overplay, although it is recognised that many clubs do not necessarily believe that there are capacity issues and are able to accommodate such excess demand. This means that they are not always open to potential solutions (e.g., NTP installation).

In the Braintree District, overplay is found across six squares at five sites, with this scenario looking at the impact of quality improvements as a solution to reducing or alleviating the shortfalls identified. However, of the overplayed squares, five are already good quality, which means the position will not improve without a transfer of demand.

Table 4.31: Overplay if all squares were good quality (match equivalent sessions)

Site ID	Site name	Club	No. of squares	Current quality	Current capacity rating	Good quality capacity rating
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	Coggeshall Town CC	1	Good	37	37
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	Kelvedon & Feering CC	2	Good	30	30

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Site ID	Site name	Club	No. of squares	Current quality	Current capacity rating	Good quality capacity rating
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	Witham CC	1	Standard	4	1
65	Terling Cricket Club	Terling CC	1	Good	19	19
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	Hatfield Peverel CC	1	Good	9	9

By increasing quality, only Sauls Bridge Sports Ground would see overplay eradicated, although only one match equivalent session per season created. Notwithstanding this, in total, five match equivalent sessions per season of overplay would be alleviated. This would reduce shortfalls for Saturday and Sunday cricket, although a deficit would remain. Whilst nine match equivalent sessions of spare capacity per season would be established for midweek cricket.

Table 4.32: Overall supply and demand balance if overplayed squares improved to good in match equivalent sessions

Playing format	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Saturday	51	46
Sunday	57	52
Midweek	4	9

Although improving quality can have a positive impact, the potential capacity created will not necessarily be in the peak period and therefore may not fully meet demand. It should also be noted that if quality was improved, for this to be sustained over a long term period, this will likely require existing maintenance budgets to be maintained or enhanced.

When factoring in future demand, current shortfalls for Saturday and Sunday cricket would still remain albeit at a reduced level, whereas the shortfall for midweek cricket would be eradicated and three match equivalent sessions of spare capacity created.

Table 4.33: Future supply and demand balance if overplayed squares improved to good in match equivalent sessions

Playing format	Future capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Saturday	75	70
Sunday	57	52
Midweek	2	3

Transfer of demand

Where squares remain overplayed despite maximising quality, installing NTPs could assist as this can enable the transfer of demand from grass wickets. In the Braintree District, none of the overplayed sites (Coggeshall Town Cricket Club, Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club, Sauls Bridge Sports Ground, Terling Cricket Club, Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club have an NTP and thus could theoretically benefit from such provision as a way of reducing identified deficits, providing sufficient space exists (further investigation is required to determine suitability).

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Notwithstanding the above, please note that the inclusion of an NTP for the management of fixtures can alleviate overplay issues, usage is subject to league rules allowing usage and minimum pitch specifications, particularly for senior fixtures where play is generally not allowed. Generally, only junior fixtures can be played on the provision, in addition to some lower level senior play and midweek demand (e.g., recreational leagues and friendlies). Furthermore, undue pressure should not be placed on clubs and volunteers to install self-funded NTPs.

The ECB highlights that non-turf pitches which follow its TS6⁶ guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play and are considered able to take 60 matches per season, although this may include training sessions via the use of mobile nets. Typically, however, play would be more suited to junior teams as senior leagues typically stipulate the use of natural turf wickets.

As an alternative to NTPs (or in addition), although not readily available within grassroots cricket, there may be potential in the future to address overplay through the installation of hybrid wicket/s on competitive senior pitches. The ECB has been working with SIS Pitches on the installation of hybrid cricket wickets at county cricket clubs (2019) and more recently recreational squares such as Perry Hall Park in Birmingham (2021) and Didsbury Cricket Club in Manchester (2022).

A hybrid wicket combines natural turf grass with less than 5% of uniquely engineered, soft polyethylene yarn, which has already been used to improve golf tees, tennis courts and pitch surrounds. These wickets are to offer a greater capacity in addition to reducing time on repair works with a faster recovery time. Reports found that hybrid wickets improve surface stability, reduced wear, reduced bowler foot holes and significantly extended hours of playing time.

Ideally, once these become more readily available for community cricket clubs and have gone through the required testing, they could act as a way to increase levels of playing capacity on overplay squares. This would be particularly beneficial for those sites which are limited on space and cannot create additional wickets due to restrictions on things such as boundary length or ball strike.

Although it is difficult at this stage to understand what impact hybrid wickets could have on each site's capacity, it is suggested that it could potentially alleviate all the overplay on both junior and senior wickets. This is based on the assumption that more senior demand can take place on the hybrid wickets allowing for the outer senior wickets to be used/converted for junior demand. However, it should also be known that hybrid wickets are a new development and remain largely untested at grassroots level, meaning there is no data at present to formally promote them as a solution.

In addition, it should also be noted that hybrid wickets have generally been designed to support high quality provision. It is said that only sites achieving a 'good' standard or above via PitchPower assessments are suitable (meaning 'basic' and 'poor' sites are not).

Accommodating exported demand

There is currently one club; Chelmsford Titans CC that exports one Sunday team outside of the Braintree District each week as demand cannot be accommodated on existing provision due to the lack of peak time capacity. The impact of accommodating this within the Braintree District is evidenced in the table below.

⁶ <http://www.cag.org.uk/docs/ecb-non-turf-pitches-ts6-final-328.pdf>

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Table 4.34: Supply and demand balance if exported demand returned to the District in match equivalent sessions

Playing format	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Saturday	51	51
Sunday	57	47
Midweek	4	4

As seen, shortfalls would increase, and there is no clear means to accommodating all the demand without improving access to sites (e.g., schools) or without establishing new provision. In total, one square is required based on two senior teams being accommodated at peak time (on a Saturday).

Removing imported demand

The Assessment Report identified that five clubs import demand into the District to play competitive matches. If this match play was to be played back in their respective authorities, the shortfall would be eradicated for Saturday cricket and actual spare capacity established. The shortfalls would remain on Sunday cricket and actual spare capacity for midweek cricket. The impact of this is explored in the table below.

Table 4.35: Supply and demand balance if imported demand returned to their respective local authorities in match equivalent sessions

Playing format	Current capacity (MES)	Potential capacity (MES)
Saturday	51	9
Sunday	57	57
Midweek	4	4

Accommodating future demand

In total, six cricket clubs in the Braintree District express future demand, which if realised will further exacerbate existing shortfalls for all formats of play. The table below therefore studies the future demand on a club-by-club basis to better understand what can and cannot be accommodated on the existing level of supply. This has previously been discounted from calculations as it is considered to be more aspirational than future demand predicted via population growth

Table 4.36: Accommodating future demand (club aspirations)

Club	Open age	Senior women's	Junior	Comments
Braintree CC	1	-	-	Site will become overplayed if demand is realised.
Earls Colne CC	1	-	-	Site will become overplayed if demand is realised.
Hatfield Peverel CC	-	-	1	Existing site is overplayed so demand cannot be accommodated.
Kelvedon & Feering CC	1	1	2	Existing site is overplayed so demand cannot be accommodated.
Rayne CC	1	-	-	Site will become overplayed if demand is realised.
Terling CC	-	1	-	Existing site is overplayed so demand cannot be accommodated.

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As seen, none of the clubs could accommodate future demand on their current provision due to either being overplayed or could be overplayed if the future demand is realised. As such, increased provision is required, through accessing currently unavailable and/or unused sites or through new pitches being established.

Accommodating girls' demand

The ECB has recently established a target of trebling the number of girls' teams across the Country by 2028, with this therefore likely to further increase in demand across the District above and beyond what is forecast through other methods. To quantify this in the Braintree District, with five junior girls' teams fielded, this will increase to 15 teams by 2028.

As girls' demand commonly takes place during midweek, the sites listed below display spare capacity that should be prioritised for accommodating additional fixtures:

- ◆ Earls Colne Recreation Club.
- ◆ Gestingthorpe Playing Field.
- ◆ Halstead Cricket Club.
- ◆ Wethersfield Playing Field.
- ◆ Witham Cricket Club.
- ◆ Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground.

However, this will place further pressure on the shortfalls identified, particularly if other growth is realised and if exported demand returns to the District. As such, whilst this particularly growth could likely be accommodated in isolation, it adds to the overall need for increased pitch provision when considered with other factors.

In addition, when considering the suitability of sites to accommodate girls' demand, it is imperative that the ancillary provision is of a required standard.

Ancillary provision

As well as creating capacity on the pitch there is a requirement to also ensure that current and future levels of demand can be accommodated off the pitch, more specifically regarding ancillary provision and changing rooms.

As outlined in the Assessment Report, ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for cricket clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior demand.

Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

- ◆ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
- ◆ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
- ◆ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.
- ◆ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Open planned changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

Specifically in the Braintree District, demand for the following clubs maybe impacted due to the poor quality of their changing provision:

- ✦ Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground).
- ✦ Gestingthorpe Playing Field.
- ✦ Halstead Cricket Club.
- ✦ Rayne Village Hall.
- ✦ Sauls Bridge Sports Ground.
- ✦ Terling Cricket Club.

Without improvements to facilities these clubs could struggle to attract new participants and teams, particularly women and girls, and may even have issues retaining current levels of demand.

Recommendations

- ✦ Protect existing pitches in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ✦ Improve quality at sites assessed as poor and standard quality and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good through partnership working with Essex Cricket.
- ✦ Install additional NTPs to accompany grass wicket squares (where space allows), particularly where overplay is present and where it cannot be eradicated via quality improvements.
- ✦ Consider the need for hybrid wickets to further support providing additional capacity.
- ✦ Encourage facility operators to provide improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement in place.
- ✦ Continue to support ECB initiatives such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for.
- ✦ Continue to support the growth of women's and girl's cricket, which includes the new partnership between the ECB and Metro Bank.
- ✦ Improve the changing facilities where there is a need to do so and ensure inclusivity and appropriateness for mixed gender usage.
- ✦ Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities where demand exists to do so and consider the creation of additional practice nets at publicly open sites (e.g., parks and recreation grounds) to encourage and increase recreational demand.
- ✦ Review changes in participation over Stage E in case some of the recommendations need revising to account for growth in the women and girls' game.
- ✦ Utilise sites such as Earls Colne Recreation Club, Gestingthorpe Playing Field, Halstead Cricket Club, Wethersfield Playing Field, Witham Cricket Club and Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground to accommodate additional women's and girls' demand.
- ✦ Work with clubs to accommodate targeted growth for women's and girls' cricket through Essex Cricket's County Facilities Strategy and ECB's Inspiring Generations Strategy.
- ✦ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and make on-site provision for meeting existing and future cricket pitch needs.
- ✦ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site cricket provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.
- ✦ Ensure that any developments nearby to existing cricket sites do not prejudice the use of the provision (e.g. through ball-strike issues).

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Tennis courts

Assessment Report summary

Tennis – supply and demand summary

- For club-based tennis, there is seemingly sufficient capacity in the Braintree District to facilitate current and future demand. No responding clubs report any issues, suggesting that there is no requirement for additional court space. However, this should be monitored particularly in relation to provision at Gosfield Tennis Club, where one of the courts is assessed as poor quality.
- In contrast, there is likely to be a shortfall of provision for non-club activity, with few local authority courts existing and with some of the supply accessed by clubs, poor quality and/or without sports lighting. This likely leading to levels of unmet and latent demand.
- A need for additional padel courts has also been identified.

Tennis – supply summary

- A total of 57 traditional tennis courts are identified in the Braintree District across 22 sites.
- Of the courts, 55 are categorised as being available for community use at 18 sites compared to compared to 10 courts that are unavailable, with these located at Alec Hunter Academy, Gosfield School, Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf and Country Club.
- Planning permission has recently been granted (June 2025) for the construction of two tennis courts serviced by sports lighting located at Courtuald Sports Ground (25/00289/FUL).
- Maltings Academy is in the process of submitting a planning application to install sports lighting on its tennis courts using S106 funding.
- Of the community courts, 15 courts are provided at club sites, seven at local authority sites, 12 at parish council sites, 18 are provided at education sites and the remaining three courts are classified as 'other' are those provided at Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club and The Essex Golf & Country Club.
- All clubs have security of tenure, either via freehold for their sites or long term lease agreements.
- Most outdoor tennis courts have a macadam surface; there are 55 of this type compared to two artificial courts.
- Of the courts, 23 are serviced by sports lighting, with 20 of these are available for community use.
- 17 courts are assessed as good quality, 20 as standard quality and 20 as poor quality.
- There are also four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, provided at The Essex Golf & Country Club and Notleys Golf Club.

Tennis – demand summary

- There are four tennis clubs in the Braintree District, with membership equating to 439, where known through consultation (it is not known for Gosfield LTC)
- Membership is seemingly on the rise, with two clubs reporting recent increases and only one reporting a decrease.
- Whilst no latent or unmet demand has been identified by clubs, it is considered to exist for recreational tennis, with LTA data identifying potential demand equating to 600 people.
- Future demand is expressed by three clubs and amounts to 60 potential additional members (35 senior and 25 junior).
- Based on identified population growth, the Sports Facilities Calculator indicates a requirement for an additional 0.74 courts, up to 2041.
- A need for 12 padel courts has been identified in the District by the LTA (meaning a shortfall of eight).

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Scenarios

Improving the recreational tennis offer

The LTA has developed a package of support for LAs to grow the use of park tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The three products are ClubSpark, Play and Gate Access and can be used individually or in combination. The products are used to provide a remote booking and access system.

Instead of providing free access, some local authorities are now securing their courts as per a membership scheme that allows members access through the use of pay and play with annual passes available utilising gate access technology.

In the Braintree District, local authority sites providing tennis courts is minimal. The courts at Strutt Memorial Ground were recently constructed (October 2025), with this in partnership between Hatfield Peverel Parish Council and the LTA.

Based on the findings of this study, quality requires improving at Gosfield Tennis Club (one of the courts is assessed as poor quality).

Accommodating current and future club-based demand

The LTA suggests that a court without sports lighting can accommodate a maximum of 40 members, whereas a court with sports lighting can accommodate 60 members.

On this basis, when reviewing club demand in the Braintree District, it is evident that all four clubs (where membership is known) are operating below the LTA recommended capacity guidelines both now and in the future. To confirm, all four clubs are fully serviced by sports lighting on all its courts.

The clubs should be monitored through the Stage E process as it is in a position where it may become unsustainable to operate.

Padel

Padel tennis is relatively new and is growing in popularity, particularly since its recognition as a sport and integration within the LTA. It is played mainly in a doubles format on an enclosed court and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although you serve under-arm and the walls are used as part of the game with the ball allowed to bounce off them.

To further grow the sport, the LTA is focused on improving the infrastructure and the coach education pathway, with £6 million invested by the NGB since 2021. At the end of 2020, there were 87 courts, 350 in 2023 and 500 courts are now provided in 2024. There is also a projected growth of 1,000 in 2026, with it therefore envisaged that, with growing infrastructure, participation in padel will increase substantially in the next five years, with the LTA identifying an aim to grow the number of courts to 1,000 and the number of players to 400,000.

There are currently four outdoor padel courts in the Braintree District, located at The Essex Golf and Country Club and The Notleys Golf Club. The LTA estimates a further eight courts would need to be provided across the District to meet all the demand.

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Given the padel courts in the Braintree District are located at commercial sites where costs are often high, there is a need for provision to provide an opportunity for all members of the community where they are located, to have the opportunity to play the sport.

Notwithstanding the above, the LTA also states that it is not encouraging clubs or local authorities to convert existing tennis courts to padel courts, unless a benefit to both tennis and padel can be evidenced. This is to ensure that the provision of traditional courts remains sufficient and the growth of padel is not to the detriment of tennis.

Recommendations

- ◆ Protect existing quantity of courts.
- ◆ Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs or that are (could be) well used for recreational demand.
- ◆ Linked to the above, improve park courts as a priority to create a year-round recreational tennis option to meet local demand.
- ◆ Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g., Clubspark) to support the customer journey and through investment into facilities and accompanying ancillary provision.
- ◆ Explore the feasibility of formalising community use of educational sites in order to increase capacity for informal/recreational demand.
- ◆ Consider development of additional courts for recreational demand, potentially through adding more courts to existing sites.
- ◆ Where local authority courts are improved/established, ensure the operation of the provision is sustainable and in line with other recommendations.
- ◆ Ensure sinking funds are put into place by operators for long-term sustainability.
- ◆ Improve ancillary provision servicing courts where demand is, or could be, high.
- ◆ Continue to monitor club demand to ensure that supply remains sufficient.
- ◆ Support opportunities to provide padel courts at suitable sites given its growing demand (separate to existing tennis courts) and seek to maximise activity, providing no existing in-use traditional courts are lost as a result.
- ◆ Linked to the above, ensure other sports such as netball and basketball which use multi-sports courts are protected as there is an increasing number of padel court proposals coming forward that would displace netball and basketball.
- ◆ Ensure that any housing developments consider potential increases in demand for the sport and that new provision or contributions are properly sought through utilisation of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Netball courts

Assessment Report summary

Netball – supply and demand summary

- Whilst there is a limited supply of netball provision within the Braintree District, existing demand levels are being adequately serviced. However, improving the alternative supply in the District and creating additional provision could result in increased demand levels and consequently help the sport grow. This should be further considered alongside the findings of the Chelmsford PPOSS and in partnership with neighbouring authorities to provide a regional solution to the issues identified.

Netball – supply summary

- There are 33 netball courts identified in the Braintree District across 14 sites. Of these, 22 are available for community use across 10 sites compared to 11 courts that are unavailable at four sites (all provided at education sites).
- Most outdoor netball courts in the Braintree District are operated by education providers, with 24 courts falling under this management type. Of the remaining courts, six are managed by the Council (at Braintree Sport & Health Club, Great Notley Country Park and Witham Sports Ground) and three by parish councils (at John Ray Recreation Ground and Feering Community Centre Playing Field).
- A total of three sites; Honywood Community Science School, Braintree Sport & Health Club and The Ramsey Academy are reported as being in use for netball activity across the District.
- All but two of the outdoor netball courts in the Braintree District have a macadam surface, with 31 being of this type and 22 (68%) being available for community use.
- Only five courts are serviced by sports lighting, with these provided at Braintree Sport & Health Club and Witham Sports Ground.
- There are 16 netball courts overmarked (e.g., by tennis courts) compared to 15 that are dedicated for netball use (standalone).
- There are 16 courts assessed as standard quality and 15 as poor quality (none are rated as good quality).

Netball – demand summary

- There are three netball clubs in the Braintree District known as Braintree Youth NC, Halstead NC and Kelvedon NC.
- All affiliated match play demand takes place outside of the Braintree District, in Chelmsford and Colchester via the use of central venues by the Colchester Netball League and Chelmsford & District Netball League (exported demand).

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- Protect existing courts.
- Secure community use at sites that are currently in use or that could be used in the future such as at Honywood Community Science School and The Ramsey Academy.
- Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs and for England Netball initiatives.
- Consider establishing additional sports lighting at venues in use for netball or at venues that could attract netball demand following installation.
- Ensure ancillary provision is appropriate where community access is received.
- Ensure demand can continue to be accommodated outside of the Braintree District (e.g., in Chelmsford) where this is the case through choice.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Bowling greens

Assessment Report summary

Bowls – supply and demand summary

- Both current and future demand for bowls in the Braintree District can be met via the existing supply, although monitoring is required in relation to Braintree BC and Witham BC to ensure that this remains the case due to its high membership.
- In addition, with no clubs operating with unsustainably low numbers, it is imperative that all four greens are protected for continued bowls activity. The levels of demand recorded could not be condensed onto fewer greens.

Bowls – supply summary

- There are nine flat bowling greens in the Braintree District across the same number of sites. All nine are available for community use. The South Analysis Area provides four greens whilst there are three greens in the Rural North Analysis Area and the remaining two in the Central Analysis Area.
- Most bowling greens are owned and managed by town council/parish council or respective sports club.
- All greens provide security of tenure.
- Six greens are assessed as good quality (66%) and three (33%) as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).

Bowls – demand summary

- There are eight bowling clubs as playing within the Braintree District.
- Membership of the clubs, where known totals 469 members, made up of 336 senior men, 127 senior women and six junior members.
- The largest club is Braintree BC with 116 members, whilst the smallest is Witham Mill Lane BC with 50 members.
- Two greens (Courtauld Sports Ground and Witham Mill Lane BC) are available for pay and play usage, although take up is relatively minimal.
- Three responding clubs report future demand aspirations, with this equating to an overall growth of 40 members (23 senior and 17 junior).

Impact of accommodating current and future demand

Bowls England does not have any specific guidance on bowling green capacity, stating that it can vary from site-to-site and from club-to-club. However, as a guide, it states that any green operating with a membership of over 80 may need additional resource to ensure that it is meeting its required level of demand.

In the Braintree District, where membership is known, Bocking Alliance BC, Castle Hedingham BC and Steeple Bumpstead BC are operating within a 'sustainable' capacity range. However, Braintree BC and Witham BC are running above the recommended capacity limit. That being said, both clubs do not report any usage pressures and states that all demand can be met on its provision. As such, no action is required at present, although demand levels should be monitored to ensure this remains the case.

Recommendations

- Protect existing greens.
- Improve green quality at sites assessed as standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good.
- Seek to improve ancillary facility quality where it is necessary e.g. at Castle Hedingham BC, Steeple Bumpstead BC and Witham BC.
- Support clubs operating with a high membership to ensure demand continues to be met on their existing provision.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

- Support the implementation of new products to increase participation within the Authority i.e., Bowls Bash (a shortened format) and Play Bowls (pay and play participation).

Athletics

Assessment Report summary

Athletics – supply and demand summary

- The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet current demand.
- Braintree & District AC has a waiting list of 30 members. The Club cites this is due to a lack of coaches and volunteers which is limiting its growth.
- As well as some level of qualitative improvement is needed at Braintree Sport & Health Club. This is especially in regard to the surface of the track, which will require a resurface by 2026 (when its Track Mark accreditation expires).

Athletics – supply summary

- In the Braintree District, there is one full size purpose built outdoor athletics track provided located at Braintree Sport & Health Club.
- The track at Braintree Sport & Health Club is owned and managed by Freedom Leisure (on behalf of the Council). As such, it is fully available for community use.
- The provision at Braintree Sport & Health Club is assessed as standard quality, primarily due to the age of the surface and some signs of wear and tear evident as well as faded line markings noted.
- Braintree Sport & Health Club has UKA TrackMark accreditation until September 2026. At which point, the track will require a respray/full resurface.

Athletics – demand summary

- There are three clubs in the Braintree District affiliated to England Athletics, both of which are running clubs.
- Braintree and District AC is a large athletics club based at Braintree Sport & Health Club. It has a membership totalling 280 people. It states that it currently has a waiting list in place of circa 30 people. The Club accesses Braintree Sport & Health Club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings for training sessions via a rental agreement which is secured on an annual basis. In addition, it competes in a range of competitions and leagues meaning it also has requirements to utilise the facility on weekends.
- Halstead Running Club is a road running club. It currently has 80 senior males and 60 senior females and is based at Courtauld Sports Ground as a meeting point and primarily utilises the local road network for training activity. In addition, it accesses the track at Braintree Sport & Health Club on a weekly basis between September and April.
- Witham Running has 133 senior males, 68 senior females and one junior member. It uses Maltings Academy and New Rickstones Academy as a meeting point and utilises the local road network.
- There is one Park Run event in the Braintree District held on a weekly basis, with this located at Great Notley Country Park.
- Future growth aspirations are identified by both running clubs and England Athletics, although this is not quantified and does not account for any track and field demand.

Scenarios

The 400m sports lit community accessible track and field facility at Braintree Sport & Health Club provides the District with an adequate amount of formal athletic provision to cater for its current demand.

The track is assessed as standard quality primarily due to the age of the surface and some signs of wear and tear evident as well as faded line markings noted. The EA ANOG report outlines the track will likely require a respray/full resurface by 2026. This should be a priority to ensure that the track can continue to service Braintree District athletics demand now and in the future.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

England Athletics' latest approach to facility planning includes the play track, compact track, mini track and active track which present more affordable means of councils installing new athletics provision. These facilities cater for a more recreational and informal offer for athletics and general health and wellbeing opportunities.

Braintree District Council could consider the installation of such provision in line with future housing developments as part of future master planning for its larger, more notable sites.

Recommendations

- ◆ Protect existing formal athletics provision in the Braintree District and consider further increasing provision to meet demand.
- ◆ Sustain quality and look to make improvements via resurfacing, when necessary to ensure demand can continue to be met and the track at Braintree Sport & Health Club remains TrackMark accredited.
- ◆ Support clubs, running groups, events and initiatives such as Parkrun and pursue increased participation, where possible.
- ◆ Ensure all clubs/groups continue to have home bases to operate from and pursue improved security of tenure where it is required.
- ◆ Support the development of providing some form of additional athletics provision, in line with England Athletics new generation of track products.

Golf courses

Assessment Report summary

Golf – supply and demand summary

- ◆ The existing supply of golf provision in the Braintree District is sufficient to meet demand levels, with a large quantity of facilities provided that collectively offers good variety to ensure that all golfers can be catered for.
- ◆ As demand levels are also high, particularly when accounting for needs from the wider region, all existing provision needs to be protected.

Golf – supply summary

- ◆ There are currently eight golf sites in operation in the Braintree District.
- ◆ Seven of the sites provide one 18-hole course each, whilst one provides one 9-hole course each.
- ◆ Three sites have a Par 3 course in addition to their standard hole offerings.
- ◆ Three sites supply a traditional driving range, with three available to the community and sports-lit.
- ◆ Of the sites, there are two members clubs (Braintree Golf Club and Haverhill Golf Club), whilst the remainder operate as proprietary venues.
- ◆ Average membership fees, where known, are slightly below the national average, although each site with an 18-hole course is in excess of this.
- ◆ Quality across the sites is good, with no issues reported.

Golf – demand summary

- ◆ The current average membership across the golf sites in the Braintree District is 586, suggesting that demand is higher than national rates (the average is 407).
- ◆ In line with a national trend of increasing membership, demand across the Braintree District has increased since 2018, despite a small reduction from 2022 data.
- ◆ Whilst pay and play usage is not known, it would be expected that demand would be higher at the propriety courses due to other on-site amenities and the operational structures in place.
- ◆ Imported demand into the Braintree District is expected to be higher than what would ordinarily be expected given the number and mix of sites that are within the District and with shortfalls existing in neighbouring authorities.

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- Unmet demand is seemingly low, with no sites operating a waiting list and with active advertising ongoing.
- Using an England Golf tool, latent demand is seemingly high, with Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre identified as having the largest levels of potential demand.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- Protect existing golf provision.
- Sustain course and ancillary facility quality and seek improvements where necessary.
- Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth and encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for players.

Cycling and BMX

Assessment Report summary

Cycling – supply and demand summary

- There is some club based demand identified in the Braintree District, with one BMX Club which accesses a dedicated facility at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field). Therefore, the provision should be protected and sustained and seen as a destination venue for BMX cyclists in the District.
- Whilst the other club (North Essex Velo) does not require dedicated facilities as it primarily utilises roads.
- Continued implementation of initiatives promoted by British Cycling should also be explored in order to encourage more people to get into cycling. This therefore includes Go-Ride and Breeze.

Cycling – supply summary

- In the Braintree District, there are two BMX pump tracks at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) and Rayne Village Hall.
- Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field) includes a small outdoor cycle park with a free-to-use pump track. Designed for BMX, mountain and off-road bikes, the track allows riders to build momentum without pedalling. It's suitable for all ages and abilities, from complete beginners to more confident riders. It is mainly utilised by Braintree BMX Club for club sessions.

Cycling – demand summary

- There are two affiliated cycling clubs based in the Braintree District.
- Collectively, the clubs run charity rides, club training rides, competitive time trials, recreational rides, road racing and track racing.
- The track at Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field) is used for club usage and recreational sessions. Public programme sessions are also held every Sunday for five hours. Braintree BMX club is the resident community club using the site. It has sole use for three hours on Tuesday nights and three hours on Saturday afternoons.
- Whilst levels of future and latent demand are identified, the nature of cycling means that most of this will not require space at a dedicated facility or within a club.

Scenarios

N/A

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Recommendations

- ◆ Protect existing provision.
- ◆ Ensure continued access to sites and routes used for formal cycling.
- ◆ Ensure all clubs/groups have home bases to operate from and pursue improved security of tenure where it is required.
- ◆ Support British Cycling initiatives and ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate such demand

Basketball courts

Assessment Report summary

Basketball- supply and demand summary

- ◆ There is seemingly a good supply of basketball courts in the Braintree District across the MUGA supply. However, there are clear quality issues that should be overcome to better accommodate existing usage and to encourage higher levels of demand.
- ◆ Additionally, there are no dedicated 3X3 facilities, despite this being a fast growing format of basketball. Whilst this can be played on the courts that are provided, a specific facility could be of greater benefit and attract increased demand from a wider catchment.

Basketball- supply summary

- ◆ All 11 MUGAs in the Braintree District are set up to accommodate basketball activity.
- ◆ One basketball court is assessed as standard quality (Notley Sports Centre) and the remaining 10 as poor quality.
- ◆ None of the basketball courts are serviced by sports lighting, which will be impacting on their capacity to accommodate demand, particularly during winter months.

Basketball- demand summary

- ◆ As with most recreational spaces, demand for outdoor basketball activity is difficult to track as usage is not recorded due to the open access nature of the provision.
- ◆ A lot of access will be for other sports, predominately football, due to the dual use nature of MUGAs.
- ◆ Courts in parks are identified as being particularly key, with usage likely to be received by community groups as well as groups of individuals all year round.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- ◆ Protect existing courts.
- ◆ Explore establishing new provision in the Analysis Areas, given there is a lack of basketball provision.
- ◆ Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality.
- ◆ Consider establishing additional sports lighting at venues to increase capacity and community use appeal.
- ◆ To increase the 3X3 basketball provision in the region, consider converting existing single-hoop shooting/ practise facilities into dedicated 3X3 courts (with line-markings and upgraded baskets).

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Other grass pitch sports

Assessment Report summary

Other grass pitch sports –supply and demand summary

- ◀ The current level of supply is seemingly sufficient enough to meet community demand for rounders in the Braintree District, with all rounders diamonds provided at Council and Parish Council sites and thus are available for community use able to adequately cater for any potential future demand. That being said, there are no community available facilities in the North Analysis Area.

Other grass pitch sports – supply summary

- ◀ There are currently five rounders diamonds identified across the same number of sites in the Braintree District, with all of these available for community use.

Other grass pitch sports – demand summary

- ◀ There are currently five rounders teams which play within the Braintree Ladies Rounders League. At present, matches are played at the local authority and parish council sites across the District.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing quantity, in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ Ensure continued access to existing sites and pitches to enable continued access for rounders.

PART 5: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic recommendations for the Strategy have been developed via the combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis which culminated in the production of an assessment report, as well as key drivers identified for the Strategy. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities and may not be specific to just one sport.

OBJECTIVE 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

Recommendations:

- a) Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that playing pitches and outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.
- b) Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c) Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.

Recommendation (a) – Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that playing pitches and outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.

The PPOSS shows that all existing playing field and outdoor sport sites cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future. As such, all provision requires protection or replacement until all identified shortfalls have been overcome. This includes disused (including any which may not have been identified in this document) underused and poor quality sites as there is a requirement for such provision to help meet and alleviate the identified shortfalls.

When shortfalls are evident, provision can only be permanently lost when the current picture changes to the extent that the site in question is no longer needed as a result of no shortfalls existing, or unless appropriate mitigation is provided and agreed upon by all stakeholders, in line with national planning policy. NPPF paragraph 104 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ❖ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- ❖ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- ❖ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

The PPOSS should be used to help inform development management decisions that affect existing or new playing pitch provision and accompanying ancillary facilities. All applications are assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case-by-case basis taking into account site specific factors.

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In addition, Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of playing field used within the last five years. They will use the PPOSS to help assess the planning application against its Playing Fields Policy.

Policy Exception E1:

‘A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport’.

Where the PPOSS cannot demonstrate that the site, or part of a site, is clearly surplus to requirements then replacement of the site, or part of a site, will be required to comply with the remaining Sport England policy exceptions.

Policy Exception E2

‘The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity and quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use’.

Policy Exception E3:

‘The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- ◀ Reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- ◀ Result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- ◀ Reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain quality;
- ◀ Result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
- ◀ Prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site’.

Policy Exception E4:

‘The playing field or fields to be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new playing field site or sites:

- ◀ of equivalent or better quality and
- ◀ of equivalent or greater quantity;
- ◀ in a suitable location and;
- ◀ subject to equivalent or better management arrangements.

Policy Exception E5:

‘The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice of use, of the area of playing field’.

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Disused provision

Disused sites should also be protected from development or replaced in accordance with the NPPF and Sport England's policy exceptions as they currently provide a solution to reducing identified shortfalls. As such, any disused sites are included within the Action Plan together with a recommendation in relation to bringing the site back into use or to mitigate permanent loss via a replacement site to address the shortfalls identified.

For playing pitch sports, the lawful use of a disused playing field is still that of a playing field until such time as it is developed for a non-pitch sport use or its use is formally changed through the planning system. There is no positive obligation, under planning law, for a playing field to be actively used as such.

The below lists known disused playing pitch sites currently within the Braintree District:

- ◀ Burches Meadow- it is unknown when pitches were last marked out.
- ◀ Dusty Lane, Tye Green- last marked out circa 2011.

In addition to the above, Strutt Memorial Ground previously accommodated some football provision equating to one adult pitch. The site is not classified as disused as it is still being accessed for recreational purposes, although the pitch is longer marked out and used for affiliated football.

Linked to the above, there are some existing playing field sites such as Strutt Memorial Ground, which may be able to or have previously accommodated more pitches than are presently marked. There may also be sites which are no longer prepared and used for formal sport but that still serve another function, such as a public open space or park. These sites should therefore not be considered disused as they continue to operate as part of the green infrastructure typology.

Additional provision

As far as possible, this report aims to capture all of the outdoor sports facilities within Braintree District. However, there may be instances that have led to omissions within the report, such as at school sites where access was not possible (although facilities at sites not accessed are still included within the PPOSS where provision is known to exist from other data sources), or where no stakeholders were aware of facilities existing (including disused). Where pitches/facilities have not been recorded within the report, they remain categorised as such and for planning purposes continue to be so. Furthermore, exclusions of a pitch/facility does not mean that it is not required from a supply and demand point of view, with the recommendations of this study still applying to them.

Recommendation (b) – Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

Much like some authorities nationally, there is reliance on the education sector to provide for an element of demand for playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities in Braintree District. However, where this is the case, particularly for the likes of hockey, it is imperative that future opportunities to secure tenure for clubs is explored and progressed where possible, unless a community use agreement is already in place.

The schools set out in the table below currently provide community use to clubs for match play purposes in Braintree District.

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Table 5.1: Known use of education sites

School	Club	Security of tenure	Sport
Alec Hunter Academy	Braintree Town Youth FC	Unsecure	Football (3G)
Gosfield School	Halstead Town FC	Unsecure	Football Football (sand-based AGP)
Hedingham School	Braintree Athletic Braintree Blades Stisted FC	Unsecure	Football Football (3G)
New Rickstones Academy	Witham Town FC Valley Green FC	Unsecure	Football Football (3G)
Notley Sports Centre (Notley High School)	Great Notley FC	Unsecure	Football (3G)

In instances where clubs do not have formal tenure agreements in place, clubs could theoretically be asked to vacate at any time which would result in each requiring alternate provision to service existing levels of demand. Not having fully formalised usage therefore presents a risk for those clubs using these sites as community use could technically be terminated. In contrast, securing community use will help to create additional capacity and could help to address deficiencies in the existing supply picture.

For unsecure sites, NGBs, Sport England and other appropriate bodies such as the FF and Active Essex can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may not have direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from these bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of any agreement. It is increasingly important for the Council to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities.

Given current budgetary pressures, it is increasingly important for the Council to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities. To facilitate this, where practical, it should support and enable clubs to generate sufficient funds for the acquisition and development of sites, providing that this is to the benefit of sport.

The Council (including parish and town councils) and private landlords (as relevant) should further explore opportunities where security of tenure could be granted via lease agreements (minimum 25 years as recommended by Sport England and NGBs) so that clubs are in a position to apply for external funding. This is particularly the case at poor quality sites, possibly with inadequate or no ancillary facilities, so that quality can be improved and sites developed.

Local sports clubs should continue to be supported by partners including the Council (where relevant) and NGBs to achieve sustainability across a range of areas including management, membership, funding, facilities, volunteers and partnership work. For example, club development should be supported and clubs should be encouraged to develop evidence of business and sports development plans to generate income via their facilities.

Relevant clubs could also be encouraged to look at different management models such as registering as Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)⁷. They should also be signposted to work with partners locally, such as volunteer support agencies or local businesses.

⁷ <http://www.cascinfo.co.uk/cascbenefits>

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Each club interested in leasing a council site (including those from parish and town councils) should be required to meet service and/or strategic recommendations. An additional set of criteria should also be considered, which takes into account club quality, aligned to its long-term development objectives and sustainability, as seen in the table below.

Table 5.2: Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations

Club	Site
Clubs should have Clubmark/NGBs accreditation award. Clubs commit to meeting demonstrable local demand and show pro-active commitment to developing school-club links. Clubs are sustainable, both in a financial sense and via their internal management structures in relation to recruitment and retention policy for both players and volunteers. Ideally, clubs should have already identified any match funding required for initial capital investment identified. Clubs have processes in place to maintain sites to the existing or better standards.	Sites should be those identified as 'Local Sites' (recommendation d) for new clubs (i.e., not those with a District-wide significance) but that offer development potential. For established clubs which have proven success in terms of self-management 'Key Centres' are also appropriate. As a priority, sites should acquire capital investment to improve (which can be attributed to the presence of an accreditation award). Sites should be leased with the intention that investment can be sourced to contribute towards the improvement of the site.

Furthermore, the Council could establish a series of core outcomes to derive from clubs taking on a lease arrangement to ensure that the most appropriate clubs are assigned to sites. As an example, outcomes may include:

- ◆ Increasing participation, particularly in target areas such as women's and girls' activity.
- ◆ Supporting the development of coaches and volunteers.
- ◆ Commitment to quality standards.
- ◆ Improvements to facilities, or as a minimum retaining existing standards.

In addition, clubs should be made fully aware of the associated responsibilities/liabilities when considering leases of multi-use public playing fields. It is important in these instances that the sites remain available for other purposes and for other users.

For clubs with lease arrangements already in place, these should be reviewed when fewer than 25 years remain so that extensions can be secured, thus improving security of tenure and helping them attract funding for site development. Any club with less than 25 years remaining on an agreement is unlikely to gain any external funding (unless the agreement has been recently entered into).

Recommendation (c) - Maximise community use of education facilities where needed

To maximise community use of education facilities more coherent, structured relationship with schools is recommended. The ability to access good facilities within the local community is vital to any sports organisation, yet many clubs struggle to find good quality places to play and train. In Braintree District, pricing policies at facilities can be a barrier to access at some education sites but physical access, poor quality and resistance from providers to open up provision is also an issue, especially at academies and independent schools.

A large number of sporting facilities are located on education sites and making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the schools and local clubs, as well helping to reduce identified shortfalls. It is, however, common for school provision not to be fully maximised for community use, even on established community use sites.

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In some instances, facilities are unavailable for community use due to poor quality and therefore remedial works will be required before it can be established (e.g., at New Rickstones Academy). The low carrying capacity of these facilities sometimes leads to them being played to capacity or overplayed simply due to curricular and extra-curricular use, meaning they cannot accommodate any additional use by the community.

Whilst community sport should ultimately be sought at all educational sites, priority should be placed on firstly exploring community use options at larger venues offering several pitches. Securing access to this site will significantly reduce shortfalls. However, it is also noted that smaller sites and particularly primary schools can also serve a significant purpose as they can be at the heart of local communities, particularly in more rural areas.

Although there are a growing number of academies over which the Council has little or no control, it is still important to understand the significance of such sites and attempt to work with the providers where there are opportunities for community use. In addition, relevant NGBs have a role to play in supporting the Council to deliver upon this recommendation and communicating with schools where necessary to address shortfalls in provision.

As detailed earlier, NGBs, Sport England, Active Essex and other funding bodies can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may have limited direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from the relevant organisations or are going to receive investment in the future as community access can be a condition of the funding agreement.

Where new schools are provided in major new residential developments, they should be designed and scaled to facilitate community access, with opportunities for meeting the community's outdoor sports needs explored at the outset to maximise the potential for facility provision to be made within the developments, if appropriate. An example of this is ensuring the provision of adult and/or youth 11v11 grass football pitches, 11v11 size 3G pitches or multi-use provision such as sports lit courts that can accommodate tennis, netball and basketball activity given current shortfalls and their suitability for the playing format of students.

OBJECTIVE 2

To enhance outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites

Recommendations:

- d) Improve quality
- e) Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- f) Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.
- g) Secure developer contributions.

Recommendation (d) – Improve quality

There are a number of ways in which it is possible to improve quality, including, for example, addressing overplay and improving maintenance. Given that the majority of councils' face reducing budgets, it is currently advisable to look at improving key sites as a priority (e.g., the largest, well used sites that are overplayed and/or poor quality). The Action Plan within this document provides a starting point for this, identifying key sites, poor quality sites and/or sites that are overplayed which should be prioritised for improvement.

Based upon an achievable target, using existing quality scoring to provide a baseline, a standard should be used to identify deficiencies and investment should be focused on those sites which fail to meet the proposed quality standard. For the purposes of quality assessments, the Strategy refers to pitches and ancillary facilities separately as being of 'good', 'standard' or 'poor' quality. However, some good quality sites have poor quality elements and vice versa (e.g., a good quality pitch may be serviced by poor quality changing facilities).

It is also important to note the impact the weather has on quality. The worse the weather, the poorer the facilities tend to become, especially if no, or inadequate, drainage systems are in place. This also means that quality can vary year on year dependent upon the weather and levels of rainfall, although maintenance regimes could be altered to reduce this impact.

If a poor quality site receives little or no usage that is not to say that no improvement is needed. It may instead be the case that it receives no demand because of its quality, thus an improvement in said quality will attract demand to the site, potentially from overplayed standard or good quality sites (thus reducing capacity issues). Where this occurs, it is vital that the improvements are advertised and marketed towards potential users as their perception of the provision may need altering.

In addition, without appropriate, fit for purpose ancillary facilities, good quality provision may be underutilised, especially by adults and female users who have more of a requirement. Changing facilities form the most essential part of this offer (although other provision can be key for income generation) and therefore key sites should be given priority for improvement. For the majority of sports, no senior league matches can take place without appropriate changing facilities and the same also applies to women's and girls' demand.

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For football, The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across the Country. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the FF's PitchPower app to carry out a free on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment, with clubs getting access to discounted rates for machinery and consumables through local partnerships.

The tool is available across mobile apps and desktop and is open to access by all providers, including clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches. Applicants are required to submit a PitchPower assessment for each of their pitches as a condition of a grant funding application for FF grass pitch investment, such as the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF).

For rugby union and cricket, the respective NGBs are now also utilising PitchPower, with reports being produced similar to those for football.

For the improvement/replacement of 3G pitches and hockey AGPs, this is most commonly linked to age, with any surfaces older than 10 years generally requiring replacement. Where pitches are provided, sinking funds should be put into place to ensure that refurbishment can take place when it is required.

Notwithstanding the above, with pressures on budgets, any wide-ranging direct investment into quality is unlikely and other options for improvements should therefore also be considered. This could be via clubs leasing/managing sites as highlighted in Objective 1, with clubs taking on maintenance, whilst other options may include the use of equipment banks and the pooling of resources for maintenance.

Addressing overplay

In order to improve the overall quality of the outdoor facility stock; it is necessary to ensure that provision is not overplayed beyond recommended carrying capacity. This is determined by assessing quality (via a non-technical site assessment) and allocating a match limit to each (daily for hockey, weekly for football and rugby union and seasonal for cricket).

The FA, RFU, ECB and EH all recommend a number of matches that pitches should take based on quality, as seen in the table below. For other grass pitch sports, no guidelines are set by the NGBs although it can be assumed that a similar trend should be followed.

Table 5.3: Capacity of pitches

Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches (Good quality)	No. of matches (Standard quality)	No. of matches (Poor quality)
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week

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Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches (Good quality)	No. of matches (Standard quality)	No. of matches (Poor quality)
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	1 grass wicket 1 synthetic wicket	5 per season 60 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Hockey	Full size AGP	4 per day	4 per day	4 per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a hard court is said to have capacity for 60 members if it is serviced by sports lighting, whereas a non-lit hard court has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). For bowls, a green is considered at capacity if it has over 80 members, whilst a membership of under 20 could be unsustainable.

It is imperative to engage with clubs to ensure that sites are not played beyond their capacity. Where overplay is identified, play should be encouraged, to transfer to alternative venues that are not operating at capacity. Alternatively, quality should be improved to increase capacity to appropriate levels. Where play is transferred, this may include transferring play to 3G pitches or to sites not currently available for community use but which may be in the future.

For cricket, an increase in the usage of NTPs (or hybrid wickets when suitable) is key to alleviating overplay as this allows for the transfer of junior demand from grass wickets. It also does not require any additional playing pitch space as NTPs can be installed adjacent to existing squares.

For rugby union, additional sports lighting, in conjunction with quality improvements, can further reduce levels of overplay at club sites as it allows clubs to spread training demand across a greater number of pitches or unmarked areas. If permanent sports lighting is not possible, portable sports lighting can be provided as an alternative.

Similarly, additional sports lighting can help resolve capacity issues for tennis, netball and bowls as it can allow for greater court/green usage, especially during winter months.

As mentioned earlier, there are also sites that are poor quality that are not overplayed. These should not be overlooked as often poor-quality sites have less demand than others but demand could increase if the quality were improved. It does, however, work both ways as potential improvements may make sites more attractive and therefore more popular, which in the long run can lead again to them becoming poor quality pitches if not properly maintained.

Recommendation (e) – Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites

To allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach, the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of outdoor sport sites and associated facilities. This should be based on their strategic importance in a District-wide and sporting context, taking into account the level of demand accommodated and the potential impact the recommended actions will have on addressing the identified shortfalls/issues.

The site-hierarchy for Braintree District is summarised below.

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Table 5.4: Tiered site criteria

Criteria	Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites
Site location	Strategically located in the District. Priority sites for NGBs.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Serves the local community.
Site layout	Accommodates three or more grass pitches, generally including provision of an AGP (or with the potential).	Accommodates two or more grass pitches.	Accommodates one or two pitches.
Type of sport	Multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision.	Generally single sport provision but may cater for two.
Management	Management control allows for wide community use, i.e., through the local authority, a leisure operator or a school with a community use agreement.	Management control generally allows for wide community use but may include sites that are owned or leased by clubs/other organisations.	Management control can be via the local authority, schools, clubs and other providers such as town or parish councils
Maintenance regime	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime or an in-house maintenance contract.
Ancillary facilities	Good quality ancillary facilities on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches; may include wider social/function facilities.	Good quality ancillary facility on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Limited or no changing room access on site.

Hub sites are of an District wide importance where users are willing to travel to access the range and high quality of facilities offered and are likely to be multi-sport. Actions at these sites are likely to have a greater impact on addressing the issues identified in the PPOSS.

Key centres are more community focused, although some are still likely to service a wider analysis area (or slightly wider); however, there may be more of a focus on a specific sport i.e., a dedicated site.

It is considered that some financial investment may be necessary to improve the facilities at both hub sites and key sites. This could be to improve the provision, create additional provision (e.g., a 3G pitch) or to enhance the ancillary facilities in terms of access, flexibility (i.e., single-sex changing if necessary) and quality as well as ensuring that they meet the rules and regulations of local competitions.

Local sites refer to those sites offering minimal provision or that are of minimal value to the wider community. Primarily they are sites with one pitch/facility or a low number of pitches/facilities that service just one or two sports (e.g., bowling green sites).

For Council sites in this tier, consideration should be given, on a site-by-site basis, to the feasibility of a club taking on a long-term lease (if not already present), in order that external funding can be sought. Such sites will require some level of investment, either to the outdoor sport facilities or ancillary facilities, and it is anticipated that one of the conditions of offering a hire/lease is that clubs are able to source external funding to improve/extend the provision.

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Other sites considered in this tier may be primary school sites or secondary school sites that are not widely used by the community or that do not offer community availability.

Recommendation (f) – Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding

Partners, in collaboration with the Council, should ensure that appropriate funding is secured for improved sports provision and directed to areas of need. This should be underpinned by a robust strategy for improvement in outdoor sport provision and accompanying ancillary facilities, with the PPOSS able to be used as an evidence base for attracting investment.

Furthermore, to address community need, target priority areas and reduce provision duplication, a coordinated approach to strategic investment is required. In delivering this recommendation, the Council should maintain a regular dialogue with local partners through the PPOSS Steering Group as well as with neighbouring local authorities. Cross-boundary developments can accommodate demand from within the Braintree District (and vice versa) and lessen requirements within the District.

To attract investment, the Council should stay informed in relation to relevant and appropriate funding pots, both in regard to what it can directly attract as well as to what clubs could attract independently (with the Council able to assist with this process). This can also be helped through the PPOSS Steering Group signposting partners to what could be available.

Although some investment in new provision will not be made by the Council directly, it is important that the Steering Group seeks to direct and lead a strategic and co-ordinated approach to facility development. This includes delivery from education sites, NGBs, sports clubs and the commercial sector and can be informed via the Stage E process, with the Steering Group to continue to meet following adoption of this study (see Part 8 for further details).

One of sport's key contributions is its positive impact on public health. It is therefore important to lever in investment from other sectors such as, for example, health and wellbeing. Sport and physical activity can have a profound effect on peoples' lives, and plays a crucial role in improving community cohesion, educational attainment and self-confidence.

Recommendation (g) – Secure developer contributions

It is important that this strategy informs policies and supplementary planning documents by setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development contributions.

For playing pitches, it is recommended the Council uses Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as a tool for helping to determine the additional demand for pitches and to estimate the likely developer contribution required. This should form the basis of the Council working with Sport England to develop a process and guidance for obtaining developer contributions and should aid the negotiation process with developers.

The calculator uses the current number of teams by sports pitch type contained within the Assessment Report and calculates the percentage within each age group that play that sport. That percentage is then applied to the population growth. The additional teams likely to be generated are then converted into match equivalent sessions and associated pitch requirements in the peak period, with the associated costs (both for providing the pitch/facility and for its life cycle) then given. The calculator splits the requirement into peak time demand for natural turf pitches, training demand for artificial grass pitches, and the number of new changing rooms required.

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For tennis, Sport England has been working with the LTA to add outdoor tennis courts to its Sports Facilities Calculator. This works by turning an estimation of demand (visits per week) into the equivalent number of courts which will be needed to meet this. It helps quantify additional demand for new growth populations, development, and regeneration areas, and is used to estimate facility needs for whole area populations.

It is used to estimate facility needs for whole area populations but should not be applied for strategic gap analysis as it has no spatial dimension and does not take account of:

- ◀ Facility location compared to demand.
- ◀ Capacity and availability of facilities – opening hours.
- ◀ Cross boundary movement of demand.
- ◀ Travel networks and topography.
- ◀ Attractiveness of facilities.

Once the calculators have been utilised, the PPOSS should be used to help determine the likely impact of a new development (or group of developments) on demand and the capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for contributions to be put towards improvements to increase the capacity of existing provision, or if new provision is required (or a combination of both).

Where a development is located within access of existing high-quality provision, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further provision or improvement to existing provision, as additional demand arising from the development is likely to result in increased usage (which can result in overplay or quality deterioration).

Where it is determined that new provision is required to accompany development, priority should be placed on providing facilities that also contribute towards alleviating existing shortfalls within the locality. To determine what supply of provision is provided, it is imperative that the PPOSS findings are taken into consideration and that for particularly large developments consultation takes place with the relevant NGBs and Sport England. This is due to the importance of ensuring that the stock of facilities provided is correct to avoid provision becoming unsustainable and unused.

The preference from the Council, Sport England and the NGBs is generally for multi-pitch (or multi-facility) and potentially multi-sport sites to be developed, supported by a clubhouse and adequate parking facilities which consider the potential for further development in the future. This is because single pitches/facilities are more likely to become under-used (or unused), unviable and unsustainable.

Where new provision is agreed as not appropriate but where contributions to existing sites are instead sought, the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to identify suitable sites within the locality that should receive the funding. This may involve directing investment into provision most likely to receive demand from the housing development, or into provision that is most in need (e.g., due to quality issues).

Sport England recommends that a number of objectives should be implemented to enable the above to be delivered:

- ◀ Planning consent should include appropriate conditions and/or be subject to specific planning obligations. Where developer contributions are applicable, a S106 agreement or equivalent must be completed that should specify, when applied, the amount that will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the permission and timing of the contribution/s to be made.

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- ◆ Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches (lifecycle costs), the cost of which is indicated by the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator. NGBs and Sport England can provide further and up-to-date information on the associated costs.
- ◆ External funding should be sought/secured to achieve maximum benefit from the investment into appropriate facility enhancement, alongside other open space provision, and its subsequent maintenance.
- ◆ Where new provision is provided, appropriate changing rooms and associated car parking should be located on site.
- ◆ All new or improved outdoor sports facilities on school sites should be subject to community use agreements.

For further information, please see Part 7 of this report.

Whilst neither the Playing Pitch Calculator nor the Sports Facilities Calculator identify demand for other types of pitches (outside of football, rugby, cricket and hockey) or non-pitch provision (outside of tennis), a similar assessment of need process can still be undertaken. As with the sports that are covered, this should entail utilisation of the PPOSS and engagement with the NGBs.

Developer contributions - step by step guide

For any application warranting a developer contribution the following processes should be followed in order to help inform the potential needs a new housing development may require and/or should look to consider. In accordance with National Planning Policy Guidance, contributions should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floor space of no more than 1,000 square metres (gross internal area).

Any obligations sought should be based on a tailored approach to each development, considering the population derived from the development, determining if the demand can be met by existing facilities and identifying the project/s that any required contribution will be used towards. All of this should be carried out using the robust evidence base provided as part of the PPOSS to help with clearly justifying the needs arising and how they are to be met.

Step 1	Determine the playing pitch requirement resulting from the development

The main tool for determining this is Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator, which is a Sport England tool provided on completion of the Strategy. The calculator will be pre-populated with the current population of the local authority and the current demand data from the PPOSS. Until this requires updating, to determine the playing pitch requirement resulting from a development, all that is required is the input of the new population that will derive from a proposal.

The calculator provides an estimation of the number of new pitches that would be required to meet the match equivalent sessions that will derive from the development. The associated costs for providing these new pitches are also identified (although please note that these are indicative costs only and appropriate local work should be undertaken to determine the true costs involved).

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Step 2	Determine whether new provision is required and whether this should be on or off site

For large-scale developments that generate high levels of demand, new pitch provision may be required to meet the population growth. This is particularly the case when the calculator identifies a need for multiple pitches and across multiple sports.

When on site provision is required, priority should be placed on the creation of multi-pitch and multi-sport sites with appropriate ancillary facilities such as a clubhouse and adequate car parking, as well as ensuring the provision contributes towards reducing current shortfalls. This will ensure that the provision is sustainable and attractive to potential users. Emphasis should also be on ensuring the site can accommodate an AGP given current sporting trends.

Other useful questions when deciding on new provision include:

- ◀ Are there any teams/clubs playing outside of the local area (displaced demand) which could utilise provision at the site?
- ◀ Do any local clubs identify existing plans/demand for access to new provision?
- ◀ Are there any overplayed sites in the local area where existing demand could be transferred to a new site?
- ◀ Do any local clubs identify any latent demand (i.e. if they had access to more pitches they could they field more teams)?

To further help determine the sustainability of establishing new provision, consideration should be given to the potential management opportunities which may be available onsite:

- ◀ Is the local authority (or town/parish council) in a position to take on further outdoor sports facilities from a financial point of view?
- ◀ Is an education establishment to be provided as part of the development which offers a potential management option of outdoor sports facilities?
- ◀ Is there a leisure trust in place which has the capacity to take on the management of outdoor sports facilities?
- ◀ Is there an opportunity for a trust based model of management, for example, by formation of a Community Interest Company (CIC) or Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)?
- ◀ Is there an existing sports club that has the capacity to take on the management of another site?

Where the calculator does not create demand for a whole pitch, which is often the case for smaller sized developments, it is recommended to make a contribution to increasing the capacity of an existing site to meet demand generated from the development. When identifying a site for off-site contributions, the proximity and location of existing playing pitch sites should be considered and whether they could help serve the new development – this could be informed by identifying the analysis area in which the development sits and if there are any hub sites or key centres within the locality.

Initially, a one-mile radius could be drawn around the site in order to help identify the nearest priority sites, which may require consultation with neighbouring authorities when the development sites to close to the boundary.

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The off-site decision should be based on the potential to improve existing facilities within an appropriate catchment of a development to create additional capacity, and how realistic it is given the nature of the local area to provide new provision. For example, there may be some poor quality playing fields that could potentially be improved with additional drainage and long-term maintenance works, along with enhanced changing provision, to enable use to be increased, thereby creating additional capacity to meet the increased demand generated from the development.

Discussions should be held with relevant parties (e.g. NGBs, landowners, facility operators and user groups), and any further necessary evidence gathered (e.g. a feasibility study) to help identify the specific works that are required, and to ensure they will provide the necessary additional capacity to meet the needs. It will also be important to demonstrate that the specific works can be delivered within an appropriate timescale in relation to the occupation of the development site.

Step 3	Determine the other pitch and non-pitch requirements resulting from the development

The Sports Facility Calculator now calculates tennis demand so this can therefore be used to inform tennis requirements; however, neither this nor the Playing Pitch Calculator determine needs for any other sports. That being said, the PPOSS identifies (where relevant) current and future demand requirements and can therefore still be used to determine if contributions are required towards these sports or if new provision is required, in conjunction with NGB discussions.

Where there is no identified shortfall in provision or future demand for new provision within an area relevant to the development (e.g. an analysis area or settlement), consideration should be given to the nearest site to the development containing that type of provision. If this could accommodate the increased demand from the development, no action is required; if it could not accommodate the demand, consider if the site could benefit from a contribution towards increasing capacity to meet likely need. For example, this could include increasing quality and/or addition of ancillary facilities such as floodlighting, changing rooms or car parking. The PPOSS Action Plan should be used as a starting point to identify site by site recommendations.

Where there is an identified shortfall that could not be overcome through contributions, new provision may be required within or nearby to the development as part a multi-sport development.

Step 4	Consider design principles for new provision

The exact nature and location of provision associated with onsite developments should be fully determined in partnership with each relevant NGB. Further to this, each pitch sport NGB provides national guidance in relation to provision of new pitches.

There is also a need to ensure that the location of outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities are appropriately located in the context of indoor sports provision (if also being provided onsite) to ensure a cohesive approach to the whole sporting offer.

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Step 5	Calculate the financial contribution required

After using the PPOSS Playing Pitch Calculator and the PPOSS as a starting point, the local cost of provision should be fully determined in order to calculate the financial contributions required.

A clear and transparent methodology for calculating up to date costs for the specific works, including appropriate ancillary provision, should be presented. Where appropriate, depending on how the needs are to be met, the cost of any required land purchase should be included in the financial contribution. If an obligation will be directed to an off-site project it should be ensured the costs are limited to meet the needs of the individual development.

Along with any capital costs for the works, an obligation should ensure an appropriate level of lifecycle costs towards the new or enhanced provision. This is required to cover the day to day maintenance for an agreed long-term period and to help ensure a sinking fund exists for any major replacement work, e.g. the future resurfacing of an artificial grass pitch.

Wherever possible, specific local costs should be used, especially if the works are to improve the existing quality of a site to increase capacity as there may be a number of site specifics to consider. Sport England does provide indicative costs for new provision:
<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>

For all developments community use agreements between providers and users would ensure that such demand continues to be provided for in the long-term.

OBJECTIVE 3

To provide new outdoor sport provision and ancillary facilities where there is current or future demand to do so

Recommendations:

- h) Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current facility stock.
- i) Identify opportunities to increase to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

Recommendation (h) - Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock

The Council and its partners should work to rectify identified inadequacies and meet identified shortfalls as outlined in the preceding Assessment Report and the sport-by-sport specific recommendations (Part 4) as well as the following Action Plan (Part 6). In addition, first and foremost, it is imperative that the current levels of provision are protected and maintained to ensure that the overall picture does not worsen in the future.

To reduce the identified shortfalls, there is not necessarily a need for a significant level of new provision, with the current provision instead able to be better utilised to overcome most deficits. Maximising use of existing provision through a combination of the following will help to reduce shortfalls and accommodate future demand:

- ✦ Improving quality in order to improve the capacity to accommodate more demand.
- ✦ Transferring demand from overplayed sites to sites with spare capacity.
- ✦ The re-designation of facilities e.g. converting an unused pitch (or pitch type) for one sport to instead cater for another sport (or another pitch type).
- ✦ Securing community use at school sites including those currently unavailable.
- ✦ Working with commercial and private providers to increase usage.
- ✦ Exploring lease/management arrangements with appropriate clubs/organisations.
- ✦ Establishing additional sports lighting.
- ✦ Installing artificial surfaces (e.g., 3G pitches and cricket NTPs).

The PPOSS identifies priority sites that should be focused upon, including those that are presently overplayed and/or poor quality as well as disused, unused and unsecure sites that are particularly large. It also advises how issues can be overcome. This is done on a site-by-site basis in the preceding Action Plan.

Unmet demand, changes in sport participation and trends, and proposed housing growth should be recognised and factored into future facility planning. Assuming an increase in participation and housing growth occurs, it will impact on the future need for certain types of sports facilities. Sports development work also approximates unmet demand which cannot currently be quantified (i.e. it is not being suppressed by a lack of facilities) but is likely to occur.

Furthermore, retaining some spare capacity allows some pitches to be rested to protect overall pitch quality in the long-term. Therefore, whilst in some instances it may be appropriate to redesignate a senior pitch where there is low demand identified a holistic approach should be taken to re-designation for the reasons cited. The site-by-site action planning will seek to provide further clarification on where re-designation is suitable.

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Recommendation (i) - Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand

Better utilising the stock of provision across the Braintree District will lessen the need for new provision. Although there are identified shortfalls, most existing shortfalls can be addressed via quality improvements and/or improved access to sites that are presently used minimally or that are currently unavailable. Adding to the current stock is therefore not recommended as a priority solution, although for certain sports and in specific areas it is likely to be required. This is especially the case for rugby union pitches, cricket pitches, 3G pitches and padel courts.

Where new pitches/facilities are likely to be needed, consideration should be given to allocating land for new provision to meet existing need as part of the Local Plan process. This should be done in addition to residential allocations and their requirements (see Part 7), although it could be via providing additional land for playing fields as an extension to the playing fields required to service large-scale developments.

Where large scale housing developments may also necessitate the need for new provision, as will the establishment of any new schools. Where new schools are developed, there is an opportunity to combine the building of the School to the development of a new multi-sport site that can be of a benefit to the School as well as the wider community, subject to any design issues and providing that long-term security of tenure can be provided.

The Steering Group should use and regularly update the Action Plan within this Strategy. The Action Plan lists recommendations for each site, focused upon qualitative improvements. However, as evidenced in Part 4, although there is value in improving quality, installing additional sports lighting, improving ancillary facilities, and enabling access to existing unused provision, capacity improvements may not offer significant capacity gains in the peak period to meet all shortfalls expressed, particularly for football and cricket.

For housing developments, as outlined in Recommendation (g), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator and Sports Facilities Calculator can be used as a guide to inform requirements. See Part 7: Housing Growth Scenarios for further information, which uses the increase in population derived from housing growth and gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision.

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PART 6: ACTION PLAN

The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the preceding Assessment Report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is separated by analysis area and includes information pertaining to the sub sections below.

Site hierarchy

The Council should make it a high priority to work with NGBs and other partners to comprise a priority list of actions based on local priorities, NGB priorities and available funding. As stated in Recommendation (e) to allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach, the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of playing pitch sites and associated facilities. This is done via classifying sites as hub sites, key centres or local sites.

The identification of sites is based on their strategic importance in a regional context i.e., they accommodate the majority of demand, or the recommended action has the greatest impact on addressing shortfalls identified either on a sport-by-sport basis or across the Local Authority area as a whole.

Table 6.1: Proposed tiered site criteria

Criteria	Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites
Site location	Strategically located in the Authority. Priority sites for NGBs.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Serves the local community.
Site layout	Accommodates three or more grass pitches, generally including provision of an AGP (or with the potential).	Accommodates two or more grass pitches.	Accommodates one or two pitches.
Type of sport	Multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision.	Generally single sport provision but may cater for two.
Management	Management control allows for wide community use, i.e., through the local authority, a leisure operator or a school with a community use agreement.	Management control generally allows for wide community use but may include sites that are owned or leased by clubs/other organisations.	Management control can be via the local authority, schools, clubs and other providers such as town or parish councils
Maintenance regime	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime or an in-house maintenance contract.
Ancillary facilities	Good quality ancillary facilities on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches; may include wider social/function facilities.	Good quality ancillary facility on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Limited or no changing room access on site.

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Hub sites are of an District wide importance where users are willing to travel to access the range and high quality of facilities offered and are likely to be multi-sport. These have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

Key centres are more community focused, although some are still likely to service a wider analysis area (or slightly wider); however, there may be more of a focus on a specific sport i.e., a dedicated site.

It is considered that some financial investment may be necessary to improve the facilities at both hub sites and key sites. This could be to improve the provision, create additional provision (e.g., a 3G pitch) or to enhance the ancillary facilities in terms of access, flexibility (i.e., single-sex changing if necessary) and quality as well as ensuring that they meet the rules and regulations of local competitions.

Local sites refer to those sites offering minimal provision or that are of minimal value to the wider community. Primarily they are sites with one pitch/facility or a low number of pitches/facilities that service just one or two sports (e.g., bowling green sites).

For local sites, consideration should be given, on a site-by-site basis, to the feasibility of a club taking on a long-term lease (if not already present), in order that external funding can be sought. Such sites will require some level of investment, either to the outdoor sport facilities or ancillary facilities and it is anticipated that one of the conditions of offering a hire/lease is that the Club would be in a position to source external funding to improve/extend the provision.

Other sites considered in this tier may be primary school sites or secondary school sites that are not widely used by the community or that do not offer community availability.

Partners

The column indicating partners in the Action Plans below refers to the main organisations that the Local Authority (or the relevant provider) would look to work with to support delivery of the actions.

Given the extent of potential actions, it is reasonable to assume that partners will not necessarily be able to support all the actions identified but where the action is a priority and resource is available the partner will endeavour to assist.

As all sites sit within the local authority area, the Local Authority is considered to be a partner for each identified action (as the column indicates partners for the Local Authority) and is therefore not included. However, it is acknowledged that it will take on more of a leading role for some specific sites and some specific actions (e.g., at council operated venues).

Priority

Although hub sites are mostly likely to have a **high** level actions, as they have wide importance, high priority sites have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the key issues identified in the assessment. Therefore, some key centres and local sites are also identified as having a high priority level. It is these projects/sites which should generally, if possible, be addressed within the short term (1-2 years).

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The majority of key centres have **medium** priority actions. These have analysis area importance and are identified on the basis of the impact that they will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment, although not to the same extent as high priority actions.

The **low** priority actions tend to be for single pitch or single sport sites and often club or education sites with local specific importance but that may also contribute to addressing the issues identified in the assessment for specific users. Whilst low priority, there may be opportunities to action some of the recommendations made against such sites relatively quickly e.g., through S106 funding.

Costs

The strategic actions have also been ranked as low, medium, or high based on cost. The brackets are:

- ◀ (L) - Low - less than £150k.
- ◀ (M) - Medium - £150k-£750k.
- ◀ (H) - High £750k and above.

These are based on Sport England's estimated facility costs which can be found at: [Facility cost guidance | Sport England](#)

Timescales

The Action Plan has been created to be delivered over a ten-year period and the information within the Assessment Report, Strategy and Action Plan will require updating as developments occur. The indicative timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based:

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

Aim

Each action seeks to meet at least one of the three Sport England aims of the Strategy; **Enhance, Provide, Protect.**

The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the preceding Assessment Report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is separated by analysis area and includes information pertaining to the sub sections below.

Please note the Action Plan recommends a number of priority projects relating to sports provision which should be realised over the Local Plan period. As such, many of the objectives and actions within this document need to be delivered and implemented by a wide range of bodies such as NGBs, sports organisations and education establishments. In many instances, Braintree District Council will not be the organisation which delivers these actions or recommendations as the PPOSS is not solely just for the Local Authority to act upon. It applies to/for all the stakeholders and partners involved.

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CENTRAL ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Central Analysis Area)

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES per week ^[1]	Future capacity total in MES per week (2041) ⁸
Football – grass pitches	-	-	-
Central	Adult	Actual spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Central	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Central	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 5.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 6 match equivalent sessions
Central	Mini 7v7	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Played to capacity
Central	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 3.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 3.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Adult	Shortfall of 14.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 17.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 4 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 9.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 11 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 7v7	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 6.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 6 match equivalent sessions
Football – 3G pitches	-	-	-
Central	11v11, floodlit	Actual spare capacity of 0.25 pitches	-
Braintree District	11v11, floodlit	Shortfall of 2 pitches	Shortfall of 2 pitches
Rugby union	-	-	-
Central	Senior	Shortfall of 7.5	-
Braintree District	Senior	Shortfall of 12.5	Shortfall of 13
Hockey	-	-	-
Braintree District	Full size, floodlit	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
Cricket pitches	-	-	-
Central	Saturday	Shortfall of 37 match equivalent sessions	-
Central	Sunday	Shortfall of 37 match equivalent sessions	-
Central	Midweek	Shortfall of 27 match equivalent sessions	-
Braintree District	Saturday	Shortfall of 3 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 27 match equivalent sessions

^[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)

⁸ Future demand (2041) is determined via Local Plan forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPOSS Assessment Report (2024).

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Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES per week ^[1]	Future capacity total in MES per week (2041) ⁸
Braintree District	Sunday	Actual spare capacity of 45 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 45 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Midweek	Shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of five match equivalent sessions

Area recommendations

Sport	Headline findings
Football	- Protect provision. - Improve pitch quality to reduce/alleviate overplay at sites (e.g. at Braintree Sport & Heath Club, Deanery Hill- Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field, John Ray Recreation Ground, Notley Green and The Crops). - Improve ancillary facilities where required and at key sites for the growth of female and adult participation (e.g. at Braintree Town FC- Cressing Road, Braintree Sport & Health Club, Deanery Hill- Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field, John Ray Recreation Ground and Releet Sports Ground). - Seek to provide security of tenure for clubs, enabling actual spare capacity. - Explore opportunities to bring lost provision back into use given local shortfalls, whilst as a minimum retaining the site as strategic reserve (e.g. at Burches Meadow).
3G pitches	- Protect provision. - Ensure sinking funds are in place for long-term sustainability and pitch resurfacing when required (e.g. at Alec Hunter Academy, Braintree Sport & Health Club and Notley Sports Centre). - Explore creation of 3G pitches that are both football and rugby compliant when alleviating shortfalls (e.g. Braintree RUFC). - Explore potential development of 3G pitches (e.g. Braintree Sport & Health Club (second 3G pitch), Honywood Community Science School, John Ray Recreation Ground and Releet Sports Ground).
Rugby union	- Protect provision. - Improve pitch quality to reduce/alleviate overplay at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club. - Improve ancillary facilities at Braintree Rugby Union Football Club.
Hockey	- Protect provision. - Encourage football users to transfer to 3G pitch provision as and when new 3G pitches are provided to free up capacity for hockey (e.g. at Releet Sports Ground). - Resurface pitch at Releet Sports Ground to improve quality and ensure sinking fun is in place for long-term sustainability. - Improve quality of ancillary facilities at Releet Sports Ground. - Upgrade sports lighting to LED at Releet Sports Ground.
Cricket	- Protect provision. - Sustain quality of squares through dedicated maintenance regimes. - Reduce overplay at Coggeshall Town Cricket Club. - Improve changing facilities at Coggeshall Town Cricket Club, Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground) and Rayne Village Hall.
Tennis	- Protect provision. - Seek to improve park courts such as Great Notley Country Park and John Ray Recreation Ground.
Netball	Protect provision.
Bowls	Protect provision and sustain quality to adequately meet demand.
Golf	Protect provision.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Sport	Headline findings
Athletics	◀ Protect provision.
Cycling	◀ Protect provision.
Basketball	◀ Protect provision.
Other grass pitch sports	◀ Protect provision.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

CENTRAL ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
1	Alec Hunter Academy	CM7 3NR	Football	Education	One youth 11v11, two youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitches which are unavailable for community use.	Explore community use options given local shortfalls.	Education FA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
1	Alec Hunter Academy	CM7 3NR	3G	Education	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was installed in 2025.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	Education FA FF	Local	M	S	L	Protect
1	Alec Hunter Academy	CM7 3NR	Tennis	Education	Four poor quality macadam courts which are neither available for community use nor serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality for curricular use.	Education LTA	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
1	Alec Hunter Academy	CM7 3NR	Netball	Education	Three poor quality macadam courts which are neither available for community use nor serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality for curricular use.	Education EN	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
5	Bocking Sports Club	CM7 5JY	Football	Sports Club	Two standard quality adult pitches which have actual spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Club FA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
5	Bocking Sports Club	CM7 5JY	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green, accessed by Bocking Alliance BC.	Sustain green quality.	Bowls England	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
6	Braintree Cricket Club	CM7 9AW	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square, accessed by Braintree CC. The square has three match equivalent sessions of spare capacity (but none at peak time for any playing format). Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Sustain quality. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
7	Braintree Rugby Union Football Club	CM7 3PR	Rugby union	Sports Club	Three standard quality senior pitches. Only one of the senior pitches is serviced by sports lighting and is overplayed and on one of the non-lit pitches. Braintree RUFC has an aspiration to install a full size World Rugby compliant 3G pitch on site. This is due to the club's high usage of the grass pitch provision on site and the overplay identified. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Improve quality to reduce overplay and consider the installation of additional sports lighting to further alleviate it. Explore the feasibility of a full size World Rugby compliant 3G pitch installation given shortfalls on site and when considered against other options in the area (it should be acknowledged that any proposal on this site would need to protect/replace any rugby pitches that would be affected). Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Club RFU	Key centre	M	M-L	H	Protect Enhance

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	Football	Council	Two youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitches, which are assessed as standard quality. The mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity and the youth pitches are overplayed.	Improve pitch quality to eradicate overplay and create actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Hub site	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	3G	Council	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was installed in 2022. Potential option to install a second 11v11 3G pitch on site.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years. Explore feasibility of 3G pitch installation.	FA FF	Hub site	M	S	L	Protect
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	Tennis	Council	Four standard quality macadam courts which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	LTA	Hub site	M	L	L	Protect Enhance
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	Netball	Council	Three standard quality macadam courts which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality to better accommodate club and recreational demand.	EN	Hub site	M	L	L	Protect Enhance
8	Braintree Sport & Health Club	CM7 1FF	Athletics	Council	One eight lane 400-metre track assessed as standard quality and serviced by sports lighting. Used by Braintree & District AC. The main track and field provision in the Authority and used as a competition venue.	Resurface the track within the lifespan of this study to better accommodate club and community demand and to attract increased usage. Also ensure it remains TrackMark accredited.	EA	Hub site	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
9	Braintree Town FC-Cressing Road (stadia pitch)	CM7 3DE	Football	Sports Club	One good quality adult pitch which has spare capacity discounted due to being a stadia pitch. Serviced by poor quality ancillary facilities.	Sustain quality of the pitch. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect
9	Braintree Town FC-Cressing Road (training pitch)	CM7 3DE	Football	Sports Club	One good quality adult pitch which has actual spare capacity.	Sustain quality.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect
9	Braintree Town FC-Cressing Road	CM7 3DE	Tennis	Sports Club	Four good quality courts, of which two are macadam and the remaining four have an artificial surface. Only the macadam courts are surfaced by sports lighting.	Sustain court quality and explore options of additional installing sports lighting to increase capacity.	Club LTA	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
12	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club	CO6 2JT	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square, which is used by Coggeshall Town CC and Braintree CC. The square is overplayed by 37 match equivalent sessions. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Sustain quality and explore options to provide the Club with increased capacity (e.g., via additional provision) to meet its current and future demand. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Club Essex Cricket ECB	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Provide

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
13	Coggeshall Town Cricket Club (Airfield Ground)	CO6 1RQ	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square, which is used by Coggeshall Town CC and Braintree CC. The square has 10 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity. The Club would like to install practice nets. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Sustain quality. Support aspirations for the creation of practice nets on site. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Club Essex Cricket ECB	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Provide
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	CM7 5SS	Football	Council	One youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch, which are assessed as poor quality. The youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed. Serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.	Improve pitch quality to eradicate overplay and create actual spare capacity. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	FA FF	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
17	Deanery Hill (Queen Elizabeth II Foundation Field)	CM7 5SS	Cycling	Council	One standard quality BMX pump track, used by Braintree BMX Club.	Improve quality to better accommodate club and recreational demand.	British Cycling	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	CM77 7FS	Football	Council	One youth 11v11 and one youth 9v9, assessed as standard quality. The youth 9v9 pitch has actual spare capacity whilst the youth 11v11 pitch is played to capacity at peak time.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity. Utilise the actual spare capacity through future demand or via the transfer of activity from an overplayed site.	FA FF	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
18	Discovery Centre (Great Notley)	CM77 7FS	3G	Council	One standard quality smaller size 3G pitch which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was resurfaced in 2020.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	FA FF	Key centre	M	S	L	Protect
27	Great Notley Country Park	CM77 7FS	Tennis	Council	One poor quality macadam court which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality and explore options of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and attract recreational demand.	LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
27	Great Notley Country Park	CM77 7FS	Netball	Council	One poor quality macadam court which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality and explore options of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and attract recreational demand.	EN	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
27	Great Notley Country Park	CM77 7FS	Basketball	Council	One poor quality court which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality and explore options of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and attract recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
27	Great Notley Country Park	CM77 7FS	Athletics	Council	Parkrun event held on site.	Ensure continued activity and seek to maximise participation.	England Athletics	Local	M	L	L	Protect
33	Honywood Community Science School	CO6 1PZ	Football	Education	Two standard quality youth 11v11 pitches, which are available for community use. Spare capacity is discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve quality to eradicate overplay and ensure long term security of tenure is provided to users via a community use agreement.	Education FA FF	Local	M	S	M	Protect Enhance

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Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
33	Honywood Community Science School	CO6 1PZ	3G	Education	Potential option to install a 11v11 3G pitch on site.	Explore feasibility of 3G pitch installation given local shortfalls.	Education FA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect Provide Enhance
33	Honywood Community Science School	CO6 1PZ	Cricket	Education	One standalone NTP which is available for community use but unused.	Retain as community available should demand exist in the future.	Education Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	L	L	Protect
33	Honywood Community Science School	CO6 1PZ	Netball	Education	Three poor quality macadam courts which are available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality for curricular use.	Education EN	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	CM7 9DZ	Football	Council	Four adult, one youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitches, which are assessed as standard quality. The adult pitch has actual spare capacity. Serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	FA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	CM7 9DZ	3G	Council	Potential option to install a 11v11 3G pitch on site.	Explore feasibility of 3G pitch installation given local shortfalls.	Education FA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect Provide Enhance
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	CM7 9DZ	Tennis	Council	Three poor quality macadam courts which are available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality and explore providing sports lighting to better accommodate recreational demand and to increase capacity.	LTA	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
35	John Ray Recreation Ground	CM7 9DZ	Netball	Council	Two standard quality macadam courts which are available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality and explore providing sports lighting to better accommodate recreational demand and to increase capacity.	EN	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
41	Kings Lane Playing Field	CM77 8AQ	Football	Council	One standard quality youth 9v9 pitch, which has actual spare capacity.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites.	FA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
41	Kings Lane Playing Field	CM77 8AQ	Tennis	Council	One standard quality macadam court, which is not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality and explore options of installing sports lighting to better accommodate recreational demand.	LTA	Local	L	L	M	Protect Enhance
43	Lyons Hall Primary School	CM7 9FH	3G	Education	One standard quality smaller size 3G pitch which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting. The pitch was resurfaced in 2016.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
46	Notley Green	CM77 7US	Football	Council	One youth 9v9 and one mini 5v5 pitch, which are assessed as standard quality. The mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity, whilst the youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed. No ancillary facilities are available on site.	Improve pitch quality to eradicate overplay and create actual spare capacity. Utilise the actual spare capacity through future demand or via the transfer of activity from an overplayed site.	FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
47	Notley Green Primary School	CM77 7ZJ	3G	Education	One standard quality smaller size 3G pitch which is neither available for community use nor serviced by sports lighting.	Improve pitch quality for curricular use.	FA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect

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Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
47	Notley Green Primary School	CM77 7ZJ	Netball	Education	Two standard quality macadam courts which are neither available for community nor serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality for curricular use.	Education EN	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
48	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	Football	Education	One adult and one youth 9v9, which are assessed as poor quality and available for community use. The pitches are overplayed.	Improve pitch quality to alleviate overplay.	Education FA FF	Key centre	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
48	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	3G	Education	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was installed in 2025.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	Club FA FF	Local	M	S	L	Protect
48	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	Tennis	Education	One standard quality macadam court which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality and explore options of providing sports lighting to better cater for community use.	Education LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
48	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	Netball	Education	Six standard quality macadam courts, which are available for community use but no serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality and explore opportunities to install sports lighting to increase capacity and help attract demand.	Education EN	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
48	Notley Sports Centre	CM7 1WY	Basketball	Education	One standard quality and one poor quality basketball court, which are available for community use.	Improve court quality for curricular use.	Education Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect
50	Rayne Village Hall	CM77 6TX	Football	Council	One adult and, one mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches assessed as standard quality. The mini pitches have actual spare capacity whilst the adult pitch is overplayed. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity and/or alleviate overplay. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	FA FF	Local	L	S	M	Protect Provide Enhance
50	Rayne Village Hall	CM77 6TX	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square, used by Rayne CC. The square is played to capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision. The Club reports that it would like to install non-turf practice nets.	Improve pitch quality. Improve quality of ancillary facilities. Support aspirations to install non-turf nets.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
50	Rayne Village Hall	CM77 6TX	Cycling	Council	One standard quality BMX pump track.	Improve quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	British Cycling	Local	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
50	Rayne Village Hall	CM77 6TX	Rounders	Council	One rounders diamond.	Sustain quality.	Rounders England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
51	Releet Sports Ground	CM7 5LJ	Football	Sports Club	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and one mini 5v5 pitches assessed as good quality. Only the adult pitches have actual spare	Sustain pitch quality and utilise the actual spare capacity through future demand or via the transfer of activity from an overplayed site.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance

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Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
					capacity and the remaining pitches are played to capacity at peak time. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality of ancillary facilities.						
51	Releet Sports Ground	CM7 5LJ	3G	Sports Club	Potential option to install a 11v11 3G pitch on site.	Explore feasibility of 3G pitch installation given local shortfalls.	Education FA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect Provide Enhance
51	Releet Sports Ground	CM7 5LJ	Hockey	Sports Club	One sand-based standard quality pitch, which is available for community use and serviced by sports lighting. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2015. Used by Braintree HC for match play and training activity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Protect for continued hockey use. Resurface pitch when required and ensure a sinking fund is in place for long-term sustainability. Seek transfer of some football demand to 3G provision to build increased hockey capacity. Upgrade the sports lighting to LED. Improve quality of ancillary facilities and car parking provision.	Club EH	Key centre	H	S	M	Protect Enhance
67	The Crops	CO6 1NT	Football	Council	One good quality adult and one standard quality mini 5v5 pitch. The adult pitch is overplayed whilst the mini pitch is played to capacity at peak time.	Improve quality to eradicate overplay and to create actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
79	Meadowside Open Space	CM7 5UG	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court, which is available for community use.	Improve court quality for recreational use.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect
84	Great Bradford Junior School	CM7 9LW	Football	Education	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch which is unavailable for community use.	Explore community use options given local shortfalls.	Education FA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
94	Braintree Bowling Club	CM7 2PA	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green accessed by Braintree BC.	Sustain green quality.	Bowls England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
104	Braintree Golf Club	CM77 8DD	Golf	Private	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
111	Braintree & Bocking Public Gardens	CM7 9AE	Tennis	Council	Two poor quality macadam courts which are available for community use but not sports lit.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand. Explore options of providing sports lighting to increase capacity.	LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY

RURAL NORTH ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Rural North Analysis Area)

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES per week ^[1]	Future capacity total in MES per week (2041) ⁹
Football – grass pitches	-	-	-
Rural North	Adult	Shortfall of 7 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 8 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Youth 11v11	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Youth 9v9	Actual spare capacity of 1 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 1 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Mini 7v7	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions
Rural North	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Adult	Shortfall of 14.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 17.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 4 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 9.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 11 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 7v7	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 6.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 6 match equivalent sessions
Football – 3G pitches	-	-	-
Rural North	11v11, floodlit	Shortfall of 0.25 pitches	-
Braintree District	11v11, floodlit	Shortfall of 2 pitches	Shortfall of 2 pitches
Rugby union	-	-	-
Rural North	Senior	Played to capacity	-
Braintree District	Senior	Shortfall of 12.5	Shortfall of 13
Hockey	-	-	-
Braintree District	Full size, floodlit	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
Cricket pitches	-	-	-
Rural North	Saturday	Actual spare capacity of 96 match equivalent sessions	N/A
Rural North	Sunday	Actual spare capacity of 120 match equivalent sessions	N/A
Rural North	Midweek	Actual spare capacity of 96 match equivalent sessions	N/A
Braintree District	Saturday	Shortfall of 3 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 27 match equivalent sessions

^[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)

⁹ Future demand (2041) is determined via Local Plan forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPOSS Assessment Report (2024).

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES per week ^[1]	Future capacity total in MES per week (2041) ⁹
Braintree District	Sunday	Actual spare capacity of 45 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 45 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Midweek	Shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of five match equivalent sessions

Area recommendations

Sport	Headline findings
Football	- Protect provision. - Improve pitch quality to reduce/alleviate overplay at sites (e.g. at Blackmore End Playing Fields, Church Road Playing Fields, Courtauld Sports Ground, Great Yeldham Recreation Ground, Lawn Meadow and Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground). - Improve ancillary facilities at sites where lack of changing facilities is affecting growth of clubs (e.g. at Blackmore End Playing Fields, Courtauld Sports Ground, Great Yeldham Recreation Ground and Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground). - Seek to provide community use for clubs, enabling actual spare capacity. - Improve quality to establish actual spare capacity (e.g. at Clayhills). - Explore the potential reinstatement of pitches at Burches Meadow and Strutt Memorial Recreation Ground, given local shortfalls.
3G pitches	- Protect provision. - Ensure sinking funds are in place for long-term sustainability and pitch resurfacing when required (e.g. at Halstead Leisure Centre).
Rugby union	- Protect provision. - Improve pitch quality at Courtauld Sports Ground. - Improve ancillary facilities at Courtauld Sports Ground.
Hockey	N/A.
Cricket	- Protect provision. - Sustain quality of squares through dedicated maintenance regimes. - Improve changing facilities at Gestingthorpe Playing Field, Halstead Cricket Club and Terling Cricket Club.
Tennis	- Protect provision. - Sustain quality of courts. - Seek to improve park courts such as Finchingfield Playing Fields, Shalford Village Hall Playing Field and Wethersfield Playing Field
Netball	Protect provision.
Bowls	Protect provision and sustain quality to adequately meet demand.
Golf	Protect provision.
Athletics	Protect provision.
Cycling	Protect provision.
Basketball	Protect provision.
Other grass pitch sports	Protect provision.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

RURAL NORTH ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	CO10 7BU	Tennis	Council	Two standard quality macadam courts which are available for community use but not sports lit.	Improve court quality for continued recreational usage.	LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	CO10 7BU	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
2	Belchamp St Paul Playing Field	CO10 7BU	Rounders	Council	One rounders diamond.	Sustain quality.	Rounders England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
4	Blackmore End Playing Fields	CM7 4DN	Football	Council	One adult, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitches which are assessed as poor quality. The adult and youth 9v9 pitches are overplayed, whilst the remaining pitches are played to capacity. Serviced by poor quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality to eradicate overplay and to create actual spare capacity. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	FA FF	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
10	Church Road Playing Fields	CO9 1TL	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch which has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality to provide actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
10	Church Road Playing Fields	CO9 1TL	Rounders	Council	One rounders diamond.	Sustain quality.	Rounders England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
11	Clayhills	CO9 2NG	Football	Sports Club	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch which has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality to provide actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	CO9 2ES	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one mini 7v7 pitch assessed as poor quality. The adult pitch is overplayed and mini 7v7 pitch has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality to eradicate overplay and to create actual spare capacity. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	CO9 2ES	Rugby union	Sports Club	One poor quality senior pitch. The pitch is not serviced by sports lighting and is overplayed.	Improve quality to reduce overplay and consider installing sports lighting to allow training demand to be accommodated.	Club RFU	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	CO9 2ES	Tennis	Sports Club	Site has recently received planning permission for two new courts which will be serviced by sports lighting.	Support development of tennis courts.	Club LTA	Key centre	M	S	L	Protect Enhance
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	CO9 2ES	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard quality bowling green, accessed by Courtauld Halstead BC.	Improve green quality.	Club Bowls England	Key centre	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
15	Courtauld Sports Ground	CO9 2ES	Rounders	Sports Club	One rounders diamond.	Sustain quality.	Club Rounders England	Key centre	L	L	L	Protect
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	CO6 2NG	Football	Community association	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch assessed as good quality. The youth pitch has actual spare capacity.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	FA FF	Key centre	M	S	L	Protect Enhance

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
					Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality of ancillary facilities.						
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	CO6 2NG	Cricket	Community association	One standard quality grass wicket square with an accompanying NTP, accessed by Earls Colne CC. The square has six match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity. Serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.	Improve quality of the square to provide additional capacity and ensure no future overplay. Improve quality of ancillary provision	Essex Cricket ECB	Key centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
20	Earls Colne Recreation Club	CO6 2NG	Tennis	Community association	Four good quality macadam courts which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Sustain court quality.	LTA	Key centre	M	L	L	Protect
22	Finchingfield Playing Fields	CM7 4LZ	Football	Council	One standard quality youth 9v9 pitch which has actual spare capacity.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	FA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect
22	Finchingfield Playing Fields	CM7 4LZ	Tennis	Council	One good quality macadam court which is available for community use but not sports lit.	Sustain court quality and explore providing sports lighting to better accommodate recreational demand.	LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
22	Finchingfield Playing Fields	CM7 4LZ	Football/Cycling	Council	Site has recently received planning permission to extend the site to create a youth 11v11 pitch and a BMX track	Support development of football pitches and BMX track	FA FF British Cycling	Local	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	CO9 3BB	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch which has actual spare capacity.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	FA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect
23	Gestingthorpe Playing Field	CO9 3BB	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square, accessed by Gestingthorpe CC. The square has eight match equivalent sessions of spare capacity. Serviced by poor quality ancillary provision. The Club would like to replace the old surfaces on the nets in the next few years but is proving expensive.	Improve quality of the square to provide additional capacity and ensure no future overplay. Improve quality of ancillary provision. Support aspirations to replace the net surface.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
24	Gosfield School	CO9 1PF	Football	Education	Two poor quality adult pitches which are available for community use. The pitches are overplayed.	Improve pitch quality to eradicate overplay and create actual spare capacity.	Education FA FF	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
24	Gosfield School	CO9 1PF	Rugby union	Education	One poor quality senior pitch which is available for community but not serviced by sports lighting. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure and poor quality.	Improve quality for curricular use and retain as community available should club demand exist in the future.	Education RFU	Key centre	L	L	L	Protect Provide
24	Gosfield School	CO9 1PF	Hockey	Education	One sand-based smaller size pitch, which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Retain for continued recreational usage.	Education EH	Key centre	M	L	L	Protect

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
24	Gosfield School	CO9 1PF	Cricket	Education	One good quality grass wicket square accompanied by an NTP, which is unavailable for community use.	Explore community use options given significant local shortfalls. If provided, seek long term security of tenure for users.	Education ECB Essex Cricket	Key centre	M	S	L	Protect
24	Gosfield School	CO9 1PF	Tennis	Education	Three standard quality macadam courts, which are neither available for community use nor serviced by sports lighting.	Explore community use options with the School given quantity of courts provided.	Education LTA	Key centre	M	S	L	Protect
25	Great Bardfield Playing Fields	CM7 4RR	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch which has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality to provide actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
28	Great Yeldham Recreation Ground	CO9 4HD	Football	Council	One adult, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitches assessed as standard quality. The adult, youth 9v9 and mini 5v5 pitch have actual spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
29	Halstead Leisure Centre	CO9 2HR	3G	Council	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2021.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	FA FF	Key centre	H	S	L	Protect
30	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	Football	Education	Two standard quality adult pitches which are available for community and played to capacity.	Improve quality to better accommodate demand.	Education FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Provide Enhance
30	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	3G	Education	One poor quality smaller sized pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2012.	Resurface the pitch to maximise competitive and recreational use. Ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	Education FA FF	Local	M	S	H	Protect Provide Enhance
30	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	Rugby union	Education	One standard quality senior pitch, which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Retain as community available should club demand exist in the future.	Education RFU	Local	L	L	L	Protect Provide
30	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	Cricket	Education	One standalone NTP which is available for community use but unused.	Retain as community available should demand exist in the future.	Education ECB Essex Cricket	Local	L	L	L	Protect
30	Hedingham School	CO9 3QH	Netball	Education	Three poor quality macadam courts, which are available for community use but not sports lit.	Improve quality and explore potential of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and to attract community demand.	Education LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
31	Helions Bumpstead Recreation Ground	CB9 7AH	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square, which is currently not used. . The square has 16 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity.	Improve quality of the square to provide additional capacity and ensure no future overplay.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
					Serviced by no ancillary provision on site.	Consider servicing site with ancillary provision if demand exists in the future.						
39	Kelvedon St Marys CE Primary Academy	CO5 9DS	Football	Education	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch which is unavailable for community use.	Improve quality and retain for curricular use.	Education FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
42	Lawn Meadow	CO9 3QL	Football	Sports Club	One standard quality adult pitch which is overplayed. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Improve pitch quality to reduce overplay. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Club FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	CM7 5EZ	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch which has actual spare capacity.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	CM7 5EZ	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square, accessed by Chelmsford Titans CC. The square is played to capacity.	Improve pitch quality. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
55	Shalford Village Hall Playing Field	CM7 5EZ	Tennis	Council	One standard quality macadam court which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality and explore potential of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and to attract community demand.	LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
62	St Margarets Prep School	CO9 1SE	Football	Education	One youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch, which are unavailable for community use.	Improve quality and retain for curricular use.	Education FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
63	Steeple Bumpstead Primary School	CB9 7ED	Football	Education	One mini 7v7 pitch, which is unavailable for community use.	Improve quality and retain for curricular use.	Education FA, FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	CB9 7ED	Football	Council	One youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch which are assessed as poor quality. The youth pitch is overplayed and the mini pitch has spare capacity discounted.	Improve pitch quality to eradicate overplay and create actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
64	Steeple Bumpstead Recreation Ground	CB9 7ED	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
66	The Bell Field	CM7 5AQ	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch which is overplayed.	Improve pitch quality to alleviate overplay and create actual spare capacity.	FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
69	The Millbank Stadium	CO9 1HR	Football	Sports Club	One good quality adult pitch which is played to capacity at peak time.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or through future demand.	FA FF	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
70	The Ramsey Academy	CO9 2HR	Tennis	Education	Six poor quality macadam courts, which are available for community but not sports lit.	Improve quality and explore potential of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and to attract community demand.	Education LTA	Local	M	S	M	Protect Enhance

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
70	The Ramsey Academy	CO9 2HR	Netball	Education	One standard quality macadam court which is available for community but not sports lit.	Improve court quality and explore options of installing additional sports lighting to increase capacity and attract demand.	Education EN	Local	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	CM7 4EQ	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square, which is currently not used. The square has 20 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality of the square to provide additional capacity and ensure no future overplay. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
72	Wethersfield Playing Field	CM7 4EQ	Tennis	Council	One standard quality macadam court which is available for community but not sports lit.	Improve court quality and explore options of installing additional sports lighting to increase capacity and attract demand.	LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
88	St Peter's C of E Primary School	CO9 3NR	Football	Education	Two poor quality mini 7v7 pitches which are unavailable for community use.	Improve quality and retain for curricular use.	Education FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	CO5 9SA	Rugby union	Council	One standard quality senior pitch which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting. The pitch is played to capacity.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity.	RFU	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
89	Feering Community Centre Playing Field	CO5 9SA	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
91	Gosfield Tennis Club	CO9 1PR	Tennis	Sports Club	Three standard quality and one poor quality macadam courts which are available for community use and sports lit.	Improve court quality for continued club usage.	Club LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
92	Castle Hedingham Tennis Club	CO9 3EW	Tennis	Sports Club	Three good quality macadam courts which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Sustain court quality.	Club LTA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
93	The Essex Golf and Country Club	CO6 2NS	Tennis	Commercial	One good quality macadam court which is not available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Sustain quality.	LTA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
93	The Essex Golf and Country Club	CO6 2NS	Golf	Commercial	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
95	Castle Hedingham Bowls Club	CO9 3HB	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green, accessed by Castle Hedingham BC.	Sustain green quality.	Club Bowls England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
98	Twinstead Cricket Club	CO10 7NA	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square, accessed by Twinstead CC. The square has eight match equivalent sessions of spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Sustain quality of square. Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	L	L	Protect

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Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
99	Castle Hedingham Cricket Club	CO9 3AG	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square, accessed by Castled Hedingham CC. The square has 33 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Sustain quality of square. Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	L	L	Protect
100	Halstead Cricket Club	CO9 2RP	Cricket	Sports Club	Two good quality grass wicket squares used by Halstead CC. The squares have actual spare capacity. Serviced by poor quality ancillary facilities.	Sustain quality of square. Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	L	L	Protect
102	Wickham St Paul's Recreation Ground	CO9 2PL	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square which is unused. The square has 16 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality of the square to provide additional capacity and ensure no future overplay. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
103	Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club	CB9 7DY	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green, accessed by Steeple Bumpstead BC.	Sustain green quality.	Club Bowls England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
105	Colne Valley Golf Club	CO6 2LT	Golf	Private	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
106	Gosfield Lake Golf Club	CO9 1SE	Golf	Private	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
107	Haverhill Golf Club	CB9 7UW	Golf	Private	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
-	Burches Meadow	Unknown	Football (disused)	Council	One adult pitch	Consider bringing pitch back into use given local shortfalls.	FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Provide

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

SOUTH ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (South Analysis Area)

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES per week ^[1]	Future capacity total in MES per week (2041) ¹⁰
Football – grass pitches	-	-	-
South	Adult	Shortfall of 9.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 10.5 match equivalent sessions
South	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1 match equivalent session	Shortfall of 2 match equivalent sessions
South	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 6 match equivalent sessions
South	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 1 match equivalent session
South	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Adult	Shortfall of 14.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 17.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 4 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 9.5 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 11 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 7v7	Played to capacity	Shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Mini 5v5	Actual spare capacity of 6.5 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 6 match equivalent sessions
Football – 3G pitches	-	-	-
South	11v11, floodlit	Shortfall of 3.75 pitches	-
Braintree District	11v11, floodlit	Shortfall of 2 pitches	Shortfall of 3 pitches
Rugby union	-	-	-
South	Senior		-
Braintree District	Senior	Shortfall of	Shortfall of
Hockey	-	-	-
Braintree District	Full size, floodlit	Played to capacity	Played to capacity
Cricket pitches	-		
South	Saturday	Shortfall of 62 match equivalent sessions	-
South	Sunday	Actual spare capacity of 38 match equivalent sessions	-
South	Midweek	Shortfall of 58 match equivalent sessions	-
Braintree District	Saturday	Shortfall of 3 match equivalent sessions	Shortfall of 27 match equivalent sessions

^[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)

¹⁰ Future demand (2041) is determined via Local Plan forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPOSS Assessment Report (2024).

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES per week ^[1]	Future capacity total in MES per week (2041) ¹⁰
Braintree District	Sunday	Actual spare capacity of 45 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of 45 match equivalent sessions
Braintree District	Midweek	Shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions	Actual spare capacity of five match equivalent sessions

Area recommendations

Sport	Headline findings
Football	- Protect provision. - Improve quality to eradicate overplay (e.g. at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground, Oak Farm, Silver Street Field and Witham Sports Ground). - Improve quality to establish actual spare capacity. - Seek to provide security of tenure for clubs, enabling actual spare capacity. - Improve ancillary facilities where required and at key sites for the growth of female and adult participation (e.g. at Keith Bigden Memorial Ground, Rickstones Sports Ground, Silver End Village Hall, Silver Street Field, Witham Sports Ground and Witham Town Football Club). - Utilise the actual spare capacity that exists via the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand (e.g. Crossing Sports & Social Club). - Explore the potential reinstatement of the grass pitches at Kelvedon Recreation Ground and Strutt Memorial Ground given local shortfalls. - Ensure football pitches proposed as part of planned housing developments are fully operational at sites such as Maltings Lane Sports Ground, Haygreen Road.
3G pitches	- Protect provision. - Ensure a sinking fund is in place for long-term sustainability (e.g. at New Rickstones Academy and Witham Sports Ground). - Explore potential development of 3G pitches (e.g. at Keith Bigden Recreation Ground (Hatfield Peverel FC) and Witham Town Football Club).
Rugby union	- Protect provision. - Improve quality to reduce overplay and consider installing sports lighting to allow for training demand to be dispersed (e.g. at Witham Rugby Union Football Club).
Hockey	- Protect provision - Ensure sinking is in place for long-term sustainability (e.g. at Witham Sports Ground). - Upgrade sports lighting to LED at Witham Sports Ground. - Improve quality of ancillary facilities at Witham Sports Ground.
Cricket	- Protect provision. - Sustain quality of squares through dedicated maintenance regimes. - Reduce overplay at Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club, Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club, Sauls Bridge Sports Ground and Terling Cricket Club. - Improve changing facilities at Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club, Sauls Bridge Sports Ground and Terling Cricket Club
Tennis	- Protect provision. - Seek to improve park courts such as Silver End Village Hall.
Netball	Protect provision.
Bowls	Protect provision and sustain quality to adequately meet demand.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Sport	Headline findings
Golf	◀ Protect provision.
Athletics	◀ Protect provision.
Cycling	◀ Protect provision.
Basketball	◀ Protect provision.
Other grass pitch sports	◀ Protect provision.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

SOUTH ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
16	Cressing Sports and Social Club	CM77 8JQ	Football	Sports Club	One standard quality adult pitch which is played to capacity at peak time.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	Club FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
21	Fairstead Road Recreation Ground	CM3 2BU	Football	Council	One adult and one mini 5v5 pitch assessed as standard quality. The pitches have actual spare capacity.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
34	Howbridge Church of England Junior School	CM8 1BZ	Football	Education	One youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch which are unavailable for community use.	Retain for continued curricular use.	Education FA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	CM3 2JL	Football	Sports Club	Two adult, one youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches assessed as good quality. The adult and mini pitches have actual spare capacity, whilst the youth 11v11 pitch is overplayed. Serviced by good quality ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality to reduce overplay. Sustain quality of ancillary facilities.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect Provide Enhance
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	CM3 2JL	3G	Sports Club	Potential option to install a 11v11 3G pitch on site.	Explore feasibility of 3G pitch installation given local shortfalls.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	M	H	Protect Provide Enhance
36	Keith Bigden Memorial Ground	CM3 2JL	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green which is unused.	Sustain green quality.	Bowls England	Key centre	L	L	L	Protect
37	Kelvedon and Feering Cricket Club	CO5 9SB	Cricket	Sports Club	Two good quality grass wicket squares which are used by Kelvedon & Feering CC. The squares are overplayed. Serviced by good quality ancillary provision.	Consider the installation of an NTP to eradicate overplay through the transfer of demand away from the grass wickets. Alternatively (or additionally), explore creation of hybrid provision on site. Sustain quality of ancillary facilities.	Club ECB Essex Cricket	Key centre	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
38	Kelvedon Recreation Ground	CO5 9AB	Football	Council	Disused football pitches (last marked xx).	Explore reinstating the grass football pitches, given local shortfalls.	FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Provide
38	Kelvedon Recreation Ground	CO5 9AB	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
44	Maltings Academy	CM8 1EP	Football	Education	One youth 11v11 and one mini 5v5 pitch assessed as poor quality which are available for community use. The youth pitch is played to capacity whilst the mini pitch has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality and unsecure tenure.	Improve quality to eradicate overplay and ensure long term security of tenure is provided to users via a community use agreement.	Education FA FF	Local	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
44	Maltings Academy	CM8 1EP	Tennis	Education	Four standard quality macadam courts which are available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality and explore options of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and attract demand.	Education LTA	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance

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PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
44	Maltings Academy	CM8 1EP	Netball	Education	One poor quality macadam court which is available for community use but not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality and explore options of installing sports lighting to increase capacity and attract demand.	Education EN	Local	L	S	M	Protect Enhance
45	New Rickstones Academy	CM8 2SD	Football	Education	Three youth 11v11, one youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitches assessed as poor quality which are available for community use. The youth 11v11 pitches are overplayed.	Improve pitch quality to alleviate overplay and create actual spare capacity.	Education FA FF	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Provide
45	New Rickstones Academy	CM8 2SD	3G	Education	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was installed in 2025.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	Education FA FF	Local	M	S	L	Protect
45	New Rickstones Academy	CM8 2SD	Netball	Education	Four poor quality macadam courts which are neither available for community nor serviced by sports lighting.	Improve quality for curricular use and then explore community use options.	Education EN	Local	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
45	New Rickstones Academy	CM8 2SD	Basketball	Education	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Education Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
49	Oak Farm	CM8 1SF	Football	Sports Club	Two poor quality adult and one standard quality youth 9v9 pitch. The adult pitches are overplayed whilst the youth pitch has actual spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity and/or alleviate overplay. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club FA FF	Local	M	S	M	Protect Provide Enhance
49	Oak Farm	CM8 1SF	Hockey	Sports Club	One sand-filled smaller size pitch, which is serviced by sports lighting.	Retain for continued recreational demand.	Club EH	Local	L	L	L	Protect
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	CM8 2LX	Football	Council	Two adult, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitch assessed as standard quality. The adult and youth pitches are overplayed with the remaining pitches played to capacity at peak time. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality and seek transfer play to sites with actual spare capacity in order to alleviate overplay. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	FA FF	Key centre	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
52	Rickstones Sports Ground	CM8 2LX	Rounders	Council	One rounders diamond.	Sustain quality.	Rounders England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	CM8 1FX	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch which is played to capacity at peak time.	Seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand.	FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect
53	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground	CM8 1FX	Cricket	Council	One standard quality grass wicket square used by Witham CC. The square is overplayed by four match equivalent sessions. Serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.	Improve pitch quality to alleviate overplay. Improve quality of ancillary provision.	Essex Cricket ECB	Local	M	S	L	Protect Enhance Provide

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
56	Silver End Academy	CM8 3RZ	Football	Education	Two poor quality mini 5v5 pitches which are available for community use. Spare capacity is discounted due to poor quality and unsecure tenure.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity and seek to establish a community use agreement for club users to provide security of tenure.	Education FA FF	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
56	Silver End Academy	CM8 3RZ	Hockey	Education	One sand-filled smaller size pitch, which is serviced by sports lighting.	Retain for continued curricular use.	Education EH	Local	L	L	L	Protect
57	Silver End Village Hall	CM8 3RQ	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitch which is played to capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
57	Silver End Village Hall	CM8 3RQ	Tennis	Council	Three poor quality macadam courts which are available for community use and not serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality to better accommodate demand and explore providing sports lighting to better accommodate recreational demand and to increase capacity.	LTA	Local	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
57	Silver End Village Hall	CM8 3RQ	Bowls	Council	One standard quality bowling green used by Silver End BC.	Improve green quality.	Bowls England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
57	Silver End Village Hall	CM8 3RQ	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
58	Silver Street Field	CM8 3QG	Football	Council	One adult, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitches assessed as standard quality. The mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity with remaining pitches played to capacity at peak time. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity. Utilise the actual spare capacity through future demand or via the transfer of activity from an overplayed site. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	FA FF	Local	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
59	Southview School	CM8 2TA	Football	Education	One youth 9v9 pitch which is unavailable for community use.	Retain for continued curricular use.	Education FA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
59	Southview School	CM8 2TA	Netball	Education	Two poor quality macadam courts which are neither available for community use nor sports lit.	Improve quality for curricular use and then explore community use options.	Education EN	Key centre	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
65	Terling Cricket Club	CM3 2PN	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square accessed by Terling CC. The square is overplayed by 19 match equivalent sessions. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Consider the installation of an NTP to eradicate overplay through the transfer of demand away from the grass wickets. Alternatively (or additionally), explore creation of hybrid provision on site. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club ECB Essex Cricket	Local	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
73	Witham Oaks Academy	CM8 1NA	Football	Education	One youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch which are unavailable for community use.	Retain for continued curricular use.	Education FA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect

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Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
74	Witham Rugby Union Football Club	CM8 1UN	Rugby union	Sports Club	Two senior and two age grade pitches assessed as standard quality. Only one of the senior pitches is serviced by sports lighting and is overplayed as well as one of the age grade pitches. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve quality to increase actual spare capacity and consider installing additional sports lighting for training demand to be dispersed equally. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club RFU	Key centre	M	M	M	Protect Provide
75	Witham Sports Ground	CM8 1EP	Football	Council	Three standard quality adult, one poor quality adult and one poor quality youth 9v9 pitch. The standard quality adult pitches have actual spare capacity whilst the youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity and/or alleviate overplay. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	FA FF	Hub site	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
75	Witham Sports Ground	CM8 1EP	3G	Council	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch, which is available for community use, serviced by sports lighting and FA approved. The pitch was installed in 2025.	Sustain quality and ensure sinking funds are in place for long term sustainability and that FA testing takes place every three years.	FA FF	Hub site	H	S	L	Protect
75	Witham Sports Ground	CM8 1EP	Hockey	Council	One full size sand-based pitch which is available for community use and serviced by sports lighting. Used by Witham HC for match play and training activity and assessed as good quality having been last resurfaced in 2021. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Resurface pitch for hockey usage and ensure a sinking fund is in place for long-term sustainability. Upgrade lighting to LED. Improve quality of ancillary facilities to make it suitable for women's and girls' access.	EH	Hub site	H	S	M	Protect Enhance
75	Witham Sports Ground	CM8 1EP	Netball	Council	Two standard quality macadam courts which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	EN	Hub site	M	S	M	Protect Enhance
76	Witham Town Football Club	CM8 1UN	Football	Sports Club	One adult, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch. All are assessed as standard quality with the exception of the adult pitch which is good quality. All pitches with the exception of mini 5v5 pitch are overplayed. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision.	Improve pitch quality to create actual spare capacity and/or alleviate overplay. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club FA FF	Key centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
76	Witham Town Football Club	CM8 1UN	3G	Sports Club	Potential option to install a 11v11 3G pitch on site.	Explore feasibility of 3G pitch installation given local shortfalls.	Club FA FF	Key centre	M	M	H	Protect Provide Enhance
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	CM3 2LS	Football (disused)	Council	Open space site, which was previously marked out for two adult pitches (circa 2012).	Consider bringing adult pitches back into use given local shortfalls.	FA FF	Local	M	S	M	Protect Provide
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	CM3 2LS	Tennis	Council	Two good quality macadam courts which are available for community use and serviced by sports lighting.	Sustain court quality.	LTA	Local	L	L	L	Protect

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Site ID	Site	Postcode	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
81	Strutt Memorial Ground	CM3 2LS	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
82	The Albert Moss Playing Field	CM8 3PH	Basketball	Council	One poor quality basketball court which is available for community use.	Improve court quality to better accommodate recreational demand.	Basketball England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
83	Powers Hall Academy	CM8 1NA	Football	Education	One youth 9v9 pitch which is unavailable for community use.	Retain for continued curricular use.	Education FA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
85	Holy Family Catholic Primary School	CM8 1DX	Football	Education	Two mini 7v7 pitches which are unavailable for community use.	Retain for continued curricular use.	Education FA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
90	Prested Hall Hotel and Sports Club	CO5 9EE	Tennis	Commercial	Two good quality macadam courts which are not available for community use but serviced by sports lighting.	Sustain quality.	LTA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
96	Witham Bowls Club	CM8 2DZ	Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green used by Witham BC.	Sustain green quality.	Bowls England	Local	L	L	L	Protect
97	Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club	CM3 2LB	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square used by Hatfield Peverel CC. The square is overplayed by nine match equivalent sessions. Serviced by standard quality ancillary provision. The Club would like to install an NTP and practice nets.	Consider the installation of an NTP to eradicate overplay through the transfer of demand away from the grass wickets. Alternatively (or additionally), explore creation of hybrid provision on site. Improve quality of ancillary facilities. Support aspirations to install an NTP and practice nets.	Club ECB Essex Cricket	Local	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
101	Witham Cricket Club	CM8 1HN	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality grass wicket square accompanied by an NTP, used by Witham CC. The square has 69 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity. Serviced by standard quality ancillary facilities.	Sustain quality of the square and seek to utilise actual spare capacity through the transfer of demand from overplayed sites or via future demand. Improve quality of ancillary facilities.	Club Essex Cricket ECB	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
108	Benton Hall Golf & Country Club	CM8 3LH	Golf	Private	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
109	Rivenhall Oaks Golf Centre	CM8 2FX	Golf	Private	One standard 9-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
110	The Notleys Golf Club	CM8 1ST	Golf	Private	One standard 18-hole course.	Retain course and ensure quality is maintained appropriately.	England Golf	Local	L	L	L	Protect
112	Witham Mill Lane Bowls Club	CM8 1BW	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard quality bowling green used by Witham Mill Lane BC.	Improve green quality.	Club Bowls England	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
-	Maltings Lane, Haygreen Road	CM8 1GR	Football	Council	Planned housing development is set to provide one adult and two mini 7v7 pitches.	Progress site development relative to on-going work with partners.	Sport England NGBs	Key centre	M	M	H	Provide

PART 7: HOUSING GROWTH SCENARIOS

The PPOSS provides an estimate of demand for pitch sport based on population forecasts and club consultation to 2041 (in line with the emerging Local Plan), with this future demand then translated into teams likely to be generated. Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator adds to this, updating the likely demand generated for pitch sports based on housing increases before converting the demand into match equivalent sessions and the number of pitches that may be required to meet the growth. It also gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision and splits the total pitch requirement into natural turf pitches to meet peak period demand, artificial grass pitches to meet training demand, and the additional number of changing rooms required.

Similarly, the Sports Facilities Calculator identifies the potential need for tennis courts from the population growth associated to housing developments.

For the playing pitch sports, the demand is shown in match equivalent sessions per week for most sports, except for cricket, where match equivalent sessions are by season. Training demand is expressed in either hours or match equivalent sessions; where expressed in hours, it is expected that demand will use either a 3G pitch (football demand) or an AGP (hockey demand). Where expressed in match equivalent sessions, it is expected training will take place on sports-lit grass pitches (i.e., for rugby union).

The indicative figures are based on the assumption that population growth will average 2.4 per dwelling. This is based on the national average.

Braintree District's Local Plan will make allocations for housing growth, and its policies will also be used to determine proposals for any housing proposals over the plan period. To therefore understand how the PPOSS can be used alongside the Playing Pitch Calculator, this section is provided as a guide to show the additional demand for pitch sports and tennis that could be generated from housing growth in Braintree District, thus showing how the calculators work and what they can provide. Please note that the scenarios can be updated as required over the Local Plan period and throughout the lifespan of the PPOSS to reflect population projections, team generation rates and change in the average household size.

Scenario 1: Likely demand generated for pitch sports from housing growth requirement over the Local Plan period (2041)

The current housing growth requirement in Braintree District across the Local Plan period to 2033 is for 18,959 new dwellings. This equates to a population growth of 45,501. The table below identifies what this equates to in terms of pitch demand.

Table 7.1: Likely demand for grass pitch sports from 18,959 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ¹¹	Training demand ¹²
Adult football	9.75	96.95 hours
Youth football	25.73	As above
Mini soccer	13	As above
Rugby union	3.69	4.14 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions

¹¹ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

¹² Hours equate to access to a full size sports lit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP.

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Pitch sport	Match demand per week ¹¹	Training demand ¹²
Adult hockey	2.81	8.42 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	1.48	1.87 hours
Cricket	238.1	-

This population increase equates to 52.17 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 4.29 match equivalent sessions on a hockey suitable AGP's and 238.1 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 96.95 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches, and accumulative 4.14 match equivalent sessions on a sports lit grass pitch for the rugby union and 10.29 hours on a hockey suitable AGP.

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.2: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand ¹³	Capital cost ¹⁴	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ¹⁵	Number of changing rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	9.75	£1,093,698	£215,459	19.5	£4,026,798
Youth football	25.73	£2,493,189	£503,624	34.3	£7,085,623
Mini soccer	13.00	£397,746	£78,754	0.00	£0
Rugby union	3.69	£640,328	£118,461	7.39	£1,525,487
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	5.41	£1,959,763	£360,596	10.82	£2,235,786
Sand based AGPs	0.7	£697,521	£18,136	1.40	£289,740
3G	2.55	£3,057,782	£89,935	5.10	£1,053,959
Tennis courts	5.83 courts	£661,554	-	-	-
Total	60.83 and 5.83 tennis courts	£11,001,580	£1,384,964	78.52	£16,217,391

Overall, an additional 60.83 pitches would be required to meet additional demand arising from an additional 45,501 people living in the Braintree District. This consist of 57.58 grass pitches, 3.25 of access to artificial pitches and 5.83 outdoor tennis courts. This would require an expected capital cost of £11,001,580 and a lifecycle cost per annum of £1,384,964. To facilitate the increased provision, 78.52 changing rooms would need to be provided at a capital cost of £16,217,391.

Scenario 2– Testing the model for the Halstead housing development proposing 2,850 dwellings in the Rural North Analysis Area (6,840 population increase)

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 2,850 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.4 people per household (based on a national average) is 6,840 people. The table below identifies what this equates to in terms of pitch demand.

¹³ Please note the number of pitches have been rounded to the nearest whole number

¹⁴ <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance>

¹⁵ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

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This population increase equates to 7.85 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 0.64 match equivalent sessions on a hockey suitable AGP's and 35.79 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 14.57 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches, and accumulative 0.62 match equivalent sessions on a sports lit grass pitch for rugby union and 1.55 hours on a hockey suitable AGP.

Table 7.3: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from an additional 6,840 people

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ¹⁶	Training demand ¹⁷
Adult football	1.47	14.57 hours
Youth football	3.87	As above
Mini soccer	1.95	As above
Rugby union	0.56	0.62 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.42	1.27 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.22	0.28 hours
Cricket	35.79	-

To quantify this, the table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.4: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ¹⁸	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ¹⁹	Number of changing rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	1.47	£164,413	£32,389	2.93	£605,340
Youth football	3.87	£374,790	£75,708	5.16	£1,065,115
Mini soccer	1.95	£59,791	£11,839	0	£0
Rugby union	0.56	£96,258	£17,808	1.11	£229,320
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0	£0
Cricket	0.81	£294,606	£54,208	1.63	£336,100
Sand based AGPs	0.11	£104,857	£2,726	0.21	£43,556
3G	0.38	£459,663	£13,519	0.77	£158,437
Tennis Courts	0.88 courts	£99,449	-	-	-
Total	9.14 and 0.88 tennis courts	£1,653,826	£208,196	11.8	£2,437,867

Overall, an additional 9.14 pitches would be required to meet additional demand arising from an additional 6,840 people living in the Braintree District. This consist of 8.66 grass pitches, 0.49 of access to artificial pitches and 0.88 outdoor tennis courts. This would require an expected capital cost of £1,653,826 and a lifecycle cost per annum of £208,196. To facilitate the increased provision, 11.8 changing rooms would need to be provided at a capital cost of £2,437,867.

¹⁶ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

¹⁷ Hours equate to access to an 11v11 sports lit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

¹⁸ [Link to Sport England cost guidance](#)

¹⁹ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

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Scenario 3 – Testing the model for a housing development (Kings Dene) proposing approximately 5,000 dwellings in the South Analysis Area (12,000 population increase)

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 5,000 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.4 people per household (based on a national average) is 12,000 people. The table below identifies what this equates to in terms of pitch demand.

This population increase equates to 13.76 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 0.86 match equivalent sessions on a hockey suitable AGP's and 62.8 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 25.57 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches, and accumulative 1.09 match equivalent sessions on a sports lit grass pitch for rugby union and 2.71 hours on a hockey suitable AGP.

Table 7.5: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from an additional 9,418 people

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ²⁰	Training demand ²¹
Adult football	2.57	25.57 hours
Youth football	6.79	As above
Mini soccer	3.43	As above
Rugby union	0.97	1.09 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.74	2.22 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.39	0.49 hours
Cricket	62.8	-

To quantify this, the table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.6: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ²²	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ²³	Number of changing rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	2.57	£288,443	£56,823	5.14	£1,061,994
Youth football	6.79	£657,512	£132,818	9.05	£1,868,631
Mini soccer	3.43	£104,897	£20,770	0	£0
Rugby union	0.97	£168,873	£31,241	1.95	£402,315
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0	£0
Cricket	1.43	£516,848	£95,100	2.85	£589,643
Sand based AGPs	0.18	£183,958	£4,783	0.37	£76,413
3G	0.67	£806,418	£23,718	1.35	£277,957
Tennis Courts	1.54 courts	£174,472	-	-	-
Total	16.04 and 1.54 tennis courts	£2,901,420	£365,253	20.71	£4,276,952

²⁰ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

²¹ Hours equate to access to an 11v11 sports lit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

²² [Link to Sport England cost guidance](#)

²³ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

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Overall, an additional 16.04 pitches would be required to meet additional demand arising from an additional 12,000 people living in the Braintree District. This consists of 15.19 grass pitches, 0.86 of access to artificial pitches and 1.54 outdoor tennis courts. This would require an expected capital cost of £2,901,420 and a lifecycle cost per annum of £365,253. To facilitate the increased provision, 20.71 changing rooms would need to be provided at a capital cost of £4,276,952.

The most appropriate way to meet the estimated demand

It is important that the above results are looked at alongside the findings of the Assessment Report, and the recommendations and actions of the Strategy. By doing so, the most appropriate way of meeting the estimated needs can be determined and any resulting proposals justified. This should include:

- ◀ Using the Assessment Report and related Strategy to understand the nature of the playing pitch sites within an appropriate catchment of the new population along with issues, recommendations and actions relevant to that area.
- ◀ Looking at the different ways in which the needs could be met, including for example:
 - ◀ Enhancing existing provision to increase capacity, supported by suitable management and maintenance arrangements to ensure the greater capacity is maintained over the longer term;
 - ◀ Undertaking works, and ensuring long term maintenance and access arrangements, to secure new or greater community use of existing provision;
 - ◀ Providing new pitches as an extension on current sites.
 - ◀ Providing new (natural and/or artificial grass pitches).

If the decision is taken to provide new pitches, then the calculator takes the estimated needs for matches and training activity and converts this into an estimate of the likely pitch provision required to meet the needs of population projections. Indicative costs are also provided to provide this level of pitch provision in addition to costing for associated changing room provision.

Summary

The above scenarios identify that through overall housing growth across the Local Plan period; demand will be generated to some extent for all pitch sports. Whilst initially the figures seem substantial, it must be noted that they are based upon the whole of the Braintree District and account for the entire period of the local plan development. In reality, the requirements will be staggered, with existing provision able to meet some of the needs when developments are considered on a case-by-case basis. This would be achieved through contributions being directed towards improvements rather than new provision.

Experience shows that only significantly large housing sites are likely to generate demand for new provision to be created. Where this is the case, consideration should be given to providing multi-pitch sites with suitable ancillary provision, including appropriate clubhouse/changing facilities and car parking. Single pitch sites which have been provided traditionally by developers are not considered to provide long term sustainable provision for the relevant sports.

If any schools or leisure facilities are to be built within the housing developments identified above, these could include the creation of collective 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch in addition to any tennis/netball courts (as long as they are sports lit) to ensure greater utilisation.

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Relevant accessible and security of tenure through CUAs would also need to be factored into any such development.

It should be noted that there is potential to locate any mini football demand onto a 3G pitch. Any monies dedicated to mini grass football pitches could therefore go towards the development of 3G provision in order to save on land. This approach would require a FA certified pitch in addition to agreement with relevant stakeholders (FF and Essex FA).

Where demand does not warrant new pitch provision, the Action Plan in this document should be consulted to determine whether the additional demand can be accommodated via existing provision (in which case no further action is required). This would only be the case if nearby sites have sufficient actual spare capacity for the relevant sports, which could be established, as an example, through creating a bespoke catchment area for the development and reviewing the provision that falls within this.

An alternative approach to obtaining contributions for each individual housing development and allocating them to improving localised sporting sites identified for improvement within the PPOSS, is to pool them together. This would allow for greater levels of investment into sites, where needed, for more expensive enhancements such drainage or ancillary expansions or even the creation of artificial pitches. Additionally, this would allow for the collating of contributions from smaller developments, below 300 dwellings, to maximise the benefit they can provide to sporting sites across the Braintree District.

The pooling of contributions could lead to the greater enhancement of provision at strategically important sites across the District, such as:

- ◀ Braintree Sport & Health Club (Central Analysis Area).
- ◀ Courtauld Sports Ground (Rural North Analysis Area).
- ◀ Witham Sports Ground (South Analysis Area).

Pooling of contributions should be done strategically and ought to be localised to the analysis area, and even potentially key settlements, of the housing growth to ensure S106 monies are spent on improving the sporting infrastructure for the new population. It is strongly recommended the Council work with Sport England, and NGBs where relevant, to develop a process and guidance to calculate and secure developer contributions which may include onsite, offsite and pooling of contributions.

It should be noted that the relevant NGBs should be included within any discussions to ensure their overall strategic recommendations for the Braintree District are considered. Additionally, the above scenarios are only to provide a broad indication of what sporting provision, at this current stage, is required for the projected population increase. The PPC will need to be used at various stages of any development to provide up to date analysis moving forward on what is required for a sporting perspective.

Please note that the PPC only includes the main pitch sports and tennis but there may also be a requirement to improve facilities for other pitch and non-pitch sports such as bowls , netball and athletics, for example. Therefore, securing developer contributions to deliver improvements/new provision should be guided by this Strategy and in particular the site-by-site Action Plan and in consultation with the relevant NGB through the PPOSS Steering Group.

PART 8: DELIVER THE STRATEGY AND KEEP IT ROBUST AND UP TO DATE

The section below is a generalised approach on how to deliver a PPOSS whilst also keeping it robust and up-to-date. However, a more tailored approach should also be considered and designed for Braintree District based on the requirements and priorities of the Steering Group.

Delivery

The PPOSS seeks to provide guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across Braintree District. By addressing the issues identified in the Assessment Report and using the strategic framework presented in this Strategy, the current and future sporting and recreational needs of the District can be satisfied. The Strategy identifies where there is a deficiency in provision and recommends how best to resolve this in the future.

It is important that this document is used in a practical manner, is used to engage with partners and encourages partnerships to be developed, to ensure that outdoor sports facilities are regarded as a vital aspect of community life and which contribute to the achievement of Council priorities.

The creation of this document should be regarded as part of the planning process. The success of this Strategy and the benefits that are gained are dependent upon regular engagement between all partners involved and the adoption of a strategic approach. Each member of the steering group should take the lead to ensure the PPOSS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence.

To help ensure the PPOSS is well used, it should be regarded as the key document within the study area guiding the improvement and protection of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision. It needs to be the document people regularly turn to for information on the how the current demand is met and what actions are needed to improve the situation and meet future demand. For this to be achieved, the Steering Group needs to have a clear understanding of how the PPOSS can be applied and therefore delivered.

The process of completing the PPOSS will hopefully have already resulted in a number of benefits that will help with its application and delivery. These may include enhanced partnership working across different agendas and organisations, pooling of resources along with strengthening relationships and understanding between different stakeholders and between members of the steering group and the sporting community. The drivers behind the PPOSS and the work to develop the recommendations and action plan will have also highlighted, and helped the steering group to understand, the key areas to which it can be applied and how it can be delivered.

Monitoring and updating

It is important that there is regular monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should continue be led by the local authority and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPOSS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. It is possible that in the interim between reviews the Steering Group could also operate as a 'virtual' group; prepared to comment on suggestions and updates electronically when relevant.

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It is agreed that the Local Authority (potentially via consultants e.g., KKP) is responsible for keeping the database and background supply and demand information up-to-date in order that area-by-area action plans can be updated. This should be carried out in consultation with the NGBs, particularly around affiliation time when information is updated.

As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPOSS being signed off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider it and the information on which it is based to be out of date. The nature of the supply and in particular the demand for provision is likely to change year-on-year, meaning that without any form of review and update it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.

An annual review should not be regarded as a particularly resource intensive task. However, it should highlight:

- ◆ How the delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g., the priority of some may increase following the delivery of others).
- ◆ How the PPOSS has been applied and the lessons learnt.
- ◆ Any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area (e.g., the most used or high quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues.
- ◆ Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport.
- ◆ Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

Alongside regular steering group meetings a good way to keep the strategy up-to-date and maintain relationships is to hold sport specific meetings with the NGBs and other relevant parties. These meetings look to update the key supply and demand information, if necessary amend the assessment work, track progress with implementing the recommendations and action plan and highlight any new issues and opportunities.

These meetings could be timed to fit with the annual affiliation process undertaken by the NGBs which would help to capture any changes in the number and nature of sports clubs in the area. Other information that is already collected on a regular basis such as pitch booking records for local authority and other sites could be fed into these meetings.

The NGBs are also able to indicate any further performance quality assessments that have been undertaken within the study area.

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Checklists

In order for this Strategy to be signed off by the steering group, a Stage D Checklist: Develop the Strategy, is signed off.

Stage D Checklist: Develop the Strategy	Tick 	
	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 7: Develop the recommendations and action plan		
1. Have a number of study area specific scenarios been looked at to help explore key issues and findings along with possible recommendations and actions?		
2. Have any recommendations and actions regarding AGP provision taken into account the guidance in the 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface' document and any NGB specific information?		
3. Do the recommendations reflect the drivers, vision and objectives of the work?		
4. Are the recommendations precise enough to enable the development of clear individual area, sport and site specific actions to help achieve them?		
5. Have all relevant parties been engaged with the development of, and are signed up to the delivery of, the recommendations and actions?		
6. Are the recommendations and actions clearly presented?		
7. Has particular attention been paid to the situation at priority sites and those which are being significantly overlapped?		
8. Have area, sport and site specific solutions been proposed to protect, enhance, and provide playing pitch provision to meet the current and future demand?		
9. Has guidance on the future of any sites highlighted as being at risk been provided?		
10. Do the recommendations and actions seek to make the best use of existing pitches?		
11. Has the detriment and benefit of proposals to relocate provision been presented?		
12. Has the level and type of any new playing pitch provision required been presented?		
13. Has the importance of providing appropriate and fit for purpose ancillary facilities been highlighted in order to maximise the potential benefit to sport of any pitches?		
14. Have the recommendations sought to ensure an adequate amount of spare capacity in the provision of accessible pitches with secured community use?		
15. Does the PPS provide a steer as to the future of any spare capacity and any provision that may be genuinely surplus to requirements (paragraphs D12 to D15)?		
16. Does the action plan cover the points listed in paragraph D17?		
17. Does the action plan provide the most appropriate actions to improve provision in the study area rather than just those which the local authority can deliver?		
18. Does the action plan represent an infrastructure plan for playing pitches with deliverable area, sport and site specific actions and projects?		
Step 8: Write and Adopt the Strategy		
1. Does the PPS document provide the reader with a clear understanding of the areas listed in paragraph D20?		

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

2.	Is it clear from the PPS document why the recommendations and actions have been included, how they are to be delivered and what they will achieve?	✓	
3.	Does the PPS document indicate how it should be used and applied in different areas and circumstances along with the benefits of doing so?	✓	
4.	Has the PPS document been subject to appropriate consultation?	✓	
5.	Do all members of the steering group and other relevant parties endorse the PPS and recognise its lead role in guiding the improvement of pitches in the study area?	✓	
6.	Has the PPS document been formally adopted by the local authority and is its status recognised across all relevant departments?	✓	

To help ensure the PPS is delivered and is kept robust and up-to-date, the steering group can refer to the new methodology Stage E Checklist: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up-to-date:

Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up-to-date	Tick ✓	
	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 9: Apply and deliver the strategy		
1. Are steering group members clear on how the PPS can be applied across a range of relevant areas?		
2. Is each member of the steering group committed to taking the lead to help ensure the PPS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence?		
3. Has a process been put in place to ensure regular monitoring of how the recommendations and action plan are being delivered and the PPS is being applied?		
Step 10: Keep the strategy robust and up-to-date		
1. Has a process been put in place to ensure the PPS is kept robust and up-to-date?		
2. Does the process involve an annual update of the PPS?		
3. Is the steering group to be maintained and is it clear of its on-going role?		
4. Is regular liaison with the NGBs and other parties planned?		
5. Has all the supply and demand information been collated and presented in a format (i.e. single document that can be filtered accordingly) that will help people to review it and highlight any changes?		
6. Have any changes made to the Active Places Power data been fed back to Sport England?		

Agenda Item: 6

Report Title: Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan – SEA/HRA Screening Report	
Report to: Local Plan Sub-Committee	
Date: 11 February 2026	For: Recommendation
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: N/A
Report Presented by: Alan Massow – Principal Planning Policy Officer	
Enquiries to: Alan Massow – Principal Planning Policy Officer	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Gosfield Parish Council are in the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan (The Plan). Prior to the submission of the Plan to Braintree District Council, it is necessary to get the Plan screened to see whether the draft plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Recommendation 1- That the Screening Report for the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan is approved, and the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan is screened out for further SEA and HRA assessment.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Place Services have produced a Screening Opinion on the draft Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan, for Braintree District Council which is included at appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out planning policies for the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area. Once the plan is formally adopted, it carries the same weight as Local Development Plans adopted by the Council.
- 3.3 The Screening Opinion sets out the policies contained within the Plan, as well as the Braintree District Local Plan policy background. It identified that no housing allocations are proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.4 The Screening Opinion sets out the relevant legislative background for the assessment and highlights its importance for assessing the environmental considerations when preparing and adopting plans, and what likely impact they may have on the environment.
- 3.5 The Screening also includes one for Habitats Regulation Assessment, which looks at whether a plan or project will have a significant effect on the integrity of any European Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

- 3.6 The likely significant effects are assessed against several themes including biodiversity, population, health, etc. For the HRA assessment no habitat sites have been identified within 20 km of the site. The screening identifies the potential impact for policies and allocations in the plan as either being Category A – No negative effect, Category B – No likely significant effect, and lastly Category C – Likely Significant Effect. All of the policies and proposals have been shown as Category A – No negative effect.
- 3.7 The screening report concludes by saying that the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan can be screened out for its requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment and screened out for Habitats Regulation Assessment.
- 3.8 The next step in the process is for Braintree District Council to consult the Environmental Bodies which are Historic England, the Environment Agency, and Natural England. This was done in October/November 2025, and the responses are set out below.
- 3.9 The Environment Agency – We have identified that the Plan area boundary includes the Water Recycling Centre Gosfield, which is currently operating close to or exceeding its permitted capacity. Providing the Plan does not allocate sites for growth development across the Plan period, we do not have any significant concerns. We would still expect to see consideration for any windfall developments captured in a relevant policy for Water Quality in the catchment of the Plan Area and serving WRC.
- 3.10 Historic England – The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.
- 3.11 On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.
- 3.12 Natural England – It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:
- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
 - significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.
- 3.13 The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.
- 3.14 When considering the responses from the environmental bodies, officers are happy to agree with the conclusion of the Place Services report that the

Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan can be screened out for further work for both SEA and HRA.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a 6 week consultation, examination, and referendum.

5. Options

- 5.1 Option 1 – That the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan – SEA/HRA Screening Report is approved.
- 5.2 Option 2 – That the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan – SEA/HRA Screening Report is not approved
- 5.3 Option 1 is the preferred option.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of Neighbourhood Planning has normally been covered through Grants. Funding for Local Authority Grants is not currently confirmed.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Neighbourhood Plan could be subject to legal challenge.

8. Local Government Review - Implications

- 8.1 The Council is required to have an adopted Local Plan which is less than five years old. The Council is undertaking a review of the Local Plan currently which is planned to be submitted for examination by December 2026. It is therefore currently anticipated that the new Plan would be adopted in 2027
- 8.2 Once adopted, the Plan will be the adopted Development Plan for Braintree District until a new Local Plan is developed for the new Unitary Authority Area.
- 8.3 Neighbourhood Plans once adopted are considered to be part of the Development Plan for the area once they have been adopted and will continue to be in force until withdrawn.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 None at this time.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. Next Steps

11.1 Once the Determination Notice listed at Appendix 2 is agreed, this will be provided to the Neighbourhood Plan group, Braintree District Council will then be able to arrange a Regulation 16 consultation, later this year.

12. List of Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1 – Gosfield NP SEA_HRA Screening Report October 2025

12.2 Appendix 2 – Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan Environmental Determination Notice.

13. Background Papers

13.1 National Planning Policy Framework

13.2 National Planning Practice Guidance

13.3 Braintree District Local Plan (2022)



Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

October 2025





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1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this Report

This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan Submission (Regulation 16) Consultation Version requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations. A SEA is required if the Neighbourhood Plan is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

This report will also screen to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). An HRA screening report is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected Habitats (European) Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan or project.

1.2 The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan will set out planning policies for the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area. Once formally adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan carries the same legal weight as Local Development Plans adopted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case Braintree District Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a Vision, which expresses the community's aspirations for the plan area. This Vision is included within the Plan as follows:

'The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will preserve the countryside, quality, village feel and thriving engaged community. It recognises that changes will be necessary to respond to environmental and climatic needs.'

A number of economic, social and environmental objectives have been devised for the Neighbourhood Plan. These are:

- Climate and environment
 - Maximise the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
 - Maximise the adoption of renewable technologies.
- Design, heritage and green spaces
 - Incorporate high quality design that reflects the character of Gosfield.
 - Protect existing village historical assets and their setting and open spaces.
- Getting around
 - Ensure the potential for residents to have safe and convenient access to village assets and amenities.

- Business and employment
 - Continue to support local businesses.
- Housing
 - Contribute to addressing the housing needs of Gosfield.

1.3 The Braintree District Council Local Plan

The Braintree District Local Plan was adopted in 2022, with a plan period that extends to 2033. The content of the Local Plan relevant to Gosfield is outlined in the corresponding sub-sections.

1.3.1 Gosfield in the Local Plan and Spatial Strategy

The Local Plan identifies Gosfield as a 'Third Tier' village. Third Tier villages are defined within the Local Plan as those which are the smallest villages in the District and lack most of the facilities required to meet day to day needs. They often have very poor public transport links and travel by private vehicle is usually required. When considering the tests of sustainable development, these will not normally be met by development within a third tier village, however they do have development boundaries.

1.3.2 Development Boundaries

The Local Plan includes Policy LPP1 - Development Boundaries, which sets out that within development boundaries, development will be permitted where it satisfies amenity, design, environmental and highway criteria and where it can take place without material adverse detriment to the existing character and historic interest of the settlement.

Development outside development boundaries will be confined to uses appropriate to the countryside whilst also protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The village of Gosfield has a defined development boundary drawn around the built up area.

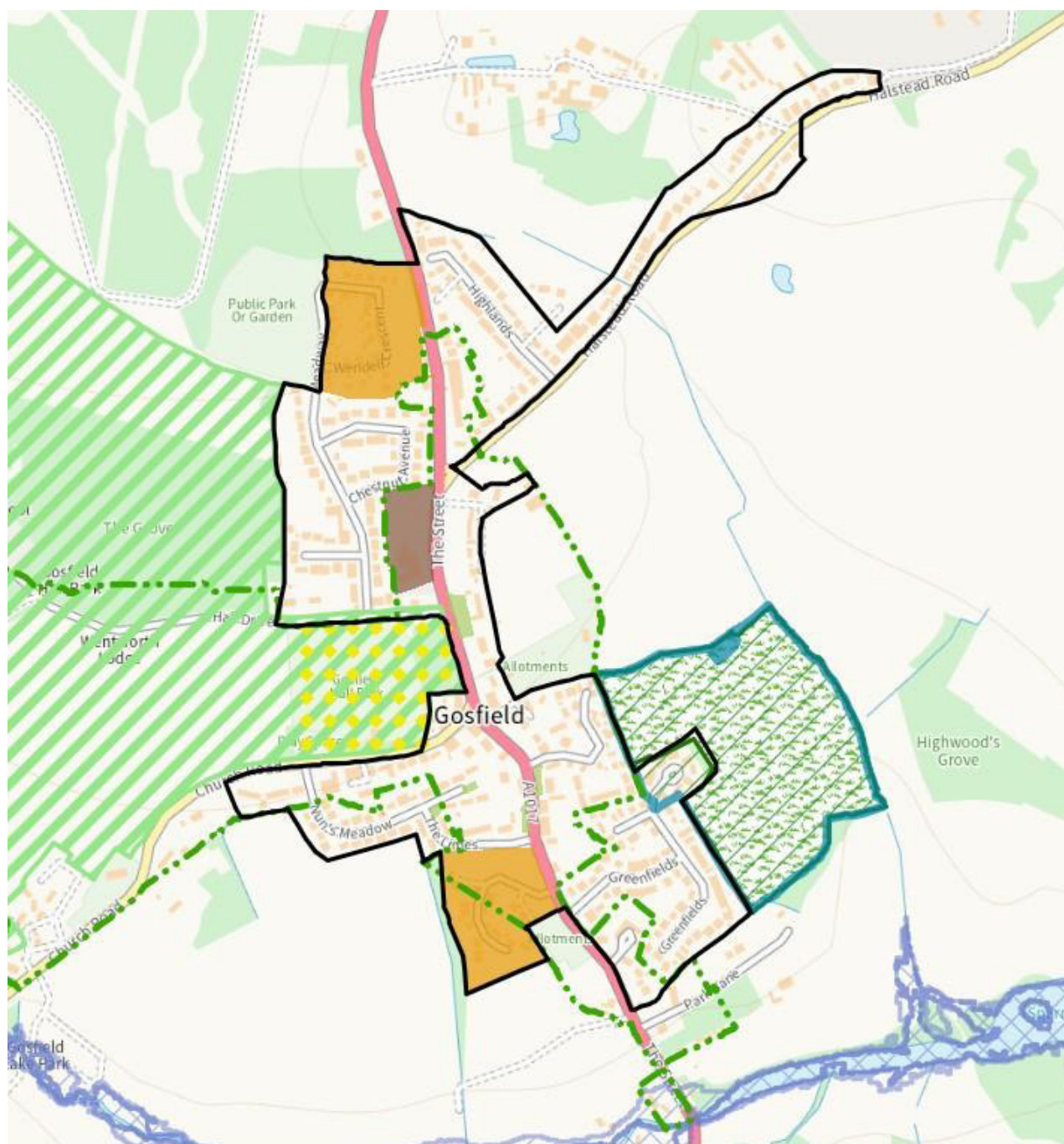
1.3.3 Housing Allocations

Two housing allocations are included within the adopted Local Plan, which amend the previous development boundary. These are:

- GOSF251 - Land South of The Limes, Off The Street (for 17 dwellings); and
- GOSF253 - Land West of Hedingham Road (for 35 dwellings).

These allocations are included within the following figure, which shows Local Plan allocations (in brown) within Gosfield.

Figure 1: Adopted Local Plan allocations within Gosfield



Source: Braintree Local Plan (adopted 2022)

1.3.4 Other relevant Local Plan policies

The Local Plan's Policy LPP 3 – Employment Policy Areas identifies Gosfield Airfield as appropriate for retention as an employment policy area. This protects the site for the current use classes that operate on it. Changes from B2 or B8 to E (other than E(g) Offices, Research and Development, Light Industrial) will not be permitted.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27th June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment states that,

‘Environmental assessment is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(10) All plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors and which set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment(7), and all plans and programmes which have been determined to require assessment pursuant to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna(8), are likely to have significant effects on the environment, and should as a rule be made subject to systematic environmental assessment. When they determine the use of small areas at local level or are minor modifications to the above plans or programmes, they should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(11) Other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects may not have significant effects on the environment in all cases and should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have such effects.’

The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan may influence frameworks for future development or become used ancillary to those plans and programmes that do set such a framework, and as such it has been determined that the principle of the Neighbourhood Plan should be screened for the necessary application of the SEA Directive.

The Report from the Commission to The Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions states, on the application and effectiveness of the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC), that ‘the following Plan & Programme (P&P), and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority and required pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions:

- P&P prepared for certain sectors, and which set the framework for future development consent in respect of projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA-Directive.
- P&P requiring an assessment under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

- P&P setting the framework for development consent in respect of projects (not limited to those listed in the EIA Directive; see above) and determined by "screening" as being likely to have significant environmental effects.'

This report represents this screening process in regard to the content and influence of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site (also referred to as Habitats sites in the National Planning Policy Framework), in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. European sites are also known as Natura 2000 sites.

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to accompany the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with certain obligations, which includes the need to undertake an HRA.

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.

On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 26 June 2018, The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent and the UK left the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 made sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and those are unchanged until amended by Parliament. The requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place with minor changes being affected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Parliament is however at liberty to introduce future changes to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) since, after 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.

At the present time the position, under section 6(3) EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), is that the courts in the UK, with the sole exception of the Supreme Court, will continue to be bound by HRA judgements handed down by the CJEU and by domestic courts prior to 31 December 2020 when interpreting the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is the case as long as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain unmodified by Parliament.

There is currently a legal requirement for HRA screening of Plans prior to being adopted so any additional plans or projects which might reasonably interact with the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will be considered before post consultation.

3. SEA Screening

3.1 When is SEA Required?

Planning Practice Guidance – Strategic environmental assessment requirements for Neighbourhood Plans (Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306) states that,

‘In some limited circumstances, where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft Neighbourhood Plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This process is commonly referred to as a “screening” assessment and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of those Regulations.

One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with European Union obligations (including under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive).

To decide whether a draft Neighbourhood Plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan’s preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.

Each consultation body will be able to advise on particular topics relevant to its specific area of expertise and responsibility, and the specific information that it holds.

Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.’

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive set out the circumstances in which a SEA is required. Table 1 sets out the assessment of whether the principle of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA.

Table 1: Exploring whether the Principle of the Plan would warrant SEA

Question 1: Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?

Yes - The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for adoption through legislative procedure.

Question 2: Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provision? (Typical characteristics of "administrative provisions" are that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a Plan to be prepared.)

Yes - The Neighbourhood Plan would be considered as falling within the category of an 'administrative provision'.

Question 3: Is the Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?

Yes to both criteria - The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 4: Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?

The Neighbourhood Plan's likely effect on sites and requirement for an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive is explored in Section 4 of this Report.

Question 5: Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a Plan likely to require assessment under the Habitats Directive?

Yes to one of the criteria - the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

Question 6: Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?

Yes - the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 7: Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget Plan, or is it co -financed by structural funds or European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) programmes 2000 to 2006/7?

The Neighbourhood Plan does not serve a purpose related to national defence or civil emergency, a financial or budget Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is not co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7.

Question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

Likely significant effects are explored in more detail in Section 3.3 of this Screening Report. The 'conclusions' section of the Report outlines whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA or not due in regard to its effects on the environment.

The following section looks at the criteria for assessing the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and the identified effects of the Neighbourhood Plan in line with the criteria. Crucially, it will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on the environment.

3.2 Criteria for Assessing the Effects of the Neighbourhood Plan

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment, referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below.

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - * special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - * exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - * intensive land-use,
 - * the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

3.3 Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment. The table below will explore the likelihood of effects on the following required themes, as included within Annex I of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC):

- Biodiversity;
- Population;
- Human health;
- Fauna;
- Flora;
- Soil;
- Water;
- Air;
- Climatic factors;
- Material assets;
- Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage;
- Landscape; and
- The interrelationship between the above factors.

Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The Plan sets out relevant policies which will be used to determine proposals for development within the Neighbourhood Plan area once adopted. A Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and once brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies only in the Local Plan for that Neighbourhood Plan area.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	The adopted Braintree Local Plan identifies housing allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any additional land for development purposes. Irrespective of the Neighbourhood Plan policies' compliance with those of the Local Plan, which will be considered between the Parish Council and the Local Planning Authority in finalising the Neighbourhood Plan and through the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for development is low. This is primarily due to the Neighbourhood Plan not allocating land for development purposes.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Neighbourhood Plan, when/if 'made', will have weight in all planning decisions within the plan area. The Neighbourhood Plan provides policies for the Plan area, relevant to a local level only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development purposes. In consideration of the above, the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan influences other plans or programmes is considered low in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This is primarily related to the Plan's position of not allocating land for development purposes.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account. The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies related (directly / indirectly) to ensuring environmental considerations will be integrated into any forthcoming development within the Plan area. Irrespective of the adequacy of any such policies, adopted Local Plan policies apply within the Neighbourhood Plan area, which have been subject to thorough assessment within the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Regulations Assessment. This ensures that environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, will be considered for all development proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan area	The Neighbourhood Plan reflects a small area and the Plan's policy content seeks to address environmental issues. The policy content of the adopted Local Plan will additionally apply to any proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Local Plan policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) within the context of the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan and this Screening Report identify the following potential (direct / indirect) environmental problems or sources of potential problems relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan area: • A SSSI is located within the Plan area in its south western corner. This SSSI, Bovingdon Hall Woods, is largely within an unfavourable condition due to forestry and deer grazing. • The majority of the Plan area is therefore within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of this SSSI. South eastern parts of the Plan area are also within the IRZ of another SSSI outside the parish boundary: Belcher's & Broadfield Woods SSSI. • As a result, consultation with Natural England is required for certain planning applications. • A number of areas on the Priority Habitat Inventory exist throughout the Plan area, including: Reedbeds; Deciduous Woodland; Traditional Orchard; and Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat. • Areas of Ancient Woodland and Ancient Replaced Woodland exist within the Plan area. • There is a designated Local Nature Reserve to the east of the village; Gosfield Sandpits. • There is a single Scheduled Monument within the

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Plan area: the Well house and donkey wheel at Gosfield Hall. • Gosfield includes 53 listed buildings and Gosfield Hall Historic Park and Garden. • Of the listed buildings, two Grade I listed (Gosfield Hall and St Catherine's Church), one is Grade II* listed and the remainder (51) are Grade II. • Additionally, the 'Ha Ha wall' is identified as a non-designated heritage asset. • The Bourne Brook, a tributary of the River Colne, runs west to east through the Plan area and south of the built up area of the village to the north. There are areas of land within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 associated with the watercourse. • The Plan area is within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ) (Zone III - Total Catchment). SPZs are defined around large and public potable groundwater abstraction sites. The purpose of SPZs is to provide additional protection to safeguard drinking water quality through constraining the proximity of an activity that may impact upon a drinking water abstraction. • The Plan area is within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water) and southern parts of the Plan area are also within a Drinking Water Protected Area (Surface Water). These are identified where the protected area has been assigned as being "at risk" of failing the drinking water protection objectives of the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England & Wales) Regulations 2017. • The Plan area contains land associated with a Principal Aquifer (superficial drift i.e. sand and gravels). This designation reflects the importance of aquifers in terms of groundwater as a resource (drinking water supply) but also their role in supporting surface water flows and wetland

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	ecosystems. • The Plan area is also vulnerable for groundwater to be polluted at ground level based on the hydrological, geological, hydrogeological and soil properties of the area. • The non-developed areas of the Plan area, and those also not in non-agricultural use, are predominantly Grade 2 ('very good') and Grade 3 ('good to moderate') soils. Grade 2 soil represents the best and most versatile soil within the wider District context. • The Plan area is located within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area (NCA). • The NCA is characterised as predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not in conflict with those relevant planning documents within the wider district and county area related to waste management or water protection.
The probability, duration, frequency and	The following impacts have been identified within this

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
reversibility of the effects on the following factors:	Screening Assessment:
Biodiversity	The Plan includes Policy GOS1, which regards wildlife friendly development. The policy outlines that new developments will be required to deliver biodiversity net gain requirements and also specific wildlife features. The policy also sets out the protection of existing features. The Plan area includes a SSSI, and is within the IRZs of n additional SSSI outside of the Plan area. Some planning applications coming forward within the Plan area may require consultation with Natural England should they be of a size or type that meets specific conditions. Nevertheless, the Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes that could potentially conflict with any such requirements. The HRA element of this Screening Report, due to the content of the Plan, outlines that there will be no likely significant effects on the designated features of any Habitats site as none are within scope, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. In consideration of all of the above effects on biodiversity that would require the full application of the SEA Directive (a SEA Environmental Report) can be screened out.
Population	It is considered that there would be no significant effects on population resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan. This is due to the small scale of the Plan area.
Health	The Neighbourhood Plan includes Policy GOS3: Local Green Spaces, and Policy GOS7: Access for Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding, both of which indirectly support the principle of improving health and wellbeing in the plan area. There are therefore no significant effects resulting from the

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Neighbourhood Plan regarding human health that would warrant a strategic assessment through SEA.
• Fauna	There are no direct impacts resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan on fauna that are considered significant at the Plan level. The Plan seeks the protection and enhancement of wildlife features and does not propose any development that could lead to the direct deterioration of habitats. Possible effects on fauna (outside those associated with Habitats sites) cannot be considered strategically significant to the extent that Strategic Environmental Assessment would be warranted. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case 'project level' basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA's adopted Local Plan. Effects on fauna from the content of the Neighbourhood Plan can therefore be screened out.
• Flora	Various areas of priority habitat exist within the plan area. The Plan actively seeks their protection and enhancement. It should be acknowledged that relevant to such matters, Local Plan policies also apply within the Neighbourhood Plan area. As a result, no effects are expected to result from the Neighbourhood Plan regarding flora.
• Soil	The non-developed areas of the Neighbourhood Plan area consist of predominantly Grade 2 and Grade 3 soils. Although no thematic policies are included within the Plan that address soil quality, it should be acknowledged that Local Plan policies apply on the matter and that the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development purposes. There are no identified negative implications surrounding soil quality as a result of the Neighbourhood

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Plan.
Water	Land within Source Protection Zone III makes up the entirety of the Plan area. Source Protection Zones (SPZs) respond to sources such as wells, boreholes and springs used for public drinking water supply. These zones show the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and as such no uses are considered to give rise to ground water pollutants (e.g. give rise to hazardous substances such as pesticides, oils, petrol and diesel, solvents, arsenic, mercury or chromium VI; or non-hazardous substances such as ammonia or nitrates). The HRA element of this Screening Report confirms that there are no potential pathways for development within the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area to impact on the Habitats sites as none are within scope of the HRA.
Air	The Plan area contains no areas designated or otherwise identified as having poor air quality. Additionally, the Local Plan does not allocate land for development purposes or include any other commitments that would lead to a deterioration in air quality. There will be significant effects on air quality as a result.
Climatic factors	The Neighbourhood Plan area contains a stretch of the Bourne Brook, a tributary of the River Colne, and there are areas of land within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 associated with the watercourse. No development allocations are proposed within the Plan that may be located within any flood risk areas Policy GOS2: Low Energy and Energy Efficient Design addresses flood risk, requiring the design of multifunctional SuDS-based drainage systems of development proposals, that also where possible incorporate mitigation and

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	resilience measures for any increases in flood risk that may occur due to climate change. Adopted Local Plan policies on flood risk and climatic factors will additionally apply to any off-plan proposals that may come forward within the Plan area. It is therefore considered that SEA would not be required regarding matters of flood risk.
Material assets	The Plan area contains land within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) for sand and gravel as identified within the County Council's adopted Minerals Local Plan. Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any land for development proposals or contain any commitments that are considered contrary to preserving the integrity of these deposits. The Plan area does not contain any existing or allocated sites for waste management facilities within the County Council's adopted Waste Local Plan. Regarding other material assets, the content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not considered to have any significant effects due to the extent / size of the Plan area. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA's adopted Local Plan.
Cultural heritage	The Plan area contains numerous Listed Buildings, a Conservation Area, and a Scheduled Monument. The Plan does not allocate land for development purposes that could have any effects on these listings or their settings. The Plan includes Policy GOS6: Non-Designated Heritage Assets, which sets out the parameters for development proposals affecting such assets. Policy GOS2: Low Energy and Energy Efficient Design includes a criterion (D) which sets out that, 'the sensitive retrofitting of energy efficiency (including glazing) and

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	renewable energy generation measures that serve historic buildings will be encouraged having regard to the Essex Design Guide, including the retrofitting of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas, provided it safeguards their historic character and setting.' Irrespective of the adequacy of the Plan's policy in the conservation and enhancement of the Plan area's heritage assets and their settings, policy regarding the protection and enhancement of the historic environment also exists at the LPA level which additionally applies in the Plan area. The effects on heritage are, as a result, considered a development management issue in the context of the Plan and its content. There are not considered to be any elements of the Plan that would give rise to significant effects on the historic environment at the strategic level that would require the full application of the SEA Directive.
Landscape	The parish is within South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area (NCA) and contains many features synonymous with this NCAs landscape character. The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes. In light of the Plan not allocating land for development purposes and in consideration also of the requirements of development proposals in accordance with the adopted Braintree Local Plan, there are no significant strategic landscape effects identified within this Report that would warrant the requirement for the application of the SEA Directive and the formulation of a SEA Environmental Report.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and therefore any negative cumulative effects can be ruled out.
The trans boundary	The adopted Braintree Local Plan can be seen to support the protection and improvement of conditions relevant to

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
nature of the effects.	those sustainability factors listed within the SEA Directive. The Neighbourhood Plan is broadly aligned with the principles of those wider thematic environmental policies. The HRA Screening element of this Report, which explores in-combination effects with other relevant plans and projects, also identifies no in-combination effects regarding Habitats (European) sites.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	It is considered that there is no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to give rise to any accidents that can be considered to have a significant risk to human health or the environment.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local level only. The magnitude and spatial extent of the Plan's content is therefore not considered significant in a wider District context. No effects are highlighted within this SEA screening at either the local or wider geographic area.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage • exceeded environmental quality standards • intensive land use	As highlighted above in the screening of the Neighbourhood Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having negative effects associated with environmental themes.



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	As highlighted above in the screening of the Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

4. HRA Screening

4.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for in combination effects from other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

4.2 Court Judgements and their consideration in this Report

4.2.1 CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.

This HRA Screening Report does not therefore consider mitigation measures within the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2.2 CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage:

1. [...] an 'Appropriate Assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.

2. [...] the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters

relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

3. [...] where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'Appropriate Assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

Within this Stage 1 HRA Screening report, the assessment determines the requirement whether or not a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is needed for the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

4.3 Habitats (European) Sites

Habitats sites is the term used in the revised NPPF (2024) to describe any site which would be included within the definition at Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations. These now form part of the UK national network of sites for nature protection. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for other species, and for Habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the National Network of sites. This is because all SPAs and SACs are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites make up the Habitats sites in England. The following offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

4.3.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds. Example: Abberton Reservoir SPA is one of the most important reservoirs in the country for overwintering waterfowl. Legislation: The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: Essex Estuaries SAC: The Mid-Essex Coast comprises an extensive complex of estuaries and intertidal sand and silt flats,



including several islands, shingle and shell beaches and extensive areas of saltmarsh. Legislation: The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl habitats. For example, Colne Estuary Ramsar site is important due to the extent and diversity of saltmarsh present. This site, and the four other sites in the Mid-Essex Coast complex, includes a total of 3,237 ha, that represent 70% of the saltmarsh habitat in Essex and 7% of the total saltmarsh in Britain. Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance.

Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed.

4.3.2 Habitats sites to be considered

There is only one Habitats site (SPA/SAC/Ramsar) which lie within 22 km of Gosfield.

Table 3: Habitats sites within 22km to be considered in this assessment

SPA
Abberton Reservoir
SAC
N/A
Ramsar
Abberton Reservoir

Consideration was given to potential impact pathways, Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for component SSSIs. The buffer was set at 22km as this is the recreational Zone of Influence (ZoI) for the Blackwater Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. However, the only Habitats sites listed in Table 3 are for Abberton Reservoir which is not considered by Natural England to currently be impacted by recreational pressure. Its IRZ as confirmed on MAGIC website www.magic.gov.uk is 5km and Gosfield parish lies outside this distance.

Therefore, after consideration of potential impact pathways, on a precautionary principle, it is concluded that none should be assessed for any likely significant effects resulting from the

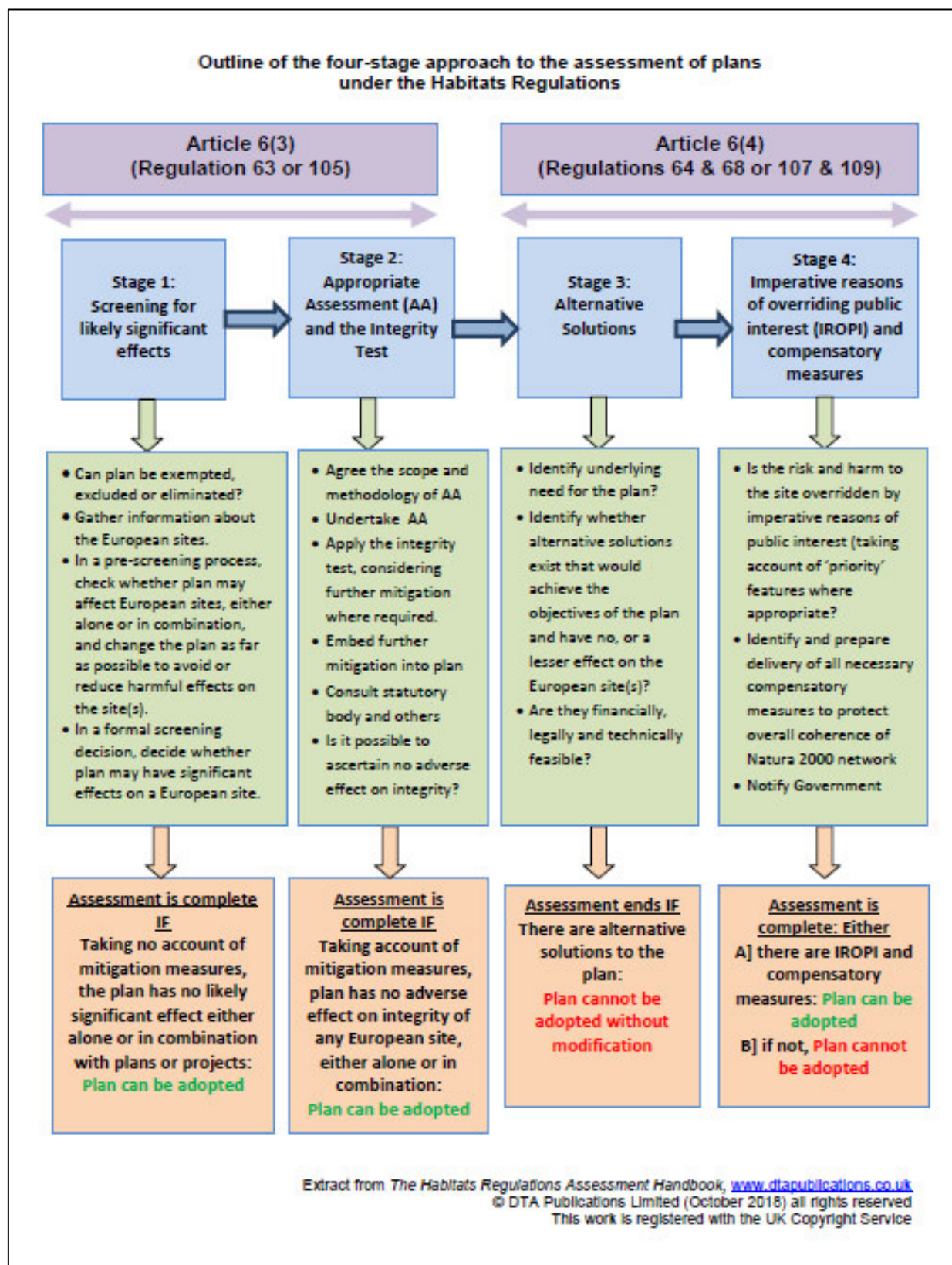
Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

No mitigation is considered necessary would need to be secured at application stage in line with policies in the adopted Braintree Local Plan as well any project level HRA Appropriate Assessment as the competent authority for planning decisions.

4.4 Method and Approach

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a HRA screening report; this is necessary to ensure the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Habitats (European) site or a Habitats (European) offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This document relates only to Stage 1 of the HRA process as set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 2: Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations (taken from the DTA handbook).



4.4.1 Stage 1: HRA Screening

The screening stage identifies if any significant effects are likely because any policies or projects will have an impact on a Habitats site. Table 4 identifies the different categories assigned to each policy in the plan: Category A identifies those policies or projects that are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Section 4.5 considers each policy or projects and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

Each of the policies in the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan has been screened to identify whether they would have any effect on a Habitats site and allocated to a category as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Screening categorisation

Category A: No negative effect
Policies or projects that will not be likely to have any negative effect on a Habitats site.
Category B: No Likely Significant Effect
Policies or projects that could have an effect but would not be likely to have a <i>significant</i> negative effect on a Habitats site alone or in combination. This conclusion could only be reached if the effects, even in combination and taking the precautionary principle into account, are considered trivial.
Category C: Likely Significant Effect
Policies or projects which are predicted to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and require revision or further assessment (Appropriate Assessment).

4.4.2 Potential impacts of Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan on Habitats Sites

There are a wide range of potential impacts on Habitats sites that could arise from development plans. These can be summarised as -

- Land take by development;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding

grounds for an identified species.

- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use resulting from new housing development and / or improved access due to transport infrastructure projects;
- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for waste water treatment, and changes in groundwater regimes due to increased impermeable areas;
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to increased traffic, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial developments, quarries and waste management facilities.

Each policy will be assessed against the criteria in the table below.

Table 5: Assessment of potential impacts on Habitats sites

Nature of potential impact	How the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Land take by development	The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area is outside the boundaries of any Habitats site as there are none within scope of this HRA.	No likely significant effects are expected, as there is no development allocated on designated land. It is therefore, considered that impacts from land take by development can be screened out when considered from the Plan alone. As there will be no land take by development this impact pathway is screened out .
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area does not contain any land providing functional use by designated features of any Habitats site.	There is no risk of impacts on protected species outside of any Habitats site. It is therefore considered that this impact pathway will not result in likely significant effects upon any Habitats site from the Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, impacts on protected species outside the Habitats site from the Neighbourhood Plan alone

Nature of potential impact	How the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		on the Habitats sites can be this impact pathway is screened out .
Recreational pressure and disturbance	The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area lies further than 22km from the Blackwater Estuary as evidenced within the adopted Essex Coast RAMS so outside the Zone of Influence.	There is no risk of impacts from predicted recreational pressure on any Habitats site. It is therefore considered that this impact pathway should be screened out for further assessment as without mitigation, Likely Significant Effects from the Neighbourhood Plan resulting from recreational impacts on Habitats sites can be ruled out.
Water quantity and quality	There is no potential pathway for development within the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area to impact on any Habitats sites.	No likely significant effects are expected given the distance and no impact pathway, so changes in water quantity or quality have been screened out .
Changes in pollution levels	It is considered that there is no pathway for development to result in pollution impacts.	No likely significant effects are expected given the distance, so changes in air pollution have been screened out .

4.5 Results from HRA Screening of Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Each of the policies in the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan was screened in turn to identify whether they would have any impact on a Habitats site and the result of this exercise is recorded in the table below.

Table 6: Assessment of potential impacts from the Plan policies

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
POLICY GOS1: WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT	A. All development proposals should deliver a minimum of 10% net biodiversity gain in addition to protecting and enhancing existing habitats and species. Proposals to create or enhance existing green wildlife corridors are strongly encouraged. B. In particular, the incorporation of design features into new development that encourages local wildlife to thrive, is strongly encouraged. C. Development should be designed to retain trees, shrubs and hedgerows of arboricultural, habitat and amenity value on-site and to conserve and enhance connectivity to the wider multifunctional green infrastructure networks. Where this is accompanied by new planting, this should consist of native species of trees, shrubs and grasses acting as stepping stones for wildlife.	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
POLICY GOS2: LOW ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN	A. Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, should demonstrate how the design of buildings and site layouts	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	improves water efficiency and minimises consumption of energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources in order to provide resilience to the effects of climate change. B. The design and standard of any new development should aim to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction including measures which minimise waste reduction, re-use and recycle minerals, and use sustainable materials, including in relation to their procurement and be optimised for energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions. C. All developments should demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. New development will be supported where it is designed and built to be Net Zero Carbon (in operation) having regard to Policy NZ1 set out in the Greater Essex Planning Policy Position for Net Zero Carbon Development . The following measures should be incorporated into development: a) Wherever possible, new buildings should be orientated to maximise the opportunities		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements; b) Proposals involving both new and existing buildings should demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc; c) The use of low embodied carbon materials, assessed through a Whole Life Cycle Carbon Assessment, should be prioritised. With regard to reducing upfront embodied carbon emissions from new development, reference should be made to the findings and recommended targets set out in the Essex Embodied Carbon Policy Study 2024 (or any successor document); d) New residential development should seek to meet a target standard of 100 litres per person per day (l/p/d); e) Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and f) All development should minimise surface water runoff to prevent off-site flooding through the design of a multifunctional SuDS-based drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in flood risk that may occur due to climate change. D. The sensitive retrofitting of energy efficiency (including glazing) and renewable energy generation measures that serve historic buildings will be encouraged having regard to the Essex Design Guide, including the retrofitting of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas, provided it safeguards their historic character and setting.		
POLICY GOS3: LOCAL GREEN SPACES	A. The area adjacent to Wendell Crescent shown on the Policies Map and in Figure 4.1 is designated as a Local Green Space: B. Development proposals	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	within the defined Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances.		
POLICY GOS4: VERGES	A. Existing green verges along the highway should be retained and should only be removed if it is clearly demonstrated to be part of necessary highway improvements, including for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling routes. Any such improvements should incorporate opportunities for planting around the existing verges wherever practicable. B. The design of highways and verges to maximise biodiversity value will be supported.	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
POLICY GOS5: DESIGN AND CHARACTER	A. Development should demonstrate high quality, safe design and layout which respects the local character of Gosfield. This includes the development of public buildings. B. In delivering high quality design, development proposals must demonstrate the appropriate use of design, layout, materials and features. The following principles should be considered as part of design proposals: a. Development should integrate with and enhance the form of its existing	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	surroundings. In particular, the open aspect of the frontages to residential properties should be retained. b. Openness is a fundamental part of the character of Gosfield. Where appropriate a range of densities, house types and plot layouts along with public green spaces should be used to maintain this. c. Building heights and rooflines should provide diversity of frontage, scale and form, with building heights that reflect the prevailing height of surrounding buildings unless it can be demonstrated that a taller building could complement or enhance the local character. d. All connections should seek to be multifunctional in nature providing safe and convenient connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists within the development and to the surrounding countryside and key destinations. e. Parking to support residential uses should be provided within the development and should maximise use of permeable surfaces to ensure adequate drainage. Where on-street parking provision is to be made, this should have regard to the EPOA parking standards and		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	should demonstrate, through the parking and/or road layout how this minimises the impact on the safety of pedestrians and other road users.		
POLICY GOS6: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS	In considering proposals which involve the loss or alteration of a non-designated heritage asset, consideration will be given to: 1. whether the asset is structurally unsound and beyond feasible and viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or 2. the extent to which measures to sustain the existing use, or find an alternative use/user, have been investigated. 3. where a development proposal would result in the loss of, or harm to a non-designated heritage asset including its setting, a balanced judgement will be made as to the acceptability of the proposal having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
POLICY GOS7: ACCESS FOR WALKING, CYCLING AND	A. Access to the countryside will be promoted through the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the existing	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
HORSE RIDING	Public Rights of Way (PROW) network, as defined on the 'Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way', provision of bridleways and the safety of users of rural roads and lanes. Any proposals impacting upon a PROW should have regard to ECC Development Management Policy DM11 (Public Rights of Way) to ensure the safety of users of rural roads and lanes. Any development which leads to the loss or degradation of any PROW should not be permitted in other than very special circumstances. Proposals to divert PROWs or cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community. Where possible, development should enhance PROWs by improving signage, existing routes and connectivity through the creation of new routes. In all cases it should seek to ensure that routes are suitable for those with disabilities.		

4.5.1 Recommendations

There are no recommendations for the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan as they have all been assigned to Category A.

There will therefore be no need for any residential development subsequently coming forward under this Plan to be subject to a project level HRA. As such there is no requirement for this Plan to progress to Appropriate Assessment.

Given that the distance from the Plan area to the any Habitats site is further than 22km, there are no predicted effects from the Plan alone and no residual effects to consider in combination with other plans and projects.

There is therefore no need to identify any relevant plans or projects likely to result in a significant effect on Habitats sites in combination with the Plan. In the context of this HRA, there are no relevant plans or projects to be considered in combination with Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

Planning Practice Guidance on SEA of Neighbourhood Plans indicates that a strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where a Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development; the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; or the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and seeks to strengthen the protection and enhancement of assets at the local level and in a local context.

In consideration of the findings of this Screening Report, the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan can be **screened out** for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

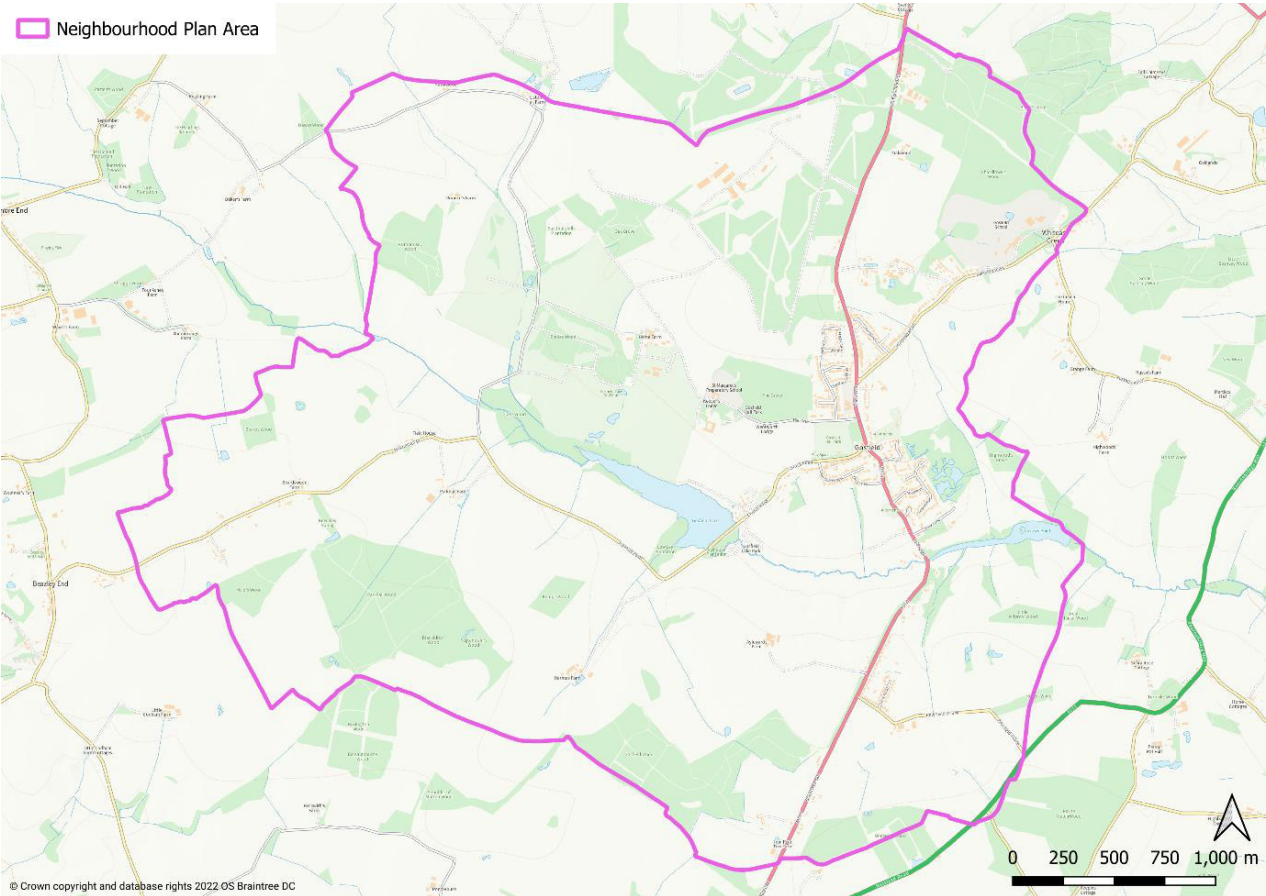
Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA Screening Report, indicates that, without mitigation embedded, the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have Likely Significant Effect on the designated features of any Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore **screened out**.

6. References

- Braintree District Council Local Plan 2013-2033 (2022)
- Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version 2024
- Land Use Consultants (August 2019) HRA report for Braintree District Local Plan Section 2
- Land Use Consultants (May 2017) HRA Report for North Essex Authorities Shared Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans Pre-submission (Regulation 19)
- Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6581547796791296#content>
- Place Services (2018) Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Available at: **Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) – Braintree District Council**
- Place Services (2020) Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**.
- Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (April 2022) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited (Accessed under licence October 2025)

Appendix 1

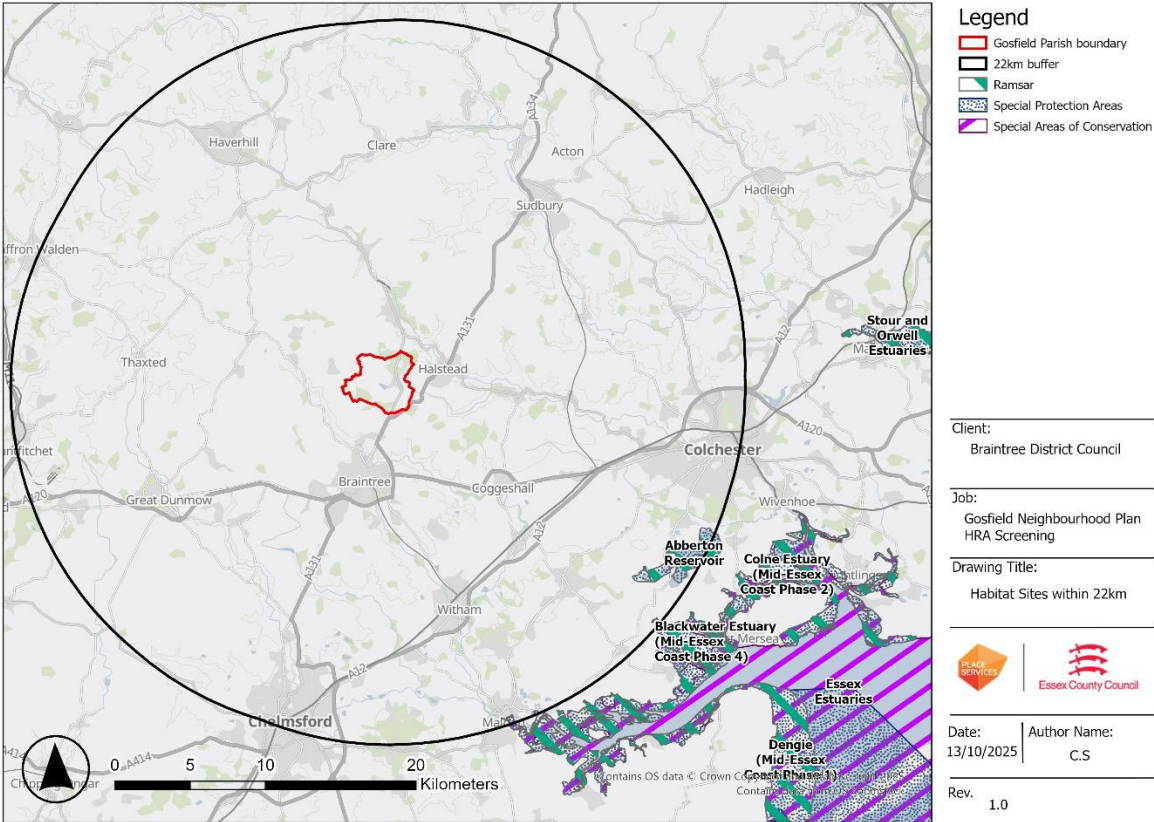
The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area



Source: Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (2024)

Appendix 2

Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area & Locations of Habitats sites within 22 km



Source: Place Services (2025)



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Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan - Environmental Determination Notice

Braintree District Council (BDC) screening of the need for an environmental assessment of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council supports communities who wish to undertake a neighbourhood plan. Government is clear that the intention of a Neighbourhood Plan should be to set out policies on the development and use of land in a neighbourhood area (In this case the Gosfield Parish Council administrative area), and that the local planning authority has a duty to support the production of a plan.

The Council's duty in this regard is to screen the likely contents of the Plan and environmental information outlined, in order to determine if a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA and/or Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) process is needed. The Council has commissioned Essex County Council place services to help it determine if a SEA or HRA is required.

This will allow the Neighbourhood Plan Examiner, to determine if the necessary conditions relating to SEA/HRA have been met, and enable the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to referendum.

Braintree District Council Comment

The Place Services Screening opinion and responses from the Environmental Bodies have been considered, and this information is considered sufficient to determine the following;

- There will be no significant environmental effects as a result from the proposals in the plan.

Conclusion

Based on the information provided by the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan Group and the Screening Opinion produced by Place Services, it is determined that an environmental assessment is not required as there are no new or additional sites being allocated for development in the Neighbourhood Plan and as such there will not be an impact on either the natural or historic environment as demonstrated in the Screening Opinion.

Braintree District Council – Planning Policy February 2026